

# Sunday Worship Service 3\_6\_2022

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

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00:00

Time now to get more deeply into God's word. So as I invite you to do every week, I hope that you will have a copy of scripture out and open with you through this time. If you have a personal Bible or a Bible app that you'd like to use, I invite you to get that out if you need something or read Bibles in all of the pews. And so you can find there the passage will be in the book of Romans again this morning, chapter 14, the last half of chapter 14 done in the first few verses of chapter 15. It's very likely that some of you here today are participating in one of the most famous family feuds in modern history, though you may not even realize that it's one whose origins The start of it are pretty shrouded in mystery, no one's really sure exactly what happened to start it, but it's one that millions of people all around the world have taken sides on over the last 75 years. And some of you may have without realizing it. I'm gonna leave you in a little bit of suspense. Before I tell you exactly what that is. We'll come back to that. Because right now, I want to get into this section of Romans, where Paul is touching on some ideas, and I'll show you why. I want to leave you in a little suspense momentarily. This part of Romans is a really interesting section where Paul is getting into giving the congregation in the community some encouragement, some instruction, some wisdom about how to live together during the times when they don't always see eye to eye. Now, the book of Romans is a really incredible part of Scripture. We've been studying this for several months here. Now he's began last fall, some of you have been here with us through that time. If not, you may just know it. Because it's such a famous part of Scripture, some of the most famous Bible verses anywhere come from Romans, and it's a book that is very, very powerful. It's also very provocative at times, because it does both things. It does two things, it comforts, those who are distressed, but it also sometimes unsettles those who may be a little too comfortable in some things. So it's a very interesting book, we're going to get back into the part at the end of chapter 14 that we where we left off last week, but before we do, let me invite you once more, to pray with me. Great and gracious God, we thank you for this time that we have to be here together today. Lord, quiet are distracted minds. Calm are distraught hearts. Let us hear what it is that you have to say. And then let us respond in ways that demonstrate our love for you, and our love for others. And Father, I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts would be acceptable in Your sight for We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen. This part in chapter 14, in the first few verses here in chapter 15, Paul, Paul is addressing a question. It's a simple one. It's a very significant one, the question that the congregation had was, how do you find the balance between a call to love your neighbor, but also having the freedom to uphold some personal convictions that may be a little bit different than your neighbors? And this is not a

particularly new question. I think it's a question that we feel sometimes some pressure on, we think that maybe we're the first generation that's had to face a kind of question like this, but it's one that they had. They said, Paul, how do we balance this call to love our neighbor, but also understand that we may not see eye to eye on certain things. And that's what he's been getting out in this part of the letter. So we stopped off in verse 12. Last week, but this is still one train of thought he's picking up and continuing on we're going to begin in chapter 14, verse 13, I'm going to read down through first seven verses of chapter 15. And I invite you to listen again now to the word of the Lord. Therefore, let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. I know and in persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you're no longer walking in love, by what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. So do not let what you regard as good, be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Do not for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God bless it is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith, for whatever it is not proceed from faith is sin. We who are strong have an obligation to Baal to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good to build him up for Christ. did not please himself. But that but as it is written, the reproaches of those who approached you fell on me, for whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together, you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. Last week, when we were looking at the beginning part of Paul's discussion here, I shared with you the motto for our denomination, which many of you know quite well, by this point, it's a quote that's attributed to the North African theologian Augustine, and it says, In essentials, unity, in non essentials, liberty, in all things, charity. And it's a simple framework. Some of you know that quite well. But I'm just going to use that simple framework to walk through what Paul is talking about here. And throughout this letter, there is a point of unity that we have with other brothers and sisters in Christ. Certainly it is around the essential teachings of the Christian faith, the core basic foundational doctrines, but even before and even underneath that, it is a unity that we have in Jesus Christ Himself. And the unity that we have in Christ is something that transcend some of the other differences that we tend to elevate, or promote. And there are all kinds of case studies, all kinds of places that you can see this dynamic at play, you can see it a play in the dynamic within the disciples, the 12, whom Jesus called to himself, we don't know a lot about every single one of them. But we know enough to know that they didn't all come from the same exact socioeconomic backgrounds, they didn't all come from the same exact educational backgrounds. One particularly interesting dynamic in there is that you had Matthew, who was a tax collector, an agent, who was fundraising for the Roman state, essentially. And then you had Simon the Zealot who was looking to overthrow the Roman state. I don't know if Matthew and Simon are a good example. They're the only two Christians who ever had different political views. So I don't they may not resonate with people, but we see these dynamics in all kinds of places. We see it in the early church. You see it in this congregation in Rome? A big question that they had in this letter, and one of the things that Paul was responding to was, do our cultural and ethnic backgrounds mean that we relate to God differently? Do we relate to one another differently? Some of us come from ethnically and culturally and religiously Jewish background, some from Gentile backgrounds. What's that mean? And Paul, right, in the very first verse, first few verses letter says, The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who

