

## Romans 14:1-12

### Introduction

Soon after embracing Christ, new believers often find themselves embroiled in disagreement; often about things that are somewhat secondary and ordinary.

The Christians, to whom Paul wrote in Rome, did not agree about the type of food they were eating and the specific days that certain members of the church considered special. These seemingly mundane issues were connected to the doctrines of justification and Christian liberty (**2LBC 21.1-3**), which were also connected to the ethical and moral imperative that Paul had given to be kind and love one another (**Rom 12:10**).

Heeding Paul's counsel was, and is, is vital for the life and doctrine of the church.

### Summary

**In Romans 14:1-12, Paul wanted the Roman Christian to understand that their ordinary lives were still connected to their extraordinary salvation and that the seemingly mundane issues with which they struggled were connected to important and fundamental doctrines, such as justification and Christian liberty.**

#### 1. Conflicting Opinions vv. 1-4

Paul begins chapter 14 by addressing the conflict that existed between those he labeled the 'weak' and 'strong' (**Rom. 14:1-3**). Seemingly, there was a group within the Roman congregation that believed consuming meat was sinful, so they ate only vegetables. Paul labeled these Christians as weak. They struggled to accept the clear teaching of Scripture that all food, vegetables and animals, were made by God and therefore were good and legitimate for consumption (**1 Tim. 4:4**). God had lifted the ban on eating unclean foods (**Mark 7:19; Acts 10:11-16**). Another group in the church, however, had no problem eating meat. Paul labels this group the strong because they had a robust faith that enabled them to eat both meat and vegetables.

The apostle does not berate those who had weak faith. Neither does Paul tell these weaker brothers simply to accept the fact that they are wrong and to ignore their stronger brothers. Paul instead draws out the implications of what it means to love one another-to consider the needs of others more important than our own (**Rom. 12:10, Phil. 2:3**). He instructs the stronger brothers to receive and accept the scruples of their weaker brethren.

Paul bases his exhortation to the strong on the grounds that God Himself has received the weaker brother into the body of Christ. If God Himself has received the weaker brother then who is the stronger brother to refuse to accept him? It is important to note that scruples cover what Paul says are “opinions” (14:1; 4). True love will exercise kindness to those who are weak in their faith, and true love will show deference to those who are strong in theirs.

## 2. Living to the Glory of God vv. 5-12

Paul expands these basic principles and addresses the issue of the observation of special days (Rom. 14:5-6; Col. 2:16-17).

Once again Paul instructs his recipients to love one another, not for the Strong to crush the Weak. Rather, they were supposed to respect one another's convictions. Paul did not advocate relativism or doctrinal indifference, as he clearly indicates that there was one group who was 'weak in faith' and another that was strong. The Apostle would eventually want the weaker brothers to strengthen their faith and become like the Strong but as is often the case in the church, the Strong want the Weak to embrace the truth immediately.

Whether as pastors or members, the weak, or the strong, the congregation at Rome was to understand the ground on which they all stood (Rom. 14:7-8).

If all in the church have been purchased and redeemed by Christ then they all belong to and serve Him (Rom. 14:9). Christ is the foundation both for their love for one another as well as their mutual respect and acceptance of their convictions.

In his effort to exhort them to a mutual love for one another, Paul reminds his recipients that they all must give an account (Rom. 14:10-12).

Paul rebukes the church at Rome because, in their effort to live out their lives concerning opinions, they engaged in censorious behavior.

They harshly judged one another.

Paul applies this indictment against both groups.

The Weak likely looked down on the Strong for consuming meat and the Strong likely looked down on the Weak for failing to eat meat.

In all matters of the Christian life, whether in explicit matters of doctrine or over opinions (doubtful things), Paul reminded his recipients that all of them would stand before the judgment seat of Christ and account for their actions.

If this is the case, then whether weak or strong, both groups were supposed to worry about their own conduct rather than engage in the judgment of others, something that was the strict prerogative of Christ alone.