

• LESSON 22 (September 14) •

Romans 14:1-15:7

Let Us Pursue What Makes For Peace

Romans 14 represents a shift in Paul's focus to another point of practical emphasis regarding what it looks like for redeemed sons and daughters of God to present themselves as "living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God" (Rom 12:1-2).

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. (14:1-3)

Before we go a step further, it's pivotal that we notice and appreciate the God-breathed parameters of the topic under discussion.

- The Spirit of God is shaping our understanding of how we ought to interact with one another when it comes to matters of differing opinion.
- The practical example used as an illustration is the eating of meat. Whether one eats anything or vegetables only, God welcomes both.
- Since God welcomes both, the one ought not to pass judgment on the other, and vice versa.

Having reminded us of the identity of the ultimate Authority, Paul asks a perspective-shaping question.

Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. (14:4)



What is an "opinion"?

What is "doctrine"?

Is it appropriate for us as brothers and sisters in Christ to have opinions?

How can we discern the difference between a matter of opinion and doctrine?

What's the danger of treating doctrine as a matter of opinion?

To further the discussion, a second example is provided.

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. (14:5-6)

- Once again, the issue is how we ought to interact with one another when it comes to matters of differing opinion.
- Whether one esteems one day as better than another or esteems all days alike, both are acceptable to God.
- Since God welcomes both, the one ought not to pass judgment on the other, and vice versa.

We all have opinions, we all make judgment calls, we all develop preferences, but this is what we *must* remember.

For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; 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 will give an account of himself to God. (Rom 14:7-12)

The judgment seat belongs to God.

Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean

With the context of *Romans* in mind, why might one brother esteem one day as better than another, while another brother esteem all days alike?

How could both brothers be acceptable in the sight of God, despite their difference in estimation?

“Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind” (14:5). *Why?*

“For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself” (14:7). What does this God-breathed reminder add to the discussion?

in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. (14:13-15:7)

CLOSING THOUGHT: In this aspect of life, as in so many others, we must fix our eyes on Jesus, "the founder and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2). Take a moment to read Philippians 2:1-7 as another instance where Paul is calling on Christians to be "in full accord and of one mind."

What valuable piece of perspective is being provided in 14:14?

What does "walking in love" (14:15) have to do with this topic?

Why does Paul interject what he does in 14:17?

"Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (14:23). What does this mean?

How does Romans 15:1-7 serve as a fantastic summary of Romans 14?