**Romans 14 – Showing Grace To Those With Different Opinions**

**(Talk about the “list” and list makers)** As we continue our run through Romans, looking at several passages that we have not looked at during other series and messages, we come to **Rom. 14**. A very practical chapter that reminds us of the need to show grace to others.

Even within churches, there are those who spend time criticizing and pointing fingers at other believers. We need to be people of grace, while knowing how to handle disagreements that we may have with others, including differing opinions on things. That is what we are going to look at today and next week.

As we begin, let me share that in **Rom. 13** Paul has discussed the issue of being submissive to governmental authorities, and then, beginning in **vs. 8** and going through **vs. 14** he tells us about the need to love others as God would want us to.

This leads into **Rom. 14** and how we are to treat others, specifically those who may be deemed weak in the faith. And we will explain what that means. But keep in mind that what follows is tied to obeying **Rom. 13:8**. We are to love others in a God honoring way.

There are those who have grown in their understanding of grace. Now, we are not to use our freedom in Christ to sin, but to serve others **(Gal. 5:13)**. We must also consider that when it comes to believers, what some see as sin may not be sin to others. The Bible is clear on some things, what is sin and what is not. It also has many principles that we are to live by.

But in some instances, Christians differ. For example, we know that drunkenness is a sin. If we get tipsy or out of control, we have sinned **(Eph. 5:18)** and we are warned of this in Proverbs.

For some, they choose to not drink at all. For others, a glass of wine, a beer, no problem. I am not offended by people who drink but when you get drunk, there is a problem. I saw enough stupidity from some uncles of mine when they had too much.

Some people say movies are off-limits. When we go to a theater, I was once told, we pour money into the Hollywood cesspool and therefore we should never go. Others would disagree though we probably would mostly agree that we need to be careful of what we watch and listen to too. For others, it is music. No secular, or only certain Christian music styles. And we judge others by that. Or what Bible version you prefer. The list could go on and on.

**Point:** There is a point I want to make before going further. In none of the discussions here is their freedom given to sin, to live as we want, to take advantage of what we see as liberty in Christ. Remember, we are to live for God’s glory and to love others. **Rom. 6:1** is clear that thinking that sinning is okay, and I would say, taking our liberties to far, needs to be guarded against.

Now, let’s get into this discussion. We know that there are believers who are more mature in their faith, and others that are wrestling, growing, shall we say, slower than some. Maybe they are not in the Word much, but they are in the Word. Or they have come out of a rules laden church and are trying to move forward in their life but are still stumbling over things that we may tend to not be bothered by, such as what we listed above. Let’s jump right into this. The first thing we want to note is this,

**1) We need to cut others some slack.** Paul is clear in the first four verses about giving each other a little grace. He begins in **vs. 1** by mentioning someone who is weak in faith. Paul has here, I believe, the idea that there are some believers who simply do not know what is right or okay for a Christian to do. In Rome, something we cannot fully relate to because we do not deal with this issue, was about meat offered to idols and what you ate.

As **Bill Mounce writes, this word for “weak’’ describes someone who “doubts, hesitates, is unsettled, timid.”** I take that to mean they as a believer are a little confused as to what it is they should be doing or not doing when it comes to some things or what is allowed and not allowed.

For us, questions may arise such as, do we go to movies? Do we listen to any secular music? What Bible do I use? How are we to dress for church?

I think most of the Roman church Paul would consider to be strong in the faith and things that may have bothered them or caused them personal struggles over what they should or should not do, they had answered.

But as with any church, people who come in who are new in their faith, or just not far along in their spiritual development and we need to know how to treat each other. And those who are judgmental can make it hard and frustrating for those who live in grace and freedom. Again, not freedom to sin, but also are not held captive by man’s opinion.

**Vs. 1** is directed to those who are more mature in their walk with God. We are told to “welcome” the weaker believers, but do not get into arguments over personal opinions of right and wrong that the Bible does not specifically talk about directly or in principle. And some people twist Scripture to get principles.

The word **“welcome”** is a command. We are not to show partiality or push them away because someone is weak in their walk. If anything, we need to help them learn what is right for them. The word **“welcome”** means **“to receive kindly, treat with kindness, to take into friendship and interaction.”** We are not to ignore them or walk away.

I think Paul tells us to welcome these young believers (not age specific) into the church because it would be easy to not want to deal with them. We are to allow them to be part of the church. We are all the body of Christ, God’s family, if we are Christ followers.

Then Paul tells us to not **“quarrel over opinions” (vs. 1)**. The word for “quarrel” means **“judging, with the idea or purpose of passing judgment on opinions, as to which is to be preferred as the more correct.”** This is aimed at the more seasoned believer, to not get into silly discussions that are just opinions. Be above that. That would be like arguing or if someone likes hymns or contemporary Christian worship songs or both.

**Vs. 3** is the key when it comes to cutting each other slack. It is addressed to both sides of a discussion or viewpoints on non-essentials, not referred to Bible statements that there is no doubt about.

