

March 10, 2024 Romans 14

The setting of Romans 14 is dated between 54-59 AD. During that brief time, the Roman empire, the Jewish and New Testament Jesus disciple Churches in the city of Rome enjoyed a period of peace that looked quite different from the chaos that would characterize the following years of Nero's reign and the persecution and purposeful attempted annihilation of Christians.

In this chapter Paul is inspired by God to give instructions and guidance on how to make our way through the confusing, confounding, conditions in our misguided possessed world of today much less what his peers would face in their immediate future when only a remnant would survive. **Romans 14:1** *Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.* That is a reminder that we are not all at the same stage in faith growth relationship with Jesus. Accept that as a part of life's reality and let God guide us through those relationships as we love and encourage each other. Paul continues with an example from their immediate circumstances: **Romans 14:2-3** *For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 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.* Simply said, don't fuss or make food a matter of salvation and be cautious not to allow your perceived differences to affect other relationships. Though we are about to learn of an application just how challenging that can become. Paul prepares us as he explains: **Romans 14:4-5** *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. 5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.* Denominations remain divided on this issue whether Sunday is the only time worship is sanctioned or approved by God. I have a couple of pages of notes and scriptures I share in that regard that can be summarized by saying, Saturday is one of **all** times sanctioned to worship. We focus on worshiping God, not the day, not the

2. church, not a tradition, or anything else that forces its way into our psychics or schedules. Jesus is the reason for worship. And however you interpret or practice a day to worship is not a matter of ones salvation it is form not substance. **Romans 14:6** *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 contrasts devotion to worship time/// to that of food choices. All those things are to be used to expedite and venerate God who is the focal point as we now see in **Romans 14:7-8** *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.* Priority #1 is God in life and into eternity. And Paul lets us know that is the way it is supposed to be, and the way it is going to be: **Romans 14:9** *For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.* Dead here means physical death that ushers the soul/spirit to their eternal life. That is the goal of creation and individually made possible by Jesus on Calvary. Paul continues to build a foundation for the point he will make that is a challenge for our contemporary practices. **Romans 14:10-12** *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.* That illustration is very straightforward./// condemnation judgment is solely in the realm and prerogative of God – while discernment based on scripture is our only prerogative. And Paul links judging and contempt for others - as deadly co-conspirators. Be sure you get the difference which is clarified in **Romans 14:13** *Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.* Don't condemn/judge anyone, anytime, anyplace!!!! Now watch this carefully, for this is the key for the upcoming

3. challenge./// From the last part of the verse: *but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.* /// What does Paul mean by “stumbling block?” Let’s see: **Romans 14:14** *I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* A stumbling block may be most anything, for example a rifle in itself is totally neutral, but it’s use determines whether it becomes a stumbling block or not. A stumbling block is anything that may lead another person away from Christ instead of to Christ. We tend to be careless understanding just how much our personal habits and behavior adversely affect other people. This next verse is a challenge to that careless behavior. In fact, Paul gives a specific concern for those first century believers with application for our own lives and behavior in **Romans 14:15** *Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.* When this illustration was put to the pen, there was still meat being offered for sale in the market place that had been offered to idols. Paul is saying if your religious friend sees you buying and consuming that meat and because of his tender faith is concerned or questions how that could be proper, respect their concern and because of your love for your Christian brother do not do something that will impede his growing relationship with Jesus. /// We agree there is nothing inherently wrong with the meat just like the rifle mentioned earlier. But the conclusion is that another may be harmed as a result of the action. /// If we are prompted by the Holy Spirit to be aware of the potential of grieving another person's faith by their action and go ahead and do it anyway then “*you are no longer walking in love.*” Followed with the admonition: “*Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.*” Food is only an example of a universal christian principal. i.e. What we say, where we go, what we do, what we partake of is all a part of faith growth and ministry/// From that example we gain understanding that the message of Christ may be quite innocently impaled by a thoughtless habit, much less deliberately violated. /// A reason I characterize this passage as challenging is because of the current cancel culture, and

4. demands of change because of being offended!!! Let's try to make some sense and application for us: First off this is a principle we will see more about in a minute. But first, our scriptural reference is for fellow believers who are sincerely trying to grow in Christ and may inadvertently interpret another faith followers actions incorrectly. This IS NOT some universal mandate from heaven to tolerate cancel culture from the general public or the unconscionable feigning of offense to defend a platform to gain advantage. In fact it is exactly opposite. Do not capitulate to our enemy, but respect our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Del Hackett and The Truth Project we study at 4 does the best job I have ever experienced in showing the foundational principles behind this republic of the United States and how it has been categorically, deliberately, purposefully, and dramatically compromised. Resulting in twisted thinking like the all too familiar: "I am not as good as I should be, but not as bad as I might be."

Today we – meaning every professed Christian- have a present and personal involvement in Paul's instruction and accompanying admonition: **Romans 14:16** *Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; /// As convenient as moral, or ethical compromise of Christian values may appear,/// to accommodate evil hoping good will result from it is a satan inspired fallacy.*

Paul continues with a practical reality check: **Romans 14:17-** *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. i.e. the things and stuff of earth are like the rifle illustration – mostly neutral - but it is how they are used determine if they are for kingdom ministry or evil roguery. For the real meaning and purpose of life is to reap as the scripture said, the harvest of *righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* He continues with the reality check: **Romans 14:18** *For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.* I noticed something – the opposite of that verse is serving satan in these things is unacceptable to God and to men. Have you realized that serving satan means trying to*

5. be better and attain more than others, and in that venture there is always interpersonal conflict? The simple solution to that international, inter-generational problem and conflict could be solved with: **Romans 14:19** *Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.*

We understand the word “*pursue,*” but generally apply it to living on earth goals with less thought on the eternity preparation aspect of that same life. In a nutshell then – peace and encouragement are not a right or privilege to be demanded but rather an obligation and responsibility to be pursued. You will recognize that statement as an adaptation from Lou Holtz and his observation of football players through his coaching career.

It is worth making a life note in your Bible – life goals –pursue peace and things to encourage each other. ///And I suggest the result is a sense of contentment in our daily walk with the Lord as we put it into practice.

The chapter concludes with an appeal to our pursuit of righteous efforts as we grow in becoming an example of Jesus to everyone: **Romans 14:20-21** *Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. 21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.* That meat sacrificed to idols must have been a really big stumbling block in their Roman church. And even though the meat was okay, to deliberately eat it to confront or offend another Christian destroyed their testimony and the work of God. That deliberate action is named evil. So be ever so thoughtful and encouraging to a fellow Christian. Give up a bit of yourself and you will build up a chosen vessel of God. And very much so in spousal interaction. The chapter is summarized with **Romans 14:22** *Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.* Paul is laying it out on the table. He declares that if a Christian is growing in faith – do something with that faith by thinking of others and not perjuring your faith before God

by doing evil. James said it like this: **James 4:17** *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

**Romans 14:23** *But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.* Everything we have learned from this chapter warns of careless tacit approval of sin. One more example to think about: Where do children learn their morals, values, ethics, language, drink, drug, and recreation and all life habits? Where do Christians learn how to practice their faith? You are so right – from each other, teachers, the media etc...

As a follower of Jesus, we are to model the life and teachings of Jesus and by example and encouragement love each other to do the same.

**Romans 14:1**

**Romans 14:2-3**

**Romans 14:4-5**

**Romans 14:6**

**Romans 14:7-8**

**Romans 14:9**

**Romans 14:10-12**

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**Romans 14:16**

**Romans 14:17**

**Romans 14:18**

**Romans 14:19**

**Romans 14:20-21**

**Romans 14:22**

**James 4:17**

**Romans 14:23**