

- I. Introduction: **Romans was written by the Apostle Paul in about AD 57, to a church mixed with Hebrew and Gentile Christians.** He never visited the church, which is indicated by 1:10 where he says he longs to minister to them and in 15:24 where he looks to be helped financially by the Roman church on his way to Spain.
- A. Commands, Ordinances, and convictions of conscience (conscience informed by God, i.e., not sinful choices or contrary to biblical revelation)
1. I don't drink, I don't chew, and I don't date girls who do.
- B. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Romans, chapter 14
- C. Previous context of the letter in chapter 13 was on items of morality and then on love. Morality is in Romans 13:9a & 13 and Christian love is I 13:9b-10. Now Paul turns to how the law of love looks in the daily life of a Christian.
- II. Body: The fourteenth chapter of Romans addresses how Christians relate to each other on grey areas of the Christian walk. This passage can be looked at from different perspectives. Today we are going to look at the Outward and Inward perspective that Convictions are to have on a Christian's relationship with his fellow Christian.
- A. Vss.14:1-4; Judging your brother to either be weak in his restrictions or loose in his morals.
1. Accept your brother in the same way God has accepted him or her.
 2. **A weak Christian is simply a person who hesitates in matters of conduct.** This is not about whether somebody is a Christian or not. That question is answered on whether or not a person has trusted Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross as payment for his sin or not. That trust is a one-time action that transfers a person from the realm of darkness and places him into the realm of His beloved Son.
 3. Here, Paul discusses food you can or cannot eat. Jesus himself declared all food clean in Mark 7:19 when He said that the words that come out of our mouths are what defile us, not the food going into it; because the words come from the heart and food gets destroyed in the stomach (Proverbs 6:16-19; '7 deadly sins' identify 3 of 7 that address what comes out of our mouths). In Corinth there were Christians having their conscience seared by other believers who were eating meat sacrificed to idols.

1 Corinthians 8:4–9; ⁴Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. ⁵For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, ⁶yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. ⁷However not all men have this knowledge; **but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.** ⁸But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor

the better if we do eat. ⁹But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

4. V. 4; In a household there are many people who work but only one Master. Perhaps this last Thursday at Thanksgiving there were many people coming over to use the stove and put food in to be warmed or made for the meal. Yet, there was one Master of the kitchen or household. The Church of God, the Bride of Christ, is referred to as a Building or a household, and Jesus is the Master or Lord of the house. The word for servant or slave here is not the usual word δούλος¹. The word is οἰκέτην² which means a house servant. See, the point is that you are a servant in God's house and so is your fellow Christian. Jesus is the Master/ Lord.

B. Vss. 14:5-9; choices that Christian makes are before God, Jesus. Each choice by each Christian is worship to his or her savior.

1. The choice you make needs to be a choice you make in **your mind as you are fully convinced**. This is a decision you need to make after consideration and it is yours to make. If you have to ask whether or not you have liberty to work or worship on one day or another, you have already made the determination by asking the question. Why would you ask if you already believe you have liberty? I cannot tell you what you need to do, because that is between you and God.
2. Which day is the day of worship? Sabbath is Saturday and Sunday is the day Jesus rose from the dead (the Lord's Day). Which one should you worship on? There is a mixed congregation of Hebrew and gentile Christians in Rome and this can be a point of contention. Paul addressed days of worship, feasts, and offerings in Colossians.

Colossians 2:16; ¹⁶Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day.

3. Live or die; You cannot live apart from Christ. Whatever you do is either as a Christian living for Christ, or a Christian living for yourself; dying for Christ or dying for self. Whether living or dying you have to choose whether it is Christ at the center or whether you are at the center. Answering that question will help you decide on grey areas of behavior.

C. Vss. 14:10-13; Judgement will be by Jesus and Jesus alone. Judgement is for every believer on the life as a Christian.

1. Isaiah 14:23; Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess is written to Christians³. This is about Jesus being the Master and His prerogative to have those he purchased with His blood to appear before Him.

