



The Unity Between Strong and Weak Believers Part 3

November 16, 2025 Romans 14:1

(Video 1:03:45)

You want to turn in your bibles to Romans 14, Romans 14 as we continue looking at this powerful truth that Paul is mapping out for us, which is basically how the strong believer, (The believer whose conscience is better informed than others, the believer who understands what it really means to have a freedom and a liberty in Christ, is not hung up by many, many non-moral traditions and practices., the so-called stronger believer), and the weak believer (the believer who is still struggling in letting go of certain non-moral traditions, his conscience not as well informed as his stronger brother or sister in Christ in terms of understanding the word of God and is still bound in some of those things, such that he believes you are not doing the right thing). He believes you're doing the wrong thing. He might even believe you're in sin if you're not doing what he or she is still clinging on to. And we've been talking about that. And Paul here in Romans 14, verses one, through chapter 15, verse 13, gives us four marvelous principles, if you will, of how we bring, and strive to constantly bring the stronger and the weaker brethren together in unity in the body of Christ and not having these frictions and divisions and problems and issues. And the outline we've been working from is:

1. in verses 1- 12, he tells us we are to accept one another with understanding.
2. His second point in verses 13-23 is that we're to build up one another without offending.
3. His third point in Romans 15:1-7 is that we're to please one another as Christ did.



4. And his fourth point, as we'll ultimately see in Romans 15:8-13, is we are to rejoice with one another in God's plan.

Now we have been camped on that first principle, accepting one another in love, if you will, and with understanding. And so we started looking at various points as to why. Why does he say we should accept one another with understanding? And we found that by looking at the first three verses of Romans 14, let's read them again. He says, ***Now accept the one who is weak in faith,...*** Not weak in saving faith, he knows Christ. Weak in the faith, his conscience is not as well informed about the truth of God's word as his older, stronger brother, if you will, spiritually speaking, older. ***...but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.*** Why are we to accept our weaker, or our stronger, as the case may be, you may be viewing it from the weaker brethren and saying, he is so undisciplined an individual. He is so out there. He's got no limits on his life, and you criticize him. Or you could be the stronger brother who enjoys your freedom in Christ. You're not in sin, these are non-moral things that you are enjoying, and you have a tendency to look at your weaker brother and say, wow, he's such a legalist, he's so tied to those things. We're not to look down on him with contempt, he's not to look with scorn or condemnation on the stronger brother, why? And the very first principle is because God has accepted him. End of verse 3, who's the ***"him"***? The stronger brother or the weaker brother? It refers to both, depending on your viewpoint. God has accepted your brother, your sister in Christ, and therefore we should accept one another as well. In other words, he's a fellow believer in Christ. He's not in sin. We're not talking about an individual who's in sin. We're talking about non-moral traditions that he may be hanging on to. Non-moral traditions that



he or she is totally released of and is not observing, depending upon the situation. God has accepted him, and we talked about that last time.

Now, we're gonna come to the second reason why we are to accept one another with understanding. First reason, because God has accepted that brother or sister. Here is the second reason, and it's all found in one verse, verse 4. He says, ***Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*** Now, if you look at that verse, and you look at it long enough, one word keeps jumping out. *Stand, stand, stand.* Three times he talks about. ***The Lord is able to make him stand, and stand he will.*** What's the principle? The second reason why we're to accept one another in the body of Christ, strong or weak, with understanding is that the Lord sustains every genuine believer, whether they're weak in terms of their legalism, or whether they are strong in terms of knowing and understanding and experiencing their freedoms in Christ.

