

Romans Summary  
Week 23, Wednesday March 29, 2017  
Romans 14:1-23

Paul continues his section on the ethical implications of his gospel for the church. We are to accept the one who is weak, but not for the purpose of evaluating what they believe. There will be those who, for example, believe they should only eat vegetables in order to avoid the possibility of eating meat which has been offered to an idol previously. As well, there will be those who believe they are able to eat anything without distinction, after all an idol is nothing. The focus is not to pick a winner, rather the strong should not despise the weak for refrain and the weak should not condemn the strong for indulgence.

The reason why is that God has accepted both. As that is the case, God is the master of each and it is the master's responsibility to despise or condemn the behaviour of his servants, not the other servant's job. God has responsibility to make his own servant stand (echo of resurrection here) and he will do so!

The same thing applies to how we consider days. Some have holier days, others all days alike. As long as each one is convinced about it and is acting out of devotion to God it's fine. As long as our lives are directed to God in Christ in life, death and everything in between it's good.

Then comes a warning for those who are engaged in despising or condemning, because it seems these are not random examples, but actual issues in the churches. Why are you engaged in this practice? We will all stand before the judgment seat of God. Yes, we have assurance that we who are in Christ Jesus will not be condemned, but we are still to be held to account.

With that coming judgment in mind, what we should be judging is not our brothers and sisters but that we are not putting anything in their path which may cause them to stumble. Yes all things are clean (possibly going back to Jesus' own teaching), however if someone thinks something is unclean then it is.

Which means we may be creating a situation. They believe that something should not be done or eaten because it's unclean, you know better and you shame them into doing or eating, now you've caused them to sin. Not because the thing itself is sin, but because they believed it was so. You are then responsible for bringing condemnation on your brother or sister — you've made that thing more important than them, who Christ paid the highest price for!

This would then make your good thing — I am able to eat anything — something evil (it's brought destruction). We need to keep our eyes on the prize. The kingdom isn't about food, drink or days but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. So if we are going to focus on something focus on these kingdom things not food and drink! In that way we build up the people of God not tear them down. So if something you're free to do causes problems for your brother or sister give it up for the sake of the kingdom.

If you insist on being right about these trivial matters which leads to them being condemned then you too will be condemned — talk about destroying the church.

**“Judgment and Grace” reflection and discussion questions:**

1. Where is the culture of Northview in terms of judgment -- do we believe in it here?
2. Based on what you have learned in Romans why might it be important that all stand before the judgment seat?
3. Why is it important for the church to not flee, but go willingly to the judgment seat?
4. How can we stand before the fiery judgment?