

**Romans 14:1-12, pt. 2**  
*Refusing to Judge Other Christians*

Last week, we began to look at Romans 14

- This passage deals with preference issues

We defined preference issues as those that have no bearing on salvation

- Matters in which we can disagree

We noted that the apostle Paul sided with the strong, on a theological basis

- He had no problem eating meat
- He had no problem celebrating days

But this does not imply that he looked with scorn and ridicule at the weak

- Nor does it imply that he would always exercise his liberties around the weak

In 1 Corinthians 8, the apostle Paul discusses the issue of eating meat that was offered to idols

- Paul understood that the idolatry didn't contaminate the meat
- But he also understood that not every believer would agree with him

So he wrote these words, “**But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble.**” (1 Cor 8:9-13)

There is a danger of abusing our liberties

- Showboating them in front of those who may disagree with us

This is a very unloving thing to do

- Especially to someone who is a fellow believer and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ

The apostle Paul is concerned that the believers at Rome not judge one another on preference issues

- Don't judge your fellow Christian about eating (14:2-4)
- Don't judge your fellow Christian about celebrating days (14:5)

This morning, we continue to examine this topic of preference issues and how we should treat those who differ from us

**Let's read Romans 14:6-12**

This morning, we will continue looking at this topic with two main headings

- Don't judge your fellow Christian about motives (14:6-8)
- Don't judge your fellow Christian because God will judge each one (14:9-12)

## I. Don't judge your fellow Christian about motives (14:6-8)

As hard as you might try to determine, there is no way that you can ascertain someone's motives

- That is because we can't see someone's heart
- Only the Lord has the ability to discern motives

Listen to what the author of Hebrews says about the power of the Word of God, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Heb 4:12-13)

What a needed reminder this is!

- God's Word is able to discern our motives
- No creature is hidden from God's sight

So when it comes to preference issues, there is a strong, strong warning

- Don't try to judge someone's motives!

To illustrate his point, the apostle Paul goes right back to the two issues that we discussed last week

- Eating meat vs. not eating meat
- Celebrating various days vs. not celebrating those days

### 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord,

The person who opts to observe a certain day "observes it for the Lord"

- "for the Lord" is a very important phrase in this chapter

Notice the repetition in the following verses

- 14:6 – three times, "for the Lord...for the Lord...for the Lord"
- 14:8 – three times, "for the Lord...for the Lord...the Lord's"

We are overwhelmed with the realization that certain matters are done "for the Lord"

- Not for self
- Not for show

In Romans 14:6-12, "Lord" is used nine times

- 9 uses in 7 verses!

This helps us to answer the question, "Is it possible to observe certain days with a right motive, to honor the Lord?"

- The answer is, Yes!

This doesn't mean that it is always with a right motive

- But it is possible nonetheless

In Colossians 2:16, the apostle Paul writes, "Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day"

- We can't judge another person for one simple reason
- We don't know that person's motives!

Can you imagine rebuking someone over a preference issue

- Only to find out that this person had the right motive of honoring God?

and he who eats, does so for the Lord,

Paul continues by examining the issue of eating

- Specifically, eating meat

The person who eats “**does so for the Lord**”

- This individual seeks to honor the Lord

So it is possible that the person who eats meat does so with a pure heart motivation

- One of glorifying the Lord

The apostle Paul told the believers at Corinth, “**Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**” (1 Cor 10:31)

- What you eat – can be done for the glory of God
- What you drink – can be done for the glory of God
- Whatever you do – can be done for the glory of God

for he gives thanks to God:

The meat-eater has a right motivation because, as verse 6 points out, “**he gives thanks to God**”

- This person is a thankful person
- He/she is grateful

We know that being thankful is a good thing

- As a matter of fact, it is part of God’s will for our lives
- “**in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus**” (1 Thess 5:18)

Also, in 1 Timothy 4:4, Paul tells young Timothy, “**For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude**”

So is Paul insinuating that non-meat-eaters are not living for God?

- Is he saying that non-meat-eaters have ulterior motives and are unthankful?
- Certainly not

Verse 6 continues by looking at the non-meat-eater

and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat,

The person who chooses not to eat meat – for whatever reason – his motive is given as well

- “**for the Lord he does not eat**”

Notice something very important

- Both individuals – the meat-eater and the non-meat-eater – have the same motive
- Both have the motive of pleasing the Lord

This helps to answer the question, “Is God more pleased with eating meat or not eating meat?”

- God is more concerned with your motive than anything

This goes hand-in-hand with what Duen has been teaching in the book of Zechariah

- Whether or not the Jewish people should continue to celebrate various fast days was not the most important issue
- It was their motive for wanting to do so

and gives thanks to God.

Also notice here in verse 6 that both individuals – the meat-eater and the non-meat-eater – “give(s) thanks to God”

- Both are grateful!
- Both are thankful!

The apostle Paul puts before us both the differences and the similarities between the two groups

- They differed with their preferences about eating and celebrating days
- But they had the same motive

This is why it is always wrong to try and figure out why someone did something

- Because ultimately, we don’t know

Even our best guess is just that

- A guess

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

Verse 7 is such an important verse when it is understood in its context

- The context of preference issues

It is easy to think that the way in which I live my life is my business

- In other words, I shouldn’t have to be concerned how my life affects others
- But that is a dangerous mindset

The reality is that the manner in which I live my life greatly affects others

- It affects my own family
- It affects this local church
- It affects the testimony of Christ

Think about how you would answer this question

- What do you live for?

Don’t assume that you know the answer to that question

- Examine your time
- Examine your finances
- Examine your thoughts
- Examine your loyalty

In Philippians 1:21, Paul wrote these simple words, “For to me, to live is Christ”

- Paul lived for the glory of God
- Paul lived for the pleasure of God
- Paul lived for the approval and applause of God

How about you?

- Every one of us here is living for something

To live a self-centered life is not the choice of the Christian

- We are called upon to live for the purposes of God

Sin would lead us down a path of self-centeredness<sup>1</sup>

- Becoming insular

How simple the Christian life is when we boil it down to one fundamental truth

- I exist to please God<sup>2</sup>

Think of how simple this would help us in our decision-making

- In our family
- In our workplace
- In our community

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.

The apostle continues the contrast between life and death here in verse 8

- In either situation, the result is the same
- We live or die “for the Lord”

This is a comprehensive term encompassing our entire lives

- We are either living or dying!

In living, how can the Christian have the right motives?<sup>3</sup>

- Our thoughts
- Our actions
- Our ambitions
- Our decisions

But how can we honor the Lord with our death?

- Trusting that His time is not our time
- Trusting that He has our days numbered, and we need to live every day as if it was our last

The Christian is assured that nothing can separate him from the love of God

- We remember these comforting words from Romans 8, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth,

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 482.

<sup>2</sup> William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Romans*, 459.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NICNT, Romans*, 844.

nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (8:38-39)

Death is not the end of the Christian life

- It is simply a transition to eternal life

We may be apprehensive about the manner in which we die

- But we have no need to fear the reality of life after death

Physical death will simply usher us into the very presence of Christ

- We will be with Him forever
- Never to be separated from Him

As Paul wrote in Philippians 1:20, “Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”

- Whether in life or death, Paul wanted God to be exalted and honored

God has absolute and sovereign authority over life and death

- We are either living or dead
- In either case, “we are the Lord’s”

That we belong to Him goes back to earlier teaching from the book of Romans

- We are in an eternal union with Christ
- We are “in Christ”!

**You shouldn’t judge your fellow Christian about**

- **Eating (14:2-4)**
- **Celebrating days (14:5)**
- **Motives (14:6-8)**

## **II. Don’t judge your fellow Christian because God will judge each one (14:9-12)**

9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Verses 9-12 give the theological foundation why it is wrong to judge another Christian

- God, not us, will be the One to judge His people

The Gospel can be summarized around the life, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ

- His perfect, sinless life
- His substitutionary death on the cross
- His actual burial due to a physical death
- His literal and bodily resurrection from the dead on the third day

Jesus had to live before He died

- He had to die before He could be resurrected

Because Christ died and rose again, we are told in verse 9 that He is “Lord both of the dead and of the living”

- He is Lord!

Christ’s Lordship isn’t limited merely to His own people

- He is Lord over all creation

As a matter of fact, one of the earliest confessions of faith was simply, “Jesus is Lord.”<sup>4</sup>

Five times in the Bible, Jesus Christ is referred to as the “**Lord of Lords**” (Deut 10:17; Ps 136:3; 1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14; 19:16)

- There may be others with limited power and sovereignty
- But there can only be One with unlimited power and sovereignty

As we will see in verse 11, there will be a future time in which every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord

Through the death of Jesus Christ, He purchased the Church with His own blood<sup>5</sup>

- Thus, we belong to Him
- We have been bought with a price!

