**Romans Chapter 14**

# Now, accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

* 1. Accept the one who is weak in faith.
     1. Don't pass judgment on those not grounded in debatable issues, "adiaphora" - those elements of the Christian faith that are neither commanded nor forbidden.
     2. Weak is "ἀσθενέω asthenéō; contracted asthenṓ, fut. asthenḗsō, from asthenḗs (772), without strength, powerless, sick. To lack strength, be infirm, weak, feeble." (Zodhiates, Spiros. 2000. In The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament, electronic ed. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.)
        1. Thirty-four occurrences in the New Testament are translated as physically in two categories: "sick" and spiritually "weak."
     3. This deals with those who are unsure of those areas of Christian theology that are less critical than the essentials.
  2. Opinions
     1. Worship on Saturday or Sunday
     2. The continuation or ceasing of the charismatic gifts
     3. Eating meat or not eating meat
     4. Limited atonement or universal atonement
     5. Baptism by sprinkling, pouring, and immersion.
  3. Primary Essential Doctrines
     1. Jesus is God in the flesh (John 8:58 with Exodus 3:14). See also John 1:1, 14; 10:30-33; 20:28; Col. 2:9; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 1:8
     2. Salvation by Grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone (Eph. 2:8-9; Gal 2:16, 21; 5:4; Rom. 4:1-11)
     3. The resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:14, 17; John 2:19-21)
     4. the gospel as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Gal. 1:8-9)
     5. You must be born again (John 3:3)
     6. Monotheism (Exodus 20:3; Isaiah 43:10; 44:6, 8)
     7. Jesus is the only way to God the Father (John 14:6)
  4. Secondary Essential Doctrines
     1. The Trinity - God exists as three simultaneous, co-eternal persons.
     2. Virgin birth - Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary

# One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

* 1. May eat all things
     1. We have Christian liberty that must be grounded biblically and theologically.
     2. Some religious people are often concerned about offending God by eating certain things. This is not the case in the Christian economy.
     3. Old Testament
        1. Lev. 11:47, "to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the edible creature and the creature which is not to be eaten."
     4. New Testament
        1. 1 Cor. 8:9–13, "But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? 11 For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. 12 And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble."
        2. 1 Cor. 10:25–30, "Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake; 26 FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS. 27 If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake. 28 But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake; 29 I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? 30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?"
  2. He who is weak eats vegetables only
     1. The one not grounded in Christian liberty will seek to avoid certain foods to avoid offending God.

# The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

* 1. We are not to judge others about what they eat.
  2. The principle of eating and not eating deals with our freedom in Christ. But we should not judge people who are not as theologically mature as we might be.
  3. But this can also work the other way, where those who are not theologically strong in the knowledge of the liberty of Christ will judge those who are more mature and understand their freedom in Christ.
  4. If God has accepted both groups, the weak and the strong in faith, we are not to judge either of them.
     1. Col. 2:16, "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day."
  5. Legalism
     1. Legalism is the practice of prescribing obedience to various rules and laws to be in a proper relationship with God.
     2. But our relationship with God is based on the work of Christ, not ourselves.
     3. Nevertheless, we are not to walk in sin as a means to avoid legalism.
        1. 1 John 2:4, "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

# Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

* 1. Paul's sharp rebuke flows from the previous verse. Apparently, there were judgmental people in the church – shocking!
  2. But their judgmental attitudes were due to their ignorance of proper theology and, ultimately, lack of love.

# One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

* 1. Paul is pointing out that we have liberty. Remember that Saturday, Sabbath worship was a mandatory practice in the Old Testament (Exodus 20:8). But now Paul says that one person regards every day alike and that we should be convinced in our own minds about this.
     1. This means we ought to study!
  2. Saturday or Sunday worship?
     1. Many groups claim proper worship is on Saturday. Some of them are the Seventh-day Adventists, Church of God Seventh Day, United Church of God, etc.
  3. If we are supposed to worship on Saturday, then why does Paul the apostle say that each person must be fully convinced in his own mind?
     1. Col. 2:16, "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day."
  4. Furthermore, if we are to be convinced in our minds, then we are not supposed to blindly follow a church or denomination. It is okay for us to study God's word and form opinions.
     1. Acts 17:11, "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

# He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

* 1. People often have convictions that they believe are consistent with God's will. This is good – as long as they *are* consistent. We should respect their convictions and not ask them to break them. Otherwise, that would be a sin.
     1. James 4:17, "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin."
  2. However, if people tell you that *you* are obligated not to eat meat, or worship on Saturday, or whatever, then reference verse five above, where each person is to be convinced in his own mind. This supports our freedom in Christ.
  3. Do not let them judge you for your freedom in Christ, but also don't judge them for their lack of freedom.

# For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself;

# for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

* 1. We live for the Lord
     1. Christians often have their beliefs and actions based upon their desire to honor God. They are devoted to Him.
     2. We must recognize this and honor those with those convictions – as long as it is not legalism.
  2. We are the Lord's
     1. Acts 20:28, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."
     2. Titus 2:14, "who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

# For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

* 1. Christ died and lived again.
     1. This is a very brief summation of the gospel dealing with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-4).
  2. Lord both of the dead and of the living
     1. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ is the act by which the redemption of the dead and the living has occurred.
     2. The dead refers to those who have passed on in the living and, of course, to those still alive.
     3. Paul puts both Jew and Gentile in the same position - redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ.

# But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

* 1. Paul condemns the judgmental attitude that so many have. People often look down upon others who do not understand Scripture the same as them (in the matter of adiaphora) and judge them for it. This is wrong.
  2. Paul is reminding us that we will all stand before God's throne and He will judge us. He is the ultimate judge, not us.
  3. But we can make spiritual judgments. Those who deny the clear teaching of Scripture in the essentials ought to be corrected.
     1. 1 Cor. 2:15, "But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one."
     2. Gal. 6:1, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted."
  4. The judgment seat of God
     1. Matt. 16:27, "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS."
     2. 2 Cor. 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."
     3. Rev. 20:11–13, "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds."
  5. This judgment is not for our damnation or salvation because that has already been guaranteed to us by Christ in whom we have faith.
  6. This judgment deals with our rewards and lots of rewards in eternity.

# For it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.'

* 1. Isaiah 45:23, "I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance."

# So then, each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

* 1. Paul is reiterating the previous verse and focusing on who is the True Judge. We ought to keep that in mind at all times.
  2. After all, we are all going to answer to God.

# Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this - not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

* 1. The culmination of thought here is not to judge others unrighteously so as not to stumble them. Our liberty should not be used to harm another's spiritual walk with God.
  2. We must avoid legalism and resist the legalism of others.
  3. We must also adopt humility as we realize that we are not perfect, have sinned, and are redeemed by the same God who has redeemed our weaker brethren in the faith.

# I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

* 1. Paul states that everything he knows about his freedom is because of Jesus. Therefore, we can eat those things listed in the OT as unclean.
     1. Lev. 11 and Deut. 14 list many clean and unclean foods.
        1. Unclean: the camel, the rock badger, the hare, anything in the waters that does not have fins and scales, shellfish, eagles, vultures, falcons, raven, ostrich, seagull, cormorant, owl, stork, heron, bat, winged insects, animals that walk on their paws, rats, lizards, snakes, ants, etc.
        2. Clean: locusts, crickets, grasshoppers, sheep, cattle, goats, deer, antelope, figs, olives, grapes, giraffes, etc.
  2. But he brings up the issue of conscience. If someone thinks something eating these things is wrong, then he ought not to do it.
  3. This is why we must understand the theology of our freedom so that we are not condemned in our ignorance by our own consciences.
     1. Rom. 7:4, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God."
     2. Gal. 5:1, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

