

# Do not judge others

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 03 May 2026

Preacher: David Skull

[ 0 : 00 ] In front of you. What am I doing now? That's not what we want either, is it? I don't want to be remembered for the wrong reasons.! Romans chapter 14.

Yeah, 1 to 12. I think last time I came, I brought a few props with me. And I've done it again. I'm going through a little season of bringing props.

That's my hat. I don't want that. Well, actually, that's fine. Okay. Let me just open this bag. Let's see what I can find.

Brilliant. Okay, let's pray, shall we, as we come to God's word. Hopefully it will engage our minds, the stories, the images. But we want to hear from Jesus. So, Lord Jesus, we ask that you who reign over the church and rule in love would have your way through your word.

If we're distracted now, help us to focus on the meaning of your word. It's application to us. Help me, as a visitor, to preach the word faithfully. Pray your spirit will apply it directly into the hearts and lives of your fellowship that we would joyfully repent and believe and obey Christ as a result.

[ 1 : 12 ] So the gospel will spread and flourish in this city and to the ends of the earth. Amen.

Amen. I don't know if you heard the expression, you need to break a few eggs to make an omelet. Has anyone heard that expression?

Sorry if that's new to you. You're from a different culture. It kind of means that if you want to get anything done, there's going to be some sacrifice involved. So if it just means you need to, if you want to achieve a goal, you've got to make some sacrifices, that's fine.

You need to break a few eggs to make an omelet. But if the eggs are people and the goal is I'm willing to break a few eggs to get there, that's not right, is it?

Sadly, some people have genuine aspirations for where they want their ministry or where they want the church to go, and they are willing to break a few eggs to get there.

I think this passage will give us a big uh-uh to that. Uh-uh. Romans is about the unity of the church around the gospel for the sake of mission.

[ 2 : 16 ] Paul wants to go through Rome with the support of the churches there and go through Rome to Spain to reach out with the gospel. And so he reminds them of the gospel that they share together.

He's been teaching about the implications of the gospel for their churches, for their community. And now he's really homing in on the importance of unity.

He's already thought about the unity between Jewish believers and Gentile believers in God's sovereign plans. And now he's thinking practically about an issue that he knew that they were going a little bit together over.

Because a divided church, even in small ways, becomes an inward-focusing church rather than a great-commissioned church. And he says, One thing the devil would love to do is to keep groups of genuine gospel-believing Christians focusing in on issues that they can agree to differ on and still be a church around the gospel together.

If you keep focusing on those sorts of issues, you'll forget the great needs out there. And so Paul, I think, is here because he is, in the light of all that he's doing in the book of Romans, he's wanting to deal with a presenting issue of disagreeing over disputable matters.

[ 3 : 34 ] Matters about opinions, which there will be a right and a wrong, but if you're not careful, can get in the way of the ultimate goal, which is to make the gospel known. In our church, when we formed our church a few years ago, we got a church covenant together.

So those who are members of the church kind of make some aspirations and promises from Scripture about what they seek to do to be a healthy church together. And it struck me again that a lot of those promises are about being together and working together.

We will pray and work together to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. We will walk together in love as Christ has loved us. We will seek to encourage one another and build each other up in the faith. It's about our life together. And there does seem to be some tension in the churches in Rome, not over the primary issues of the gospel or clear moral issues that the Bible is clear about, such as sexual immorality and adultery and those sorts of things, but over disputed matters.

And Paul is very, very clear. Let me just get a few things out here. Paul is very clear that he doesn't want the gospel mission or the health of the churches to be as a result of breaking a few eggs.

[ 4 : 48 ] Don't worry, I'm not going to break them. You're okay. Yes. I might later in the sermon. You never know. So think about the eggs. Think about the eggs. Let's just...

Do I press a button? I don't know what I'm doing, actually. Clicking it? Oh, there you go. Just beautiful matters in the church. Excellent. Okay. So here's what I think is happening. If you read the passage earlier.

This is where I need the things in my bag. Okay. I've got some carrots. And I've got some sliced chorizo.