Because of Christ’s death and resurrection, Romans 14:9 tells us that Christ is “**Lord both of the dead and of the living**”

- Christ has always been Lord in one sense

But specifically through His death and resurrection, He has been given universal dominion and sovereignty

- Not just over believers
- But over all of creation

If we think about this from the greater to the lesser, Paul’s point really hits home<sup>6</sup>

- Christ is Lord over the living and the dead, right?
- Christ is Lord over all creation, right?

Since these two are true, Christ is certainly Lord over the preference issues as well

- Whether we eat meat or not
- Whether we celebrate days or not

Everything – and everyone – comes under His Lordship

- This is why we dare not judge our fellow Christian

**10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt?**

So if Christ is Lord, where does that leave us?

- Certainly not in a position of lordship

This is why Paul revisits this issue of judging your fellow Christian

- It is wrong to do so because God has not entrusted judgment to us

Paul uses the same two words “**judge**” and “**regard...with contempt**” that he used before

- The weak Christian would be the one to “**judge**”

The strong Christian would be the one to “**regard...with contempt**”

- It implies a condescending, judgmental attitude

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<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur NT Commentary, Romans 9-16*, 283.

<sup>5</sup> Everett F. Harrison, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Romans*, 146.

<sup>6</sup> Morris, 483.

The weak is tempted to judge the strong<sup>7</sup>

- The strong is tempted to scorn the weak

Both attitudes are wrong

- Both individuals are not loving their neighbor as themselves
- Rather, they are both assuming that they are right and the other is wrong

In both instances, Paul uses the term “**brother**”

- Both the weak and the strong Christian are still part of the family of God

We are a spiritual family

- We should be looking out for the interests of our fellow Christians

Any time that we judge or treat our fellow Christians with contempt, we are guilty of premature judgment<sup>8</sup>

- Thinking that we know enough to decide what’s right and wrong

There is a sinful boldness that we must reject in wanting to judge our brother

- Because when we do so, we rob God of the right that is exclusively His<sup>9</sup>

In judging others, we may find that God will judge us for our critical spirit

- God will evaluate us in the future day of judgment

“Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men’s* hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.” (1 Cor 4:5)

We must understand that the Bible never forbids discerning examination on the part of one Christian to another

- But this is far different from an attitude of judging

### **Let’s turn to Matthew 7**

- Many people have used this verse to say that Christians are not to be concerned with the lives of other Christians

Jesus says in Matthew 7:1-2, “**Do not judge lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.**”

- That seems rather straightforward

Jesus goes on to say in verses 3-5 that we should be careful about seeing the small issues in the lives of others

- While we ourselves have huge issues in our own lives

Drop down to verse 15 where Jesus discusses the issue of false prophets

- “**Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.**”

If we were told never to examine the lives of others, how would we be able to identify false prophets?

- We couldn’t!

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<sup>7</sup> Harrison, 146.

<sup>8</sup> Alan F. Johnson, *Everyman’s Bible Commentary, Romans*, 246.

<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans*, 501.



We must be discerning

- We dare not believe everything we hear around us

But does this apply only to false prophets?

- Should we have a “hands off” approach when it comes to believers?
- I don’t think so

In Matthew 18, Jesus tells us how to deal with a sinning brother

- How do we know that this individual is sinning?

Sometimes we have to go after a sinning Christian and privately rebuke him/her

- That requires us to examine his/her life

The process of Biblical restoration continues, if the sinning individual does not repent

- Rebuke in private
- Rebuke in the company of two or three witnesses
- Rebuke in the context of the church

But what if the sinning person doesn’t repent after the three steps?

- Listen to Jesus’ words, “**And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.**” (Mt 18:17)

Notice something very important

- Jesus doesn’t say, “If the sinning individual doesn’t repent after three steps, then he/she is an unbeliever.”
- Jesus says, “**let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer**”

In other words, we are to treat that person as an unbeliever

- Why?
- Because he/she is acting like an unbeliever

Have there been cases where a person has been disciplined out of the church, only to realize their sin, repent, and be welcomed back into fellowship?

- Thanks to God’s grace, yes

But we also have to admit that there have been cases where a sinning individual is disciplined out of the church, never to return

- In that case, we are to treat that person as an unbeliever
- But we can’t say, “Well, that means that he/she never was saved.”

