

Romans 14

Intro: Here in this section we have Paul laying down a principle of brotherly love and consideration when it comes to interaction between mature and immature believers—strong vs. weak. There is something higher than right and wrong!

--It is possible that he had heard of specific issues within the Roman church from those believers that he knew and communicated with through the years—but I think it is more likely that this was simply an issue that Paul dealt with in churches everywhere.

Verses 1-4:

--(1) What makes a person **weak** in the faith? They are weak in their understanding and application of matters of faith. Was it is sin before God to kill and eat animals? No! That is made very clear in Scriptures such as: **Gen. 9:3; Mk. 7:15; Acts 10:12; Col. 2:16; 1 Tim. 4:3-5;** etc.

--How is someone weak in the faith? We are all weak as babes in Christ—newly saved; ignorance of Scripture—never taught; wrong influence such as cults/legalism—twisted Scripture; carrying over previous convictions from pagan religions—weak in faith.

--There will *always* and should *always* be brothers or sisters in the body of Christ that are **weak** in the faith and we who are now mature used to be one of them!

--Paul starts from the very beginning and makes it clear where he is going with this. He says that those that are weak are to be *Received* in the body of Christ—and that not to arguments over **doubtful things**.

--It is not the mature believers place to settle doubtful points for other believers. Paul then brings some of those issues up as real applications.

--(2) To be a vegetarian by conscience before God is a sign of weakness of faith—to do it for health reasons or pure preference of taste (which I will never understand) is different.

--(3-4) Here Paul is laying out the entire argument he is going to make.

-The temptation for the mature believer is to **despise** the believer weaker in faith.

-The temptation for the immature believer is to **judge** the believer stronger in faith.

--Both are wrong! Primarily because we are all God's servants and it is not our place to judge another person's servant. They are not accountable to us in the end. *What if I invited you over for dinner, had my kids helping serving dinner, and you just complained about their service the whole time?*

Verses 5-9:

--(5-6) Here Paul brings in another topic that he knew was always going to be an issue in the churches of his day. What day were they to worship on? What feasts or festivals were they to recognize and celebrate? Especially matters of the Sabbath observances.

--Now, Paul could have never said: **Let each be fully convinced in his own mind**. . . if the Sabbath command was still in place.

--So where are these matters to be settled? Before the Holy Roman Church? No! Before **the Lord** and the believers **own mind!** Paul is exhorting these mature and immature believers to love one another and **receive** one another as individual servants of the Lord. They were to tolerate each other in points doubtful or indifferent.

--God can see the small burning coal of Holy Spirit life in the hearts of mature believers as they enjoy their BLT's and the immature believers as they enjoy their LT's. And if He, as the Lord, has patience with our growth we must have patience with one another.

--(7-9) My entire life and my death are God's in the end.

John 21:19: This he spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

--Not only that, but Jesus Christ is the only Lord of all. He battled through life and death and won His crown and wears it presently. He alone is Lord of all believers—both living and dead. We are to recognize His place in the life of other Christians.

Verses 10-13:

--(10-11) These are good questions for us. It isn't that we cannot correct or teach. But we are not to coerce or force others into our particular molds. We should ask ourselves:

1) Why am I judging my brother? Is this something His Lord judges the same way I am?

2) Why do I have contempt for my brother? Does His Lord have the same feelings I do?

--Here Paul introduces the **Bema Seat** or *judgment seat* of Christ. The word is used some 10 or 11 times in Scripture. We see Jesus before Pilates judgment seat, Herod on his judgment seat, and poor Paul drug before numerous judgment seats but here and **2 Cor. 5:10** we have the last two uses of the word in the NT. Both relate to Jesus' judgment seat.

John 5:22: For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.

1 Peter 4:17: For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

--The Bible teaches that we all have a personal, face to face, appointment of accountability before Jesus Christ. This is not a popular doctrine—especially nowadays.

--This judgment is not for salvation but for works—works after salvation. Jesus will judge our faithfulness in respect to what He has placed into our trust as His stewards. Eternal reward or loss will be the result.

--The doctrine of the judgment seat of Christ is a balancing doctrine to that of the grace of God. The Bible makes it very clear that even after salvation, everything I do in my body—good or bad—matters. Eternal life is decided here as well as the experience of that eternal life.

