

## Romans Chapter Fourteen

### Romans 14:1-12 – Christian Freedoms and Tolerance

**v1.** "BUT HIM THAT IS WEAK IN FAITH RECEIVE YE, YET NOT FOR DECISION OF SCRUPLES (KJV DOUBTFUL DISPUTATIONS)." (ASV)

**Romans 15:1** "NOW WE THAT ARE STRONG OUGHT TO BEAR THE INFIRMITIES OF THE WEAK, AND NOT TO PLEASE OURSELVES." (ASV)

**I Corinthians 8:9-11** "BUT TAKE HEED LEST BY ANY MEANS THIS LIBERTY OF YOURS BECOME A STUMBLINGBLOCK TO THE WEAK. FOR IF A MAN SEE THEE WHO HAST KNOWLEDGE SITTING AT MEAT IN AN IDOL'S TEMPLE, WILL NOT HIS CONSCIENCE, IF HE IS WEAK, BE EMBOLDENED TO EAT THINGS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS? FOR THROUGH THY KNOWLEDGE HE THAT IS WEAK PERISHETH, THE BROTHER FOR WHOSE SAKE CHRIST DIED."

A man's faith is weak when it is troubled over untaught and doubtful questions. The one whose faith is not fixed and firm should be accepted with the hope that his faith will grow strong and steadfast by use or exercise. And then the necessary teaching should be provided to help his faith grow.

It is the duty of Christians to receive those persons who are weak in the spirit and word but not to trouble them with doubtful questions and controversies. It is sin to disturb the peace and harmony of Christians over untaught questions. The continual discussion or wrangling over matters of opinion will destroy the harmony and zeal of any congregation and Paul instructs the church not to permit it. Now let's look at the other side of this issue.

While this admonition is directed at "SCRUPLES" or "DOUBTFUL DISPUTATIONS" neither should we avoid the hard questions that must be taught. There is danger in avoiding what some would call hard questions. That is the danger of going too far in the direction away from these things and becoming so weak in the knowledge of God's word that we can no longer teach some of the things that need to be taught. Things such as marriage, divorce and remarriage, fellowship, modest dress and a long list of others.

**v2.** "ONE MAN HATH FAITH TO EAT ALL THINGS: BUT HE THAT IS WEAK EATETH HERBS." (ASV)

**I Corinthians 10:25** "WHATSOEVER IS SOLD IN THE SHAMBLES, EAT, ASKING NO QUESTION FOR CONSCIENCE' SAKE," (ASV)

"FOR EVERY CREATURE OF GOD IS GOOD, AND NOTHING IS TO BE REJECTED, IF IT BE RECEIVED WITH THANKSGIVING:" **I Timothy 4:4**

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In the context of the time of Paul's writing; one brother, informed in the truth and with strong conviction, knows that an idol is nothing and so does not hesitate to eat meat which has been taken from idol temples and carried to the meat markets and put on sale for food. But, another brother, disturbed about such matters feels it is wrong to eat such meat and restricts his diet to herbs or vegetables because of it. The first brother is strong; the second is weak. How are they to act toward each other? They are to show tolerance; the strong for the weak.

**I Corinthians 9:22** "TO THE WEAK I BECAME WEAK, THAT I MIGHT GAIN THE WEAK: I AM BECOME ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN, THAT I MAY BY ALL MEANS SAVE SOME." (ASV)

**v3.** "LET NOT HIM THAT EATETH SET AT NOUGHT HIM THAT EATETH NOT; AND LET NOT HIM THAT EATETH NOT JUDGE HIM THAT EATETH: FOR GOD HATH RECEIVED HIM." (ASV)

**Colossians 2:16** "LET NO MAN THEREFORE JUDGE YOU IN MEAT, OR IN DRINK, OR IN RESPECT OF A FEAST DAY OR A NEW MOON OR A SABBATH DAY:" (ASV)

The strong brother then is not to despise nor reject the weak brother as if he were of no importance. And, the weak brother is not to condemn the brother that disagrees with his opinion or make their opinion on the matter a law. Neither is to make the person who does not share their opinion a subject for discipline. Here is where love comes in! Strong brethren are sometimes disposed to dismiss as silly and over cautious the claims of the weak; and weak brethren will sometimes charge those who do not agree with them with digression and apostasy. We should respect the feelings of others and tolerate them as far as is possible, in the Lord. However, we must be sure not to extend this rule beyond that intended by God. It applies only in matters of opinion such as eating of meats was in first century and similar issues today. Were a brother to deny the necessity of baptism, bring in instrumental music, deny the kingdom is in existence today, something that is a matter of the doctrine of Christ, we must, of course, oppose him and expose his error.

**v4.** "WHO ART THOU THAT JUDGEST THE SERVANT OF ANOTHER? TO HIS OWN LORD HE STANDETH OR FALLETH. YEA, HE SHALL BE MADE TO STAND; FOR THE LORD HATH POWER TO MAKE HIM STAND." (ASV)

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In matters neither right nor wrong, but indifferent, we are to tolerate the weak. It is not our place to pass judgment on our weak brethren. Only God has the right to pass judgment. And if he is faithful in essential matters, God will receive him in spite of his scruples. Again, let it be noted that the matter involved is something about which God has given no law, something that is indifferent but which a brother, being uninformed, entertains a strong opinion about.

The example that Paul uses applies to his day; the matter of eating meat bought in the market place which had been slaughtered as a sacrifice in a heathen temple and then carried to the market to be sold. The weak brother says it is wrong to eat; the strong brother says it is not wrong. What has God said about it? Don't make it a point of disagreement; respect the opinion of the weaker brother; don't tempt him to sin by your actions. Was it actually wrong to eat the meat that had been offered to an idol? No. Would it be wrong to eat it if it caused a weak brother to sin? Yes.

**v.5** "ONE MAN ESTEEMETH ONE DAY ABOVE ANOTHER: ANOTHER ESTEEMETH EVERY DAY ALIKE. LET EACH MAN BE FULLY ASSURED IN HIS OWN MIND." (ASV)

**Galatians 4:10** "YE OBSERVE DAYS, AND MONTHS, AND SEASONS, AND YEARS. I AM AFRAID OF YOU, LEST BY ANY MEANS I HAVE BESTOWED LABOR UPON YOU IN VAIN." (ASV)

Has the Holy Spirit created a conflict here between what Paul writes to the Roman Christians and what he write to the churches in Galatia? In Romans he says that if a man esteems or holds one day above another it is of no consequence, make up your own minds about these things. In the Galatian letter he tells them that he was afraid of them because they observed or esteemed days, months and years.

The conflict is not in Paul's record or in the direction given by the Holy Spirit but rather in what they were doing. The worship of God on the first day of the week, the Lord's day, set apart by God, for the purpose of worship, is not to be placed in doubt or something which man can change. However, if our elders decide that we should meet to study God's word on at 7 p.m. on Wednesday evening, as we do, that is within their authority, and in harmony with the word of God. We could even meet and worship on Saturday if we choose to do so, *SO LONG AS WE DID NOT NEGLECT OUR WORSHIP ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK AS WE HAVE BEEN DIRECTED.*

The Galatians, however, were observing the feasts and observances that were commanded by the Mosaic covenant that had been fulfilled by Christ, completed and removed to make way for a new covenant.

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They were trying to carry over the parts of the Mosaic covenant into their Christian worship that they liked and wanted to use. We have the same mindset in various denominations today regarding religious holidays, most of them copied from the Catholic denominations. This practice and teaching the Holy Spirit condemned through the writings of the Apostle Paul.

**v.6** “HE THAT REGARDETH THE DAY, REGARDETH IT UNTO THE LORD: AND HE THAT EATETH, EATETH UNTO THE LORD, FOR HE GIVETH GOD THANKS; AND HE THAT EATETH NOT, UNTO THE LORD HE EATETH NOT, AND GIVETH GOD THANKS.” (ASV)

Whether a man observes an additional day of worship, other than those prescribed by the scripture, or not, whether these people ate of the meat offered to the pagan god and was then sold in the market or refused to do so was of no consequence to God. He had left them, and us, to exercise our liberty and use the reasoning power that he has given each of us to determine if we want to do these things or not. This is a freedom of choice that is given to the individual to exercise.

**I Corinthians 10:31** “WHETHER THEREFORE YE EAT, OR DRINK, OR WHATSOEVER YE DO, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD.” (ASV)

Should this same line of reasoning be applied to Sunday evening worship services, Wednesday night Bible study, gospel meetings, etc.? Absolutely not, and for these reasons: 1.) Our elders have the authority to call the local congregation together to worship or for edification purposes when they think that this is useful or necessary for our spiritual wellbeing; 2.) Our elders have the responsibility to feed, edify and watch after the “flock of God” (**I Peter 5:2**), these periods of worship and study are designed to answer that responsibility; 3.) In **Hebrews 10:19-25** we have an exhortation to “DRAW NEAR (to God) WITH A TRUE HEART”, “HOLD FAST THE PROFESSION OF *our* FAITH WITHOUT WAVERING” and to “PROVOKE (each other) UNTO LOVE AND TO GOOD WORKS.” Then we’re told that “FORSAKING THE (practice) OF ASSEMBLING OURSELVES TOGETHER” with the congregation when it assembles is a sign of weakness and a sin-sick soul; that if we know better and refuse to assemble, just because we want to do something else, it is willful sin, rebellion against God.

**v.7** “FOR NONE OF US LIVETH TO HIMSELF, AND NONE DIETH TO HIMSELF.” (ASV)

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As Christians we are no longer our own master, neither are we at liberty to conduct ourselves according to our own will or for our own purposes in matters governed by God. Paul declared to the churches in Galatia:

**Galatians 2:20** "I HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST; AND IT IS NO LONGER I THAT LIVE, BUT CHRIST LIVING IN ME: AND THAT LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I LIVE IN FAITH, THE FAITH WHICH IS IN THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME, AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR ME." (ASV)

We all live or die to God, if we serve him, not to ourselves. Paul describes our relationship and commitment to God another way in:

**I Corinthians 6:19-20** "OR KNOW YE NOT THAT YOUR BODY IS A TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHICH IS IN YOU, WHICH YE HAVE FROM GOD? AND YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN; FOR YE WERE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: GLORIFY GOD THEREFORE IN YOUR BODY." (ASV)

**v.8-9** "FOR WHETHER WE LIVE, WE LIVE UNTO THE LORD; OR WHETHER WE DIE, WE DIE UNTO THE LORD: WHETHER WE LIVE THEREFORE, OR DIE, WE ARE THE LORD'S. FOR TO THIS END CHRIST DIED AND LIVED AGAIN, THAT HE MIGHT BE LORD OF BOTH THE DEAD AND THE LIVING." (ASV)

In our daily living we live for the Lord. If we die we die in the Lord. This is the purpose for which man was created, the reason we're here:

**Ecclesiastes 12:13** "THIS IS THE END OF THE MATTER; ALL HATH BEEN HEARD: FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS; FOR THIS IS THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN." (ASV)

Jesus Christ came to this earth the same way you and I did, he was born of a woman and grew up as a man, suffered physical death shedding his blood for our sins and earning our respect, love and obedience to his word. When we surrender ourselves to Him, we live in Him and if we remain faithful to that commitment and we die in Him we will be rewarded accordingly. As Paul reminds us through the letter to Philippi:

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**Philippians 2:7-9** "BUT EMPTIED HIMSELF, TAKING THE FORM OF A SERVANT, BEING MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN; AND BEING FOUND IN FASHION AS A MAN, HE HUMBLING HIMSELF, BECOMING OBEDIENT EVEN UNTO DEATH, YEA, THE DEATH OF THE CROSS. WHEREFORE ALSO GOD HIGHLY EXALTED HIM, AND GAVE UNTO HIM THE NAME WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME;" (ASV)

**v.10** "BUT THOU, WHY DOST THOU JUDGE THY BROTHER? OR THOU AGAIN, WHY DOST THOU SET AT NAUGHT THY BROTHER? FOR WE SHALL ALL STAND BEFORE THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF GOD." (ASV)

Here we get into the same kind of discussion that usually follows:

**Matthew 7:1-2** "JUDGE NOT, THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED. FOR WITH WHAT JUDGMENT YE JUDGE, YE SHALL BE JUDGED: AND WITH WHAT MEASURE YE METE, IT SHALL BE MEASURED UNTO YOU." (ASV)

Paul has been writing about things that are indifferent to God; things that about which God has given us liberty to form and follow our own opinions. We are not to judge our brother in these matters. That doesn't mean that we are not to judge our brothers teaching or actions in matters where God has given us instruction; we are still to follow what Jesus taught about that as well in:

**John 7:24** "JUDGE NOT ACCORDING TO APPEARANCE, BUT JUDGE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT." (ASV)

For Jesus also tells us in **Matthew 7:1-2** that there will come a day that he describes for us:

"BUT WHEN THE SON OF MAN SHALL COME IN HIS GLORY, AND ALL THE ANGELS WITH HIM, THEN SHALL HE SIT ON THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY: AND BEFORE HIM SHALL BE GATHERED ALL THE NATIONS: AND HE SHALL SEPARATE THEM ONE FROM ANOTHER, AS THE SHEPHERD SEPARATETH THE SHEEP FROM THE GOATS;" **Matthew 25:31-32** (ASV)

**v.11-12** "FOR IT IS WRITTEN, AS I LIVE, SAITH THE LORD, TO ME EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL CONFESS TO GOD. SO THEN EACH ONE OF US SHALL GIVE ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD." (ASV)

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All men will stand before the judgment seat of God. All men will confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but that confession made at the judgment will be too late. A confession not made until then will not save us but will rather be a lament of sorrow, knowing that we are lost.

Each will give an account:

**II Corinthians 5:10** "FOR WE MUST ALL BE MADE MANIFEST BEFORE THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST; THAT EACH ONE MAY RECEIVE THE THINGS DONE IN THE BODY, ACCORDING TO WHAT HE HATH DONE, WHETHER IT BE GOOD OR BAD." (ASV)

There are things that God fixed in scripture that we are to follow such as meeting on the first day of the week, singing vs mechanical instruments in worship, partaking of the Lord's supper, on the first day of the week, etc. There are things about which God has not given us any specific direction. Jesus tells us to go teach but he didn't tell us how that we should go; we are expected to assemble but we aren't told to buy or build buildings, that is our choice; we are told to help those that are poor but have not been told how we should do that except that we should give on the first day of the week partially for that purpose. The list could go on but this is sufficient to illustrate our purpose. These are all things that God has left to the discretion of men and the elders of the congregation and we should not judge one another concerning these things.

### Romans 14:13-23 – The Law of Brotherly Love

**v.13** "LET US NOT THEREFORE JUDGE ONE ANOTHER ANY MORE: BUT JUDGE YE THIS RATHER, THAT NO MAN PUT A STUMBLINGBLOCK IN HIS BROTHER'S WAY, OR AN OCCASION OF FALLING." (ASV)

Where God provides us with instruction and we judge according to God's word it is God doing the judging. When God does not give us instruction concerning something and we make laws regarding this matter then it is us judging and not God. Our love for our brethren is to go beyond just tolerating their various opinions about things that are of no consequence. We are to conduct ourselves so that we do not cause a brother who is weak, who does not understand the scripture, perhaps as well as we do, to stumble.

**I Corinthians 8:9** "BUT TAKE HEED LEST BY ANY MEANS THIS LIBERTY OF YOURS BECOME A STUMBLINGBLOCK TO THE WEAK." **v.13** "WHEREFORE, IF MEAT CAUSETH MY BROTHER TO STUMBLE, I WILL EAT NO FLESH FOR EVERMORE, THAT I CAUSE NOT MY BROTHER TO STUMBLE." (ASV)

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**v.14** "I KNOW, AND AM PERSUADED IN THE LORD JESUS, THAT NOTHING IS UNCLEAN OF ITSELF: SAVE THAT TO HIM WHO ACCOUNTETH ANYTHING TO BE UNCLEAN, TO HIM IT IS UNCLEAN." (ASV)

When God looked out over all of this creation in **Genesis 1:31**, inspected what he had made we are told that it was "VERY GOOD." God did not create anything that was not good. The stumbling block that Paul is writing to the Romans about was the eating of meat from the market, not knowing whether it came from the idol temple or not; or perhaps even knowing that it did. If someone thought that to eat of it was sin, then for him to eat of it was sin. They would be in the same condition that Peter was in on the roof top in Joppa. There he was rejecting those sources of food created by God because they were forbidden under the Mosaic Covenant; a covenant that had been taken away and replaced by the law of Christ. God was preparing him to accept Gentiles into the Lord's body just the same as the Jews.

**Acts 10:15** "AND A VOICE CAME UNTO HIM AGAIN THE SECOND TIME, WHAT GOD HATH CLEANSED, MAKE NOT THOU COMMON." (ASV)

**v.15** "FOR IF BECAUSE OF MEAT THY BROTHER IS GRIEVED, THOU WALKEST NO LONGER IN LOVE. DESTROY NOT WITH THY MEAT HIM FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED." (ASV)

We should walk in brotherly love. We should conduct ourselves in such a way that we do not lead our weaker brother to lose his soul. If someone sees you doing something that they think is sin, Paul is not talking about that person being personally offended by what you may do, though that may be the case. Paul is talking about someone seeing you doing something he thinks is wrong and then because he thinks that what you did is sin he is made weaker and more vulnerable to sin himself. If you allow this to happen then you have destroyed a soul that will be held to your account.

**v.16** "LET NOT THEN YOUR GOOD BE EVIL SPOKEN OF:" (ASV)

Do not let your rights and privileges lead others to do wrong nor cause those who might not understand to speak evil of you. It is the tendency for men to think that if brother so and so thinks something that we do is sin (if it is not sin) then that's their problem. The Holy Spirit through the pen of Paul says no, that's our problem and we should restrain ourselves.



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**v.17-18** “FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT EATING AND DRINKING, BUT RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE AND JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT. FOR HE THAT HEREIN SERVETH CHRIST IS WELL-PLEASING TO GOD, AND APPROVED OF MEN.” (ASV)

The kingdom of God is not based on restrictions regarding eating and drinking (except that which is intoxicating) but is based upon right doing, right living and encouraging people to live righteously. It follows the way of peace, not disputing about trivial matters or haranguing about things of no spiritual consequence. It provides us joy or the opportunity for rejoicing because we are God's children.

Much of what Paul is talking about here has to do with the people having been converted from Judaism and not wanting to leave the daily prohibitions and requirements of the old law

**v.19** “SO THEN LET US FOLLOW AFTER THINGS WHICH MAKE FOR PEACE, AND THINGS WHEREBY WE MAY EDIFY ONE ANOTHER.” (ASV)

So we go back to chapter 12, which gives us instruction in Christian living and find:

“IF IT BE POSSIBLE, AS MUCH AS IN YOU LIETH, BE AT PEACE WITH ALL MEN.” **Romans 12:18** (ASV)

**I Thessalonians 5:11** “WHEREFORE EXHORT ONE ANOTHER, AND BUILD EACH OTHER UP, EVEN AS ALSO YE DO.” (ASV)

This is part of the reason behind Paul's instruction to Timothy:

“BUT SHUN PROFANE BABBLINGS: FOR THEY WILL PROCEED FURTHER IN UNGODLINESS.” **II Timothy 2:16** (ASV)

**v.20** “OVERTHROW NOT FOR MEAT'S SAKE THE WORK OF GOD. ALL THINGS INDEED ARE CLEAN; HOWBEIT IT IS EVIL FOR THAT MAN WHO EATETH WITH OFFENCE.” (ASV)

Meat does not destroy the work of God but we can for the sake of a little meat. This same lesson is taught in:

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**I Corinthians 10:27-28** "IF ONE OF THEM THAT BELIEVE NOT BIDDETH YOU TO A FEAST, AND YE ARE DISPOSED TO GO; WHATSOEVER IS SET BEFORE YOU, EAT, ASKING NO QUESTION FOR CONSCIENCE' SAKE. BUT IF ANY MAN SAY UNTO YOU, THIS HATH BEEN OFFERED IN SACRIFICE, EAT NOT, FOR HIS SAKE THAT SHOWED IT, AND FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE:" (ASV)

**I Corinthians 10:32-33** "GIVE NO OCCASIONS OF STUMBLING, EITHER TO JEWS, OR TO GREEKS, OR TO THE CHURCH OF GOD: EVEN AS I ALSO PLEASE ALL MEN IN ALL THINGS, NOT SEEKING MINE OWN PROFIT, BUT THE PROFIT OF THE MANY, THAT THEY MAY BE SAVED." (ASV)

Then Paul says that all things are clean but they are unclean to that man who thinks that they are unclean.

**v.21** "IT IS GOOD NOT TO EAT FLESH, NOR TO DRINK WINE, NOR TO DO ANYTHING WHEREBY THY BROTHER STUMBLETH." (ASV)

Thus in summary we have a general truth presented by Paul in this part of this chapter. We are not to indulge ourselves in anything that would cause our weaker brother to sin. If we do then his soul is our responsibility. If we have the kind of brotherly love in us that we should we will not do anything that will cause our weaker brother to sin. The Greek word translated "wine" here is "oinos", the general term for wine and generally that which was not intoxicating.

**v.22** "THE FAITH WHICH THOU HAST, HAVE THOU TO THYSELF BEFORE GOD. HAPPY IS HE THAT JUDGEH NOT HIMSELF IN THAT WHICH HE APPROVETH." (ASV)

Even though through the knowledge of God's word and the strength of your faith you know that something is acceptable to God, do not use it to lead others into sin who are weaker. Happy is the man who does not condemn himself because what he practices causes another brother to lose his soul.

**v.23** "BUT HE THAT DOUBTETH IS CONDEMNED IF HE EAT, BECAUSE HE EATETH NOT OF FAITH; AND WHATSOEVER IS NOT OF FAITH IS SIN." (ASV)

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The person who does anything that he doubts is of God or doubts that it is according to God's word, he is condemned in doing so. We must always keep on the safe side. We can apply this to our worship. We are to worship in spirit and in truth; with the proper frame of mind and as God has instructed his children to worship him. We must worship in faith and faith comes from hearing God. If there is anything that someone wants to do in worship to God that is not of faith, as multitudes of our brethren are doing today, then whatever that may be, however wonderful some might think it is, it is sin.