

Romans Chapter 14
New American Standard Bible®

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Paul's Teachings on Love:

- Love must be serving – we are given spiritual gifts in order that we might serve each other. Love must be genuine – not phony or sham. (Chapter 12).
- Love must be submissive to the authorities God puts in place over us. Love must be universal. We must love everyone, regardless "Owe no man anything, but to love one another". (Chapter 13)
- Love must be patient and tolerant of other people's views. (Chapter 14)

Romans Chapter 14

¹Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

We will find ourselves in situations where (in our opinion) those we meet are weak in faith. We are to be accepting of them and not judgmental of their opinions.

All of us are brothers and sisters in God's family and we owe our brothers and sisters consideration. We certainly may not have chosen them as members of the family, but it pays to remember that the Lord did make the choice and He chose them (as surely as He chose us at some point in time). All of us have probably found ourselves in situations where we were at obvious disagreement with some brother or sister regarding a scriptural or theological point. Most likely we also have been of the opinion that we are as certain that they are wrong and we are that we are correct. In 14:1 of Romans, Paul directly addresses our desire to straighten out those who are "less of the faith" or "weaker in the faith" than we are in these circumstances. He is very much to the point in what he teaches. We are to accept the opinions of others and not pass judgment on their beliefs.

Does this make them (their opinion) correct?

No, but we need to be accepting of it and we should not pass judgment on what they believe.

²One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. ³The 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.

Observant Jews lived under extremely tight food restrictions – no pork – no mixed dairy and meat – Lamb must be Kosher – no mixed cooking of lamb in a cream gravy. As I understand, their dietary restrictions required them to have separate kitchens for meat and dairy, and so on. For a Jew to eat meat was a strictly controlled dietary undertaking. Paul was above all, an observant Jew; a "Pharisee among Pharisees". For him to sit down at a meal where the entrée was a BLT would have been an interesting thing to observe. Understanding this, he still writes that some have "faith that he may eat all things" and that this is acceptable, even though the faith of another may limit his food to vegetables (only). IN stating this, Paul reminds us that we did not accept anyone. God did. Nor are we to judge them for the faith of their culinary dietary beliefs.

Paul does not directly mention it here, but within the Roman Empire, there was considerable controversy regarding eating meat that had been sacrificed to pagan gods. As he stated elsewhere, Paul taught that eating meat from a butcher shop that obtained the meat from sacrifice was a matter of faith and not open to criticism or judgment.

The Apostle Peter faced exactly the same decision in confronting his vision of the cloth lowered from heaven (Acts 10), resulting in his understanding that, "What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unholy." (Neither food or person).

It is not difficult to extend this to any one of a number of concerns we hold today:

- Should we drink wine and beer?
- Should we go to the movies?
- Should we dance?
- Is it bad to play cards?
- What about those who work on Sunday?

There are scriptural absolutes (Do not commit adultery. Do not become a drunk. Do not take the Lord's name in vain, and others), but for many things we argue and use to separate ourselves from others, there simply are no hard rules in scripture, so what do we do?

We follow our faith and allow others that same option, not judging the state of their understanding of the truth (their strength in the faith). It seems reasonable about many things to ask, how can we pronounce a judgment of "Yes" or "No" when God doesn't? The fact is that many/most things are not judged by God in Scripture and depend on our strength or weakness in understanding the truth of scripture to determine the appropriateness of action or belief.

This is what Barclay writes in his commentary on Romans:

Such a man is weak in the faith for two reasons:

(i) He has not yet discovered the meaning of Christian freedom; he is at heart still a legalist; he sees Christianity as a thing of rules and regulations. His whole aim is to govern his life by a series of laws and observances; he is indeed frightened of Christian freedom and Christian liberty.

(ii) He has not yet liberated himself from a belief in the efficacy of works. In his heart he believes that he can gain God's favor by doing certain things and abstaining from doing others. Basically he is still trying to earn a right relationship with God, and has not yet accepted the way of grace. He is still thinking of what he can do for God more than of what God has done for him.

³The 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.

The strong (in faith) is not to look down on the one who is still struggling and weak in faith. That is what we are to remember here. It has much more to do with that than the suitability of a BLT Vs a tomato salad. The opposite is also true. In short, we are not to judge each other.

⁴Who 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.

The reason we are not to Judge each other is that we are not responsible for the actions of others (no one died and left us to be God). My thought is that I need to be much more concerned with my life than the lives of others. Our

brother is not our servant, so we have no right to expect to be able to judge their actions. They are a servant to the Lord and only the Lord has the right to judge them. The Lord chooses us and has the responsibility for judging and changing us.

Paul points out here that the Lord will make us stand (change us or make us suitable to Him). If we are really doing wrong, the Lord will take care of the problem. It is not the responsibility or right for others to do what is the Lord's responsibility for those he chooses (His servants). Not only is changing us the Lord's responsibility, he is quite capable of making changes in the lives of his servants.

The Phillips translation states this thought very well here when he writes:

"God is well able to transform men into servants who are satisfactory."

⁵One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶He 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.

Not only is it God's business to change us, He sees what others may not be able to see in His servants, because he sees what is in the heart. The simple fact is that God can read hearts where we can't. God understands the differences in viewpoint that we can't. Although we may not be able to see and understand, we need to realize that people have honest, sincere viewpoints based on their understanding of what God wants from them. If we can understand this, we also need to understand that we will differ on what we believe and need to honor the beliefs of others (correct or not).

It is interesting that Paul says both the man who sets one day apart as special and the other man who sets all days as the same (all important) are equal, as long as they both honor God. These things become matters of honoring God. They are seen as a question of what the heart is doing in the eyes of God. Perhaps we sometimes are too harsh in our criticism of one another in these areas.

⁷For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; ⁸for 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.

Our relationship with each other is more important than our lifestyle. No one lives by himself alone and no one dies by himself alone. We live and die for the Lord, because we who are called belong to him. Whether we live or whether we die is not the important thing. The important thing is that we belong to the Lord.

In short, we are brothers and sisters. We do not serve each other and do not belong to each other. We belong to the Lord. We are his servants and he will deal with us as he sees fit since he is the one who has the right to judge and change us.

⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. ¹⁰But 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. ¹¹For it is written,

**"AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME,
AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD."**

¹²So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

Christ alone has the right to Judge us – no one else. He paid for this right and it belongs to him alone. We have no right to do what Christ has paid for and it is wrong when we try.

¹³Therefore let us not judge one another anymore,

This statement covers the first 12 verses of Chapter 14.

So, if we are to not judge or attempt to change our brothers and sisters, what are we to do with them?

but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

We are to do our best to not cause them to stumble or trip up on our beliefs and actions. We are to avoid putting obstacles in their way.

¹⁴I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Paul has had a long time to come to his understanding of the attitude of Christ regarding the acceptability (cleanliness or un-cleanliness) of the things he encountered. He does recognize however that not everyone will have his understanding. Simply because he sees anything as acceptable (in itself) does not mean that others will have the same view or belief.

Wine, a BLT, a pork chop, dancing, singing, whatever, in itself is neither clean nor unclean. However he understands that others may not take the same attitude. There is an entire set of questions at play here.

¹⁵For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. It needs to be pointed out that some might say a glass of wine each day will help with heart health. This absolutely would be a bad decision for those with alcoholism. To insist that an alcoholic take a drink is foolishness. It is the same with many other things and Paul writes that we need to be careful and considerate of others, understanding that we do not have the right to insist that they hold the same attitudes as we do.

When we were kids, there was a shortcut we used to cross a deep ditch that ran through our subdivision. The shortcut saved us a couple of hundred yards, but it involved walking a 10 inch water pipe that crossed the ditch. Walking the pipe was no trouble at all, except that one of our friends could not keep his balance well enough to make it across the pipe and always fell. What seemed easy for us was very difficult for him. To insist that he follow us across the pipe (now – if not then) was a cruel thing to do. It showed very little consideration for him and a lack of love on our part. Perhaps it was a push for us to take a chance on destroying him (with the pipe) for whom Christ died.

Paul uses food in his message, but as I think about what Paul wrote, other things we do (take for granted) seem equally important. We need to remain concerned for our brothers and sisters - that those things that spiritually seem to make perfect sense are not beyond their ability to understand and cope with. We need to remember that it is not always love to insist that others move at our pace of comfort.

¹⁶Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;

The next thing that Paul writes is that regarding some spiritual things, we need to stand firm. There are certain scriptural and spiritual doctrines we need to stand fast and refuse to allow others to force a change in our belief and attitude. We yield and show acceptance on some things, but not everything. Simply because someone else thinks a good thing is evil does not necessarily make it so.

¹⁷For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

What is the kingdom of God? Is it eating and drinking? Or is it righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit?

Righteousness, peace, and joy go together. They are gifts of God. They do not come from us. They are gifts that come from Him. As we live in righteousness (doing what is right in God's eyes – walking humbly with God with a sense of worth that comes from doing what is right in God's eyes) peace (that inner calmness, regardless of what is happening externally) and joy (a delight in life that always finds life worthwhile, even though it may be filled with problems) we find that three things happen:

- 1 – We serve Christ – our Lord and Master
- 2 – We find acceptance with God – Our goal as his children
- 3 – We are approved by men – they will see and acknowledge that we really are different.

¹⁹So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. ²⁰Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. ²¹It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. ²²The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. ²³But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

We get upset about the most minor of things (food, drink, nutrition, dress, petty, minor, childish things) and cause others to stumble, when if we showed concern to their feelings and beliefs (out of love), we would strengthen our relationship and keep from being the reason a brother or sister might stumble. Given the opportunity to build others up, we choose to have our way for the moment, insist that they change their way, permanently, and tear down the work of God (that all would come to Him) for the sake of minor things.

Our Faith is our conviction before God. Paul reminds us that Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. We need to act on our faith, because that keeps us from sinning.

Faith and Sin

²³... whatever is not from faith is sin.

We need to act and live by our faith and trust that if that actually is our Goal, God will make it right for us.