

ROMANS CH.14

MAJOR THEME: THE GOSPEL: THE RIGHTEOUSNES OF GOD REVEALED IN TRANSFORMED LIVING

Hymn: #19 (BGCS) Now Thank We All Our God

#72 (BGCS) I Surrender All

(Modified Outline of John A. Witmer- Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; SP Publications; 1983; p.438)

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H) Dealing with Other Believers (Ch.14:1-15:13) Back in Ch. 12, Paul, like a man determined to reach his destination before sunset and “keeping the pedal to the metal” gave us 20 action directives in just seven verses for relating within the Body of Christ. Here in Ch. 14, it’s as if he breaks hard and pulls his theological car right over on the side of the road and looks straight into the eyes of those in both the front seat and the back seat and says to them... “Accept each other!”

i) Without Judging (Ch. 14:1-13)

- (1) V.1 There is such a thing as weak faith, and as we shall see, it is ironically those whose scruples tend towards the more legalistic side who Paul identifies as those of “weak faith”. They are those who self-identify as “I don’t do this....I don’t do that etc.”; they are those who embody the “Southern ditty” I used to light-heartedly recite as a boy amongst my friends saying “I don’t cuss, I don’t chew...and I don’t go out with girls that do”.
 - (a) The background to this command to “Accept” the brother or sister with “weak faith is this: In Rome the church was comprised of both believing Jews and Gentiles. For many of those with a Jewish background in the Law with its dietary and Sabbath keeping requirements, they found it hard to live free of these constraints. For the Gentiles who were not steeped in Jewish Law, were quite free about the food they ate and certain days of the week were of no consequence to them.
- (2) V.1 (b) There is also such a thing as “disputable matters” lit. διαλογισμῶν- meaning reasoning’s or opinions.
 - (a) Some disputable matters today:
 - (i) Drinking alcohol
 - (ii) Christmas Trees
 - (iii) Climate change
 - (iv) The King James Bible or another translation
 - (v) Harry Potter
 - (vi) Styles of Baptism or Communion
 - (b) Some matters are always indisputable:
 - (i) The deity of Jesus and His Virgin Birth
 - (ii) The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
 - (iii) The Trinity
 - (iv) The Resurrection
 - (v) SSM & LGBT agenda and lifestyle is wrong and unfitting for a Christian
 - (c) Apart from staying grounded in Rom. 12:2 “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will”, one will be perpetually tossed to and fro by ever wind of doctrine and the cunning of men and remain confused as to what constitutes a “disputable matter” and what one has to “go to the wall” for.
- (3) V. 2 Paul makes it clear that it was the man who ate “only vegetables” who was of weak faith. Perhaps, this refers to a Jewish believer who might have wondered if the “meat” he was eating was “kosher” or if it had previously been offered to an idol in a pagan ritual.
- (4) V. 3-4 Those with “strong faith” must not look down on - lit. ἐξουθενεῖτω- meaning “despise” or “make of no account”, the believer with weak faith. Vice versa those

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with “weak faith” are not to condemn- lit. κρινέτω- meaning to “judge” the believer with strong faith...because God has accepted them both; Not because of the relative strength or weakness of their faith, but because of their faith period.

(a) “And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand” hearkens us back to Rom. 5:1-2 and the “standing” which **all** believers have before God by grace through faith. “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now **stand**.”

(5) V. 5-9 Here Paul introduces the first of three great principles for walking out this command of acceptance

(a) **Conviction**

(i) V.5 “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind”...that is each one **MUST** have a conviction about what he is doing.

1. Why do you do what you do? Is the exercise of your freedom or restraint based on knowledge of the Word of God? Is it because “others are doing it”? Are you fully convinced in your own mind about WHY you do what you do?
2. I’ve had conversations with professing believers about “undisputable” matters they were involved in where they have said to me “Well, I just don’t have a conviction about that”. My response was “Well, you better get one.” I dare say Paul would be even bolder and say, “Well, brother you are sinning, not because of the matter per se, but because you don’t have a conviction about it.”
3. “At the outbreak of the Civil War, a Tennessee cotton planter could not decide which cause to support, the North or the South. He had friends on both sides, so he decided to be absolutely neutral. He wore a grey jacket and blue trousers, thereby dressing for both the Confederacy and the Union. One day this man was caught in a skirmish between the two armies. He stood up and shouted that he was neutral in this fight and expected to be allowed to leave the field before the battle closed in on him. But Union sharpshooters, seeing the grey jacket, riddled him with bullets. And Confederate marksmen, seeing the blue pants, filled them with lead.” The point is clear. It is a dangerous and false security to be “conviction-less” about what you do in life.

(ii) V. 23 Jumping ahead we see this principle underscored: “But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin”.

1. If you are involved in any activity that you cannot do with CONVICTION and faith based on knowledge, then it is sin to YOU; maybe not to me or to someone else, but to YOU it IS sin.
2. “No Christian can “borrow” another Christian’s convictions and be honest in his Christian life. Unless he can hold them and practice them by faith, he is sinning. Even if a person’s convictions are immature, he must never violate his conscience.” (*Wiersbe; Romans- Be Right; p.168*)

(iii) Why is conviction so important? Because everything we do is done “unto the Lord”. Whether eating and drinking or abstaining; whether living or

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dying, we are to do all things as unto Him with a conviction, energy and the whole heartedness that comes from the Spirit.

