

We Must Learn This

- The apostle, in teaching the Romans how to truly worship the God Who has given them mercy in Christ (12:1), says, *“through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith”* (12:3).
- We are to *“let love be without hypocrisy”* (12:9), which includes: *“Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation...owe nothing to anyone except to love one another”* (12:16; 13:8).
- Those who have been saved by faith in Jesus Christ are to grow together in the faith, but the reality is that even as we grow together, we don’t do it at the same pace. How are we, the Church of those saved by God’s mercy in Christ, to live in love with each other when we have genuine disagreements over matters of conscience? How can we, in these circumstances, live out the apostle’s command to *“be at peace with all men”* (12:18)?
- Chapter 14 begins a long discussion on this topic that goes all the way to 15:7, concluding this teaching with *“therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”*
- Beloved, we must learn this, or we will not be able to worship God as we should (12:1). We will not be able to think as we should (12:2,3,16; 15:5). We will not be able to love as we should (12:9; 13:8). We will not be able to grow as we should (14:9; 15:2). **We must learn this.**

You Are Not the Judge (14:1-4)

14:1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. 14:2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. 14:3 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. 14:4 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.

Let’s Clarify a Few Things

Foundational Biblical Doctrine Is **Not** Up to Opinion

- Paul is not speaking of foundational biblical beliefs such as – to name a few examples - the plurality of divine Persons in a single God (Trinity), the fully human and fully divine nature of Jesus Christ, the sinfulness and guilt of every human being before God, the justification of the sinner before God by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Biblically-Defined Sin Is **Not** Up to Opinion

- Paul is dealing with the issues of cultural diet and observance of Jewish feast days, not violations of God’s moral Law. It would be a perversion of this section of Romans to use it to defend an acceptance of homosexuality, gender confusion, gossip, adultery, sex outside of marriage, anger, hatred, injustice, neglect of the needy, etc. – things that the Bible is clear in defining as sin.
- *“Opinions”* (14:1) and being *“fully convinced in his own mind”* (14:5) don’t apply in areas of biblically-defined morality and God’s Law. Paul is strictly speaking about areas in which the Bible is not clear or does not give strong guidance.

These **“Weak in Faith”** Are **Not** Sinning in This Dispute

- Paul is not accusing the *“weak in faith”* of sin:
 - They have *“faith”* (14:2).
 - They are practicing their observances *“for the Lord,”* and in doing so give *“thanks to God”* (14:6). They *“are the Lord’s”* (14:8).
 - The *“weak”* is *“brother”* to those *“strong in faith”* (14:10).
 - See also 15:7.
- The *“weak in faith”* are still totally justified before God by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Contrast this with the churches in Galatia. When Paul writes to

them, he uses extremely strong language in condemning them. Their observance of Jewish diet and calendar was seen as a part of justification – they thought they stood right before God because of their good works and religious practice. Paul absolutely condemns this in the strongest language. In contrast, he doesn't even tell the *“weak in faith”* to change their practice in the Roman church! Why? They rightly understood that they stand before God in this life and eternally only by faith in Jesus Christ. As part of their faith-life in Christ, however, they still had a difficult time separating from those practices that marked Jewish life.

- Just as Paul does not compromise justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, we cannot either. We may have some disagreement about how to live in Christ, but we do not compromise on that standard of entering into that life by faith alone with no assistance from good works or religious practices.¹

What's the Conflict?

- The abstention from meat is probably related to the conflict we see in Corinth of meat sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 8).²

¹ Some examples of disagreement on how to live the Christian life may include: alcohol consumption, what movies believers can watch, what type of music they listen to, books they read, how they spend money on hobbies, association with unbelievers, dating (for the unmarried), music style in worship, Bible translations, political involvement, patriotism, clothing, etc. These are just a few areas of disagreement between believers that can get pretty heated, but there is very little biblical reflection or Scripture citation in these disagreements – just heat.

² Some believe the banishing of Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2) made it difficult to obtain kosher-prepared meat, which would have made life

- We see in 14:21 that the abstention included wine. The O.T. Law forbids neither meat nor wine, but notice the similarities with Daniel's diet when he is refusing to live in dependence on a pagan king (Daniel 1:1-21). It could be the Jewish Christians living in pagan Rome were making a similar statement that the non-Jewish Christians didn't feel led to make!

Weak Faith and Fully Belonging to Jesus (14:5-9)

14:5 One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. 14:6 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. 14:7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 14:8 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. 14:9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

You Must Have an Opinion

- The solution to differing opinions is not the abolition of opinion. In fact, the apostle commands that we do the opposite: *“Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind”* (14:5b). We should have a conviction and opinion about all things as Christians, and sometimes we have honest disagreements about those convictions.
- Paul doesn't tell us to compromise our convictions, and he doesn't tell us to have no convictions at all. We must have convictions. A Christian cannot live with any neutrality at all! Jesus is Lord over all things in our life, and we must have convictions about all

difficult for Jews and/or Jewish Christians still following that dietary tradition.

things as servants under a master, as the created under the Creator, as the saved under a Savior. Nothing is exempt from His absolute authority and Lordship.

The Lord’s Day vs. Traditions

- When Paul speaks of *“the day”* here, he isn’t speaking of gathering on the first day of the week as the Lord’s Day. The New Testament does teach that the church must gather together (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25), and from the New Testament (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2) onward we have ample evidence that the church met on the first day of the week (in recognition of Jesus’ resurrection, Matthew 28:1// Mark 16:2//Luke 24:1//John 20:1) instead of the old covenant Sabbath (on the seventh day,).³ Paul is dealing with Jewish feast-days and other traditionally Jewish calendar peculiarities.
- Since the conflict is over Jewish traditions, it seems that the practices of those *“weak”* in faith were a continued following of Jewish traditions. We certainly see this in other congregations (Galatians 4:10; Colossians 2:16). Again, Paul does not chastise the *“weak”* or tell them to quit – they may not be mature in their understanding of the faith, but they are not sinning. Paul chastises the Galatians and Colossians over it, because their traditions were interfering with a

³ Revelation 1:10 speaks of *“the Lord’s Day.”* Read what our Baptist forefathers confessed about this day: “...God, so by His Word, in a positive moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men, in all ages, He hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a sabbath to be kept holy unto Him, which from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ was the last day of the week, and from the resurrection of Christ was changed into the first day of the week, which is called the Lord’s day: and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath, the observation of the last day of the week being abolished” (1689 Baptist Confession, 22.7).

right understanding of salvation by faith in Jesus alone. The Romans apparently had a right understanding of salvation by faith in Jesus alone, but were slow in shedding old traditions in living that faith out.

- Just like the *“weak in faith”* in this section of Romans, we, too, have cultural blind spots – areas where our culture, background, or extra-biblical philosophies/worldviews have equal (or even greater) influence than the truth of the Bible. READ Revelation 5:9,10. Pray to see reality in Christ, more and more free from man-made distinctions and barriers.

Living Life Before God (14:10-12)

14:10 *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.* 14:11 *For it is written [in Isaiah 45:23], “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.”*
14:12 *So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.*

- This is a repeat and expansion of 14:4.
- Paul now quotes from Isaiah as reminder of the bigger perspective: READ Isaiah 45:21-23.⁴ Since this section of Isaiah is concerning with the condemnation of idolatry, this underlines the premise that the believers abstaining

⁴ Paul will quote this Isaiah 45 passage again in Philippians 2:1-18, while pursuing the same goal: the unity of the people of God, who must learn imitate Christ in their treatment of each other. *“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus...”* Isaiah 45:23 is quoted in Philippians 2:10. Read the whole section. Often.

from meat and wine were doing so because of how these things were used in the idolatrous Roman culture around them.

Why We Pursue Unity Even in Disagreement

- The motivation for the unity of Romans 14:1-15:7 isn't strictly horizontal (“can't we all just get along?”), but is driven toward a vertical goal: the purpose of God in Christ.
- Let's highlight some of the doctrines peppered throughout today's text.

The Preservation of the Saints

- “...he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand” (14:4). Those who have a more restrictive view of Christian liberty mustn't judge those who have a more free view, because true believers don't stand or fall before God based on these things. We are made to stand by the grace of God if we are truly His (salvation is of the Lord, not of us or our efforts).
- This is the perseverance and/or preservation of the saints.⁵ We've already seen this in 8:35-39.⁶

The Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

- “...to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living” (14:9).
- We easily confess and joyfully sing about Jesus' death for our sins and resurrection for our eternal life; we don't always apply that to everyday life, though.

⁵ “All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end” (Baptist Faith & Message 2000, V).

⁶ For preservation, see Romans 16:25; Philippians 1:6; 1 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 Peter 5:10; Jude 24. For perseverance, see John 8:31; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 15:1,2; Colossians 1:21-23; Hebrews 2:1-3; 4:14; 6:11,12; 10:39; 12:14; James 1:2-4; 1 John 2:19.

Jesus' death and resurrection means He is absolute Master over our life and death – there is no neutral space, in other words, free from His authority.

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

- “...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” (14:8).
- In the church, each member is “servant” to the “master” (14:4).

The Judgment Seat of God

- “...we will all stand before the judgment seat of God” (14:10).
- We do not judge the world, but we proclaim the judgment of God to the world.
- “...it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). The only way anyone will be acquitted in God's judgment is by faith in Jesus Christ.

The Praise and Glory of God in All Things

- Those who live a stricter life and those who live in more liberty must each do so “for the Lord” (14:6,8), with the final goal that “every tongue shall give praise to God” (14:11). If it is not done by faith in Jesus Christ, it is sin (14:23). Do the things you do meet these standards?

**The Church must stand firm in unity
on God's truth
and God's commands in the Bible,
and must accept each other in Christ
as we've been accepted in Christ
with everything else.**