

Romans 14

Six Laws Guiding the Christian Life: Romans 14:1-12

1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations [the judging of beliefs].

14:1 Apart from salvation, there are many issues in life that concern the welfare of the soul but on which the Scriptures are silent. As a result, there are Christian individuals who have a difficult time discerning what is pleasing to God and what is not pleasing to Him. The question arises as how to deal with the doubtful things in life. The challenge comes to the Christian who is strong in the faith to help those who are weaker. As mature believers consider the merits of those things that concern the weaker believer, several principles must be kept in mind.

First, the love of Christ compels the stronger Christian in the faith to treat weaker believers with great respect. *“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations” (Romans 14:1).* The reception of the weaker believer into the Christian fellowship is to be done in such a way that a spirit of religious superiority is not created. The spirit of the Pharisees of old does not die easily.

2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

14:2

Second, the Church fellowship is not to become a debating club. Rather, respect is to be shown to all and by all. Respect can best be manifested by honoring the decisions of those who feel they are pleasing God by giving up certain things or by observing other things. *For one believeth that he may eat all things [including swine]: another, who is weak, eateth herbs [is a vegetarian].* Those who are stronger in the faith and able to handle the law of liberty can act in a gracious manner by refraining from legitimate activities in their presence. The burden of showing graciousness in doubtful areas rest upon the stronger Christian, like Paul (Rom 15:1)

3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

14:3-4

Third, the stronger Christian in the faith is to behave in such a way as to encourage the weaker believer to move towards maturity and liberty in the Lord. This is best done by not being judgmental. *“And let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he [the weaker brother] shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand”*

(Romans 14:3b-4). For purposes of illustration, the relation of master and slave is used for it would be well known. If a slave is in need of some form of correction, his own master is the one to administer it. In like manner, the servant of God, in doubtful areas or unregulated matters, is to answer to Him. Much infighting in local assemblies would immediately cease if Christians would stop trying to regulate the life of others.

5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

14:5-6

Fourth, all Christians are to operate in faith, believing that everything said and done is for the honor of the Lord and the benefit of others. *“One man esteemeth [lit. prefers] one day above another [sabbatarians]; another esteemeth every day alike, Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth [lit. observes as sacred] the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, and give God thanks” (Romans 14:5-6).*

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived [lived again], that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

14:7-9

Fifth, Christians should be gracious toward each other for all believers are interdependent. *“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself” (Romans 14:7).* Despite differences on doubtful things, there is an essential unity of the body of Christ that relies on all other parts. The Baptists and the Methodist, the Presbyterians and the Lutherans and all other expressions of the visible body of Christ still need one another. In times of a major crisis such as a world war, or a local or national emergency, this interdependency is more clearly seen as doubtful lines are crossed to embrace and comfort one another. *“Let us not therefore not judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way” (Romans 14:13).*

10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought [reduce to nothing] thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

14:10

Sixth, at the judgment seat of Christ, all the doubtful things will be sorted out. “*For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ*” (Romans 14:10). It is at the final judgment that every Christian, strong and weak, shall give an account to God the Son. (Romans 14:12 cf. John 5:22) Since there will be a final day of reckoning, since time is short and eternity is real, let Christian charity prevail in non-essential matters.

11 For it is written, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*

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

Romans 14:13-23: Rights and Responsibilities

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*

15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him

with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

14: 13-15 Having established the fact that every person shall one day kneel to be judged by the Savior, the Scriptures place a prohibition on believers judging one another in an inappropriate manner. The stronger Christian in the faith should be calm and quiet rather than engage in conversation and behavior that gives offense to a weaker Christian who has certain qualms about matters on which the Scriptures are silent.

The apostle is not asking believers to do something that he has not done. Paul knows, for example, that there is nothing wrong with Jewish believers eating pork. The Old Testament rules and regulations prohibiting that particular practice have been rescinded.

Still, if a person's conscience is violated with the eating of meat, then that individual should refrain from eating it and the person whose conscience is not violated with the eating of meat should not be judgmental. The larger principal at stake is this: the strong believer with his liberty should not destroy the weaker believer for whom Christ has died.

This passage is not teaching that once a person is saved they can be lost. The doctrine of the security of the believer is not in view here. “*This arresting language is not intended to suggest that any man could actually rob Christ of the fruit of His passion*” (Romans, Geoffrey B. Wilson). Rather, the issue is whether or not the strong believer will recognize their responsibility towards their weaker brethren. (1 Cor. 8:11).

David Brown notes that, "*Whatever tends to make any one violate his conscience tends to the destruction of his soul; and he who helps, whether wittingly or no, to bring about the one is guilty of aiding to accomplish the other.*"

16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ *is* acceptable to God, and approved of men.

19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify [build up] another.

20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

21 *It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

14: 1-21 Paul is concerned that the liberty of the strong believer not be used in such a way that it can be spoken of in an evil manner. (Romans 14:16) While many practices are legitimate for the strong Christian, not all are expedient to perform. There is more to life than being right doctrinally. There are souls for whom Christ has died to sustain and nurture in the sphere of sanctification. Spiritual nurturing for the weak takes place most effectively when the strong

believer manifests righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

These three truths will work to unite all Christians.

There is the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to the believer's account apart from good works.

There is the peace with God because of no condemnation.

And there is the joy of the Holy Spirit based on the realization that fellowship with the Father is restored. When the strong believer keeps these doctrinal concepts close to the heart and emphasizes them over personal liberties, heaven and earth will unite to approve.

The Essence of Sin

There is one final major point to observe in this section of scripture: whatsoever is not of faith is sin. While there are many definitions of sin that could be set forth, the summary of sin is lack of faith.

When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit it was because he had lost faith in the sovereignty of God. When the children of Israel made a golden calf and danced around it in the dark night of the desert it was because they had lost faith in the sustaining power of God.

When Peter sank into the cold waters of the Sea of Galilee and cried out that he was perishing it was because he had lost faith in the sustaining power of the Lord.

When the disciples fled on the day Christ was killed it was because they had lost faith in the promises and power of God. "*Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*"

When a weak believer eats something, says or does something without the faith that it is pleasing to the Lord, for that person, it is sin. Therefore, the strong believer must be careful not to

insist that a person does something that will violate the conscience.

22 Hast thou faith? Have *it* to thyself before God. Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

23 And he that doubteth is damned [condemned] if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

14:22-23 **Summary**

Graciousness is to be a mark of every genuine Christian. Spiritual graciousness is manifested in part when the strong believer practices the Law of Love and does not use liberty to offend weaker brethren. Graciousness is manifested when questionable matters are not argued over, but peace is promoted through the remembrance of imputed righteousness, redeeming reconciliation, and the delight of being under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Study Guide

Romans

Questions on Romans 14

1. State the six laws that should guide the life of the Christian
2. What prohibition does the Scripture put on believers in Romans 14:13?
3. List three truths that can help united Christians.
4. When is gracious manifested by the believer?
5. What does an action become in the sight of God when it is not grounded in faith?

Answers to Romans 14

1. The six laws that should guide the life of the Christian are noted.
 - First, the love of Christ compels the stronger Christian in the faith to treat weaker believers with great respect
 - Second, the Church fellowship is not to become a debating club.
 - Third, the stronger Christian in the faith is to behave in such a way as to encourage the weaker believer to move towards maturity and liberty in the Lord.
 - Fourth, all Christians are to operate in faith, believing that everything said and done is for the honor of the Lord and the benefit of others.
 - Fifth, Christians should be gracious toward each other for all believers are interdependent.

- Sixth, at the judgment seat of Christ, all the doubtful things will be sorted out.
2. The Scriptures place a prohibition on believers judging one another in an inappropriate manner
 3. There are three truths that can help to unite Christians.
 - First, is the truth that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer's account apart from good works.
 - There is the truth that there is peace with God because of no condemnation.
 - There is the truth the Holy Spirit provides joy based on the realization that fellowship with the Father is restored
 4. Graciousness is to be a mark of every genuine Christian. Spiritual graciousness is manifested in part when the strong believer practices the Law of Love and does not use liberty to offend weaker brethren. Graciousness is manifested when questionable matters are not argued over, but peace is promoted through the remembrance of imputed righteousness, redeeming reconciliation, and the delight of being under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 5. For the Christian any activity that is not grounded in faith is sin. *"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."*

Personal Application and Reflection

1. Reflecting over the local assemblies you have been part of, were they characterized by individuals who were critical and judgmental?
2. What can you do to make sure you are not a stumbling block to another Christian (Rom. 14:13)?

3. In what way is it possible for a Christian to violate their conscience?
4. Provide a definition and give examples to distinguish between legitimate guilt and false guilt.
5. It is important for a Christians to be known for having a gracious spirit? Why or not why? How is a gracious spiritual cultivated?