¹ δούλος – used 126x in New Testament

² οἰκέτην – used 4x in New Testament; Lk. 16:13; Ac 10:7; Ro 14:4; 1Pe 2:18

³ Phil. 2:10-11 also and directed at Christians to behave toward each other in humility

- a. If you are **not** a Christian you will stand before God at the Great White Throne to be judged by God the Father, at the end of the Thousand-year rule of Jesus (Revelation 20:11-15). At the great white throne you are judged on where you will spend eternity, and that judgement is determined by your behavior of sin. If you are a Christian, that is, if you have put your trust in Jesus' death on the Cross as payment for your own sin, **you will not be at the Great White Throne judgement. Only unbelievers will be at the Great White Throne Judgement.** ALL Christians have been forgiven for their sin by grace, through faith in Jesus' substitutionary death.

2. 2 Corinthians 5:10

- a. Christians will stand before Jesus at the Bema seat. If you are at the bema seat, then you are already saved. The Bema seat is distinct from the Great White throne. In the isthmian games, the Bema seat was a place of reward for an athlete who compete in the games. Paul uses this term, Bema (βήμα) because his hearers would know that Paul is making a comparison to the Christian life and competition as Paul does elsewhere⁴. Christians will receive rewards for their behavior, sometimes referred to as crowns and in other places as gold, silver, or precious stones.

Christians will not all be the same in heaven which is evident because every Christian is not eligible for every crown (esp. shepherding)

Crown	Scripture	Criteria
Incorruptible	1 Corinthians 9:24-27	Mastery over the flesh
of Rejoicing	1 Thessalonians 2:19-20	Soul winning
of Life	James 1:12 & Revelation 2:10	Enduring trials/ martyrdom
of Glory	1 Peter 5:1-4	Shepherding well
of Righteousness	2 Timothy 4:8	Longing for His appearing

1 Corinthians 3:12–15; ¹²Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

- b. Here you see that even if a Christian's life is built on "wood, hay, and stubble" he himself is saved but he will not have anything that survives examination. He built his Christian life with worthless materials and it is revealed on the day it is tested by fire to show its quality.

⁴ 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Tim. 2:5; 4:7

- c. This truth about the Bema seat has fallen from the pulpit in many western churches and might be difficult for some to accept. The reality is that Christians will not all be the same in heaven. Some will have all of their work, or lack of work, burned up and some will have crowns while others do not have those crowns.

God is just and holy, and as a just and holy God, He must hold a person accountable for the choices they make. Understand that satan tries to use God's justice and holiness to condemn and accuse. Previous to becoming a Christian a person is not able to live rightly before God but after a person becomes a Christian, they now have the ability through the Holy Spirit to live rightly before God, and confess their failures when they don't.

This illustration might help:

There are teenage twins who go to an old tent meeting where the both hear the gospel and they both go down the aisle at the same time and they both become Christians at the same time. One of them begins spending time in prayer, Bible Study, and service. He goes on to become a missionary and leads a life serving others and telling other people about Jesus sacrificial death on the cross. His brother however, does not change anything. He actually grows up to be a drug abuser, beats his wife and kids, and is generally a mean behaving person. Eventually, both brothers get together to celebrate their 75th birthday and while driving back from dinner at a restaurant they get into a car accident and they both die instantly at the same time.

*These twins were born at virtually the same time, became Christians at the same time, and finally died at the same time. One of them lived a life for himself and they other lived a life serving others and using his gifts as God directed. **What if I told you that these two brothers were to receive the same eternal dwelling in heaven exactly the same reward?** Something inside of you might be squirming right now, even if you don't know why. **That is because you know it is not 'just' for a person to trample on the blood of Jesus and there not be any consequences.***

There are various passages that warn the Christian to live a holy life or face consequences⁵, and the previous passage on the bema seat indicates that some of the consequences extend beyond glorification. Some take those warnings and attribute them to unbelievers who are being warned about the wrath to come, but the New Testament was written to Churches, or to individual Christians (except the Gospel of John) and not written to unbelievers. I think that does Christians a disservice and it lulls Christians into complacency, by removing the warnings to them. It is intellectually dishonest and inconsistent to come to a passage that talks about future accountability for present choices, and then dismiss it because you believe that every Christian is going to be the same in heaven, which is contrary to the Bible's teaching.

⁵ 2 Ti 2:11-13; 2:5; 2 Co 12:21-13:5; 1 Co 11:28-32; 2 Co 5:10 compare 5:11; Co 3:22-25; He 6:4-6; ; 10:26-27; 1 Pe 4:17-18; 1 Jn 4:17; Re 2:23

- D. Vss. 14:14-23; You judge yourself, by your conscience and that can mean sin or not sin for the same behavior, but for different Christians. I mean, one person can eat meat sacrificed to idols and one can choose not to eat meat. For one to eat meat sacrificed to idols it would be sin, but it wouldn't be sin for the other Christian to do the same thing.
1. Nothing is unclean in and of itself. Remember that Christ died for the weak Christian. Liberty does not equal License.
 - a. The Kingdom of God is not about what you had for Thanksgiving. I work with a person from Albania and a person from Syria. Does it matter what they had for Thanksgiving or does it matter that they gave thanks for what they ate and where they are?
 2. V.17; This is practical righteousness, not positional. Figure of speech; polysyndeton, to slow down and consider each point. This is about your behavior, not your salvation from the lake of fire. Righteousness is in the Holy Spirit. Peace is in the Holy Spirit. Joy is in the Holy Spirit.
 3. The church can be described as a building in a metaphor, like I read earlier from 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 but this building is not the 'Church'. We, as Christians are the 'Church,' because we are the "called-out ones." In this metaphor as a Church building Paul tells Christians not to tear down what God is building up by the material aspects of meat, drink, and which day of the week they worship on. If I might continue the metaphor of a building for a moment longer, don't take a sledgehammer to demolish what God has built up. It is easy to knock down a building, but putting it back together, construction, takes more time and effort than destruction.
 4. Your convictions are for you to have before God and not to push on somebody else. If a Christian pushes their convictions on another Christian, we call that legalism. Can you look back on your behavior toward your fellow Christians and be happy, well pleased with it? Pursue a life that makes for peace and building up your fellow house-servants.

NOTE: I need to remind you that this is about Convictions to Christians who are going to heaven. If there is sin involved then that needs to be addressed as Jesus described in Matthew 18:15-17

III. Conclusion

- A. When you became a Christian or began to grow as a Christian, did you become uncomfortable with some of the vestiges from your old patterns? I mean some of the music you used to listen to. Maybe movies you used to watch or books you used to read?
1. Did you throw any of them away because you were convicted that they did not honor God? Was it a specific sin? Did you go to every other Christian's home and start rifling through their music or movie collections and start making garbage piles?

2. So, here is a follow-up thought... of those items that you once thought were “unprofitable” for your Christian growth or for the closeness of a relationship you have or wanted to have with Jesus – have they crept back in? Did they creep in because you approve of them as nothing being unclean, or did you lower your standard? Let me put this plainly – ARE YOU SINNING AGAINST YOUR CONSCIENCE? You need to have that conversation with Jesus, not me. I might be able to answer biblical questions and help you work out what the bible calls sin or not. Questions of conscience are something you need to get right with God about. I will give this advice → If you are struggling with whether something is going against your conscience or not it might be that you are holding it too tight. Philippians 4:8 is a good place to go for what a Christian ought to be focusing on.

Philippians 4:8; Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

- B. If you are a Christian that is on the side of liberty (that is liberty to have more freedom of food or worship options) and you find yourself in a situation where you discover one of your fellow Christians holds a different conviction than you, how can you take steps so that you do not put an obstacle or stumbling block before your brother?
- C. Here is a question you can ask yourself about whether or not you should do something: Can you maintain liberty along with maintaining a close relationship with Jesus?

See, Paul could eat meat sacrificed to idols, that is, sacrificed to demons and still maintain a close relationship with Jesus. Paul could go to a house and eat whatever was put before him with a clear conscience.

Part of the weaker Christian’s mind is that they want a rule to follow which is legalism, following rules.

Here is an example from my life. When I was in Bible College I would not study on a Sunday. Sometimes, if I had a paper to write for Monday I would stay up past midnight, because then it wasn’t Sunday. So, what difference does 1 second make? None. Silliness!