

Romans 14:1-12 "Each of Us Will Give An Account to God"

Romans 14:1-11 ^{NAU} Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but* not for *the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions. ² One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*. 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. 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. ⁵ One person regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. 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. ⁷ For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 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. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. 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. ¹¹ For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD."

As we come to chapter 14 we must keep in mind that it is on the heels of the previous chapter which had as its 2 main themes, our submission to governing authorities, and loving our neighbors which is the fulfillment of the law.

And with respect to that, our behavior should be conducive to living in the Spirit, not in the flesh, or the old nature. And therefore, Paul's admonition in Rom 13:14 "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

This same idea of clothing ourselves with Christ runs throughout Paul's letters as we see for example in Gal 3:26-27 "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

This speaks of two things.

1) It speaks of being given a new righteousness which only God can give through Christ, and which is the only righteousness acceptable before God for our salvation. Job spoke of this righteousness in Job 29:14 "I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban."

In other words, the clothing came from outside of himself, but he accepted it as his by faith in God who gave such righteousness as a garment which covers our sinfulness.

2) It also speaks of a new desire to walk in His righteousness in His power.

Eph 4:22-24 "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

Col 3:9-10 "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."

The idea here is that now that we have a new life in Christ that new life must begin to show itself to be vibrant because it is Christ working in and through us to make that life able to bear fruit.

And so, Paul is showing us that we now have the ability to make the choice to turn away from the former life and begin walking in the new life by the power of the Spirit. We have no excuse to do anything less.

That doesn't mean the struggle will ever leave us in this present world in making the proper choice. However, it does mean that we can be victorious for our Lord to honor Him as we choose Him and reject self and its desires, always relying on the life in the Spirit which He gives.

With this as a backdrop Paul now moves to demonstrate in chapter 14 that there will always be varying degrees of Christian maturity in the church and how we are to deal with these people who seem to be less than mature.

This doesn't pit the mature against the immature. In fact, Paul warns those who claim to be mature not to act as immature Christians in the way they deal with those who may be babes in Christ.

Rom 14:1-3 "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. 2 One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him."

Here Paul warns both groups, the mature and the immature. And he begins by warning the mature to accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.

A number of things need to be pointed out here. It is possible for a true believer to have a weak faith and still be as justified in the eyes of God as the person who is the pillar of Christian maturity. The only thing that makes us acceptable in the eyes of God is not our maturity or lack thereof, but the blood of Christ which cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

And so, you can have an apostle Paul who is that pillar of Christian maturity, to whom we all look up to, but his redemptive position before God is no greater than the struggling Christian who has placed his faith in the same Christ whose blood has promised to redeem him as well.

And so we need to understand that up front. Paul says there are weak Christians in their faith, but we must accept them as Christians, not for the purpose of passing judgment on disputable matters, or as the NAS puts it, not passing judgment on their opinions.

The KJV has it, 'doubtful disputations', while the NKJV has it, 'doubtful things'. Don't pass judgment on things which are opinions of different people except where Christ has expressly authorized it.

Let me touch on that for a moment. There are those in the church who feel that no Christian should ever judge another brother or sister in Christ. Who are we?, they say, to judge another and try to take the speck out of another's eye, when we may have a log in our own.

And that's very good biblical advice as it pertains to doubtful things, or opinions; things which the word of God allows us to see from the eyes of liberty in Christ. However, when it comes to things that are not doubtful, or things that are not mere opinion, according to the word of God, then judgments must take place.

For example, in Mat 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."

To show someone their fault necessarily means that you had to make a judgment. You had to make a judgment that there was a fault. The difference however, takes into consideration that the fault was defined by the word of God.

And so, if you know that a brother or sister is stealing then you need to go to them in love, and you need to point out what God says on the matter and exhort them to repent.

However, if you have an opinion on what kinds of foods to eat, that you have very strong convictions on before the Lord, and you go to someone and demand they eat just like you, you've now stepped over the bounds, because God's word tells us that no food is unclean.

That's the kind of thing Paul is talking about here. He's not saying that legitimate biblical judgments should never take place, but when it comes to matters of opinions outside the clear teaching of God's word, we must show some restraint and give leeway for those opinions without going to war over such matters.

By the way, don't ever think that Paul goes soft on sin by overlooking matters which demand a judgment, according to the word of God. You need only look to the 16th chapter when he says in Rom 16:17 "I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them."

He's talking about people within the Body of Christ. If that isn't a judgment I don't know what is. But in our text Paul is addressing something different. In fact, he's addressing things like eating certain foods, and observing certain days as holy.

Now from the text and the kinds of situations Paul brings up, it seems apparent that he has in mind the Jews who had such convictions.

Rom 14:2-3 "One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him."

Here are two Christians who do not see eye to eye regarding the eating of meat. They have different opinions on this. The one man, whom Paul describes as having a weak faith, eats only vegetables, and by implication, the other who has a strong faith eats anything.

Now don't confuse this with today's practice of someone being a vegetarian for health purposes, unless of course that individual looks down on you because you're not a vegetarian.

What was happening in Paul's day was that some of the Jewish Christians would not eat meat because they knew that in many Pagan societies the meat was often sacrificed to idols. They didn't want to associate themselves with such practices.

And so, instead of accidentally eating such meat, they figured it would be safest not to eat any meat at all. On the other hand those Christians who understood that there is only one God and that no matter how much meat was offered to these false gods the mere use of words or incantations over a piece of meat didn't make it or you inherently evil or demonic.

And so you've got these two groups arguing over this matter. 'If you come over to my house for supper you're only going to get veggie-burgers.' The other would say, 'that's stupid, how can a piece of meat be tainted by some Pagan ceremony?' 'Meat, it does a body good.'

Here's the problem with such matters. The stronger in the faith may be quite right concerning this matter of meat. And the scriptures certainly allow the eating of meat, even meat sacrificed to idols, although even there certain cautions must be used so as not to cause another brother or sister to sin because of such freedom.

However, the weak in faith also have the freedom not to eat that meat. And they too, have the freedom only to eat vegetables. The situation Paul addresses is in the judging of others concerning their opinions on such matters.

And here both groups; the weak and the strong in faith, are lumped together as weak if they continue to judge like this. What Paul basically says in verse 3 is that if God has accepted both weak and strong Christians, why can't you accept each other in these matters and not bite and devour each other over such stupid things?

Rom 14:4 "Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand."

In these types of matters we do not have the option to judge because their master has not judged them. And here their master is the same; Jesus Christ. And in this verse the implication is that both the weak and the strong must stand before their Master. And both will be able to stand, because it is their Master, Jesus Christ, who is able to make them stand.

It's easy for us to fret over the weak in faith, thinking that if we don't do something for them they will never be able to stand. Don't forget we did not give them life in the first place. Jesus Christ gave them life. Don't you think He's infinitely more concerned over the weak and the strong than we are?

And in such matters of differing opinions He is able to help both groups work through it if we will look to the Master of both groups who have only one Master and Lord and Savior.

I knew of a church who was split down the middle and who ended up going to war over the decision as to what color of carpet should be installed in the sanctuary. One group wanted green, the other wanted blue.

When the decision was made those who wanted the other color ended up leaving that congregation. Paul would have addressed such a situation in a way that showed how immature both groups were despite the maturity of those in each group.

These are not matters to split over and again going back to the previous chapter we must remember Paul's words in Rom 13:8,10 "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. 10 Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

And if both the weak in faith and the strong in faith are seeking to love their God above all then their ability and desire to love their neighbor will become a reality. But as if the eating of food were not enough, how about which day to observe as holy?

Rom 14:5-9 "One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for

he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living."

Again, it would seem apparent that Paul has in mind here the observance of Jewish holy days which many of the Jews observed after becoming Christians.

Charles Hodge in his commentary on Romans makes this observation: "As the law of Moses not only made a distinction between meats as clean and unclean, but also prescribed the observance of certain days as religious festivals, the Jewish converts were as scrupulous with regard to this latter point as the former. Some Christians, therefore, thought it incumbent on them to observe these days; others were of a contrary opinion. Both were to be tolerated."

It was not unusual for Paul to go to great lengths to observe certain Jewish festivals and holy days after coming to Christ by faith.

Act 21:26 "The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them."

For Paul these were personal matters which enabled him to worship God during those festivals which he understood to point to Christ. But he never felt obligated to add those Jewish observances as necessary to his salvation.

Nor did he put that burden on any other believer. In fact, he went so far as to tell the Galatians, some of whom wanted to re-introduce the law into their Christian faith, that they were wrong to force others to observe such rituals as a necessary part of their salvation.

Gal 5:4-6 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."

Again, this doesn't mean that a Christian couldn't observe a Jewish holy day as a means of worshipping God, as long as they understood that it had nothing to do with adding to their salvation or that others must feel obligated to observe such days.

And, keep in mind here, that the even the Lord's Day, which was celebrated on the first day of the week, which is Sunday, is not intrinsically any holier than any other day with the exception that it was set aside by the apostles as the day that was traditionally the day all believers came together to worship the Lord collectively.

There is no particular mandate in the word of God to force someone to worship only on Sunday, or Saturday, or any other particular day of the week, but because of the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week it became important to have a day where the consensus was to meet with the entire church where everyone had some sort of stability in the time in which they looked forward to worship God together.

And the operative phrase in my last statement is to force someone to worship on a particular day.

This is why Paul could say in Rom 14:5-7 "One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone."

Let me just say here, that in the coming together on the "Lord's Day" we not only honor the resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ, it also acts in a pragmatic way where at some point someone decided that since the church is commanded to worship together that a particular day of the week made more sense than another. And that day for the early church followed the example of the apostles who identified the first day of the week as that day.

But back in our text we read in verse 7 we read, "None of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone." In other words, we are not our master and we are not at liberty to set our own agenda according to our own wills. We belong to the King of kings who has purchased us with His very life. We do not belong to ourselves.

Therefore, we must follow our Master and His will according to his word. If His word allows us to have freedom in certain areas then our consciences may allow us to follow those desires as long as we do not force our conscience on someone else who may share another opinion.

If however, that opinion crosses the line from acceptable opinion to unbiblical behavior then we must be willing to come back into conformity to the clear teaching of God's word.

Every area of our lives must be measured by His word and our motivation should come from an understanding of how He has loved us despite our sinfulness, and in turn we should love Him above all by following Him and giving our full allegiance to Him.

Rom 14:8-9 "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living."

This aspect of God's authority has been lost with many Christians. Some feel that they can receive Jesus as Savior and not as Lord. But God will have none of that.

Paul says in Rom 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus ***our Lord.***"

The giver of eternal life, our Savior Jesus Christ, is the same one who must be accepted as Lord.

Rom 10:8-9 "But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," [Deut. 30:14] that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: 9 That if you confess with your mouth, ***Jesus is Lord***, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

We don't have the option to accept Him as Savior and not accept Him as Lord. But what does it mean to accept Him as Lord as well as Savior?

The word Lord in the Greek is *Kurios* and it is associated with Supreme authority. God alone is our Supreme authority. And here Paul equates Jesus as being that very God with all authority which by the way was promised to the risen Christ.

Jesus Himself, said this after His glorious resurrection from the dead.

Mat 28:18 "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

What this should do is to help us see Jesus, not just as a benevolent Savior Who died that we may be forgiven of our sin, but also as the Holy God He is, who has all authority over our very lives, and who desires to bring us into conformity into His image.

That means that we must have the same desires He had which was to do the Father's will. If He is our Lord and Savior then our wills will begin to come into conformity to His will which is to please the Father in all things.

One of those things has to do with loving the world He came to save. And that's why, just after He told the disciples that all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth in Mat 28:17, He then said in Mat 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The problem Paul addresses in our text is that if we are so busy judging each other on such petty issues as what we should be eating and what particular day we should honor, then we'll never have time to get to the weightier issues of life and death and glorifying Christ in this world.

And this is what Paul has in mind in Rom 14:10-12 "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" [Isaiah 45:23] 12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God."

Every one of us in Christ will stand before our Lord in the righteousness of Christ and yet every one of us are commanded to bow the knee in submission as we love God above all and our neighbor as ourselves. In cases of liberty leave the judging to God because He makes both the weak and the strong able to stand.

There's work to be done for Jesus, our Savior and Lord. And His love for us and in us should be the motivation to seek to please Him and obey Him and go forward taking the love of Christ and His gospel to a dying world who needs to know this loving God and Savior.

Go in His grace and strength and peace, and live as people who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.