

God's Judgment, Man's Judging, and Christian Liberty (Romans 14)

Pastor Phil Layton, GCBC, June 12, 2022

Please turn in your Bibles to Rom 14. We've been studying God's attributes (or who God is) in the book of Romans and related passages. Last time I taught on Rom 13, today in Rom 14 we'll see God is Judge, and how His future judgment should impact us in how we judge others in the present. It's an incredibly important study. We don't think enough about God's coming judgment on believers. When was the last time you meditated on the fact of what you do and say as a Christian coming before God's judgment seat? Or do you think there's only a judgment for unbelievers? God will judge -- not only those who go to hell -- He has a judgment for those who go to heaven.

¹⁰ *Why do you pass judgment on **your brother**? Or you, why do you despise **your brother**? For **we will all stand before the judgment seat of God**;* ¹¹ *for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."* ¹² *So then **each of us will give an account of himself to God**.* ¹³ *Therefore let us not pass **judgment** on one another any longer, but rather **decide** [same Greek word translated **pass judgment**] never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.*

Key word is judgment, 10x in Rom 14 a Greek word for judge/judgment¹ is used for God's judgment, man's judging, and Christian liberty decisions.

- Outline:**
- 1) God's judgment of believers**
 - 2) Our judgment of believers (who differ from us)**

First, God's judgment of believers. v. 10 is about brothers in Christ. Paul as a believer writes '*...we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.*' The Greek word is *bema*, and it's not the usual word used for the judgment of unbelievers or a judge in a courtroom. This Greek word was used for the Greek Olympic judges' seat where wreaths and rewards were given out to athletes. 1 Tim 4:8 '*I finished the race...in the future there is a crown the... judge will award me...*' The word for *bema* seat judgment is in 1 other text:

- 2 Cor 5:9-10 '*... we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before **the judgment seat** of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*'
- Or '*recompensed for his deeds...repaid...whether good or worthless*'²
- Same word in Eph 6:8, doing work not to please man but to please Him, since '*whatever good anyone does, he will **receive back** from the Lord*'
- In 2 Cor 5, our aim is to please Christ because we'll all stand before His judgment seat to receive recompense or reward for deeds that pleased
- Whatever didn't please Him will be judged, burned away as worthless
- Only one life, it'll soon be past, only what's done for Christ shall last'³

Rom 14:12 says '*each of us will give an account of himself to God.*' What's that include? Jesus said '*on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak*' (Mt 12:36). Hebrews talks about those who '*watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account,*' and it says no one '*is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account*' 13:17, 4:13. Judge Jesus sees all

Thought, word, and deed, His eyes are like fire that burns through, Rev. 1

Flip forward to 1 Cor 3, just a few pages forward, to see more about this. In 1 Cor 3 Paul says Christ must be the foundation. ¹² *Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—* ¹³ *each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.* ¹⁴ *If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.* ¹⁵ *If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss [of reward like v. 14], though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*

There are some who will be saved, but much of their life work will burn and won't get a reward. Only what's done for Christ shall last. A judgment day is coming for believers where each one's work will be manifest, disclosed, tested by Christ. What are you building your life on now? Is Jesus the focus and foundation and are you doing it to please Him? All else will burn away. But v. 14 says what we do that passes the test will receive a reward. So end of v. 10 says '*Let each one take care how he builds...*' It counts in eternity.

Our 1 life will soon be past, only what's done for Christ shall last

God sees what you do behind the scenes and when you don't see fruit but are just planting seeds that others will water later. ⁸ *He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.*

That word 'wages' is the same word translated 'reward' in v. 14 that we'll receive on that coming Day, according to what we did, and why we did it.

Faith believes God exists and rewards those who earnestly seek Him⁴

Jesus used this word for '**great reward in heaven**' to those who have men on earth persecuting, reviling, or saying evil about them for Christ's sake.⁵

Rejoice and be glad for great is your reward in heaven, the Lord Jesus said.

Every believer has a reward, but some get greater reward, or a 'full reward' as the apostle John called it.⁶ Jesus taught '*love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great...*'⁷

The gospels mention 5x '*treasure in heaven*' to invest, store up in this life.⁸

If you fast or pray privately instead of to be seen by men, '*your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.*'⁹ Those who use their talents for Christ and are faithful with little will be given much more in the kingdom to come.¹⁰ Little things include giving '*one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly I say...he will by no means lose his reward.*'¹¹

Little kids at VBS, prayer ministry, doing good, love the unloving

Our ministry to little ones really needs more faithful help. We've been short SS teachers for literally all age groups except K-1 (the Palms are the one class consistent every week since before Covid). If you could help teach kids every other SS or Thursday nights in fall, we need faithful servants. Where do you serve?

It doesn't have to be little ones, but your big God calls you to serve

That's what Paul moves from in ch 4, faithful servants, rewards, the Lord's judgment. **4:1** *This is how one should regard us, as **servants** of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.* ² *Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found **faithful**.* ³ *But with me it is a very small thing that I should be **judged by you** or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.* ⁴ *For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is **the Lord who judges me.*** ⁵ *Therefore **do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes**, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and **will disclose the purposes [motives] of the heart. Then each one will receive his***

commendation from God. ⁶ *I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us **not to go beyond what is written** ...*

Idea is written in scripture, don't judge by extrabiblical standards

Notice we're not to pass judgment or pronounce judgment before the time when the Lord comes again, that's when secret things and motives of men's hearts will be revealed and rewarded or not. We cannot judge heart motives and we must not judge beyond what is written in God's Word. God judges.

That takes us back to Rom 14. It takes us from His judgment of believers to

#2. Our judgment of believers (who differ from us)

Last week's scripture reading was from James 4, where it says we're not to speak against or judge a brother, God is judge, so '*who are you to judge?*'¹²

Dave Swavely writes in his book ***Who Are You to Judge***: 'In many years of pastoral counseling, I have repeatedly found that the difficulties people face in their marriages, families, churches, and jobs can be traced back to wrongful judgments that have been made in their minds concerning others. And almost as often I have found that these people are not even aware that this problem exists, or that it is a primary cause of their conflicts. But when they have learned about it, I am glad to say that through repentance from this sin and practicing new ways of thinking, many have experienced peace as never before, in their hearts and in their relationships with others.'¹³

v. 19 *So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.*

Let's go back to the start of the chapter and walk through it with that goal.

v. 1 in **LSB**: *Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of **passing judgment on opinions**.² One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.³ The one who eats must not view the one who does not eat with contempt, and the one who does not eat **must not judge the one who eats**, for God accepted him.⁴ **Who are you to judge the servant of another?** To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.⁵ One person **judges one day above another** ... **13** *Therefore let us not **judge** one another anymore, but **rather judge this**—not to put a stumbling block or offense before a brother.**

It's the same Greek word *judge*, but ESV has *esteem one day... decide this*.

It's ok to judge one day above another, but not esteem myself above others.

In one sense don't judge, in another do judge how not to stumble. Do judge, not a brother's heart, but what might hurt one another or trip up a brother.

God will judge your brother's heart, and will judge your heart toward him.

v. 10 in ESV *why do you pass judgment*, and it adds **despise your brother**...

- NAS '*why do you judge ... you regard your brother with **contempt***
- NKJV '*show contempt*'; others '*condemn / criticize / look down on*'¹⁴

Why are you judgmental in those ways with a Christian?

Don't think you stand above other believers when we all must stand before God's judgment seat and give an account of our actions and attitudes! v. 11 says every knee will bow to God that day. So don't look down on others in judgment, when we'll all be falling down before the throne of God above!

God doesn't need you to be judge or jury or prosecuting attorney

It's ok to have opinions, even strong ones, but it's not ok to judgmentally think less of Christians who differ in their opinions. If you condemn in how you think of them, or have contempt in how you view them, or are critical in what you say to them or about them, you have a sinful judgmental spirit.

You'll have to give an account for that to God. v. 4: *Who are you to judge?*

God is God and you are not. Who are you to take His place?

ESV of v. 1 says welcome a weaker brother but don't quarrel over opinions.

Other translations '*argue about*,' same Greek word for judge, that's the root

It's not about winning arguments, it's about welcoming a family member.

If a sister is younger or weaker in the faith, accept her, don't argue with her.

We're in different places of growth, opinions (NIV '*disputable matters*').

There's disputable debatable issues you don't need to debate or crusade for.

Where God's Word hasn't judged sin, we're not to judge sin, we're not God

v. 4 says you're not your brother's Master, he's not your slave

The context of Rom 14 is Christian liberty or conscience issues where some will have different convictions. Some in v. 2 ate only vegetables, it may be their past with idols made it hard to eat meat associated with idols. For Jews it could be hard to eat non-kosher food (even the apostle Peter) and others stumbled over drinking alcohol. There's freedom in Christ to not drink or eat meat or certain kinds, but don't judge people by that (or me for bacon)!

My life verse growing up, 1 Cor 10:27: *eat whatever is set before you ...*

I'm not giving up my liberty, but I can set it aside temporarily for a brother.

Some have alcoholic pasts or persuasions, don't drink alcohol with them if you know that.

But if that's your past, don't judge others who can drink and not get drunk. Being drunk is a sin but so is being a judge beyond scripture. v. 3 is key: ***Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.*** So you're to welcome him in v. 1, don't look down on him.

But if you know his weakness or struggle, don't offend him. ¹³ *Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, **but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.*** ¹⁴ *I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but **it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.*** ¹⁵ *For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died... **[v. 20] Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.*** ²¹ *It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.*

The takeaway isn't walk however you want and say 'don't judge me,' the takeaway of v. 15 is walk in love so no one can say 'don't you love me?'

Don't flaunt your liberty, walk with sensitivity. The humble don't do what makes one stumble. Don't destroy God's work or wound man's conscience

It's not all black and white. There are 'gray areas' of opinion or conviction.

⁵ *One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. **Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.***

Some Jews saw the Sabbath as a special day still, but some saw every day the same under Christ. A few centuries after Paul wrote this, some were convinced Sunday was the Sabbath, not Saturday. The Puritans called it the 'Christian Sabbath' in their confessions and esteemed it highly, but didn't observe Christmas or other special days. I'm convinced in my mind today is the Lord's Day, the day the Lord rose, that's why we worship on it, not OT.

I don't call it the Sabbath because I don't see Bible writers or early history call it that, but I have confessional friends who esteem that day higher and it's ok. ⁶ *The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord.*

My biological brother Mike is an OPC elder who is fully convinced in his mind of every line of the WCF on Sabbath, antichrist, infant baptism, etc. And I'm fully convinced of believer's baptism, but we don't quarrel over it.

A local church needs unity in that, but liberty in non-essentials and charity.

Col 2:16: *do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival...or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ... do you submit to...rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These are ...based on human commands...but they lack any value in restraining [sin]*¹⁵

Let's bring it home by bringing it closer to home. 2 years ago stay-at-home orders were in place for many weeks and strict rules were put in place for religious gatherings or what we could or couldn't do on the Lord's Day. We began to re-gather this month 2 years ago and there were different opinions among believers, even leaders. Some criticized that we met outside, others criticized us for even meeting. Being apart from corporate worship fueled passing judgment, some never came back because we didn't force masks or others left because we didn't initially meet indoors like a big SoCal church.

Some felt we must obey all guidance, others judged those obeying guidance

For other reasons I was judged prideful, even called 'evil' that year

Some had contempt toward believers. Some had concerns for health of at-risk parents they lived with, but people passed judgment on them as fearful because of a facial covering, judging by outward appearance. Others had condemnation for any with unveiled faces as reckless, selfish, or wanting others to die! Rom 14 speaks to conscience issues some have from Rom 13, others had constitutional issues and felt like Paul who wrote Rom 13, they could appeal to their rights and to Caesar. Others saw communist threats like countries they grew up in taking away freedom. Whoever you think is weaker, Rom 14 says accept them without judging or looking down on them.

I had to say more than once from this pulpit don't judge others by what they do or don't put on their face or in their body. Whoever wants to get shots or not, that's a personal decision and God's Word calls the church to welcome without passing judgment either way. The vaxxed or masked believer isn't to look with contempt on the one who abstains or vice-versa. Some do shots for medical concerns, some don't for medical concerns, or ethical concerns (aborted cell lines). Rom 14 says don't judge, despise or divide by opinions. v. 5 ends where we must: *let each one be fully convinced in his own mind.*

Consciences differ so we support freedom of conscience under God

Our conscience for church worship obeys God above govt. 20-some months ago GCBC leaders respectfully chose God's Holy Word and conscience above man's health guidance.

New Hampshire Confession says govt. is to be ‘conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience.’

Continually forbidding church meetings opposes our King’s will

Some of you have strong opinions about music in church (hymns or piano only), the Bible calls for hymns and spiritual songs, new songs, instruments with beat and string. Let not the older look down on younger or vice-versa. Scripture says don’t quarrel over opinions, keep it to yourself if not asked.

v. 22 says in the NIV ‘*So whatever you believe about these things, keep it between yourself and God.*’ NAS ‘*have as your own conviction before God*’

You don’t need to debate or crusade for your view after church

Some of us have our kids in public school next year (including me, several families in our church). Many have kids in Christian school or homeschool (private or public chartered, and I know of divisions within homeschoolers).

Let each be convinced in his mind without contempt at different convictions

You can’t please everyone, but strive to be wise and please Christ

Should kids date or court or dort? Should you boycott this business or that? What about politics, parenting, or personal appearance (hair or skirt length)?

What about psychotropic meds or Santa Claus or celebrating Halloween? Should I do gaming, growing kids God’s way or giving 10% legalistically?

Should I refuse anyone who dances or chews or hangs with those who do?

This pulpit will not be pounded on those subjects. Don’t make the church a soapbox for your opinions and don’t put Scripture in a box of your tradition. Let’s get off hobby horses and preach Christ who’s returning on His horse!

Jesus faced sinful judgment to put an end to our sinful judgments of others. He faced God’s judgment on the cross for sinful motives of hearts that He alone can see, so we don’t have to. v. 1 says don’t pass judgment, welcome – why? 15:7 *Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you...*

Your brother may be weak in some areas, be welcoming like Christ was to you. Rom 5 says while we were still weak Christ died for us. So don’t look down on others or think you’re better, look up to Jesus who sees your worst sin but welcomes you by grace (and helps you be better at grace). If you’re convicted of your sin, repent, turn your eyes on Jesus. And let’s thank Him we’re not clones or a cookie-cutter mold. PTL for diversity that can come together in unity and harmony as Rom 15:6 says *that together you may with one voice glorify...God...* Let’s pray, then with one voice sing to the Lord.

Father forgive us and give us grace. Help us to Judge Rightly Lord, to judge others as we want them to judge us: Charitably, not critically, Privately, not publicly, Gently, not harshly, In humility, not pride. Help us to believe the best about others, until facts prove otherwise—To assume nothing, to seek all sides of the story, And to judge no one until we’ve removed the log from our own eye. May we never bring only the Law, to find fault and condemn. Help us always to bring the Gospel, to give hope and deliverance, As you, our Judge and Friend, have so graciously done for us. Amen (adapted from JBC).

¹ *Krino* 9x and *diakrasis* (same root) in v. 1.

² HCSB, NASB.

³ C. T. Studd.

⁴ Hebrews 11:6 NIV.

⁵ Matthew 5:10-11.

⁶ 2 John 8.

⁷ Luke 6:35.

⁸ Matthew 6:20, 19:21, Mark 10:21, Luke 12:33, 18:22.

⁹ Matthew 6:6, 18.

¹⁰ Matthew 25:15-24.

¹¹ Matthew 10:42.

¹² James 4:11-12 NASB.

¹³ Dave Swavely, *Who are You to Judge? The Dangers of Judging and Legalism*, p. 14.

¹⁴ NLT, HCSB, NIV.

¹⁵ NIV.