believes to the Jew and to the Gentile. In chapter two, he says, God shows no partiality. In chapter 10, he says, the same Lord is Lord of all and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. In chapter 12, he starts talking about the fact that we are one body brought together in Jesus Christ. And the global and historic church has shown this in the best of its moments. The early church, even this congregation here in Rome provided a very powerful testimony to that Rome was a massive city. It seems that there were probably about five or six local house churches who came together to form this one congregation. So it's clear that there would have been all kinds of differences among that group, you can tell by some of the questions that they had. And the global and historic the early church especially saw that by coming together across a lot of the lines that people would typically use to separate themselves from one another men and women rich and poor, young and old, Jew and Gentile. They understood that they were able to come together in a new way because of the identity that they had in Christ. As the church expanded, you saw they were continually faced with this, what did it look like for people from different cultures? Who spoke different languages who lived under different reigns all gathered together in Christ? What does it look like? When tribal factions who previously only saw the other as other we're now worshipping and working together, and the things that made people who they are don't just disappear, they don't just get flattened out or smashed down into some kind of generic composite, they're still there, but they're also renewed, they're restored, they're transformed. And this is a truth that the church always has to remember that the thing that unites you to other Christians is not the fact that you have common cultural artifacts or experiences or they have a shared vocabulary, whether you watch the same movies or cheer for the same sports teams. The thing that unites you to other brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ is that every one of us is a sinner saved by grace, that Christ has called us by name out of death, and into life that you've been adopted as sons and daughters of the living God. That's the grounds for this. And it runs so much deeper than any of the other arbitrary markers that we like to elevate and promote. And that's true for us even as we're gathered here this morning. I know there's going to be people here with whom you have many overlapping points of identity and there's probably people here with whom you don't have hardly any overlapping points of identity. But what if we started started, at least by remembering that our unity in Christ is the foundation of this instead of searching for the cracks to drive the wedges into the places that are a little bit different. This is again, just this basic reminder that there are essentials of the Christian faith, there are a central truth, but even before and even underneath that, is just the unity that we have in Jesus Christ. And yet, as we know, there are points of difference. We know that we experienced that in all kinds of ways. There are points where we see things where we understand things where we hold some different convictions and the congregation in Rome was facing that exact situation. That's why Paul gets into that in this part of the letter. He says, I know you guys have different opinions on some things. And as we start to look at his argument last week, he says you need to give space for those secondary things you need to allow for these secondary matters. Like, last week, I gave you the theological vocabulary word *adiaphora* that's what Scripture calls and it's a word that just means in different things, secondary matters, things are the heart of the gospel is not at stake, the heart of the gospel that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. That's not at stake in these things. But there are areas where we view things differently. Paul uses a couple of examples here again, I introduced them to you last week, but just by refresher or to remind you of them, he talks about dietary laws, and observing certain days. And here's what he means by that. And back in chapter 14, verse three, verse two rather, is where he said one person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. And again, just another reminder here a couple of times when he uses the language of weak and strong, that's not meant to be an insult and a compliment. So don't don't hear them that way. It's a way he's trying to refer to the fact that some people's consciences are more sensitive these things than others. And he says that's okay. He doesn't condemn them or criticize him for it. He just acknowledges that. But he says some people were convinced that they can eat anything they want some people that there are certain things they can eat, probably he's referring to people in the community or the congregation who felt like they still needed to uphold the Old Testament dietary laws. Or maybe they

