

Romans 14:1-12
The Esteem of the Gospel

- I. The historical issue.
 - A. Paul was writing to the church in Rome.
 1. The church there was made up of Christians from a Jewish background and Christians who had come from a pagan background.
 2. Each of these groups had different views of the right way to serve the Lord.
 - a. The Jewish Christians had a high regard for the Law.
 - 1) Therefore they were concerned about whether the meat had been sacrificed to idols or whether it was “kosher,” killed under the supervision of a priest in accordance with the Law.
 - 2) Since they could not be sure, many of them chose to eat only vegetables (verse 2).
 - 3) They were also concerned to observe the feast days required in the Law.
 - a) Verse 5 One man regards one day above another.
 - b) They believed they should continue to keep the feast days required in the Law.
 - b. The Christians from a Gentile background had no such regard for foods or feast days.
 3. The differences had created dissension in the church.
 - B. Paul has already taught in Romans 12:3-8 that all Christians are the Body of Christ and each and every member has been given gifts by God to enable them to discharge their debt of love.
 1. In Romans 12:9-13 he teaches that Christians are to love their brothers and sisters in Christ.
 2. In Romans 12:14-21 he teaches that we are to love our enemies as Christ loved us who were hostile toward Him.
 3. In Romans 13:1-7 he teaches that we are to honor those in authority over us; to behave toward them in a loving way.
 4. In Romans 13:8-10 he teaches us that we are to love our neighbor.
 5. In Romans 13:11-14, he teaches that we are to live in the light of eternity.
 - C. In these verses, Paul is teaching the church in Rome some very practical ways to work out how to love one another.
 1. You must accept the one who is weak in faith.
 - a. Paul is not referring to a Christian who is weak in salvation, the brother is in fact saved – he is **in the faith**.
 - b. He is referring to one who is weak in his understanding of the liberty that is his, but who is, never the less, in the faith.
 - c. Leon Morris: *“Paul is not referring to basic trust in Christ. He assumes that that is present, for this weak person is a member of the church, not an outsider who it is hoped will be converted. What is being discussed is the way the believer should live, the actions that are permissible or required.”*
 - d. John Stott: *“...Paul is referring to a weakness neither of will nor of character, but of faith...It is a ‘weakness in assurance that one’s faith permits one to do certain things’. So if we are trying to picture a weaker brother or sister, we must not envisage a vulnerable Christian easily overcome by temptation, but a sensitive Christian full of indecision and scruples. What the weak lack is not strength of self-control but liberty of conscience.”*
 - e. These were believers who had faith, but their faith did not give them the assurance they needed to eat meat with thankfulness or not celebrate the Jewish feast days.
 - f. The word translated “accept” means to take to oneself, i.e. use (food), lead (aside), admit (to friendship or hospitality).

- 1) Stott: The word "...*means to welcome into one's fellowship and into one's heart. It implies the warmth and kindness of genuine love...it is used...of Philemon giving Onesimus the same welcome that he would give to (Paul), and even of Jesus who promises to welcome his people into his presence in heaven.*"
 - 2) It does not mean "unconditional" acceptance.
 - 3) Stott: "*For though God's love is indeed unconditional, his acceptance of us is not, since it depends on our repentance and our faith in Jesus Christ.*"
2. The strong must not "**regard with contempt**" the weak (verse 3).
 - a. Paul regards himself as one of the strong (Romans 15:1).
 - b. Word translated regard with contempt is a word which means "not out of man, woman, or thing."
 - c. It therefore means the one being referred to is as nothing; contemptible.
 3. The weak must not judge the strong.
 - a. The word means to criticize or condemn.
 - b. The force here is to believe the other is condemned to hell for breaking the Law.

II. The Cultural relevance.

- A. We must accept into fellowship even those with whom we disagree.
 1. Our purpose must not be to pass judgment on their thoughts (opinions).
 - a. Literally we are commanded to accept the one who is weak in faith "not to doubtful disputations."
 - 1) Disputations are "doubtful points (NEB) or disputable matters (NIV)."
 - 2) They are unimportant or *adiaphora*.
 - a) Such things as what time of day to worship.
 - b) What the building should look like.
 - c) What color the carpet should be.
 - d) "...matters on which Scripture does not clearly pronounce." (Stott).
 - b. We are not to "pass judgment" in **indisputable** or unimportant matters.
 2. We **MUST** judge other Christian's behavior **in regard to Scripture** since that is commanded in 1 Corinthians 5:12-13: **For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.**
- B. The problem in the church in Rome exists in our churches today.
 1. **Boice: "To use our common expression, the problem is that Christians are always dumping on one another. Instead of getting on with living their own lives as best they can to the glory of God or, which is also necessary, living so as to win nonbelievers to Christ, they are wasting their time trying to find fault with one another. They do not trust what God is doing in the other Christian."**
 - a. We judge others by how well they conform to what we are doing.
 - 1) If we drink wine, we accept them if they also drink wine.
 - 2) If we don't drink wine, we look down on them as doing something sinful.
 - 3) If we hold a strict view of the Sabbath, we judge those who do not hold such a view to be sinful.
 - 4) If we hold a loose view of the Sabbath, we regard with contempt those who hold a strict view.
 - b. Boice: *If you are making the other person's acceptance...depend on what he or she is doing, you are operating on the basis of salvation by works and are denying the gospel.*"
 2. In many of our churches we capitulate to the weaker brother.
 - a. Wuest: "*A distinguished minister once remarked, "The weak brother is the biggest bully in the universe."*"

