

Diets + Days = Divisions + Disunity
Christ + Love = Harmony + Unity
Romans 14:1-12

Thought for the Day: When you have a difference of opinion on a disputable matter with a brother or sister in Christ, do not argue, pass judgment, or look down upon that person.

Romans 14:1 begins a new section in Romans that runs through 15:13. In this section, Paul is answering the question, "What does a right relationship with God look like when we face an issue that could potentially divide us as brothers and sisters in Christ?" The Bible clearly teaches that some things are right and some are wrong. But there are some issues, not so clearly taught in the Bible—gray areas—where there is room for different understandings, opinions and personal preferences. What should be our attitudes toward one another as brothers and sisters in Christ and, more importantly, how should we treat one another when we have differences of understanding, opinion, or personal preference?

Three Broad Principles. When you and a brother or sister in Christ have a difference of opinion on disputable matters:

- 1) Romans 14:1-12 – Do not argue, pass judgment, or look down upon your brother or sister in Christ.
- 2) Romans 14:13-23 – Do not cause your brother or sister to stumble in their faith because of the freedom you enjoy in Christ.
- 3) Romans 15:1-13 – Follow the example of Jesus—be willing to give up your rights, or freedoms, in order to maintain unity and help your brother or sister in Christ grow to spiritual maturity for the glory of God.

Five Supporting Principles:

I. Mutual Acceptance (vss. 1-2)

1 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. 2 One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.

- Who is the person "whose faith is weak"?
 - The person "who thinks that his keeping certain rules as to food or religious rites will make him more acceptable to God..." (*Charles Erdman, Romans, p. 143*)
 - "The 'weak in faith' were immature believers who felt obligated to obey legalistic rules concerning what they ate and when they worshipped... In the Roman assemblies, the weak Christians were those who clung to the law and did not enjoy their freedom in the Lord. The weak Christians were judging and condemning the strong Christians, and the strong Christians were despising the weak Christians." (*Warren Wiersbe, Be Right, p. 162*)
- Paul's admonition to both groups is mutual acceptance: welcome, receive and accept one another.
- St. Augustine: "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity." (Cp. John 13:34-35)

II. A Non-Judgmental Attitude (vss. 3-4)

3 The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

- The person who has freedom and a clear conscience to do something must not look down upon the person who does not have that same freedom.
- The person who is not at liberty in a questionable matter must not condemn the person who does have freedom.
- We have no right to judge a servant of the Lord.
- If you're always busy looking for splinters in the eyes of others, you probably need to get busy pulling the planks out of your own!

III. Personal Conviction (vss. 5-6)

5 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

- Most issues, quite simply, are not worth fighting over!

IV. The Lordship of Christ (vss. 7-9)

7 For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

- We do not live in a vacuum: we need to carefully consider how our choices may impact others.
- "Our lives are ultimately for Christ alone. Our entire life, from beginning to end, belongs to the Lord. We live to him and die to him. Our relationship with the Lord is more important than life or death, and life and death are more important than religious observances. So all our discussions must never interfere with our relationship to Christ, who is our Lord. It is the Lord's judgment that matters. With respect to the way we treat other believers, we ought to consider the question, 'Am I treating people as though they also belong to the Lord?'" (*Life Application Commentary*)

V. The Judgment Seat of Christ

10 You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" 12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

- Jesus Christ alone is the Judge and rather than judging others, we ought to be focusing on preparing ourselves for the time when we will give an accounting to Him for our actions.