- (6) V. 10-12 Paul again addressed both the strong and the weak and reminds them of the reason why the strong are not despise nor the weak to condemn. "For we will all stand before God's judgment seat"
- (a) Lit. – βήματι- the bema seat of judgement for Christians
 - (b) 2 Cor. 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."
 - (c) 1 Cor. 3:11-15 "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."
 - (i) Lot is an example of this type of escaping through the flames.
 - (d) When it comes to "disputable matters" and the temptation to start despising or judging, we do well to remember that we have more than enough to concern our focus on what we ourselves are building with; our motives; the quality of our own building before the Lord.
 - (e) No one is immune from this tendency to peg others on our self-made maturity scale or be comparing others to ourselves.
 - (i) Peter and John
 1. John 21:19-22 "Then he said to him, "Follow me!" Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, **what is that to you? You must follow me.**"
 - (ii) Charles Spurgeon and Joseph Parker
 1. "Two of the most famous Christians in the Victorian era were Charles Spurgeon and Joseph Parker, both of them mighty preachers of the Gospel. Early in their ministries they fellowshipped and even exchanged pulpits. Then they had a disagreement and the reports even got into the newspapers. Spurgeon accused Parker of being unspiritual because he attended the theatre. Interestingly enough, Spurgeon smoked cigars, a practice many believers would condemn. Who was right?" (Wiersbe; Romans- Be Right; p.164) Did you pick one? If so, you just proved the point Paul is making.
 - (f) V.13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.
 - (i) Stumbling Block lit. Πρόσκομμα- that over which the soul stumbles, by which it is impelled to sin.
 - (ii) Obstacle lit. σκάνδαλον- meaning "the movable stick or tricker ('trigger') of a trap; (Thayer's Greek Lexicon); stresses the method (means) of entrapment, i.e. how someone is caught by their own devices (like their personal bias, carnal thinking). (HELPS Word Studies; copyright © 1987, 2011 by Helps Ministries, Inc.)

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ii) **Without Hindering (Ch. 14:14-23)** In this section Paul gives us the next two principles for walking out mutual acceptance between weak and strong believers

(1) **Conscience**

- (a) V. 14 "As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean."
 - (i) This verse highlights that what is critically important is not what a person does in regards to a disputable matter, but what that disputable matter does to him.
 - (ii) The conscience is a function of our human regenerate spirit which is indwelt by The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's role is to sanctify us and grow us from children into sonship. Thus, to participate in anything that violates one's conscience is to sin by resisting and grieving the Holy Spirit.
 - (iii) Some things that are appropriate for an 18 year old son are entirely inappropriate for an 8 year old child. When you have children you don't leave things laying around the house that they could hurt themselves with. In other words, we don't leave stumbling blocks laying around that can impel someone to sin; we don't leave obstacles laying around the house...scandalous things that can trigger the weak conscience to sin. As they grow up you can relax a little bit and know they are not going to kill themselves if you forget and leave a sharp knife out on the table.

(2) **Consideration**

- (a) V. 15-18 We are to consider how our convictions and clear conscience liberties will affect weak believers and how our actions might appear to them.
 - (i) Love is the standard. If I love my weak brother I will not stumble, grieve or destroy him by the exercise of my Christian liberty. I will not be a source of temptation for him to violate his conscience.
 - (ii) V. 17 "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"
 - 1. "The Kingdom" here in context is not to be understood as the coming Millennial Kingdom, nor is it meant to deny such a Kingdom is coming. Rather, it refers to that spiritual realm which one enters into by the new birth Jesus spoke of in John 3:5-7:
 - a. "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"
 - 2. You cannot enjoy the righteousness, peace and joy IN the Holy Spirit if you as a strong faith believer stumble your weak faith brother. Neither can you enjoy the righteousness, peace and joy IN the Holy Spirit if you as a weak faith believer violate your conscience.
- (b) V. 19-21 Mutual edification is the key
 - (i) " The strong believer needs to grow in love; the weak believer needs to grow in knowledge. So long as a brother is weak in the faith, we must lovingly deal

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with him in his immaturity. But if we really love him we will help him to grow. It is wrong for Christian to remain immature, having a weak conscience...it is natural for a child to stumble when he is learning to walk. But if an adult constantly stumbles, we know something is wrong.” (Wiersbe; Romans- Be Right; p.167)

- (c) V. 22-23 The blessedness that is spoken of here is the happiness that comes when one can look back upon his past actions with a clear conscience about his actions; when one can look at the present with Conviction as to his standing on disputable matters; and when one can look to the future with Consideration of other believers and where they are at on their journey.
- (i) Towards some we must recognize that keeping our convictions to ourselves is what is called for. They are babies.
 - (ii) Towards others we may have liberty and indeed responsibility to help edify them and grow up. They are adult sons.
 - (iii) Towards all, we must exercise love.
 - 1. It was the early Church Father and Archbishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom who said “In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, charity. In all things, Jesus Christ.”
 - 2. But let us never forget there is a great difference between being united and having unity. Two chickens tied at the feet and thrown over a clothes line may be united, but they don’t have unity.

Ch. 14 teaches us that The Righteousness of God is revealed through our transformed living as we deal with other believers without judging them or hindering them; by the way we hold our convictions, maintain our conscience and consider others and their edification. Whether you are “riding shot gun” in the front seat of maturity or sitting in the back seat of “weak faith”, this is the steely-eyed, road side discipleship message of the Apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit.