

Dealing with the Non-Essentials in the Body of Christ
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Paul our author is writing to us. Let me stop and teach you something for just a second. It is real simple. Any time a preacher opens up the Word of God, let's talk about what he is supposed to do so you know what right looks like everywhere you go. No matter whether you are visiting another church or whether you are here. This is what right looks like. Who is the author? Who is he writing to? When did he write it? What did he mean when he was writing to that audience? You have to figure that out every time. You need to know that every time. Once you figure out what he meant when he was writing to the original audience in the context that he wrote, then and only then can you grab that truth and move it forward into the 21st Century. So listen, when you are visiting other churches or you are a guest here and you listen to your preacher back home or you are on the Internet or you are flipping through the television channels, look very closely to make sure he is doing that. Is he saying what did it mean then? What does it mean now? What is the application today? This is the truth to the audience, to the Israelites, if you are the Old Testament and then how am I going to bring this to the church of the 21st Century. That is what we are going to do by the grace of God.

Romans 14:1-12

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who are thou that judgest one another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yeah, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be full persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. By why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Let me give you a warning first of all the twelve verses contain far too many truths for us to deal with in only one week so we will have to for lack of better words, we will have to re-attack this passage in the weeks to come.

Here is the background. Paul is the author. There is a group of believers there and they have an issue. We could take this congregation and divide it up. We could call this group, Group A and this one over here Group B. At Rome there were Jewish Christians

who were reluctant to give up certain ceremonial aspects of their religious heritage. They were uncertain about how faith in Christ affected the status of Old Testament regulations. Others embraced the new freedom in Christ unencumbered by an overly sensitive regard for the past. Group A has grown up in Judaism your entire life. You are raised under the law. You know about the Tabernacle, the Temple, the Sacrifices, the Passover and all those things. Group B are Gentiles who came to Christ as adults. You don't have all the Jewish baggage that this side has. You have never been to the Temple. You don't know about all this Torah stuff and keeping the law. You came to Christ and you are thrilled that Christ delivered you from your sin. This group, according to Paul, is struggling. They were uncertain about how faith in Christ affected the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, Sacrifices, and all kinds of stuff like that. You are not eating any unclean meat. You are adhering to the dietary laws of the Bible. This group over here, you are pork eaters, bacon eaters, you have it in the morning with your eggs, you put bacon bits on your salad, your arteries are choking even as you are sitting there, the amount of sausage that you consume, you are gaining weight. You got it?

What I want to do is use these two terms all morning. Essential and a non-essential. An essential element to a truck is a transmission. It is a set of wheels. It is a steering wheel. It is a cargo bed. You have to have these to have a truck. No cargo bed, no truck. No wheels, it's not much of a truck if you can't move it around. No transmission, the wheels are not turning. No engine, these are essentials of the Christian faith. Things like Jesus is the Son of God, that is essential to the Christian faith. Things like God the Father sent the Son. That is essential. We are saved by grace. That is essential.

Let's talk about non-essentials to the faith. Air conditioning is non-essential. Now some of you ladies are thinking, no Preacher, that is an essential, that is only because of your make up. If there was no makeup you would worry about it sweating off. Another non-essential is leather. You don't have to have leather seats. How many of you can remember the old pick-up trucks that had a vinyl bench to them. That is all it was. You just need a place to sit. It doesn't need to be comfortable. You just have to have something to sit on to grab a hold of the steering wheel. A c.d. player is non-essential. Nowadays the Cadillac has a 6-disk player, drop down screens—that is all non-essentials.

Here is the non-essential issue. Back then Paul was writing to the church at Rome, the question was, What role do the Jewish food laws have in the life of a Christian in the New Covenant? You're a Jew. You have been delivered from the Old Covenant, brought into the New Covenant, what do I do with all this all this old baggage? Not eating unclean foods and all that kind of stuff. Some of those in Group A were holding on to it. Group B said, We are in the New Covenant, all that stuff is past tense and we can eat what we want. Paul told us in Romans 6, that they are not under the law, you don't live under the Mosaic Law. You don't have to go to the Tabernacle. You don't have to go to the Temple. You don't have to offer sacrifices. You are not under the law. In fact in Matthew 15:11, Christ doesn't endorse dietary laws. Look at the verse with me. *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.* Eating doesn't defile you. Now it may make you gain weight, but that is different than defiling. Defiling is referring to sin. When He made

that statement, He was giving us freedom when it comes to eating. He was releasing us from the bondage of no pork. You just eat it. If you enjoy snake, eat snake. Give thanks and enjoy it.

So then the question comes to us, what was the point of the law then? Why did God give us the law if He was just going to release us from it? Galatians 3:24-25 *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* Another rendering is our tutor, or our guardian. Here let me explain this to you. The law comes along side you and grabs you. The law is a schoolmaster. The law is a tutor. The law is a guardian. And I look at that tutor, I look at that schoolmaster and I say, I don't measure up. How do I measure up? I fail. I fail again. And the schoolmaster says you are right. You are right again. Check. Now, let's go get a solution and he carries me to Jesus. That is why after the death, burial and resurrection He took them to the Old Testament and He unpacked the law showing them Hey, here I am on this page. Here I am over here. Look at this sacrifice right here. That is me. Look at this fulfillment of prophesy. That is me. The law, the Torah, is our schoolmaster. It is our tutor. It is our guardian and it takes us to Christ. We don't read the law to put ourselves under bondage. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The objective of reading the law is not so that you become so miserable. It is to remind yourself of how awesome it is to have your sins forgiven and what Christ did on the cross for you.

Group A attempts to keep the dietary laws of the old covenant. Group B is not concerned. So we are going to call this group vegetarians. Just for the moment of this sermon, you are released from this at noon. Group B over here you are the libertarians, not the political party, but you have lots of liberty in Christ and you love that liberty and you embrace it. This is what Paul says to the church and he could write to us today. He could write to us right now. He could say, I want to speak to Berean Baptist Church. I want this letter read at the next assembly. This is what he would say.

Concerning Group A who is weak in the faith, welcome them. So all of you over here, welcome Group A into the congregation. Embrace them. Sit next to them. Invite them out to lunch. Come to Sunday School class. Welcome them. But not to quarrel over opinions. Receive them. Welcome them. Embrace them. Fill your church with them. Paul knew that a divide was happening in Rome. No doubt he was writing for a specific issue. No doubt the church was beginning to split in Rome. And the group that kept the dietary laws was assembling and the group that didn't and these groups were not welcome one to another. So he says, Hey, listen Group B when they come through your doors, you welcome them into the assembly and you embrace them into the assembly. You get to know their names. And you are not doing this to bring them over to your side. It is not what you are doing. You are not engaging them for a relationship to win them over to become libertarian. If they don't want to eat meat, there is more for you. You don't worry about it.

Here is Paul's message to us in the year 2010. Listen, this is so important for Berean Baptist Church to get this, everyone. The non-essentials of the faith must not have any

bearing on who is welcome into this church and who isn't. The non-essentials. No one ever gets looked down upon because they don't measure up to what our perceived higher standard is. No one ever gets looked down upon for whatever our perceived liberty in Christ is, that they chose not to have that liberty for whatever reason and we look over there with our self-righteous pungent nose and we say I can't believe you are not embracing the liberty. Or from this side we say, Oh, I can't believe you are taking advantage of the liberty you have in Christ. That is so repulsive. And we go, I can't believe you are sticking to the Old Testament Torah like that. Don't you understand that Christ died to set you free? And both groups are despising each other from a different perspective, you got it?

Let me use this analogy. This is a Toyota Tacoma truck. It is a great truck. Someday I am going to have one. There is an essential to the truck—the wheels. That cargo bed is an essential to the truck. That rack is a non-essential. You don't need a rack to have a truck. You don't need those stickers to have a truck. You don't even need a bumper to have a truck. I remember my first Toyota I bought didn't even have a bumper. A bumper was an option back then. How many of you can remember when bumpers were options? Doors, two doors or four doors or a cab, those are all non-essentials. You just have to have a way into the truck. These accessories so that you can roll down the window and stay dry, these type of rims, you can have spray painted silver paint or you can have thousand dollar rims with those little tiny wheels and kind of looks a little ridiculous. Preacher, we are not concerned about trucks. Alright. We are not. These are the non-essentials that the church is battling with today. Music, Bible Translations, Pants on Ladies, October 31st, Christmas Trees, Alcohol in moderation, Dress on Sunday mornings, with a tie or more casual. Those are the non-essential issue that we are battling. Let's remember none of these impact salvation by grace. None of these impact the deity of Christ. None of these impact whether we are a Baptist church or not. These have nothing to do with the essential core elements of Christianity. According to Paul Berean Baptist Church must not have the goal of filling the church only with those who agree on the non-essentials. Let me break this down so you all understand because this is relevant. This is relevant for our church for years to come. We are not trying to create cookie cutter members who all listen to the same music, carry the same Bible, buy the same shirts, always wear that, don't wear that, do the same thing on October 31st, no one has a tree in their house. We are not trying to do that. In the exact same way that we want to make sure that we have blacks, whites, Hispanics, Koreans, and every nationality in the congregation, we also, likewise, want to make sure that we respect individual differences have on the non-essentials of the faith. So, you and I can have a difference of understanding on any of those topics and you are welcomed and embraced and received into this church as a member and as a fellow brother in Christ. That is the message. No one is made to feel like a second class citizen because they don't measure up to whatever we have determined in our own mind as Group A or Group B. No one is made to feel like a second class citizen because they are not wearing a tie or they are wearing a tie or because they have pants on or they don't have pants on or because they went to the concert last night or they didn't go to the concert last night. Or they sent Johnny out on the festivities or they didn't send him out.

Please look at verses 2 and 3. Group B believes they can eat off things. Another Group A only eats vegetables. Let not Group B despise Group A and let not Group A judge Group B. Make sure that is not happening. For who art thou that judges another man's servant? Who made you the pope of the church? Who made you the bishop of the Sunday School class? Who elevated you to a position? Notice what it says, He stands or falls yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. Then someone says, that means we are not going to do any judging in the body of Christ. No one ever corrects anyone. No. That is not the case at all.

Galatians 6:1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* So what we have to decide in the body of Christ every time is if this is essential or if it is non-essential. If it is an essential of the faith then I am going to go to you. We are going to quarrel about this. We are going to have words about this. You cannot leave your wife. You are called to be a husband. That is essential. You cannot say to me that I feel the Lord leading me to abandon my family. No, that is not a non-essential of the faith. I am going to come to you and say, No, you are in a fault. You are in a transgression. You are called to remain faithful to your wife until death do you part and I need to encourage you to remain faithful. Why? Listen please. Essentials of the faith must be confronted. You cannot depart into unorthodox doctrine. If anyone in this church starts teaching that Jesus is already coming again and we are living in the millennial kingdom you are going to be corrected because an essential of the faith is that Christ is coming again. He has not already come. But if someone says, Hey, I went to that concert last night and another one says, I can't believe you went to that concert last night. Wait a minute, are you entering into Group A judging Group B?

The issue becomes every time is this essential or non-essential? If I am talking about wheels, transmission then we are going to have a debate. We are not going to be allowed to come into this church and split us over something that is called an essential of the faith. Paul talked about that with wolves in sheep's clothing. But wait a minute, if you have a preference of music that is different than my preference of music then we are going to respect each others differences.

Here is the non-essentials. One person feels the liberty to read other Bible translation, another limits himself to the King James Version. Now that is a real thing that the church is battling in America and normally only in Baptist churches. Listen very closely. If you find yourself in Group A or Group B, you are not to go around as the translation police trying to fix everyone, looking for someone who is carrying something other than what you are carrying and then beginning to create within the congregation two groups— Group A and Group B and your job is to sway all of them into your camp. You are not to do that.

What are you to do? Look at what verse 1 says. You welcome them. The word literally means not for scrutinizing of thoughts, not with searching out and pronouncing judgment on their opinions. If they ask you a question. If they say to you, Hey, why do you read that translation? Answer their question. That is a realistic question. If they say, Why do

you limit yourself. Tell them, I have some concerns with some of the ways the modern translations are removing some stuff, so this is my preference. And then let it go at that. Your job is not to convert them to your side. You let them make up their own opinion. Tell them why you believe what you believe. Tell them why you make the decisions you make. Tell them your logic. Tell them the Scriptures that you use. But in the end, you don't judge them.

Group A doesn't invite them to their Bible study only to ambush them at the Bible study. Hey, Man, I sure would like for you to come to the men's Bible study and then the men's Bible study is set out to have an ambush on why you shouldn't be using that translation. That is not what we are supposed to be doing. You welcome him because he is a brother in Christ.

Instead, look at verse 4. *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.* May I remind you that the preacher is not the master of the congregation. We have far too many Baptist preachers who are assuming popish roles in the congregation and their job is to get everyone conformed to their image using their own personal preferences. That is wrong. I make up my own standards for my family and you make up yours for your family. And we are to respect our differences.

Scenerio #2 is that Group A keeps all the Jewish laws and festivals and Group B views all days the same. One group is living back in the Feast of the Tabernacle and Passover. The other says that is all gone. We ought to respect the differences.

Let's make it modern. Let's bring it to the 21st Century. Let's make it relevant today. There are 3 groups in the church. Group A are home school. You love home schooling and you have embraced it for your life. This group over here is Group B and you chose private school. Group C over here, you guys are choosing public education for your children. Those are 3 relevant groups in the church. Let's make sure that in Berean Baptist Church that there is never a time that one group is despising another group for the choice that they make for their family. Please listen to me. This is so important. If you are in the nursery, if you are in AWANA, if you are in the hallways, if you are at a Bible study, or the narthex or the coffee shop, and you are talking about and you say, I can't believe they send their kids to and fill in the blank. I can't believe they are sheltering their kids. I can't believe this. Who in the world would send their child to Jack Britt? Or the reverse is, Why would you want to shelter your child in a private school? If you are talking that way in the church you are ignoring what Paul tells us which is to welcome and receive each other to not quarrel.

Let me make it even more clear. If you are at dinner having a conversation about Group A, B or C because you are in one group and you don't like what the other group is doing you are sinning. You can talk in theory about one preference over another, but listen, when you are calling out families names and you are saying, I can't believe the Browns send their children there or I can't believe the Smiths are going there. When you are calling out names, you are doing exactly what Paul says to the church at Rome which is not to do. You let every family make up their own mind for their children.

Let me give you three quick points of applications. Number 1, all three groups should be welcomed into the church. We are not trying to create a church in which every single family sends their children to our little school. We are not trying to have a youth group in which if you don't go to Berean Baptist Academy you are not welcomed because we are the in group, we wear the cool t-shirt, you don't. You go over there. That is not the way the youth group is supposed to be. The youth group is supposed to be filled with public school, private school and home school who are all brothers and sisters in Christ and respect each others differences. And if in our youth group one group is despising another group or isolating from another group you are in fact disobeying what Paul tells us in Romans 14.

Number 2, there shouldn't be anyone passing judgment, gossiping or quarrelling about any other group. If you are talking about Group A that went to the concert and you can't believe that they went to listen to that group, you are ignoring this. Now if you want to talk about why they are not in church, that is a different story. You shouldn't go to a concert as your substitute for corporate worship. If it is out too late and you can't get up, then don't go to the concert. Saturday night concert at the Crown coliseum does not constitute corporate worship in the body of Christ. It is an additional activity.

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| #1—All groups should be welcomed into the church
#2—There shouldn't be anyone passing judgment about another group
#3—Each group needs to be fully convinced in his own mind |
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What about Number 3, Let's look at the sentence in the verse. *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.* So number 1, respect our differences. Number 2, don't quarrel. Number 3, you don't embrace something because I said it. You embrace it because you have studied it through and you have prayed about it. You are fully convinced in your own mind. Why do you believe such and such? Well, the preacher believes it. No. Not because the preacher believes it. Not because the chaplain believes it. Not because John MacArthur believes it. No. That is not the reason to believe something. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Each group needs to fully convinced in his own mind.

According to Romans 13:5 you have a conscience. Make sure you are listening to your conscience. Group A says, Hey we give thanks, and regard the day, the other one does not and also he does it as an act of worship. Group B eat and thank the Lord. Group A abstains. Both are doing it with a clear conscience before God.

Let's make it relevant since it happens to be October 31st. Group A abstains from trick or treating as an act of biblical separation from the world. Group B lets little Sally get dressed up and go around with her little plastic pumpkin and gets some free candy because they are cheap skates and don't want to buy Sally any candy themselves. Let every family be persuaded in their own minds. We are not to judge other families for what they did last night. We are not going around as the police going to get everyone

doing the same thing on that day. Every family needs to be fully persuaded in their own mind. Now fully persuaded does not mean that Johnny wore you out and you succumb to them. That is not fully persuaded. Can I go? Just to shut you up. No, that is not fully persuaded. Fully persuaded is you worked through it and you have made a decision for yourself.

Let me give you three quick keys. What do I do if I am not fully persuaded on an issue? Let me give you three quick keys. Number 1, consult with others. Let's go back to home school, private school or public school. As a home school, why do you home school? As a private school family why do you send them to private school? Ask another family, why do you send them to public school? Go around and ask. Is it a conviction or a preference? Is it a money issue? Why do you do what you do? Are there Bible verses that have lead you towards that opinion? Then what are you going to do next? Study the Bible. Look at the Bible verse that they quoted. Do you see the same application for your family? Jeremiah 10 is the ridiculous text that talks about bowing before a tree and so a bunch of people have applied that to no Christmas trees. You open up Jeremiah 10 and by my own statement when I use the word ridiculous you can see I don't believe that is what that means. But you open up the Word of God and you decide what does this mean for me and my family and then you pray about it.

Here is what I want to tell you at Berean Baptist Church. We are okay with diversity. Our goal is not to fill the church only with every single person that agrees with us. It is just the opposite. We want diversity in the body of Christ. We want some diversity. We are not looking for everyone to look like us, smell like us, walk like us. But wait a minute. This is so important. Let's just say for the sake of discussion that people that drive trucks go to heaven and people who drive cars go to hell. What are you saying, Preacher? We are going to welcome people in that we want to see them change. We want to see them change to Christ. That is the difference. You can have a difference in music, but you can't have a difference in Christ. What I am showing you with this analogy, let's just say for the sake of discussion, that people who drive trucks are followers of Christ and people who don't drive trucks are various other as sundries of nonbelievers. So if someone comes into our congregation driving a car, we are going to pray that the Lord would move them to become an owner of a truck. What do you mean? To become a Christian. We are not going to just let Patrick sit in the congregation week after week as an unbeliever without being concerned. Wait a minute. If he wants to drive a Nissan Titan or a Toyota Tacoma or a Chevy or a Ford or a Honda or an old Dodge, that is his business as long as he is in Christ. We are going to pray you and lead you and admonish you and encourage you to move from this side onto the side where there are followers of Christ. We don't want you staying an unbeliever. We need you to come to Christ. Our desire is for you to repent and put your faith in Christ.. Not to fix everything to get you lined up and look like us in every way. No. But we do want you to come to Christ.

We could say it like this. We want everyone to drive a truck, but we don't want a parking lot full of black, Toyota Tacoma, 4x4 pick-up trucks with racks on it. We are not looking for someone to drive by our church and see every single person driving the exact

same vehicle. We are not wanting someone to come into our congregation and notice that everyone dresses the exact same way, listens to the exact same music, does the same things and if you don't conform to that you sure are made to feel uncomfortable because we are all white in this church or we are all black in this church or we all carry this Bible in this church or we all listen to this music in this church or we all abstained on this day. No. We want some diversity in the body of Christ. Why? We want every person fully convinced in their own mind.