



by Mercy

ROMANS 14:1-12

Devotional

Romans 14:1-12

¹ As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. ² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;

¹¹ for it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall confess to God.”

¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Day 1

ROMANS 14:1, 3, 15:7

14:1 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. . . .³ and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. 15:7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Paul begins and ends this section with the exhortation to “welcome” or “accept” one another. Paul’s aim is not tolerance, but rather a peaceful and mutually beneficial church that seeks to include and build up one another all for the glory of God. Helpfully he ties this welcoming to the truth that we have been welcomed by Christ. If not, the kind of welcoming Paul is implying would be not only counter cultural, but also superficial and selfish. If you stop to think about this, this is a remarkable truth. Consider Paul’s words elsewhere;

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience...” Eph 2:1-2

We have been welcomed in by Christ, despite our sin, our waywardness, our allegiance to things, people, ideas that are not Christ. Jesus has welcomed us into the family of God, by his mercy and grace, with the intention that this status will last forever. This sort of welcome puts our worldly differences on the back burner and our unity in the gospel at the forefront. What areas of your life hold you back from welcoming others in the way you have been welcomed?

What sins, theological differences, lifestyle choices, etc that people have, are especially hard for you to see passed? Consider repenting of those today, asking God to loosen their stronghold on how you perceive and love other people.

As followers of Christ, we have all we need in Christ. This frees us up to give of our time, our energy, money, resources, gifts and more. It means our welcoming doesn't "put us out" but rather shares the generosity of the gospel. It means when we feel ill-equipped, tired, weak we can trust that the Spirit will bear fruit in us for the work God gives us. Can you recognize when you are least likely to welcome another? How can you submit that before the Lord today? What might it look like to take a practical step towards welcoming a "difficult" someone?

Prayer

Father in heaven. What a glorious truth that you welcome me. There are so many reasons not to, yet your word is abundantly clear that despite those you have. Thank you. Help me welcome in the same way you have. Give me the strength to open my life to another. Where there is quarreling, give me a spirit of unity. Where there is difference, give me a spirit of acceptance. Where there is change, give me a spirit of peace. In all of this, may my life be a living sacrifice, pleasing to you, bringing glory to you, and proclaiming your beautiful truth to all. In Jesus name, Amen.

Day 2

ROMANS 14:1-4

^{14:1} As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions ² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Paul here identifies what he calls strong and weak Christians within the Roman church. It is important to remember that this is not an indictment of saved vs. unsaved or even categories of better or worse Christians, rather the weakness is a conscience that is easily pricked resulting in a lack of liberty (in this case Jewish dietary laws and holiness days). In calling out this distinction Paul is saying that Christians do struggle to abandon themselves to the totality of our salvation in Christ and finding our identity completely in His finished work, bar nothing!

Can you identify ways that you are holding on to something other than Christ as “proof” of your righteousness? (i.e. theological understanding, views on activism, freedom regarding alcohol, etc...)

Here in Rome the weakness seems to characterize the Jewish Christians who struggle with application of Jewish dietary laws (2) and holiness days (5), whereas in a similar passage in 1 Cor. 8 the weak seem to be Gentile Christians struggling with meat that has been sacrifice to idols in the marketplace. It seems important to note that people can be categorized as both weak and/or strong depending on the situation.

What might be some categories that you see yourself as strong? Spend some time thanking God for his work in you in that way.

What might be some categories that you see yourself as weak?

How does this change the way you view those you encounter as weak within the church?

Throughout 2 Corinthians 10 and 11 Paul emphasizes that he will boast in weakness rather than strength. He concludes these observations by saying “For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses,... For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:10).

How does our weakness highlight the glory of the Gospel?

How does weakness actually translate to strength?

Prayer

Father, when it comes to our rightness with you, we confess that it is totally dependent on your finished work! We can not add one small percent to what you have done, not through theological astuteness, dietary rigor, holy day observance, or anything else. Our righteousness comes 100% from you! Help us to live that life of complete surrender and be strong in faith and conscience. Father in areas where we find ourselves weak, may we entrust ourselves more fully to you. Spirit we pray that you would gentle us with those who we experience as weak, especially in areas where we may be strong. May our strength never become pride. May the truths of the Gospel always lead us to welcome, receive and carry those who are weak.

Day 3

ROMANS 14:5-6

⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

“Why didn’t they join our celebration? We’ve always known how important that day is.” It is easy to imagine the tensions that arose as freedom in Christ replaced a religious system that had been in place for centuries as well as the thinking of people coming out of false worship practices. What was right and what was wrong? What could change and what should stay? How enlightening that Paul neither asks them to agree, nor offers his own opinion on issues not central to the gospel. Instead, he gives principles that will retain their accountability to God and will allow them to transcend their differences. First, he says each person should be convinced in his own mind. Then, he adds their conviction should be based on what honors the Lord...exactly what they couldn’t agree on. By asking them to be convinced in their own minds, he is challenging unexamined lives and practices, and also appealing to a conscience that has been cleansed by new birth and can respond to God. Sin darkens and deadens our conscience. Christ brings light and life. As we walk in the light, individually and together, we are able to discern what honors God and others.

Do you wonder if you fit this description? Ask the people you live with if they see a thankful heart in the ordinary and unrehearsed places of your life. In the beginning of his letter, Paul said an unregenerate heart will not submit to God or be thankful; this heart feels entitled, and sees religious practice and service to others as a favor given. Understanding ourselves as undeserving sinners rescued by God’s mercy from slavery to a master that did not love us, fills our hearts with gratitude and frees us to honor God and others. Celebrate the freedom!

What parts of your life are unexamined, maybe untouchable?

Where are you examining other people more than yourself?

How has spending time in God's Word sharpened your conscience?

Is gratitude a first response for you?

Prayer

Merciful Father, we can never get over your amazing generosity and patience in our lives day by day. We are quick to protect and defend our own interests. We want the humble and gentle heart of our Lord Jesus. Please forgive us again, enable us to love each other, and receive our thanks today. In Jesus name, Amen.

Day 4

ROMANS 14:7-9

⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

What does it mean that being called to life means no longer living for ourselves?

There is glory — much glory — in being called into something bigger than who we are. We are people with souls, and souls are big. We were made for eternity. A sure sign of our depravity is how we become so turned in on ourselves. So turned in, in fact, that we exchange the glory of God for images that resemble us (Romans 1:23). Parochialism is against everything that we were created to be — there is no question why Jesus saves us from it.

What Jesus offers us in the gospel is not only the forgiveness of sins and right standing before God. That is a crucial, necessary, beautiful part. But it is the glorious means to an even more glorious reality: that we would be his, that we be welcomed into his fellowship, that we be brought into his mission for the universe.

We're not all about ourselves anymore, not even about our own sanctification in a way that ignores others. We began to see that even the transformation of our own selves is part of that great work which will encompass the entire cosmos (Romans 8:19–22).

We don't live for ourselves anymore, but for him. All the nitty-gritty, day-to-day, hour-to-hour stuff of life becomes absorbed into the great drama of God conceived in his mind before the world was created — a people of worshipers from everywhere inhabiting a new world in the fellowship of his presence forever.

We don't live to ourselves, and we don't die to ourselves. Not anymore. We are the Lord's.

--*Life Means No Longer Living for Ourselves* by Jonathan Parnell. Sun, Dec 2, 2012, Fighter Verses, a ministry of Truth78.

In what ways do you find that you are living for yourself? Why? What is keeping you from trusting God with the things that matter most to you?

How does Jesus's death and resurrection show off both His tremendous love and His tremendous power?

How can meditating on God's tremendous love for you help you trust Him with the things that matter most to you in this life so that "You live to the Lord?"

How can meditating on God's tremendous power help you trust Him in the face of death "So that you are ready to die to the Lord?"

-- questions from *Sweet Comfort* by Timothy Cain, November 24, 2017.
Fighter Verses, a ministry of Truth78.

Prayer

Our gracious Father, you sent your Son to die and rise to new life in order that death might be brought to an end and that we too might live a new life. Yet foolishly, we have chosen death over life. In our thoughts, words and deeds we have rebelled against you and your intentions for us. In so doing, we have broken our fellowship with you whose love is better than life and whom to know is life itself. We have hurt others and diminished their lives. We have damaged ourselves who had been created to reflect your beauty. Father, forgive us our sin, and grant that your resurrection power might course through our entire being so that we walk in the ways of love and justice to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

--Prayer from Redeemer PCA, NYC.

Day 5

ROMANS 14:10-12

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ¹¹ for it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

You have heard it said, “the ground is level at the foot of the cross”. This section seeks to remind the believer that we are brothers and sisters, because of what Christ has done. Therefore, if there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom 8:1), neither should we pass judgment on one another. But rather we should pay attention to our own life of Faith in the Lord.

- Are there Christians on whom you regularly pass judgment? This could be individuals in your circle or groups who perhaps see things differently from you.

A major part of treating fellow believers with grace is recognizing the grace that we live under.

- Spend some time thanking God that there is really NO CONDEMNATION for those in Christ Jesus.

V. 12 reminds us that we all will stand before the judgment seat of God to give an account of our life. Again we remember that there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus, but we stand before that judgment seat to testify to the ways that God’s grace has radically transformed us in the here and now.

- How often do you think of standing before God?
How might thinking of that more change your behavior?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you that you lived, died and rose again so that we could be your sisters and brothers, adopted into the heavenly family. Help us today, remembering that great grace, to love those whom you died for by not passing judgment on them. Give us the sweet humility that sees our own faults as worse than others. Give us the recognition to acknowledge that if I can be washed clean, then surely my sister or brother can, no matter their fault. And as we look forward to that day when you will be seated on the judgment seat in all your glory, may our lives be one giant Hallelujah from head to toe.