

# (Romans) Romans 13:11-15:2

by Zac Poonen

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*We must live with the expectation of Christ's return, remain fervent in love, and accept others in the church who have different views from ourselves.*

**Duration:** 46:34

**Scripture:** Romans 12:10-13

**Topics:** "Judging Others", "Christian Unity"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not judging others and leaving judgment to God. He highlights that God will stand at the judgment seat of Christ and everyone will give an account of themselves to God. The speaker also discusses the idea of unity versus uniformity in the body of Christ, emphasizing that God has made people different and allows for different convictions. He uses the example of Jewish Christians who observed the Sabbath and emphasizes that they are responsible to God, not to others. The sermon concludes with a reminder to wake up from spiritual slumber and recognize that salvation is nearer than when they first believed.

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## Transcript

We'll turn today to Romans chapter 13 and verse 11. In the previous verse, in our last study, we were considering the importance of love. Earlier on in chapter 12, we'd spoken about being devoted to our fellow believers in love, verse 10 of chapter 12.

And in chapter 13, verses 8 to 10, he speaks about loving everyone, loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. And then, he speaks in that connection of not taking revenge, in chapter 12, verse 19, giving honor to people whom honor is dear, etc., chapter 13, verse 7, and never doing anything wrong to your neighbor, verse 10. And then it says in verse 11, this is what we must do.

Knowing the time, particularly since we know the time in which we are living, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from your sleep. It is time for you to wake up from your sleep. For now, salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

What does that mean? Salvation has got three tenses. Past tense, present tense, future tense. Past tense, we have been saved from the wrath of God.

We saw that in Romans chapter 5. Saved from wrath. Already the judgment of God, penalty of sin, sense of guilt is all gone. Then, secondly, present tense, we shall be saved day by day, Romans 5.10, by the life of Jesus from the power of sin in our life.

That's the second salvation. And the third salvation is future, mentioned here in chapter 13, verse 11. Our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

That means the coming of Christ is drawing near. That's how they lived. They did not know that it would take another 1900 years at least, but they lived in the daily expectancy of Christ coming soon.

That's how we're supposed to live. And if Paul could say that in the first century, can you imagine how much more we should be living with that expectation burning in our hearts in this 20th century? Our salvation now is nearer to us than when we believed. And therefore, what shall we do? We got to remain fervent in love, honor people, and always act in love towards everybody.

Never do any wrong to another person. Verse 12, he says, the night is almost gone, the day is at hand. Remember, this is written 1900 years ago, more than 1900 years ago.

What does he say? The night is almost gone, the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. It's amazing how these early Christians lived expecting Christ to come.

And that spurred them on to even greater devotion. We want to do what's right, we want to love others, even if Christ takes another 2000 years to come. But all the more, when we realize He's coming soon and we don't have much time, if I wait, I may not get the opportunity to show love to that person.

If I wait, I may not get the opportunity to tell him that God loves him, that Christ died for him. The coming of the Lord is near. Let's use every opportunity to show love to other people.

Especially to show them love by giving them the gospel. That's the greatest manifestation of love. We can show to a person that, to show him that Christ loved him, that he can be saved.

So, let us do this, let us lay aside the deeds of darkness, it says in verse 12. Because we're going into the day, we're moving towards the day, the night is almost gone. Is there still some deed of darkness in your life? Something that cannot bear the light of that day? Something that cannot bear the light of the judgment seat of Christ? This is a good verse for us to examine our lives, to see if there's anything in our life that we will feel ashamed of when Christ comes again and we stand at the judgment seat of Christ.

The Bible says we will all stand at the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of our life concerning everything that we did in our bodies. If you just took that one exhortation, it would change your whole life. You would get rid of every deed of darkness, as in when you get light on it in your own body.

And it says, put on the armor of light. It's interesting that light is called an armor. Do you know that light protects you from the attacks of Satan? If you decide, you'll always speak the truth and you'll walk in the light and you'll never allow any darkness to come into your life.

You'll never have any hatred towards another human being in your life. You're going to live in the light. That light becomes like an armor.

Satan cannot touch you. Satan cannot touch you. Satan can touch and attack only those who are walking in darkness.

