

Mutual Toleration About Doubtful Things

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you very much, Diana Wright, Julian Smart. Beautiful. Well, for the last time, or some time, we will be looking at Romans chapter 14.

Those of you who have been with us for the duration from the time we began in meeting in the public school will realize that this is our third time through Romans chapter 14 in approximately 12 years.

And the reason for that is because of the intense practicality of the content. It is an area of difficulty for a great many congregations. It has never yet been an area of difficulty for grace.

And I am satisfied that it is only because we have been through this twice before, because there is great potential for conflict in this chapter.

And I am satisfied that this is the principal reason why the Spirit of God gave this material to Paul to communicate to us. It represents a real potential problem area.

[1 : 0 3] There is nothing that is so natural or so common to a believer as to expect and want other Christians to think like they do. Even about areas wherein legitimate question can be raised.

We just kind of automatically are more comfortable with everybody being reasonable and doing it our way. And we are frequently not too apt to give latitude to those who wish to differ with us regarding the area of questionable things.

And the Apostle has devoted some 36 or 37 verses to this subject matter. And we are going to, as completely as we can, cover the entire content.

We'll be doing it in a little different way, and I'll show you what I mean shortly. I'd like to preface this material with a few basic statements, if I may, so as to once again clear away any possible ambiguity or misunderstanding that might surround this entire passage.

And let me begin by saying, in Romans 14 through chapter 15 and verse 13, all persons referred to in this portion of Scripture are believers.

[2 : 1 4] They are all born-again Christians. The weak and the strong both belong to the same Lord. There is no difference in the theological position before God insofar as any of these people are concerned.

Whether they are weak or whether they are strong, they stand in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. They both share a destiny with Christ. And it makes no difference how they view these things that are of questionable activity.

Their destiny is wrapped up in the person of Christ. They are believers. Secondly, the basic issue deals with the area of doubtful things, not doctrinal things.

This deals strictly with questionable issues. These are gray areas. When Paul makes statements like, let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, he doesn't mean regarding anything and everything.

He doesn't mean, how do you feel about the deity of Christ or the virgin birth? Well, let everybody be fully persuaded in his own mind. If you go with it, fine. If you don't, that's fine too. Just be tolerant of those who disagree with you.

- [3 : 19] That is not the issue. Never is. He is not talking about those things that are clearly defined and set forth in Scripture as to the rightness or wrongness of that position or that doctrine. He is talking about the iffy areas, the gray areas, the things that the Bible simply does not address in a dogmatic way. And there are a lot of things. And you know, the beautiful thing about it is, is this contains, this kind of an approach contains a built-in flexibility that allows the church to deal with all kinds of questionable issues that come up down through the centuries.
- Because all you do is apply the principle, for instance, of eating meat offered to idols, you apply the same basic principle to these questionable or gray areas in a society where we live today.
- And that enables you to maintain the principle, to update the idea. And nobody's really worried about quibbling about eating meat offered to idols. But there are other issues that are peculiar to our generation in our culture.
- So what do you do? You simply take the principle, and we'll be devoting the balance of our time to those principles this morning, and you apply it to whatever that gray area is today. And the end result is the same.
- [4 : 32] The thing that is important, critical, essential, absolutely, absolutely necessary. It's attitude. I think if you were to boil these two chapters down, all of this content, into just one word, it has to do with attitude.
- Attitude. Being able to maintain a gracious, kind attitude toward those who differ from you. So the Apostle Paul is presenting this concept.
- The attitude with which one holds his position and the attitude with which he regards others who differ with him is of paramount importance. You can get pushy, intolerant, insistent, demanding.
- People ought to see it like I do. They ought to believe like I do. They ought to have the same preferences that I do. They ought to be turned off at the same things that turn me off. And if they don't, we get miffed. That's wrong.
- That's wrong. There is great diversity and individuality within the body of Christ. There is a vast area of legitimacy here for people to see things in a different way.
- [5 : 36] Attitude among the brethren determines the spiritual climate or atmosphere which is critical for learning. And I should like to make this very clear also at the outset.
- And if I think of it, and I'm going to try to think of it, I want to insert it again at the conclusion because this is what young people, particularly young people, really need to understand about Romans 14.
- And that is, the content communicated in this passage is applicable only for adult believers in the church. It does not apply to children. Paul is assuming that the recipients of this content in the church at Rome are adults.
- And the area and teaching regarding questionable activities is not within the prerogative of young people to apply to themselves. It is applicable only to adults.
- Young people who are under parental authority are to derive their standard and value system, their scruples, their attitude toward these gray areas, toward that which is permitted, that which is forbidden.
- [6 : 45] You are to get that from your parents. It is your parents' prerogative to instill their standards and their values into you. Then, when you grow to adulthood and you become independent, should you choose to maintain that standard and adopt those values as your own, you have that prerogative.

Should you decide not to, you have that prerogative. But you do not have it until you become an adult. So, no child can look at this passage who is nine or ten years old and say, hey, the Bible says let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Mom and dad, I'm entitled to this because I'm, no, you're not. You're not. This is applicable only for believers who are adults. So, all of us parents can go, whew, don't have that to contend with.

That's nice. Herein is set forth the way we are to regard others who differ with us in areas of questionable things. And I'm going to do this, as I said, in a little different way this morning.

We're going to be utilizing the overhead almost for the balance of this. And what I plan to do is this. As we read through these verses, and there are 23 in chapter 14 and 13 for a total of 36 altogether, I thought, I really want to cover all of this material.

[8 : 08] Some of these verses contain really absolutely essential key thoughts. I don't really want to skip any of them. Yet, I don't know how in the world I can possibly incorporate 36 verses and maintain some continuity and get across all the content I want in the time that is allotted and still have an opportunity for questions and comments.

I just don't know how I can do that. So, what I arrived at is this. We are going to take each of these verses, and I will encourage you to read whatever translation you have before you, whether it's King James, New American, New International, whatever.

Read verse by verse as we go through this. In some instances, it will be almost a verbatim quote of the verse.

It will be the truth of the verse restated or paraphrased in most instances in a different way so as to set forth the truth of the verse in a propositional statement by way of a principle so that if the verse as you read it doesn't grab you, perhaps the principle that is related to that verse will.

And I think we can do that fairly rapidly and be able to get through the entirety of the 36 verses, maintain some continuity, and cover all of the important items. Whether or not we actually do it remains to be seen, but we're going to try.

[9 : 47] So, let's take a look at it. You begin, if you will, with Romans chapter 14 and verse 1. And follow me as we try to work our way through this.

Dealing with doubtful things. Verse 1 tells me by way of a principle. Now, you follow verse 1 in your Bible and then just look up here and pick up the principle for verse 1, if you will.

Verse 1 tells me that Christians are not to accept one another with ulterior motives. Now, I hope no one says, where did he get that?

Well, I hope I got that from verse 1. But it is rephrased, restated, principalized, put in propositional form. So, read verse 1, then look at the principle and ask yourself, is that an interpretation of verse 1?

Is it saying the same thing, but just in a little different words? And if it is, I hope you see that. And if one doesn't get you, then perhaps the other will. Christians are not to accept one another with ulterior motives.

[10 : 48] Verse 2. Christians have varying yet legitimate personal opinions regarding scruples. Do you see that in verse 2? I hope you do.

Christians have varying yet legitimate personal opinions regarding scruples. Now, what we mean by a scruple is a personal value or an item of conscience.

If a person is very scrupulous, that means they are conscientious. It means they are sensitive toward right and wrong.

It means they have their feelers out. If someone is unscrupulous, that means they are always operating on the shady side.

You know, they are always just that far away from their, they just aren't bothered all that much by moral issues, right and wrong and so on. So we are talking about a very delicate, tender conscience versus one that is not all that concerned regarding scruples.

[11 : 48] Item 3. Verse 3. Those holding certain positions regarding scruples are not to reject those who differ with them.

As to me, that's what verse 3. To me, that's what verse 3 is saying. Those holding certain positions regarding scruples are not to reject those who differ with them.

Item 4. Verse 4. Each Christian is a servant of his Lord and is therefore solely responsible to him in matters of conscience.

In other words, to me, that's the essence of Romans 14.4. That's the essence of what it's saying. I hope you're picking up on this as we go along. I haven't done this this way before, but I've never tried to cover this much material.

So we'll just have to see how it's going to fly. Verse 5. Therefore, based on verse 4, Therefore, doubtful issues must be resolved in the mind of each individual, by that individual or himself.

[13 : 07] Item 6. Verse 6. Whether one participates or refrains from a doubtful activity, his motivation should be to please his Lord.

You participate in that particular thing. Why do you do that? Why do you participate? It should be because you are convinced that would be pleasing to the Lord. You do not participate.

You refrain from practicing that or from doing that. Why do you refrain? It ought to be because you believe refraining would be pleasing to the Lord. That's to be your principal motivation.

Item 7. Verse 7. The Christian is to be an expendable who lives and dies to please the Lord rather than himself.

This, by the way, is hearkening back to our Romans 12, 1 and 2, where the believer is to consider himself a living sacrifice. He is totally at the beck and call, if you will, of his Lord and Master.

[14 : 11] He is expendable. He does not consider his life his own. It has been bought with a price. Therefore, he has one principal objective in mind, and that is to glorify God in his body and in his spirit, which are God's.

So, if you are more beneficial to the cause of Jesus Christ living than you are dying, then you ought to live. If you can better serve the Lord by dying than by living, then you ought to be ready to die and prepared to die.

That's the burden of Paul in Philippians chapter 1, when he expressed the opinion that Christ be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. Now, most people have a very definite preference concerning those two.

Which do you prefer? No question about that. But Paul, I think, had the right attitude, and I don't believe you can say, well, that's just because he was an apostle, and apostles are special, and really, he ought to feel that way.

I think that ought to apply across the board to all Christians. Whether by life or by death, Christ is magnified in my body. That's the important thing. Nothing else really matters more than that.

[15 : 15] And I am talking about the long haul. We look at it as mattering a great deal right here and now on planet Earth in space and time. But when you consider the big picture of eternity, that puts dying and living in a different perspective.

And the apostle Paul continually labored under the attitude that he had eternity's values in view, the Christian ought to also. This world is not our home. It's just a stopping-off place.

We're just passing through. We're strangers and pilgrims here. Let's not become too attached. Verse 8 of Romans chapter 14 tells me that living or dying is immaterial.

What matters is that in either we are the Lord's. That, again, is that big picture. And in eternity, this is the only thing that matters, that you are the Lord's.

Christ died for us to earn the right of being our Lord, whether alive or dead.

[16:20] Do we give him that right of lordship in our life? We have no right. We have no right. We have no right to assume control for our own lives, because Jesus Christ died as a substitute in our place to earn the right to be your Lord.

And it is wrong on our part if we deny him lordship over our life. Verse 10.

Put in a propositional form or a principle. Because our Lord is the ultimate and just judge of all motives and deeds, we have no right to exercise judgment toward one another in doubtful issues.

You know, I would hope that you would become so familiar with the thrust of Romans chapter 14 that if in discussing some item or some area of activity with a friend or with your mate, perhaps, you will find yourself doing what Barbara and I have found ourselves doing over a number of years when people are talking about this or that or questionable activity or something, we'd be driving down the road and some issue would come up.

And sometimes even almost simultaneously, we would say one to another, that's Romans 14. You know, that comes under Romans 14. And what that means is when you apply that principle to Christians, it removes the demand that is so natural to us to be judgmental.

[18:04] You just can't do that if you keep these principles in mind. But the most natural thing is to allow our personal convictions and our personal preferences override Romans 14 and then we end up with a critical spirit.

And there is nothing that so sours a person's disposition as a critical spirit. They just find fault constantly because they will not allow other believers the liberty of Romans 14.

These are people who have the little mental list. And this little mental list contains a long number of things that they consider to be acceptable and appropriate.

And over here on the other side are all of these things that are unacceptable and inappropriate. And whenever they see somebody engaging in some activity or something, they mentally whip out that list and check it over.

And that's wrong. But we are so prone to do that. Romans 14 is designed to help us prevent that. Verse 11.

[19:13] Eventually everyone will acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ. That's what verse 11 is saying. Time is coming when this will be a reality. Verse 12.

None will be responsible to give account for others but for himself alone. Now you see, we could very legitimately offer criticism and rebuke and all the rest to somebody else if we knew that in time we, we are going to be called on the carpet and asked to give an account for that person's activities, attitudes, actions, and so on.

But we aren't. We aren't. Each person stands or falls to his own master. And even though one may engage in activities here that you personally do not approve of, you will never be called into question about it.

God is never going to say to you, how come you didn't say something to Joe Dokes when he did thus and so and thus and so. Not your responsibility. Each one is going to answer for themselves. And because we do not have to answer for them later, we should not be judgmental and critical of them now.

Because they are going to answer later. And you know, when you consider that in these questionable areas, each of us is going to eventually have to give an answer to the Lord, that's going to be bad enough.

[20 : 38] We ought not to have to give an answer to each other here and now. And we don't. We don't. Item 13, verse 13. And I do hope that you are following along in your Bible.

I don't want you to just look at the overhead. I want you to read the verse, see what the verse is saying, then see if this principle is saying the same thing as that verse is to you.

And that way we're getting a double dose. You see, we're getting it from two different perspectives. As a verse of Scripture and then in propositional form as it's set forth here. Verse 13 is saying to me by way of principle, any judging that we do should be limited to evaluating our own deeds and that we not be an obstacle to another's spiritual progress.

Paul is saying, you want to judge? You want to judge? Judging is fine. Limit the judging to yourself. You want to be critical?

Fine. Criticize yourself. Engage in self-criticism, self-constructive criticism. If we judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

[21 : 52] Because if we judge ourselves before God in the light of his word and we reach a conclusion, then we are in a position to remedy what that judgment reveals and forestall judgment later because we enter into self-judgment now.

Self-judgment is a very healthy biblical thing. That means evaluating your life in the light of the word of God on a regular basis, asking the Lord and the spirit of God to reveal to you areas of your life that are displeasing to him, and then do something about it.

And if you do, then you will avoid any future problem with that. Verse 14, principle 14. An activity not wrong in itself is wrong if we so perceive it and thus violate our conscience.

Sin may therefore actually be relative. Now think of that if you will. That simply means that an activity in and of itself may not be wrong at all.

But if in your mind you consider it to be wrong, you go ahead and do that, then for you it is sin. It isn't sin for somebody else to do it unless they perceive it to be wrong.

[23 : 10] Because the idea is you are going against the dictates of your conscience. You ought not to do that. You wound your conscience by engaging in an activity that you consider to be wrong even though it is not wrong in and of itself.

And in that way, sin can actually be relative. Now I'm not talking about things that are set forth in Scripture as sin.

I'm not suggesting that, hey, adultery is relative. It all depends on how you look at it. No, we're not saying that. Because adultery is something that is clearly defined in Scripture as sin. As well as lying and stealing and cheating and a whole host of other things.

They are not questionable activities. The Bible takes a position regarding them. And we all know what that position is. But here's where we have the problem. When two people see different issues or see the same issue in a different way.

verse 15. We are not motivated by love if we insist on pursuing practices to the spiritual detriment of other Christians.

[24 : 22] That's what verse 15 is saying to me by way of a principle. Do you get that? We are not motivated by love if we insist on pursuing practices to the spiritual detriment of other Christians.

Now, granted, there is room for a lot of elaboration on all these. I'm giving a little bit. But basically, I want to try to confine it to what that actual verse is saying to avoid as much repetition as possible.

Verse 16. A good thing can become an evil thing if used with a wrong motivation or attitude. Verse 17.

Spiritual reality does not consist of food or drink, but of spiritual virtues. That's so very important. That's so very important.

Spiritual reality does not consist of food or drink, but of spiritual virtues. So, Paul is as much as saying, so what in the world are you doing fussing over food and drink?

[25 : 29] How do you allow that to become an issue? How can you possibly justify wrangling and fussing and feuding with one another over the proper food to eat and the proper drink and all of this stuff?

Those aren't real issues at all. What do you get off at with that stuff? That's not the stuff that the kingdom of God is made out of. You are majoring on minors. I'll tell you, Satan can accomplish more harm in a congregation if he can get the people to major on minor issues.

Pay all kinds of inordinate attention to petty, insignificant details. And do you know the thing that is more devastating to congregations than anything else is pettiness.

Not big issues. Little issues. Little petty grievances. Little petty gripes that tend to go into business for themselves and produce others.

And the fallout is enormous. It is infectious. Infectious and contagious. Pettiness. My, my, my, my, my. Verse 18.

[26 : 35] He who operates from a base of spiritual virtue and reality is a true servant of Christ and pleases both God and man. That's simply saying, get your value system straightened out, get your priorities in line, and operate majoring on the majors, minoring on the minors.

Man, that's the way to please the Lord and your fellow man. Verse 19. Peace and harmony provide the environment for edifying one another, but they do not come naturally.

They must be pursued. You've got to have the right climate for growing saints. Saints grow in a climate and environment of peacefulness and tranquility, harmonious relationships, one among another.

That's the kind of climate. That's the soil you need for growing saints. But where there is bitterness, divisiveness, wrangling, backbiting, all of these things, growth is stifled, the atmosphere is involved, it's just a negative, down situation.

And learning doesn't take place. You just cannot reach people that way. You've got to have the right climate for inculcating learning. And peace and harmony provide that kind of an environment.

[27 : 58] item 20, verse 20.

We must not allow petty differences to neutralize the local testimony. We must not ride roughshod over others by insisting on pursuing the petty or the minor.

And I tell you, this is just so very, very disruptive. And you know, the splashover effect gets out into the community. People hear things and they're talking and so on.

A church, a church that names the name of Christ ought to be the one place on the face of the earth where you could really go and expect to find, expect to find peace and harmony and tolerance and love and mutual acceptance and caring and concern.

That ought to be the one place that you could go to and just almost be guaranteed that that's what you're going to find when you get there. But we all know that many times in many congregations that's not the case.

[29 : 00] It just isn't. You know, there are lots of fraternal organizations and lodges and whatnot where people can go and be treated more warmly and be accepted better and be made to feel more comfortable and be made to just generally feel better about the whole situation than what is true in some churches.

It ought not to be that way. A local congregation ought to be the ultimate, ought to be the epitome of this kind of thing. And so often it is not. And Paul knew that.

I think that's in part why he is saying what he does in chapter 14. Verse 21 tells me that abstinence from questionable areas is enjoined if their pursuance hurts others.

This is the principle. I will eat no meat as long as the world stands if meat makes my brother to offend. It is preferable to abstain. In verse 22, personal convictions in doubtful areas are between you and your Lord.

make your outward behavior be consistent with your inner convictions and be without guilt. But when we act outwardly in a way that is contrary to our inner convictions, then guilt ensues.

[30 : 26] It's just predictable. We violated our conscience. We feel guilty about it. So the advice that Paul is giving in verse 22 is make sure that your outward behavior is consistent with your inner convictions and when the two harmonize, then there won't be any guilt produced.

Terrible, terrible thing to live under guilt. Terrible thing. Verse 23 Engaging in something you believe to be wrong leads to guilt, self-condemnation.

One must partake or abstain on the basis of what you really believe. Anything less is sin. You can see, of course, how that's closely related to verse 22.

That's very, very important. Paul says, whatsoever is not of faith is sin. That means if you cannot enter into an activity with a good, clear conscience in doing it, then if you go ahead and do it, even though it violates your conscience, that's sin.

The thing in and of itself may not be sinful at all, but this is again back to the way you perceive it. If you are not acting out of personal inner conviction, if you are not acting on the basis of faith and confidence in the acceptableness of that, then it is sin.

[31 : 42] And you have sinned. Now, if you'd read, please, verse 24, or I'm sorry, chapter 15.

Read chapter 15 in verse 1 because the principles continue right on and we're just going to maintain the numbering system. Principle 24, believers oriented to grace who are the strong are to carry those who are not the weak.

A la 1 Corinthians 9, 19 through 23. Paul said to the Jew, I became a Jew and to the weak I became as weak that I might gain to those under the law.

I became as under the law that I might gain those who are under the law and so on. The flesh will refuse to do so and insists on pleasing itself. And this ties in earlier with what I said about peace and harmony do not come naturally.

They have to be pursued. The flesh will refuse to do so and insists on pleasing itself. 25, or verse 2 of chapter 15.

[32 : 55] Grace oriented or strong believers are their brother's keeper. Remember when Cain asked that question? God says, where is Abel, your brother?

I can see old Cain now shrugging his shoulders. Am I my brother's keeper? The answer is yes, you are your brother's keeper. What about in the congregation?

What about the assembly of saints? Are you your brother's keeper? You better believe it. You most certainly are. We are all our brother's keeper. We have a responsibility one to another.

We are our brother's keeper. And we are to contribute to their ongoing spiritual growth. we have a debt to pay to everybody.

Oh, no man, anything but to love one another. You'll never finish paying off that debt. You'll never get all caught up on your love to the brethren so you can say, oh, I've done my share.

[34 : 00] I've been loving Christians for 30 years. Now I'm going to retire. I just don't have to do that anymore. I've got all my loving in. You'll never come to that place. God never came to that place with you and we'll never come to that place with each other.

We are our brother's keeper. Verse 3, chapter 15, the ultimate example of the strong is Christ who exalted as he was did not please himself.

Philippians 2, verses 5 through 8 and the great kenosis passage the condescension of Christ who though he was in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God and so on.

He is our ultimate example. And verse 4, chapter 15, the scriptures, the Old Testament of Paul's day were designed to teach, produce staying power, encourage, and build unshakable confidence.

This now also includes the New Testament. That's why we have these great documents in order that they will teach us, produce staying power or perseverance, edify, encourage, and build unshakable confidence.

[35 : 18] That's the hope. That's the biblical hope is unshakable confidence. This now also includes the New Testament as well. We have everything we could ever need in the Old and New Testament to provide us with those realities and they are very, very practical.

They determine your quality of life. Principle 28, God provides via grace, that is, He gives divine resources for living as we exhibit the attitude of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2, 5, let this mind be in you. Let this attitude that was Christ's be your attitude also. And then he goes on in Philippians to tell how Christ demonstrated that attitude through self-sacrifice to serve others and that principally is what we are supposed to be doing.

And when you do, God provides through grace divine resources for living. Principle 29, glory, acknowledgement, credit is rendered to God when harmony of heart and purpose is realized by believers.

That's fantastic. That is fantastic. That's what that verse is saying. God is glorified. God is glorified just by believers living harmoniously with each other, loving one another, getting along with one another, tolerating one another, edifying one another, ministering to one another.

[37 : 03] That in and of itself gladdens the heart of God. God is glorified through that. That is the body of Christ in action. Fantastic.

Principle 30, we glorify God in accepting one another different from ourselves as Christ did. We don't really have any problem in accepting people, and by accepting I mean, I don't mean just smiling to them and nodding in their direction.

I'm not talking about some kind of a superficial thing that enables us to treat people cordially. I'm not just talking about accepting as a social grace.

Yes, fine, how do you do? a nice day or a bad day or blah, blah, blah, and smile and so on. Pass the time of day, a little bit of chit-chat. That's not accepting anybody. That's just treating people civilly.

You do that with a stranger. Accepting has the idea of an emotional embracing of somebody. It doesn't have to be a physical embrace. It is an emotional embracing.

[38 : 09] It is an inward acceptance of that person, not just superficial. That is where it's all at. We don't have any difficulty doing that if these people tend to think like we do and live like we do and value the things that we value, approve of the things that we approve, disapprove of the things that we disapprove of.

We don't have any problem accepting people like that because they're our kind of people. But in the local assembly and body of Christ, you're going to find people who don't share those same values.

What do you do with them? Well, you reject them. No, you don't. You accept them. If they are in Christ, you accept them. You emotionally embrace them inwardly.

That's another item, isn't it? Big item. Christ did that. He did that. Now, if someone says, well, he could do that because he was Christ, but I'm just me.

But do you not understand that as a believer, he gives you through grace, he gives you the resources, the divine operating assets to be able to do that same thing.

[39 : 34] So if anyone says, oh, I just can't accept that person, that's hogwash. I just can't get along with them. I just can't accept them.

I just can't tolerate them. I just can't stand that person. Now, if you want to say, I won't tolerate them, I won't get along with them, I won't stand them, fine. At least be honest about it and be up front.

But don't say you can't because you can too. You choose not to. God is not shortchanges. Hey, we all have our favorite people. That's just part of being a human being.

We all have our favorite people. And you know what they're called? They're called friends. And we have some very favorite people. They're called close friends. And then we have some that are out there on the peripheral, their acquaintances and so on, you know.

But these distinctions are to be broken down and we are to love one another with a mutual love and acceptance and it's just and Christ provides us the wherewithal to do that.

[40 : 35] All right. Item 31. Christ came to serve the Jewish people in order to fulfill Old Testament promises that God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He had obligated himself by making promises. God cannot make promises and then ignore them. He can't make promises and then write them off.

God's integrity is at stake for the fulfilling of all that he has promised. So, Paul tells us that that is exactly what he is doing and Christ's fulfillment of Old Testament promises to the Jews, despite their unbelief, has become a source of blessing and rejoicing for Gentiles who have no covenant.

God made no covenant with Gentiles, God's blessing. But we get the blessings. We are included. The splashover effect on the basis of mercy. You see, God is going to do certain things for the Jews because he has to.

Why does he have to? Because he's promised. But he hasn't promised the Gentiles anything, so he has just showered unadulterated mercy upon us.

[41 : 51] And we come in for the blessing and benefit of God, not on the basis of God fulfilling a contractual agreement which he made in the Old Testament, but solely on the basis of his mercy.

Just fantastic. Lastly, and in conclusion, God has a basis in righteousness, the death of Christ, for granting to all who believe, even Gentiles, his joy and peace, so that our confidence may superabound via the power provided by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

That's Romans 15 and verse 13. It's an exclamation of doxological praise that Paul renders to God at the conclusion of this portion of the epistle.

Does this not engender desire to accept, embrace, tolerate, and love one another? How can we do less?

That's the burden of that whole passage. Now, we did indeed make it with those 38 principles, and we have time for some questions and comments from you.

[43 : 15] Andy? You may have answered this question but the whole of Romans 14 deals with gray areas. What happens when you feel that an area is definitely not gray and somebody else does?

For example, the sovereignty of God in relation to salvation or eternal security something else? I've got one of the several people that you feel that it doesn't matter what you do.

well, you're talking about doctrine rather than practice then. How are you to respond to that person?

Well, so far as the manner in which we treat that person or the degree to which we accept them, I think, again, the thing that is of paramount concern is whether that person, and they probably are, or they wouldn't even be talking about that, whether that person is really a believer in Christ, and if they are a believer in Christ, then that is all the basis that we need to accept them and afford them every cordiality as a fellow believer, even though they may hold doctrines that we do not consider compatible with the Word of God.

If they know and love Jesus Christ, that is our basis for fellowship. That's all the basis that we need. Now, we tend to identify ourselves with those who hold more along the doctrinal lines that we do, but that does not mean that someone who disagrees with us doctrinally is some kind of a second-class Christian.

[44 : 51] Let me use this case in point. Take a couple of areas, both of which we feel kind of strong about here. Let's take the issue of the security of the believer.

I personally do not see that as a gray area. I see that as a very definite issue, one that is set forth in Scripture, without any incontrovertible evidence at all that is really substantial.

I see a believer as being set apart by God the Father for Christ the Son for eternity. I see the very definition of justification by faith, automatically including the security of the believer.

You are positioned in Christ. That is as definite and as sure. I think that a person who is a believer in Christ is as sure of heaven as if he were in it, whether he believes that or feels that or agrees with that or not.

I really believe that. But here is a Christian who is convinced that if he sins, he's generally not prepared to say how big or how many sins because he doesn't know.

[45 : 57] But if he sins to a certain extent, he believes that salvation can be forfeited and that whereas he used to be a believer, he actually could forfeit heaven by his sin and ultimately end up in hell.

I don't agree with that at all. But I do not have a basis therein for rejecting that person and not accepting him and treating him as a brother in Christ.

Now to me, that's a pretty important doctrine. I see a person's emotional, psychological security and well-being tied up in how he views that doctrine.

So it's a very practical doctrine as well as being what I think is a very biblical one. But I cannot take that Christian who disagrees and say, well, if you don't believe in the security of the believer, I'm not going to have anything to do with you.

And you don't speak to them on the street and you won't demonstrate any kindness and you wouldn't pray with them or pray for them. There's no call for that. That's ridiculous. Our fellowship is in his son.

[47 : 05] And if he is in the son and you're in the son, you both have the same heavenly father. You are brothers and sisters in Christ. You're going to be together throughout all eternity. When we get there, we'll all get straightened out.

But in the meanwhile, we are to love one another. We feel pretty strongly about the pre-millennial faith, about the literal reign of Christ on earth.

But I know there are a lot of good men and a lot of them are smarter than I am who simply don't agree. They're all millennial. And I cannot for the life of me understand how in the world intelligent people can come to that conclusion.

But they are intelligent. And as I said, a lot of these people are smarter than I am. If it comes to IQ and plain old smarts, many of them have it all over me. But we just really disagree in that area.

Yet I do not have the prerogative of saying, well, because you don't agree with me and what I consider to be a clear-cut position of Scripture, I'm not going to have anything to do with you. And then people, Christians, Christians, engage in name calling and bitter spirits and put-downs and make fun of and all the rest of it.

[48 : 16] That's really not called for. That's not called for. Does that help any? Somebody else? Steve? I'm not even sure I can phrase this the way I want it.

What about the grace-oriented believer in relationship to the non-grace-oriented believer, the legalist, so to speak? I know that our job as grace-oriented people is to show deference and to abstain from things that would cause that person to stumble and everything that it keeps us here.

But yet I see another doctrine in Scripture saying, well, in Colossians, it says, don't let anybody put you down because of your beliefs in these kind of things.

Don't let anybody force their beliefs on you or whatever. And I see another doctrine saying, we need to live our life in front of them to be a testimony to the grace of God so that they might grow up in Christ.

How do we rationalize? Okay. That subject has come up. We treated that several sessions ago, I think, in a question and answer period too, but probably not satisfactorily, not as thoroughly as I would have liked.

[49 : 28] There is this possibility, and I am convinced that Paul is not teaching this. There is the possibility that strong believers, grace-oriented believers, may have to continually go underground with their grace orientation and place themselves at the ongoing mercy of these demanding legalists who insist that they do everything their way, and it becomes a form of intimidation where the strong believer actually is ruled over by the demands, which he views to be very unreasonable, by the demands of the weaker Christian so that he finds himself in a place where a weaker Christian is just dictating his whole life and hemming him in on what he can do and what he cannot do and all the rest of it.

And the distinction that we tried to make in that is that there are areas of questionable activity that are established by our culture, and that is one thing, and that, I think, is where we owe the deference.

But areas of questionable activity that are established by weaker Christians in the assembly, because these are things that they do not approve of, or these are things that they think you ought to do, I do not see those as valid.

I don't think a Christian, you see, it can get to the place where a Christian can't do anything, because he can always find somebody who's going to be stumble over that, you know?

Now, there are some people, you get the impression that they just look for something to be offended at, and they are very easily offended. You cannot live your life as a believer in accordance with the dictates of people who would spiritually bully you.

[51 : 23] And let's face it, no one tends to be a bigger bully than the weak, immature Christian. They're very zealous in their immaturity, usually, and they're very demanding of others, and strong believers are not to be intimidated by them.

But we do need to really pay careful attention to the things that our culture has established as being unacceptable. Barb, you had something. I think my question is really the same as Steve.

That first verse in chapter 15, where we are to bear with the weakness of the weak, it seems like the weak believer is always the one who wants to set the standard for the strong, and I have a difficulty, not a difficulty of accepting the weak, but a difficulty of placing myself under them.

Well, I think the thing we need to realize is that frequently zealousness goes with weakness, not always, but frequently zealousness goes with weakness.

And we who are grace-oriented need to tactfully, responsibly, kindly, but firmly take the weak under our arms, and under our wing, and we have to assume the responsibility for their spiritual growth and maturity, but we cannot do that if we poo-poo their areas of difference, if we ride roughshod over them.

[53 : 05] We, who are strong, have to conduct ourselves in such a way so that we will be able, in God's time, to bring the weak to a position of strength.

And you can't do that if you are rejecting them. So granted, I think it does involve handling people sometimes with kid gloves. I think it does involve sometimes deferring an activity or foregoing something that you don't see anything wrong with.

But you need to be motivated by love to do that. You ought not to be motivated because they've got a sharp cutting tongue and they're going to tear into you.

You need to be motivated by love and concern for them. It's a delicate area, to say the least. It really is a delicate area. And I'm satisfied that's one of the reasons that so much time and space is given to it.

Clyde? We understand that we're not to be judges of one another. But yet in another passage, we read that if a brother is overtaking a fault, we're supposed to try to win over.

[54 : 10] And if we can't do that, first point then we bring them before the assembly. Now, where do we distinguish a fault and how does this particular passage tie in and overtake in?

That's a good question, and I think the passage there in Romans 6 is not talking about questionable issues. It's not talking about doubtful issues in Galatians 6. If a brother is overtaken in a fault, that really has to do with a brother straying, falling into sin of some kind, and then believers are supposed to restore such in one.

And the restoration implies, the very fact of restoration implies that it is a grievous sin, that he didn't play golf on Sunday.

That's not what he's talking about. It's not a questionable area at all. It is an area that is strictly delineated in Scripture as wrongful and as sinful, and this brother has fallen into it.

There we are to approach the one and attempt to restore him. But that's not a gray area, you see. That's a very definite kind of an issue there. Joe? I'd like to vote that your summary method that you used today is very effective.

[55 : 27] I'd like to say that again. Well, thank you. How are the possibilities of getting a written handout for that summary? I think that would be a possibility. I really hoped it would have that effect.

Really, it's just kind of restating the same thing in a little bit different form with the idea that maybe if one doesn't grab you or a light doesn't break through, that another will. Appreciate that. Joanne?

Joanne? In light of Roman's 21st verse, we talked about eating meat or drinking wine or anything else that would be a good example.

When I think of the gray area, I think about perhaps loaded dress, eating meat, drinking wine. I think about the things that perhaps could be harmful to another brother.

And wearing jeans or wearing jeans or wearing dresses, to me, isn't harmful other than it could be offensive to that person. Maybe you need a lady to wear dresses.

[56 : 28] The same one with eating meat. The same one with eating meat or not eating meat, except to excess, perhaps. It doesn't seem like it would be harmful to another brother if they started eating meat.

But if another brother started drinking wine and they then started to use alcohol and beverage, to me, that could produce harmful effects for them if they drank to excess.

Because in that case of the sin, I know. But it still, some things to me in gray areas are more harmful than others. Okay. Well, gray areas have a lot of potential danger in the way that they're handled.

They really do. Because they're gray areas, there is an additional risk that goes with them and it needs to be handled. Back to what Clyde had mentioned just earlier about someone who's taken a fault.

What do you do about confronting them, about going to them? We're not supposed to be critical, but in that case, you surely are. Now, the Apostle Paul is dealing with this coming up in a very next issue, a very next verse, next issue, in the very next verse of chapter 15, and he's talking about caring enough to confront.

[57 : 46] And when he says, And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another.

That's a heavy verse. This is the verse upon which Jay Adams has built his foundation for newfetic counseling. And we'll be talking a little bit about that in our next session.

And what it literally means is having the ability, the courage, and the divine guidance to be able to go to someone and admonish them.

Now, that's talking a little bit along the line of Galatians 6 that you were talking about. And here he's getting into a different area now, and this is why we've broken with the end of chapter, with the end of verse 13, because 14 is taking up new subject matter, and it is devoted to confronting one another.

And you want to talk about sticky business. Caring enough to confront. Do we care enough to confront?

[58 : 57] When it would be a lot more comfortable not to confront. That's really quite a passage. But love cares.

And love will confront. And love will realize that there is pain in confrontation. And will still confront. It is faithful are the wounds of a friend.

You know how hard it is. If you've ever done this, maybe you never have done this. You know how hard it is to tell somebody they have bad breath.

That's minor. Compared to what we'll be getting into here. What's the matter? Well, it's embarrassing. It's painful. It's, you know, who are you to...

And this is what we often use as a cop-out. This is a thing that will generally keep us from going to someone and confronting them about something that really needs to be brought to their attention.

[59 : 55] The cop-out is, well, how can I go to them? After all, who am I? You know. Who am I to be so perfect and so holy that I can actually take it upon myself to correct somebody else?

I mean, I've got a few chinks in my armor, too. I can't go to somebody else and say, hey, did you know thus and so, thus and so, is this an offense or is wrong or... And that is a cowardly cop-out.

But we're all prone to do that. That's a lot easier than going to somebody and confronting them about an area.