

# Using and not Abusing Your Liberty Part 1

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[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Well, when I was a boy, I could get up every Sunday morning and go milk the cow, feed the pigs, check the eggs, go to church, not go to a restaurant, and on Sunday afternoon I could play baseball, I could ride the horse, I could do a lot of things, but I was not allowed to swim on Sunday.

I never figured out exactly why I couldn't swim on Sunday, but I could play baseball. But we didn't play much baseball, but all the church kids would come over to my house and we would ride the horse. And so my parents had a rule about what you could do on Sundays.

It was also almost law that you had to take a nap. And, you know, when you're a kid, that's the last thing you want to do is take a nap. And so my friends would come over and we'd go ride the horse, but we never went swimming.

And that's a Romans 14 type issue. I want you to open your Bibles with me if you would, and we're going to read Romans chapter 14 and verse 18. And then we're going to work our way through Romans 14.

And I will be honest with you, we're going to take our time. I hope you'll come back tonight because I want to finish Romans chapter 14 with you today. And we're talking about using and not abusing our spiritual liberty.

[ 1 : 20 ] Using and not abusing our spiritual liberty. There are a lot of things that aren't wrong in and of themselves. And churches have divided over these issues and churches have fought over these issues.

I just say to you before I read the verse that one of the differences in where you go to church and what we do here is we read the Bible verse by verse. And we study what the Bible says. And when I get through today, I would more than be glad to have you come to me and say, no, Romans 14 didn't say that.

Let's look at what Romans 14 said. But I really don't want to know what your personal feelings are on the issue. I have personal feelings that don't agree with Romans 14, just to be blunt honest with you.

I have personal feelings of ways I was raised. And sometimes I would like to say, now God, I think you should have been a little more clear on this. I think you should have said things the way I was raised and the way I was taught.

But we are Bible students and the Bible is our only rule of faith and practice. Can you say amen right there? And so we study the Bible. That makes us a very unusual church.

[ 2 : 24 ] A lady visited one Sunday and she was here with one of the deacons. And she was here to watch him baptize his son. And she said, this is an unusual service. She said, all the guy did was explain the Bible.

And it was very clear everything he was saying was straight out of the Bible. And she said, I've been going to church all my life. I've never seen such a thing. And so that's an unusual thing. But we're going to read the Bible.

And there's a lot of liberty. And people my age, we kind of are steeped in some tradition and some things that we're taught. And young people don't always do what people my age like.

And they don't always agree with us. And so we would like to straighten them out. So if you'll go with me through Romans 14, I promise you it's the word of God. You can study it.

I want you to have your Bible open. We'll hardly step away from Romans 14 the whole day. Maybe you'll mark the fire out of this chapter. Just mark it up and get it straight. But I want you to realize that no matter what the chapter's main purpose is, would be summed up in this.

[ 3 : 26 ] You're not to abuse your liberty. You're not to abuse your liberty. You're not to abuse others with your liberty. So read with me, if you would, Romans chapter 14 and verse 18.

For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men. Would you read that verse out loud with me, all of us in one united voice?

Are you ready? The Bible says, for he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men. Father, I pray now that you would help us to let Romans 14 come alive for us.

And let it be a defining moment in our church's history, in our church's life, and in my life. And God, I want to live this more every day. And I want to honor this.

And I will give you praise for what you do. I pray you would mature and grow your people. And I pray that you'd help us to love each other and serve each other like we never have before. And I'll give you great praise in Jesus' name.

[ 4 : 26 ] Amen. There's a big thing that goes on around America. And I don't know how much you keep up with what goes on in church. But you can go by and see big billboards that say, church, not like your grandmother's church.

And there's whole churches built that basically have the philosophy of, I'm going to shake my fist in the establishment church's face. One pastor, after using Romans 14 as an example, took a six-pack of beer.

He's a mega church pastor. Thousands of people, maybe 20,000 people attend the churches that are under his leadership and watch him on video. He took a case of beer up to the pulpit and popped a beer open and said, it's okay to drink beer.

And we are free to drink beer. And he said, after church, if you'd like to get together with me, we'll all drink a beer and smoke a cigar together. And you're going to find out in Romans 14 that what he did was dead wrong. It was completely against serving Christ and serving others.

He may have had liberty, but he abused his liberty. He may have had liberty, but he abused his liberty. In Romans chapter 14, you're going to be taught this, that you're not to hurt your brother.

[ 5 : 35 ] You're not to grieve your brother. You're not to destroy your brother. You're not to cause your brother to stumble. And if you serve Christ in this, and if you serve Christ in this, you will be doing the right thing.

It says you will, you'll, uh, he then in these things serves Christ is acceptable to God. That's pleasing to God. And it's approved of men. It's acceptable to God and it's approved to men.

So I hope you'll go through the chapter with me and learn. And so the, so, and by the way, this is a very, uh, harsh chapter in one way. It calls the guy weak who has lots of rules.

And in many ways, I am that weak brother. I've been raised with lots of rules and I have been raised with lots of thoughts for myself. And the guy who's strong has less of those rules. So read with me if you would, some different things and think through this with me.

Here's a good thought to start. Our Christian liberty is vertical before the Lord, but our exercise of that liberty is horizontal because it's seen by and affects other people.

[ 6 : 36 ] I'd like to start before we ever get to point one. I'd like to start with John 21, 18. You don't need to look it up, but you can check it out for later. Write it down there in the margin of your, uh, notes and you can check it out later. And I just want you to think of this.

It's a mind your own business passage. Jesus is talking to Peter and he tells him how he's going to die. He's just asked him, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? Feed my sheep, feed my sheep, feed my sheep is basically the idea.

And, uh, so Peter, Jesus tells Peter, uh, you know, you've been in charge of your life, but soon you'll be picked up and taken around by yourself and places you don't want to go. Basically saying you're going to get crucified.

And Peter says to Jesus, well, okay, well, what's going to happen to John? And basically, I'm going to read you the verse, but basically Jesus said, none of your business. You worry about your relationship.

You worry about what I want you to do and you take care of your life. And we'll let John take care of his life because none of your business. Now, independent Baptist, we don't like that. Come on, be honest. It is our business to take care of everybody else's business.

[ 7 : 33 ] Amen. And, and so the mind, your own business. Listen to what it says in John chapter 21, verse 18. He said, verily, verily, I said unto you, when thou was young, you girded yourself and you walked whether you wouldst.

But when thou shalt be old, you will stretch forth your hands and another shall gird thee and carry thee whether thou wouldst not. This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God.

And when he had spoken this, he said unto him, follow me. Verse 20. Peter's a good Baptist. Peter turning about sees the disciple John, the one that Jesus loved, following, which leaned on his breast at supper.

That's John. And he said, Lord, which is he that betray? And the guy that had said, which is he that betrayeth him? Verse 21. Peter seeing him said to Jesus. And what about him? What shalt thou do?

What shall this man do? And Jesus said unto him, if I will that he tarry till I come, what business is it of yours? What is that to thee? Follow thou me. And it doesn't necessarily mean he's going to do it.

[ 8 : 29 ] But here's the whole point as he gets started. And this is a Romans 14 issue. And he says to him, none of your business, buddy. I told you how you're going to die. And you need to worry about what you're going to do. You need to worry about following me.

You need to worry about pleasing me. And what John and I got going on, none of your business. Stay out of it. And that's a pretty much a Romans 14 attitude. Maybe many of the fights in the churches could be avoided if we were more interested in spreading the gospel than controlling each other.

All across America, our churches are more interested in making sure everybody does certain things than they are in getting the gospel to the world. I'm amazed when I talk to preachers of great ministries and large ministries and small ministries, how little is ever thought about getting the gospel to the world.

What are we going to do to get the gospel to the world and how we go about it? It's possible that much of what hinders the gospel getting around the world is our fighting over non-essential externals. We fight about all sorts of things.

Not necessarily you, but Christians. A missionary agency listed the problems they were having overseas. And I have in my notes here enough to talk to you about the rest of the morning. I'm just going to pick a handful of them.

[ 9 : 37 ] But they went through and they picked them out and they had an unforgiving spirit and the missionaries were self-seeking. The missionaries had a legalistic spirit. The missionaries wanted to play God for the other missionaries.

Missionaries would assume without reason that the others were at fault about something. They were domineering one over the other. They were thinking too highly of themselves. And they have a whole list. It took them hours to come up with it.