Chorizo, whatever everyone wants to call them. I've got meat and I've got vegetables. Here's what's happening, I think. First, the meat and the vegetables. Okay. We know that there are some Jewish background believers of Jesus in Rome.

We know that from the previous chapters. And it seems to me, this is how I see this chapter, that many amongst that group still held to the Old Testament laws about diet, about needing to eat kosher food, and the special festivals from the Old Testament.

[ 5 : 53 ] They considered a continuation from their Old Testament beliefs, which is fine in and of itself. But at the same time, there were also Gentile background believers of Jesus in Rome, who because of the gospel knew that they weren't obligated to observe those special diets and those special days.

They were free to eat non-kosher meat, as it wasn't an issue. So there's one group that are happy to eat the meat, which is non-kosher. And then there's the other group that says, no, we can't do that.

We can only eat vegetables. Of course, the issue was that they're in the same church. So what do you do for a church meal? Do you have two separate tables? Do you divide them into two different churches?

We are the kosher group that won't eat non-kosher meat, or no, we are the group that eats everything. What do you do? Mainly, it seems that the Jewish background believers restricted their diets and days, but they were starting to judge and condemn the guys who weren't, the mainly Gentile background Christians.

They were not questioning, it seems, each other's salvation. They were all followers of Jesus. But this group was starting to judge the Gentile group and saying, are you really living to please God?

[ 7 : 14 ] And this group, with their freedom, was starting to judge the Jewish background believers and saying, you're not living out your freedom. And there was a tension going on between these two groups. So there's kind of details about exactly what was going on there that people can think.

But that's the big picture. You've got the two groups. Let me put these out of the way here. The mainly Gentile background Christians, they were free to eat everything and treat every day the same.

And they were starting to despise or ridicule the guys that said, no, no, no, we'll eat any vegetables, thank you very much, in our culture. And we've got to observe the Old Testament feasts and Sabbaths. Now, if you look at verse 14, you'll see that instead of gathering together around the gospel, thinking about verse 17, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, living in harmony with each other and glorifying God with one mind and voice, that's chapter 15, verse 6 at the end. And they were actually, 14, verse 1 in our passage, conflicting, arguing about these disputed matters, opinions. So rather than gathering together being the highlight of the week, I imagine for some, it's like, oh, crumbs, I've got to gather with the flock.

And I know I'm just going to have a conversation and an argument again about what we should be eating and what days we should be celebrating. Now, we might not have the same issue, but there are lots of things that can cause that sense of, I don't really want to go to church this week because I just know that I'm going to get it in the neck again.

[ 8 : 57 ] Someone's going to look down on me for this. Or I'm going to despise others because they're so tight, they're so restricted. Growing up, there's been a number of those issues which are

kind of broader and wider.

I remember sitting in church one day when a visiting speaker said, noticed some of the young people in the background, they're wearing jeans. And the visiting speaker said, you wouldn't go and visit the queen dressed like that, would you?

So why are you coming to church with jeans on when you should have a jacket and a shirt and tie? It doesn't really matter, does it? What we wear is as long as your heart is right before the Lord.

In the previous church in Guildford that I was on the leadership team with, John, who was the long-term pastor of the church, some of you would know him, he had to navigate over a number of years lots of these kind of issues which there wasn't a right or wrong about but people felt very strongly about.

And I just remember looking at him one week and thinking, you dress differently every week, don't you, John? So one week he was there in his suit and looked so smart. And the next week he was in his scruffy jumper with his jeans on.

[ 9 : 58 ] In other words, saying, you come in your conviction about how you should dress before the Lord. But don't impose that upon others in the life of the church. There's a freedom of conscience over these things.

It's very important. Another area you can expand that into rather than just the food could be Bible versions, for instance. Some very strongly hold to a certain version and would have a tendency of judging others for being not so faithful to God to having a different version.

That can be an issue. And of course today, I think in Brighton, we can go down the food issue, can't we? In a slightly different way, thinking about whether someone is vegetarian, vegan, or loves their steak.

