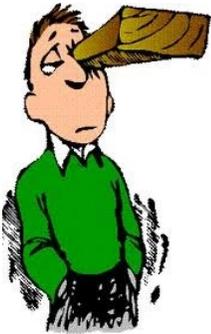


WHAT CAN WE EAT?
ANSWERS ABOUT LIBERTY (PART 3)
ROMANS 14:10-12

There are many things that can destroy the unity of the church. Among the most effective tools that Satan uses is the tool of hypocritical pride that takes the form of judgmentalism. Whenever we think we are superior to others in the body — that we have attained to something they have not and that they are beneath us so that we have a right to criticize and demean them, we are well on the way to destroying the unity of the church and the church itself.

Jesus Himself addressed this early in His ministry when He warned,

“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.” (Matthew 7:1-5)



We refer to these men as Mr. Log and Mr. Speck. They demonstrate that it is easy to sit in judgment of others while ignoring the condition of our own hearts. We make such judgments to our own detriment — and to the detriment of the church.

So, in Romans 14, Paul continues the theme of everyday exhortations for the church body that will preserve the body and help it function well. Specifically, he addresses liberty issues and our use of them: how can we joyfully exercise our freedoms in a way that maintains spiritual unity in the church? That’s Paul’s concern in Romans 14, which we have summarized this way:

USE YOUR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS AS A MEANS OF PRESERVING THE CORPORATE UNITY OF THE BODY.

Having given five instructions for the use of our liberties in vv. 1-9, Paul returns to the principle of God as Judge from v. 4 with **four reminders** in vv. 10-12 to keep us from judgmentalism and hypocrisy in the church.

1. To Keep From Judgmentalism Remember **YOUR** Position (v. 10a)
2. To Keep From Judgmentalism Remember **RELATIONSHIPS** (v. 10a)
3. To Keep From Judgmentalism Remember God’s **JUDGMENT** (v. 10b- 11)
 - ✓ There is a judgment of **BELIEVERS** — He will give **REWARDS** (v. 10b)
 - ✓ There is a judgment of **UNBELIEVERS** — He will be **RIGHTEOUS** (v. 11)
4. To Keep From Judgmentalism Remember God’s **GRACE** (v. 12)

1. To Keep From Judgmentalism Remember **YOUR** Position (v. 10a)

- Throughout this passage, Paul makes a series of declarative statements about the decisions that other people make (e.g., vv. 2, 5a), how we are to relate to those people (vv. 1, 3), and how we are to make decisions about issues of liberty (vv. 5b, 6).
- But in verses 4 and 10, Paul doesn't make statements. He asks questions. Those questions are designed to invite self-examination. Interestingly, they are the only questions in this chapter, and they all are about the issue of judgmentalism and the tendency of the heart to be judgmental and critical.
- In the very first clause, Paul is emphatic in addressing his readers — **but you**... Just as in v. 4, the tone is something like, "Who do you think you are?..." On what basis have *you* taken up position as judge?
 - ✓ This emphasis on the pronoun **you** is even more striking when we observe that in the previous verses he has been using the first person plural pronoun — **we** and **us** (vv. 7-8).
 - ✓ What he is doing is gentle and subtle, but it's a mild form of accusation. He is pointing the finger and rebuking the readers and inviting them to remember their own position before the Lord. Has He left them the right to evaluate, judge, and execute judgment against others? He has not.
 - ✓ Notice that he again is addressing both the weak and the strong believers in the same way, with the same critique. As we've seen throughout the passage, while their decisions and actions are different, they are prone to having similar ungodly attitudes.
 - ✓ So whether weak (having a conscience that is particularly sensitive) or strong (having a conscience that can joyfully engage in the liberties given through Christ), Paul invites self-examination of both to determine if there is any spirit of judgmentalism.
- I say that he is inviting self-examination about judgmentalism because the questions he asks are **why do you judge?** and **why do you regard with contempt?** The question **why?** invites self-examination...
 - ✓ To **judge** is probably addressed to the weaker brother (note parallel in v. 3). To judge him is to evaluate his actions and motives. Even worse, it is to assume a position we don't have — and specifically, it is to assume the position that we are master and authoritative over that person; it says, "I'm God in your life." In its worst form, it attempts to usurp God's authority.
 - ✓ One person has defined judgmentalism as "a critical and censorious spirit that judges everyone and everything, seeking to run others down." [Hughes] That's correct. But it's even worse: it is an attempt to run down others and at the same time exalt myself to the position of deity.
 - ✓ The question about **regarding others with contempt** is probably for the strong (same language in v. 3); it is similar to judging — it has the idea of looking down on others because one believes he is superior and has higher inherent value. This one disdains and is pridefully contemptuous of others.

