

Romans 14 - Keeping Unity in the Body of Christ

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: 16 April 2023

Preacher: Wayne Thiessen

- [0 : 00] Good morning. Greetings in the name of our Lord, our risen Savior. It's a privilege again for us to gather on the first day of the week to be encouraged to worship.
- And as we had in our Sunday school downstairs, that the church age was a mystery. In Old Testament times, it was not spoken of.
- And there was mention that Jesus would be a light to the Gentiles, but there was no mention that Jew and Gentile would come together, which is the church.
- We are privileged. We are privileged to be part of God's family. And so as we fellowship together, as we worship together, may we do that with that view that we are privileged people.
- So this morning we're back into Romans. We haven't been there for a few weeks, but seeking to finish off the book.
- [1 : 21] Not this morning, but in the next weeks to come. And we're in chapter 14. And so Romans 12, 13, 14, 15 are all practical instructions for the church of how we are to relate to one another.
- The first 11 chapters are theory or doctrine. And now we're well into the practical side of things.
- In chapter 12, we learned about sex and how we're to use them to edify the body. I believe Pastor Peter spoke on that. And then in the end of 12, the last half, our relationship to society around us, including church.
- Chapter 13, we spoke of our relationship to government. How do we look at government? And then the last half of 13, the believer's testimony or walk, in light and not in darkness, also as a testimony.
- And Pastor Henry spoke of that. And so this morning, we're moving into a section, in a practical section, our relationship to other believers, fellow believers.
- [2 : 58] And it takes us through chapter 14 and most of 15. So we're going to do that over a couple Sundays here. But it's going to be an interesting study for us.
- There's probably some different thoughts out there on what Paul is saying here. But as we prepare to go into this, I want us to turn to John 15 as a backdrop, as a couple of verses that set the tone for us.
- John 17, verse 20 and 21. John 17, 20 and 21.
- And Jesus is praying, and he says, I do not pray for these alone, that's for the disciples, or the apostles, but also for those who will believe in me through their words, that they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.
- Jesus is praying for the unity of the church. Is that correct?
- [4 : 34] He's praying for the unity of the church. Why? That the world, that the testimony of the church would spill over into the world, and they would be drawn to God.
- No. No, this is the universal church. Yeah, absolutely.

Yeah, so we are to be one with the people in China, right? The believers there. The people that God puts us in contact with.

But it's worldwide, the unity of the church. And it's so that the world may believe. There's a purpose here.

And so that's a bit of a sobering thought. Because this is where Satan likes to poke and try to instill disunity between believers.

[5 : 45] And very often, over non-essential teachings, that we become divided.

And so Paul, in Romans, proceeds to address a few of these, as was read by Ben.

And that we need to look at these things as non-essential doctrines. And the two that are mentioned are foods and holy days.

And so we're going to start to examine that this morning. And we're just going to briefly touch into the food one and then continue that next Sunday, Lord willing, as it goes right into chapter 15.

But the holy day one we'll try to cover today. And so I've titled the message, Unity in the Body of Christ. Unity in the Body of Christ.

[6 : 56] Paul starts off, Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. Now, none of us would like or enjoy to be called weak in the faith.

Or as weak in the faith. Would we? We acknowledge our own weakness before God, but by fellow man, to say, he's weaker in the faith, is not a pleasant thought.

Yet Paul identifies that here, and he says this is a reality, that we're not all the same far along in our journey of faith and understanding of Scripture.

And so the instruction here, as he begins chapter 14, is receive. We're to take them in. One who is weak in the faith, and so weak in the faith here, maybe could be defined as someone who is not sure or confident in a certain doctrine that's non-essential to salvation.

And he's hesitant whether this is right or wrong. And he's not full understanding yet from the Scriptures of where he should be in this.

[8 : 43] And the examples that Paul has will bring that out very well. He says, we are to receive such a one, but not to disputes, not to argue with him or with her.

We're not to fight over these things, the non-essentials, for that would divide. That would do the opposite of what God intends for the body of believers to do.

And so, just to realize that there is fighting is not welcome. Arguing.

Disputing. It's prohibited by God. And when we do that, it is carnal. It is me against you and you against your neighbor.

I'm right, you're wrong. I know you're wrong. We're to leave that be. And if I think that I am more mature in the faith, then so be it, but leave it be.

[10 : 02] Don't, don't argue and put the other person down. So let's look at some of the examples that we are given in order to understand this better.

So, the first one is, for one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

No meat. So, in the one that is weak, there is not the knowledge or understanding in his heart that everything is given to us by God to eat.

And, in his heart, he is convinced that it's not all given to us to eat. And so, when he would eat meat, he might, or she might feel condemned by their own conscience.

And it's a lack, perhaps, of maturity in the faith. and the next person believes he can eat all things.

[11 : 24] Well, what is this based on? It has to be based on the Word of God. It's not what you think or what I think, but it's what the Scriptures teach that is to be our baseline for this.

And, and even this eating certain foods has been divisive throughout the entire church age where, where people become aggressive that, that we may eat all things or we may not eat all things and, and, and that we actually divide from one another over these things.

And, and so this is, this is being addressed here. And so let's, let's look at, at this further. He says, let not him who eats despise him who does not eat and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats for God has received him.

Who are you to judge another servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand for God is able to make him stand.

So a little more into the food. I won't go very deep this morning with that. But, this is very likely Old Testament teaching carried forth into the New Testament to the church age and because of the dietary laws that God had given in the last third of the New Testament or Old Testament going into the New there's a struggle.

[13 : 13] Is that wiped out? Has that been fulfilled? Has it not? Am I okay to eat pork? Am I not? And, or do I not eat meat at all?

And, and later and next meat offered to idols as well and some of the cultures that they had. Is it right or is it wrong or does it not matter?

And, and just to dig into these things. So this is the things they were struggling with. Is it, is it right? What does God's word say? And, but the, the theme I want to take out here for today is that let not him who eats who is convinced in his heart that I can eat meat despise or look down on him who does not have that assurance.

Who is doubtful. Whose conscience would provoke them. And, and so we're not to look down to despise them. And then, notice, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats.

For God has received him. So, the person that is convinced that we are not to eat pork or meat, let him not judge him who has that.

[14 : 43] Why? For God has received both. God has received both. And, if God has received both sides, why would we judge?

Why would we judge that? We may, if you are on the side that, that we are convinced that we can eat all things, you may have an understanding that's deeper, but we're to let go of him who doesn't and allow God time to work in their faith as well.

And so, Paul does make the distinction, one of them is weaker in the faith, not fully mature yet. So, we do recognize that, but it does not give reason for disunity.

Verse 4, who are you to judge another servant? To his own master he stands or falls. We all belong to God. He is my master and if you are a believer, he is your master.

And you are answerable to him, to him alone for your behavior in this regard.

[16 : 13] stand. And so, indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. And so, before God, if we are convinced in our heart that this is okay for me, then God will make me stand.

But if my heart condemns me, and I feel guilty, then I better not eat it. For then I'm sinning.

And he will bring out that a little more too for next Sunday. So that's the food part. And I'm going to leave that for now and move on to verse 5.

The second issue, one esteems one day above another, another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

He who observes the day observes it to the Lord, and he who does not observe the day to the Lord, he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks, and he who does not eat to the Lord, he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

[17 : 29] And so dwelling on holy days now, he says one person esteems one day above another, another esteems every day alike.

and again, as we look at context and the scriptures, in the Old Testament, which they have just come out of, the Sabbath day was pronounced a holy day, and they were forbidden to do work on that day, and it was a day of worship, worship, and now Jesus has died on the cross and has gone to heaven, and we're in a new age, well, what about that holy day?

And it's deeply, deeply ingrained that we've always kept the Sabbath, now what?

and can you picture the controversy that would have arisen out of this? And it's more than just God saying, keep the Sabbath in the Old Testament, it has become part of culture, deeply, deeply rooted and engraved in them, that the Sabbath is a day of no work.

In fact, the Jews had added a whole bunch of laws to protect the Sabbath, that they wouldn't even come close to breaking it. In fact, I think I've heard like 27 different laws that the rabbis had to protect the Sabbath.

[19 : 26] You go to Jerusalem today on the Sabbath, there's hardly a vehicle on the road. And you will not find a shop open to buy Pepsi.

We found that out, didn't we? It is shut down. That's their understanding of where they're at, that the Sabbath is valid today.

Paul brings that in here. He says, one person esteems one day above another, another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his mind.

