**What Marks Our Faith As Weak Or Strong?**

Hope Chapel Honolulu

Romans 14:1-23

7 For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. 10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; 11 for it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

(Romans 14:7-11, ESV)

**Introduction**

In a culture that values individuality, success, autonomy, strength and self-reliance, any conversation about weak and strong faith is likely to invite confusion and conflict. But while these words were written nearly 2000 years ago, because of the cultural debt we owe the Greeks and Romans, there’s much that we can learn from this discussion about weak and strong faith with regard to love for God and neighbor, and our resulting witness to the grace and truth of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**1. God has become our Father and made us brothers and sisters. (Romans 14:1-6)**

a) The relative strength of someone’s faith should not influence our acceptance or rejection of them.

b) We are to love our neighbors as ourselves and leave judgment to God.

**2. Christ is Lord both of the dead and the living. (Romans 14:7-16)**

a) Living life in light of God’s promised resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

b) Love and relational responsibility are more important than rights and privileges.

**3. Righteousness, peace, joy and faith in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17-23)**

a) “The kingdom of God is…righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (v.17)

b) “For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.” (v.23)

**Conclusion**

Knowing, or at least believing, that we’re living in the last days should encourage us to love God, neighbor and enemy more rather than to love less. In a season of history when about a third of the world’s population claims to be Christian but in a nation where 2/3 of those professing Christians allow social and mass media to renew their minds rather than the Word and Spirit of God, it should be surprising when and where we meet Christians whose speech, actions and relationships betray confusion or even conformity with the way of this world which is perishing. Faith in Christ is about more than forgiveness and freedom, it is about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit!

**For our prayerful study, discussion and application:**

1) Read Romans 14:1-23 and try to explain in your own words the difference between strong and weak faith here.

2) Read Romans 14:17-23 and describe how the values and practices of the Kingdom of God affect your life.

3) What are the Word and Spirit of God teaching you this week about righteousness, peace, joy and faith?

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