- Whether we can eat meat or whether we believe it is best not to eat meat, we should not criticize, condemn, ridicule, or mock the decisions and actions of others. They aren't sinning and they can honor God with their decision. We have no right to examine them. Cf. **Lk. 6:37**.
 - ✓ But we *do* have a responsibility to examine and evaluate ourselves: am I judging? Am I cultivating and condoning a critical spirit?
 - ✓ Further, Paul would have us remember that we have no right to judge others, *but* we do have a responsibility to **accept** the brothers who are different from us (even **weak**, v. 1).

2. To Keep From Judgmentalism Remember **RELATIONSHIPS** (v. 10a)

- I've intentionally skipped over a couple of words in the two questions in v. 10 — **brother**.
 - ✓ The word is common in the Epistles (184x), with Paul (133x), and even Romans (e.g., **1:13**; 7:1, 4; **8:12**, 29; **10:1**).
 - ✓ What is notable is that when Paul moved to the application section of Romans, he immediately used the word **brethren** (**12:1**). And then he doesn't use it again until this verse, though he uses it 5x in this chapter (vv. 10 [2x], 13, 15, 21).
 - ✓ Why that emphasis on brotherhood? Because Paul wants the readers to remember that we have a relationship with one another that demands we treat each other in particular ways. We are not just random, anonymous acquaintances. We are **brothers**. And being brothers demands we relate to one another in a particular way. If we are brothers, we are equals. We are not father and son, master and slave, ruler and ruled, or even husband and wife. We have equal position and equal responsibility. Neither is inherently superior or inferior. We have the same position before the Lord because of our position in Christ (Gal. 3:28).
- Being brothers, we love one another (**Jn. 13:34-35**). We have care for one another. We have affinity for one another. We embrace one another. And we accept one another (14:1; **15:7**).
- When we love one another, that also means that we have no right to look down on, demean, or cast doubt about the spiritual integrity of a fellow brother — *especially* if he is not sinning.
 - ✓ John Calvin said, "If the Lord has ordained among us a society of brothers, equality must be observed. Anyone, therefore, who assumes the part of a judge is behaving insolently."
 - ✓ When we become judgmental, we have forgotten this key tenet: "he's my brother; she's my sister; I have no authority to rule and condemn but I do have a responsibility to love and care."
 - ✓ If that's true, why are we critical and judgmental? We have forgotten verses like these, and...

“We don’t value the word enough, and we don’t love people enough. It’s a heart problem—our hearts are not sufficiently fired by the wonder of God’s mercies and the majesty of Jesus Christ and our hearts are not sufficiently full of love and compassion for those around us.” [Marshal and Payne, *The Vine Project*, 113.]

- ✓ If we want to keep from judgmentalism, we need to consciously remember our brotherhood and the same position we have with one another before the Lord, which leads to the next reminder:

3. To Keep From Judgmentalism Remember God’s JUDGMENT (v. 10b- 11)

• There is a judgment of BELIEVERS — He will give REWARDS (v. 10b)

- ✓ At the beginning of v. 10, Paul changed to the second person plural pronoun — **you**; now he reverts back to the first person, **we**, to again include himself in the discussion and to emphasize “all.”
- ✓ The word **for** (v. 10b) introduces the reason we should not judge one another. Why not?
- ✓ **We will all stand before the judgment seat of God.** There *is* a judgment coming and not only are we not the ones who will carry out the judgment, but we will be among those who are judged.
- ✓ At this point, you might say, “Believers? Believers are going to be judged?” Yes. In fact, Paul is emphatic about it — he not only changes back to the first person pronoun, **we** (including himself among those who will be judged), but he also uses the inclusive adjective **all**. No one will escape judgment. Every believer will face judgment.
 - It is notable that the word that Paul uses for the judgment is, “Bema” — this is one of only 2x Paul uses the word (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10, though that passage is parallel to 1 Cor. 3:10-15).
 - Because we are in Christ Jesus, there is no more condemnation from God; Christ took that (8:1).
 - However, at the *Bema* seat, the believer’s life of service for Christ *will* be evaluated and we will be **recompensed** (rewarded) according to those deeds: if the deeds are good and worthwhile, there will be blessing and gifts; if the deeds are bad and worthless, there will be lack of gifts.
 - Hear this: the *Bema* is not an evaluation of your salvation (if you have trusted Christ, you are possessed by Him and cannot be dispossessed, though you may lose some reward, (1 Cor. 3:15), but it *is* an evaluation of the value of our lives, including our motives (1 Cor. 4:4-5).
 - Because there is an examination coming from the Lord, we want everything we do to be pleasing to Him (2 Cor. 5:9).
- ✓ With this statement there is a two-fold emphasis:
 - *There is a reward coming* and we want to work for it. Is it wrong to be motivated by reward? No. The Lord offers that motive and comfort regularly (1 Cor. 9:24; cf. also Gal. 6:9; 2 Tim. 4:8).
 - *There is a reward coming* and we don’t want to lose it (1 Cor. 9:27; cf. also 1 Cor. 4:5).
 - Paul uses this coming judgment as a motive to keep us 1) from judging others; 2) to keep us working and laboring, watching over our own hearts and actions.

• There is a judgment of UNBELIEVERS — He will be RIGHTEOUS (v. 11)

- ✓ In verse 11, Paul quotes from Isaiah 45:23.
 - Context of that passage: The quotation is given in a section of Isaiah where God is predicting that Cyrus would release the Jewish exiles in Babylon, 150 years before Cyrus took that action (and almost that long before he was known by name). Specifically, this statement was made in a cluster of verses (20-22) where God appeals to Gentiles to repent from worshipping idols and trust and worship Him, since eventually they would indeed recognize His sovereignty (and it is better to do it on earth than later in Hell when there is no joy or hope in the acknowledgment).
 - Immediately preceding the statement in v. 23, God says, “I am God, and there is no other” (v. 22), emphasizing His right to authoritatively judge all men. In fact, because He is God, He *must* judge everyone in all history. He could not be a righteous God without that judgment.
 - You might have noticed that ***As I live*** is not part of Is. 45:23. However, it is regularly a part of similar prophecies (including Is. 49:18); Paul is likely simply combining the two prophecies to emphasize the right for God to serve as Judge of all mankind. God speaks according to His life — He is making a promise or declaration according to His own authority and position as the eternal God, the One who is alive and has always been alive (emphasizing His exalted position over every created, finite being). He has a right to judge that no one else has.
- ✓ This same passage is also quoted by Paul in Phil. 2:10, the culmination to the *kenosis* of Christ. Christ was humbled in His advent but is and will be exalted in Heaven.
- ✓ The point of all these passages is that at some point, every person everywhere will affirm that Christ and God the Father are sovereign God; repentance now keeps them from acknowledging it from Hell later, when they will be unable to have their condition altered. GOSPEL: 2:3-4; 12:19-21.
- ✓ With this statement, Paul subtly reminds us that we can trust God to rightly evaluate and judge everyone’s actions; we do not need to concern ourselves with judgment of issues of liberty; the Lord will rightly carry out that judgment (it is not our place).
- ✓ We tend to be judgmental because we are afraid that things won’t be made right, that wrongs will persist and will escape God’s notice. This is Paul’s reminder that we can rest when we are anxious about unrighteous wrongs against us and others. God sees and He will judge.

4. To Keep From Judgmentalism Remember God’s GRACE (v. 12)

- Verse 12 serves as a summary statement of what Paul wrote in vv. 4, 10-11. While it cannot be true linguistically, someone has noted that every word/phrase in the verse is emphatic:
 - ✓ ***So then*** introduces the logical conclusion about God’s judgment (and ours).
 - ✓ ***Each one*** emphasizes the universality of the judgment of God.
 - ✓ ***Of us*** makes it personal — it’s not just our neighbor facing judgment; it’s me. *I* will be judged.

- ✓ **Will give an account** is a financial term for record keeping and it suggests that there is nothing that will escape notice; everything about what we do, think, and desire will be evaluated.
 - ✓ **To God** reiterates that God alone is judge and worthy to judge. Our accountability is not to anyone else except God who fully knows the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
 - ✓ Those statements combine to a sobering and humbling consideration for us. *I will face that.*
- As you consider these verses, also remember Paul's first mention of this judgment in this section: **v. 4.**
 - ✓ Yes, we will all face judgment, but notice what he says at the end for the believer: **he will stand.**
 - ✓ That's no small statement because when men were introduced to God and saw even the tiniest glimpse of His glory, they fell down (Ex. 3:5; Job. 42:5-6; Is. 6:5; **Mt. 17:6**; **Acts 9:3-4**; Rev. 1:17).
 - ✓ The unbeliever is completely incapable of standing before God (**Ps. 1:5**).
 - ✓ But the believer — weak or strong — *will* stand before God — he will not be destroyed.
 - ✓ He will not stand because of any inherent worthiness; he will stand because of God's grace that **is able to make him stand.** God is sufficient to make you stand in Christ's righteousness before Him.
 - When you and I are tempted to judgmentalism and a critical spirit (and a proud heart that looks down at others), we must remember that we have only one thing enabling us to stand before God: His grace.
 - We have nothing else but His grace — we only contribute our sin to our salvation — but when we have His grace we have everything we need. And that will help keep us from judgmentalism.

PRAYER

BENEDICTION: **1 Corinthians 11:33-36**