

**Not Ashamed  
(Week 33)  
Romans 14:1-12  
“Let God Be The Judge”**

**Introduction**

**So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.**

**Romans 14:12**

When Scripture is perfectly clear about something, we know exactly what to do and how to behave accordingly. But what about the things that are not clearly defined in The Scriptures? What do we do then? Answer: We act according to our conscience. You see, there are some things that are wrong for me to do, but may be perfectly acceptable to someone else. Not every single thing is covered in Scripture, and therefore, we must do our best to live with a clear conscience before God. And that means, that often times, we have to take a “live and let live” approach with our fellow believers, who may not see everything as we do.

Please allow me to give an example. When we first started Freedom Fellowship, there wasn't a lot of money in the bank. Because of that, I had to get a part time job at a popular sporting goods store. I worked behind the gun counter in the hunting department (those of you who know me well will probably understand it was a pretty good fit for me there). One day, while I was working, I casually mentioned a hunting trip that I had coming up the following weekend. To my surprise, one of my Christian co-workers said, “You don't plan on hunting on SUNDAY do you!?” Actually, I did, in fact, plan on hunting that particular Sunday. And when I told him as much he absolutely freaked out! He started letting me have it right there in front of everyone in the store. He told me that he loved The LORD too much to break the Sabbath commandment by hunting on Sunday. It was pretty brutal. I was so uncomfortable, I just wanted to get away.

Later, I pulled him aside privately and had a conversation. There is absolutely nothing in *The Bible* that I am aware of that says specifically that a Christian cannot hunt on Sunday. The Ten Commandments say that we are to **“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8).** Anyone who knows me, will tell you that I do some of my best praying in a deer stand. To me, being out in the woods is actually a way for me to spend time with God.

The purpose of the Sabbath (which was originally on Saturday by the way) is to cease from our labor and spend time in rest and communion with God. It seems no more or less “work” to me to go and sit in the woods than it does to go to a church and sit in a pew. But that's just me. If the commandment had said, “Thou shalt not hunt on Sunday”, then I might think differently about it. But it doesn't, so I will keep on with my current belief, until God convicts me to do otherwise. If someone feels that he is honoring God by not hunting on Sunday, then he, by all means, should not hunt on Sunday. But I have NEVER felt that way, and until God changes my mind, I might just spend a Sunday in a tree stand from time to time! So you see, what is good for me wasn't necessarily good for him. It didn't mean that either of us did not love God as we should.

When the Scripture isn't crystal clear on a given matter, then the Christian's conscience should guide him. And this is exactly what Paul is telling us in **Romans 14:1-12**. Paul commands those in the church of Rome to “accept” the bother who is weaker (**vs. 1**). Today, we will discuss just how and why we are to do just that. We (the church) will never see eye to eye on everything, until we all are glorified in Christ's image, of course. So how do we handle differences of opinion in the here and now, when there is no clear guideline of Scripture to direct us? With acceptance, allowing each one to act according to his or her own conscience, always keeping in mind the effect we have upon one another. When all else fails... love first!

So, we are to accept those who are weaker in the faith. In this passage Paul gives us four distinct reasons why we are to do so. We accept them because:

- 1) Christ has ACCEPTED Them;
- 2) Christ Himself will ASSIST Them;
- 3) Christ has AUTHORITY Over Them;
- 4) Christ will ASSESS (Judge) Them. Please allow me to explain.

### **Christ Has Accepted Them (vs. 1-3)**

**Welcome anyone who is weak in faith, but don't argue about disputed matters. One person believes he may eat anything, while one who is weak eats only vegetables. One who eats must not look down on one who does not eat, and one who does not eat must not judge one who does, because God has accepted him. Romans 14:1-3**

First of all, many are surprised to learn exactly who it is that Paul is calling "weak in faith". It has been my experience of several years to find that those who are actually weak in faith are convinced that they are the exact opposite! The person in this passage, who is deemed "weak", is the one who believes that by doing a certain thing or by living according to a stricter set of rules, they are somehow made more "spiritual" than others.

In Paul's day, meats were sold in various "discount meat markets". The reason that these meats were sold at a lesser rate is because they had been used in ritual sacrifices to pagan gods. In short, the meat had been offered up to idols. Many in the church, namely Jewish believers, felt that they should abstain from eating food that had been offered up to idols. To them it was an abomination. They believed by abstaining from eating this food, they were in fact honoring The LORD.

But many Gentiles, however, reasoned that since those idols were simply wood and stone carvings made by the hands of men, it was mere superstition to attach any uncleanness to the meat. They firmly believed that if they gave thanks to God for it, then it was made perfectly acceptable. For in their eyes, they too were once pagan and had been cleansed by God. If God could make them clean, why could He not make this food holy as well? It is these believers that were actually demonstrating stronger faith than their Jewish counterparts!

What Paul commanded the church to do was nothing short of astounding. Instead of having a church-split over a t-bone steak, he commanded them to accept one another in the faith! Imagine that; Christians having different viewpoints, and yet, making the decision to get along with one another in spite of their differences. I've seen churches almost shatter to pieces over the type and color of carpet to lay in the sanctuary! You see, whether to eat the meat or not, both sides were doing so based on a desire to be pleasing to God. We are never going to agree on everything, my friends, but we are to accept one another, because Christ has accepted us! And yes, he has also accepted that believer in the church that I don't always agree with. Because none of us have been perfected as of yet, we accept them, just as Christ has!

### **Christ Will Assist Them (vs.4)**

**Who are you to judge another's household servant? Before his own LORD he stands or falls. And he will stand, because The LORD is able to make him stand. Romans 14:4**

I LOVE this verse. Just recently, I had someone who felt that they were qualified to "enlighten" me on all of my shortcomings. Don't you just love that? When someone else, who has never walked a mile in your shoes, thinks that they can sum you up in a few short sentences and manage to qualify or disqualify your entire life's work? Me too. Well, here's the good news. You will not have to stand before any of your "critics" and be judged! If you belong to God, then He is the only opinion that matters! And here is the even better news: He will see to it that you get to the place that He wants you to be! You will be able to stand in judgment, because God will see to it that you do! Let's revisit this verse from **Chapter Eight**:

**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed in us. Romans 8:18**

Child of God, lift up your head and be encouraged! God is going to ultimately glorify you. Yes, **YOU**. If you belong to Christ, then Christ will correct your flaws. Paul admonished the church at Rome to wait for The LORD to do His will in the lives of others. We don't write them off, because, just like us, God isn't finished with them yet! We are His servants, and He will see to it that we are completely remade in the image of Christ.

When I was a kid, my mom would bake cakes (on occasion). I was completely addicted to sweets in those days! (Probably explains why I am now a diabetic.) But every time mom would bake a cake, I would stand impatiently in the kitchen to wait on it. Many times when she had her back turned, I would open the oven door to “check in” on the process. Every time I did that, my mom would have a fit. She would say, “You’re going to cause my cake to fall!” Did you know that if you jostle a cake while it is still in its vulnerable state of being half between batter and cake, then you can cause the whole thing to collapse? I didn’t. That is until I got my hands smacked away from the oven door a few times!

You may not know this, but Christians are much the same way. If you disturb them with endless criticism while they are still growing in Christ, you can actually discourage them and cause them to fall. We need to let Christ finish the work that He began in them. Sometimes, we just need to stand back and allow the cake to “rise”. Be an encourager and not a judge. For:

**I am sure of this, that He Who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.** **Philippians 1:6**

The LORD will cause His own servants to stand! For He will assist them.

### **Christ Has Authority Over Them (vs. 5-9)**

**One person judges one day to be more important than another day. Someone else judges every day to be the same. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. Whoever observes the day, observes it for the honor of The LORD. Whoever eats, eats for The LORD, since he gives thanks to God; and whoever does not eat, it is for The LORD that he does not eat it, and he gives thanks to God. For none of us lives for himself, and no one dies for himself. If we live, we live for The LORD; and if we die, we die for The LORD. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to The LORD. Christ died and returned to life for this: that he might be LORD over both the dead and the living.** **Romans 14:5-9**

And here is the “meat” of the message as it were. If Christ has accepted someone, and Christ is assisting them in their growth, then let them act according to the convictions that Christ has given them. Let me try and offer some insight here. I have been called to preach the gospel. It wasn’t my particular career choice, but God made it clear to me years ago that this was what He wanted from me. If I had refused to obey this command, it would have been sinful for me to do so. But not everyone has been called to preach. Everyone in Christ has been gifted to serve in many different ways. If a person is gifted in the area of service, then it *would not* be a sin for them, if they chose *not* to preach. Just the same as, it *would* be sinful for me *not* to preach. Just imagine the chaos and confusion, if everyone thought they were supposed to get up and preach this morning?!

For you see, we are to do what Christ commands us to do. And those commands may take us in different directions. For God is our ultimate authority. If God tell us to do something, we must do it, but that doesn’t mean that He has commanded us all to do likewise. Remember the story of Peter the disciple? After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to His disciples, and He specifically told Peter that not only did He want him to preach the gospel, but that he would ultimately be executed for doing so. Peter turned to look at John standing there, and he asked the LORD, *“What about him?”* Jesus answered,

**If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? As for you, follow Me.** **John 21:22**

God may indeed have different things for each of us. He may wish for some people to honor Him in a certain way, while at the same time having someone else honor Him differently. The simple truth is, we are all called to honor The LORD. If you feel that you do so, by carefully observing the sabbath, or some Jewish feast day, while others do not share in your convictions, just remember that you are under the authority of God, the same as they are. Let God command them, as He sees fit.

I know people, who refuse to go out to eat on Sunday or refuse to go shopping. If that is what they believe God has commanded of them, then who am I to say different? But at the same, they do not have the right to look down upon me, if I don't necessarily share their views! We are all under the authority of The LORD. He can and will command us, as He sees fit. We live as His, and we die as His (**vs.7-9**).

Many of the Jews in Paul's day still felt compelled to honor the Jewish feasts days, handed down in *The Old Testament*. Not to mention, observing all of the dietary restrictions given in The Law of Moses, restrictions that Christ Himself set aside (**Mark 7:23**). Many Gentile believers didn't see the importance of honoring these Jewish holidays. And they were absolutely opposed to observing Jewish dietary laws! (Would you want to give up bacon?) As a means of offering compromise, Paul commanded each person to obey the convictions of their own consciences. God is perfectly capable of correcting His children. if and when they need correction. Every disagreement isn't "a hill worth dying on". Do what you think that God has called you to do. And don't get caught up in things that should not concern you. In the Church, Christ is LORD of all. He has the ultimate authority.

### **Christ Will Assess Them (vs. 10-12)**

**But you, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, as I live, says The LORD, every knee will bow to Me, and every tongue will give praise to God. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.**

**Romans 14:10-12**

Because it is Christ, Who has ACCEPTED those that are His, and it is Christ that will ASSIST those that are His, and it is Christ Who has AUTHORITY over those that are His, then it is also Christ, Who will ultimately ASSESS (judge) those that are His.

Anyone who has every had a public job knows that evaluations are done by management and not by your peers or fellow employees. In The Church of The LORD Jesus Christ, He **IS** management. He is the head of The Church (**Colossians 1:18**). And, as such, it is up to Him to perform our evaluations, as it were. Christ alone will judge His Church. I can look at someone and tell if they are behaving differently that I think they should, but I have no way of looking into someone's heart to determine their motivation. But Christ can!

**But The LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or his stature because I have rejected him. Humans do not see what The LORD sees, for humans see what is visible, but The LORD sees the heart.'**

**1 Samuel 16:7**

When Samuel the prophet went looking for a king for Israel, he thought he would know who would be pleasing to God, just by his own personal assessment. But the prophet learned a valuable lesson that day. He learned that God sees the things that men cannot see. No one would have ever picked David to be a king. He simply didn't "look the part". But God chose Him nonetheless. According to the book of *Romans*, every one who comes to faith in The LORD Jesus Christ has been chosen by God Himself. **"For those He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed into the image of His Son..."** **Romans 8:29**. Therefore, since God chose those of us that are saved by His grace, He also will judge us for what we have done with that salvation. We will all stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ to give an account for what we have and have not done. We won't be judged according to our sins, for they have been judged upon the cross (**Romans 8:28**), but we will give an account for our deeds.

Christians would do well to remember, that we all are called and accountable for how we serve. I really do not have time to judge anyone, for I am more concerned about how I myself will be judged. Let God be the judge of those that are His. Make sure that you are doing what He has commanded you to do. And don't get caught up in worrying about everyone else's service. Or as Christ Himself would say, **"What is that to you? As for you, FOLLOW ME!"**

May we always accept those whom Christ has accepted, and allow Him to finish what He has started in them, and in us, as well.

And let all of His followers say... TRUTH!!!