

Parson to Person

ROMANS 14 PART 1

“Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 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. 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.

One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 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. For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. 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. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. 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. For it is written: ‘As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. 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.

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. 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. Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. 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. 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. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:1–23 NKJV).

There are several items for deeper discussion here in Romans 14. Therefore, I suspect we will take a considerable amount of time in this chapter. (Not as though that is something new here at Candlelight.)

Scripture is never so basic that it demands no call for no deeper examination. However, simple lessons may be observed from casual overview and (at times) may be missed when digging for the deeper “gold.” Therefore, both a “flyover” and follow-up “mining” will benefit us as Bible students.

This passage gives a face value lesson: The call to love and exercise grace for fellow believers—allowing for growth without judgment concerning “matters of conscience.” This fact does not suggest looking the other way when a brother or sister is practicing intentional and persistent disobedience to the fully communicated will of God. Some examples might include sexual misbehavior, drug or alcohol abuse, theft, fraud, etc. However, in this chapter Paul refers to those things wherein a person must make good decisions based upon their level of faith and maturity in the truth (“*for whatever is not from faith is sin*”—vs. 23). Specifically, he references eating, drinking, and observance of a Sabbath day. If we were to expand the list, we might suggest such items as monetary gain, accumulation, forms of investment, smoking, vaccinations, birth control, owning or watching a television—movies, listening to non-sacred music, buying a lottery ticket or entering a raffle, swimming at a public beach, etc. Far too many things could be named here.

There are things one Christian may find comfortable doing while others see the same as sin. Some are free to live in “liberty” while others find greater comfort with rigid limitation. Some see behavioral liberty as a lack of maturity and limitation as spiritual. Some see liberty as growth in grace, and others view performance-driven religious laws as God exalting. Whatever it is and wherever we are, in matters of conscience, Paul encouraged believers toward a willingness to allow for growth in the Lord who is able to make His own people mature in faith and certainly able to keep them/“make them stand” (vs. 4).

I pray the Lord to make us grow in grace and in the truth. He is glorified in our growth and pleased with our faith. For it is by grace through faith that we are justified, sanctified, and glorified. (See Romans 8:30)

Over the next weeks we will examine the following:

- 1) The Christian and dietary liberty and/or restriction.
- 2) The Christian and religious/ceremonial liberty and/or restriction.
- 3) The greater liberty a mature believer may enjoy concerning lifestyle choices.
- 4) The greater others-centered-love (agape) a mature believer should exercise when enjoying said liberties.
- 5) The greater level of patience a mature believer will have toward others as they grow.
- 6) God's ability to shape, mature, and keep His own.
- 7) Personal accountability before the Lord and the "bema."
- 8) The rest we have in the Lord.

I trust we will all grow together in grace, truth, and love, as we spend a few weeks "mining" the text here in Chapter 14.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul