

In View of God's Mercy: Do Not Destroy the Work of God

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Lots of you know

WellSpring started in Spring Hill Elementary

And in those early days

We shoved everything we owned

Inside a little 7x14 trailer

98 ft²

It's kinda wild to think about

WellSpring now

Occupies over 40,000 ft² of space

But in those early days

It all fit in the trailer

That probably gave me extra compassion

When my friend Dave

Who started a church in Charlotte

About the same time we did

Got his trailers

He had 2... he was fancy

197 ft²

When he got his trailers stolen

He's so creative

He got connected with a billboard company in Charlotte

And the guy gave him a couple of months

On 6 billboards throughout Charlotte

For free

To talk to the thieves who stole their trailers

Their insurance replaced everything

And they got priceless amounts

Of national attention

But still - it's amazing to me

That people are willing to do that to a church

Like I understand that not everyone's in the same place spiritually

But it seems like messin' with a church

It's like you're setting yourself up for trouble

Like you do not want to be known

For destroying the work of God

Right?

When we built this building

You'll notice all of our new air conditioner units

Are on our roof

Our contractor recommended that

Strongly

Because it's a growing trend

With the increased value of copper

To tear apart those units

And scrap out the copper

Now, the thieves only get a little bit of money

But the church is out thousands of dollars

And it's amazing to me

That people are willing to do that to a church

Messin' with a church?!?

You don't want to be known

For destroying the work of God

I was talking to an out of state friend of mine a while back

He's an attorney

And he's also a committed Christian

And he's advising churches these days

To be careful about posting your policies online

Especially if it's anything culturally... difficult

Because with the power of the internet

There are groups

Who hire people to scour church websites

Looking for things that can be sued

Can you imagine that being your job?

What do *you* do?

I look through lots of random church websites

Hoping to help my rich boss find something to sue

You do not want to be known

For destroying the work of God

Today's message is titled

Do Not Destroy the Work of God

We're getting it out of the 14th chapter

Of the book of Romans

But we're not talking about church trailers

Or HVAC systems

Or websites

Because the Roman church didn't have any of those

But what they *did* have back then

We still have today

In fact, I think it maybe

More rampant today

Than it was then

So if you have a Bible

Turn to Romans 14

You can grab one of the Bible's in your seats

That's our gift to you

Or if you have a Bible app

You can use that

Today we have a long passage

Not long to read on your own

But long to teach through on a Sunday morning

So, read through it later

It's all Romans 14

But here's what we're going to do

To make that work better

Paul does a great job

As any good teacher does

Of making a point

And then illustrating that point

With specific things that relate

To those specific people

And then he makes another point

And then illustrates *that* point

With specific things that relate

To those specific people

So, I'm going to mostly cut out Paul's illustrations this morning

But keep his main points

I'll still read them

And you can read it this week

But I'm mostly just going to skip over them this morning

OK?

Look at verse 1 with me

Out of Romans 14

Read Romans 14:1

"Accept... without quarreling over disputable matters"

The New American Standard Bible says

Don't have "quarrels over opinions." (NASB)

Notice that phrase

"The one whose faith is weak"

What's Paul up to here?

It seems like he's puffing the church up a bit

Like if someone disagrees with you

Clearly, their faith is weak

I mean, I can't speak for everyone

But typically, people who quarrel with me are wrong

So – weak faith

That makes sense

Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters.

Then he illustrates that in verses 2 & 3

Read Romans 14:2-3

Then he makes another main point

Look at verse 4

There's a lot of judgment these days

Ironically enough

As our culture gets louder and louder about not judging

We've become more and more judgmental

In fact, some of the loudest voices in this discussion

Are some of the most judgmental people

This verse is not saying, btw

That we shouldn't call out sin

Or encourage each other to follow God more fully

It's the picture of cutting people off

Deciding whose in and whose out

It's cancelling people... spiritually

Look at the New Living Translation:

Who are you to condemn someone else's servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord's help, they will stand and receive His approval. – Romans 14:4 (NLT)

Our standing is not based on us

And our performance

It's based on Him

I love the last part of that verse in the New American Standard Bible

He will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. - Romans 14:4b (NASB)

Then he illustrates that for them in verse 5

But how does that impact us today?

Churches writing off whole denominations

Because of minor doctrinal differences

Who are we to condemn someone else's servant?

Or Christians

Writing off people

Who look different

Or act different

Or vote different

Even though they also claim Jesus

As their Lord & leader

Christian husbands or wives

Allowing resentment and contempt and even rage

To build in their lives

Because of lots of little things

That at the end of the day don't really matter

Who are we to condemn someone else's servant?

I want you to notice

The word judge in verse 10

Do you see that?

It's in there a couple times

Read Romans 14:10

The word "judge" there literally means to "separate"

To decide whose right and whose wrong

Or, rather, whose in and whose out

Don't do that

You can debate ideas

God commands us to do that

But it's not up to us

Who's in and whose out

I have never had my cell phone ring

When I'm leaving a funeral
With God asking me what to do with Fred
Is he in or out?
It's not up to me if Fred's in or out
There is a judge
It's not me

Also notice the word contempt in verse 10

Do you see that?

Why do you treat them with contempt?

That word for literally means

"To cast out as nothing"

Eksouthenéo - έξουθενέω

"To cast out as nothing"

Now – hold on a second

This is one of those times

That you may have a hard time translating

From this ancient document

But in the first century

In Rome

Christians

Actually divided with other Christians

Over things that are not spelled out clearly

In Scripture

Weird, right?

Look at verse 11

Read Romans 14:11-13

Why does Paul bring in this picture

From the end of time?

I mean it's real

We will all stand before God

Every knee will bow before Him

They may not today

But they will

But why does Paul mention that here?

I think it's because

He wants to have a better perspective

I think it's because

He wants us to consider that moment

When we're thinking about

Pushing someone away

Like – in that moment

Will your division be worth mentioning?

Picture this...

OK – so he gives a specific Roman illustration

In verse 14

Let's skip down to verse 19

Read Romans 14:19-20

I want you to notice the word “food” there

I don't have any special insights for that word or anything

My question

Is there any other word

That you could put in its place

That would make it untrue?

Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of politics

Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of debatable issues

Do not destroy the work of God for the sake money or the color of the carpet or some stupid thing that Andy said in a sermon once

Do not destroy the work of God to get your way with your wife or husband

Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of anything

Jesus prayed in John 17:

May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that You sent Me and that You love them as much as You love Me. – John 17:23 (NLT)

Jesus said our unity

Our perfect unity

Tells the world that God sent Him

That He's legitimately the Son of God

And that God loves them

So are there things worth dividing over in church

Certainly

But it's a really short list

And none of these things are on it

Except for maybe... maybe... that last picture

Read Romans 14:22a

Is there a more appropriate verse for America today?

Is there a more appropriate verse?

But what about when it's not that simple?

There are real disagreements

That have to be dealt with in relationships

What then?

Look at this verse from Matthew 18

I pulled it out of the Reader's version

A children's bible

It felt appropriate to keep it simple

Matthew 18:15 (NirV) - If your brother or sister sins against you, go to them.

Step one is go to them

They're family to you

Your brother or your sister

Go to them

Tell them what they did wrong. Keep it between the two of you.

This is where we usually get it wrong

We don't go to them

Until we've talked to three other people first

You know

To make sure it's right for me to be upset

So, I have three conversations with friends

And two veiled references on Facebook

And then I wonder why my relationships a mess

Go to them

Just the two of you

If they listen to you, you have won them back.

Notice it doesn't say if they agree with you

They don't have to agree to win them back

Go to them

Get them to listen to you

You listen to them

And often

Even if you still disagree

You've won them back

Because you went

You cared enough to go

Jesus said if you're at church

And remember that you've got a problem with somebody

Go to them

Leave church and go to them

You don't have to leave

I'm wrapping up

But decide now to go

Go to them

Instead of going to them

Jesus talks about what to do if they don't listen

You can read that in Matthew 18

But something hit me this week

That I had never noticed

If you look at Matthew 18

Where this verse is

There are 5 major sections of Jesus' teaching

This is section 4

"When Someone Sins Against You"

Right before it

In section 3

Is The Story of the Wandering Sheep

Where Jesus says

In God's economy

If one of us wanders away

They're valuable enough

To leave everything to find them

Jesus – who left everything in Heaven

To come rescue us

Says that they're worth leaving everything to find them

GOSPEL

**The first two sections {Show Who Is the Most Important Person in the Kingdom?
& Do Not Cause People to Sin}**

Talk about not thinking too highly of yourself

And not causing someone else

To struggle in their relationship with God

And then remember that every person you meet

Is worth pursuing

So, go to them

Just the two of you

The last section of Matthew 18 {Show The Servant Who Had No Mercy}

Says we need to remember

How much God has forgiven us

Before we decide

Not to reconcile with someone else

Do not destroy the work of God in someone else's life

I believe that the number one thing

That keeps people from God

Is not theology

It's not philosophy

It's not intellectual

It's relational

Go to them

May it be true of us

That we purposed

To never destroy the work of God

In someone else's life