

them not to judge each other harshly on these matters.

Notice that the theme continues throughout the chapter. Verse 10 says, “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” Verse 13 makes the point again, “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.” The thought continues into 15:1, “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”

The first subject Paul dealt with was vegetarianism (Romans 14:2-3). Apparently some, when they became part of the Church, had been vegetarians. Paul and most members understood that eating meat is not a sin, but neither is it a sin to not eat meat. So he reminds them not to judge each other over that issue.

Second, in verses 5-6 Paul refers to certain days that, by personal or traditional choice, were considered feast days or fast days. Perhaps some who came from a Pharisaical background were literally fasting once or twice each week (Luke 18:12). There was apparently some controversy over which was the better day to either fast or feast. Paul puts this matter in the category of personal choice, not something about which Christians should judge each other. He’s writing about feasting or fasting—there is no reference to the Sabbath here or any other place in this context.

The third subjective controversy was over the eating of meat that had been sacrificed to an idol (verse 14). Recognizing how sensitive this subject could be, Paul’s concern was that members not offend those who considered meat offered in a sacrifice to be unclean. Some also apparently believed they could not drink wine (verse 21). Those who understood that neither should be an issue were reminded to not flaunt their understanding in a way that could harm those who did

not understand. The importance of conscience is stated in verse 23, “But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.”

Throughout the chapter Paul is warning the brethren not to be critical or judgmental of each other over matters that are subjective. There is no mention of the seventh-day Sabbath, which was understood to be a clear command.

What about 1 Corinthians 16:1-2?

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”

It is often assumed that this statement describes the passing of the collection basket at a Sunday worship service. There is no mention of worship service in this passage.

Paul requests that the members do the work of gathering an offering on the first day of the week. The offering was gathered, not for the local church, but “for the saints” who were in need. Their circumstance is described in Acts 11:28-30: “Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”

In Romans 15:25-26 Paul mentions the gathering of this assistance by brethren in Macedonia and Achaia: “But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.”

After requesting this special offering of assistance for their needy brethren, a year later Paul urges

the church to follow through on its pledge to help those who were in need:

“Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation” (2 Corinthians 9:1-5).

Again Paul suggests that they prepare their donation in advance so it will be ready to be sent.

Understanding the context and setting of 1 Corinthians 16, it is clear that the church was not holding a weekly Sunday worship service; they did not take up a weekly collection, and there is no instruction for the church to do either of these.

No change in the Sabbath

Jesus Christ observed the seventh-day Sabbath. After His death, the apostles and the New Testament Church continued in its observance. There is no evidence in Scripture that the day of worship was ever changed to Sunday.

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Was the Sabbath Changed to Sunday?

The Bible shows Jesus and the New Testament Church worshipping on the seventh-day Sabbath. But what about passages Sunday-keepers use to support their practice?

There is no evidence in the New Testament of the Sabbath day being changed to Sunday. There is, however, consistent evidence of Jesus and the apostles continuing to observe the seventh-day Sabbath.

Established at creation (Genesis 2:1-3), the Sabbath is a day set aside for the benefit of all mankind. God rested on the seventh day and sanctified it (set it aside for a godly purpose) as a blessing for all people. The Sabbath was later confirmed as part of God’s law in His covenant with the nation of Israel (of which the Jews were but one tribe) in Exodus 20:8-11 and repeated in Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18 that He did not come to “destroy [dissolve, overthrow or demolish] the Law or the Prophets.” Jesus said that He came to fulfill His purpose as our Savior, not to change or eliminate any of the laws that regulate our relationship with God and with each other. He stated emphatically that not even the smallest letter of the law (jot or tittle) would pass away before His entire plan was fulfilled.

In Mark 2:27 Jesus referred back to the creation

of the Sabbath, declaring to the Pharisees, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” It’s clear that the Sabbath was made (created or established) for the benefit of all humanity, not just for the Jews. And since the Sabbath was made for man, as long as there are people, the Sabbath will continue as part of the creation and part of our connection to God.

Verse 28 says, “Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.” In other words, the Sabbath is the true “Lord’s Day.”

Luke 4:16 indicates that it was Jesus’ “custom” (habit or tradition) to observe the Sabbath. Although the Pharisees continually challenged Him about what He did on the Sabbath, Jesus consistently observed the seventh day—never indicating there was any need or plan to change its observance to Sunday.

The New Testament covers six decades of the Church following Jesus’ death. There is no mention of changing the day of worship to the first day of the week.

Man does not have the authority to “sanctify” or designate a day to be holy. Only God can do that. And according to Scripture, the only day God set aside as a day of rest and worship is the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3).

Paul’s example on the Sabbath

As the apostle Paul traveled throughout the gentile world preaching the gospel, he consistently met with Jews and gentiles and taught the gospel of Jesus Christ on the Sabbath day.

Acts 13 is an excellent example. “When they [Paul and his companions, verse 13] departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, ‘Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.’ Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, ‘Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen’” (verses 14-16). Paul then deliv-

ered a message about Jesus Christ (verses 17-41).

Notice verse 42: “So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.” If the New Testament Church was now observing Sunday instead of the seventh-day Sabbath, why didn’t Paul simply tell them there was no need to wait a whole week—they could meet again the next day (Sunday, the first day of the week)? Clearly Paul continued to uphold the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath even among the gentiles. In verse 44 it says, “On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.” There is no evidence here, or in subsequent references, that Paul made any effort to change the day of worship to Sunday.

We find similar references to Paul preaching in the synagogue and on the Sabbath in Acts 14:1; 17:2, 10; and 18:4. Some argue that Paul went to the synagogue because that was where people were gathered to worship God. True, but he continued to meet with them on the Sabbath. It is never recorded that Paul explained to them that it was no longer necessary to observe the Sabbath day and that they should have their future worship services on the first day of the week.

There are a few passages that are often used as proof that the day of worship was changed to Sunday.

What about Acts 20:7?

“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.”

This verse is commonly thought to say that the church gathered for a communion service on the first day of the week.

The meaning of “break bread”

The first assumption is that to “break bread” means to have a communion service. While it is true that the breaking of bread is part of the Passover ob-

servance (1 Corinthians 10:16 and 11:23-24), when the phrase “break bread” is used in Scripture, it is generally simply referring to eating a meal.

Notice in Acts 20:9-11 that during the meeting a young man’s life was miraculously restored after dying when he fell from the third-story window. In verse 11 it says, “Then Paul went upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he continued to converse with them until dawn; then he left” (New Revised Standard Version). He didn’t preside over another communion service just a few hours later. But he did have another meal, following the one mentioned in verse 7.

Another example of the meaning of the phrase “break bread” is in Acts 27:27-37. Paul was on a ship that encountered an incredible storm that continued for two weeks (verse 27). During that entire time the mariners had not eaten, as they were struggling to keep the ship afloat. Paul encouraged them to have a meal so they could regain their strength. Notice verses 33-36:

“And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, ‘Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing. Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.’ And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat. Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves.”

The “breaking of bread” refers to eating a meal, not a religious service. Paul gave thanks for it; they ate; they were nourished.

Not a Sunday worship service

Consider the timing of the meeting described in Acts 20. Are we to think that Paul started a worship service Sunday morning and continued speaking until midnight (verse 7)? Let’s consider a more logical scenario.

By Jewish reckoning a day begins at sunset. So the phrase “first day of the week” used in this verse can refer to the time beginning at sunset on what we would refer to as Saturday night. Since it was after dark, there were “many lamps” in the upper room (verse 8).

Paul met with them for the purpose of having a meal together. Since he knew he would be leaving the next morning, he took the opportunity to speak to the group and continued until midnight. After the young man fell from the third-story window (verses 9-10), they took a break and had another meal and Paul continued talking to them until daybreak Sunday morning and then he left on his journey (verse 11).

Clearly this was an event that occurred between Saturday night and Sunday morning, not at a Sunday communion service.

What about Romans 14?

Romans 14 is typically used to justify that the New Testament Church taught that the Sabbath isn’t different than any other day of the week: “One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind” (Romans 14:5). Analysis of the chapter shows that Paul is not reducing the Sabbath to the same status as the rest of the week.

Verse 1 states the premise of the chapter: “Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.”

Like any congregation, the church in Rome was a mix of those who were more experienced and stronger in faith and those who were less experienced and weaker in faith. Paul warns those who are more experienced to be patient and understanding in dealing with brethren who are less spiritually mature. In this chapter he addresses three issues over which there was the potential for contention, describing them as “doubtful.” In other words, what they did in these matters was regarded as a personal decision, and he warned