

Romans 14 - The Believer's Relationship to Other Believers

SUMMARY

This chapter deals with a believer's relationships with other (weak) believers on an **individual basis**, specifically how to interact with believers who see things differently than you do. The **context** is still to get the Gentile believers to live and behave properly so as to provoke the Jews to jealousy that they might understand that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and they need to trust in Him by faith and get saved.

v. 1 - How to deal with a person who is "**weak in the faith**".

- First we must receive and have fellowship with him and welcome him just as we would a mature believer who is not weak in the faith.
- One clear characteristic of people who are weak in the faith (babies) is that they spend most of their time talking about themselves and their own experiences in the faith. (They use the words "I/my/me" a lot in their conversations)
- **Stick to basic doctrine** and avoid getting into arguments or issues that cannot be easily understood and proven from the scriptures. - 2 Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:9
- Teach weak believers how to "rightly divide the word of truth." - 2 Tim. 2:15
- This is **not** to say that we should receive into our assembly those who want to infiltrate our church by sowing discord or by spreading false doctrine, false Bibles, or false plans of salvation. - Rom. 16:17-18
- Spending time in the word of God will help a believer grow strong in the faith and realize the need for Christ to be magnified. - John 3:30; 2 Pet. 3:18
- **OLD SAYING:** "**Little** men talk about people (mainly themselves), **big** men talk about things of this world (cars, sports, etc.), **great** men talk about ideas (how to fix this world), and **spiritual** men talk about God and what God said in His Book."

vv. 2-3 - What we eat is a **personal conviction** and does not affect our fellowship with the Lord.

- In v. 2, the Bible says the believer that only "eateth herbs" is weak in the faith.
- In v. 3, God has received all believers based on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not based on the foods we eat. - Gal. 3:26; Matt. 15:16-20
- In v. 3, whether you are a meat eater or a plant eater, we are **not** to despise, judge, ridicule, or insist another believer must follow our personal convictions.
- Herbs are seed/plant based foods grown in the field. - Matt. 13:31-32; Deut. 11:10 (in contrast with a "stalled ox" - Prov. 15:17)
- Four rules for food:
 1. If you have faith to eat something, eat it; if you don't have faith for it, don't eat it.
 2. If you can thank God for it with a clear conscience, then eat it; if you can't, then don't eat it.
 3. Don't force your convictions for what you eat on others. - Gal. 5:13
 4. Don't cause others to stumble by prideful or arrogant exercising of your own liberties, or by despising those who are weaker in the faith. - Rom. 14:21; 1 Cor. 8:4-13, 6:12, 10:23; 1 Thess. 4:8

Romans 14 - The Believer's Relationship to Other Believers

v. 4 - Believers should not think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, and should not appoint themselves as the judge. - Rom. 12:3, 14:10-13; James 4:11-12

- Believers, **individually**, are accountable to God for the specific calling God has given **them**. - Rom. 14:12
- God guides, provides, and enables believers for what He wants us to accomplish.
- God promises the believer that he can stand against any enemy. - Eph. 6:13

v. 5 - Another **personal conviction** → esteeming one holy day above another.

- Notice first that every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind, which means that personal convictions can be different for each of us. - Col. 2:16
- While there is no specific commandment that believers must worship on the **first day of the week**, here are **three reasons** why most believers today set aside **the first day of the week** as a holy day of worship.
 1. It is the day of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. - Mark 16:9
 2. It is the day the early church met to worship, fellowship, and to hear the preaching of the word of God. - Acts 20:7
 3. It is the day established for collection of offerings. - 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-8
- Lost people and backslidden believers are watching believers and **expect us** to faithfully attend church and have a testimony that is above reproach. - Prov. 10:9
- Believers should be sensitive to the will of God and keep our consciences clear, i.e. believers should always do what we know to be right. - Acts 24:16; Rom. 12:9

v. 6 - We are to honor God in the days that we observe as holy and in what we eat.

- Believers sometimes must worship on different days (in other countries, perhaps), but it is honorable to God to worship Him **EVERYDAY!**
- Believers are not to look down on or despise others when they don't regard the same day that we do.
- This is **NOT** to say that we condone or have fellowship with those who promote false doctrine. - Rom. 16:17
- God receives and accepts thanks from **BOTH** the plant eater, even though he is weaker in the faith (vv. 1-2), as well as from the one who eats beef steak, shrimp, or catfish.

v. 7 - Believers lives are **not** our own, we belong to God. - 1 Cor. 6:19-20

- "No man is an island unto himself." - John Dunn
- Your life **WILL INFLUENCE** the lives of others, **for better or for worse**.
- Ask yourself these five questions to determine if you are doing the right thing:
 1. Does it please God?
 2. Would I like the Lord to find me doing it when He returns?
 3. Can I in good conscience ask God's blessing on it?
 4. Would it cause a weaker Christian to stumble?
 5. Would it cause a lost person to reject the Gospel?

