

Why do you judge your brother?

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[0 : 00] So I'm doing up to the first full stop in verse 13. And my introduction is I would like you to consider a game of snooker.

Where you have different coloured snooker balls which go around the table. And the snooker balls bump into each other occasionally.

There's one picture. Here's another picture. It's mashed potato. Mashed potato tends to stick together in dollops. A dollop of mashed potato.

And if you have those two thoughts. I would like to add to that. That the purpose of Jesus Christ. Is not just to save many.

Not just to produce many saved individuals. But to produce a whole new community. In other words the purpose of Jesus Christ. Is not to produce a group of people who bump into each other occasionally.

[1 : 11] Like snooker balls. But to produce groups of people that stick together like mashed potato. In dollops. For the word dollop. Read church.

That's what churches are supposed to be. Dollops of Christians. That are tasty. And nutritious. And stick together. That is the vision.

Of the Bible. For the purposes of God. God. And that's what we're going to look at in Romans chapter 14. Let's look at the context.

It's called Romans. Meaning. Paul's letter to the Romans. Or Paul's letter to the Roman Christians. Or Paul's letter to the church in Rome. And. Like all churches. It is an individual church. With its own particular features. It includes.

[2 : 09] Oh. We've got squeaking. We've got. We've got Jews in the church.

People who are Jewish. Who've been converted to Jesus Christ. We've got Gentiles in the church. Who have been converted to Jesus Christ. This is clear from all the things that Paul has been saying all the way through.

And these two groups of people. Are faced with particular temptations. As they think about each other.

By virtue of their background. The Jews know the law of Moses. They know the food laws. They know kosher foods. They know the times and seasons. Passover.

All the different feasts. The Jewish feasts. And they are tempted to look at the Gentile Christians. And say. Look at them. They are so lax.

[3 : 10] They don't keep the food laws. They don't worry what they eat. Throw things on the floor. And they'd eat it. They're lax. They're sloppy. They're slapdash.

And the Jewish Christian. Is tempted. To look at the Gentile Christian. And judge. That Christian. And say they're very substandard.

And the Gentile Christian. Is also tempted to think things. They're tempted to think about the Jewish Christians. Look at them. They're rather obsessive.

You know. They're always asking. What's in this food. Things like that. They have their law. But they take it to the nth degree. And they. They're legalistic.

They've got an unhealthy interest. In rules and regulations. And they're scrupulous. Now scrupulous. In this sense. I mean. They have scruples.

[4 : 09] They are troubled. By things. And the Gentile Christian. Would say that normal people. Wouldn't worry about. They're worried about. Where the foods come from. And they're worried about.

Things like that. And the Gentile Christian. Is therefore. Tempted. To look down. On his or her. Jewish brother or sister.

And say. Look at them. You know. They haven't got their act together. They're not really free. They're not really. What Christians ought to be. And that will give you. An idea. Of the context. That Paul is speaking into. And even though. It may be. More complicated. Than that. I mean. It may be. That some of the Gentiles. Had been. Converted to Judaism. Before they became Christians. All sorts of complications. Might be in there. But that gives you. The basic idea. And the question. That Paul is addressing. Is how can these.

[5 : 05] Very different people. With different mindsets. Different ideas. How can they. Function together. And especially. How can they.

Worship God together. Have a look at. Romans chapter 15. Verse. Five and six. Chapter 15. Verses five and six.

Which is what he's aiming for. He says. 15. Five and six. He says. May the God. Who gives. And encouragement. Give you a spirit. Of unity. Among yourselves. As you follow. Christ Jesus. Follow Christ Jesus. So that. With one. Heart. And mouth. You may glorify. The God and father. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. He says. I want you to be together. Following the Lord Jesus.

[6 : 04] And with one heart. And one mouth. Glorifying. The God and father. So I want you to be together. As you worship.

As you live. As you function. And he goes on in verse. The following verse. To say. Accept one another. And that's what we'll be looking at.

In these next few weeks. And I want to say. That even though. Churches nowadays. Are not usually. Divided. In terms of.

Jewish background. Gentile background. There is nevertheless. Ever since. Been temptations. Upon the church. Of Jesus Christ. To division.