And so, a question that I'll put out to you, did God command us keep the first day of the week?

Sunday? How many of us, if you're honest, culturally, if you look at your background, would have been taught that Sunday was a day that we had to religiously keep, it would be sin not to.

[21 : 01] Most of us, probably, would have that background. So, let's explore that a little. What is God's intention?

We are right. Nowhere's in the scriptures, in the Old or the New Testament, are we commanded to keep Sunday as a holy day?

It does not appear. If you find it, let me know. The Sabbath, very clear in the Old Testament, but Jesus says, I have fulfilled the law.

In Jesus, the law has come to an end. God's will need to understand that the whole Sabbath movement, or not movement, teaching in the Old Testament, was twofold.

It reflected God's design of mankind that we need a day of rest. rest. We're geared that way.

[22 : 20] We're human. We're flesh. And we need a break. And in Genesis, God created in six days, and he rested.

Not that God needed rest, but it was symbolic of our need to rest in him. And so the Sabbath was a symbol that we need to find rest in Jesus Christ.

It's a spiritual likeness. It pointed to that. And when we become believers, that has been fulfilled. We have found that rest.

do we as Christians still need a physical brain? We do. We do.

And if you're macho and you think not, you're deceiving yourself. We all wear out. And if you don't believe me, try it.

[23 : 36] We wear out. We need time off. And so this is some of the background of that. Now, looking to Sunday, the first day of the week, I want to bring out a few thoughts here.

That our Lord arose on which day? On the first day of the week.

on that same day, he appeared to the believers that evening. And last Sunday, we heard that on the Sunday after, Jesus again appeared to the believers that were gathering.

And Henry mentioned that he came through the wall. He didn't need the door, but he was there. So, the believers have started a precedence of gathering on the first day of the week.

And furthermore, when was the Holy Spirit given to us? The birthday of the church. The first day of the week on Pentecost.

[25 : 04] Christ. And furthermore, Acts 20 says that the disciples gathered to break bread on the first day of the week.

Or not the disciples, the church gathered to break bread on the first day of the week. They got into a pattern somewhat.

Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 16 that when you gather on the first day of the week, see that there is a collection, that you pass the offering plate around.

And so, we do see an established pattern that the church has transitioned from the Sabbath to the first day of the week, due of the new covenant, covenant.

The age of grace where the church has been formed. And so, it's become symbolic in a sense, and yet, we cannot anywhere say that God has commanded us to gather on the first day of the week.

[26 : 23] So, rather, it's not a command, it is a privilege. It's a privilege for us to gather to worship.

The closest thing that we come to a command is in Hebrews chapter 10. Let's turn there and read those verses. Hebrews chapter 10.

Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. verses 24 and 25.

And he says, And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another and so much more as you see the day.

And so the author of Hebrews is saying we need to consider one another and to not forsake, not to forget, to gather as the church.

[27 : 44] Now he's talking about the local church as believers. believers. This is important to us. We need this.

Nowhere in Hebrews does it say the first day of the week, yet it acknowledges that believers are to assemble. And the pattern in the New Testament is more the first day of the week.

And so we see ever since a general pattern in the church age has been Sunday. And it does make sense that we do that.

Again, we need it. I need it. You need it. We need to be encouraged by other believers, by the word of God, to go forth.

And because our Lord rose on that day and is the birthday of the church and so on, it's kind of, you know, start our week off with worship. In the Old Testament it was, we'll finish our week by resting.

[28 : 56] Well, it's kind of reversed in that way. So let's go back to Romans. One person esteems one day above another in verse 5.

So Romans 14, 5. Another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. Going back to the Jews, what, you're going to force me to work on the Sabbath?

No way. Not a chance. That likely has been the response of many. I will not. That goes against everything in me.

Early church, those that did not fully understand the transition from the old to the new, they would have struggled with this.

And yet, Paul is saying here, we are to be convinced in our minds how we look at these days.

[30 : 09] One person has every day alike. We are forbidden to judge one another. here. Even regarding Sunday.

That's what he is saying here. But I need, I need to understand between me and God what is healthy.

What do I need? that's why we're here this morning. Because you understand it. And we are here to be built up and encouraged.

And yet, and yet we are forbidden to judge. Because if you, if you are not, the church does not condemn you and you need to work on Sunday, it is between you and God.

and yet it's not necessarily healthy. We need to realize that. We need each other.

[31 : 23] We need the church. And so the lesson is that in food and in days where the scriptures does not forbid we are not to judge one another.

This may come as a surprise to some of us as we look at these things. And like I said, culture can play a very big role.

I grew up in La Crete and there, if I would have worked on the second and third holidays, it would have been much judgment would have come.

In my heart, I understood that whether I kept them or not, wouldn't please or displease God either way.

It was neither here nor there. and yet often not to provoke a neighbor, we refrain in that kind of community.

[32 : 46] And he brings that out further in chapter 14 and we'll save that as well for next Sunday. But these are cultural things.

things. And keeping the second and third halidach is not to be found in scripture. Nowhere have I ever run across anything resembling that kind of teaching.

I'm not saying that the history of where it was started was necessarily wrong. I don't know where it started.

I've never heard a clear explanation. And yet it's so deeply ingrained in culture that all of a sudden it becomes sin if you don't do it.

And this is what Paul is saying. We are forbidden to judge. We're forbidden to judge. He who observes the day observes it to the Lord and he who does not observe the day to the Lord does not observe it.

[34 : 05] And the same with the food. We live unto the Lord. Verse 7. For none of us lives to himself and no one dies to himself.

For if we live we live to the Lord and if we die we die to the Lord. Therefore whether we live or die we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

Jesus desires to be Lord over your life. And whatever we do, is to his glory.

For his glory. In life and even in death. Jesus is glorified as our spirit and soul go to be with him.

It is to the glory of God. It's his plan fulfilled. In life and in death all to the glory of God. God. So we need to have that understanding.

[35 : 20] My actions need to be for the glory of God. And then verse 10 he says, but why do you judge your brother?

Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. So again both sides. The weaker judging and the stronger looking down upon.

He says why? you will go to God yourself. There's no room for judging in these matters or to leave it be.

I need to be convinced in my own heart this is right before the Lord. And we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

For it is written as I live says the Lord every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

[36 : 29] And the judgment seat of Christ or the bima seat in the Greek and it's a judgment upon the church upon us individually when we meet Christ.

My understanding is that the judgment seat of Christ will happen perhaps during the tribulation period as the church is raptured and taken to be with the Lord and we will stand before him and give account.

And this is every one of us will give account of our life of our works. and if I have judged I will give account for that.

And if I have despised I will give account for that. How have I treated my fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord? It's not a judgment whether we are saved or not but it's an accounting and Corinthians tells us that we will be rewarded accordingly.

The judgment seat of Christ. So if we're tempted if we're tempted to be judgmental remember you will stand before Jesus and you will give account not for your brother or your sister but for yourself.

[38 : 06] All of us. verse 13 therefore let us not judge one another anymore but rather resolve this not to put a stumbling block or a call in our brother's way.

And so we'll continue that next Sunday Lord willing the stumbling block in our brother's way. How far do we take that to refrain from causing a brother to stumble over his weakness and so on.

Again remember that many of these things are deeply rooted in culture and we are to see the difference between salvation essential doctrines of scripture and those that are not and to make to understand the difference between the two.

When we are tempted to judge the root is that I'm lifting myself up in righteousness and even despising the same way the root of it is I know better.

I'm lifting myself up higher. I'm condemning my brother by judging him. I don't know if he'll make it to heaven or not. Perhaps it can go to that extreme.

[39 : 55] We see churches divide and split over these things. I've seen churches split over whether we should preach in high German or low German or in English.

to the point where people cannot pass each other on the street. And we've become enemies over language.

It's just another example of judgmental, of not understanding, of being weak in the faith and despising.

And so let us be careful and let us grow in the scriptures in our knowledge and understanding of God and his doctrines.

May the Lord bless us with that as we give this some thought. And the Lord willing we'll finish off this section next week. Let's pray. Father we thank you for clear instructions.

[41 : 16] We thank you for salvation. For all the essentials to the faith. Lord you have revealed them to us.

us. But Father we are tempted to be caught up in idealism. My understanding of everything is the right way.

My brother is wrong. Lord this morning you have rebuked us for that. Thank you for the teaching out of this chapter to give us understanding.

Lord may we in our love one for another and Father that we would be more unified than ever for your work for your kingdom.

In Jesus name. Amen.