If you want to sum up what the problems are among missionaries, those are the problems. And many of those problems come from the fact that I'm not as worried about my relationship with God as I am me telling you what to do and me straightening you out.

Romans 14 is basically saying, hey, take care of your own business. Be fully convinced in your own mind and don't worry about the others. So let me walk through it with you if I would. Number one, if I can.

Number one, write this down. You're to be fully convinced. You're to be fully convinced in your own mind. Romans chapter 14 and verse 5. You have your Bible open. And keep it open in Romans 14.

[ 10 : 34 ] Mark it. Underline it. Write down the notes. Check it out on the web later to see. Because I'm going to do my best to simply read what it says and say what it says.

Be fully convinced in your own mind about these things. Verse 5. One man esteems one day above another. Another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

One guy has a high bid of respect for a certain day. And another guy doesn't have that respect. But you need to be fully convinced in your own mind. I grew up in a time when Sunday was like the Sabbath day.

And it was considered to be the holy day. Of course, it's not the Sabbath day. It's not in the Bible. It's not a Bible teaching in that sense. And you could actually worship God on Saturday or Friday or Monday.

And God didn't ever say. And he said, look, you don't have to argue about that. Sometimes on the mission field, missionaries will actually go to the field. And they've got to have Sunday school at 930 and church at 1030.

[ 11 : 34 ] Because that's what their home church did. And you've got to have church on Wednesday night, not on Thursday night. Because that's what their home church did. And he said, so some people, some people are seeming one day over another day.

And others are not a seeming that day. And so what do you do? So here's some things that you need to write down. First off, you're to be fully convinced in your own mind. Under that, write these things. The Bible's not clear about a lot of stuff.

The Bible is not clear about a lot of stuff. Look in Romans 14.1. Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations. Receive you, but not to doubtful disputations.

Underline doubtful disputations. And what that means is there's some doubtful things going on here. And we could argue about these things. We could have long meetings about these things that are not as clear as they could be to other people.

Romans chapter 14.1. When I first arrived back in the United States, I met with a friend of mine who lives in my neighborhood, who is an independent Baptist.

[ 12 : 36 ] And I needed to understand exactly where you people were. Because I kind of understood Peruvian culture, but I wasn't up to date on what Americans thought. I kind of knew what preachers said, but I didn't know what lay people thought.

And so I met with this brother, and I had him over supper. Betty and I had him over supper. His wife was out of town or couldn't come for some reason. And we talked for hours. And I asked him, I said, well, tell me, what do you think about ladies' dress?

That's a big issue. It's preached about a lot in church. And I said, but your wife doesn't do what the preacher says. I mean, you both know that. I said, we're buddies, and I know you're never going to join my church, so I'd just like to know what you think.

And he said, that's what the preacher says. I don't agree with him. That's the way it is. I said, okay. And then we talked about music. And he said, well, that's what the preacher says. I don't agree with him. And that's what I do. And so I can remember sitting there going, I cannot believe this.

I thought everybody had all these things down. But they are doubtful, and preachers have pushed them. And so here's the issue. The first thing, you must be fully convinced in your own mind.

[ 13 : 37 ] It's fully convinced about that day. It's fully convinced about that day. There are doubtful disputations. Look, if you would, the second thing, chapter 14, verse 3.

Your decision is about what you believe, not how you can look at others. Your decision, as you get fully convinced in your own mind, is about you. Like John needed to worry about his own relationship with Lord, and Peter needed to worry about his.

Verse 3 says, Let not him that eat despise him that eateth not. And let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth. For God hath received him.

So here's what's going on in verse 3. It's not about, it's not about, I'm not getting a conviction so I can preach it. I'm not getting a conviction so I can tell other people what to do. I'm not getting a conviction so I can judge other people.

I'm getting a conviction. Frankly, I'm figuring out what I believe so I know what I believe pleases the Lord. And I can work on my relationship with the Lord about what I do. Don't forget, the Lord received him.

[ 14 : 38 ] You got verse 3 open? Look at it. He received him. The Lord received him. The Lord has received him. Look at verse 3. You are not to despise him. Circle that word. You are not to despise them.