Paul says to the more mature believer not to **“despise”** the “weaker.” We are commanded to not do this. The word **“despise” means to treat someone as if they did not matter, to despise them with a strong negative attitude, to ridicule them.** Don’t mock or look down upon the one who has a different view than we do if we are more mature in our faith. We need to act like spiritual grown-ups.

In **vs. 3** Paul also tells the veggie eater (weaker brother) who does not fully understand their freedom in Christ, to not **judge people (be the judge of what others do, finding fault, judging unfairly)** who have different opinions than they do. This is also a command to not do this.

Paul knows how people can be. Cut people slack if they have a difference of opinion. Show some grace. Paul tells us in **vs. 4** that we are not to spend time judging each other. Let the Lord lead us as individuals for He is the ultimate judge and director of our life. We are talking about things not noted in Scripture.

**Point:** It is very easy to become self-righteous regardless of where we are in our spiritual growth. Let’s just be gracious. We know that the Bible is clear on certain things regarding right and wrong and gives principles to live by but in many cases, what someone does is not sinful but maybe we would not do it. Cut some slack, let God the Holy Spirit work in their lives.

**Point:** Another important point is that God wants His children to become strong in their faith, not to stay weak. Paul does not write this passage with the idea that the list maker (the weak) stays a list maker. It is not to be their lifelong situation. They are to grow in their relationship with Christ and become strong in doctrine, belief, and action. Differences of opinions, as one writer notes, need not cause division in a church but be a source for learning and enriching our relationships as we listen to others.

**2) Allow people to come to their own conclusions before the Lord.** Note **Rom. 14:5-13**. Again, we are not talking about ignoring sin. We are talking about those things, as **J. Vernon McGee says, are not “expressly forbidden in Scripture.”**

In **vss. 5-9** Paul simply tells us to show grace and allow people to come to their own decisions on things instead of us trying to make up their minds for them. We must stop micromanaging the lives of people in areas that the Bible does not even do so specifically.

We could all argue from Biblical principles that we should not do this or that if we try hard enough. I remember getting in trouble as a youth pastor because I showed a fun Disney movie to the youth at an event. I got called in because I did so. It was not a Christian film, but the old Disney movies were as clean as could be.

But someone did not like me doing it and told the pastor and I got reprimanded. Well, how silly. **First**, the person did not come to me personally to discuss it. That was wrong. **Second**, they were expecting me to follow their personal preferences. There was nothing unbiblical about what we did but we never thought of how it might affect others. It was the same guy who always said, “just walking in the Spirit.”

Anyway, back to **vss. 5-9**. Paul uses current day situations that he was in to make a point. **Vss. 5-6** talk about what day someone chooses to worship on. The church, historically, worshipped on Sunday, the Lord’s Day. But in some churches, we had Saturday night service because we were trying to reach a different group of people than we would on Sunday morning.

**Crucial:** A key is found in **vs. 5**. Instead of pointing fingers at others and what they think on things, just be sure that we are confident in our own thinking regarding issues that are open to different views. Note the phrase **“fully convinced in his own mind.”** That should help us.

This was important to Paul for he again used the imperative, a command or exhortation or request. He knows the importance of each individual coming to conclusions with God’s help. Obviously, we are to do nothing that goes against the Scriptures. He is talking about **“opinions” (vs. 1)**, differing views on things.

We are to have our convictions, be convinced, persuaded, ourselves, of what we can and cannot do. As long as our goal is to honor Christ **(vs. 6)**, we must allow differences. We are not all cookie cutter Christians who think alike on every single topic.

All we do is to glorify God and bring Him honor **(vss. 7-9)**. So, even if we have different viewpoints on things, that is okay, and we need to not spend the time judging and criticizing each other. Keep in mind that our life, from start to finish, belongs to the Lord. We must not get sidetracked over some of the things believers like to argue about. We need to treat others regardless of their maturity level as Christians.

**Point:** Again, as a reminder, if someone is sinning, then yes, we need to confront them, but that is different than attacking and going after another person because they do not see things as we do.

In **vss. 10-12** Paul once again reminds us that we are not to pass judgment on each other. God is the ultimate judge, not any person. We will all give an account before God. I am not God.

**Chuck Swindoll**, in his book, **“The Grace Awakening”**, notes some reasons why we are not qualified to judge as **vss. 10-12** remind us not to do. Let me share just three or four that Chuck mentions: He notes that we do not know all the facts. We are unable to read motives. We find it impossible to be totally objective. We live with blind spots. Most of all, we ourselves are imperfect and inconsistent.

**3) We must with our freedom in Christ also consider others.** Certain things that are not specifically stated in Scripture, that we may feel free to participate in, not everyone else necessarily will feel the same. Note **Rom. 14:13-23**. This is where **Gal. 5:13** really does come into play.

Paul tells us in **vs. 13** that instead of judging each other, both “strong” and “weak” Christians, questioning someone’s (strong or weak) spirituality by what we think, and not necessarily what the Bible says, I do need to consider that even in things that I am at ease with before God, others may not be. Thus, I am not to be a stumbling block or hindrance to them. And both groups can be a stumbling block.

