

Overview

Some thoughts are in order before we attempt explaining the verses of this chapter. Chapter 14 doesn't raise quite the interest that perhaps chapter 6 does, but it is nonetheless a very important subject. When we think of the strong and the weak, we will often think, good and bad or acceptable and non-acceptable. What we need to think however, is that all these are loved by God. Not only loved, but received into His fellowship. Therefore, without love we will not be able to enter this wonderful arena with any true honesty. If we do not aggressively enter into this love of others, we will find ourselves stunted in our Christian growth and outlook on Christian living.

Verse 1 *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.*

"Weak in the faith"- This verse assumes there are those who are considered weak in faith. These individuals have Christ and are believers but because of legal teaching, such as Jewish believers, or perhaps because of former sins and a lack of instruction; these are the *weak* yet penitent. They are to be received. One great reason for receiving them is their need for fellowship.

"Doubtful disputations"- This simply means for the purpose of deciding or judging his qualifications . Our receiving of him is a recognition of his union with Christ and his desire for the things of the Lord. When a person of this manner comes into the assembly, he feels the moving of the Spirit and the love of the saints and so becomes soft and is encouraged. There are some who come into the assembly who are believers but have a desire to minister or perhaps are not penitent. These we must be very careful of.

Verse 2 *For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.*

We haven't had to consider this issue in our churches today. But the principle that is being taught is important. See the following verse 3.

Verse 3 *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.*

The principle of one judging another because he is different, in some manner, is an issue in today's churches. The rule here is if God receives someone, why can't we with the same attitude taught in the instructions of Verse 1.

- **Galatians 2:14** *But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*

Verse 4 *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*

"Who art thou that judges?" This is no doubt a reference to the Jew who was judging the Gentile convert to Christianity. This also has application to issues of our day. In the case of one believer feeling superior to another for various reasons, that believer should realize he has no right to judge the servant of the Lord.

- **James 4:12** *There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?*

Often the motive for one judging another is nothing greater than wanting to recruit for our thought system. We need to see this for what it is: pride, selfishness, and a feeling of superiority.

- **1 Peter 4:15** *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.*

“God is able to make him stand.” This expresses the thought that one doing the judging doesn’t realize that it is God working His will in all of us. The necessary solution here is to see each other in Christ, therefore, on an equal basis in Christ.

- **John 10:29** *My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

Verse 5 *One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*

“To esteem one day above another.” This is saying that a higher value is placed on one day over the other, or it is regarded more sacred than another. This was the position held by many Jews who, though they converted to Christianity, still held these days sacred. “Every day alike.” The word alike is not in the original. He is saying every day is consecrated to the Lord. Also, He is not taking a position of indifference toward the first day of the week that is generally held as a day to be set aside for attending church services. Everyday of the week should be a day to follow the Lord. One man can see everyday alike, but the other wounds his conscience if he does not set that day apart to the Lord. The difference is the conscience. Therefore, let every man be persuaded in his own mind.

Verse 6 *He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*

It is entirely possible one day could be viewed in opposite ways by two men. The important point here is that they both do it unto the Lord. The Lord loves them both, and therefore both of them should respect the other and receive each other. This expresses the value of the body of Christ being one and receiving each other.

Verse 7 *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.*

Each one of us are part of the body of Christ. It represents some of the worst practices of division to make a difference between us in things of this kind. These teachings seem small, but when allowed to continue, the practice produces divisions that hurt the body of Christ and is offensive to the Gospel being received.

- **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

Verse 8 *For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

For a man to say, “Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord,” is a sign that he knows the Lord. This man doesn’t just know about God, but has a fellowship knowledge of God.

Verse 9 *For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*

These verses are an expression of the value there is in being part of the body of Christ.

Verse 10 *But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

It is understood that there are judgments the church must make.

- **1 Corinthians 6: 2-3** *Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?*

Here in Romans 14, individuals were judging others. There was the problem of Jewish converts judging Gentile Christians for not keeping the law. Gentile Christians were judging Jewish Christians for keeping certain days or not eating certain foods which they had liberty to do. This issue was pretty deep. They were setting certain ones at naught, that is, to despise some. Paul's answer to this was that everyone would stand before the judgment seat of Christ. In other words, leave these issues to the Lord to judge. Also, this issue of judging was showing up a serious need in the group. There was need of love for one another. If love for one another was present, it would bring solution to these problems. The needs shown by this chapter are current today just as in those days. These issues are the problems that bring division in the church.

