

No Shoes on Tuesdays

The Gospel According to Paul: Patience with People. Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Sunday, May 6, 2018

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"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:1-4).

Diversity of Believers

Real talk: Sometimes our brothers and sisters in the faith are weak. By weak I don't mean faulty and prone to commit sin, although we all are. This time, I mean weak in understanding. Sometimes God's people subject themselves to unnecessary guidelines we've picked up along the way and then wonder why others are not adhering to them. I would give you a list, but that would fly in the face of what our Scripture focus is teaching us today.

Let's just say, for the sake of argument, that some of our brothers and sisters believe it's sinful to wear shoes on Tuesday. I know that seems ridiculous; but then so do some of the things we really struggle with. Work with me here. What should the "stronger" believer do in that case?

Should the stronger believer chastise the weaker one for that faulty line of reasoning if that person just chooses to maintain a no shoes wearing practice for Tuesdays? What if that person doesn't really pester others with that faulty thinking?

What to Do With the "Weak"

The problem Paul was addressing was multifaceted. Among the many facets was the basic human relationship element that said strong believers need to take time and be patient with our brothers and sisters who hold onto certain paradigms that don't necessarily lead to sin or death (especially). Whether a person does or doesn't wear shoes on Tuesday means absolutely nothing, on the surface level. What if the so-called strong believer tried to enforce a mindset adjustment on the weak believer? What if the strong believer deliberately paraded his or herself in front of the weak believer on Tuesdays, while wearing shoes, just to make a point? What if the strong believer pressured the weak believer to at least try on the shoes that day, and the weak believer violated his or her conscience, albeit misguided? Are you getting the picture here?

Jesus did not unnecessarily (I said unnecessarily) jolt people into truth or new life paradigms. Some people need more tender guidance than others. Some need to overcome strange customs and superstitions. Our duty is to bear long with those who are just getting their spiritual feet under them and humanely teach, share, pray with, and guide them. In due season, they will unlearn the seemingly senseless customs they have been carrying for a long time.

Patience Please

The message of Christ is that we should encourage hope in all situations. We

must encourage faithfulness and holiness. We must reflect God's love and patience if we claim to be His ambassadors. We must bear one another's burdens and learn from the errors of those who did not get this valuable aspect of the gospel.

We now know what not to do. We must not bruise the consciences of those who have not reached our stage of development as yet. We must not forget that these dear ones are also the apple of God's eye and we must help them the same way God helps us everyday. God's truth is loving, kind, patient, and practical.

I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, are you?