So let us put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing, drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, sensuality, strife, jealousy, but ask the Lord Jesus Christ to help you. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Here, evil is considered like a dress. He says, if you're walking in the day, right in the bright light where other people are watching you, you wouldn't do all these wicked sins. Most sins are committed in secret.

Most of the sins you're ashamed of, you commit in secret. You commit in the darkness. You commit behind closed doors without anybody watching you.

But he says, we're not children of darkness. Why do you live in the darkness? You're children of the day. And the Holy Spirit has come to get rid of all darkness from our lives.

Therefore, don't do anything that you would be ashamed to do in the light, especially in the light of the judgment seat of Christ. So what's the solution? It says here, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is quite an expression.

It's not found anywhere else in Scripture. But it's an amazing expression. It's not just an exhortation saying, go around and do good.

Try and be better. Paul doesn't give exhortations like that saying try and be better. No, he says you can never be better.

Do you know what you need to do? You need to put on the Lord Jesus Christ to cover the nakedness of your self-life, which is so corrupt. See, we'll be able to get rid of our self-life completely only when Christ comes again. We're never going to get rid of it before that.

You can be sure of this. But we can be clothed with Christ and increasingly partake of the nature of Christ as long as we are on this earth. That is the way of sanctification.

Progressive sanctification increasingly becoming like Christ. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and don't make any provision for the flesh with its regard to its lusts. Don't make any provision for the flesh means, if you're trying to conquer smoking, don't keep cigarettes in your table drawer and try to conquer it.

Don't walk into shops which sell pornographic literature and say, I'm going to conquer. The Jesus taught us to pray, lead us not into temptation. Don't even go by someplace where there's temptation.

Don't look at a cinema poster if that can cause you to lust. There's no need for you to know what those posters are like. You know beforehand they are filthy.

Why do you need to look at it to find out if it's filthy? Don't make any provision for the flesh. Jesus taught us not only to avoid sin, but to pray that God would not even lead us into temptation. Temptation has come at the gate.

Turn him away from there itself. Don't wait till he comes to the front door. Don't make any provision for the flesh or its lusts.

Then in chapter 14 he says about accepting others in the church who have different view from yourself. I believe this is a very very important area because a person or a church that does not have place for the practical application of Romans 14 in their life or in their church life will end up as a cultist and the church will become a cult. The way to be saved from cultism, one very important way, is by having a place for Romans chapter 14 in your life.

It's not the only way, but it's certainly a very important way because one preeminent and predominant mark of cultists is that they think they are the only ones whom God has accepted and they think their doctrines are the only ones which are perfectly pure and of course everybody else is wrong. Every cult in the world says that. They quote the Bible and say, well, for 20 centuries everybody has been in darkness, but finally God has given us the light and our leader got light which was hidden for 20 centuries.

Whenever you hear words like that you can be pretty sure you are close to a cult. The Bible says we got to accept believers who have slightly different doctrines from ours in non-essential issues. We are not talking about the deity of Christ, we are not talking about the humanity of Christ, we are not talking about the work of Christ on the cross or Jesus Christ being the only way of salvation, we are not talking about his resurrection.

These are fundamental doctrines, the person and work of Christ. But there are so many other doctrines in Christianity which are important, some more important than others, but they are not as fundamental to salvation. For example, water baptism.

It's a very important commandment that Jesus commanded and we cannot ignore it. But we have to admit with all its importance it's not necessary for salvation. Salvation is not by water baptism.

Salvation is by repentance and faith in Christ. And a person who is not water baptized can still be a believer. And if God has accepted him, we've got no right to reject him.

Except Romans 14.1, the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on him. He's talking here about eating food offered to the idols. Some people do it and some people don't do it.

He says that's not the basis of our acceptance before God. And we could apply that to many, many other areas. Let's learn to be warm towards other believers and to accept every single one whom God has accepted.

Let's turn today to Romans 14.1. We were considering this verse a little bit in our last study that we are to accept a brother or a sister who is weak in faith. Not everybody has been given the same measure of faith. There is faith for salvation, which all believers have.