didn't want to eat any of the meat that they could buy in the market because it had probably been sacrificed at one of the pagan temples first, whatever the reason, some people thought I can't touch those things. Other people said, No, it's okay. There wasn't complete agreement on it. When he speaks about observing days, he says that in verse five, some esteem one day is better than another, another esteem all days alike, perhaps referring to some who felt like they had to observe all the Old Testament feasts and fasting days and ceremonial days, or maybe it's just a reference to the Sabbath itself. Is there a specific day that you have to set aside to worship and focus on the Lord? Or is it just important that you do one day each week, where that's the focus, Paul says people have different opinions on those things. Those are the two examples he gives here. There are other ones when he was writing to the congregation in Corinth, for example, in First Corinthians, he says, some of you are called to be married, some of you are called to be single, both are okay. Both are okay, don't get in fights about that there are all kinds of examples that we find in Scripture, or that we even see in our own life. But Paul's point here is, if the heart of the gospel is not at stake, then whatever you decide to do about these matters, he said, Do it because you feel that the Lord's calling you to do that. That's what he's getting at in verse six. When he said, The one who observes the day observes it in honor of the Lord, the one who eats eats in honor of the Lord's and he gives thanks to God while the one who abstains abstains in honor of the Lord and give thanks to guy. So whichever, wherever you land on those things, he's telling them, make sure you're doing it because you believe you are best honoring the Lord that way. And the distinction he's making is between what you call principles and practices. The principle in this one is him saying, thank the Lord, for the food that you receive. Be grateful for what God has provided you for an approach to have an appreciation for the goodness of God, that's the principle he says, Now the practice can look different. He says, the practice can be different. You can use pulses, I'm convinced you can go ahead and eat whatever you want. And that's theological advice, not nutritional advice. I don't want any cardiologists getting mad at me out there. theologically, he says you can eat whatever you want. It's okay. With the other example, he's talking about the Sabbath or a rest of day a day of rest for the Lord. He says, have a day where you rest and you're focused on the Lord. It can be a Sunday, incidentally, we do it on Sundays, because that's the day Jesus rose from the dead. But he says if it's not just have a day where you do those particular things, and don't fight about these matters. These are the two examples he brings up here. Let's give another one maybe it's not in this particular section. But we can think of this idea between principles and practices. Scripture throughout throughout is clear in the fact that we are called to help take care of the poor. That's the principle. Okay. What does that look like in practice? Is it direct personal support? Is it education or training? Do you do it through charitable companies or NGOs? Do you through government programs, all of the above, Scripture doesn't precisely say on those matters, the principle was clear. But then it's about making informed educated and wise decisions and how we practice those things. So again, just one other example, there are all kinds of examples. What time are we supposed to worship? What kind of style should we do on these things? How often should we celebrate communion together all kinds of things that fall into this category. The challenge, though, and I admit this can be this can be tough. The challenge sometimes is knowing where those boundaries lie. Knowing where those boundaries like how do you know, if something legitimately falls into this category of a secondary matter? or non essential matter? How do you know that? How do you figure out what those are? I said this last week, but once again, something is not a secondary matter or non essential, just because you don't like what Scripture teaches about it. That's not what makes it a secondary matter or non essential. It's a nuanced thing, it can be challenging to figure out but here's a simple diagnostic, here's how you start at least a basic way to get started. does Scripture explicitly explicitly offer either a command or a prohibition on a matter you shall do this, you shall not do that. If it does, then the matter settle, should be settled. The Scripture gives something that gives a very, very clear implication, very obvious inference and application. If so, then don't go looking around for a loophole. Here's maybe a simple example. The sixth commandment says You shall not murder, right, don't go looking for the loophole. So I didn't technically kill them, I just violently attacked them. The implication the application is pretty clear. So it can be tough to figure out exactly

