

## Romans 14

### Scriptures:

John 17:20-21 - 20 I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Psalms 133:1-3 -

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
For brethren to dwell together in unity!  
2 It is like the precious oil upon the head,  
Running down on the beard,  
The beard of Aaron,  
Running down on the edge of his garments.  
3 It is like the dew of Hermon,  
Descending upon the mountains of Zion;  
For there the LORD commanded the blessing—  
Life forevermore.

### Notes:

When Jesus came, one of the things He did was establish His church. The church is unique in that it is built the relationship between fallen man and righteous God, reconciled through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It also is referred to as the body of Christ, in that the church is to continue the work of Christ until He comes back. It also bears the glorious title of the Bride of Christ, denoting the intimacy of the church to Christ. We could spend our whole time talking about how amazing the church Christ established is. And we could spend another hour talking about how people have messed it up over the last two thousand years. There is an inherent beauty to Christ's church that we ought to cherish and protect.

One of the characteristics of the church Christ established is unity. Christ created one church and His desire for it is that we would be one.  
**John 17:20-21**

Unity has been God's desire for His people from the beginning. **Psalms 133**

One of the things that makes unity difficult in the church is the fact that we are all different and our faith is at different stages of development, and we sometimes see things in Scripture differently. It is our response to those things that becomes a problem.

A healthy church is also very diverse. It ought to be a reflection of the community around it. Different cultures, socio-economic levels, professions, and views on politics are normal in a healthy church. That diversity adds to the beauty of the church, it is also a breeding ground for disunity. Deliberate effort must be applied to maintain unity.

Paul, in chapter 14, is going to address some of the things that break unity. He addresses a couple of things that would have been controversial in his day, and they are still somewhat divisive today.

## Romans 14:1-23 - The Gospel and Liberty!

### Scriptures:

Genesis 12:3 - 3 I will  
bless those who bless you,  
And I will curse him who  
curses you;  
And in you all the  
families of the earth shall  
be blessed.

### <sup>1</sup> Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not

G4355 –  
welcome.

G770 – “to be weak  
(abstractly) v. — to be  
or become wanting in  
moral strength,  
courage, will, or other  
cognitive feature.”

G4102 – what  
they believe.

### Notes:

The word ‘receive’ has the meaning of welcoming. A healthy church ought to be welcoming. Everyone is welcome. You don’t have to attend a doctrinal examination to attend. You don’t need to show us your spiritual resume or genealogy. Everyone is welcome, especially people who have not yet come to faith in Christ.

### to disputes over doubtful things.

G1253 – arguments.  
“differentiation n. —  
a distinction made in  
an especially  
contentious  
manner.”

G1261 –  
uncertain things.

Paul tells the Roman church to be welcoming to people who are weak in the faith. This could be new believers or believers who have not progressed very far in their faith. These might be marginal or carnal Christians. They were to welcome them.

Paul does put a condition on their acceptance, those who want to argue about doubtful things. These would be issues that do not affect our salvation. One such issue might be our position on Israel. We believe it is right stand with Israel. We believe **Genesis 12:3** applies to us.

We want to be blessed by God so we will bless Israel. How you feel about that will not affect your salvation. If you would like to talk with us about it, come see me. If you want to pick a fight about it, don’t bother, I’m not interested.

The church should be a place where we strive to maintain unity and resist anything that might divide us.

He begins by addressing a potential conflict with food.

<sup>2</sup> For one believes he may eat all things, but  
  
he who is weak eats *only* vegetables.

Notes:

It is not clear where this conflict regarding eating meat versus only vegetables arose. It probably wasn't from the Jewish culture. They grew up sacrificing animals and eating their flesh as a part of their religion. It is possible it had something to do with the fact that non-believers regularly sacrificed their animals to false gods and then sold the meat in the market, so, some people didn't want to eat meat sacrificed to idols by accident. You can see Paul addressing that in 1 Corinthians 10.