But then, beyond that, there are many other things in the Christian life for which not all have the same measure of faith. And very often Christians can be very dogmatic and stubborn and proud and evil towards other believers who don't see eye to eye with them in every doctrine. And Romans 14 is especially written for such believers.

So if you fall into that category, Romans 14 is a chapter you really need to study and read and obey. And he takes the example of one man who's got faith that he may eat all things, but another who's weak eats vegetables only. This is not essentially speaking about vegetarians and non-vegetarians.

It's because in those days all the meat that was available in the market in those days was meat that had been offered to idols in the temples. And so you couldn't get any meat except meat offered to idols. So if you had a conscience about that, about eating meat offered to idols, you would have to be a vegetarian all your life.

That was the choice. There was no other choice. And so a lot of Christians said, well, we don't believe that idols are anything.

They're just a block of wood shaped like a man or something like that. And just because the meat was hung up in front of that piece of wood, it doesn't do any harm to me. There are no idols in any case.

There's only one God, one Lord Jesus Christ. So they had that faith, and they would buy meat and eat it. But a lot of other believers who had a more sensitive conscience on that, they would be disturbed.

They wouldn't eat it. And they would be stumbled by these other people eating it. And so this is the conflict Paul is speaking of.

Now you realize that whether you're a vegetarian or non-vegetarian, it's got nothing to do with your salvation. And whether you eat meat or not eat meat, don't eat meat also, it doesn't make any difference. Now the danger here is that the one who eats can look down on this other fellow and say, you don't have faith.

That idol is only a block of wood. And it says here in verse 3, let not the one who eats regard with contempt. Verse 3, the one who does not eat.

At the same time, there was a problem the other way too, that the one who did not eat would think he is a holier person than the one who is eating. And so it says to him, let not the one who eats, who does not eat rather, judge the one who eats. Because God has accepted him.

Okay, that chap eats meat offered to idols. But God has accepted him. He is a child of God.

Give him that freedom. Who are you to judge the servant of another? This is the important question. See, that man is not your servant.

It's like if you see someone who is a servant and working in somebody else's house, whether he does his job properly or not is really none of your business. He's got a master, and the master will decide whether to accept him or not. To his own master, verse 4, he stands or falls.

They are not responsible to you. They are responsible to their master. And God is their master.

And like the Living Bible says, let the Lord tell them whether they are right or wrong. And if God has accepted them, why should that bother you? And God is able to make them do what He wants them to do, not what you want them to do. See, the mark of cultists and cultistic believers is this, that they want everybody to be like them.

They don't seek for unity. They seek for uniformity. You know the difference between unity and uniformity? In our human body, there's perfect unity.

Have you seen a man playing a piano? All his ten fingers, his eyes, his ears, his feet are all working in coordination. That's unity. But the fingers are not all the same size.

And his toes certainly don't look like his fingers. And his eyes and ears all look different. But there's unity.

Uniformity is what you see in a military parade. Everybody wearing the same dress, standing in the same line, with the same type of rifle. Or children in a school, all dressed in the same way.

The school uniform, it looks nice. But that's not what God wants in the body of Christ. He doesn't want everybody to be the same.

He wants us to be different, but having the same life within us. The life of Christ. And this is the theme of Romans 14.

God has made people different. He's even allowed people to have different convictions on certain things from yours. And thereby, He tests whether you can humble yourself and accept that brother.

Why do you judge him? God is able to make him stand. He takes another area. Verse 5. And that's the matter of the Sabbath.

See, those days there were some Jewish Christians who for years and years and years and years had been Jews and keeping the Sabbath. They would not eat leavened bread and they wouldn't do any work on Saturdays. And then they got born again.

And you know how difficult it is to get rid of old habits? Well, they just didn't get rid of those old habits. They still felt we must keep Saturday without doing any work. We mustn't play.

We mustn't eat leavened bread. We mustn't even light a fire. So they regarded that day as special in the week.

Another person who's a Gentile who never kept the Sabbath in his life in any case, he says, well, Christ has made every day a Sabbath for me. Monday is a Sabbath and Sunday is a Sabbath and Tuesday is a Sabbath. I'm in the rest of God every day.

What's the answer? Which of these two fellows is right? Here's a wonderful word, which if you can accept it, it will liberate you. Verse 5, the last part. Let everybody be fully convinced in his own mind.

That's the answer. Are you convinced in your own mind about keeping the Sabbath? Go ahead and keep it. But don't force another person to keep it.

It's when you force another person to keep it that you become a cultist. Let him be convinced in his own mind. He keeps the Sabbath every day.

Now, there's nothing wrong in your deciding to say, okay, for me Sunday is a Sabbath day and I'm not going to do a lot of things on Sunday which I do on other days. Well, that's fine. It says in verse 6, He who observes the day observes it for the Lord.

What is the reason why you want to spend one day in a week specially? It's because you want to honor God and spend time reading His Word and Christian books. Very good. Go right ahead.

But don't judge the other fellow who doesn't keep it. Don't force him to keep what you're keeping. That's the point.

Here's somebody who eats meat he's eating for the Lord. He gives thanks to God and eats that meat offered to idols. He says, Lord, You created this meat.

I pray that You'll bless it. I don't believe anything has happened to this meat just because it was hung before a piece of wood and I pray You'll bless it and I can eat it. He's giving thanks to God.

Praise the Lord. Accept Him even if you don't agree with Him. And the one who doesn't eat, he's also for the Lord's sake he's not eating.

He's got a conscience. And he also gives thanks to God and eats his vegetables. I say, what difference does it make? And now we could extend this.

It's not just a question of Sabbath or meat offered to idols. Today, these are not the issues that divide Christians. In fact, hardly anybody is divided by these issues.

But the principle applies to the hundred and one things or shall I say a thousand and one things that divide Christians. Silly, petty matters on which you're perfectly right to have your own conviction. But be convinced in your own mind and don't force it on another person.

Do you have to get up at six o'clock in the morning and read the Bible to be spiritual? Some people think so. Well, that may be a good habit. But when what is a good discipline in your life, you impose it on another, it becomes legalism.

You build a cult. Another person may read it a little later. So, there are so many areas like this.

Something so important as I said like water baptism. A very important commandment. Do you believe that's essential for salvation? The Bible doesn't teach so.

If it's not essential for salvation, you cannot force a person to do it just because you know it's right. Okay, your faith has understood it. Another person hasn't understood it.

We could apply this to sisters wearing ornaments. Okay, you have a conviction. Good.

Keep it. Here's another sister who still doesn't have that conviction. What are you going to do? Reject her whom God has accepted? Unless you believe that removal of ornaments is essential for salvation.

I've never met anyone who believes that. But they still will reject someone whom God has accepted. You don't have to change your conviction.

Your conviction may be 100% scriptural. But what the Lord is saying is accept that other person whose convictions are different. They have a different pattern of worship in their church service.

You have a different one. Is that essential for salvation? If not, accept them. He's not saying you should go and join that church.

You stay where you are. Hold your conviction. But let your heart be large enough to receive that other person whom God has accepted.

Perhaps he's a more spiritual believer than you are. Despite his doctrines being wrong in one or two areas. That's humility.

And that's the essential thing. Don't look down with contempt on another person. Don't despise another person.

Don't judge another person. Because God has accepted him. That's the fundamental principle.

The last part of verse 3. God has accepted him. So, the question that I need to ask in my fellowship and relationship with other believers is this. Has God accepted him? I will accept him.

There is a difference between those we can accept and fellowship with and those we work together with. Now, when there are serious differences of doctrine in non-essentials, it still may not be possible to work together but to use an example, if one believer believes that all children must be baptized and another believer believes that only born-again believers must be baptized, how in the world will they work together in one church? There will be constant clashes. But they may both be born again.

And because of these differences of doctrine, we have different groups, different denominations, different churches. There is nothing wrong in that. The wrong is when these believers in different groups don't love one another.

Jesus never said all men will know you are my disciples when you all sit in one church building. That's not what he said. He said, all men will know you are my disciples when you love one another even if you go to different places to me.

So, this is the point of Romans 14. So, I hope you understand what I've been trying to say. That if you don't accept Romans 14 in your life, you are going to be a cultist and your church will be a cult.

Let's learn to accept those who have different views and convictions from us in non-essentials. Let's turn to Romans chapter 14 once again. We were considering the importance of this chapter to deliver us from a cultistic attitude towards other believers.

An exclusive pharisaical attitude towards believers who don't see eye to eye with us on non-fundamental, non-essential doctrines. And I mentioned in our last study that the essential doctrines had to deal with the person and the work of Jesus Christ. We need to know what are essential.

In other words, what is essential for God to accept a person? Romans 14, 3. On what basis does God accept us? You got to be clear on that. Romans 14, verse 3. That and that alone is what we need to consider as essential doctrine. What are essential doctrines? Those that are essential for God to accept us as His children.

Beyond that, we can have many, many circles of doctrines that are very important, important, and not so important. Different circles. We may not be able to work together with all believers because of differing convictions.

We may not gather together every week with believers of differing convictions. That doesn't matter. We are to love one another.

We are to accept one another. We must fellowship with one another. This is what Romans 14 is all about.

He is not saying that we must all have the same convictions on differing doctrines. We could ask this question. Why has God allowed believers to have differing opinions on water baptism, on the subject of speaking in tongues, on the subject of wearing ornaments, even on the subject of the Sabbath and what

we should do on a Sunday and what we cannot do on a Sunday.

Why has God not made these things so plain? I myself used to wonder about this. That if God had only put one verse in the Bible saying this is the only right type of baptism, that would have solved many problems, wouldn't you think? Or that everybody should speak in tongues or nobody should speak in tongues. If one verse was like that in the Bible, it would have solved the problem.

But God who could see the future and knew what would happen in 2000 years of Christianity still decided not to put such verses. And I've come to see a reason for that. You know, it's very easy to love somebody when you see eye to eye with him.

The test of your love is when you don't see eye to eye with him. And I believe God has purposely allowed certain areas of doctrine, non-essential doctrine, to be vague so that among his people there will be people with different opinions. And then the love of each person is tested more than if everybody saw eye to eye with you.

Now, the test of that is this. If you can love only the people in your own church, that isn't a great thing. But if you can love people who differ from you but whom God has accepted, then you can say you've gone to maturity.

And so we see here Romans 14 is dealing with that issue. And he says in verse 7, ultimately, remember, each person is a servant of God. None of us lives for himself.

No one dies for himself. Verse 8, If we live, we live for the Lord. If we die, we die for the Lord.

Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. And that other person is the Lord's. That's the point.

He's not your servant. And you're not his servant either. And the question he asks earlier on in verse 4 is what comes back here.

Think of it in an earthly way. Here is a neighbor of yours who's got a servant who's not doing a good job now. He's maybe not sweeping the floor properly or not cooking your neighbor's food properly.

How does that bother you? I mean, you're not paying him. He's working for your neighbor. If your neighbor is happy with him, why should it bother you? Your neighbor says, well, that's good enough for me if he sweeps the floor like this or if he cooks the food like this.

Why do we have to judge him? Now, very often, in that area, we know very clearly we would not go poking our nose into our neighbor's servant's affairs. But we don't recognize that every believer, even those other believers in your church, are also God's servants. They're not yours.

Let God deal with them. And to husbands and wives, I would say, you're not even supposed to judge your wife or your husband. They have to live before God.

You can share your convictions with them, perhaps something that's wrong you can point out, but leave it to that person to come to that conviction yourself, to herself or himself. Supposing you as a husband are absolutely convinced that women should not wear ornaments, but your wife is not convinced about it and she wears it. What are you going to do? Are you going to have a clash at home? Well, I'll tell you one thing, God won't support you in that clash.

Blessed are the peacemakers for they are the sons of God. And you're proving yourself to be a son of the devil there. By creating a problem over what you think is a very important issue.

The question is only one thing. Has God accepted your wife? Sure. And if she doesn't have a conviction on that, leave it.

Till she has a conviction. In any case, if she does something merely to please you, it'll be a dead work. So why get her to do a dead work? It's not done out of conviction before God.

It's done out of a desire to please man. God doesn't want that. I'm just taking one example.

It could have application in many, many, many areas. Hundreds of areas. We need to give freedom to one another.

Your view is not always right. We must acknowledge that we are human beings. We are faulty.

When we are young and immature and zealous, we think we are right. But as we grow older and get to know God better, we realize that we make so many mistakes as human beings. And if you walk with God, you'll be a humble person.

And you'll recognize the fact that others have different convictions. He lives unto God. I'm happy about that.

Let me stir him to be zealous in serving God, not just to follow me in some petty little doctrine. Christ died, it says here, in verse 9, and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living. So why do you judge your brother? Why do you regard your brother with contempt? These are the two things.

Judging, regarding with contempt. Ultimately, he says, whose judgment seat is he going to stand before? Are you going to be on the throne when he's judged? No. Jesus is going to sit on that throne.

And you and that brother are both going to stand in front of that throne. You're going to be judged and he's going to be judged. Why not leave the Lord to do his business of judging? Why do you anticipate that judgment? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

And what Paul is saying here, what the Holy Spirit is saying, is be patient. You know, this is one characteristic of man. We judge people before God judges them.

The Bible says, it's appointed unto men once to die, and after this, the judgment. So my question is, when does God judge a man, according to that verse? After he is dead. When do you judge people? Long before their death.

You can't bear to wait. You've got to pass judgment immediately. Think of the patience of God.

He waits until a man dies because he says, he may change before he dies. Why should I judge him earlier? Okay, he's a bad man now, but he may change. He may change next year.

He may change ten years from now. I'll wait. But we can't wait.

That's one mark of the race of Adam. We are so thoroughly impatient. We think everybody should get the conviction we have immediately.

Let's learn to be like God. That's all that Romans 14 is about. God doesn't look down on anyone.

Don't look down on anyone. God doesn't judge anyone until the man's dead. You wait.

And even after he's dead, he doesn't ask us to judge him. He'll do that. And he doesn't need any help from us, I'll tell you that.

So, leave that to God. He's going to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and so are you. The Lord says in verse 11, As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me and every tongue will give praise to God.

That's for certain. In that final day, everyone, verse 12, is going to give an account of himself to God. So if that brother of yours or sister of yours has done something wrong, leave it to God to deal with him.

He's well able to do it. Therefore, what's the conclusion? Verse 13. Let us not judge one another anymore.

Just think if you took that one verse alone, what a tremendous deliverance will come into your life. You know, I'm convinced after watching believers for 40 years, as a born-again Christian myself, I've discovered one thing. That one of the main reasons why believers do not grow spiritually is because they judge so many other people instead of judging themselves.

And the devil has really done a master work here among believers by making them judge others because when you concentrate on judging others, you don't judge yourself. And then you never grow spiritually. You remain in the same condition year after year.

So let's take this verse seriously. Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore. Can you take it seriously from today? It will bring a great deliverance in your life and spiritual progress too.

You'll probably grow more in the next six months than you've grown in all your life so far. If you just take this one verse, don't judge others. But rather, if you want to do something, determine this.

Don't put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. Don't do anything yourself. In other words, judge yourself to see whether there's something in your life which is a stumbling block or an obstacle to that fellow believer.

Get rid of that. That's your only calling. And leave his judgment to God.

Paul says, as far as my conviction is concerned, I'll tell you what. I believe there's nothing unclean. Something hung before an idol is not unclean for me.

But if someone thinks it's unclean, to him it is unclean. That's the point. I'm not here to judge that other person.

I don't think it's unclean. But if he thinks it is, it's unclean to him. And now supposing you think it's clean and you eat food and you hurt your brother or you eat food or you do anything that hurts your brother.

You're no longer walking according to love. Just for the sake of food, don't destroy a person for whom Christ died. He says, be considerate of the feelings of others.

Don't do something in front of them that will offend them. This is Christianity. Don't do anything which may be good to you.

Let it not be spoken of as evil by that other person. Consideration for others is one of the fundamental laws of the body of Christ. A care is something I do going to offend or hurt that person.

Let me never do it. Let me not judge him and let me not do anything that will cause offense. Follow these laws and you can be a blessing in the body of Christ.

Let's turn today to Romans chapter 14 and verse 17. We've been considering in our last few studies the importance of this chapter to deliver us from exclusivism, cultism, legalism, phariseeism and from destroying our own spiritual growth. What does Romans 14 basically deal with? I could sum it up in what's mentioned in chapter 15 and verse 7. Accept one another just as Christ accepted us for the glory of God.

Don't wait until he's got all his doctrines straightened out before you accept him, until he agrees with you. Accept him even when he doesn't agree with you. That is true Christianity.

If God has accepted him, you're not more spiritual than God. You can definitely accept him. If Christ has accepted him, you're not more spiritual than Jesus Christ.

And Jesus did not accept you and me when we were perfect in our doctrines. Don't wait till he's perfect in his doctrine to accept him. Because the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking.

He's speaking in this chapter, chapter 14, about people who have a problem with eating food offered to idols. He says, the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. And we could say the kingdom of God is not a lot of other things.

What is the kingdom of God? You know, the kingdom of God is an expression which is found frequently in the New Testament. It's almost never found in the Old Testament because the kingdom of God was not offered to Israel. The kingdom of God began to be preached only by Jesus Christ.

John the Baptist came and said, repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. It was just going to come. What did they preach in the Old Testament? A kingdom of earth, not a kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of God was offered by Jesus Christ. That's why in the Old Testament we have promises of prosperity and health and everything to do with the earth. But in the New Testament we have promises related to partaking of God's nature and overcoming sin and things related to heaven.

Because the New Covenant has got to do with heaven like the Old Covenant had to do with the earth. The Israelites were promised to land on this earth. We are promised an inheritance in heaven.

So the kingdom of God has got nothing to do with all these earthly things like eating and drinking and what dress you wear and all this type of stuff. No. The kingdom of God has got spiritual realities in it.

Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Now this is not how it was in the Old Testament. They had righteousness in the Old Testament but it was only external.

And they did not have that inner peace that Christ comes to give by the removal of the guilt of all our past sins. They did not have that. They did not have joy.

For example do you know that there is no command in the Old Testament which says rejoice in the Lord always? That was impossible in the Old Testament. If God had put a commandment like that anybody could have turned up to God and said God that is impossible. Nobody can do it.

But what about today? I think today a lot of believers would say it's impossible even today. It's impossible because you don't believe or you don't have the power of God's Holy Spirit. It says joy in the Holy Spirit.

God's power is able to bring us into that kingdom where we rejoice always in the Holy Spirit. Not rejoice because things are going well around us. Things may not be going well.

Things may be going badly around us and there may be chaos and confusion all around us but that can never take away the peace and the joy in a believer's heart who is walking in righteousness. It's righteousness with peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Of course if there is unrighteousness in your life and your conscience is convicting you about something you've done against God or against another human being you deserve to lose your peace.

You deserve to lose your joy. In fact that's a good thing that you don't have peace and joy when you've got unrighteousness in your life. It's something like if you get a thorn in your foot it's a good thing that that thorn keeps on disturbing you till you pull it out.

You don't have any peace till you remove that thorn. And if there's something that's pricking your conscience like a thorn in your body it's good that you don't have any peace or joy until you get rid of it until you settle that matter. But the kingdom of God is righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Remember this is your birthright. Think of some rich uncle of yours who died and left a massive inheritance of millions of rupees for you to inherit. He's written your name in his will.

Think how excited you would be. This is something like that. The kingdom of God that I can live a life on this earth this is what Christ has written in his will for me.

That on this earth I can live a life of righteousness peace and joy by the power of the Holy Spirit whom he gives to me to control and rule and fill my life. Every day every moment of the day do you know that you never need to be in a bad mood at any time of the day morning, noon or night or middle of the night you never need to be in a bad mood if you allow God to fill you with his Holy Spirit and bring the kingdom of God in power into your life. That brings righteousness brings peace and it brings joy.

