

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to the book of Romans 14

Once again, we are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this amazing letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to believers in Rome – and by extension, to us today – about the Gospel of grace.

That our salvation, our sanctification, our glorification – it is all by grace

God did all the work – He initiated the work; He executed the work – He sent His Son to die for us – to pay a debt that we couldn't possibly pay.

He continues to do the work in us and through us and will continue to do the work as He makes us more like Jesus and He has promised to finish the work He started.

He is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

We simply receive it by faith

We embrace it

We live it

And for the last few months – in our studies – Paul has provided for us what our only logical response is.

This is the practical portion of Paul's letter

(Romans 12:1) By the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

And part of that service – is to serve those that God has gathered us to fellowship with.

God has equipped ever believers with giftings to be used to serve one another, to love one another, to complement one another – as we all have different giftings.

Paul uses the illustration - We are one body – with separate parts – we all have different functions within the body.

And as we begin a new chapter this morning – Paul is going to remind us that whenever you gather people together – there is going to be friction.

Some old dead dude once said -

*To dwell above with saints we love - O, that will be glory.*

*But to dwell below with those we know - Well, that's a different story!*

And it is so true –

Even though the gathering of the saints is encouraging and wonderful – there is going to be friction.

It is not a matter of if there will be friction but when will there will be friction

Sometimes we are the ones that cause the friction and sometimes the friction is caused by someone else.

And often times – that friction is caused by the clash of differing attitudes and opinions.

Different convictions –

And many times – these attitudes, opinions and convictions are related to grey areas of in scriptures that if we are not careful and exercise discernment - lead to division within the church.

It leads to the opposite of what our response to grace should be.

And so - how we respond to that friction is so vitally important.

This is what Paul is going to remind of this morning –

Let's pray...

Read Text

In our studies – in Ch 13

Paul tells us that being a follower of Christ means being committed to a tough-minded love and devotion to one another.

This is something that happens as we abide in Jesus and as we walk in the Spirit.

This is something that happens as we cast off the works of darkness and we put on Christ

But if we are not abiding in Jesus, if we are not walking in the Spirit – certain things about each other will begin to irritate us.

Such was the case – for the believers in Rome.

Jew and Gentile worshipping side by side

The distinctions that mark the believers – slave, master, rich, poor – they are left at the door where they assemble – they are one.

But there was a controversy that was threatening to tear them apart

It had to do with certain grey areas where people differed in their opinions.

One area is over the issue of what you eat or can't eat.

The other issue is about what day you think is the best for worshipping God.

So let's take a look at the first one.

The eating of meat –

Not just any meat – but meat that has been offered up to idols.

Let's look at our text -

[Rom 14:1-13 NKJV] 1 **Receive** one who is **weak in the faith**, [but] not to disputes over **doubtful things**.

The primary way the early church understood the call to love one another was in the realm of hospitality.

They knew they were to be hospitable,

To open their lives, homes, & resources to welcome & bless others.

Paul directs us to show warm, welcoming affection,

That is what the word receives means.

We are to receive not just our pals – not just our brothers and sisters who share the same opinions we do and the same convictions we do –

We are to receive those who are weak in the faith as well.

Now – notice that Paul refers to these individuals as weak in the faith and not weak in faith.

There is a big difference –

A new believer – is weak in faith

But one could be a believer for 20,30 or 50 years and still be weak in the faith.

It is the individual who gets caught up in the disputes over the gray areas

By the way – I had you make a note of doubtful things – that is in reference to the gray areas.

A "gray" area is one where the Scripture doesn't specifically forbid a certain thing. Some people take it one way, others take it another way.

People have different opinions about these things.

More important, they have convictions about them and then they try to push those convictions upon others -

That is what a person who is weak in faith does – they get a bad case of the “supposed to”

A Christian is not supposed to have tattoos and piercings

A Christian is not supposed to go to a party or drink wine

A Christian is not supposed to dress like that

A Christian is not supposed to go to the movie theater

A Christian is not supposed to listen to secular music

A Christian is supposed to use the Old King James bible -

Again, these are all personal convictions that they want others to have.

So Paul says – when we encounter someone like this – where we have a difference of opinion on the gray areas – we are to receive them.

We don't argue with them.

We are to "accept" the other who has a view different from ours.

When it's a "black and white" area, and the person refuses to try and change, then we are to separate from them.

We have an example of this in 1 Cor 5:9-13 –

Where Paul rebukes the church in Corinth for continuing to receive individuals who were refused to change from their evil ways –

Paul says - Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”

Separate from them.

So again – gray areas – we receive, black and white – we separate.

**2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats [only] vegetables.**

So, here is what was going on in Rome during this time -

1<sup>st</sup> century Rome was a pagan empire that was run by Gentiles

And so – as sacrifices were brought for the Roman pagan gods – the pagan priests would take most of the meat and sell it at cost in the meat markets.

The Gentile believers – they liked a good carne asada – they knew that the best meats in town were at these pagan meat markets – they also knew that these pagan gods were man made idols of wood and stone – they were all false gods – they knew there was only one True God. So they were not convicted – to them, it was just meat.

The Jewish believers – they didn't want anything to do with food that was offered up to idols – they wanted to maintain a kosher diet - so they avoided the pagan meat market.

“There is no way we are going to eat that meat – it was offered up to idols”

Now – because the early church loved to fellowship and break bread with one another – just like we do –

When they would come together - The Jewish believers would see the Gentile believers bring their meat dishes – they were scandalized.

They were so upset, they gave up meat altogether & became vegetarians & convinced several Gentiles to join them in refusing meat.

And so there was tension and division within the brethren

They made it the measure of their spirituality -

First church of Vegetarians



## Carnivores for Jesus

So Paul says – that the vegetarian group that refused to eat meat – they are the weak in the faith

Not because they are vegetarians –

They are weak in the sense that his or her conscience would be violated by eating meat.

Because they feel that they'd fail God because they would be doing something that their conscious said was sin.

Turn to 1 Cor 8

Because we have the same problem in the church in Corinth –

This whole thing with eating meat that was offered up to idols.

**[1Co 8:7-8 NKJV] 7 However, [there is] not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat [it] as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. 8 But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.**

Again – we have to think about what is driving force of the vegetarian – conscience, not the word of God

Verse 3

**3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.**

On the issue of personal convictions - where our conscience rather than the Word directs us, we have to stop judging each other!

And it goes both ways

The meat eater – the one who walks in liberty – they are not to look down on the ones who have personal convictions.

Because our tendency is to call them out as legalist

For the vegetarian – they are not to look down on the meat eaters –

Because the tendency is to refer to the meat eater as immoral or carnal

Their tendency is to question whether they are saved or not?

So - In their commitment to holiness – they break fellowship with those who don't agree with their convictions.

And that is what Paul is saying –

It's not our place to be deciding who God accepts and who He doesn't. Our job is simply to accept who God has accepted. Because God has accepted this person, so should we.

**4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.**

Paul says –

No one has the right to judge the Lord's servant

As believers, we sometimes have an urge to call into question another person's spiritual character based upon something other than their personal relationship with Christ – based upon something other than the gospel of grace

We look at their hair, the way they are dressed, the music they listen to or whatever standard we come up and we begin to despise or criticize others

But here is Paul's point

Jesus is the head of the household

He is the one who makes us stand

Our success or failure as Children of God, as servants of Christ, as members of a holy family doesn't depend on the praise or the criticism of others.

It is God, by the power of the Holy Spirit who accepts us, receives us, embraces us

Those who being obedient to the calling that God has placed in their lives, those who are serving with the giftings that God in His grace has given to them, those who are

being led by the power of the Holy Spirit to share the good news – they don't have time to be judging other people.

The weak in the faith – the vegetarians don't have the right to judge the meat eaters

And the strong in the faith – those who walk in liberty – they don't have the right to judge the weak in the faith

Because both the weak and the strong are servants

The point that Paul is making here is that it is the Lord who makes a person stand and it is the Lord who makes a person fall –

While we serve God by serving one another, we answer for our service to Him alone!