--Now, the context here is not reward or loss as Paul is using this doctrine. The context here is that of personal accountability. Paul is making it clear that no one is "getting away" with anything.

Proverbs 15:3: The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.

--Paul is also challenging us to think about how our present judgment or contempt of our brothers or sisters in Christ will look when I stand before The Judge then.

--He then quotes from Isaiah reminding these believers that it is **to Me** and **to God** that all tongues will confess and every knee bow.

--**(12-13)** So our focus should be twofold.

--First, I am to focusing on giving an account of myself and not worried about whether someone else needs to give an account or not. I should live every day of my life in light of that day when I stand before Him. That day will be the true and final measure of my life.

--Second, the thing that I should be judging is whether I am living in light of the wellbeing of my brethren. Am I a help to them or am I causing them to stumble? *With my insistence on food, worship days, speculative points of theology, shibboleths, etc.*

Verses 14-18:

--Paul knew—knew very well—that he was no longer under the dietary law. He was convinced of that by Jesus Christ Himself! You cannot get more sure than that.

--Even so, he realizes that anyone who is not so convinced, and truly desires to please God, cannot eat without sin. To insist on his liberties would in fact end up wounding others. It would not be living a life of love as Christ did.

--Could Christ love enough to come down into our world and live a life and die a death of full self-denial and we cannot even put down some bacon to make life a bit easier for a growing Christian?! *Inviting over an ex-muslim and refusing to back off on the bacon!*

--The insistence here is the issue. We do real and positive harm to other believers when we try to force them into a work the Spirit is not doing in them. We try to force people into: freedoms; grace; dependence; works of faith; etc.

--In doing so Paul says that we can **destroy with food the one for whom Christ died**. . . and have our good **evil spoken of**. To destroy is not speaking about salvation but the reality of faith and a good conscience in someone's life. The word for **destroy** has the idea of rendering useless or ruining something such as the wineskins in **Mt. 9:17**.

--Paul then makes it clear that the kingdom of God is not in drink or days as non-essentials but in the life of the Holy Spirit. Our liberties are not as important as our very life in Christ. I could use almost any freedom to harm another in the Lord.

--To live life in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit is the type of life that is well-pleasing to Christ. *Loud theological talkers are often low spiritual walkers.*

Verse 19-21:

--It is not always easy to measure these things out in our practical lives but we should at least know where to aim! We should strongly pursue whatever can make for peace and edification with one another—in contrast to the things that stir up judgment and contempt.

--Paul again uses food but what of our society? What causes you to judge or hold others in contempt? There is always something new popping up.

--Paul says even if things are pure, it is still good to refuse to do anything that may cause a brother or sister in Christ to stumble.

--You could say by example: It is well pleasing to Christ to surrender the public act of drinking alcohol (which is literally one of the most destructive forces in societies all around the world) to love and protect others, but we cannot despise brothers and sisters in Christ who are not in the place to take the same stand.

--The mature and immature both always have a role to play Vs. Simply a position to take.

Verses 22-23:

--There is always pressure to conform to cultural Christian norms Vs. Exercising your conscience before God alone. That is our proper and most happy place of confidence before God.

*Tozer (Of God and Men): *"The great fault in all of this is that it shifts the life motivation from within to without, from God to our fellowman. Any act done because we are afraid not to do it is of the same moral quality as the act that is not done because we are afraid to do it. Fear, not love and faith, dictates the conduct, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin."**

--I should come before God, Him and His Word alone, in all of these issues and move forward in relation to what I receive there and not what any other person is pressuring me to do.

--Why? Because we are to live by faith. Not just have faith.

--**Whatever is not from faith is sin.** It is never right for me to ignore my conscience before God. To continue in anything doubtful is itself sin. I cannot live my life willing to displease God!

--What if I did that with my wife?! *I didn't think you were going to like this—so I bought it for you! I thought I recalled you saying that you didn't like sushi. . . so I booked our valentines night out at a sushi place. . .*

--No Christian actually seeking to please God can live that way! **Whatever is not from faith is sin.** To be honest, we often want someone just to tell us what to do so we can escape the reality of having to exercise our conscience before God alone and then live accordingly.