This is not a technique. It's not by listening to pep talks that we get this. It's by the power of God's Holy Spirit where God's Holy Spirit works in us and brings the joy of heaven the peace of heaven the righteousness of heaven into our hearts.

And he says in verse 18 if you serve God if you serve Christ like this like what? In righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit you are acceptable to God even if a lot of other people don't accept you. This is the main thing. This is the thing that counts in heaven.

This is the thing that counts as far as God's concerned. And this is what builds harmony in one another. Others will also be happy if you learn to accept them as they are.

Don't you think a person will be happy if you accept him just as he is? That you don't wait for him to change before you accept him? Weren't you happy that Jesus accepted you just as you are before you started changing? Well, learn to accept one another the same way. And you'll be approved by men. That's what it means.

Others will be happy too when you accept them in this way. Verse 19 So what should we do? We should pursue the things that make for peace and harmony and the building up of one another. Don't pursue things that are going to produce clashes.

Don't keep on majoring on minors. Don't keep on hammering away on the areas where you differ with a person. Okay? Accept it that you have your conviction.

That fellow's got another conviction. But God's accepted him. And every time you come together don't bring up that topic on which you disagree.

And that's the way to disrupt fellowship. Think of the 99 other areas out of 100 where you agree. Think about those things.

Let us pursue those things that make for peace and harmony in the church. And let's try to build one another up in the way of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Don't tear down the work of God for the sake of food.

You know how many people are tearing down the work of God for some silly little thing? Don't ever do it. All things are clean but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. You know, even though Paul said everything is clean, if you are eating and thereby giving offense to other people, the same meat becomes evil.

So, what's the answer? Verse 21. It's good not to eat meat or to drink wine or anything by which your brother stumbles. If you're drinking wine, causes your brother to stumble, don't eat it.

Don't drink it. If you're eating some meat which causes your brother to stumble, avoid it. Don't do anything that applies to many, many other areas.

Don't do anything that will cause another person to stumble. You have some faith in a certain area? Have it as your own conviction before God. Not to flaunt it and boast about it and proclaim it in such a way that causes offense to others.

Do you have faith to do something before God which your brother does not have faith for? Don't make him feel small. There are people, for example, who say we should not take medicines when we're sick. We trust God to heal us.

Well, brother, if that's the way you believe, that's fine. There's no scripture that teaches that you should not take medicines. Scripture does not make, forbid that and we should not forbid what scripture does not forbid.

But supposing you have a personal conviction on it, keep it to yourself. The faith which you have as your own conviction before God, don't impose it on your wife or anybody else or on your children. Keep it to yourself.

And if other people want to have that conviction, that's fine. Otherwise you can kill some of them. It's pretty serious.

Happy is the man who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But in this matter of eating, it says in verse 23, if you doubt, that means you're eating with a bad conscience or you're doing something with a bad conscience, then you commit sin because you're not eating from faith. And whatever is not from faith

is sin.

That's a good verse. The important thing is when you do something, it doesn't apply only to eating. It applies to anything in our Christian life.

That brother has got a clear conscience and does that. It's not sin for him. But you do exactly the same thing and your conscience bothers you.

It's sin for you. If you read those 2-3 verses and meditate on it, the last 2-3 verses of Romans 14, you learn that one thing can be sin for a brother and not sin for another brother. Because his conscience doesn't bother him.

Why do you judge him? Do you judge your wife for something that bothers your conscience? It may not bother her conscience. Leave it alone. This is the way of spiritual growth.

We who are strong, it says in the next verse, 15 verse 1, should bear the weaknesses of these people. How do you prove that you're strong? Bear with the weaknesses of others. If you can't bear the weaknesses of others, you're not strong.

You're weak yourself. You know a strong man can lift a heavy weight. That's how we know he's strong.

But can you lift this weight of the weakness in your brother or sister or your wife or husband? If not, you're not spiritually strong. Our aim in life, it says in Romans 15, 2, must be to please our neighbor for his building up. That's how Jesus lived.

He did not please himself. Verse 3. So if that is your goal, my aim is to build up my brother, you'll never go wrong. I don't want to offend him.

I want to do everything possible to build him up spiritually, to draw him closer to the Lord. May God help us to do this.

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