There is nothing wrong with choosing to eat only vegetables. If someone chooses to be a vegan, they can. Paul is challenging their spiritual motivation for doing so. There are people who are vegans for health reasons. And there are people who are vegans because they don't like the idea that animals have to die so they can eat their meat.

The obvious inference here is that someone in the church is saying Christians should not be eating meat and they are causing division in the church.

Paul tells them how to relate to one another.

Scriptures:

<sup>3</sup> Let not him who eats despise him who does

G1848 – “to utterly  
disdain v. — to treat  
(someone)  
contemptuously as if  
completely worthless  
or despicable.”

not eat, and let not him who does not eat

judge him who eats; for God has received

G2919 - evaluate,  
judge based on  
correctness of  
something.

G4355 –  
welcomed.

him.

Notes:

You should notice that Paul does not say that either one of them is right or wrong. The problem arises out of the vegan claiming that not eating meat is a matter of biblical obedience when it is not. This is an issue of liberty. If the Bible doesn't command for or against something, the Lord leaves it up to each individual believer to decide for themselves. Nowhere does the Bible command Christ-followers to abstain from eating meat. If someone chooses to be a vegan, go for it.

What we can't do is despise one another for our liberties or judge someone who sees 'doubtful things' differently than we do.

Paul is saying if you despise people who don't eat meat or you judge someone who does, that your faith is weak and you are wrong.

<sup>4</sup> Who are you to judge another's servant? To

Notes:  
It is God's job to judge people. Let Him do it.

Paul then addresses another point of conflict for people.

his own master he stands or falls. Indeed,

he will be made to stand, for God is able to

G2476 – persist,  
remain.

make him stand.

Scriptures:

<sup>5</sup> One person esteems *one* day above another;

G2919 – “to  
distinguish  
(positively) v. — to  
distinguish someone  
or something as  
superior.”

Notes:

This is a radical thing for Paul, a Jew, to say. To the Jews, the Sabbath is holy. The Sabbath runs from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. Again, Paul doesn't say either is right or wrong.

As Christ-followers, we do not esteem any day as more holy than any other day. We choose to gather on Sundays to worship together because it is the day the Lord Jesus rose from the dead. We are not commanded to meet on Sundays – it is our tradition. The Seventh Day Adventists meet on Saturday. Okay, go for it.

another esteems every day *alike*. Let each

be fully convinced in his own mind.

G4135 - be  
completely  
certain, be fully  
assured,  
convinced or  
persuaded.

'be fully convinced' – When you come to one of these issues of liberty, be fully convinced in your heart and mind that what you are doing is right and pleasing God. But be careful that you are not letting your flesh make the decision. If God's Word hasn't spoken on something, that doesn't mean He will approve of what you are doing. Sometimes where the Bible is not specific on a topic, one of His principles covers it. For example, there is not a specific command in Scripture about not viewing pornography. But God has spoken about sexual purity and immorality that applies there. Let God's Word, Spirit, and people minister to you about it.

<sup>6</sup> He who observes the day, observes *it* to the  
G5426 – respects.

Notes:

If they are convinced in their heart and mind that it is okay, and they are doing it to the Lord, then leave them alone. Let them eat rabbit food if they want to.

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.

Scriptures:

<sup>7</sup> For none of us <sup>+</sup> lives to himself, and no one

Notes:  
[verses 7-12]  
The Lordship of Christ is the foundation of our faith. Jesus died on the cross so that we all could be a part of His kingdom.

<sup>+</sup> dies to himself.

Scriptures:

<sup>8</sup> For if we <sup>+</sup> live, we live to the Lord<sup>+</sup>; and if we

Notes:

<sup>+</sup> die, we <sup>+</sup> die to the Lord<sup>+</sup>. Therefore, whether we

<sup>+</sup> live or <sup>+</sup> die, we are the Lord's<sup>+</sup>.



Scriptures:

<sup>9</sup> For to this end Christ died and rose and

Notes:

lived again, that He might be Lord of both the

dead and the living.

Notes:

[verses 10-12]

Paul challenges them to examine the motive of their attitude toward weaker believers.

Scriptures:

<sup>10</sup> But why do you judge your brother? Or why

Turn to **1 Corinthians 3**

The Judgment Seat of Christ is where all believers will stand someday. It will not be a judgment of our sins because Jesus took that judgment with Him to the cross. It will be for the things we have done in this life. Paul gives us a sense of that in **1 Corinthians 3:9-15**.

do you show contempt for your brother? For

G1848 – despise.

Paul makes it clear this judgment is not about salvation, but about the rewards we gain or lose based on the works we do in this life.

Turn back to **Romans 14**.

we shall all stand before the judgment seat of

G968 – “judgment seat (site) n. — the site of litigation at which a judge is present to issue official decisions.”

All true believers in Christ will go to heaven. Depending how we walk through this life will determine some aspect of how we spend eternity in heaven. There is no way to say what that looks like, but it should be something we consider as we go through this life. I don't mean we should be overly concerned about the rewards in heaven, but that God cares about how we live this life. He especially cares about how we treat others. I want to live a life that allows me to hear Jesus say at the Judgment Seat, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' That would be the greatest reward I can imagine.

Christ.

Based on that, Paul tells them to watch how they treat others.

Scriptures:

11 For it is written: *"As I live, says the Lord,*

Notes:

*every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue*

*shall confess to God."*

Scriptures:

12 So then each of us shall give account of

Notes:

G3056 – "narrative  
account n. — a record or  
narrative description of  
past events; especially for  
the determination of  
accountability."

himself to God.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore let us not judge one another

anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a

stumbling block or a cause to fall in *our*

G4625 – trap,  
cause to sin.

brother's way.

Notes:

Judgmentalism is one of the things that can cause a believer to stumble in their faith. People of weak faith are vulnerable to attacks from Satan, the enemy of our souls. Judging them will be perceived as an attack and might drive them away from the body of the church. That is like driving a weak animal out of the herd where the lions and wolves are prowling around. Instead, Paul tells us to help them. **1 Thessalonians 5:14**

We should be patient and do what we can to help them grow in their faith.

Paul comes back to the topic of food.

<sup>14</sup> I know and am convinced by the Lord

G3982 -

Jesus that *there is* nothing unclean of itself;

but to him who considers anything to be

G3049 – hold a  
view.

unclean, to him *it is* unclean.


Notes:

Paul discussed this topic at length in 1 Corinthians. The issue of whether a believer should eat food that had been ceremonially offered to idols is a matter of faith. Idols or false gods are not real – they are nothing. The fact that the meat was offered to idols meant nothing – it didn't change the meat. If your faith tells you that is true – eat the meat. But, if your faith is weak in that area and you are not sure, not convinced, then don't eat it. Even though other believers have liberty to eat it, you don't because your faith is not fully established in that area.

Where this becomes complicated is when you have two believers together, one who believes it is okay to eat meat, and another who doesn't. What do you do then?

15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of

G3076 – made  
sad.

your food, you are no longer walking in love. 

Do not destroy with your food the one for

whom Christ died.

Notes:

Everything we do with one another ought to be motivated by love for God and for each other. If a believer's faith convinces him that eating meat, regardless of where it came from is okay, is with someone whose faith is not strong, and is uncertain if it is right to eat meat, and the strong believer eats meat in the weaker believer's presence knowing it offends them, the stronger believer is not walking in love. The stronger believer should be willing to forego a liberty to protect a believer of weaker faith.

I would say to those who are offended by the liberties some people enjoy that you do not feel free to enjoy. The issue is not their liberties; it is your faith. That doesn't mean you should do what they are doing, you are not convinced it is right. You need to grow your faith to the point that you are convinced in yourself what is true or right in that matter. Because when you are convinced about what you believe then it won't offend you that others enjoy liberties that you do not.

