

## Romans Part 48 – Chapter 14

Sunday, April 16, 2023

With input from <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/romans-14/>, Grace to You 9/25/95, KnowingJesus.com

Paul's discussion moves from loving one another in chapter 13 to not judging another believer in chapter 14. He includes the reason why this is wrong in his message.

### **Romans 14:1-9:**

*As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. 2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. 4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

*5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.*

*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.*

Notice in this passage that there is no sin mentioned (lying, cheating, stealing, sexual immorality, etc.) Otherwise we would be required to apply the corrective actions of Matthew 18. In verse 1 it states that this is a situation regarding "opinions."

### **A. Don't judge each other in doubtful things.**

#### **1. (1-2) Receiving the weaker brother.**

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

- a. Receive one who is weak in the faith: We accept those weak in the faith, but not for the sake of carrying on a debate with them regarding doubtful things.
  - i. Receive the one who is weak in the faith: These are words to take seriously. Paul warns us to not make spiritual maturity a requirement for fellowship. We should distinguish between someone who is weak and someone who is rebellious.
  - ii. There are many reasons why a Christian might be weak.
    - A. They may be a babe in Christ (babies are weak).
    - B. They may be sick or diseased (by legalism).
    - C. They may be malnourished (by lack of good teaching).
    - D. They may lack exercise (needing exhortation).

- b. Eats only vegetables: As an example of a doubtful thing, Paul looks at those who refuse to eat meat for a spiritual reason. Perhaps they refused it because they feared it was meat sacrificed to a pagan god (as in 1 Corinthians 8). Perhaps they refused the meat because it wasn't kosher, and they stuck to Jewish dietary regulations and traditions.
  - i. Because some Christians saw nothing wrong in this meat and others saw much wrong in it, this was a burning issue among believers in Paul's day. While the issue of not eating meat for spiritual reasons is no longer directly relevant to most Christians today, there are plenty of issues where some believers believe one way and others believe differently.
- c. He who is weak eats only vegetables: In Paul's mind, the weak brother is the stricter one. It wasn't that they were weaker in their Christian life because of what they ate or didn't eat, but they were weaker because of their legalistic attitudes and lack of love towards others.
  - i. Undoubtedly these weak ones did not see themselves as weaker. It's likely they thought they were the strong ones, and the meat-eaters were the weak ones. Legalism has a way of making us think that we are strong and those who don't keep the rules the way we do are weak.
  - ii. Now the one who believes he can eat everything is strong. Is he right? Is that right? Can he eat everything? Yes, he's right. **1 Timothy 4** says, *"For every creature of God is good and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer."* And that's in response to those who are forbidding people from eating certain foods. No, everything is to be received with thanksgiving.

## **2. (3-4) Judging our brother is inappropriate because we are not their masters.**

Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

- a. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat: It would be easy for a Christian who felt free to eat meat to despise others as hopeless legalists. It would also be easy for those who did not eat meat to judge those who did. But God has received those Christians who eat meat.
- b. Who are you to judge another's servant? Paul reminds us that it isn't our place to pass judgment on any fellow Christian. They stand or fall before their own Master, God – and God is able to make those "meat eaters" stand.
  - i. There is a lot of useless, harmful division among Christians over silly, bigoted things. Paul isn't telling these Christians to erase their differences; he tells them to rise above them as Christian brothers and sisters.

## **3. (5-6) Judging our brother is inappropriate because these are matters of conscience.**

One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

- a. One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike: By bringing in the aspect of observing certain days, Paul lets us know that he is talking more about principles than specific issues. What he says has application to more than just eating meat.

- b. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind: In such issues, Paul is willing to leave it up to the conscience of the individual. But whatever we do, we must be able to do it to the Lord, not using “conscience” as an excuse for obviously sinful behavior.
- c. The strong tend to despise the weak. The weak tend to condemn the strong. And in order to justify our concern, this would be sort of a typical scenario. We sort of feel that the other person is in danger of falling away. Boy, we that are strong say look at that poor, legalistic, narrow-minded person, poor person can't enjoy freedom in Christ, they're going to sour up, they're going to despair of the Christian life with all of its rigidity. They just may fall away because of the lack of joy, and a lack of freedom and a lack of ability to enter into all the things that God has provided. They're constrained by all this stuff. And so we may say, you know, they're just... They might just fall away. They're going to drift off and they're going to be useless to God and they'll never make it.
- d. On the other hand, the weak person looks at the strong and says “they're going right out the other end. They're going so far away from what God wants. They don't have any rules in their life. They're breaking all the ceremonies. They're going to fall. I can see it, big sin coming, they're going to hit hard when they fall. They're going to fall because of license and liberty.” And the strong are saying they're going to fall because of unbelief and weak faith and narrow-mindedness. And they're not going to really discover the riches in the power of God. And so the tendency is to want to justify our concern because we're afraid that it's going to lead to a spiritual disaster.

