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## Romans 14

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Romans 14.

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### Topics.

- Do not quarrel over doubtful opinions or imaginations.
- The strong and the weak in faith.
- Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?
- All will stand before the judgment seat of God and give account.
- Nothing is unclean in itself, except to those who think it unclean.
- The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
- Blessed is the one who does not pass judgment on themselves.
- Conscience and doubt.

**The previous chapter:** in the previous chapter Paul told Christians they should be subject to the governing authorities and to pay taxes because civil rulers are ministers of God. He said those who belong to Christ should owe no-one anything except love because the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The chapter ended with Paul saying it is time to proclaim the Gospel of salvation.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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### ROMANS 14:1-9

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#### Do not Quarrel over Doubtful Opinions or Imaginations.

- **Romans 14:1-9:** As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions (doubtful disputations in KJV). <sup>2</sup>One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. <sup>4</sup>Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. <sup>5</sup>One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup>The one who observes the day, observes it in honour of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honour of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honour of the Lord and gives thanks to God. <sup>7</sup>For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. <sup>8</sup>If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. <sup>9</sup>For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.
- Remember this is a letter Paul is writing to the Christian brothers in Rome.

**Weak:** in this context means without strength, spiritually and morally it carries the idea of being without spiritual knowledge and power.

**Opinions:** (doubtful disputations in KJV) in this context it carries the idea of debating disputing and holding contentions discussions over controversies and doubtful imaginations through deliberate reasoning and thought.

**The strong and the weak in faith:** the Jews had four-thousand years of history with God and as such their knowledge would far exceed that of the Gentiles which means the strong in this context refers to the Jews while the weak applies to the Gentiles, nevertheless by extension the application of the principal Paul is teaching applies to all who belong to the body of Christ throughout all generations. Paul being fully aware that for those with great knowledge there is a danger for the spiritually prideful to be tempted to puff themselves up by displaying their knowledge through quarrelling over doubtful opinions, views, thoughts, ideas and judgements with each other and having this insight is warning them not to quarrel, argue or debate their meaningless opinions against those who are weaker in faith or amongst those who are not strong in Scriptural knowledge.

**Despise:** means to consider a person inferior and esteem them as less important.

**Judgment:** means to distinguish decide and sentence one to condemnation.

**Doubtful disputations:** in this context refer to things that do not affect salvation, but are simply acts of conscience (i.e., eating foods and holy days etc.), today an example would be the wearing of hats in church, some women believe it is right before God to do so while others believe it is not necessary neither the women who wear hats and those who do not should judge the other since both are being true to their conscience before the Lord and it is certain Christ will not cast the faithful out of his eternal Kingdom simply because they did or didn't wear hats in church.

**Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?** The focus of what Paul is saying is not about those in Christ who are doing things for their own self-gain or selfish ambition nor is it about sinful actions, Paul is putting a floodlight on the attitude we are to have toward those who are faithful to Lord, but may have a different conscience toward traditions, foods, holy day, etc. It is about wholesome acts of conscience a good example is worship; some churches use celebration songs of praise, while others strictly adhere to hymn books, neither of these two groups should judge each other since neither is doing anything sinful and both are doing what they are doing for the Lord. Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and faithfully follows him belong to the Lord, he is their Master and their King so no-one in the family of Christ has the right to judge the salvation of another brother or sister (especially on matters of conscience) since we are all servants of the Lord and only he has the power to grant eternal life or deny it. Our focus should be on making sure that we are fully convinced that what we are doing is in accordance with our own conscience before the Lord. An example of this is the oversight of a church who is fully convinced that women wearing hats in church is the holy thing for a women to do and therefore impose that teaching on all women who desire to be a member of their congregation, but many of these women (especially the younger ones) are not wearing their hats because of a conviction before God, but simply because they desire to be accepted, but this is what Paul is teaching against, he is basically saying when it comes to matters of conscience each brother and sister should have the freedom to feel comfortable amongst the family of God to live true to their own conscience before the Lord. Rather than impose on another person conscience we should trust that the Holy Spirit is working with each brother and sister and understand that not one of us enter the family of God free of dysfunctions and aberrations and that all of us are on a spiritual journey of discovery into the endless and unfolding glory of God much like a gold digger doing whatever they can to find that nugget of gold that surpass all others. Further examples of what Paul is saying:

- In the Lord Supper (Communion) some believe it is extremely important to use unleavened bread while others do not believe it matters since is only symbolic of Christ's body.
- Some believe Saturday is the proper day of worship while others believe it is Sunday

- Some Christians put stickers on their car to show they belong to Christ others believe it is wrong because none of us are perfect drivers.
- Some believe it's OK for woman to pray in church while others don't
- Some believe it's OK to sing songs of celebration to worship the LORD others believe it is flippant and disrespectful.

And the list could go on and on, but in all these things each one is doing what they believe in their conscience is right before the Lord and are doing what they are doing not for selfish gain or ambition but for the Lord. Concerning these types of things Paul is saying don't judge the eternal salvation of another brother or sister or despise those that belong to Christ just because they in faith do (non-sinful) things differently to what we might believe is right.

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## ROMANS 14:10-16

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### **All will stand before the Judgment Seat of God and give Account.**

- **Romans 14:10-16:** Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; <sup>11</sup>for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." <sup>12</sup>So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. <sup>13</sup>Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. <sup>14</sup>I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. <sup>15</sup>For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup>So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.