To judgmentalism. If that's the word. Of looking down. And judging people. Ever since. And I think. If you have thought about it. At all. You'll find. That same.

[7 : 00] Temptation. In your heart. To think. Wrongly. Of other Christians. And if that grows. And develops. Then you have. A breakup.

Of the church. And that is. What Paul is. Desperate. To prevent. And to say. We want. The churches. To be. Like the dollops. Of mashed potato.

That stick together. That's the context. So let me. Make a couple of points. And then. Look at four principles. So.

My first point. Is. That all. Of Romans. 14. And 15. Takes place. Within.

Agreement. About the fundamental. Points. Of the gospel. He's not saying. Accept somebody. Who doesn't believe. That Jesus Christ. Died on the cross.

[7 : 54] For our sins. Because that doesn't. Really matter. He's not saying that. He's not saying. Accept somebody. Who is not sure. Whether Jesus. Rose from the dead. That's fundamental.

He says. No. We've got to be clear. About that. He is. Agreeing. Within the fundamental. Within agreement. On the fundamental. Points of the gospel.

So. He's already. You see. Written the first 13 chapters. In which he's talked about. Those things. So for example. We could say. He is not. Putting up.

For negotiation. The universal. Problem. Of sin. Before the creator. We've all agreed. On that already. So. For example. In chapter 1.

Verse 18. We're all agreed. That the wrath of God. Is being revealed. From heaven. Against the godlessness. And wickedness. Of men. Who suppress the truth. By their wickedness.

[8 : 49] So we're agreed on that. We're agreed. Are we not? And even as we sit here. This morning. We're agreed. We're sinners. That we all. Need. The.

The forgiveness. Of God. Because. All have sinned. As he says. In chapter 3. Verse 23. All have sinned. And fall short.

Of the glory of God. The Jews. Have sinned. And fallen short. Of the glory of God. And the Gentiles. Have sinned. And fallen short. Of the glory of God. And you are in one group. Or another.

And you. Would be included. And would you agree. With that. That I've come here. Into a Christian assembly. And a Christian assembly. Assembles on the basis. That. I'm a sinner.

So that's one of the things. They would already have agreed. And then he would. They would already have agreed. The atonement. Bringing. Me.

[9 : 43] Back into relationship. With God. Is through. The cross. Of Christ. Alone. So. For example. Chapter 3. Verse 24. He says.

We're. All have sinned. And are justified. Freely. By his grace. Through the redemption. That came. By Christ Jesus. God.

Presented him. As a sacrifice. Of atonement. And we're agreed on this. That Jesus Christ. Died. On the cross. As a redemptive.

Sacrifice. For our sins. He achieved. What was necessary. He did it. There's no. Other place. That we could go. And find the same benefit. No one else.

Died on the cross. For our sins. No other. Religious teacher. Has ever done that. It's only. Through the Lord Jesus. So we'd be. Agreed on that. And we'd be agreed on that.

[10 : 38] This morning. Would we? No answer. Yes. I think we would. Yes. And things. Like that. The main points.

Of the gospel. Are already agreed. Now. As we go down. Through church history. It's become clear. At different points. That different things.

Become fundamental. Or different things. Come into prominence. As fundamental. And there are different. Ways of summarizing. The main points. Of the gospel. You can summarize them.

In a quite a short statement. Or a longer statement. Or a very very long statement. But. Of course. If you make it very very long. Then you probably go. Beyond the fundamental points.

Into some more particular points. But. We belong. To the. Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches. The FIEC. And that has. What seems to me.

[11 : 35] To be a very. Wise choice. Of fundamental points. They call it. The doctrinal basis. Basis. So basis. Basis meaning fundamental.

And doctrine. Meaning what is taught. What is believed. So if you were to make a list. You would include things like. We believe in God.

We believe that he made everything. We believe. That he is Trinity. That he is Father. Son. And Holy Spirit. We would say. We believe something about humankind.

About the sinfulness. The universal sinfulness. Of humankind. We might say something about being made. In the image of God. Depends how far you want to go. We'd say something about Jesus Christ.

That he is truly God. And truly man. That he was. Born of the Virgin Mary. That he's without sin. That he died on the cross. And is raised again.