Three times the word *stand* is there. This is a very critical, important point. I want you to get this. What's he talking about here? The weak, we tend to justify our criticism of a brother who's enjoying his Christian freedom. We tend to justify our condemnation on a weaker brother who's tied up in legalism. And what do we do? We say, oh, that legalistic guy, he's so caught up in all these do's and don'ts and so forth that aren't even biblical and aren't even required and have no moral aspect to them whatsoever. He is gonna get weary. He's gonna get burdened on this. He's gonna get bitter. He's gonna get sour. He's gonna turn on the faith. He's gonna apostatize. He's never gonna be fruitful for the Lord if he keeps doing that. He's gonna live a miserable life. The legalistic believer looks at the believer who's strong in the faith, if you will, enjoying his Christian freedom and saying, that guy is so undisciplined. He lives right on the edge of everything. He pushes the envelope on everything. He is gonna go



off the rails eventually. He's gonna make a shipwreck of his life eventually. He is headed for spiritual disaster. There's gonna be moral disaster and sin big time in that guy's life. And we justify our criticisms, our condemnation and our critical spirit out of concern for that person's spiritual wellbeing. And the word of God hits this right on the money. He says, stop it. **Who are you to judge the servant of another?** That is the Bible's way of saying, "Mind your own business". That is exactly what the word of God is saying there. Who do you think you are? You're not a part of the problem. You're not a part of the solution. And so mind your own business. The point is, your opinion of someone else's servant, he says, doesn't improve or denigrate, impair, that servant's position before his own master. And the point is that, and he says, **To his own master, he stands or falls.** And that phrase there, I wanted to underscore **his own** in verse four. It's an emphasized form of the word *idios*. And remember, we were in 1 Corinthians 12:11. I said, the Holy Spirit distributes each gift to each one individually. And I said, that word *individually* there is based on the word *idios*, from which we get *idiot*, and meaning one who's totally different. There's no one else like him. And we say idiot in a negative sense. But the word means there's totally unique, nothing like it. And what he's saying here is this guy has one and only one master. Totally unique and specific to him or her. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not you and me. And our condemning critical spirits that cause division in the body of Christ literally are absolutely wrong.

Go to 1 Corinthians 4. I've never quite understood this passage of scripture, and I'm so happy that I believe I do now, and wanted to share it with you. In 1 Corinthians chapter 4, we're gonna come back to Romans 15 pretty quick here. But in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, Paul is speaking to the believers in Corinth. And basically, he's underscoring the point that he's making here in Romans that only God can evaluate another person's heart. And he says here in 1 Corinthians 4:1 **Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ,...** Now stop



right there. That word servants, I could do a whole sermon on that. It is so rich, *hypēratēs*. It basically means *third class underrower*. What's a third class underrower? If you ever see the movie Ben-Hur, and he's on a galley ship, and the Roman ships are fighting somebody else, and they're coming at them, and in the galleys, the captain yells out, "Ramming speed, ramming speed!", and the slaves are in the galleys rowing. And there's three levels of slave on these Roman warships, three levels of rowers, if you will. And the lowest of the low is the guy chained to the oar down at the very bottom with all those guys in the bottom of the galley. And Paul says, I'm a third level underrower. I'm the lowest of the low pulling for Christ. It's a very humble description. He says, ***Let a man regard us in this manner***, as underrowers, third level underrowers, ***servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.*** Some of your translations might say faithful. Here we go. ***But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human court, in fact, I do not even examine myself.*** Stop right there. I thought every time we came to the Lord's table, the word of God says we're supposed to stop and examine ourselves. I thought he says examine yourselves, brethren, and see whether in your faith and so forth. I thought we were supposed to take stock of our lives and so forth. We are. That's not what he's talking about here in context. He goes on, I'll explain it. ***For I am conscious of nothing.*** There's his conscience again. I got a clean conscience before the word he says. He says, as a matter of fact, in Acts 23:1, he even says, up to this point in time, I have lived with a clear conscience before God. He says, ***[For] I am conscious of nothing against myself***, here we go, ***yet I'm not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.*** Here is what he's saying. Whether it's what I think of myself, or what you think of myself, doesn't matter. I'm living my life to please an audience of one, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what he's talking about there. Paul's saying, I don't live to please men. I don't live for



man's approval. That's why he says, I don't care about any court's decision on me. He says, I don't even live up to my own standards. When he says, I don't examine myself. In my conscience, I don't know of anything against me right now, but even that doesn't make me okay, because I'm a fallen, depraved sinner, my heart is desperately wicked, and no man truly sees themselves the way they really are. He says, I won't even rely on that. The standard is the word of God, and the standard is how the word of God is gonna be applied to me from the only One who knows my true heart, the Lord Jesus Christ, who ultimately is going to hold me accountable. Verse 5, ***Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time,...*** Don't judge your fellow brother or believer. We're not talking about somebody who's in sin. We're not talking about loving somebody in accordance with Matthew 18. You see a brother in sin, go and confront him in their err, it's not talking about that. Talking about people engaged in non-moral traditions; food they eat or don't eat, things they drink or they don't drink, places, maybe activities they engage in or don't engage in that have nothing to do with morality, okay, or feast days or not a feast day. What day of the week they worship on, what festivals they do, it goes on and on and on. He says, don't pass judgment before the time. Well, I'm gonna get to judge sometime. No, you're still not gonna get to judge. Who's gonna judge? ***Wait until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from Almighty God.*** Basically, he's saying, look, you and I need to live our lives accountable to Almighty God. And if the Lord is able to cause a brother who's hung up on legalistic traditions in your view to stand at the judgment seat of Christ, to make it all the way to glory, the Lord will sustain him all the way. And so the Lord is able to make him stand. He's able to stand for Christ and do fruitful things for God. If he's a legalist, he's not gonna get bankrupt and destroyed and never do what God's ordained him to do. If he's living, experiencing his religious liberty,



excuse me, Christian liberty in Christ and doing things that you perhaps would never do, but they're not sinful in any way, God is not, he's not gonna be shipwrecked. God is able to make him stand.

This really spoke to me in the last 48, 72 hours because I stood up at this pulpit last week and I gave an example of a pastor in a church in a little town west of Indianapolis and a singing group that came. And that pastor came to this singing group, remember they all had Tom Selleck type mustaches. And this pastor who I described as the weaker brother in that situation, and he was, insisted that they not sing with those facial hair and those guys cut the facial hair off and didn't argue about it, didn't say a peep, just accommodated that particular pastor. Well, I found myself in my own mind and I even shared a couple things with Teri that I need to apologize for. That guy was such a legalist, he was such a this, he was such a that. I'd interacted with that pastor a couple of times years subsequent to that. The Lord is greatly convicted me. I was doing in my own mind, I was violating the very thing we're preaching on. I was sitting there thinking how fruitful could he, just think how fruitful he could have been for Christ had he hadn't been such a legalist. No, I am dead, dead wrong. The Lord made him stand. I got so convicted of it, I went on the internet and I checked, he died in 2002, I saw a picture of his grave and his dear wife Martha where they're buried and so on. That pastor led many people to Christ. That pastor built a wonderful work in a church in a county west of Indianapolis. That pastor started a Christian school which today is still ministering in the lives of children and their families to the glory of God for the cause of Christ. The Lord enabled him to do exactly what God had called him to do. And how dare me besmirch his memory. I'm so thankful I never mentioned his name, by saying, oh, he was such a legalist or he was saying, hey, he wasn't perfect. He did some things, but far be it from me to be judging him in that manner. So I asked God to forgive me for that, but I thought it does make a perfect example



of what we're talking about. Your legalistic brother or your brother who's enjoying his liberties in Christ will accomplish everything Almighty God has ordained for them to accomplish. You and I simply need to not judge another man's servant, the Lord is able. They'll make it, remember John 10:[28]? I give life, I give eternal life and no one can snatch them out of my hand. They are in the Father's hand and no one can snatch them out of the Father's hand. Romans 8, the end of the chapter, what's it say? For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor things present or to come on and on and on shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. John 6, all whom the Father gives me will come to me and I will lose none of them and I will raise them up on the last day. That's the legalistic brother who can't quite let go of a bunch of traditions that are totally irrelevant as well as the brother in Christ who enjoys his Christian freedom to the max. They're both going to be rejoicing in glory around the throne and they're going to make it, they're gonna be just fine. Jude 24 and 25, Steve, your favorite two verses. ***Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling ,and to, I love it, it fits right in, make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time and now and forever. Amen.*** What did Peter say in 1 Peter 1:5? We are kept by the grace of God for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Legalists and Christian libertarians are all going to meet God.

By the way, go back to Romans 15 if you're not there, excuse me, 14 if you left it. In Romans 14:3-9 that we're looking at here, there's a tremendous underscoring of the deity of Christ. I just want you to see this and then we'll get some principles. Look in verse 3, he says, ***God has accepted him.*** Then and down in verse 5, ***one man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike, let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.*** Look at verse 6, ***He who observes the day observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord,***



for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end, Christ died and lived again, that He, Christ, might be Lord both of the dead and of the living, he goes on and on, what's the point? He uses the word God three times, he uses the word Lord seven times and he equates them all with Jesus Christ. It is a powerful statement on the deity of Christ.

We are to accept one another with understanding,

1. because the Lord has accepted each one of us already and
2. because the Lord sustains us and is gonna make every one of us stand for the glory of Christ throughout life and make us stand ultimately at the judgment seat of Christ to receive eternal rewards.
3. There's a third reason, a third reason why he says and this promotes unity between the weaker and the stronger brethren in the body of Christ and it has to do with the fact that the Lord is sovereign to each one of them.

The Lord is sovereign to the weaker brother and sister, he's sovereign to the stronger brother and sister. What do you mean? Well, I just read verse five, one man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. This is a key aspect of this we're coming back to. ***Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.*** This underscores again what we saw last week. You see the importance of the conscience, let each one be fully persuaded in his own mind. You don't wanna violate a man or a woman's conscience. ***He who observes the day observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.*** Again, ***For not***



one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord.

If we die, we die for the Lord; therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. As a matter of fact, ***For [to] this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead,*** that means saints who've gone on before to glory, ***and of the living,*** those who are alive right now. The point is we're to accept one another with understanding, weak or strong, because why? Because God has accepted us one, because number two, the Lord sustains both of us all the way to the end, is gonna do what he wants to do, two. And the third reason is because the Lord is sovereign over all, meaning what?

Being weak in faith, being tied to non-moral traditions or rituals or whatever, does not mean you're fleshly or carnal or not spiritual. That legalistic pastor who had those guys shave their beard off was absolutely in his heart of hearts doing that for the Lord. He believed he was doing the right thing in service to Almighty God. And the heart is what controls. And many, many people are doing such things, believing they're serving Almighty God. Spiritual maturity, excuse me, maturity, if you will, spiritually, is not dependent upon being weak or strong in terms of being spiritual. You're not in sin, you're not ungodly, you're not less spiritual, if you will. Your conscience is, just again, not as well informed and you don't understand or appreciate or able to appreciate enough the freedom that you have in Christ, if you will.

Well, there's so many things that we can underscore about this. Verse five is critical. Let each man be, first of all, he talks about one day or night. Remember, he had certain Jews that were coming out of Judaism and they were hung up on the Sabbath. Now you've got these Christians, Jews, and Gentiles alike who are worshiping on the first day of the week, Sunday, we would call it, the first day of the week. And quite frankly, if you look at the history of the Sabbath in the Old Testament, the word Sabbath comes from the Hebrew word Shabbat,



which means rest. And so, many times, the Sabbath was not on the seventh day of the week, was not on what we call Saturday. There were different declarations throughout the Old Testament. This will be a Sabbath day for you. This will be a Sabbath. This will be a rest day for you. And it wasn't Saturday, the last day of the week at all, okay? So, we're not talking about the Lord's Day here. We're talking about certain people who believe that you should worship on certain days and so forth.

Now, why go into all of this? It's amazing the amount of things that are constantly out there that Satan loves to take and use to cause divisions in the body of Christ. Let's just talk about keeping holy the Lord's Day. There's all sorts of things connected with that. One well-known pastor says this: *I can remember as a little boy, we couldn't move off the couch on Sunday. I had this little Lord Fulteroy suit that I wore when my father was pastoring in Philadelphia. I had this little collar thing and these little pants, and we'd come home and we would eat a huge dinner. Apparently, gluttony, he says, was not an issue. We would eat a huge meal, and then we would sit desperately in need of motion, and we couldn't read the paper. We couldn't go out and play catch. We couldn't read the comics. We couldn't read a magazine. We couldn't watch television or listen to the radio. That was a sad day.*

Now, I wanna tell you something. I came out of Roman Catholicism. All this stuff like this was totally foreign to me, and I meet Teri and others who are born again believers and have different religious backgrounds and family backgrounds, and I start realizing this stuff is out there everywhere. One of Teri's sisters (has gone to be with the Lord now), Jill, told me one time when they were little kids, they could play with playing cards, but they had to scratch the kings, queens, and jacks faces off the cards. I said, are you kidding me? She says, no, no, real deal, and so I come to find out that was very... my family background coming from the ne'er-do-wells that I come from, I was shocked at it, but what, well, historically, cards were



always associated with gambling and drinking and seedy things of life and stuff like that in people's minds, and so a lot of Christian denominations that are, there's also the provisions about you don't wanna have any graven image ahead of you, and some people would justify it by saying, look, we only have one divine authority over us. It's the Lord and King Jesus Christ, no earthly monarch, and those are kings, queens, and jacks, all sorts of, and so it blew my mind. Have you ever heard of the card game rook? You ever heard of the card game rook? Oh, several hands. All right, do you know that rook has a special deck? It's a special deck of cards. Do you know what's different about a rook deck from a regular 52 playing card? I will tell you, there's no kings, queens, or jacks. They're all birds or something, and there's no hearts, spades, clubs, and diamonds. Those are all changed to colors. The rook deck was developed, this is a great trivia question for you, by Parker Brothers in 1906 (It's a trick-taking game, you take tricks by different cards you play), Parker Brothers by 1906 to accommodate Christian denominations, the Mennonites and others who thought that cards with kings, queens, and jacks in them were sinful. It's just amazing. And by the way, our culture's been greatly impacted in good ways as well as some not-so-good ways about certain, as you know, Judeo-Christian principles. And the reason why I think it's important to share this is because 80% of this church, it probably doesn't even know what I'm talking about. I was raised in the 50s and 60s. How many of you remember what they called blue laws? Well, there's a few hands, and everybody who's over 40. So literally, on a Sunday, every business was closed. Every business was closed, except hospitals were in operation, of course, police departments and fire departments were on staff, and drugstores. But interestingly enough, only certain drugstores were allowed to be open, and you could go to the drugstore to fill a prescription. And you could go to the drugstore and maybe buy a magazine. But don't even think you could walk into that drugstore on a Sunday and buy cosmetics or buy other artifacts,



buy a hammer and nail. No way. You couldn't do anything like that. Wow. Now, you say, well, John, those times are past as well. I can remember when car dealers were the first to start demanding to be open on Sundays to sell cars in Indianapolis. That became a huge deal. I wasn't even a Christian at the time. I think I was an eight-year-old kid in the 50s. And I remember that was a huge, huge deal. But there's all sorts of things like that that still affect us to this day that are not moral at all. They're just traditions. I'll give you one, a big one, actually. Have you ever heard of the King James Only movement? There's some churches where if you go, and it's the King James Bible is the only Bible, God bless you, is the only Bible you can read. As a matter of fact, even in your private times, they think you're inappropriate reading anything but the King James version of the Bible. And I've never been called upon to preach in one of those churches, and I probably never will be. But if I was, you know what I'd do? I'd take a King James Bible. It's not a moral issue, okay? But to them, some congregations go so far as to shun others who would read anything other than the King James Bible. It's a tradition. Paul in Colossians 2:16, ***[Therefore] let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to festivals or a new moon or a Sabbath, a rest, day,*** Colossians 2:16. I have a relative, freed after years of this, went to a church for many, many years where he was an usher at the church. He had to go into the cloakroom every Sunday, shut the cloakroom door, because there was a chart on the back of it with an outline of a man's head and a haircut to see and make sure that his sideburns met the standard and it weren't too long. Otherwise, he couldn't walk and escort people to where to sit in the church. Pastored the church one time, declared in a sermon. I believe if Jesus Christ returned today, he would never drive a BMW. We laugh at those things. Man was a godly man, spiritual man, hung up on those, in those areas, the weaker brother. But those things have a tendency to divide people. I'll give you another one. My brother-in-law, Reese, Child Evangelism Fellowship, had the privilege



of speaking in almost every country on the globe multiple times. He says, John, if you ever preach in a church in Scotland, get prepared. I said, why? He says, you can stand there and preach your heart out. Illustrations, examples, pound out the word of God, and so forth, with tears running down your face, moved by the Spirit of God, and he says, you'll be looking at three, four, five hundred stone-cold individuals staring at you like this. He says, I remember leaving the pulpit the first time I ever preached in a church in Scotland. I thought, oh Lord, what did I do? I must have blown it. He says, I had no response out of the congregation. Afterwards, I'm talking to people and they're saying how much they appreciated the sermon and so forth. He said, but while it was going on, I thought I was talking to 400 concrete statues. Why? That's tradition in Scotland. That's the way the church primarily there worships. He said, now, as a matter of fact, there was a Scottish man on staff at Child Evangelism Fellowship at the home main office who transferred there from Scotland, this was 35 years ago, looking for a home church there in the main office of Child Evangelism Fellowship in Warrenton, Missouri. If you know anything about that area in Missouri, there's Southern Baptist churches everywhere. And this guy from Scotland, looking for a home church, goes into this Southern Baptist church and he's hearing people go, amen! Preach it, brother! Amen! On and on and on. His head exploded. And of course, if you be in a predominantly, quite frankly, H.B. Charles, Steve, if you look at H.B. Charles, he's a black pastor in Florida and he's got a mixed congregation. It's mostly black. If you watch one of his sermons online, he'll be preaching and you'll hear people say, if he talks about Jesus was crucified, somebody will just yell out, "Get him off the cross, pastor! Get him off the cross!" And it's almost like he's got a conversation going with the members of his congregation. In the middle, they'll yell out something and he'll answer it. And if you're not, it just blows your mind. If it's not your kind [of church]. Those are non-moral things. Those are just traditions. And neither one is good or bad. They're just



traditions. Let each man be persuaded. But you see where the possibility of real division in the body of Christ and real judgmentalism and looking down your nose at somebody can take place.

How do you respond to that? What's he say? Verse five. ***Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.*** There you go. Well, how could he possibly say that? Because they're not moral. They're not sin. They're just traditions. And Paul does never want to train anyone to violate their conscience. Why? Because the spirit of God leads subjectively and He takes the word of God and moves it with power through the mind, the conscience, of an individual believer. And over time, that conscience, informed by God's truth, responds and is activated by things that violate, or don't violate, that conscience. King James says, ***Let each be persuaded in his own mind.*** I love that. I love what he's saying there.

So in any event, let's finish up. In Romans 14:7. Again, ***For not one of us lives for himself, and not one of us dies for himself;*** Look at verse eight. I think verse eight, really, is one of the greatest injunctions for holy living in all of the Bible. ***For if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.*** Every Christian is involved in an absolute, unconditional, sovereign relationship with Almighty God. I hear people say, or used to say, more often than I do now, I guess, well, you know, when I was 15, I came to know Christ as my savior. But when I was 22, I made Him the Lord of my life. Please dismiss that from your vocabulary, okay? That is not biblically accurate or sound, and it's not what happened. Jesus is Lord. And I have never known Jesus personally when He wasn't giving me orders. He's my Lord. He's your Lord. So, well, I accepted Him as my savior at 15. Maybe you genuinely came to know Christ as your Lord and savior at 15. Or maybe you didn't come to know Him as Lord and savior until you were 21 or 22 or whatever it was. Either way, but I will tell you something. The point in time that you're genuinely born again,



He is your Lord. Meaning what? He's your master. You're a third level underrower. How do I know that? How do I know if that's when it was?

I always use this passage of scripture. I want us to end there. Go to Philippians chapter two. Go to Philippians chapter two. Like Steve said, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians. All right, Philippians chapter two. And what does Philippians chapter two have to say? Verse 12. Verse 12. I still remember that pastor of Saddleback Church. He was interviewing John McCain when John McCain was running against Obama for president. I'll never forget that interview. His Christian "faith" came up. And they asked McCain, well, what does Christianity really mean to you? I'm watching the television and I'm dying for him to say it. And of course he never said it. Christianity, genuine biblical, the real deal Christianity is you can sum it up in three words. Jesus is Lord. Look right here in verse 12. ***So then, my beloved***, (he's speaking to believers) ***just as you have always obeyed*** (that's the subject matter, obedience to the word of God. Just as you've always obeyed), ***not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence***, here we go, ***work out your salvation [with fear and trembling;...]***. That doesn't mean you gain eternal life by works. He's talking about working out your salvation/sanctification, your salvation/justification, the Holy Spirit you got the moment you were saved, you now work it out, if you will, in your life by yielding to the Spirit of God, by striving by God's prompting to obey the word of God, growing in holiness, growing in Christ's likeness, and sanctification, whatever term you wanna put on it. How do you know that that's what he's talking about? Well, look at verse 13. ***...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will***, that means to wanna obey the word of God, and ***to*** actually obey the word of God, ***work***, what? For your good pleasure? No, ***for His good pleasure***. Now go back to what I said a moment ago. If you're genuinely born again, it means God is in your heart and life and soul, and that God is prompting you to desire, to will, to obey the word of God, to will, to work out your salvation.



Jesus Christ has never been in your life when He wasn't giving you orders. Jesus Christ is Lord. So at the age of 15, if you think you came to know Him as Savior, and you weren't compelled and prompted and pushed and had a conviction and a weight to wanna strive to obey the word of God, you can mark it down on the authority of the word of God. You never came to know Christ. But maybe you did. And maybe over the force of time, in growing and stumbling and starting and circumstances and crises of life and so forth, God molded you more and more and more to Christ, and maybe you understood more of who He was and so on. And it doesn't matter. Either way, Jesus is Lord.

And what's the tie-down point? As Brian comes to lead us in a closing hymn, the tie-down point is this: That legalistic brother or sister, just what verses five, six, and seven says, they are insisting that your hair be a certain length; They're insisting that you only use the King James; They're insisting that no spiritual pastor would ever drive a ritzy sports car. They're hung on to those things because they believe with all their heart, they're pleasing God. They have a desire to please God. They love God. They are just as spiritual as the brother over here who says, what kind of car you drive has got no test of your spirituality? Why, the new American standard is, in many ways, a better translation than the King James. I don't care if I have long hair or if I'm bald. It doesn't matter in the eyes of God. Both of those men are enjoying their freedom in Christ or dealing with their rules and regulations because they love God and believe in their heart, if they truly do, that they're pleasing God as a result. So we, who understand our conscience is better informed, don't look down on that legalist. And those legalists out there, don't be looking at us and say, hey, he's headed for disaster. He's way too free in his walk with the Lord. Amen?

Let's pray. Father, thank You for this time in Your word. Thank You for these blessed, blessed truths. Free our hearts and minds up to love one another as Christ loved the church by giving



Himself up for them. Father, may we never wound a weaker brother or sister's conscience by insisting that they exercise the Christian freedoms we do. And may we never, ever constrain, condemn or shun a fellow believer because they don't cling or follow some of the non-moral religious or other traditions or conduct that we think are what Christians should do. Father, draw us closer and closer together as a local church and as a church universal, around the things that matter: The truth of Your word. We ask it again in the matchless name of Jesus our Christ. Amen. And amen.