Verse 11 *For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*

Paul is saying to us that there is a timed place that every knee will bow. There is a sovereign God who is over all and will right every wrong. Every man will give account of his deed, whether good or bad. This realization that God is over all and has everything under control has a way of leveling the playing field. So the man that thinks too highly of himself can just relax and enjoy his fellowship with God and with the church.

Verse 12 *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

One of the great principles of scripture is that we all will give account of ourselves. This causes us to desire a careful walk before the Lord.

- **Hebrews 13:17** *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you*

Verse 13 *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.*

Therefore let us not judge others anymore but judge ourselves instead. This will solve the problem of being a stumbling block to other Christians. Paul helps us greatly with the teaching of judging ourselves.

- **1 Corinthians 11:30 & 31** *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*

We realize it is because of a lack of self judgment that there are ones among us who are weak and sickly and even sleep.

Verse 14 *I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*

The real problem with these foods that were in question or the special days was in the hearts of the people involved, not with the foods. It is a difficult issue when a man esteems something to be wrong for him. However, there is a powerful cleansing of the mind the Lord has for us.

- **Romans 12:2** *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

It is only with a renewed mind that we can properly serve God.

Verse 15 *But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.*

Even though we have liberty to eat most foods, we would do well to allow our liberty to be limited by the conscience of our brother.

- **1 Corinthians 10:28** *But if any man say unto you, this is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:*

This word “destroy” is not saying this brother would be lost forever.

- **1 Corinthians 3:15** *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

Verse 16 *Let not then your good be evil spoken of:*

It is interesting that the scriptures instruct our liberty to be limited by the conscience of a brother. This instruction from the scriptures shows us how important our walk before the public is. Through a pure life before people, we can bring glory to God and blessing to people.

Verse 17 *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

This word of what the kingdom is and is not sweeps the Christian arena clean of all the traditions. Many who are unlearned in the truths of the kingdom of God, think that by keeping the traditions will give them merit before God. The traditions of any church does not have merit for those who keep them. The kingdom of God is within us and causes us to have joy and peace, not only in our heart, but in our daily lives.

*****Verse 18** *For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

For us to serve Christ Jesus in these truths of the heart, is pleasing to God and approved of man. To keep the traditions of a church for salvation will not please God.

Verse 19 *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

It is important for us to learn what it is to build up the church.

- **Romans 15:2** *Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.*
- **1 Corinthians 8:1** *Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies.*

There is a fellowship that is available to us in Christ that is edifying to all who will be involved in it. Something that is mostly lost today is the simple teaching of the Word of God to the church.

- **Acts 20:32** *And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*

Verse 20 *For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.*

“For food destroy not the work of God.” God is in the business of constructing buildings, and we are those buildings He is hard at work on. We are also laborers with God. Therefore, the exhortation is that every man must take heed how he builds on God’s foundation. We must so discipline ourselves that we would not desire

things for ourselves that would hinder our brother. As in this case, Paul is saying don't influence your brother to eat foods which his conscience doesn't allow. Also, in today's society, don't indulge in worldly things and cause your brother to do so.

Verse 21 *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*

This verse is teaching us that we must be willing to give up some of our liberties or enjoyments for the sake of not stumbling our brother.

- **1 Corinthians 8:13** *Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

Paul withstood Peter to his face and publicly because he was causing some of the Jews to dissemble or to separate from each other for fear of the Jews from James. Even Barnabas was caught up in their hypocrisy.

- **1 Corinthians 9:22** *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

Verse 22 *Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.*

"Hast thou faith, have it to thyself before God." The issue here is if one has liberty to eat certain foods or respect certain days, he should not display his liberty in public knowing there are some that are weak. It is a sign of love for him to limit himself in that manner. He is happy who has discerned the Lord's will in this matter and is not condemned for restraining himself about his liberty. This is important because it is a real victory to be clear in his heart and have no resentment for having kept his faith to himself.

Verse 23 *And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

What is meant here is the problem of falling into condemnation because he went beyond his faith in the exercise of his liberty. When a man bypasses his faith, he sets in motion a kind of conviction which is saying to him "you have disobeyed God." A person has then entered into the realm of self will. It is called lawlessness which God declares as sin.

- **1 John 3:4** *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*

It is a very important practice to learn to walk in faith and by faith.

Remarks on Chapter 14

With a close study of this chapter, we realize the points being made are essential to the Christian life and the church we attend. If one errs on some of these points, he is not to be excluded from fellowship in the church. Those in charge or those who are the strong ones, should receive him in love and give sufficient time for him to think through on his actions. Thus giving the Spirit time to correct him and he to receive correction.