#### 4. (7-9) We live and die to the Lord.

For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

- a. For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself: We must understand that from beginning to end our life is connected to other lives. Paul reminds the Roman Christians that “No man is an island.”
- b. Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's: From beginning to end, our lives are to be dedicated to God. Therefore, whatever we do, we do it to the Lord – because Jesus is our Lord (that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living).

Every Christian is involved in a situation of unconditional sovereignty. There are any other terms for salvation. That may be the greatest statement in the Bible on the lordship of Christ and His relation to the believer. We are the Lord's. We are His possession. And you can track that one back to **1 Corinthians 6:20**: *"For we have been bought with a price."* We are His. I'm not my own, so I don't live to myself, and I don't die to myself, I'm His so I live to Him and I'll die to Him. And so what Paul is saying is, "Hey, we're all in the same relationship to the Lord, we're all concerned to serve the sovereign Lord we have embraced as Redeemer and so if we're weak and we conscribe ourselves to certain lives, it is because down in our hearts we believe it is living to Him that we're doing. And if we're free to enjoy, we enjoy because we believe we're living to Him as well." So, in a sense, we both have the same motive.

And since these matters are simply matters of preference and not sin, let's not make a rift in the church over them. I believe what Paul is saying here implies some tremendous things in this issue of the lordship of Christ. For all believers, self-interest, he says, is not the concern. You show me a true Christian and I'll show you somebody who in their deepest truest self longs to submit to the lordship of Christ. Even though we fail, when we fail we hate the failure, right? When Christians do what conscience tells them, with a desire to serve and honor Christ, we shouldn't condemn that.

**John MacArthur:** We will all stand before the judgment seat of God. It is in 2 Corinthians 5:10 called the judgment seat of Christ, and another of the evidences of the deity of Christ where He is spoken of interchangeably with God. When we are there, 1 Corinthians 3 says, our works will be measured whether they're gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay stubble. It says our secrets will be revealed, the secrets of our heart, 1 Corinthians 4, and then we'll receive praise from God. We're all going to stand before the judgment seat of God.

And to reinforce this he says "It is written," and he quotes Isaiah 45:23. Paul says, "As I live." Isaiah actually says, "By Myself I have sworn." But the two statements mean the same thing, referring to God's eternal nature. He's swearing by Himself. "As I live," or as Isaiah put it, "By Myself, or on Myself I have sworn, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me and every tongue shall confess to God."

Does that sound familiar? Sure, Philippians chapter 2, Paul uses it there, but it's taken from Isaiah. And what it means to say is that every one of us at one point in the future is going to bow the knee in the judgment of God. So, beloved, when we get prone to judge people, we are really playing God, aren't we? We're playing God. And that's a blasphemous thing.

So, then verse 12 says, "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." There's going to be an accounting time. We're all going to have to come before Him and our works are going to be examined and then we'll receive the praise and the reward that God has planned to give us.

Why do we open our arms and receive each other? Because God receives us, because the Lord can hold us up and does, because the Lord is the sovereign over each of us and because ultimately, He is the only one who has the right to judge. We're not talking about sin, we're talking about these preferential areas. And so we want to receive each other. Many conflicts in the church can arise over non-moral, non-essential things and they can be stopped if we'll open our lives and our hearts to receive each other. Drop the criticism. Let the Lord be the judge; better that we should love one another.

**KnowingJesus.com:** Our union with Christ is perhaps one of the most astonishing privileges of the Christian. We are one with Him, in union with Him, part of His Bride, and members of His very Body. We are being built up together with other believers to become a holy dwelling-place in which God lives by His Spirit.

Christ was made sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Throughout our lives, we should be His willing servants and devoted disciples. We should seek to do everything as unto the Lord, for it was to this end that Christ died and lived again that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Whatever we do in word and deed, action and attitude, mind and motive, may we do all unto the Lord. Whether we live or whether we die, let us do ALL to His praise and glory, for ever and ever.