all these things. But if Scripture gives an explicitly clear teaching on the matter, then that is the teaching on the matter if it gives a very obvious implication, or application, and those are the things we need to follow as well. But there are some areas where it allows for some space. And what Paul is saying is, in those moments, be charitable with one another. That's what he's talking about. Here. He's talking about the overarching way in which we should approach these things. Because if we don't, we can end up in the worst place of all, in terms of fracturing and destroying not only our relationships with one another, but perhaps even one another that themselves. Claire read a little bit ago from Genesis for I know, you know that story. People who don't even hardly know anything about the Bible know the story of Cain and Abel, we know that one, right? What makes that so tragic is not only is that the first murder that's recorded in Scripture, but what you have there is the devastating rupture of what should be one of the most closest bonds of all. And it shows us what it looks like when people are turned against one another. When Adam and Eve sinned against God, when they rejected his command, when they decided to follow their own ways when they wanted to put themselves on the throne, in place of God. That's, that's something of a model of all of the ways that we sinned against God as well. And when you look at Cain and Abel, then when you see what happened there, Cain sin first by hating his brother in his heart. And it led him to lash out in violence. And in a way that is the model and the paradigm for all the ways in which we sinned against one another. Remember what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, if you hate someone in your heart, it's just as if you carried through on the act of murder. So that's where it can end up. I mean, that's the tragically devastating place it ends up Paul says, here's what you should not do. Here's what you should do so that you don't reach that point. So that you don't reach that point. Here's what not to do. Here's what to do. Under the what not to do part back in verse 10, as we saw last week, he said, Why do you judge? Or why do you despise your brother, because you can't, you can't do that you can't despise someone if they have a different conviction than you on these kinds of things. And when he talks about judging them, again, that's a reminder that he said, every one of us is going to be accountable to God, every one of us is going to give an account of himself to God, it's not your place to be the ultimate judge over someone else. Now, again, as we looked at last week, it's a reminder, there are times where it's appropriate to say that things are right and wrong, that there are times that's appropriate, if somebody is a Christian, and they are living and speaking and acting in ways that are contrary to what Jesus is called, we should lovingly and graciously tried to call them back. So he's not talking about never even acknowledging that things are right and wrong. But he's saying you're not the person who holds ultimate judgment over someone else's soul. And don't despise your brother or sister. If you guys disagree about something, he goes on in verses 13 and 21. To to say in both of those places, don't put a stumbling block or a hindrance in someone's way. Verse 13, never put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother, verse 21. It's good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble, what he's talking about there as if you know that someone else has a different conviction. He says, don't want to eat meat or drink wine. If one of those people in the community said I can't touch those things. He says don't invite them over to your house and force them To participate in that stuff, so that don't do that you're causing them to stumble, don't put something that causes someone else to violate their conscience in that particular way. And then perhaps the strongest verse, the one that just it just it hits you, if you really listen to what it says is at the end of verse 15, when he says by what you eat, in other words, by kind of forcing your opinions out there, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. That is a powerful statement. Someone else is a fellow believer in Jesus Christ. He says, Do not through your actions, destroy the one for whom Christ died, do not seek to humiliate them, do not cause them grief, do not push them into a place where they are violating their conscience about certain matters, Paul says do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. On the other hand, there are things we should do. He also gives a positive sketch there one of the places in verse 19, when he says pursue it makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. I mean, simple things like assuming the best from someone else. It means honestly representing both your position and theirs. It means being gracious and patient means that we need to act from a position of faith when he said in verse 23, anything that does not proceed from faith, is