And we won't go into that quite now. But Paul is writing here and he has his convictions, I think. And he knows actually what the answer is that in the gospel, even though he is from a Jewish background, he is free to eat the non-kosher meat.

He has a freedom there. So he calls himself part of the group that is the strong in these verses. But his concern primarily in this passage is that he has a concern that people treat each other well and especially that the weak, those who have such conviction about these things, are loved and looked after.

[ 11 : 17 ] Because what he didn't want and what we don't want are for churches to break up or divide over those disputable matters.

You can imagine the breakup of the churches of Rome into the meat eaters and the vegetarians. And suddenly you've got all these different churches that are going which reflects a split between Jews and Gentiles.

Now there are some disputable matters that you do need to agree on as a church, the function of the church. Such as who gets baptized, who belongs to the church, what you do with the Lord's Supper. You've got to make decisions on that and you agree to unite around that.

And it needs to be carefully done. But when you're doing that, you're not saying that people who preach the same gospel have a slightly different application of scripture are wrong.

We may say that they're wrong, but you're going to love them through it. But arguing and dividing over important secondary issues is wrong, but having a position is right for the church sometimes.

[ 12 : 20 ] But then this kind of thing, arguing and dividing over food and drink, just doesn't seem to be right, does it? You can expand it to arguing and dividing over rotors or how you dress or Bible versions or styles of singing or all those sorts of things.

It can cause a bit of ah in the church if you're not careful, which can cause problems. So what do we do? Here's the principle in verse 1 of chapter 14.

Paul says, Accept or welcome anyone who is weak in faith, but don't argue or quarrel over disputable matters.

So he's speaking to the group, basically, that says you can eat everything. It's fine now in the gospel. Welcome anyone who is weak in faith, who thinks that they can't do that, but don't argue about disputed matters.

It makes me think a little bit like, I don't know if you've seen Finding Nemo, but there's the two crabs at the end who are kind of standing over this pipe. And they're going, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, to each other.

[ 13 : 24 ] And anyone comes near them, hey, hey, hey, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip. And we don't want that kind of attitude in the church, do we? Don't quarrel over disputable matters. You may have your conviction, but learn to love each other through it.

Okay. Even with your Bibles open, talking to each other. None of that, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip, nip. Okay. Now, weakened faith here means, I think, that these believers, who in this case are like the vegetables only guys, they need to grow in their faith because they are weak. So they do need to grow. Paul takes the position of the strong here, and they need to live out the implications of the gospel. And Paul, even though he's from a Jewish background, does consider these many Jewish background believers like this, who won't eat the non-kosher meat as the weak. After all, didn't Jesus himself declare all foods clean? Mark chapter 7. So Paul's with the strong on this issue of diet. Eat your meat. Eat it all. And each day is the same.

We're not bound by the festivals and the Sabbaths of the Old Testament. We gather on the Lord's Day. We work that out together. But what Paul is concerned about in this chapter and these verses isn't about the details of the issue.

[ 14 : 37 ] And this is really important to grasp. Paul, in these verses, isn't so concerned about the details of the issue, as important as they are to work through. He's concerned about how the churches are loving each other and treating each other through the issue.

Okay? Through the issue. So just looking at the first part of the section where Paul is dealing with this in Romans 14 to 15. Now I said that these disputable matters are not gospel issues. you can elevate them to gospel issues. To say, you're not really a Christian unless you do the right thing. I think in Galatian, that kind of issue is being talked about circumcision.

People are saying you're not properly in the people of God unless you're circumcised. And Paul comes down very heavily on that. But the issue about practice in the church, people disagreeing over that, it does give an opportunity for the gospel to be applied in the life of the church. And I don't even notice this in verses 1 down to 12 in our passage, but Paul is always talking about the gospel as he deals with this issue. He deals with this issue of disputable matters.

[ 15 : 48 ] Look at verses 2 to 4. Where's the gospel there? Well, look at verse 3. What does Paul say in verse 3? He says, he talks about God accepting the person who you might be tempted to judge.

God welcoming them. The weaker brother, they have been saved by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, just like you. The gospel has an implication for how we deal with this issue. God has accepted them.