Here is a personal example. The Bible does speak on whether a believer should drink alcohol. It does speak about drunkenness and being under the influence of anything other than the Holy Spirit. For me personally, I do not feel free to have any alcohol. It is a liberty that I do not feel inclined to participate in. If I was sharing a meal with someone and they ordered a beer or a glass of wine, I wouldn't think anything of it. Because the Bible doesn't prohibit it, they have the liberty to do it. If they ordered three or four, I would be inclined to challenge them, if they are believers.

Strong faith is not offended by other people enjoying the liberties you do not feel free to participate in.

Scriptures:

<sup>16</sup> Therefore do not let your good be spoken

of as ~~xxx~~ evil;

Notes:

[verses 16-21]

Our faith should draw us closer to other believers and encourage us and them to peace and joy. We should be focused on building each other up and not looking for reasons to tear them down. If you are enjoying your liberty knowing it is offensive to a weaker believer, you are the one who is wrong.

Scriptures:

<sup>17</sup> for the kingdom of God is not eating and

drinking, but righteousness and peace and

joy in the Holy Spirit.

Notes:

Scriptures:

18 For he who serves Christ in these things *is*

Notes:

acceptable to God and approved by men.

G2101 – well-pleasing.

G1384 – accepted.

Scriptures:

19 Therefore let us pursue the things *which*

Notes:

G1377 – press forward.

*make* for peace and the things

by which one may edify another.

G3619 – “building up n. — the act of bringing something closer to fullness or completion; understood as if assisting in the construction of an incomplete building.”

Scriptures:

20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake △ Notes:

of food. All things indeed *are* pure, but *it is*

G2513 – ritually clean. “ritually clean adj. — free from impurities according to cultic regulations and requirements; especially understood as necessary to be cultically pure in the eyes of God.”

~~xxx~~ evil for the man who eats with offense.

G4348 – “cause sin ⇔ stumbling n. — any cause that results in a person sinning; whether by preventing righteous action or by promoting sinful behavior.”

Scriptures:

21 *It is* good neither to eat meat nor drink wine Notes:

nor *do anything* by which your brother

stumbles or is offended or is made weak.



Scriptures:

<sup>22</sup> Do you have faith? Have <sup>it</sup> to yourself

Notes:

If you demand your right to partake in that thing that you have liberty, you are being selfish and unloving.

before God. Happy <sup>is</sup> he who does not

G3107 – blessed.

Notes:

Paul puts the emphasis for this whole thing on faith. Faith is what we believe that manifests in what we do. If you do something that is contrary to your faith, it is sin. Even if everyone else is doing it, if your faith says it is wrong or is uncertain about it, it is sin if you do it.

condemn himself in what he approves.

G2919 – judge.

G1381 -

Even as a pastor, I have liberty to have a beer or a glass of wine. In my faith journey, I have concluded that they are not for me.

For those of you who love rules and boundaries, be careful. It is my guess that a message like this might make you very uncomfortable. Faith is not about rules and boundaries.

Faith is about knowing God, His Word, His Son, and His Holy Spirit. It is about walking with God and responding to His direction as He gives it. Every time I do a message about liberty, people will come to me and give me scenarios and ask me what to rules or boundaries are. My response will be something like, what is God telling you to do about that. If their response doesn't go outside the clear teaching of Scripture and is in the area of liberty, my response is going to be, go do that. Well, how we do know we are doing it right? Trust God and let His Holy Spirit guide you. Don't be afraid to ask for help, but trust God to help you navigate most of these things.

Scriptures:

<sup>23</sup> But he who doubts is condemned if he eats,

G1252 – be uncertain.

G2632 – judged as guilty.

because *he does* not *eat* from faith; for

whatever *is* not from faith is sin.

The church is very diverse, and that diversity can be challenging to maintaining unity. From a starting point of love, try to build each other up into the likeness of Christ. For me, I believe my greatest work in this life is the love God with every bit of myself and to try to do that with others. The way that I do that is I cooperate with the working of the Holy Spirit to grow my faith. And as I grow, I work to help others grow their faith.

Jesus died so that we could do that. Let's pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us to be faithful.

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