You're not to have in your mind, well, he doesn't agree with me about this, and he swims on Sunday afternoon. He goes swimming on Sunday afternoon, and so I despise him. He does things I don't like, and so I despise him.

And those of you, whichever side of the coin you're on, verse 4, you don't judge either. You don't despise and you don't judge. Look at verse 4. Who art thou that judges another man's servant?

To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holding up, for God is able to make him stand. So underline, who art thou that judges another man's servant?

You're not to judge. So here's what ends up happening. I, in my personal walk with the Lord, decide that I won't have a television. I do have a television. I'm just saying. But I decide I'm not going to have a television.

[ 15 : 38 ] And so all of a sudden now I know I won't have a television. So I'm walking around the church going, you've got a TV. I despise you. You have a TV. I despise you. You watch TV. I despise you.

Because I've decided that's what's right. And here's what the verse is saying. No, you be fully convinced in your mind for you and for what you ought to do. But your attitude towards others is you will not despise them.

Can I hear an amen there? And you will not judge them. The Bible really doesn't talk about TV. There's not a chapter or verse that says thou shalt not watch TV.

Now there is a verse that says don't say anything. I've made a covenant with my eyes and I won't look at a virgin. So, you know, there is a thing of I'm not going to be watching things that are inappropriate.

We're not talking about that. We're talking to some of you watching ESPN until you've got ESPN coming out of your veins. I have a preacher friend who just said this week, he said, I didn't know there were other channels on TV.

[ 16 : 37 ] There's ESPN and ESPN2 and ESPN this and ESPN that. And he's an ESPN guru. And his sons have both left home.

One's in college and the other one's in Korea in the military. And his wife and daughter, he said, they found Lifetime. He said, they have Lifetime on my TV.

And he named two of the others Hallmark. He said, they got Hallmark on my TV. He said, I didn't even know those things existed. I wish I still didn't know, he said. And he was just all upset.

Here's what he says. I'm going to be fully convinced in my mind for me and for my family about anything that is doubtful, that it's not clear. And I'm not going to judge either in verse four.

In verse of the fifth thing, what you see is I'm not going to treat my brother like he's nothing or less. Look, if you would, at Romans 14.10. Why do you judge your brother?

[ 17 : 34 ] Or why dost thou set thy brother at naught? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. So I am not to despise my brother. I'm not to judge my brother.

And I'm not that right. My brother's nothing. So, you know, basically. And by the way, can I just say I've been guilty of every bit of this? You're looking at the most wicked, guilty guy you've ever seen. But it's a very simple thing.

I could easily say, well, I don't drive cars. I only use a horse and buggy because that's the old-fashioned way of doing things. And I despise you, judge you, and think of you as nothing if you don't do what I do.

Here's the point. Number one, you're to be fully convinced in your own mind, and you're not to set him at naught. The next thing I want you to see at this point would be verse six.

What we are doing or not doing is actually between us and the Lord. What we're doing or not doing is between us and the Lord. Look at chapter 14 and verse six. The Bible says, he that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord.

[ 18 : 38 ] Underline, unto the Lord. And he that regardeth not to day, to the Lord, he does not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks. And he that eateth not to the Lord, he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

He said, here's the deal, guys. One guy's over eating steak, and the other guy's over eating a salad, and they're both doing it for the Lord. The one guy eats a steak and says, thank you, Jesus, for this steak.

I like it medium rare. Bring it to me. And that guy and this other guy's over saying, I don't eat steak. I love Jesus, and I would never eat meat. He said, this guy's doing it for the Lord, and this guy's doing it for the Lord, and that's the whole point.

You're supposed to be doing it for the Lord. It's between you and God. We are all responsible to the Lord, not each other in this. Look at verse 12. Look at verse 12.

Romans 14, 12. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. So you see, my responsibility is to the Lord.

[ 19 : 38 ] I should be fully convinced in my own mind about what I ought to do or ought not to do on these particular things. I should figure out, this is what God wants me to do.

This is what's right. This is what I think the Bible's teaching. This is where I am. And I should be doing that. And I should be fully convinced in my own mind. And I ought to study things.

Let me just say this. Everything you do, you ought to be saying to yourself, what's God say about this? How does God want me to handle my money? What entertainment can I have that would honor God?

Where can I go? What should I do? What do I do about Christmas? Is it okay to have Christmas? Is it okay to celebrate birthdays? Any of a thousand things you should be fully convinced in your own mind for you and never to judge, never to despise, never to hold it as though they were nothing, your brother, your sister in Christ.

Because this is something I do for Jesus. I'm doing this for Jesus. And you're about to say, well, brother, there's just some things that are wrong. But we're not talking about those. Verse 1, we are talking about doubtful disputations.

[ 20 : 45 ] Things that aren't necessarily clear in the scripture. Things that aren't necessarily clear in the scripture. You know, and I've been preaching for over 40 years, and I've been saved for over 50 years, and I can tell you that Christians have fought about everything from cowboy boots to wire-rimmed glasses.

When I was a missionary, when I was a missionary traveling all the time, a major figure preached against cabbage patch dolls. And he said that cabbage patch dolls all came demonized.

He said, if you have a cabbage patch doll in your house, you are worshiping the devil. And you have a devil in your house. So Betty and I, Betty, my kids, my daughters wanted cabbage patch dolls.

And Betty being wicked as she is, and me being weak as I am, I decided to let her get them. So we drove down about 4 o'clock in the morning, 4.30 in the morning, we drove down to some store that was going to open at 6, and everybody was going to beat each other up to get a cabbage patch doll.

And I told her, I said, baby, I don't know. I said, these dolls, man, they're supposed to be demon-possessed. You ever seen Chucky the diabolical baby, you know?

[ 21 : 54 ] What are we going to do? So we went in there, and when she found the dolls, you had to take what you could get. We got out in the car, and so we looked real quick to see, because they were supposed to all have demonic names, like Lucifer.

You know, something like that. And ours were named something like Esther and Ruth. And we thought, those don't sound real demonic. But we would drive up to churches.

Now, you've got to remember, I'm pulling up to your church. I don't know you from Adam's house, Cat. And in the back of our car, my kids have. There weren't video players back then. There weren't even seatbelt rules back then. When our kids roamed around the car anywhere they wanted to, and they played with.

I know that's wicked, but they did. The rule wasn't there yet. And so the kids would run around in the car with their Cabbage Spice dolls. Not my sons, praise the Lord. My daughters were playing with those Cabbage Spice dolls.

My boys were playing Yahtzee with dice. That was their mother again. You know I wouldn't do that. And they were playing chess.

[ 22 : 54 ] It was magnetic, and they had cards. And we'd pull up, and we'd be getting close to church, and I'd say, How'd everything? Man, they'd be stuffing them dolls under the seat. Hiding the Yahtzee things, because you never knew if the pastor was going to say, I'll ride with you to the restaurant.

Never knew about that. They always take you out to eat. So we'd hide it all. And buddy, if I could see a hair of that Cabbage Spice doll, I'd say, Hide that demonic dog. Get that thing out of sight. You can go back to being demonic when we leave here.

So here's point number one out of Romans 14. Let every man be fully convinced in his own mind. In his own mind. Now everybody laughs about the Cabbage Spice dolls, but I'll be honest with you, it was a big deal.

This guy had major conferences in Atlanta. He had 18,000 to 20,000 people coming to his conference downtown. I mean, this guy was having a big impact. And so, you know, you had to be fully convinced.

Number two. Some special things to know from this chapter. Here's just some special little truths. I'm going to write these down. The weak brother is actually the one with the most rules.

[ 23 : 59 ] He's the vegetarian. Look, if you would, at chapter 14 and verse 1. You'll have to come back for tonight for the conclusion of this message. So some of you that don't come, you've got to come.

And if you don't come, let's see, what can I say? You're demonic. No, that was a joke. That was a joke. Be fully convinced in your own mind. I was teasing. The weak brother is actually the one with the most rules.

The vegetarian. Look at chapter 14, verse 1. Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things. Another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

We can trust God to keep both people standing. That's our main thing to look at here. I want you to look at this. Here's the truths of Romans 14.

The weak guy is the one with the most rules. That makes me weak often. That makes me pretty weak in a lot of ways. Second thing I want you to know is God keeps both men standing. This was a shocking thing to me.

[ 24 : 57 ] I watched families that had cabbage pesto's and their kids turned out right. And I watched families that never had a cabbage pesto's and their kids turned out wrong. So the truth is, I watched families that put their kids in Christian school and families that didn't put their kids in Christian school.

I watched families that did homeschool and that was a conviction, man. They didn't do a homeschool. Let every man be fully convinced in his own mind. But we got to know this. It's God that keeps us standing.

It's not a list of rules you keep. It's God that keeps us standing. Romans 14, if you would, verse 4. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?

You know, everybody here is a servant to Jesus. Nobody's my servant in this room. And not even my wife is my servant. Who are you to judge another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls.

Yea, he shall be holding up. Look at this. He will be held up. He will be held up for God is able to make him stand. For God is able to make him stand.

[ 25 : 56 ] And I can trust that God will keep both people standing. Actually, there's nothing wrong with eating meat. Romans 14, 14. You got your Bible? Romans 14, 14.

I know and I am persuaded by the Lord Jesus. Listen to this. That there is nothing unclean of itself. But to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Now look at verse 14. I want you to read that verse with me. That's a wild verse. He says, I know and I am persuaded by the Lord Jesus. Let me just tell you. I know Jesus. I'm an apostle.



I'm writing scripture. And I can tell you. I know it and I'm persuaded. There is nothing unclean of itself. There is nothing wrong with eating that meat. Or playing with that cabbage patched off.

There is nothing unclean. But to the guy that esteems anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. I just want you to know this.

[ 26 : 54 ] You're about to think to yourself, so everything goes. No. If the Bible clearly says something, we clearly stand on it. Look, if you went in Romans chapter 13 and verse 9, which is right before where we are.

And it's all in context. And because you went through it verse by verse, you know this. In Romans chapter 13 and verse 9, the Bible says, For this, thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not covet. And if there be any commandment, it's briefly comprehended in this saying. Namely, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

So God makes clear, I don't want you doing this. This is not a doubtful disputation. And the Bible is full of things that aren't doubtful.

Is it ever right to commit adultery? Never. Is it ever right, is it ever right to be a liar? Never. That's not the issue that's being discussed here.

[ 27 : 55 ] The things that are being discussed here are things he didn't really make very clear. Things he didn't say. Can I eat the meat that's offered to Noddle or not? Do I have to always honor all the special holidays?

Can we have Christmas or not? Can we have birthdays or not? The Bible actually says more against birthdays than it does against Christmas. And yet, there are whole groups of people that would be against Christmas.

They'd say, well, it's wrong to have Christmas. Okay? So let every man be fully convinced in his own mind. We don't operate on what the culture teaches us or what men tell us, but on what the Bible clearly says.

Bible principles stay the same, but personal preferences change. Bible principles stay the same, but personal preferences change. One of the hardest things when you're a missionary or somebody like me who travels around the world, it's amazing.

I can say the Bible says this, and it says it for Russians and Chinese and Africans and Indians and North Americans. But there are other things that we do that just aren't in the Bible.

[ 29 : 04 ] Now, for example, when I go to India to worship with Jim, everybody sits on the floor. I mean, that's just where you sit. And he showed me a picture.

He said, we'll go here and we'll worship when you come. I said, well, you'll get me a chair. I said, because I can't sit on that floor. My back will be killing me. I won't be able to stand back up. He said, we'll get a chair for the old people. I said, good. I'm an old people.

That's a conviction of mine. I believe you should have chairs and they ought to be padded. Amen? And they should be brown, in case you didn't know the color. I said, joke too. The primary concerns in this chapter were food and holy days.

Look at verse 2. One believes that he may eat all things. He could eat meat. He could eat guts. He could actually grill his steak and have that red juice running out of it, which would be totally against it if you were a Jew and eating kosher food.

You've got to soak that thing in salt water enough to get all the red out. No red can be left. He said, one believes he could eat all of it. Another who's weak eats vegetables, herbs.

[ 30 : 07 ] It was about certain holy days. Look at verse 5. One man esteems one day above another, and another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

So one guy says, I prefer Sundays. I like Christmas. I don't like Christmas. I like Easter. I like birthdays. I like having all the holy days we used to have. As a Jewish believer, he said, well, you'll be figured out on your own.

Possibly into the mix could even come wine. Look at verse 21. It's good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended or is made weak.

Now listen to this one. I've got to finish here, and we'll save the rest of it for tonight. But listen to this. It can be wrong for one and not for the other. Read the verse.

I didn't say it. It's all out of the book. Romans 14, 14. I know and I am persuaded by the Lord Jesus there is nothing unclean of itself. But to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

[ 31 : 15 ] To him it is unclean. Nothing wrong with it. When you're overseas, sometimes they will serve you blood pudding. It's a pretty nasty tasting thing.

They take blood and they stick it in an intestine and they, I don't know what they do to it. But whatever it is, it ain't good. And then they slice it and they give it to you on the plate. And I have a friend of mine who won't eat it.

He said the Bible says don't eat blood. And so he won't eat it. When they serve it to me, I'm just like, Lord, I'll put it down if you can keep it down. And I eat the stuff. But he says it's wrong for him to eat that.

That's what's going on here. He says it's unclean. Look at verse 22, 14, 22. Hast thou faith? Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he allows.

You ought not do anything that's going to make you feel wrong. So if eating the meat offered to an idol makes you feel bad, eat vegetables. Good. That's fine. Go to it.

[ 32 : 14 ] And he that doubteth is damned if he eat. That's his judge. Really the word damned there is talking about being judged or condemned. Because he eateth not of faith.

Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. It's really wrong. It's not really wrong. But for my brother it is. For now.

It's not really wrong. But for my brother it is. For now. I want to accept and respect my brother and how he feels about things. This verse doesn't say it's actually wrong.

But the brother esteems that it's wrong. Don't try to force everyone to agree with you. Allow God to deal with the hearts that need dealing with. For us it means there are certain things that simply aren't as clear as we wish they were.

Food. Clothing. Music. Entertainment. Holidays. Or not. So I'm going to stop.

[ 33 : 14 ] You get point three tonight. Let's sum it up. Romans 14. There's a whole lot of things going on in Romans 14. There's a whole lot of things going on. It's mainly about food.

Maybe drink. And holy days. But it applies to a vast array of things that go on in my life. You've got to understand Christianity has fought about everything.

One whole group of Christianity believes it's wrong to own a car. Amish people. And they did that out of a religious conviction. Another group of people would worship on Saturday. Another group of people would worship on Sunday.

Other places overseas. Some of the guys they'll say Sunday's a work day. In North Africa Sunday is a work day. They go to work. But Friday's a day off. Because that's when they worship.

Mohammed's Islamic worship. They asked me what do we do? I said well I think I'd be having services on Friday. They said what would you do about Sunday? I said well what time do they get off? I like Sundays too.

[ 34 : 10 ] But what day do you have to have church on? If a whole society shuts down on Friday. And you're welcome to have a meeting. Why not have a meeting? So you've got to figure out fully convinced in your own mind.

What do you believe is right or wrong? Fully convinced in your own mind. And for you not to judge. Not to criticize. Not to despise. Not to hold it not. And when you may honestly be thinking.

I have more rules than everybody else. So I'm a better Christian. Actually the book of Romans says you're a weaker Christian. I got a lot of rules. But I'm having to learn.

I'm having to learn that we don't live by rules. We live by just what the Bible says. And I got rules about things that aren't rules. I got rules about rules. I have rules to protect me from my rules.

I have rules to protect me from my rules that protect me from my rules. I got rules. But what the Bible is saying is this. On these things that aren't clear. And boy I've been so guilty.

[ 35 : 11 ] I've spent much of my life walking around thinking. I see what you're doing buddy. I'm looking at you. You're not really a good Christian. Because if you're a good Christian. You'd have my list of rules. And he's looking at me and thinking.

Well if you're a good Christian you'd have my list of rules. We go around criticizing each other. So here's your big lesson. Now let's say this. Tonight when you come back. I want you to know what you're going to hear. You're going to hear this.

Respect the other guy. Respect the other guy. The guy who brought the six pack of beer out on his platform. And act like he could drink a beer. Was very very very very wrong.

He was trying to say. I can drink a beer. And he might can say. He can drink a beer. Because the Bible is not as clear. That I can't have anything to drink. I'm against it myself.

But that's my rules. But that you can't. But for him to bring it out in front of all those people. And act like that. He was not walking in charity. And love. You'll find that out. He was despising his brother.

[ 36 : 06 ] He was judging his brother. He was destroying or devastating his brother. If you read the chapter. He was causing his brother to stumble. There was a person in the church that had an alcoholic problem.

Very likely. And he's like. It don't matter. Don't worry about it. And so Romans 14 is going to tell you. And so some of you are sitting there. You're real nervous right now. You're like. Oh boy. Austin don't really think it's wrong to do this or that or this or that or this or that.

Whichever is on your list. We're not talking about what Austin believes. We've read the Bible. Now you can't finish up until you get all of Romans 14. But I think if I did it all this morning. You'd shoot me. But tonight you're going to find out very clearly.

That if in your freedom. You never take advantage of your brothers. I've had a. For example. I have a television in my house. But for years.

Betty can tell you. It's never on if anybody comes to my house. I will just turn it off. There will be no TV watching at my house. My grandkids get to watch. When they come. I usually put them in the back room.

[ 37 : 02 ] Because I don't want to watch what they watch. I think Dora the Explorer. Is like Cabbage Patch. I'm almost positive. That girl is demonically oppressed. Dora the Explorer.

Finding all this juggernaut. I'm like. Lord. Help me. When the Staley. When Mike Staley's kids came to stay at our house. They had. They had this Sky Ranger. What was his name? And anyway.

He flew around. He said. Sky Ranger to the rescue. Sky Ranger to the rescue. He kept pushing his button. A doll sang. So one day. When everybody was in the bed. I saw that doll sitting out.

And I exercised that doll. I hid it. The next day. The kids came down. They said. Where's the Sky Ranger? And I said. You reckon he flew away?

And he was hiding right up on top of that thing. And now the kids are all grown. And I still remember that doll. I hate that doll. I hate that doll.

[ 37 : 57 ] Let every man be fully convinced in his own mind. Amen. So come tonight. You'll find this out. Nobody in our church should ever flaunt liberty. If you know something offends your brother.

You should be very respectful of your brother. If eating meat would cause my brother to stumble. I won't eat meat. In front of them. Now that doesn't mean I ain't never going to eat meat. I can promise you.

When they come to my house. I invited some Indians. It's time to quit. But I invited some Indians to my house. They were here one Sunday. One Saturday. I think it was. Trent had a special day to evangelize Indians.

And I invited them to my house. And they were like. What are we going to eat? I said. I don't know. What are y'all eating? That's what we'll eat. Because I want to respect them. I'm going to respect them. I'm not going to go in there and say.

Glad y'all came. We're having ribeye today. First off. They don't like ribeye. So why would I waste my ribeye? Amen. And if I put it on their plate. They might take one bite and throw it away.

[ 38 : 54 ] And I'm. That is a sin. I am convinced that is sin. To throw away a ribeye. Say amen. Or to feed a ribeye to a dog. I'm convinced. But I'm never going to throw my weight around.

And hurt my brother in Christ. Ever. That's not to be our place. So I would never ever bring a pack of beer up here on this platform. And say hey you can take a drink of beer. There was a time to quit.

Parker and. Pastor Parker and Pastor Spurgeon were in Lima. In London together. Both big shot pastors. And they had an argument. And Spurgeon said. Parker was wicked because he went to the theater.

I might have told you this last week. He went to the theater. And he said that's wicked for him to go to the theater. And see like a Shakespearean play. That's wicked for him to do that. So Parker preached a message about how Spurgeon was wicked because he smoked cigars.

And so they asked Spurgeon. And personally they said. Do you think you overdo it smoking cigars? He said when I smoke two at a time or more. I'll be overdoing it. Until then.

[ 39 : 54 ] I'm okay. Two guys fighting over Romans 14 stuff. We don't want to fall into that trap. That's how we'll keep love here. You come tonight.

You'll get the rest of the story. You really need to come. Because I hate not to finish it. But I won't be here next Sunday morning to preach. And I want to get the whole Romans 14 with you. So come back tonight. Father. I pray that you work in the lives of your people.

I pray you'd help us to trust you. Look to you. And believe in you. And I pray that you would build us up in the faith. And make us stronger for your honor and your glory. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia.

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