Romans 14 - The Believer's Relationship to Other Believers

- Our lives will **also** influence future generations **after we die**. The phrase "**visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation**" is found three times in the KJB. - Ex. 20:5; Num. 14:18; Deut. 5:9 **contrast these verses with** Deut. 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6; 2 Chron. 25:4; Ezek. 18:20
 - What kind of legacy will we leave our families?
- v. 8a - Our lives are not our own regarding **God**. - 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Phil. 1:20
- Believers are commanded to walk so as to **please** God. - 1 Thess. 2:4; 4:1-12; Col. 3:20; John 14:15
 - Walking so as to please God **directly affects** getting our prayers answered. - 1 John 3:22; Ps. 66:18; Prov. 15:29; Isa. 59:1-2
- v. 8b-9 - The best news ever is that believers belong to the Lord **both** now and forever!
- Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection was accomplished so that believers can have the Lord 1) right now, 2) at our physical death, and 3) for all eternity.
 - Nothing can separate the believer from God and His love. - Rom. 8:35-39
 - Psalm 116:15 - "**Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.**"
 - Prov. 12:28 "**In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death.**" - Eph. 1:3
 - Eternal life for the believer today is a **present possession**; the death of a believer's physical body is only a change in residence. - 2 Cor. 5:1-8; Eph. 2:5-6
- v. 10 - Why are believers so quick to judge other believers?
- Most of the modern Bibles change this verse to read "the judgment seat of **God**" so a person will confuse this judgment with the Great White Throne Judgment of Rev. 20:11-15. This change leads to the belief in only one general judgment with no accountability for how believers have lived their Christian lives.
 - The reference to a "**judgment seat**" in this v. 10 is not a "**throne**" as in Rev. 20:11
 - The context still is personal convictions, so believers are not to judge another person's salvation based on his personal convictions.
 - Being a vegetarian or "keeping the Sabbath" (on Saturday) are not necessarily signs the person is lost.
 - Here we have the first (of two) occurrences in the Bible of "**the judgment seat of Christ**"; it is a judgment (accountability) **for Christians only** and will be based on the **quality** of each believer's work **after salvation**, it has nothing to do with judging whether or not a person enters Heaven. - 2 Cor. 5:9-11
 - Knowing the "**terror of the Lord**" concerning the judgment seat of Christ, we should continually walk in fear and trembling of the Lord and fervently serve the Lord and persuade others to do likewise. **WHY?**
 - Some "**bad**" things (**eternal losses of reward**) are going to happen at **the judgment seat of Christ** (burning heaps, broken hearts, and bloody hands).

Romans 14 - The Believer's Relationship to Other Believers

- The purpose of **the judgment seat of Christ** is for believers to receive rewards and/or suffering loss of rewards. - 1 Cor. 3:11-15
- v. 11 - Every knee shall bow and confess to God. - Isaiah 45:20-23
- What will be confessed? - Phil. 2:10-11
 - For the lost it is too late after they die, so we need to be good witnesses while they still have time to get saved. 2 Cor. 6:2; Luke 6:35
- v. 12 - Every one of us will give an account **of himself** (not others) to God.
- This verse is one of the most important verses in the Bible, so memorize it!
 - As believers, we are accountable to God and we will answer for how we've lived our Christian lives and everything we do → what we say, where we go, what we think, how we raise our children, how we witness, how we study the Bible, our time, our talent, our faithfulness, our prayer lives, our attitudes, our motivations, our relationships, our example, our responsibilities, our stewardship, our vocation, our homes, our finances, etc. → EVERYTHING! - Matt. 12:36
 - Leaders and teachers have even more responsibility and accountability to God. - Heb. 13:17; James 3:1
 - Therefore, it is **not wise** to be **overly ambitious** in putting yourself in charge of anything, unless you are clearly called by God; **let God open the doors of service that He has for you**, then He will provide all the resources that are needed to succeed.
 - All freedoms, opportunities, and privileges also come with an equivalent responsibility and accountability to do right.
- v. 13 - Believers are not to judge other believers on doubtful or unclear matters.
- Where the scriptures are silent or are unclear on something minor, don't judge other believers who disagree with us. (already covered in vv. 4 and 10)
 - This is not to say that believers are not to make righteous judgments using the scriptures and the plain common sense and the conscience that God has given us. - Lev. 19:15; Prov. 21:3, 31:9; John 7:24; 1 Cor. 2:15, 10:15
 - Believers should be willing to set aside our liberties if they would cause another brother to stumble or fall into sin. - 1 Cor. 8:7-13
- vv. 14-15 - All things that God made "**are pure**" (v. 20) and "**nothing unclean of itself.**" All sin is a good thing that has been twisted or perverted by man!
- Man **DOES NOT** use everything for good and pure uses as God intended, e.g. tobacco, barley, rye, corn, grapes, drugs, house, car, fire, radio waves, etc.
 - It's when man corrupts God's good and pure things that they become sinful.
 - Individual believers **must be fully persuaded in his own mind** (v. 5) as to whether something is clean or unclean, but this is no license for justifying things that are clearly sinful. - Gal 5:13; Rom. 6:1-2