Look at verse 4. The gospel not only accepts them, but the gospel will help them persevere to the end. They will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand. The same God of grace that saved them and saved you is the same grace that will lead them and you to persevere, whether you are meat only or vegetables only on the issue.

Verses 5 to 9. Look at verse 8. He says, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. The gospel not only saves us in status, but unites us to Christ and we belong to him.

And wherever we stand on this issue, this debatable matter, we belong to the Lord. And then, of course, in verse 9. Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

[ 17 : 06 ] He's speaking about the death and resurrection of Jesus, that he is Lord over everyone and everything, including your brothers and sisters with whom you disagree over this issue in the life of the church.

The gospel. Finally, you see the gospel in verses 10 and 12. He brings it to a conclusion. And he speaks there about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He says, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. Verse 12. Each one of us will give an account of himself to God. Jesus has died. Jesus has welcomed me through the gospel into relationship with God.

I belong now to God through Jesus Christ. And Jesus is coming back. And we will all stand before the judgment seat of God on this. The gospel speaks into this issue.

So how we treat each other as we deal with disputable matters like this is really about the implications of the gospel among us and around us. So there is a strong and a weak faith over the issue in these churches.

[ 18 : 15 ] But there is also an opportunity to grow and apply the gospel where we land on disputable matters, especially where we disagree. At the end of the day, we're all on the journey, aren't we?

Together. To grow in Christ's likeness. Our journey towards heaven. Let's just quickly just see a few ways in which the gospel helps us. As a visiting speaker, I've got no idea whether there's a little issue going on where you're going ee, ee, ee, ee, with each other.

I do know churches, and I know my own heart, so there probably is somewhere, somewhere. So how does this passage help us? Let's just remember a few things.

It will come up on the screen. First of all, remember the welcome of God. Look at verses 1 to 3. Accept the one whose faith is weak without quarreling over disputable matters.

Oh, it's so tempting to tell someone where they are wrong. One's person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another whose faith is weak eats only vegetables on the issue.

[ 19 : 20 ] The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not. And the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them.

Aren't you amazed in the grace of God in accepting you into his kingdom, into his family, and into the life of the local church?

Isn't that amazing? The grace of God. Think of the story of the prodigal son, who is, despite his running away, and he thinks, I don't deserve it. His father runs to him. His arms are open.

He's embraced. This son of mine was dead. He is alive. He's lost and he's found. And that's the heartbeat of every Christian, isn't it? I'm just happy to be here. Praise the Lord. And when you come to an issue where you're tempted to go, ee, ee, ee, ee, over, isn't it good to remember that just as God has welcomed you, so he has welcomed and accepted that brother or sister, assuming that they are brother and sister in Christ.

Remember the welcome of God when it comes to disputable matters in the life of the church. Secondly, remember that you are not God on this issue.

[ 20 : 34 ] Look at verse 4. Verse 4. Who are you to judge someone out as servants? To their own master, servants stand and fall, and they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

You are not God. You are not their master. Beware, some churches can fall down the line of heavy shepherding, where the leaders kind of control every little detail of people's lives, and I know that's not the case here.

Elders have the authority to teach God's word and set an example, not to lay down the law in every detail. You're not God of each other. You're not each other's master, although there is a loving responsibility you have towards each other.

And you certainly can't be the other person's savior. You know, someone is judging someone, thinking you're not living the proper Christian life on this issue, which is a disputable matter, not clear in scripture.

You cannot save that person. You can't keep them persevering until the end. But look at the promise at the end of verse 4. Isn't it wonderful? At the end of verse 4.

[ 21 : 40 ] They will stand. For the Lord is able to make them stand. That's a special note to pastors, isn't it? You can't be their savior.

The Lord will make them stand. The grace of God will work its way through. And especially if you view each other over disputable matters. I am not God.

I'm going to live by the principles of scripture. And there is a kind of strong and a weak and a right and a wrong over this. But it's such an issue that it's not worth dying on this hill.

And I cannot save you. I believe you are saved. And you will persevere towards heaven by the grace of God. It's lovely, isn't it? It takes the pressure off a little bit.