# For if, because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

* 1. As stated before, we should not use our freedom in Christ in such a way that it injures others spiritually.
  2. We Christians are free in Christ and are not required to follow the Old Testament's strict ceremonial and dietary laws.
  3. But we are not to injure anyone in our freedom.
  4. Our freedom in Christ must be balanced with our love towards others so we do not use our liberty negligently or even arrogantly.
     1. Gal. 5:13, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

# Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;

* 1. One of Paul's cautions is to ensure that our freedom in Christ is not said to be a form of evil by people.
  2. We must realize that what we do affects others – believers and unbelievers. Though we are free in Christ, we must take care display our freedom properly, not recklessly, and thereby have others speak evil of Christ. Our responsibility is huge.

# for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

* 1. The kingdom of God
     1. The phrase "the kingdom of God" occurs 66 times in the NASB.
     2. It refers to the sovereignty, rule, reign, presence, and forgiveness of God.
     3. The kingdom of God is also called the Father's kingdom (Matt. 6:9-10; 26:29) and the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 8:11).
     4. There is also the "gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 24:14; Luke 16:16).
     5. Entrance into the kingdom of God is by being born again (John 3:3-5).
  2. Is not eating and drinking.
     1. Paul is contrasting the spiritual aspect of the kingdom with the physical part of our lives.
     2. The spiritual is ultimately more important.
  3. Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
     1. The Holy Spirit ministers to us and, through us to others. He brings to us His fruit, the witness of Christ, and the love of God.
     2. Gal. 5:22–25, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

# For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

* 1. By putting others first and considering their consciences/convictions, we are serving Christ. This is acceptable to God and approved by others.
     1. Phil. 2:3–4, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."
  2. So, we are obligated to please God and people. But, of course, pleasing others is only to be done within the confines and prescription of the revelation of Scripture.
     1. Deut. 6:5, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (See Matt. 22:37)
     2. Lev. 19:18, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord." (See Matt. 22:39)

# So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

* 1. A common theme in the New Testament is how God loves us and how we are to love others.
     1. 1 Thess. 3:12, "and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you."
  2. If we love others, we will be at peace with them.
  3. If we love others, we will build them up.
  4. So we need to ask ourselves if we are doing this. Are we at peace with others, and are we helping them, building them up, and considering them lovingly?

# Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.

# It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.

* 1. In the Jewish context, the dietary laws were extremely important.
  2. Paul compares our freedom in Christ with those who are still under the Law.
  3. Paul seeks to convince people that they are free, but he also does not want that freedom to result in sin.
  4. So, if someone believes that doing something is wrong, we should not encourage that person to violate his conscience. If we do, then we have sinned.

# The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

* 1. This verse is similar to verse 5 above, which says, "One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind."
  2. We are to have our convictions before God. But this means we must study His word and letter convictions and let the Scriptures guide us. This, again, is why theology is so important.
  3. We do not want to condemn ourselves in our freedom by injuring others or even using our freedom to sin.

# But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

* 1. Those who doubt our freedom in Christ and operate under Law (dietary laws) are not working by faith. They are still under the Law. And in this, they are condemned because the Law cannot justify anyone.
     1. Rom. 3:20, "because by the works of the Law, no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."
     2. False religions keep their people under the Law.
  2. Therefore, because faith is the foundation upon which our justification occurs, we must constantly live in that faith, not legalism.
  3. We must acknowledge that our freedom in Christ is by faith in what He did on the cross and that we must never seek justification before God by what we do. This is why Paul says whatever is not from faith is a sin.
  4. But of course, this does not mean that if we believe something to be good when it actually is not, that it is okay. After all, the Scriptures are the final authority in the revelation from God on all behavior and thought, not our opinions.
  5. This is why we need to know God's word, so we know the limits of our freedom as they relate to ourselves and others. Yet we also enjoy that very freedom we have in Christ. For we have died with Christ and are freed from the Law.
     1. Rom. 7:4, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God."