

Romans 14

I wanted to ask you a question or two this morning as we begin our study in Romans 14. Have you ever thought about the incredible differences between yourself and the person next to you? Have you ever thought about the simple fact that your life has been lived entirely differently than your brothers and sisters in Christ that are in this room? Have you ever listened to the testimonies of those who have come to know Jesus and marveled at how incredible Jesus is to bring people from totally different walks of life to Himself?

And then have you thought about how Jesus has seen fit that we in this room have been brought together in this building as the local body of Christ?

The reality is that you and I and everyone else in this room have had very different experiences as we have gone through life. Some of us grew up on the farm down the road, while others of us have grown up in the city or have lived in multiple locations as we have moved around. Some of us come from a place of wealth, while others of us come from a place of struggle just trusting that God will help us pay the monthly rent and help us to have food on the table.

Because we have all come from such diverse backgrounds the reality is that we are going to see things very differently. The church in Rome was no exception to this as they had both Gentiles and Jews who had come to believe in Jesus Christ.

If you were a Gentile then your experience was that the Lord Jesus had reached out and saved you and given you great freedom by His grace...The Jewish mindset was quite different and while they were

saved by grace through faith just like the Gentiles their mindset was largely tied to the laws of the Old Testament which included very specific ways to worship God and very specific dietary restrictions and permissions.

The question then becomes how do you bring people together in Christ who have some very different opinions about how God is to be served? That's what Paul is tackling here in Romans 14 and part of Romans 15. How should I react to those that have different opinions about the Christian life than I do.

Let me just give some examples to you this morning that you and I may have some different opinions about.

I want you to think about how you feel about the following things. What kind of music do you listen to? What kind of TV do you watch? What do you think about having tattoos as a Christian? What do you think about what kind of clothing a Christian should and should not wear? What about the rapture of the church and when it will take place? What about speaking in tongues and whether that is a gift for today or not?

If you go through this list I just gave, then you know that all of us can have some very different opinions about these topics...The question then becomes do I expect everyone else to see things the same way I do? **Or should I take my expectations and place them on others** and even speak to others as if my way is the right way and they need to become more like me?

Today we are going to explore this subject and how you and I as we serve Jesus together should behave towards those that may see

things differently. It's a fun topic I believe, and I will say that there are many different facets to this...So let's see where the Lord leads us this morning as we look through this important chapter in the book of Romans.

Look with me at verse 1 of chapter 14 which says this **Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.** It is interesting to me that Paul here makes mention of those who are weak in the faith. That seems like Paul is making a slight or perhaps speaking poorly of some.

I think if we are just honest about it you and I would agree that in the church there are those who have a lot of experience and those that may not have as much time knowing Jesus. Those who have walked with Jesus for a long while should be and I want to highlight the words **SHOULD BE** further along in the faith.

As a body of Christ here at CCJC we should never think one person is better than another when it comes to their walk with Jesus...But we should be willing to say that there will be those that God might bring here who have some very different opinions about what is right when it comes to following Jesus and what isn't right.

When someone comes in with a different opinion let's say about worship and how it should be done how should we respond? Should we tell that person that because they don't think the same thing we do that they shouldn't be here? I don't think so...We should accept those that may have different opinions or even have a weaker position in the faith.

Speaking of worship music... have you ever noticed how differently we can feel about the choice of songs, and the lights being on or off and when someone prays and doesn't pray during worship? Some of you love to raise your hands during worship and others prefer it be more quiet and introspective. It's amazing how different we can feel about worship and yet in the body of Christ we are commanded to have unity and submission to one another.

But notice Paul does draw a line here when he says that we are not to accept someone in order that disputes could take place over doubtful things. In other words when someone comes into the church and they do think differently about let's say how worship should be done we accept them into the fellowship BUT we don't allow them to come in critically and try to argue their points and get us to think like they do.

Have you ever met someone like that? Here you are in a church that has been around 30 years and someone new shows up and within 20 minutes of talking to them they are looking to change the culture of what has been established.

Over in Titus 3:10-11 we have the following which says ¹⁰ Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. I'm not advocating for jumping to judgment and I certainly would encourage grace towards one another in our interactions but there does come a time when someone that is constantly critical needs to be addressed.

So Paul essentially says we can and will have different opinions about disputable things...What is a disputable thing we might ask?

Well, Paul as we move on here is going to give us two examples of disputable things that the believers in Rome had some different opinions about. And both things listed were related to how a Christian should live their daily life as they seek to honor Jesus.

Look at verse 2 which says this **For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.** So here was one of the issues in the church. Some believed that all food was open to being eaten...So if a brother or sister in Christ wanted to have a nice pulled pork sandwich then they sure could or if someone wanted to eat some beautiful lobster or crab straight from the seas they could surely do so.

Just for some insight those foods I just listed were considered unclean according to the Old Testament Jewish law meaning the Jewish people wouldn't eat.

So, the Jewish believers if they saw the Gentiles eating these things would more than likely say "Wait a minute now, I have grown up eating specific foods and being taught according to the law that there are foods we should avoid and that food should be prepared a certain way and so I can't possibly ever eat these foods that the Old Testament forbids as I look to honor the Lord."

So you can see that because of how Jews and Gentiles grew up and went through life that different thoughts in relation to food could be found...It could even potentially cause division in the church as one side tried to assert what they believed upon the other side.

Now I want you to know that there was probably more to this than just clean and unclean foods and for homework I want you to write down 1

Corinthians 8 and just read through that and as you do so you are going to see that there was a dispute about whether you could eat meat that was sacrificed to idols or not.

And just to give some general understanding about that what would happen is that the Jewish people were not the only ones that made meat sacrifices to their God...the pagan world had multiple gods they worshipped and as such they would regularly make sacrifices and they would give certain cuts of the meat, BUT not all of the meat was burned in a sacrifice and some of it would actually be taken into the market and sold to those who were purchasing.

Some believers felt very strongly that they shouldn't eat this meat that was dedicated to idols while others felt total freedom to eat and saw it as nothing. This might lightly be likened to how some people have a very strong feeling that they should not shop at certain stores while others have freedom to shop wherever their feet might land.

Listen to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 8:4-8 which says ⁴Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. ⁵For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), ⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

⁷However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸But food does

not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.

So you can see here that culturally speaking there was a bit of a debate about what foods should be eaten and shouldn't and Paul here in our text in Romans 14 says the weak brother eats only vegetables while some could eat all things.

To be clear this is a disputable matter, it didn't pertain to salvation but instead to personal preference and how one walked with Jesus in their lives.

Ok let's move on here if you look at verses 3-4 which say this ³**Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.** ⁴**Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.**

Notice Paul doesn't take a side on the issue in the text...He simply says that we shouldn't be judging our brothers whether we agree with eating all things or not...Notice Paul says that God has received him...this means that God will take a person how they are and that He permits people to have different thoughts about what should and should not be permitted.

I believe this whole section is speaking of the conscience that each person has been given in life. The experiences we each have had and the world view we have grown up with and how they shape how we choose to live for the Lord.

I want you to see also here and this will be a theme in this chapter and you might even just underline this in the chapter but notice the Words God, Lord and Christ are found all over this chapter. We'll see this but Paul repeatedly points us to God's opinions and thoughts about us rather than what man thinks.

Here we can see that Paul says we shouldn't judge another's servant for to His own master he will stand or fall. IN other words when it comes to disputable matters you are not the judge. God is the one that looks at the life and weighs the matters of the heart. I love it that it says here that God is fully able to make a person stand.

My salvation and my walk with Christ is not dependent on the opinions of others...but instead it is based on how I respond to the Spirit's work in my own heart personally.

I want to pose something to you as an example to think about as we talk about this. Let's make up a few people here and if your name happens to be Todd or Esteban then don't think I am using you personally for the example.

Let's say Esteban grows up in a Christian home and he has learned the difference between right and wrong and he even learned all the Bible stories when he was a child but for whatever reason he never really accepted Christ until he was about 12 years old. Esteban begins to study the Bible and learn about Jesus and even begins to live for Jesus.

Then you have Todd and Todd grew up on the streets of New York, he joined a gang when he was 13 and he chose to live the life of drugs,

alcohol and promiscuity and even landed in prison. While in prison Todd heard the gospel and gave his heart to Jesus.

Now in thinking about these two individuals do you think they are going to think and act the same way and even live for Jesus in the same way? Should I have the same expectations for both of them in their walk with Jesus? I don't think so...Esteban may find it very easy to not curse, to make immediate corrections in his life while Todd may cuss like a sailor and he may have some things in his life that he will have to work through that Esteban was never exposed to.

Do you think that Esteban is better in the eyes of God than Todd? Do you think that Todd because he has more of the world in him than Esteban is seen by Jesus as inferior? I don't think so at all. Jesus accepts both of these individuals as they receive Him by faith and begins to do a work on their hearts.

You can't expect Todd to be just like Esteban, you can't expect Todd to be perfect you have to instead realize that Jesus accepts both men and wants to work in them to change them...and you have to give room for the Holy Spirit to make the changes in that persons life and you have to realize as Paul said that you shouldn't judge your brother but instead must learn to trust that God will judge the motives of his heart and the actions of his life.

You and I ought to be very careful when it comes to judging the servant of another Master. People do not answer to us when it comes to how they live in regards to disputable matters, but instead they will be held accountable by the One that knows them through and through.

Now I do want to balance this out a little bit here because you and I have the Word of God in our lives and we should be able to see fruit coming from the lives of each other and we should see people change on a regular basis as that is the nature of the Holy Spirit...we should judge one another in a godly way with concern and hope that we can all become more like Christ.

So this section of scripture isn't giving anyone a license to continue to sin or to refuse to change and it doesn't mean that you and I can't lovingly confront one another but when it comes to matters that are **disputable** there must be grace and a willingness to receive one another.

Let's look at a second issue that took place that Paul is addressing in verses 5-9 which say this **5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.** **6 He who observes the day, observes it to the 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.** **7 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.** **8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.** **9 For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.**

Now Paul addresses what day of the week the Lord should be worshiped on...Culturally speaking there were Jews who probably had it in their hearts to worship Jesus on the usual Sabbath day which

would mean a Saturday while others began to worship Jesus on a Sunday the day the Lord rose from the dead.

Paul says each person should be fully convinced in his mind how they should handle this whether food or what day you worship. Paul doesn't take sides but instead leaves room for each person to experience Jesus in their lives as the Holy Spirit has ministered to them.

Now what I appreciate about what Paul does here in these verses is he constantly points out to the reader that each person does these things unto the Lord. In verse 6 he says He who observes the day observes it to the Lord. And he who eats does so to the Lord and he who doesn't eat also does so unto the Lord.

In verse 8 he points out that if we live we do so unto the Lord and if we die we are the Lord's...He also says in verse 9 that it is Christ that died and He also rose again that He might be the judge.

Do you know what these verses don't say? That you and I are the judge, or that people as they make choices are doing so to please us...Paul removes you and I all together and instead points out that we must all live as unto the Lord. Jesus is the Lord not Jared and not anyone else in the building.

You can have your thoughts and opinions about what is right and wrong when it comes to disputable matters but what you can't do is press those opinions on others and expect them to be just like you.

Why is it that you and I can't seem to trust that the Holy Spirit can and does work in the lives of others just like He does in our own lives?

Why can't we trust that people will change as they study His Word and spend time with other believers?

I can tell you that my opinions about what is acceptable in my life and what isn't have changed over the years...I can honestly tell you that I don't watch the same movies I used to when I first came to Christ. I can tell you that I don't listen to the same music either.

You may see something in a brother or sisters life that you may not agree with but you forcing them to change is what is called legalism...it's placing a trip on someone else or requiring them to change for your sake and your convictions...It's much better to trust Jesus that He can and He will sanctify their life in time...There is a saying that goes let's give grace and let's give space to each other.

Let's move on here as Paul brings it home in verses 10-12 which say

10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written:

**"As I live, says the Lord,
Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God."**

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

At the end of the day who are you and I accountable to? Not to each other but unto God and let me just tell you that God is going to be totally fair and just and righteous in all of His judgments. We must remember that God is the one that can weigh the judgments of each individuals hearts. He knows if you take Him seriously or not or if you

just make excuses for your lifestyle. He knows if you are regularly connecting to the Holy Spirit or not.

Now when we talk about the judgment seat of Christ as Christians I want you to know that this is not a judgment of whether we will be in hell or not. You and I know that because of what Jesus has done and because we have chosen to receive Him in our lives that we are eternally secure in Him as we live for Him and choose to honor Him.

This judgment seat of Christ is what is called the Bema seat of Christ and that's the word in Greek here in verse 10. The Bema seat of Christ is speaking of the fact that you and I even as believers are going to be judged for how we lived our lives...this is not a judgment of condemnation but instead a judgment of reward.

And let me just share a few scriptures with you to just solidify this in our minds. Listen to what 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 say when it says

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

We also see this in 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 which say **9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to**

Him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

You might even read Luke 19:11-26 which is a parable that I believe points out to us that we will be held accountable for our decisions and actions as we live for Christ. The reality is that Jesus does expect us to live for Him, to honor Him and to seek Him...as we do so He will change us and make us more like Him.

Notice in these verses that we have in Romans 14:10-12 that Paul says that Christ is the judge, that every knee will bow to Him and every tongue shall confess unto God.

I want to remind all of us who are here today or watching online that one day all knees shall bow and all tongues confess that Jesus is the Lord.

Humanity has a choice to make and the choice is will you bow the knee now in this life to King Jesus, or will you refuse to bow the knee in this world and instead reject the authority of God in your life and refuse to accept Jesus as Lord in your heart. Understand that though you may reject Christ now there will come a day that you will confess that He is Lord....If you do so you need to know that the Bible is clear and this isn't my opinion but the Bible says you will face an eternity in hell.

If you are here today and you refuse to accept Jesus in your life, I would simply ask why not accept Jesus in your life? Why not accept that He paid the price for your sins? Why not choose to confess your sins and repent of them and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ who loved

you so much that even while you were far from Him, He chose to go to the cross to die in your place?

God will one day judge, we all will be held accountable and there is no getting around it. That should be a sobering reminder for us shouldn't it? That we ought to live our lives in the fear of God and the reverence of who He is.

Look at verse 13 which says ¹³Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

Paul simply says stop all the judging, stop looking around and thinking ill of others, stop living for yourself and your so-called freedoms in Christ but instead resolve in your heart to not put a stumbling block in your brothers path.

Paul said this over in 1 Corinthians 8 when he was talking about eating food sacrificed to idols when he said this in verse 13 which says ¹³Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

You know the last few chapters have talked a lot about loving a brother as you love yourself, it's talked about laying down your life for the benefit of others, its talked about considering others in all you do and this section of scripture here in Romans 14 to me hits the nail on the head.

If you want to love a brother or sister then live with them in mind, live in such a way that you won't cause them to stumble...Listen if you have the freedom let's say to have a glass of wine with your meal be very careful that you don't invite someone over to your house and

freely drink your wine in front of them...**for they may have great difficulty with alcohol in their lives.**

Think about if that brother or sister has just come to Christ and they had major trouble with drugs and alcohol in their life **and here you are as a believer and you are just enjoying** your freedom and that brother or sister goes home **and thinks "hey if they can't do it why can't I"** and **before you know it your freedom has caused that** person to fall back into an old sinful pattern.

We must always live our lives with others in mind and that's why Paul says let's live without putting a stumbling block in front of another. **I'll add here that personally I think alcohol has far more down sides to it than upsides** but I'll leave that between you and Jesus.

Let's continue on here if you look at verses 14-18 which say ¹⁴**I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.** ¹⁵**Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.** ¹⁶**Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;** ¹⁷**for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.** ¹⁸**For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.**

Paul was personally convinced that all foods were acceptable **but he was also fully convinced that if a brother** or sister truly had a conviction that a particular food was sinful to partake of that for them it is unclean...**down in verse 23 Paul says this if you glance at it** ²³**But**

he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

We each have a conscience given to us by God and if you truly violate that conscience, to you it is sin...Your conscience can change over time as the Holy Spirit changes you and matures you, but we must work not to violate it.

Paul even says that God's kingdom isn't really about eating and drinking but instead it's about walking in the righteousness of God and the peace and joy that is found in the Holy Spirit...Make sure you don't relate to God based on keeping rules and regulations for that won't make you any more holy than the person next to you...Instead look to be connected to the Spirit of God and allowing your self to be washed in the Word of God and as you do that you'll mature in the faith and you'll see the Lord changing you and helping you to walk in His righteousness.

Make sure as you live life that you do it with others in mind. Remember Jesus came not to be served but to serve others and to lay down His life for others. You and I are to live the same way in our lives putting the needs of others above ourselves.

Look at verses 19-23 which say ¹⁹**Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.** ²⁰**Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.** ²¹**It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.** ²²**Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he**

approves. ²³ **But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.**

Instead of living with a judgmental attitude and self-righteous or an I'm better than you attitude Paul says to pursue those things that make for peace and mutual edification of one another. That's what the goal should be when we come together.

Yes, there will be people here in the church that may think differently than you do about all kinds of issues but in Christ you and I should see peace and a building up of each other...and please be very careful that you don't allow your freedoms and your convictions in Christ to destroy what Jesus is doing in the life of someone else.

Even if I have freedom to do something I should be fully willing to let that thing go that I might be a blessing to another person...If I'm with a Jewish brother and they can't handle it that I eat pork then guess what? I'm going to lay that pork aside to bless that brother and help them be more near to Jesus...and at the same time if I happen to eat some pork and that Jewish brother or sister doesn't have that freedom they should be willing to say the Word doesn't prohibit it in the New Testament and I have to accept that they may feel differently about it. **And guess what?** I can just abstain from eating that and let God deal with them as He sees fit since He is the judge.

The same goes for the different opinions of what day of the week to worship God. I worship Jesus every day of my life, I just happen to get together with other believers on Thursday nights and Sunday's...I'm not going to look down on you if you happen to worship on a Monday

night...and you shouldn't look down on me for how the Lord has been leading my life.

At the end of the day there are many issues in the Christian life and how we choose to live our lives that the Bible does not spell out exactly how we should handle them...to each person God has given a conscience and each believer has the Spirit of God living inside of them to guide them and teach them. Each of us will be held accountable by the only true Judge who is Jesus.

May you and I be so closely connected to Jesus that we live each day to honor Him and we live each day to honor our brothers and sisters around us.

Well that's where we will close today and listen if you need to accept Christ as your Lord and Savior the Bible says today is the day of salvation and so if you want to receive Jesus in your heart just come on forward during the time of worship of afterwards and I would love to pray with you.

Let's pray

Romans 14:1-23 “It’s Ok To See Things Differently”

Cross References

Verse 1

Titus 3:10-11

Verse 2

1 Corinthians 8:4-8

Verses 10-12

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

2 Corinthians 5:9-10

Verse 13

1 Corinthhains 8:13