**Judgment:** in this context carries the idea of condemning a person to punishment.

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**Despise:** in this context carries the idea of considering a person inferior.

**Paul's focus:** so far is brothers and sisters in Christ judging each other which means the phrase, "Every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (v11) applies to those in Christ and not the unsaved (see previous verse). Paul is saying that everyone in the family of Christ will give their own account to God and since this is the case why concern ourselves with judging another brother or sisters standing with the Lord and their eternal salvation.

Paul is telling us that this kind of judgment should be left to each brother and sisters own master and High Priest the Lord Jesus Christ and that instead of concerning ourselves with the standing of another before the Lord a better focus for us to have and one that is far more pleasing to the Lord is to concern ourselves with making sure we don't cause others to stumble.

**Nothing is unclean in itself, except to those who think it unclean:** the context of the chapter is food, so the statement, "There is nothing unclean" applies to food and by extension to any non-sinful action those in Christ are doing for the Lord. Paul is warning those that do cause others in Christ to stumble that they can destroy them and therefore they are not acting in love and are breaking Jesus command, love your neighbour as yourself (Matt. 22:37-39) (Mark 12:28-31) this is called the Royal law by James (James 2:8). Paul is saying to those in Christ who hold to certain principals or traditions that other brother and sisters don't consider so important not to let those differences be spoken of as being against Christ himself, since in the context of this chapter the only three things that the Lord considers evil are:

1. When we judge each other's standing before the Lord according to matters of conscience.

2. When we demean another brother and sister or exalt those in Christ above others.
3. When we make those, who belong to Christ feel less important than others simply because we don't agree with some non-sinful thing, they are doing in faith according to their conscience.

**A personal testimony:** from my past experience Christian smokers are a good example of this principle, because in my early years of Christianity (if they were seen smoking) they were looked upon as lesser Christians, yet within the leadership there were certain men full of self-righteous pride and self-importance yet they were exalted and esteemed while the poor smoker was cruelly judged as the lesser, added to this there were in the same church others who loved to gossip and demean others and yet they were never made to feel less. I am only mentioning this to highlight the truth that we are all flawed and in the hope that we will all learn that not one of us is free from some kind of sinful aberration and dysfunction and therefore no-one has the right to make another brother or sister feel of less worth before the Lord or to think they are superior to others especially since not one of us can stand before the Lord sin free.

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### ROMANS 14:17-23

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#### **The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy.**

- **Romans 14:17-23:** For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup>Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. <sup>19</sup>So then let us pursue (follow after in KJV) what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding (edify in KJV). <sup>20</sup>Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. <sup>21</sup>It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. <sup>22</sup>The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. <sup>23</sup>But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

**NOTE:** the context is not talking about salvation, but serving Christ and being approved of God.

**The Kingdom of God:** is about living a good lifestyle before God and others, keeping peace as much as it is in our power to do so and having joy in good and wholesome things. Paul is saying the way to serve Christ is to live a good lifestyle, maintain peace as much as it is possible and having joy in good and wholesome things. By serving Christ in this way a person is not only acceptable to God but also acceptable to the unsaved.

**Upbuilding:** (edify in KJV) in this context means confirmation and acceptance it is initially about Jews and Gentiles encouraging each other, but by extension it extends to all those who belong to the family of Christ mutually encouraging everyone in the faith. Paul is saying, don't focus on judgement, but pursue what makes for peace and encouragement.

**Blessed is the one who does not pass judgment on themselves:** this means if a brother or sister in Christ has faith that what they allow is OK before God they should not come under the condemnation of others, but if they are with brothers and sisters who might stumble because of their freedom it is better for them to keep it to themselves.

**It should be mentioned:** this is not about sinful actions, but eating foods, drinking wine, etc., it is about wholesome acts of conscience. A simple example of this would be if a brother who has no problem drinking a cold beer on a hot day or a couple who have a bottle of wine over a romantic dinner are with a Christian who used to be an alcoholic and now believes all forms of alcohol are evil, then it is obviously better for them

not to drink alcohol while they are with such a brother. The principal is that it is better for us to lay aside what we want for the sake our brother or sister while we are with them rather than cause tension. (Note, the Bible does not teach that drinking alcohol is sinful, but it does clearly warn against drinking and excessive amount of it, because of the sinful behaviour drunkenness can lead to).

**Conscience and doubt:** if a brother or sister in Christ has doubt in their conscience about what they are doing they will feel a certain amount of guilt and condemnation in their conscience because they are not sure that what they are doing is right before the Lord and therefore they are not doing it in faith toward God. Paul is saying, if those in Christ do anything (i.e., have a glass of wine) that is not in faith, meaning with a clear conscience before God they will feel condemned by doing it. This is not a condemnation to eternal death it is a condemnation to themselves since they are basically doing something, they are unsure of. God is not going to reject those in Christ because of what they eat or drink or because of any other non-sinful action they do, but are not sure of it. This is because in this context it is not the action itself (drinking a glass of wine) that is sinful, but the doubt that is involved in the conscience while drinking it that makes it sin. The idea behind all Pauls teaching in this chapter is that God and the Lord Jesus Christ want us to live true to ourselves and to our own conscience in contrast to living in pretence and being hypocrites or living according to another person's conscience.

**The underlying thought in this chapter is:** living with our conscience before Christ and not before man, God wants us to be free from the influence of other people's conscience and walk with our own conscience before the Lord Jesus Christ.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*