# Sermon Highlights

## Living Together in the Family of God:
## Navigating Differences Without Division

**Summary:**

Drawing from Romans 14, this sermon addresses how believers are to receive and relate to one another within the body of Christ, particularly when differences arise over non-essential matters. Pastor Bruce Gordon distinguishes between fundamental doctrines that are non-negotiable, such as the deity of Christ, salvation by grace, and the resurrection, and secondary matters over which sincere believers may disagree. Using illustrations both from the first-century church and from contemporary church life, the sermon calls believers to resist the temptation to judge or despise one another over minor issues, recognizing that every believer is ultimately accountable to God alone. The overarching call is to pursue harmony, build up fellow believers rather than cause them to stumble, and remember that in life and in death, all belong to the Lord.

**Key Points:**

- Believers are to receive those who are weak in the faith without engaging in disputes over doubtful or non-essential matters

- A distinction must be maintained between fundamental doctrines, which are non-negotiable, and secondary issues, which should not divide the church

- The strong believer must not despise the weaker believer, and the weaker believer must not judge the stronger, because God has received them both

- Every believer is a servant of God and will ultimately give an account to Him, not to fellow church members

- Contemporary applications of this principle include disagreements over Bible translations, worship music styles, and the observance of particular days

- No believer lives or dies to himself; all belong to the Lord, which demands a posture of humility and mutual care

- Believers are not to place stumbling blocks in the path of fellow believers, but are called to be a blessing rather than a burden to those around them

**Scripture Reference:**

- Romans 14:1-13 serves as the primary passage, with the sermon noting that the full thought extends through Romans 15:13

- Romans 14:11 is referenced, where God declares that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess to Him, drawn from Isaiah 45:23

**Stories:**

- The first-century issue of meat that had been offered to idols and then sold in the public market is used to illustrate how the strong believer understood freedom in Christ while the weaker believer, often with a Jewish background, struggled to separate the food from its former association with idol worship

- The debate over the observance of the Jewish Sabbath versus the Christian practice of worshiping on the first day of the week is presented as an illustration of how day-related disputes can arise between sincere believers

- Pastor Bruce Gordon uses the example of King James Only advocates versus those who read other translations to illustrate how a secondary matter can become a source of unnecessary division, noting that no major reliable translation denies the essential truths of the faith

- The history of hymnody is used as an illustration, pointing out that every hymn now considered a classic was once new and unfamiliar, and that the same resistance people now show toward contemporary worship music was once shown toward the hymns themselves