You're not God. Jesus said in John 10, My sheep hear my voice. I know them. They follow me. I give them eternal life. They will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

[ 22 : 42 ] Remember in this issue, you are not God. God will maintain his kingdom. Thirdly, remember the importance of living to the Lord or living for the Lord.

It says in the NIV. Look at verses 5 to 9. He says that one person considers one day more sacred than another. Another considers every day alike.

Each of them should be fully convinced in their own minds. There's a personal responsibility according to your biblically informed conscience to come to a decision on this. Whoever regards one day as special, though, does so to the Lord.

Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord. For they give thanks to God and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and give thanks to God.

For none of us lives for ourselves alone and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord. And if we die, we die for the Lord. Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

[ 23 : 46 ] Lord. In other words, each of you, although we're a church together, the church is made up of individuals who on disputable matters have the responsibility as they grow in their faith to come to decisions about how they practice and live out their faith in these areas of disputable matters.

And as they do so, it comes as a consequence of having been saved and welcomed by Jesus, we are now called to honour the Lord, to thank him and live for him.

And that is your position on this issue and also that will be your brother or sister's position on the issue which they're working through at the same time. We are all called to live to the Lord.

There is a personal responsibility in the Christian life along with a corporate togetherness. And I think this leads you, if you're dealing with someone when you're doing a bit of eh-eh over an issue, it leads you in some way to put yourself in the shoes of the other person and to say, actually, I can see that they are seeking to do the same as me, to honour the Lord, to thank him and to live for him.

So, to look at the other person and think, well, what is God doing in their life? Rather than assuming the worst, can I see the best in what they're seeking to do?

[ 25 : 25 ] I guess this assumes that we're all seeking to live for the Lord, doesn't it? Could he say that about you? Now, the Gospel, verse 9, says that Christ in history, Jesus Christ, died and rose again.

And we believe those truths for our salvation. But he died and rose again that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. Jesus is Lord.

And when you repent and believe you are welcomed into this relationship with God through Jesus, you belong to Jesus now. And you are all about living to honour and thank him and to live to him or for him in your life.

And that is true of your brothers and sisters in the church too. So think the best of them over a disputed matter, even though you feel like ee-ee together. Think the best of them.

Thirdly, remember also that we're personally accountable to God. note the challenging question in the conclusion in verse 12. What is he?

[ 26 : 34 ] In verse 10, rather, sorry. I say, you then, why do you judge your brother or sister?

Remember the vegetables only guys were starting to judge and condemn the other group for their freedom in eating non-cosher meat.

Why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? That's the other group looking back. And 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 acknowledge God from Isaiah 45.

So then each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Friends, we are safe in the welcome of God through Christ.

And we belong to Christ. We know there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ. But the gospel also tells us that those who are safe in Christ will personally stand before God on that final day of judgment.

And he will turn to each one of us and say, so, Scully, how did it go? How do you deal with that issue? Did you just try and push through what you need to be right and crush a few eggs?

[ 27 : 50 ] Or did you seek to honour others and welcome them as you have been welcomed by Christ? It's not just about whether you're right or not.

It's important to know what the scripture teaches and how the principles apply in disputable matters, not over the great gospel issues where we have to be clear on and the strongly clear moral issues we've got to be clear on.

But lots of the other stuff is not just being right. It's about how we relate to each other as we are right or as we think we're right.

How did you view the other person? Speak about them and speak to them over the issue. For me, sometimes, recognising that I will have to stand before God and give an account for how I have related to people over some of these issues.

For me, sometimes, it's a case of being willing to drop the bone over the issue. Just like a dog. Drop the bone. Drop it. Drop it. Drop the ball.

[ 29 : 00 ] Sometimes, you've just got to drop the bone because love's more important, isn't it? I don't want the Lord to say to me on that final day, why didn't you drop the bone, Scully?

Why did you pass judgment all the time over that brother or sister when you yourself have a long way to go to work out the implications of the gospel on that issue for you and for the people around you?

