

**Romans 14:1-12**  
**“About Diets and Days”**

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**I. Intro**

Having dealt with *Christian Civics* Paul now takes up yet another touchy subject, *Christian Ethics*. The dictionary describes “*Ethics*” as a philosophy that deals with what is good and bad, right, and wrong, moral duty and obligation. Often the Church’s favorite indoor sport is trying to change each other, and this chapter deals with Christian “*No No*’s”; the so called “*taboos*” of the Church, such as:

- Those that believe that it’s wrong to drink alcohol trying to change their fellow believer’s opinion that it’s alright to have a glass of wine or a beer with dinner.
- Those that read out of the 1611 King James Bible trying to change folks to stop reading out of those “*per-versions*” such as the N.I.V. which they say means “Nearly Inspired Version”.

The list goes on and on to add noisome all the while those apart from Christ wonder what’s wrong with us. This is such an important topic that Paul is going to spend 1 and ¼ chapters on it and this as an extension of what he had said in 13:8 that **we owe one another a debt of love**.

There seems to be **two groups in any church** that are always about trying to change the other:

- A. Those that are convinced they need to “*Give it up*”
- B. Those that are convinced that they need to “*Live it up*”

Many in the Church are engaged in **the indoor sport of evangelizing their fellow believers** all the while the world is in desperate need to hear the gospel. Here in Romans 14 we learn that “**Love must be patient and tolerant of other Christian views**”.

## I. Vs. 1-3 Accounts Receivable

Vs. 1 The NLT renders Rom 14:1: “*Accept Christians who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.*” Almost every church mentioned in the New Testament had divisions to contend with that the writer has to address. Today is no different as often Christian disputes are over “grey areas”. This verse is plain and ought to be easy to put in practice, but it's not! Don't reject folks, don't ignore them, place them in categories, and argue with them simply because they practice their faith different than you. **Grace sanctifies the heart much more easily than the head! Remember God washes our hearts in this life, but He washes our brains in the life to come!** Accept them without doing the above because they are your brothers and sisters in the family of God. **Jesus doesn't need or ask for our permission to invite them into the family!** The word “*receive*” in the Greek is a word that means that we are to do so without an ulterior motive so that we can convince them later. This requires us to fully accept each other even if they sprinkle and you dunk... your donuts, ... you though I was going to say baptism didn't you?

Vs. 2 This wasn't about nutrition it may have been about being kosher or idols, but the point Paul is making is much broader in scope than just diets. **The point is, if the scriptures are silent about it then it's a matter of opinion and personal preference that the Lord will direct us individually.** Oft times folks like to lump it all together under the verse in 1 Cor. 6:19 where Paul says, “*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*” But then Paul admonishes Timothy in 1 Tim. 5:23 to “*No longer drink only water but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.*” The problem with using 1 Cor. 6:19 as the proof text on smoking, dancing, chewing gum, sugar etc. is that verse 18 gives us the context as being “*sexual immorality*”. There are things that the Bible is clear on with regards to things that we should abstain from: It's

always wrong to have sex outside of marriage, it's always wrong to get drunk, or get high. God has spoken on these on these things, and we are to exhort one another to abstain from these areas and in so doing we aren't judging God's Word is.

Even more surprising is Paul's estimation of who is the weaker brother. This is even more remarkable when we consider Paul's own history. The natural leaning of most folks is to see the one that has the most rigid standards as the more mature believer. Yet verse 2 says "*he who is weak eats only vegetables*". The weak person is described as being "weak **IN** the faith" not "weak in **FAITH**". Their problem is not in faith but in understanding. Jesus said in John 8:31-32 that "*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" Thus the mark of maturity and understanding the Bible is **freedom** and the person who understands that these unclear things have no bearing upon God's love of us is stronger than the person who doesn't. Barclay in his commentary on this said that **the person is weak in the faith for two reasons:**

1. They have not yet discovered the meaning of Christian freedom and in their hearts are still looking to things to govern their life with regards to right and wrong. They are frightened by freedom and liberty.
2. They have not yet separated themselves from a belief that "works" work in gaining favor with God. They are still trying to earn a right relationship with God instead of receiving one by grace through faith. they are still thinking more about what they can do for God instead of what God has done for them.

Vs. 3 Having described the problem Paul now gives his readers who are on both sides of this problem what to do about it. **The strong that have greater understanding must not reject the one who lacks understanding.** The word "*despise*" means to "*look down*" or "*push out*".

Someone has described **a legalist as a person** "*who lives in terror that someone, somewhere, is enjoying themselves.*" But that attitude towards the weaker brother is what Paul is referring to here by "*looking down*" on them.

The other side of that is also addressed and those that don't eat are told to not sit in judgment over those that do. When we sit in judgment over another we typically do two things:

1. **Criticize:** We are going to be thinking or saying, *"I don't see how a person is a Christian if they are doing things that I don't allow myself to do."*
2. **Categorize:** We are going to thinking or saying, *"They aren't much of Christian if they are engaged in doing what I don't do myself."*

Folks that are engaged in this want the church to come up with uniform codes to enforce these standards upon all and if you don't they will seek to find a Church that will.

### III. Vs. 4-12 Reasons to not Criticize or Categorize

Vs. 4-12 Having said that we should not treat our fellow Christians either way Paul gives us

#### **three facts we ought to consider before we ostracize our fellow Christian.**

1. Vs. 4 **The believer that doesn't see these grey areas as you doesn't belong to you: The truth is God is standing with the person I can't stand, the person I put down He holds up.** Who am I to judge my Master's servant? If God wants to correct him in some nonessential area that I have made essential then He is perfectly able to do so. **It is not our responsibility to change our fellow believer to our way of thinking.** If such an area is not defined by the word then we ought to leave it to the Master to whom they belong to convince them. **The Lord didn't consult you and me in saving them and He isn't asking for our help in making them just like we are.** Notice that Paul says that before God the person *"stands or falls"*, the words means to be **straightened out.** Then Paul says that **even if he isn't standing God will keep working on him to "straightened him out" until he does stand.** We are all a *"work in progress"*, we are all in the continual process of *"change"* and what God has started He will finish. There won't be a single person in heaven not *"finished"* that God wasn't able to get to in time. **There are far too many in the body of Christ that believe that they're the Holy Spirit's "little helpers" trying to force compliance to their rules and regulations. I have a word for us "stop it" let the Holy Spirit do His work!**
2. Vs. 5-8 **God sees what we cannot, hearts:** Paul takes up another area on Christian ethics that was relevant to their time to show that this was more than a one area problem. The problem wasn't only about diets it was about days as well! **Eight times in these verses the word Lord is found which suggests to us that no Christian has the right to play "Jesus" over someone else.** Often these differences arise out of honest convictions which we can't see or know. The person isn't trying to ruffle our feathers just because they don't agree with us, **they may be acting on what they are convinced is right for them.** Paul says, let each be fully convinced in their **OWN MIND**, it doesn't say in someone else's mind. God's sees both viewpoints and both maybe honoring Him in what He told them to do or not do. **The vast majority of issues in the Church today that causes divisions are just a matter of opinion and a difference of perspective.** Those opinions

and perspectives seem logical to us, well thought out but to others it makes no sense. We have all had areas where we practiced something and were convinced in our mind that God had told us to do it or not do it that way that latter one He changed our mind as we grew in His grace. The bottom line is **there is something of worth and has far more value than us being right and that's our relationship with the other person.** Whether we live in liberty or are called to limit ourselves the important thing is that we belong to the Lord!

3. Vs. 9-12 **God alone has paid the price to judge:** The judgment seat of Christ is the bema seat, equivalent to the judge's seat in the Olympic Games. After each game, the winners came before the judge's seat to receive crowns for first, second and third places. Jesus knows the price of limitation as He humbled Himself and became a man even to the point of death. He also knows what life is like as He like no other man lived FREE! **Paul is saying stop trying to take Jesus' place on the throne of judgment.** We are not His consultants; we have no right to stand in that place. In 1 Cor. 4:5 Paul says, "*judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.*" Whether we are into "Living it up" or "giving it up" our focus is to glorify God!

For a chapter and a half Paul is going to give us **three guiding principles on how to apply what early church founder Augustine wrote: "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity!"** The Three admonitions are:

1. 14:1 Receive
2. 14:19 Edify
3. 15:2 Please