The **Life Application New Testament Commentary** put it this way,

**“Both “strong” and “weak” Christians can cause their brothers and sisters to stumble…to trip or fall into sin. The strong but insensitive Christian may flaunt his or her freedom, be a harmful example, and thus offend others’ consciences. The…weak Christian may try to fence others in with petty rules and regulations, thus causing dissension. Paul wants his readers to be both strong in the faith and sensitive to others’ needs…we…need to monitor the effects of our behavior on others (see also 1 Corinthians 8:9).”**

We see this also in **vss. 20-23**. Notice that these verses tell us not to cause another to stumble, to enjoy our freedom in Christ but also that we should not do something that we are not comfortable before God doing.

My liberty, or freedom in Christ, on certain things, is not to be flaunted or bragged about but practiced quietly, with others who hold the same freedoms. To some, playing cards is sinful, to others they are not. But we choose then who we play cards with. Again, we must keep in mind that we are talking about things not expressly forbidden in Scripture.

It really is on the one who understands their freedom in Christ to not, knowingly, cause someone to stumble in their faith. If you think rock music is sinful, and I listen to it, except for crass stuff, I won’t play it in my car if you are riding in it and I know that it offends you. But when you are out of the car, oh yeah.

I am not purposely going to do something to make you slip in your relationship with God or get you to do something I know goes against your conscience. I don’t want to put an obstacle in someone’s way. Even Paul said in **vs. 14** that there were things that he knew were not wrong, but if someone else thinks they are wrong for themselves, then they are.

**Vs. 15** says that if someone is **“grieved” (to make one uneasy, to offend, to feel pained, distressed)** by what we do, without thought of others, then we are not showing the love of Christ. The idea of “destroying” in this verse does not mean that we cause them to lose their salvation. They fail to obtain, as Mounce puts it, what they expect or anticipate, and I see that in dealing with someone’s spiritual growth.

In fact, Paul is concerned enough to make sure that we do not abuse our freedom that he commands us to watch, and he is speaking to the more mature believer here, what we do so that we do not lead others astray and that they do something that goes against their conscience.

**Point:** I know we walk a fine line. Some people are offended by everything. Others are easily bothered by stuff that the Bible does not specifically say is wrong. But to them it is wrong, and they should not participate in it. And we who have matured in our faith and understand freedom must think of those who are not as far along but those who are “weaker” need to back off and quit being so easily offended.

**Point:** Some offenses are nothing more than preference. People have a preferred music styles, even in church. Others don’t go to movies, etc. And that is their decision, but Scripturally movies neutral unless we are filling our minds with garbage that affects us spiritually or causes us to sin or think sinful thoughts.

**Point:** We must use wisdom. But in some cases, people, people need to show others grace on both sides of the aisle, as Paul mentions. The mature, the growing, need to work together for the kingdom.

When we do not consider others, we are possibly being selfish or simply unaware. That is why both sides, the mature and the less so, need to show love to each other and stop judging. **Vs. 16** tells us to not let our good be spoken of as evil, or our freedom to be used in a way that hurts others.

Now, before we finish up, **vss. 17-19**, I believe, are the pivotal verses in the chapter. Instead of being overly concerned and focused on things that we can point fingers at each other about, the author here tells us that there are three key things that will make everyone’s life better, and it will help us to show concern for others.

**First**, note the word **“righteousness.”** This word is used to describe those who become followers of Christ through faith and is descriptive of God’s righteousness offered to us that makes us acceptable to Him because of the work of Jesus on the cross and resurrection.

Here, though, the word has to do with being people of integrity, people of trust, reliable. It also deals with how we think, feel and act, doing so in the right way, honoring God. This will be seen in how we interact and think of others. See **2 Tim. 3:16-17** where we read how the Word of God helps us to grow in this.

**Second** is the word **“peace.”** Though it is true we have peace with God and are no longer separated from Him if we have Christ as Lord and Savior, the peace here I believe has to do with peace between each other as believers. When we are not thinking of others, there can be tension, frustration, dissension.

But if we follow passages such as **Rom. 12:18** and **Col. 3:12-17**, we can also have peace with each other. When we forgive, are kind, are willing to bear with each other, we can be at peace.

The **third** word noted in this verse is the word is **“joy.”** Joy is not based on circumstances but on the realization that God is in control, and we can rest in Him in our relationship. This joy also is seen in the fact that as we live with each other, we consider others and enjoy our freedom in Christ that is proper and non-problematic. If we serve Christ with integrity, peace and joy, God is glorified, and others will see our desire to do what is right and be concerned for others.

These ways of living are only possible if we allow the Holy Spirit to lead our life. Our goal is to help each other grow in our faith but not try to pin someone in a corner to agree with our freedoms. But we are to grow to the point where we can accept the fact that we may differ on opinions regarding certain things while at the same time being considerate of each other.