It needs to be humility and a willingness to drop the bone sometimes for the sake of the gospel. As Paul says to the Philippians, do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.

Everyone should look not only to their own interests but rather to the interests of others adopt the same issue as that of Christ. So I want to say to you this issue of the where's my food gone?

Of the vegetables only guys judging and condemning the we eat everything guys and the we eat everything guys treating with contempt and despising the vegetable only guys in the church.

[ 30 : 06 ] Paul says there is an answer I'm with the strong I'm over here but I'm more concerned over this issue about how we treat each other as those who are welcomed by God those who are unaccountable to God personally those who are all called to live and honour God over this issue and personally I often think I'm here when I'm quite often here I don't know about you and I'm on a journey to learn what it means to be working through before the Lord what it means for me and my family but at the same time to be humble enough to say I've got a long way to go a church that has that attitude will be a lovely vibrant place full of the spirit of the laws well I just want to say a couple of things as we close and it might be over these kind of disputable matters you're in one two places the first is that you might feel that you are a bit of a broken shell at the moment because of the way someone has spoken to you or condemned you or despised you over a disputable matter and you think

I'm a bit fragile at the moment doesn't mean to keep away from church but it does hurt doesn't it it can hurt I just want to say to you that know that Jesus was himself rejected he was despised they passed judgment over him unfairly and they did it by sending him to the cross but Jesus was willing to do that so that you may be welcomed and belong to him and you are loved by God called to be a saint come to me says Jesus all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me because I am lowly and humble in heart says Jesus and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light if you're feeling a bit of a broken shell today let the love of Christ tend to you and heal you and pat you up maybe you've been cracking a few eggs recently in your desire to make an omelette of biblical orthodoxy or correct Christian practice in every element of your lives Paul knew what was clear and what was right but on this issue he was willing to drop the bone wasn't he one of the hardest words to say if you've been cracking eggs but the words that really show that you belong to the Lord words that God uses to heal and restore are the words sorry in the life of the church my impression is that they are the hardest words to say in the life of the church actually sorry I shouldn't have said things in that way please forgive me oh you may think you were right and you might be right on the issue the strong position but it's never right to show you're right by cracking a few eggs is it or it could just possibly be that you're one of those people and I have met them sometimes who just go around and pass judgment on everyone and everything nothing is quite right in the life of the church is it everything's wrong could it just possibly be that you also have a way to go to learn about the implications of the gospel for the issue and over how you treat others over the issue what will

God say to you on that final day well done for breaking the eggs to make sure everything is aligned perfectly in the life of the church well done for crushing people do you think he'll say that to you or would he say to you these are the ones I've welcomed just as I've welcomed you you're not God they live to the Lord to honour him and thank him just as you have sought to do and you're accountable to me for the way you've treated them what will you say to God on that final day what is he saying to you now rather than breaking a few eggs to make an omelette when the church learns to love which is really what this is about through the issue not dodging the issue but through the issue we find rather than omelettes let's be more like hens who nurture the eggs and that leads to life doesn't it a church is more like a brood of chicks some older some younger some wrong some right but we're all on the journey to growing and life may that be true for you as it needs to be true for me let's pray

Lord I wish everything could be nailed down so clearly there'll be some kind of manual that will tell us exactly what to do when to do and how to do it we thank you for the great truths of the gospel that we never want to compromise in our faith we thank you for the moral implications of the gospel which are so clear in scripture about living lives of love and purity in this world but then Lord there's so many other issues where there'll be weak and strong positions there'll be unclear thinking and Lord we don't want those issues to be the main thing we want your welcome of us and the grace of God in the gospel the oil of your spirit to kind of keep the engine of the church running in love and so we pray Lord God we want to say sorry for the times we have cracked some eggs because we're too proud to back down from our position and we want to say please as you forgive us in your son make us those who honor and respect even those who would differ from us on certain disputable matters make

[ 36 : 53 ] Calvary a very loving place clear on the gospel but loving to all and help us all on that journey as we work out the implications of it I pray for the glory of Jesus amen amen thank you I didn't drop an egg which was great thank you Thank you.