

ROMANS From Wretchedness to Righteousness

Study 21
 How The Gospel Affects Each Other
 Romans 14:1-23

True Worship Through Transformed Relationships

Recap

Romans 13 talks about our relationship with the government, society, and times. Romans 14 talks about two types of Christians, the strong and the weak.

1) Fill in the blanks. A summary of the differences between the strong and the weak in Romans 14 is given at the beginning of the video lecture, fill in what those differences are.

Strong	How they feel towards each other	Weak
	Judge ←	
	Despise →	

Part 1 of 3: Allows us to See Each Other in a New Light (Romans 14:1-4)

Verse 1-4

Romans 14:1-4
 Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 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. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

2) a) Discussion question. Based on the video lecture, what are the differences between being judgmental and making a judgment?

Being Judgmental		Making a Judgment
	Definition	
	Traits: How to detect? What does it look like? Or when is it used?	

b) Discussion question. Based on the video lecture, what are the reasons a person is judgmental, and what are the reasons Christians should not be judgmental towards other Christians?

Reasons a person is Judgmental	Reasons not to be Judgmental on other Christians	
	i) God’s approval “God has accepted them.”	
	ii) God’s servant “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant?”	
	iii) God’s help “To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.”	

c) Reflection question. The video lecture suggested practical guides on practicing not being judgmental by offering a substitute when you detect or identify something disagreeable with a Christian brother or sister. Reflect on whether you do these when you disagree with someone. Feel free to share your rating at this moment of your life.

Practical guide	Rate from 0-10 of how often you practice this, 0=Never; 10=every time
i) Ask questions	
ii) Declare strengths of other's positions	
iii) Declare limitations of other's positions	


iv) Declare weaknesses of other's positions	
v) Show appreciation of their views	
vi) Demonstrate modesty by saying, "I don't know," when you don't have an answer.	

Part 2 of 3: Allows us to the Freedom of Conscience (Romans 14:5-12)

Verse 5-6

Romans 14:5-6
 One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special 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 gives thanks to God.

3) Reflection question. Verse 5 says that "Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind" and the conviction is that this they are doing is "in honor of the Lord" or "does so to the Lord". A number of examples of the different types of issues that churches have argued about in the past and present. Without going into the reasons and debate, tick the examples of issues you have thought about to better "honor the Lord". (Don't spend more than 10 minutes here in this section)

Examples of morally neutral issues	
A. Food and drink	
B. Wine or grape juice in the Lord's supper	
C. Special days	
D. Worship or praying posture	
E. Tattoos or Piercings or clothes	
F. Exotic dance or yoga or other exercises	
G. Cultural items: Harry Potter, Santa Claus, Pokemon, Music	
H. Eco-friendly product or other ways of caring about the environment	
I. Covid-related issues	
J. Others (give example)	

Verse 7-9

Romans 14:7-9

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. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

4) Reflection question. Verse 7-8 says that whether we live or die, we do it for the Lord and not for ourselves. Share how often you incorporate the Lord's interest in your everyday living activities.

Verse 10-12

Romans 14:10-12

You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? 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.’”

So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

5) Reflection question. In issues related to food, drinks, special days, and other morally neutral issues we are to not judge and hate others for their different belief and conviction as everyone will give an account on why they believe it to God, they just need to focus on their own convictions. Do you find it hard to not judge/dislike/argue with those who disagree with you on these issues?

Background Information

“In both war and theology, there are battles to avoid. Just as we can be ineffective because of compromise or inertia, so too we can be ineffective because of impulsiveness or haste. In fact, I would suggest that a wise theologian, like a wise military general, will be characterized by patience far more frequently than by action. Most of the battles you could fight, you shouldn't. And I'd go so far as to say that the majority of doctrinal fights Christians have today tend to be over third-rank issues—or fourth (under the ranking system by Gavin Ortlund.)

The Four ranks:

- 1) First-rank doctrines are essential to the gospel itself.
- 2) Second-rank doctrines are urgent for the health and practice of the church such that they

frequently cause Christians to separate at the level of local church, denomination, and/or ministry.

3) Third-rank doctrines are important to Christian theology, but not enough to justify separation or division among Christians.

4) Fourth-rank doctrines are unimportant to our gospel witness and ministry collaboration.”

Gavin Ortlund, *Finding the Right Hills to Die On*.

Part 3 of 3: Expresses Love in a Practical Way (Romans 14:13-23)

Verse 13-23

Romans 14:13-23

13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. 14 I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean. 15 If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died. 16 Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.

19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. 21 It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.

22 So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. 23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

6) a) Fill in the blanks, what are the three practical ways to love our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ according to the video lecture and verses 13-23?

	Principles that Guide Behavior
i)	
ii)	
iii)	

b) Discussion question. Fill in the table below with short answers to the question.

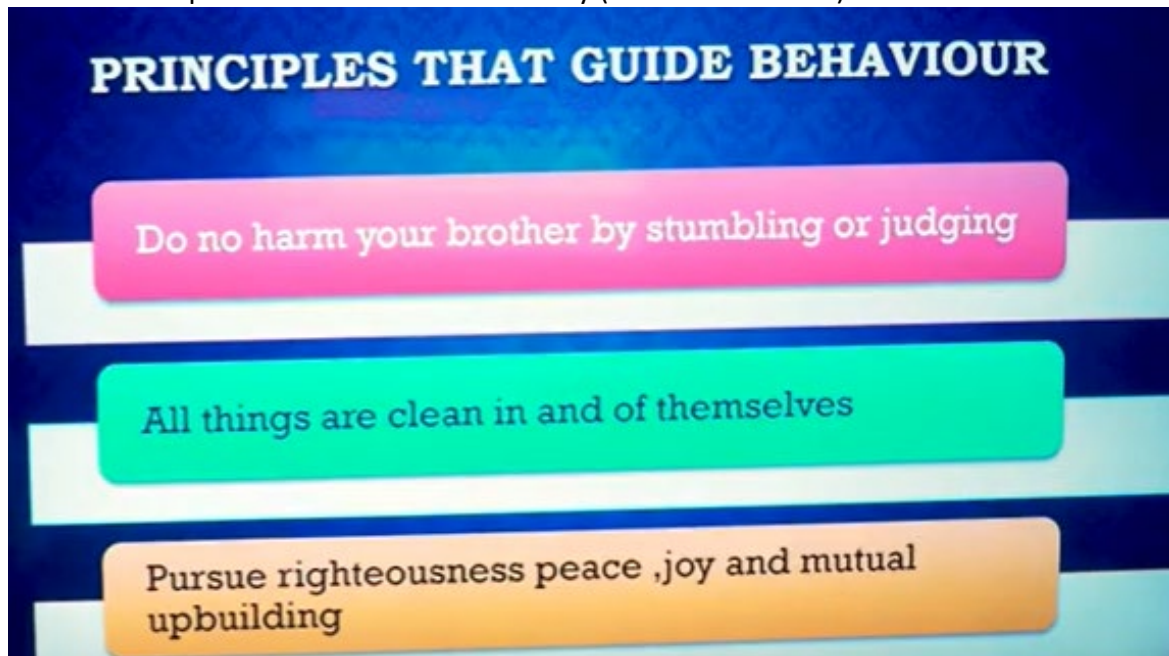
Question	Answer
i) Are there such a thing as 'unclean food' regardless of the situation? (v.14,20)	
ii) When does the food become 'unclean'? (v.14,23)	
iii) If I believe all food is clean, can I eat it anywhere, anytime, and in front of anyone? (v.15,20,21)	
iv) If we are not sure, should we proceed to eat or drink and follow the rest of the people doing it? (v.23)	

Takeaway for Romans 14:1-23

Part 1 of 3: Allows us to See Each Other in a New Light (Romans 14:1-4)

Part 2 of 3: Allows us to the Freedom of Conscience (Romans 14:5-12)

Part 3 of 3: Expresses Love in a Practical Way (Romans 14:13-23)



Case Study

Case 1

There was a proposal in the third Methodist church from some leaders to compel everyone to go back to physical Sunday worship by stopping the online platform. The rationale was that corporate worship is best on a physical basis. Even though the current Covid daily numbers are high, the disease is mild in vaccinated people hence people should come back to the physical service even at a slight risk of the disease.

Stopping the online service will leave the members with no choice but to come back to church and if they do not then some leaders think that they are probably not spiritual and there is no loss if they migrate to other churches in response to this move.

Stopping online worship would instill discipline and give a sense of priority and holiness in worship as the online platform promoted laziness and a casual approach to worship which will not build up people.

8) a) Discussion question. Does Romans 14 apply to this scenario? Please debate

Case 2

Toh Rae Mi and Toh Rae Mon are siblings who are both Christians.

Rae Mi is the older sister and believes that Christians should not have tattoos and piercings except for ears for females, and thinks that rock music, Harry Potter and Pokemon is Ungodly.

Rae Mon is the younger brother by 10 years, has tattoos, multiple piercings, and dyed blonde hair, loves rock music, and believes that Christians should be vegan to avoid animal cruelty and support the environment by using fewer plastics.

Rae Mi scolds Rae Mon for his hair, tattoos, piercings, and rock music whereas Rae Mon scolds Rae Mi for eating meat and being cruel to God's creation, and not caring for God's environment. They often fight over these issues.

8) a) Discussion question. Is it possible to be "strong" in regard to one issue and "weak" in regard to other issues?

b) Discussion question. As Christian brothers and sisters, what should they talk and discuss about instead?

Meditation

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17 ESV)

What wrong attitudes do I need to repent of?

What is it in these verses that bring comfort?

What is it in these verses that build me up?

Meditate on these for the next week and come back to share with each other how God has spoken to you through the Holy Spirit.