Romans 14 - The Believer's Relationship to Other Believers

- Believers must be careful not to destroy other believers' Christian walk or fellowship with the Lord by what we eat or other minor issues. - Jer. 10:1-5
- v. 16 - Guiding principle for this entire Chapter 14
- Do what is right in such a way that others cannot say anything bad about it. - 1 Cor. 10:23-33; Heb. 13:13
 - While all spirit-filled believers shall be persecuted and spoken evil of, we must live so that the evil spoken of us is not justified or true. - 1 Thess. 5:12-15, 21-22
 - Prov. 16:7 - "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."
- v. 17 - The definition and description of the *spiritual* Kingdom of God. - 1 Cor. 15:50
- It is not a physical kingdom of things we eat and put into our physical bodies.
 - It is not the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the earthly, physical, literal, Davidic kingdom that will be ruled by Jesus Christ when he returns at the 2nd Advent. - Rev. 19:11-16
 - It is not the political kingdoms of today ruled by Satan. - Luke 4:5-6; 2 Cor. 4:3-4
 - The Kingdom of God here is an invisible spiritual kingdom. - Luke 17:20-21
 - Men get into the Kingdom of God by being born again (saved). - John 3:3-7
 - The Kingdom of God has spiritual qualities found in the Holy Spirit, e.g. inner righteousness, inner peace, and inner joy. - Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:8-11
- v. 18 - The result of serving Christ in righteousness, peace, and joy.
- We are accepted by God as a good servant and approved by men. - 2 Cor. 5:9
 - Believers are "lively stones" building a spiritual kingdom. - 1 Pet. 2:5
 - Men may slander you, but they will respect you if you genuinely serve God; they will also envy you because you have something they wish they had.
 - Believers ought to live for and serve the Lord, and continue to do right no matter what the situation or circumstances...and let the chips fall where they may.
- v. 19 - Believer's should "**edify another**" and not focus on ourselves. - Rom. 15:1; 1 Cor. 10:24; 1 Cor. 10:31-33; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 4:1-3
- Believers should seek peace. - Ps. 34:14; 1 Pet. 3:10-11; 2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 12:14
 - Believers are to build up fellow believers, but without compromising doctrine.
 - Word study on "edify" (handout)
- v. 20 - Believers are not to destroy the work of God by what we eat or by insignificant things of little or no importance.
- Believers are not to let minor issues destroy the work of God.
 - God said "All things indeed are pure". The context here is food → God cleansed all food in Acts 10 with Peter's vision of the great sheet with all manner of beasts, fowls, creeping things that descended from heaven down to the earth.

Romans 14 - The Believer's Relationship to Other Believers

- We **must not violate our conscience**. - Acts 23:1, 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:5; 1 Pet. 3:16
 - Good Bible study habits and prayer will develop a good conscience in the believer. The First Mention of (30X) "**conscience**" in KJB is found in John 8:1-11
 - In John 8:6-8, what Jesus likely wrote on the ground → Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22
- v. 21 - Believer should never eat, drink, or do anything that will cause a weaker brother to stumble or be offended.
- (Covered in vv. 13-15) Believers should be willing to set aside our liberties if they would cause another brother to stumble or fall into sin. - 1 Cor. 8:7-13
 - When we despise others we are really despising God. - 1 Thess. 4:8
 - We sin against Christ when we cause others to stumble or weaken their faith.
 - Example: We need to abstain from alcoholic drinks of any kind as it weakens our testimony and will cause another brother to stumble. - Prov. 20:1
- vv. 22-23a - This "faith" is the faith of a believer to do certain things, the context is still **FOOD**.
- For example, to eat all meats rather than just herbs and plants.
 - But don't use your faith (and the liberty it gives you) to cause your brother to sin.
 - If you cause your brother to sin, you bring damnation (temporary condemnation) upon yourself → cf. the **believers' condemnation** we studied in Rom. 8:1.
 - A believer's condemnation due to carnality affects the believer's life and testimony right now **and** also later when the believer suffers loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ. - 1 Cor. 3:1-4
 - Three examples of temporary condemnation that comes upon carnal believers: Chastisement -Ps. 89:30-32; Heb. 12:6; Premature death - Eccl. 7:17; Rom. 8:6,13; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; Self-condemnation by what he allows in his life. - Rom. 14:22-23; 1 Cor. 11:28-34
 - "Happy" (blessed, fortunate) is the believer that does not bring on himself condemnation by what he eats or allows to go on in his life.
- v. 23b - Sin defined (6X in KJB)
- Just exactly what does the KJB say "**is sin**?"
 1. Rom. 14:23b - for whatsoever is not of faith **is sin**. - Heb. 11:6
 2. Prov. 21:4 - An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, **is sin**.
 3. Prov. 24:9a - The thought of foolishness **is sin**:
 4. James 4:17 - Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it **is sin**.
 5. 1 John 3:4 -Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for **sin is** the transgression of the law.
 6. 1 John 5:17a - All unrighteousness **is sin**: