

Timeless Truth



ROMANS: CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WEEK FOURTEEN | CASEY SHEFFIELD

TIMELESS TEACHING |

Romans 14

UNITED OR DIVIDED, WHAT DO YOU PREFER?

We have seen in previous chapters Paul telling believers HOW to live out the theology he laid out in Romans chapters 1-11. We are continuing that theme in our text today. In chapter 12 we discussed how the church is one body made up of many members and that we should think about ourselves using sober judgment. Then last week Mrs. June ended her lesson by encouraging us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. We begin our text today immediately following Paul's exhortation to "suit up" or put on Christ. Which I believe is an imperative thing we must do in order to follow the teaching we find in our text today. There are four contrast Paul points out in Romans 14: **Weak OR Strong, Life OR Death, Guilty OR Innocent, Good OR Evil, and Right OR Wrong.**

I. **WEAK OR STRONG (Romans 14:1-4)**

A. **Who They Are (v. 1)**

- Weak—They are Believers in Christ.
- Strong—They are Believers in Christ.

What is so wonderful about both the weak and the strong is not only WHO they are—they are believers—but more importantly WHOSE they are—they are in Christ!

B. **What They Believe (v. 2)**

- Weak—They are bound by certain convictions. They abstain and keep.
 - They had a sensitive conscience and found it difficult to stop following certain aspects of the law.

- They abstained from certain foods that were once considered unclean under the old covenant.
- They kept the sabbath even though they weren't required to.
- Strong—They are free from certain convictions. They partake and give up.
 - They understood the freedom they had in Christ and no longer felt bound by the ceremonial or dietary laws.
 - They partook of foods that were once prohibited by the law.
 - They gave up observing the Sabbath.

--These believers were different. And in some regards were at opposite ends of the spectrum. Paul pointed out their differences, but he didn't condemn them for their differences. Instead, he told them how they should treat each other in spite of their differences.

--God has welcomed each of us. **HE** has accepted **US** as His own. One commentary points out *"The Greek word [for welcome] refers to **personal** and **willing** acceptance of another."* There is no better example of this than Jesus.

- He **personally** took on our sin and **willingly** gave us His righteousness.
- He **personally** took on our shame and **willingly** gave us His glory.
- He **personally** laid down His life and **willingly** gave us life eternally.
- He **personally** calls us to repentance and faith in Him and **willingly** calls us His own.

Because Jesus personally and willingly accepted us we can in turn accept others! And one way we can show our acceptance of others is by how we treat them.

C. How They Should Treat Each Other (v. 3)

- Weak—They shouldn't judge
- Strong—They shouldn't despise

In the first part of verse 3 Paul tells the weaker brother not to judge and the stronger brother not to despise. John MacArthur says: To "despise" is to consider someone as worthless. "Pass judgement" is equally strong and means "to condemn." Paul uses them synonymously: The strong hold the weak in contempt as legalistic and self-righteous; the weak judge the strong to be irresponsible at best and perhaps depraved."

Romans 5:8 says: "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."

HE made the difference in each of our lives and HE makes it possible for us to love each other in spite of our differences. It is not our place to judge our sister or brother in Christ.

D. Who Judges Them (v. 4)

- Weak—The Lord is their Judge
- Strong—The Lord is their Judge

Who better to judge than the Lord? He is perfect, holy, righteous, good, honorable, trustworthy...HE IS. We all must get out of the Lord's way and trust Him to judge. And we can trust He will do it rightly.

II. LIFE OR DEATH (Romans 14: 5-9)

A. What They Think (v. 5)

- Weak—Think some days are more important
- Strong—Think everyday is the same

What Paul is telling believers here in these verses is that no matter what they think or do they need make sure they are **fully convinced**. Meaning they need be sure of their own conscience and convictions and follow them when it comes to things that aren't specifically addressed in scripture.

There are certain things God makes VERY clear in His word. There are certain things that God tells us are non-negotiables. These things we MUST believe and obey. What the bible teaches about sin, what the Bible says about God, salvation, etc. those things are all non-negotiable, meaning what God's Word says about those we are to hold tight to. However, there are some things (like we have seen in our text) that are left up to our convictions.

That **DOES NOT** mean we are free to do whatever we want. One source put it this way: *"Freedom in Christ is the biblical concept of being liberated from the power of sin, the condemnation of the law, and the fear of death, allowing believers to live for God and serve others in love. It is not a license for self-indulgence or sin, but rather the spiritual ability and empowerment to obey God's will and experience true life."*

2 Peter 1:3 says, *"His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness."*

While Paul is telling believers either view and practice concerning important days is permissible he implores them to be fully convinced. In other words, personal convictions are fine to have, but those convictions MUST BE filtered through the Holy Spirit and God's Word.

When considering our convictions we can ask ourselves the following questions:

- Am I glorifying God in and through this? (1 Corinthians 10:31)
—If the answer is no, then it is sin.

- Am I being mastered by something other than the Lord? (1 Corinthians 6:12)
—If the answer is yes, then that is sin.
- Am I taking care of God’s temple? (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
—If the answer is no, then that is sin.

Whatever your convictions, make sure you are fully convinced. Your WHY matters.

Now the question is are you fully convinced that what you are doing is the right thing to do? Ladies, do you live fully convinced?—Ask yourself: “Why am I doing the things I’m doing?”

B. What They Do (v.6)

- Weak—They honor the Lord. They give thanks to the Lord.
- Strong— They honor the Lord. They give thanks to the Lord.

Honoring the Lord should be our motive for everything. When we are following our convictions, we should not only honor the Lord but also thank the Lord.

C. How They Live and Die (v.7-9)

- Weak—They live and die belonging to the Lord.
- Strong—They live and die belonging to the Lord.

What matters in both life and death is that we belong to the Lord. When you belong to the Lord both your life and death will be impacted by it.

In life, He is our purpose and in death He is our promise.

III. GUILTY OR INNOCENT (ROMANS 14:10-13)

A. Where They Will Stand (v. 10-11)

- Weak—They will stand before the judgement seat of God.
- Strong—They will stand before the judgement seat of God.

B. What Account They Will Give (v. 12)

- Weak—They will give an account of their life before God.
- Strong—They will give an account of their life before God.

C. What They Should Decide (v. 13)

- Weak—They should decide not to judge. They should decide not to judge and to never put a stumbling block or hinderance in the way.
- Strong— They should decide not to judge and to never put a stumbling block or hinderance in the way.

IV. RIGHT OR WRONG (ROMANS 14:14-23)

A. What is Right

- For BOTH the Weak and Strong:
 - Obeying God (v. 14)
 - Following convictions
 - Preferring your sister in Christ (v. 15, 21)
 - Serving Christ (v. 18)
 - Pursuing Peace and unity (v. 19)
 - Rejecting sin

B. What is Wrong

- For BOTH the Weak and Strong:
 - Disobeying God
 - Doubting convictions (v. 23)
 - Hindering (tripping) your sister in Christ (v. 20)
 - Destroying the work of Christ (v. 20)
 - Causing discord
 - Accepting sin

WEEK FOURTEEN

ROMANS: CHAPTER FOURTEEN

FOR WE DON'T LIVE FOR OURSELVES OR
DIE FOR OURSELVES. IF WE LIVE, IT'S TO
HONOR THE LORD. AND IF WE DIE, IT'S TO
HONOR THE LORD. SO WHETHER WE LIVE
OR DIE, WE BELONG TO THE LORD.

ROMANS 14:7-8 NLT

DAY ONE

ROMANS 14:1-4 | Weak OR Strong



TIMELESS TRUTH |

ACCEPT OTHER BELIEVERS WHO ARE WEAK IN FAITH,
AND DON'T ARGUE WITH THEM ABOUT WHAT THEY THINK
IS RIGHT OR WRONG.

ROMANS 14:1 NLT

One of the beautiful things about the body of Christ is that, as we have seen in previous chapters, it is made up of many different parts. Those parts represent different people who have come to Christ from all backgrounds and walks of life. In chapter 14 Paul is addressing both Jew and Gentile believers alike, each of which whose culture and past religious experiences have impacted the way they follow Christ now. In our passage today Paul distinguishes between two types of believers: the weak and the strong.

Read Romans 14:1-4

In verse 1 who can we conclude that Paul is speaking to (hint: the weaker or the stronger believer) and what does Paul instruct them to do?

According to the text, what distinguishes the weak from the strong?

In verse 2 the NLT says this: "For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables."

Paul describes the weaker believer as having a _____ conscience.

What warning does Paul give about the stronger believer? The weaker believer?

Stronger: _____

Weaker: _____

The key thing we need to understand in this text is whether “weak” or “strong,” we are talking about believers. BOTH have trusted in Jesus as their Savior and BOTH are true followers of Christ. While today we may not struggle with whether eating meat or abstaining from it (except for maybe where losing weight is concerned) is the right thing to do there are still “issues” we face in today’s culture that can be very divisive and potentially cause our fellow believers to “stumble”.

What are some of those issues we face today? List them below:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

The things that you listed above—are they sins against God or are they convictions you personally hold to? Whatever those issues are that you listed above we must be quick to recognize them for what they are using God’s Word as our standard. We must also remember that as believers we are on a journey with the Lord. Each of us are at differing levels/stages in our sanctification. Paul is telling us to be aware of where we are in our walk with Christ but to also be aware of where other believers are in their walk with Him and not judge them because they aren’t “doing as you do.”

What does Paul ask the believers at the beginning of verse 4?

We must also ask ourselves that same question—Who are we to judge our sister (or brother) in Christ?

Who does Paul say will judge each believer (whether weak or strong)?

Who is both the weak and the strong believer’s Master? _____

How are believers able to stand when they are judged (v.4; see also Romans 8:1)?

It is not our place to judge anyone, especially other believers. We must leave that up to the Lord. Take a moment and go before the Lord ask Him to reveal any judgmental spirit within you.

PRAYER MOMENT |

Ask the Lord to help you be more aware of your weaker brother, to give you a heart of compassion toward them and to show you ways to prefer them over yourself.

DAILY REMINDER |

Whether weak or strong the Lord loves and accepts those He has redeemed. We need to love our brothers and sisters the way the Lord loves and accepts us.

FURTHER READING |

Philippians 2:1-18

*So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.
35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.*

John 13:34-35

DAY TWO

ROMANS 14:5-9 | Life OR Death



TIMELESS TRUTH |

FOR WE DON'T LIVE FOR OURSELVES OR DIE FOR OURSELVES. IF WE LIVE, IT'S TO HONOR THE LORD. AND IF WE DIE, IT'S TO HONOR THE LORD. SO WHETHER WE LIVE OR DIE, WE BELONG TO THE LORD.

ROMANS 14:7-8 NLT

Read Romans 14:5-9

To understand what Paul is talking about we must look back to the Old Testament. Under the old covenant Christians were required to obey and keep certain laws, ordinances and practices. Paul refers to two of those in our text today—keeping the Sabbath and the eating of unclean foods. These regulations were put in place by God for several reasons including: to set Israel apart from other nations, protect God's people, reveal man's sin, reveal God's character and ultimately point to Christ. When Jesus came into the picture it changed everything.

Read the following verses concerning the impact that Christ's death had on the law:

Galatians 2:16, Galatians 3:24, Romans 8:3-4

Summarize, in your own words, what these verses are saying:

Hallelujah! We are no longer bound to the law, but free in Christ! We can live freely because of Christ's atoning sacrifice which was offered once for all (**Hebrews 10:12, Romans 6:10**). Let me be clear. That DOES NOT mean we are free to do whatever we want. One source put it this way: *"Freedom in Christ is the biblical concept of being liberated from the power of sin, the condemnation of the law, and the fear of death, allowing believers to live for God and serve others in love. It is not a license for self-indulgence or sin, but rather the spiritual ability and empowerment to obey God's will and experience true life."*

Concerning our text, the issue Paul was confronting was the differing convictions between believers:

- *The weaker believers* believed certain days were more sacred than others and abstained from certain foods that were thought to be unclean under the law.
- *The stronger believers* believed that every day is the same and all foods are ok to consume.

The point Paul was trying to get across is that, as one commentary puts it, “Both views are permissible. Each person must follow his own conscience.” The guiding question in all of our lives should be **WHY? Why are we doing IT (whatever “IT” may be)?**

Re-read Romans 14:6-8

What reason does Paul give for why we should do the things we feel convicted to do (v.6)?

Before we go any further I want to make it abundantly clear—pertaining to what is permissible vs. what is not permissible—there are things that God considers non-negotiable. Those non-negotiables are considered sin. Another way to think about it is: What’s right is right and what’s wrong is wrong. When it comes to sin there are no gray areas. **Romans 3:23** tells us **“Everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.”** According to this verse, sin is missing the mark. God’s standard is perfection—which none of us are nor are we able to live up to it. God has given us standards to live by (i.e. the 10 commandments). When we do not live up to those standards, whether it be by disobeying God’s commands or rejecting His word, we sin. Any sin is not permissible according to God’s standard.

However, according to our text there are some things that are permissible and every believer has their own convictions concerning them. Let’s use modesty as an example. Imagine with me there are two Christians with differing views on modesty. Christian #1 believes women should only wear dresses all the time because they feel convicted that showing their legs is immodest. Christian #2 believes modesty is important but has no issue whatsoever wearing pants or even descent length shorts.

So who’s right?

Some may say Christian #1 is right, others may say Christian #2 is right, and yet others may say both or neither—it all depends on convictions. The reality is we are all on a journey with the Lord. Some of us are further along than others. While some Christian ladies feel convicted that they should only wear dresses others may not feel convicted about it at all. What matters is their heart and whether or not they are honoring the Lord in their choice—if they are being convicted or not.

Our **WHY** is so important. Think about your own life, your own convictions on certain things, and answer the question below:

What is your WHY? Why do you do the things you do or why do you not do the things you don't do?

(More plainly stated—Why do you do certain things and not do others? Think certain shows you watch or don't watch, music you listen to, places you do or don't go.)

We must continually check our motives using God's word and the Holy Spirit as our guide.

Read Hebrews 4:12.

How does this verse describe God's Word?

What does it say God's Word does?

Now read 1 Corinthians 2:11-16.

What does this passage tell us about the Holy Spirit and His role in our life?

Aren't you thankful we have the Holy Spirit to guide, direct, and show us God's Truth?!

As we close our lesson today let's turn back to Romans 14:7-9.

Read verse 7-9.

What do these verses tell us about how believers are supposed live and die?

What does verse 9 say is the purpose for which Christ died and rose again?

What does that mean?

The truth is when we became believers our lives were no longer ours, but His. He is our Creator, Redeemer, Father, Master, Judge, Savior and Lord! We live (and die) for HIM.

PRAYER MOMENT |

Thank you Lord for your Word. Thank you for giving it to us as a guide for us to live by (Psalm 119:105). Thank you that in both life and death that you are Lord over all.

DAILY REMINDER |

Follow your convictions but make sure those convictions a filtered through God's Word and the Holy Spirit.

FURTHER READING |

Galatians 5:13-26

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

DAY THREE

ROMANS 14:10-13 | Guilty OR Innocent



TIMELESS TRUTH |

...DECIDE INSTEAD TO LIVE IN SUCH A WAY THAT YOU WILL NOT CAUSE ANOTHER BELIEVER TO STUMBLE AND FALL.

ROMANS 13:13 NLT

Read Romans 14:10-13

Paul begins our text with two straightforward questions. He asks, “Why do you...”

- 1.) _____
- 2.) _____

He follows up those questions with a reminder. What does he tell believers to remember?

Let’s take a moment and see what God’s word says about judging others. Write down the important truths that are found in these verses in the space provided below.

Matthew 7: 1-5:

Luke 6:37:

John 8:7:

Titus 3:1-11:

2 Corinthians 5:10:

1 Samuel 16:7:

Verse 12 in our text tells us that we will each will give a PERSONAL account to God. Not an account of our friends or our enemies' lives, but *our own personal account* concerning *our own personal life*! As many of the verses above pointed out: God is the Judge, we are not.

Instead of condemning each other, what does Paul encourage us to do instead (v.13)?

Why do you think we condemn others?

Do you find yourself ever judging your brother or sister in Christ? If so, why?

Look at the last part of verse 13.

What does Paul mean when he says, “live in such a way that you will not cause another to stumble and fall”?

Is that difficult or easy for you to do? Why or why not?

Read verse 13 one more time. Pay close attention to the second part of that verse.

Did you notice what it said? The NLT says: “**Decide instead...**”, other translations say: “*Instead decide...*”, or “*Rather decide (or determine) ...*” No matter what translation you use it is clear we all must decide to “*live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall.*” Meaning— **we have to choose.** The way in which we live our lives as believers is a choice we make every day. And there are only two choices—are you going to choose to live controlled by the Spirit or controlled by the flesh?

Read Galatians 2:20 and Matthew 16:24-25.

What do these verses tell us?

What does that mean?

If we “decide instead” to live with our flesh crucified and take up our cross and follow Him we can be certain we won’t cause another believer to stumble because we will be walking and living in the Spirit—right in step with HIM. We will be doing what He wants us to do. Saying what He wants us to say. Living how He wants us to live—that is true freedom!

PRAYER MOMENT |

Ask the Lord to reveal any specific ways you may be causing someone to stumble. Confess those to the Lord. Ask Him to help you to change your ways and be more aware of those areas and how they impact others in your life.

DAILY REMINDER |

"Walk worthy of the calling you have received." Ephesians 4:1

FURTHER READING |

Pertaining to judging others read the following biblical accounts of 2 special women:

Woman at the Well- John 4:1-30; 39-42

Woman who anointed Jesus- Luke 7:36-50

*It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict,
God's job to judge and my job to love.*

Billy Graham

DAY FOUR

ROMANS 14:14-19 | Eternal OR Temporal



TIMELESS TRUTH |

LET US AIM FOR HARMONY IN THE CHURCH AND TRY TO BUILD EACH OTHER UP.

ROMANS 14:19 NLT

There is nothing the enemy would like more than to cause disharmony in the church. As believers we must strive to live in unity and fight against allowing the enemy to divide us.

Read Romans 14:14-19

What does Paul know?

Why is he (or what makes Him) convinced?

While Paul believes that no food is wrong to eat, he also recognizes that if someone believes (or feels convicted) it is wrong to eat then for that person it would be wrong.

If someone feels that certain things are wrong what advice does Paul give to those who feel different?

According to verse 16, how can a strong believer “ruin someone for whom Christ died”?

What does the phrase “ruin someone for whom Christ died” mean?

How do we see that happening in our world and /or the church today?

As believers we mustn't just say we love each other, but we must also act like we love each other. One of the ways we do that is by preferring our brother or sister over ourselves, even if we don't agree on certain issues. Paul further expounds upon what he is saying by putting everything into perspective.

Read verse 17.

What does Paul tell believers about the Kingdom of God in this passage?

Read Matthew 6:33 and Colossians 3:1-17

Oftentimes we as believers get caught up in the temporal things of this world instead of living for the eternal. Satan loves to distract us, keep us busy and redirect our attention to temporal things (e.g. what we eat or drink). One of the ways he distracts us is with pettiness. We've all been there—we make a mountain out of a molehill and we wonder why none of our Christian friends join us on the climb. Or maybe they do, but they seem to be just as miserable as we are. Take a minute to fill out the columns below: **THINGS THAT ARE TEMPORAL** vs. **THINGS THAT ARE ETERNAL**. If you cannot think of any examples of your own spend some time looking in God's Word.

THINGS THAT ARE TEMPORAL:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

THINGS THAT ARE ETERNAL:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Now let me ask you—What are you living for? The temporal? Or the eternal? May each of us live with an eternal perspective not a worldly one. As Paul ends this chapter, he encourages believers to strive for harmony and build one another up.

How do we aim for harmony (or peace) in the church?

Why is harmony in the church so important?

What are some ways we can build each other up?

Is there anyone in your life right now who needs to be built up?

What are some ways you can help build them up even this week?

We should continually look for ways we can build each other up in the faith. If we keep our focus on what is eternal instead of what is temporal, we will begin to see our brothers and sisters how the Lord sees them.

PRAYER MOMENT |

Pray and ask the Lord to give you an opportunity to build someone up in the faith this week.

DAILY REMINDER |

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Look full in His wonderful face

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim

In the light of His glory and grace.

EXTRA TIME |

2 Corinthians 4

DAY FIVE

ROMANS 14:20-23 | Right OR Wrong



TIMELESS TRUTH |

IF YOU DO ANYTHING YOU BELIEVE IS NOT RIGHT, YOU ARE SINNING.

ROMANS 14:23 NLT

The end of Romans 14 sums up what Paul has been saying throughout this chapter. He encourages believers to remember. He also gives an important warning about sin. Let's look at our text to see what Paul tells his readers to remember.

Read Romans 14:20-23

Paul begins this chapter with a strong declaration. What does he tell the believers he's writing to?

The phrase *tear apart* literally means to destroy.

Verse 20 reveals something very important for all believers to take note of. Our personal convictions have the potential to "*tear apart the work of God*". Even if our convictions are "good" if not followed for the right reasons and in the right spirit they can become tools in the hands of the enemy. Paul goes on to say it is better to abstain from anything that will make another person stumble, in fact he says it's wrong if you do.

Has there ever been a time in your life when someone caused you to stumble? If so, what happened?

How did it make you feel?

Read verse 23

What is Paul saying in this verse?

Have you ever had doubts about something (concerning your convictions), but ignored them? If so, how did that situation turn out?

What does Paul tell believers they are doing if they're not following their convictions?

So the questions is: what is right and what is wrong? In our text today and throughout this entire chapter, we see that both the strong and the weak have the potential to hurt one another. For the strong, just because something seems right to them doesn't mean their weaker sister has the freedom or same conviction. And as result the stronger believer should not cause their weaker sister to stumble because if they do that it is wrong. For the weak, even if they abstain from something that may be considered permissible abstaining is the right thing for them to do if they are convicted about it. And on the flip side if they do not hold to their convictions and they, as verse 23 puts it, "*do anything [they] believe is not right*" they are wrong and it is sin.

Ultimately, as believers in Christ we have the gift of the Holy Spirit and God's word. We must know, follow and obey both. If we do, we will be living right and we won't do wrong.

PRAYER MOMENT |

Ask the Lord to help you to listen to and follow your convictions. Ask Him for the Holy Spirit's help to be able to discern what is right and wrong.

DAILY REMINDER |

“Never doubt in the dark what God has told you (or shown you) in the light.” -Unknown

EXTRA TIME |

As you have time, read back through Romans 14, ask the Lord to speak to you and allow the light of His word to illuminate your heart and mind. Respond to His leading and prompting as He speaks to you.

If the Holy Spirit guides us, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

-George Muller