I think that is the truth that we learn from the NT

- We can’t look at someone and know if he/she is a Christian

We have to leave these matters with God

- Because only He knows the heart
- Only God knows the true status of a person’s relationship with God

But in no way does this mean that we should not care about a person’s actions, habits, and manner of living

- If I see a person sinning, out of love, I need to go and talk to that person
- I need to express my concerns in a private manner

Paul reminds us in both questions of verse 10 of the reality that we are part of the same spiritual family

- Bringing the essence of unity back into the discussion

### For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.

This last phrase of verse 10 is very somber and serious

- It is yet another reminder of why it is wrong to judge our fellow Christians

Don't miss the power of these words, “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God”

- “all” – in the Greek language, this word means ALL
- No exceptions!

Here in Romans 14, this is called “the judgment seat of God”<sup>10</sup>

- In 2 Corinthians 5:10, it is called “the judgment seat of Christ”

It is yet another critical reminder of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ

- He wasn't just a good man
- He wasn't just a good teacher
- He was the unique God-Man!

What exactly is this “judgment seat”?

- Who will be there?
- What will be the basis of judgment?

First of all, the “judgment seat” is for believers only

- We won't be judged for our salvation
- Because we have already been saved through Christ

Unbelievers won't be at the judgment seat of Christ

- They will appear before Christ just before eternity begins

Believers will be evaluated on how they have lived the Christian life<sup>11</sup>

- Rewards will be given for faithfulness
- Rewards will be forfeited for unfaithfulness

### 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.”

Here in verse 11, Paul quotes from Isaiah 45

- Listen to the words of this prophet, “Declare and set forth *your case*; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me. Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*.” (45:21-23)

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<sup>10</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale NT Commentaries, Romans*, 233.

<sup>11</sup> William R. Newell, *Romans: Verse-by-Verse*, 509.

The NT version of this is found in Philippians 2:9-11, “Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This is universal language, designed to include everyone

- Every knee should bow to Me
- Every tongue shall give praise to God

The bowing of the knee is a sign of homage and respect

- A lesser acknowledging a greater

The tongue giving praise to God is a sign of mutual confession

- Acknowledging that God is worthy of praise, honor, and glory

Think of all the self-proclaimed atheists who have ever lived

- Think of all those who have followed various cults
- Think of all those militant dictators

Every single one of them will bow the knee and give praise to God

- What a sight that will be!

As believers, we bow the knee and give praise to God now

- But in the future, every single created being will bow the knee and give praise to God

There will be no exceptions

- This won't be voluntary
- This will be mandatory

## 12 So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

In the future, every person will “give account of himself to God”

- This is a financial term, indicating the opening of the accounting books<sup>12</sup>

You might even say that God will perform a spiritual audit on every individual

- He won't need to discover information He doesn't know
- He knows everything

On the future day of judgment, I won't give an answer for you<sup>13</sup>

- You won't give an answer for me

On that day of evaluation for believers, we will all stand solo before the Lord

- He knows us perfectly

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<sup>12</sup> Morris, 484.

<sup>13</sup> Alva J. McClain, *Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace*, 235.

In John 5:22, we are told that God the Father “has given all judgment to the Son”

- In Acts 17:31, we are told, “He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead”

You see, I am forbidden from judging you

- And you are forbidding from judging me

Because our judgment is

- Partial
- Biased
- Imperfect

But God’s evaluation will be

- Complete
- Unbiased
- Perfect
- Righteous

Think of the warning that Paul was giving to these believers

- They were being critical of each other because of preference issues
  - o Eating meat vs. not eating meat
  - o Celebrating days vs. not

Satan must be laughing when he sees fellow Christians arguing over such superfluous matters

- When there are much bigger issues to deal with

If we really consider the weight of this final evaluation, our focus won’t be on other Christians

- It will be on own our hearts

We need to live the most God-honoring lives that we can

- God will evaluate our words
- God will evaluate our thoughts
- God will evaluate our motives
- God will evaluate our actions
- God will evaluate our affections

As Christians, we share so much in common<sup>14</sup>

- One aim – to live for the glory, honor, and applause of God
- One Lord – Jesus Christ
- One common judgment seat – both the weak and the strong will undergo Divine evaluation

Let’s not focus our efforts on preference issues

- But on proclaiming the Gospel
- On exalting the Savior
- On equipping the saints

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<sup>14</sup> McClain, 236.