Sin means if you're engaging in something, just because you feel some, I don't know, some weird kind of pressure, something around he says, that's not it. If you are convicted about it, as if your actions are coming from a place of faith, that's what it should be. If it's not, then he said, Don't do that. What we should do, he says in verse two, chapter 15, verse two, our look to build up those around us, and in verse seven, to welcome one another as Christ is welcome you for the glory of God. And the goal of all of it, the goal of all of it is in verse six, five, make sure that's another one you focus on the goal of all of it is in verse six when he says, so that together, you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's the goal. So that together, you may glorify with one voice, or with one voice, who may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's what he sketches out there. Now, I realize that when you look at a model like this, or you hear something like this, it's easy to on one hand, think, yeah, that that sounds good. That's exactly what it is. Let's go do those things together. And you might also think, okay, it does sound nice, but that proposal collapses if you put any weight on it at all. So is this an impossible ideal? Is this is Paul, is this kind of just a naive way of looking at things? Is this an impossible ideal? Or is this something that we can do that we should do? In short, no, it's not an impossible ideal, but it's also not easy. It takes effort, demands patience, requires love. It depends upon grace. It embraces humility, it abstains from arrogance. It's possible when it's also necessary, because it's what Scripture sets forth for us here. But the difficulty, the huge difficulty is when we elevate secondary things to primary things, or we relegate primary things to secondary things, or when we so tightly tether the entirety of our identity, to some secondary matter, that we feel rejected at the deepest core of our being, just when someone has a different opinion in that area. So look, I navigating these things is not easy. I'm not gonna pretend like it's an easy thing to do. It's not an easy thing to do at all. It takes the endurance and the encouragement that only God can provide. Which is why he says that twice in this section, twice, he brings that up, listen again to verses four and five. For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, through endurance, and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together, you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's acknowledging there, it doesn't just depend on your efforts. It's not about just gritting your teeth and trying hard, says it's going to take the endurance and the encouragement that the Holy Spirit can provide to us through the scriptures. It's going to take the endurance and the encouragement that God Himself can provide to us so that we can pursue that goal, that together with one voice, we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So what's this actually look like in practice, though, just call them just give me a couple. Let me give you a couple quick steps, even just as we go a couple things that need to be a part of this. The first thing that happens is that every one of us needs to return again and again and again to the gospel. None of us can ever lose sight of the fact that we are sinners saved by grace. Then we need to repent of those things that we use to distance ourselves from one another, whether that's fear or hatred, or arrogance, or ignorance or pride. Third, we need to recognize and understand that genuine brothers and sisters in Christ may have different may have different convictions than you do on things where the heart of the gospel is not at stake. And fourth, we need to realize that pursuing peace and mutual love doing does not necessarily mean forcing everyone else to admit that you are unequivocally right. It might mean that you have to admit you're wrong, once in a while. But it also means being committed to worship, to pray to serve alongside others, especially those with whom you may disagree on some secondary things in order that with one voice we may glorify together the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Alright, I've made you wait long enough back to the famous family feud that you might be participating in without even realizing it. Back in 1992 Brothers, Rudolph Dassler and Adolf Dassler founded this sporting shoe company, it was in small Germantown of hers again, Iraq, it was in Germany. And again, they first started by just sewing together some athletic shoes in their mother's basement. And they got so good at this and it became so popular that the company expanded rapidly, and they actually provided all the athletic apparel for the 1936 Olympic Games in January of 1948, however, January of 1948, for reasons that no one not even their kids or grandkids know, for

reasons nobody knows, Rudolph and Adolf had such a falling out such a fight such a dispute that they completely broke all business and familial relationship with one another. In this small town, they move to opposite sides of the river is a river that goes through town, one on the north, one on the south side, and they started each competing shoe companies. And because they'd already had a loyal following, it wasn't hard for them to build up their business, but people quickly took sides and got to the point where if you were employed by or somebody in your family was employed by one of the factories, you did not associate with anybody, employee by relate to the other, they had different restaurants, they had different stores, they had different pubs, people did not marry across company lines. This went on for decades, people in the town exclusively identified with one of the Dassler brothers, or the other but not at all, to both and to this day, Rudolph and Adolf are buried in opposite ends of the town cemetery. Now the intensity of that feud has died down a little bit over the years, but each company did get so big that they became global brands. And still the headquarters for both of them are right across the river from one another in this tiny little German town. Now, you may not have heard of this feud this morning, but I suspect you know, the companies. Rudolph named his shoe company, Puma, and eight all formed by the name Adi named is Adi Das, Puma and Adidas. Some of you are probably wearing some of that gear this morning, or will at some point in this week, and maybe you didn't know that you were participating in this family feud that's gone back 75 years. That's a pretty extreme example, right? Two brothers who turned against one another. So I know you're thinking, that's a very extreme example, I get what you're saying. But the arguments I'm having with my cousin on Facebook matter, and the newsletter, the news articles that I'm sending to my idiot neighbor, those matter. Maybe they do, maybe they do. Maybe they don't. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking. It's not about your conviction on some of these secondary things. Paul says it's about righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding that you may together with one voice, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray. Great and gracious God, we thank you for the fact that in Christ we are new creations. Lord, we confess the too often we still live and act as those who have not been made new. So we pray that You would give us patience and grace, humility and love in our common life. enable us to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ in all things for it's in his name, we pray. Amen.