[12 : 32] And we'd probably include something. About the atonement doctrines. To be clear what we mean. By he died for sins. He didn't die. In a random. Pointless death.

He died in a purposeful death. In which God. Poured. On Jesus Christ. The wrath. And the judgment. That we deserved.

And he took it instead. So Jesus died in a punishment. Fashion. And he. Whatever it was. That we would have suffered. Jesus Christ.

Suffered instead. It's a substitution. So we would say something. About the atonement doctrines. And then we would say. How does that. Come into my life. We would talk about.

Justification by faith. Which is what Paul was talking about. How can I be put right with God. Is it by working hard. By doing my best. Well Paul says. It's radically different from that.

[13 : 28] We are put right with God. By believing. In what Jesus Christ has done. It's an amazing statement. That's what the Christian message says.

And then if we were thinking. Of fundamental points. We probably say something. About being born again. So there's no such thing. As a Christian. Who isn't a born again Christian. Because Jesus said.

You must be born again. And there is a supernatural change. In the life. Of a believer. You might not always be able. To identify the exact moment.

But. There's no such thing. As a Christian. Who hasn't experienced. The new birth. We might say something. If we were looking at. Basic fundamentals. About.

The new birth. Leading to an ethical life. And the fact. That if we're not living. In new obedience. Not perfect obedience. But new obedience. Then there's.

[14 : 23] A bit of a question mark. Over whether we're really Christians. And we might say something. About the end of the world. The coming of Jesus. As judge. To judge.

The prayer book says. The quick and the dead. That means. Is the living and the dead. And we might say something. Because it seems a big. Important point. That there is a heaven. And that there is a hell.

And that we are. Now. Challenged by the gospel. To choose. Whether we're choosing. One or the other. Whether we're choosing. To follow Jesus Christ.

Or not. Those would be the. Fundamental points. I don't think I've. Left out anything. That. You would say. Is a. Fundamental point.

But you could certainly. Enlarge on them. Because I've just put them. As headings. And you would. Probably want to. Add to that. Where all this came from. And it comes from. The Bible. And so.

[15:19] We would. Add. That we get this. From the scriptures. And that the Bible. Is the word of God. And we would want to say. It's infallible.

Or it doesn't have mistakes in it. Or it's inerrant. Or something like that. To say that it's a totally. Reliable book. And that's where we got it all from. And if people. Want to. Refine.

Or challenge. What we've been saying. Then we would all agree. To go and see what the Bible said about it. Okay. So. That's my first point. That. We're not.

Disputing. The fundamental points of the gospel. What he's saying is. That there may be things. Once we've agreed. The gospel. There may be things that.

We. We differ over. Does that make sense so far? Yeah. Thank you. So that was point number one. And this is point number two.

[16:17] Or it's really a question. Why. Doesn't he. Simply. Teach his way. Out of it. So here's. One believer. Who only.

Eats. Lettuces. And here's another believer. Who eats. Beef burgers. And here's a believer. Who has. A calendar. And thinks. That it's very important.

To follow certain days. Why doesn't Paul. Just say. Wrong. Right. Right. Wrong. He could. Teach his way.

Through it. And it surprises me. In a way. That he doesn't. He doesn't do so. Although he could. Say. You're right. You're wrong.

You're wrong on this. But right on that. And you're completely. Up the spout. He could. Say that. But he doesn't. And I think the reason is. That he is tackling. Underlying.

[17:11] Principles. In other words. There is something. More important. To. For. The churches of Jesus Christ. To get hold of. Than whether you eat. Only lettuce.

There are more. Telling. Weighty. Valuable. Important principles. Than. Just the individual. Issues. And. The principles. Apply. To us. Too. So. Whether or not. We're. Disputing over. Being vegetarians. Or. Not. That.

There's. Principles. That apply. So. Let's look at the principles. Of which I have four. Chapter 14. Verse 1.

Accept him. Whose faith is weak. Without. Passing. Judgment. On. Disputable. Matters. One man's faith. Allows him to eat everything. But another man.

[18:05] Whose faith is weak. Eats only vegetables. 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. And the first thing. I'd like to. Bring out. Is. Acceptance. There's an important principle.

It seems to me. Of acceptance. Because he says. God. Has. Accepted. This person. This person has believed.

The gospel of Jesus Christ. And therefore. God. Has. Has. Accepted them. And. The word. To accept. Means. To take.

To oneself. As it were. You might like to think of it. To hold. Hands. With. So. Here is somebody. And God. Has.

[19:00] Accepted them. God said. Hold my hand. I'm holding your hand. You hold my hand. God's accepted them. They're holding hands. With God. God. And what.

Paul is saying. Is okay. This is the church. It's the church. Of people. Holding hands. With God. Why can't you hold hands. With each other. Why do you say. Oh no. When God.

Has accepted. This person. And if you think. Of all the people. That God. Has held hands. With. The woman. At the well. The woman.

At the well. The man. The woman. Who'd had five husbands. And the man. She was living with. At that moment. Was not her husband. She was accepted. And God said.

Yeah. My dear. I hold hands. With you. Well. Would we. Accept her. Think of. Rahab. The prostitute. Think of.

[19 : 57] Rahab. The prostitute. Now. She. When she heard. In the days. Of Joshua. About. What God. Was doing. Things. Changed. In her life.

But she still. Goes down. In. In. In the story. As Rahab. The prostitute. So. You're sitting. At the church. Lunch. You're saying. And. What do you do. For a living.

Well. You could see. How embarrassing. The. The conversation. Might go on. From there. But God. Said. Well. No. Here's a woman. Who's turned to me. She's put her hand. In my hand.

And I'm not ashamed. Of her. I've accepted her. So you accept. One another. You think of the thief. On the cross. Even. It was just in those. Very last moments.

Of his life. Wasn't it? That. I think. Quite possibly. He'd been making fun. Of Jesus too. But. A point. Came. Where he said. Hold on. Hold on.

[20 : 50] Hold on. Hold on. This man. Has done nothing wrong. Speaking of Jesus. And saying to Jesus. Lord. Lord.

Will you remember me. When you come into your kingdom. And Jesus saying to him. You got it. Today you'll be with me. In paradise. It was just that interchange.

Just those few seconds. Where. The man put his hand. Into the hand of the almighty. And the almighty. Grabbed his hand. And held it tight.

Said. I got you. I've got you. God accepted him. And if he was in the congregation. We'd have to accept him too. Or think of Paul.

We think Paul's a very fine chap. Because he wrote quite a bit of the bible. But I don't know.

Whether we quite remember. His background. He was. Sort of. As it were. In charge of the secret police.

[21 : 45] He was. You know. In charge of the Stasi. Going around. And knocking on Christians doors. And hauling them out. And pressurizing them. To. To relinquish their faith.

He was. As he would have said. He was the ultimate. Orthodox Jew. And yet. There came a time. When he was on his way. To arrest some more Christians.

That the Lord said. You're not doing that anymore. Saul. Saul. Why are you persecuting me? And. Saul. Was. Reduced to nothing. And Saul of Tarsus. The Orthodox Jew. Realized how wrong he was. And how he was forgiven.

For all that he'd done. And became. A follower of Jesus Christ. Such a radical thing. That to begin with. People thought he was pretending. And that he was.

[22 : 42] A spy. But. God accepted him. And if Paul. Were here. We should accept him too. And we could add.

Matthew the tax collector. We could add. All sorts of people. With all sorts of backgrounds. And who would come into the congregation. With all sorts of history. And all sorts of things. That they'd done wrong.

And thought wrong. And learned wrong. And perhaps still needed to unlearn. And perhaps still needed to unlearn. And God has accepted them.

And Paul says. Well why can't you accept them. Why can't you accept one another. Accept him whose faith is weak.

Verse one. God has accepted him. Verse three. Fifteen verse seven.

[23 : 37] Accept one another. And Paul says. And don't just accept them. So that you can sit down next to them. At lunch. And ask them. Why they're still doing such and such. Don't accept them.

Accept without passing judgment. On disputable matters. It's an interesting. And very. It's a very radical thought. Isn't it? You'd think. Paul. You're always on about getting things right.

But Paul says. Well. You know. Accept one another. But it's not just so you can have a. Constant debate. And constantly been getting at one another. Principle number one then. Acceptance.

I don't think Paul is saying. You can't. Therefore have a sensible conversation. About.

Vegetarianism. Or whatever it is. But have that conversation.

In the context. That we've accepted one another anyway. Principle number two. Liberty. Liberty. As we go on then. Verse four.

[24 : 39] 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. One man considers or judges.

One day more sacred than another. Or just more than another. Another man considers or judges. Every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced. In his own mind.

That's a very surprising thing for Paul to say. Each one should be fully. Or fully convinced. Or full. In his own mind.

So I think this second principle. Is a principle of liberty. To allow other people the space. To have their own consciences. On these less important matters.

Let each be full. It's a sort of full word. Rather than a convinced word. But the word mind is a mind word. Let him be fully happy.

[25 : 38] Fully content. In his own mind. Isn't that an interesting thing for him to say? So he's not saying. You should avoid having a view.

On whatever it is. That other Christians may have a different view on. He's not saying. You don't have a view on it. So you might well have a view on. What songs you like singing.

Or you might well have a view. On which version of the Bible you prefer. Or you might well have a view on homeschooling. Or you might well have a view on party politics. Have a view.

Says Paul. Be fully convinced in your own mind. He says. But you must allow. Other people to be fully convinced. In their own minds too. Do you see the point there?

Let each one be fully convinced in their own mind. It's a surprising thing to say. But the only way he can make this work. Is to allow liberty. In these matters.

[26 : 36] And we have to find a way of having liberty. So that we can work together. So for example. On a sort of trivial example. With songs. Somebody will say. Well I like such and such songs. Somebody will say.

Well I like such and such songs. And somebody else will say. Well I like such and such songs. Well we have to share. We have to take turns. We have to do. We have to. In a spirit of love.

Sing along. When it's a song you don't particularly like. Because you know somebody else likes it.

And the other person. Has to cheerfully sing along. When it's one that they didn't particularly like.

And we have to work it all together. Be convinced in your own mind. But allow people the liberty. To be convinced in their mind. Does that make sense?

It's an interesting principle isn't it? Principle number three. A principle of motive. And I'm coming along to verse four.

[27 : 33] Where he says. To his own master he stands or falls. And he is able to make him stand. And verse six. 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. For none of us lives to himself alone. And none of us dies to himself alone. If we live. If we live. We live to the Lord.

If we die. We die to the Lord. So whether we live or die. We belong to the Lord. For this reason.

Christ died and returned to life. That he might be the Lord. Of both the dead and the living.

Now I'm trying to pick out one thought at this. I'll pick out another one in a moment. But it seems to me that what he's saying here. Is that there's a judgment to be made.

[28 : 33] And he's certainly going to say that. We'll look at that in a moment. But in making this judgment. Motive matters. You know how he kept on emphasizing.

If somebody has such and such a day. It's to the Lord. That's why they're doing it. If somebody eats meat. They're doing it to the Lord. They give thanks to God. If somebody doesn't eat meat.

They're doing it to the Lord. And he seems to be saying. That this is an important thing. For whom is this being done?

To whom is this being done? Somebody is making a decision about. Whether they're vegetarian or not. He says well. Why are they doing it? That's really a very important thing. And somebody is eating meat.

They're not bothered about the vegetarian stuff. Why are they doing that? That's very important.

What is their motive? Because. Notice his assumption here.

[29 : 30] That true Christianity. Without doubt. And without exception. Is lived. To the Lord.

That's a very radical statement. Isn't it? He doesn't have any time. For Christians. Who are sort of half time Christians. Christians. So they worry about.

What the Lord thinks. Really only on Saturday night. When they're getting ready for church. And Sunday morning. When we're in there in church. He says. I don't have any time for that. Because that's not being a Christian. Being a Christian. Whether we live or die. It's to the Lord. When we're in the office. It's to the Lord. When we're planning our finances. It's to the Lord. When we're having our social time. It's to the Lord. When we're doing our studies. It's to the Lord. When we're sitting our exams. It's to the Lord. [30 : 24] When we're going to the doctors. It's to the Lord. And so on. Everything is to the Lord. He says. We don't live to ourselves. Verse 7. None of us lives to himself.

we live to the Lord. So he says, you know, that's what we're agreeing on this. And so I pause to say, is that true of us? It's worth a thought, isn't it? That's why I thought we should stop when we were singing, Lord be my vision. Because Paul assumes that that's the case for every Christian.

You could look at that person and say, whatever they're doing, I can be confident of this. They're doing it for the Lord's sake. They're doing it with the Lord in mind. They're doing it conscious that the Lord is watching.

It was a Latin expression, *quorum Deo*, which I think means before the Lord. And it was said about Calvin, the theologian, that one of the great things he was conscious of was that he lived and studied and taught *quorum Deo*, everything in the sight of the Lord.

[31 : 34] And then I say that God seems to find this important. Even more important than whether we've got everything right.

Even if we are mistaken in detail, even if God's saying, actually, I don't really care whether you eat lettuces or not. But you're doing it for me.

So I value that. It's an interesting thought, isn't it? It's done to the Lord. Here's an example. Imagine you are a parent, and some of you are and have been parents, and your little child brings to you a picture, which is a red scroll with handles like the handles of a mug sticking out on each side, and a blue blur in the middle, and two black dots on it.

And you think, what on earth is this? And the little child says, here you are, mummy. It's a picture of you. And you think, well, I could actually write quite a long list of details in which this picture is not entirely a good representation.

But you don't do that, because you look at the motive, don't you? So even, you know, they tried their best. They did try their best, and it was honestly done out of love for mummy, and that makes all the difference.

[33 : 07] And I think Paul is saying that in many ways, we, even in our grown-upness, and even in our sophistication, what we try to do for the Lord, he sort of looks like that, well, you know, they tried their best.

They probably didn't realize all the imperfections in what they were doing, but they did it for me, and they've offered it for me, and that means it's a special thing. And I think what he's saying is, just have a little bit of that when you think of other Christians.

So motive matters. That was my third principle. And my fourth principle is this principle, which he's coming to, of judgment.

He's mentioned this already, verse four. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? And in verse nine, he gets onto this, for this reason, Christ died and returned to life, that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

Why then do you judge your brother? Actually, there's been quite a bit of judging going on. The word condemn is, in verse three, is the word judge.

[34 : 24] The word in verse four is to judge one another's servant. The word consider, in verse five, is a judgment word. You judge one day more than another, and people judge every day alike.

There's a lot of judging things going on, and in the nature of it, there has to be. But he says, the judge is God. It's an interesting point he's making.

God is the fair judge. God is the fair judge. And the way it seems to me, is that he's saying that the judge weighs up.

He makes an assessment, and he weighs up everything. And the living God, when he judges, does put everything fairly into account, in a way that we're not even capable of doing on ourselves.

So the judge weighs the deed, and he weighs the motive, and he weighs what has gone before.

[35 : 36] So for example, for some people, it's not a big thing to be honest with money, because that's the advantage they've had in their upbringing. They've never learned anything else.

They've never seen anything else. They've got all sorts of advantages. And it might be the same thing, you know, in terms of sexual morality. They've never known any other thing than what we might say a traditional morality, which fits in very well with a Christian morality.

But the judge weighs up the advantages, and then he weighs up the disadvantages. Advantages. And he says, you know what this child has been through as they've grown up to be an adult? Can you see why they've done the things that they do?

Can you see why they think the way they do? I can weigh up, says the living God, I can weigh up not only the advantages, but the disadvantages. And I can weigh up, the judge says, whether you find things easy or difficult.

Some people find, you know, for example, speaking up an easy thing. They do it all the time. Some people would die rather than speak up. And then when it comes to Christian witness, perhaps the person who finds it easy to speak, finds it easy to speak in Christian witness.

[36 : 44] And then the other person who finds it difficult to speak up might find it difficult to speak in Christian witness. And the judge will take that into account. And the judge will take into account the circumstances.

I think C.S. Lewis comments, I can't remember it now, on different ethical decisions that people might make, which might be influenced quite a lot by whether they've had a lot of sleep last night, or whether they've got a stomach ache, or whatever it is.

All these circumstances all add up. And you know, the Lord sees all that stuff, but we don't. We only look on the outside. We don't see what's been going on before, during, and after, do we?

And the point is that the Lord is the judge. Why do you, verse 10, why do you judge your brother? Why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written, as surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before me. Every tongue will confess to God.

[37 : 55] So then each of us will give a word, an account of himself to God. Let us stop passing judgment on one another. He says, you're not the judge, God is the judge.

And there's a very real sense in which it is not our job to think, or even begin to think, we can categorize other people in judgment. That's God's job.

I'd like to look at Matthew 25, if I may. And there's a parable there, the parable of the talents, in Matthew 25, verse 14, in which different servants are given different amounts of money and left to do something with them.

And the master comes back and finds out what these different servants have done with their different amounts of money. So they're different. And in Matthew 25, verse 19, after a long time, the master of these servants returned and settled accounts with them.

The man who had received the five talents, that's five coins, had made five more and brought them. And master, he says, you've entrusted with me with five talents.

[39 : 07] See, I've gained five more. Now notice that the master does an accounting. He says, okay, I gave you five and you've made five more. And he congratulates the servant.

Well done, good and faithful servant. You had that particular advantage, those particular gifts, you've done that with them, well done. Verse 22.

So there's a man who's got less advantage, less gifts, man with two talents. And he comes and he says, master, you've entrusted me with two talents.

See, I've gained two more. Well, that's different, isn't it? And the master has assessed that. It's not exactly the same, it's different. But he says, well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful with a few things.

I'll put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness. What I want you to notice is that the judge gets an account from each of these different believers.

[40 : 11] It's not condemnation. It is a beneficial assessment. So when Paul says, we will all stand before God's judgment seat, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

I don't want anybody to go away thinking, oh dear, before I heard this sermon and read this passage, I was looking forward to the coming of Christ and now I'm going to be ashamed.

It's not meant to be like that. It's, if you like, the different things that the Lord will see in every different believer's life in which you'll say, well done for that or well done for that or well done for that

and he will know and understand and with fairness and with fatherly goodness, as each of us gives an account, he will say, well done in a different way.

There are degrees of reward reward, but I hasten to say for the believer there is, chapter 8, verse 1, no condemnation.

For the believer, there is no condemnation. So, how much condemnation is there for the believer on the day of judgment? None.

[41 : 35] That's a very important point. But Paul is saying, God is the judge and he is the actual judge, not us. And that's his point, isn't it?

We're not to be judgmental. We're not to be looking down and saying, well this Christian is nothing but such and such and they're always there of that sort of type and we need to deal with each other wisely.

We can form provisional judgments. We can say, well such and such a person is mature, growing. Such and such a person is reliable.

Such and such a person in all Christian love and honesty has a lot to learn. Such and such a person has a lot to unlearn. So, probably not a good idea to tell them to lock up at the end of the service because they'll probably forget.

Things like that. We can assess gifts. Now that's fair enough. That's part and parcel of the Christian life and we're supposed to do that. But he says, don't be judging one another. Don't be writing one another off.

[42 : 42] Don't be putting one another down. Don't be reducing one another to say, well she's nothing but her. He's nothing but her.

Because Christians are never nothing but a troublemaker. Nothing but a attention seeker. Nothing but a whatever.

They're a Christian. They're a Christian. They're someone whom God has embraced. They're someone whom God has accepted.

So, here are the points that we've looked at so far. Number one, acceptance. God has held out his hand to this person. So, why can't you hold out your hand?

Liberty. There are disputable matters. Let each one be assured in their own mind. If it's a fundamental matter, that's different.

[43 : 44] If it's a less important matter, there's certainly room for discussion. But discussion with liberty. Motive matters.

You may have a very different view of what your political party to vote for. But, you're doing it for the Lord. And so is so and so else doing it for the Lord.

And judgment. God is the one who judges. He takes everything into account in a way that we can't possibly do. His is the right to judge.

Not us. Accept one another without passing judgment on disputable matters. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We're going to sing together. Just remind you that if you're involved in helping out next Saturday that please meet with Maria.

[44 : 55]