

**Considering Others in the Body**  
**Romans 14:1-23**  
**(Lesson #24)**



As we come to Romans 14 Paul is going to take up **two different topics**.

- 1) **Food and drink**, in particular, Jewish food laws.
- 2) **Festival days**, in particular the weekly **Sabbath**.

In support of our lesson today, I would like you to role play. I want you to imagine yourself as a 40-year-old devout Jewish person. Six months ago, while in Rome, you became convinced through the sharing of a Jewish friend that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and you have joined a small group of people who like you have placed faith in Jesus. Some, like you, are formally devout Jewish men and women, some are pagan Gentiles who have come to Jesus. Today at your home church meeting you are continuing a review of this amazing letter that the church received from the apostle Paul. Although you did not personally know Paul, you have heard a great deal about him. He was a Hebrew, from the tribe of Benjamin, prior to coming to Christ he was a Pharisee. His knowledge of the Old Testament and how it teaches the Messiah is amazing! You can hardly wait; you have learned so much as the believers have worked through this letter.

You are meeting again, tonight at home of Priscilla and Aquilla and you can hardly wait to continue to learn more about Jesus from this amazing letter.

Some verses that you have obeyed your whole life:

*“12 ”Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 15 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.” (De 5:12-15 ESV)*

You have never forgotten:

*“32 While the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. 33 And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation. 34 They put him in custody, because it had not been made clear what should be done to him. 35 And the LORD said to Moses, “The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.” 36 And all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, as the LORD commanded Moses.” (Nu 15:32-36 ESV)*

Food:

*“1 ¶ And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, 2 ”Speak to the people of Israel, saying, These are the living things that you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth. 3 Whatever parts the hoof and is cloven-footed and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. 4 Nevertheless, among those that chew the cud or part the hoof, you shall not eat these: The camel, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. 5 And the rock badger, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. 6 And the hare, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. 7 And the pig, because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed but does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. 8 You shall not eat any of their flesh, and you shall not touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you. 9 ¶ ”These you may eat, of all that are in the waters. Everything in the waters that has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers, you may eat. 10 But anything in the seas or the rivers that does not have fins and scales, of the swarming creatures in the waters and of the living creatures that are in*

*the waters, is detestable to you. 11 You shall regard them as detestable; you shall not eat any of their flesh, and you shall detest their carcasses. 12 Everything in the waters that does not have fins and scales is detestable to you. 13 "And these you shall detest among the birds; they shall not be eaten; they are detestable: the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, 14 the kite, the falcon of any kind, 15 every raven of any kind, 16 the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind, 17 the little owl, the cormorant, the short-eared owl, 18 the barn owl, the tawny owl, the carrion vulture, 19 the stork, the heron of any kind, the hoopoe, and the bat. 20 "All winged insects that go on all fours are detestable to you.*

*46 This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground, 47 to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten." (Le 11:1-47 ESV)*

**For our role pay: You have always (as far back as you can remember) been a devout Jew, but you see that Jesus is the promised Messiah and you have placed faith in him.**

**You can hardly wait for the next installment of the letter from Paul!**

*"1 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. 2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. 4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

- 1) One person, the strong person, the believer without Jewish food prohibitions, believes he may eat any and everything.
  - a. This is the liberty that we have in Christ.
  - b. We are not under the Mosaic law (Rom 7, Gal 3)
- 2) The other person, the weak person, the Jew who has trappings of his/her life in Judaism is only eating vegetables, due to the situation they are in.

Weak and strong, but all brothers, all who have placed faith in Christ, all for whom Christ has died.

**Now, let's think about this. Who is the one weak in faith? The one who is enjoying the liberty they have in Christ, or the one, who is imposing additional rules beyond those that Christ has imposed?**

**Who is the one right?**

**Vs 1** - So Paul opens with a discussion about people who are "**weak in faith.**" At this point we are not exactly sure who these people are, although I have already told you and you will see it develop.

So, in reference to those who are weak in the faith:

- 1) We are to **welcome them**. It is to receive them, it is to bring them into our lives. This is a **present tense imperative (command)**, receive and keep receiving those who are weak in this and similar areas.
- 2) We are not to **quarrel about opinions**. So this weakness in the faith, at least in some cases can come with a **strong opinion on certain matters**.

**Vs 2** – So the initial dividing along weak and strong first has to do with **food**.

- A) One group believes: **we may eat anything** (this is the **strong person**).
- B) The other group Paul says: **while the weak person eats only vegetables**

Scholars agree that these are Jews who have converted to Christianity who still have concerns about **Jewish laws involving food**.

Likely, because they cannot verify that the meats sold in the market have not contacted forbidden meats, were properly drained of their blood, and have not been offered to idols, they shifted to eating vegetables.

We saw Daniel do this very thing:

*“But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king’s food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.” (Da 1:8 ESV)*

*“Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.” (Da 1:12 ESV)*

No doubt, some Jewish Christians, living in Rome would have seen themselves in the **exact same circumstance** as Daniel and his friends, and thus would have taken the **exact same step**.

**APPLICATION: What is the difference they were missing?**

**APPLICATION:** I do not want to **offend anyone**, so if what I say offends you, please forgive me. But I want you to consider something. The stronger person is not the person who **makes up additional rules**. **That is the weaker person. The strong person is one who exercises their liberty in Christ, yet does not cause others to stumble and does not sin themselves.**

**Vs 3** – Paul gives two simple and clear commands, that require very little additional information: The strong should not **“despise” look down** on the weaker brother or sister and the weak should not **“pass judgment”** on the stronger brother or sister.

**Now when Paul writes, pass judgment, he means to declare and determine the motives of their heart, he means to declare and determine sinful or holy. YOU are not to pass JUDGMENT, on our brothers and sisters in Christ.**

But, you and I make judgments all day long... As free moral agents of God, as moral functioning humans we **MUST**. But we do not pass judgment on our brothers and sisters in Christ. That is God’s realm, that is God’s business.

**Vs 4** – Likely speaking to the weak (although the point applies to all), who are you to pass judgment upon another man’s servant. **Again, who do you think you are looking at a believer, based on something on the outside and passing judgment?**

**This is wrong for a number of reasons, let me give you a few.**

- 1) The **most obvious**, although we are to judge all things, we do not pass judgment on other people, sinful or holy. The first and most obvious reason, **we are commanded not to**.
- 2) **We cannot see the heart**. We only see the outside.
- 3) You and I are not the judge, **we are not God! It is the Lord who is the judge and who shall judge His people! (Heb 10:30)**

**Quick rabbit trail:** We talked about this last week; I want to make sure we are all in the same place here. What should we do if we see a brother or sister overtaken in a sin?

*“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” (Ga 6:1 ESV)*

So this requires us to **look at what is happening**, make a **judgment that it is wrong**, not pass judgment on our brother, but **make a judgment that it is wrong**, then go to that person (not passing judgement) but **seeking to restore**.

**Can I give you one more?**

*“The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.” (1Co 2:15 ESV)*

**One more? (last one I promise):**

*“14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.” (1Co 10:14-15 ESV)*

**We are to make judgments of right and wrong, but not pronounce eternal judgment on a person who does something that is wrong or that we do not agree with.**

The word translated slave is the Greek word is **οικέτης (oiketes)**.

It is the word that means a **slave who serves in the house**, a domesticated slave. The most intimate type of slave, one who serves your wife and children, even while you are away.

**Here is Paul’s point: The servant stands or falls before his actual master, not before you or me! AND, the Lord will cause him to stand...**

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*5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we 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 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? 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 confess to God.” 12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

**Vs 5-6** - Here Paul shifts **his discussion** from what a person eats, to the calendar and the esteeming of some days above other days.

Of course, this is about the Jews who had **festival days** that they held in high honor, but more importantly, at least for them, it is the keeping of the Sabbath. Honoring Saturday (Ex 20 and Deut 5).

The Jews has been keeping (on and off) the Sabbath from the time of Moses to today.

**Next, Paul says something that would have been shocking for the Jewish Christian! Be convinced in your own mind, no longer a command.** Reminder: the believer is no longer under the Mosaic law (Rom 7, Heb 7, Gal 3).

**ESV Study Bible:** *“What us remarkable is that the Sabbath is no longer a binding commitment for Paul but a matter of one’s personal conviction.”*

The one who honors certain days should do so in honor of the Lord. The one who is concerned about what he eats, should do so in honor of the Lord. The one who abstains, should do so in honor of the Lord!

Here is how Paul explained these two issues to the church in Colossae:

*“16 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. 17 These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” (Col 2:16-17 ESV)*

### **Vs 7-8 - Here is the larger issue!**

It is not about the things we do, that were only shadows of things, **but instead about living our lives to Christ and for His glory.**

Live or die, we are the Lord's, we should do what we do for **His glory!**

*“for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” (1Co 6:20 ESV)*

**Vs 9** - He lived and died for us, He lives again for us. He is Lord of all!

Live for Him!

**Vs 10** - Here Paul reminds us, that rather than passing judgment on our brothers, we should recognize that God is the ultimate judge, and we will all stand before His judgment seat! He is the ultimate judge.

All will stand before the **judgment seat of God!** This is the judgment or the **βῆμα (bema)** seat of God.

This word is used 12 times in the New Testament and normally refers to an earthly ruler's throne. (Pilate, Herod, Gallio, Felix, or Caesar). It is only used once to refer to God's bema seat (here) and once to refer to Christ's bema seat (II Cor 5:10).

Paul says, in reference to Christ's **βῆμα (bema)** seat:

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” (2Co 5:10 ESV)*

Some believe God will replay every sin, there at the bema seat. Some believe God will distribute rewards, there at the bema seat, while some believe this is a principle that all must stand before Christ's bema seat, you can do so today, or you can do so at the end.

**Vs 11** - To solidify his point, Paul quotes (Is 45:23) with slight modifications:

*“By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.’” (Isa 45:23 ESV)*

**Regardless of exactly what you believe about the bema seat, in this context, Paul's point seems to be that everyone will stand before it and everyone will bow the knee. You can do so now or later, but you will do so.**

**Vs 12** - This is a future tense reality that each of us will “**give an account**” of ourselves to God. **The Greek word is λόγος (logos), we will give a word or a saying about ourselves to God.**

*13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. 15 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. 16 So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.*

**Vs 13 - Vs 3, Vs 4, Vs 10, Vs 13...** This is the **fourth time** that Paul has warned us about **passing judgment on one another**.

Here he says, we should rather decide. **NEVER to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a fellow believer!**

As you consider what he might mean, the good news. He is going to explain.

**Vs 14** - Now this is the death nail, along with other verses to the **keeping of days** and the **eating of certain foods**.

**Clean and unclean foods are a uniquely Jewish issue and idea. This makes it crystal clear that what Paul is talking about is Jewish food laws and clean and unclean per the Torah.**

I would remind you:

*“46 This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground, 47 to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.” (Le 11:46-47 ESV)*

Paul is pursued that within itself, nothing is unclean... As it once was under the Mosaic Covenant.

**ESV Note:** *“Christians are no longer under the old covenant, hence Paul no longer accepts the view that some foods are unclean.”*

**Vs 15-16** - If, I use my freedom to eat anything I want, in such a manner as to offend my brother or sister in Christ. I have missed the whole point and **I am not walking in Love! This remains the real issue of applying the deep theology of Romans. Love!**

Reminder:

*Ro 12:9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.*

*Ro 12:10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*

*Ro 13:8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.*

*Ro 13:9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

*Ro 13:10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

**If love is the summation of God's law. Then to act unlovingly is a violation of the sum and substance of God's law as it relates to human relations!**

Surely, we do not want our diet to injure a brother who does not yet understand the liberty we have in Christ (ICor 8:6-9)!

Equally, verse 16, do not let what is right, appear to be evil! **We do not want the liberty of the gospel, the goodness of the gospel to end up being spoken of as evil!**

**Vs 17-18 - The kingdom of God is not about food, it is not about drink.**

It is about righteousness bestowed upon us by Christ, it is about being at peace with God through the sacrifice of Jesus, it is about joy, true joy that only comes from knowing you are in a right standing with God through the sacrifice of His Son for your sins!

Put all of this into practice in serving Christ, and you will be acceptable (pleasing) to God and accepted by men.

**Vs 19 - Here is the sum!** Pursue not what food you eat, or what you drink, or how you honor Saturday.

Instead, pursue all those things that make for peace and mutual uplifting or upbuilding. Let's work on those things that are mutually edifying.

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*20 Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. 21 It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. 22 The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. 23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin."*

**Vs 20 -** Here again, Paul is clear, **in the New Covenant all foods are clean**, and again, this statement has no connection to anything from history if Paul is not talking about Jewish food laws.

But we do not want to damage a brother, or cause a sister to stumble because of what we eat or drink.

**Vs 21 -** If eating meat or drinking wine might cause you brother to stumble, do not do it!

Do all things in love.

**Vs 22 -** His idea is hold to the faith that you have and keep it between yourself and God.

Or even closer, the **personal convictions that you have, keep those as a faith matter between you and God.**

**Where there is freedom, live there. Where you see a place, you should not go**, even though the Bible does not clearly say that. **Then do not go there.**

**APPLICATION:** After I became a Christian, I quit going to a certain restaurant with my friends from the submarine, not because I had a Bible verse that said do not go there, but because I had the personal conviction, that I should not go there.

So, I have not been there since. But I do not super-impose my conviction on others.

Follow your nonbiblical convictions on your own. Hold them between you and God. Do not force them on fellow brothers.

**Vs 23** - If we go against **our conscience**, we are not acting in faith, and thus it is sin.

**Our own conscience condemns us.**

If you feel like you should not have a TV in your home, do not have a TV. But understand, God is probably not saying that to everyone else.

If you feel like you should not eat pork, do not eat pork, but understand, God is probably not saying that to your brother or sister.

**Love one another, that was the whole point of every law that involved your fellow man, do not cause you brother to stumble, obey God, follow your own convictions but do not impose them on others, do not sin against your conscience.**

**Love one another, consider one another, do not cause one another to stumble and do not judge one another.**

**As you do these things you are fulfilling the intent of the Royal Law as it relates to human interactions.**

Or as Paul said in Phil 2:3

*“3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Php 2:3-4 ESV)*

**Paul on this matter to the church in Corinth:**

*“23 "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. 24 Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. 25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. 26 For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." 27 If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. 28 But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience — 29 I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience? 30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks? 31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.” (1Co 10:23-33 ESV)*

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