So we are to reserve our judgment on the scruples of others, because quite frankly, it's none of our business!

Since our brothers & sisters belong to God, let Him deal with them about those things.

**5 One person esteems [one] day above another; another esteems every day [alike]. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes [it] to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe [it]. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.**

Paul talked about the issue of eating meat in the first four verses – now he brings up another issue that was causing division in the church

What days should be reserved for worship

Is it Saturday or is it Sunday???

Again, the early church – you had Jewish converts that wanted to continue to worship on Saturdays.

There are many today –

Christian denominations that make a big issue of whether one worships on Saturday or Sunday.

The church up I19 –

They believe that true worship is done on Saturday and that those who worship on Sunday receive the mark of the beast

Turn to Gal 4

**[Gal 4:9-11 NKJV] 9 But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how [is it that] you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? 10 You observe days and months and seasons and years. 11 I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.**

Paul addresses the issue of the person that believes that they are a good person because they go to church on Saturdays

**[Col 2:16-17 NKJV] 16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.**

Now – Paul could have wrote in his letter –

I am going to settle this issue right now -and picked the day to worship.

He didn't do it regarding the meat eaters and vegetarians and he doesn't do it here –

Why?

Because these aren't issues the Word speaks to, they're matters of personal conscience.

And what's important is that in these gray areas, a person live by the dictates of their conscience.

That's why he says: Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

If you violate your conscience, it's sin for you.

Because if what you do is not from faith, then it is sin. (which Paul says in verse 23 – we will look at it next week)

You see loved ones – our personal convictions are to be brought before the Holy Spirit for His review.

Then, having done that, we must be careful not to judge others because they don't share our opinions.

This is the wisdom that we need to live our Christian life –

This is why Paul doesn't say eat meat or don't eat the meat / go to church on Saturday or Sunday

The Christian life can't be reduced to a set of rules.

It's a living, dynamic relationship with God.

We walk in the Spirit, not rules.

It's a lot harder – but it's that difficulty that keeps us ever dependent on Him.

**7 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.**

None of us live to ourselves and none of us die to ourselves -no matter what society or our culture says

Christians do not live alone –

Christians are never alone

And Christians cannot live alone or love alone.

Because in the end, we belong to Jesus.

In John's gospel – when Jesus restores Peter –

**[Jhn 21:18 NKJV] 18 "Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry [you] where you do not wish."**

Translation – Peter, there was time in your life where you did what you wanted and went where you wanted – but there is going to come a time – when someone else is going to take you by the hand and lead you to a place you may not want to go.

And Peter says – what about this guy? What about John? And Jesus says – don't worry about Him – you follow Me.

It is Jesus who establishes our appointment with the future –

That is why the Christian can never say – "This is my life and I will do as I please"

Paul reminds us that Jesus is the goal of our lives.

We love Him



We obey Him

The life we've been given is meant to be lived by a daily giving of ourselves to God & one another.

**10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 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 shall give account of himself to God.**

While the judgment of our sins was satisfied in the Cross, we will face a judgment for how we've used our lives in Christ.

It's important we each live in the light of a Spirit-informed conscience, but what'll be of greater importance when we stand before the Lord is how we've treated one another.

So Paul warns us – to not judge our brothers or show contempt to them.

One reason we need to be careful in judging others is that "motives" are a very difficult thing to judge.

We can see someone doing a good deed, and it may look like they're doing it for the right reasons, they might even stop and tell you that they're doing it for the right reasons, but deep down inside they may be doing it for the wrong reasons.

And the opposite is true too! Sometimes we may think that someone is doing something just to get attention, but deep down inside their heart they are only doing it out of love for the Lord.

Things aren't always as they appear:

How can you tell the difference between good motives and bad ones? WE CAN'T!!!

Only God can.

That's why we need to be careful in not judging gray areas.

So we let God handle it.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Paul wants us to understand – that we should have certain convictions about certain things –

But if those convictions are not clearly outlined for us in the scriptures, we better be gracious to those who don't share the same convictions.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'