- b. We fail to understand the command of Romans 15:2: **Let each of us please his neighbor for the good, to edification.**
- c. We should use the opportunity to teach the weaker brother so that he can enjoy the liberty of salvation in Christ.

III. The Biblical Reason.

- A. Stott: Paul presents four theological truths for accepting your brother.
 - 1. You must accept him because **“God has accepted him.”**
 - a. The same word is used in the command to accept the one who is weak.
 - b. The word means to “take to oneself; admit to friendship.”
 - c. If God has accepted someone, who are you to judge your brother (verse 10).
 - d. If God has looked with favor and acceptance upon someone, who are you to regard that person with contempt?
 - 2. Christ died and rose again to be Lord of all (verse 4-9).
 - a. If someone is a Christian, he or she will answer to Christ for their behavior.
 - b. What right do you have to judge how that person is doing in the unimportant issues?
 - 3. You must welcome or accept him because **he is your brother** or sister.
 - a. A Christian is one who has been accepted by Christ and made a part of His body.
 - b. It is the height of stupidity and arrogance to not include a part of your body because you don’t like the way it looks or behaves.
 - c. It would be like “cutting off your nose to spite your face.”
 - 4. Welcome him because **“...each one of us shall give account of himself to God.”**
 - a. Paul is not saying that God will judge between us based on our deeds.
 - b. Stott: **“...we have no warrant to climb on to the bench, place our fellow human beings in the dock, and start pronouncing judgment and passing sentence, because God alone is judge and we are not...”**
- B. We must accept our brother because we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.
 - 1. What this statement does not mean.
 - a. It does not mean that we will have to explain to God why we did certain things, God already know all our deeds and why we did them.
 - b. It also does not mean that we will be judged by God for our actions, whether they are good enough to get us into Heaven. We have been judged already in Christ.
 - 2. What it does mean is that we are not responsible for the sins of others.
 - 3. Adam Clarke's Commentary: **“We shall not, at the bar of God, be obliged to account for the conduct of each other...”**
- C. Boice: We are accountable for all things before God.
 - 1. We are accountable for every word we have spoken.
 - a. Matthew 12:36: **“And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment”**
 - b. Malachi 3:16: **“Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.”**
 - 2. We are accountable for the talents that have been given to us.
 - a. Each one of you has been given gifts by God to be used to glorify Him and build up His body, the Church.
 - b. Boice: **“Whatever you have, it has been given to you by God, and you are responsible to God for how you use it. Are you using it for him? If you do not know the answer to that question you need to...ask God to show you what you can do that will make a difference for him in this life and for eternity.”**
 - 3. We are accountable for how we use our money.

- a. Matthew 6:19-21: **Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**
 - b. Boice: *What would I discover if I were to examine your checkbook?...What percentage of your income would I find given to the support of your local church?...If you give anything to your church or charitable causes, you probably consider yourself to be very generous...But would that judgment hold up to a really objective scrutiny? Would God be satisfied with your priorities?"*
 - c. Donald Grey Barnhouse: "...refers to a cartoon in which a farmer is sitting at a table with nine giant potatoes in front of him and a tenth potato, his tithe to God, sitting off by itself. The isolated potato is marked "The Lord's portion," and the caption expresses the words of the farmer who is saying, "I don't see how any fellow could be mean enough to give less."
 - 1) Boice: *"But I find myself thinking, "Nine for me and one for God? Is even that a strong enough priority? When we have been given so much and have such abundance, is that all we can do, should do, or would do if we really loved the Lord with all our hearts and minds and souls and were aware that one day we will have to give an accounting of how we have spent our money?"*
 - 2) Ten percent is not very much if you can afford 30, or 40, or even 50 percent.
4. We are accountable for how we have used our time.
- a. Do you use your time to help others, to tell others about Jesus, to study His word and learn more about Him?
 - b. Do you waste time, or work all the time, are you working only for yourself and the things you would like to have in this life?
- D. We must accept our brother because Christ has accepted us.
- 1. Even though we were hostile toward God, even though we were rebellious and argumentative, Jesus Christ lived and died and rose again that He might be our Lord and Savior.
 - 2. If He is willing to accept us; if He is willing to accept even those who are different from us; can we not esteem and accept others who may not agree completely with us in the unimportant things of life?