



Handling Disagreements Over Secondary Matters

“For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's” (Romans 14:1).

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“One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. 7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. 8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. 10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” (Romans 14:5-10).

Introduction

Romans 14 deals with disagreements among genuine believers over **secondary matters** such as what one eats, what day one regards, and matters of personal Christian practice. Paul is not teaching that truth does not matter. Scripture is clear that there are fundamental truths which cannot be compromised. But there are also matters where sincere Christians may reach different conclusions while still seeking to honour Christ. The danger is that **a difference of conviction can become a cause of division.**

One believer says, “I do it this way because I believe it honours God.” Another says, “I do not do it because I believe that honours God.” Paul says: **“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”**

Then he takes us to the heart of the matter: **“For whether we live, we live unto the Lord.”** The central issue is therefore not merely **what day you keep, what food you eat, what you prefer or what personal practice you follow. The Real Question Is “Whose Are You?”** If Christ is Lord, then **our lives belong to Him, our choices should honour Him, and our judgement of others must be restrained by the fact that we ourselves will stand before Him.** We will study this in 3 parts:

- 1) BE FULLY PERSUADED AND DO IT UNTO THE LORD
- 2) REMEMBER: YOUR LIFE DOES NOT BELONG TO YOU BUT TO THE LORD
- 3) STOP PLAYING GOD AS WE WILL ALL STAND BEFORE CHRIST

1. BE FULLY PERSUADED AND DO IT UNTO THE LORD

Paul begins with personal conviction in Romans 14:5-6: **“One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”** Note these 3 crucial points:

- A. Conviction is important** - Christianity is not merely about following the crowd. You must know **what you believe and why you believe it.** Paul does not say, “Let everybody simply do whatever they like.” He says: **“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”** There must be conviction. A believer should not simply say:

- “My pastor does it.”
- “My parents taught me this.”
- “Everybody in my church does it.”
- “This is what Christians around me do.”

There comes a time when you must be personally persuaded from the Word of God. **Acts 17:11** says: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

B. But conviction must have the right objective - Notice what Paul repeatedly says: **“unto the Lord.”** Verse 6: “He that regardeth the day, regardeth it **unto the Lord...**” And: “He that eateth, eateth **to the Lord...**” The question is not merely: **“What do I want?”** It is: **“What honours the Lord?”** This is a powerful principle for Christian living. **1 Corinthians 10:31** says “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” That includes:

- how we worship;
- how we spend our money;
- how we use our time;
- what entertainment we consume;
- how we dress;
- how we speak;
- how we treat people;
- what we do privately when nobody is watching.

C. There is danger in confusing preference with principle - Not every personal preference is a biblical command. There is a difference between: **“The Bible says...”** and **“I prefer...”** There is a difference between: **“This is sin.”** And **“I personally believe this is unwise for me.”** Maturity requires knowing the difference.

As an illustration, imagine two Christians travelling to the same destination. One chooses to take the motorway. The other chooses a different route. If both routes legitimately lead to the destination, the second traveller is not necessarily disobedient simply because he did not take your route. Likewise, we must distinguish between **biblical absolutes** and **personal convictions** by:

- Being persuaded.
- Being informed by Scripture.
- Being sincere.
- Making sure that your conviction is ultimately **unto the Lord.**

2. REMEMBER: YOUR LIFE DOES NOT BELONG TO YOU BUT TO THE LORD

Paul now moves from **personal conviction** to **Christian ownership** in Romans 14:7-9. In verse 7 he said: **“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.”** Then verse 8 gives us one of the great declarations of Christian identity: **“For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.”** Consider these 4 important points:

A. Christianity means surrender of ownership

The world says: "It is my life. I can do what I want." The Christian says: "**I am the Lord's.**" That changes everything. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 6:19–20**: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you... and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." We are not self-owned. **We are purchased people.** The price was the blood of Jesus Christ.

B. If we belong to Christ, we must live for Christ

Paul says: "**Whether we live, we live unto the Lord.**" That means Christianity is not confined to Sunday. We do not belong to Christ only:

- in church;
- during prayer;
- during worship;
- when preaching;
- when other Christians are watching.

We belong to Him:

- at home;
- at work;
- in business;
- in conversation;
- on the internet;
- in our relationships;
- in our private decisions.

Galatians 2:20 declares: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..."

C. Even death does not change our ownership

Paul says: "**Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord.**" Death does not remove us from Christ. It brings us into His presence. **Philippians 1:21** declares: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." What confidence! Whether living or dying: **WE ARE THE LORD'S.**

D. Christ has the absolute right to be Lord

Why? Because verse 9 says: "**For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.**" Notice the progression:

- **Christ died.**
- **Christ rose.**
- **Christ revived.**

Therefore, Christ is Lord. The cross establishes His ownership. The resurrection establishes His authority. He is not merely our Saviour. **He is our Lord.** We often want Jesus as **Saviour** without allowing Him to be **Lord**. But the Jesus who saves us is the Jesus who rules us. **Acts 2:36** says "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

As an illustration, if somebody purchases a house, they have the right to determine what happens in that house. The previous owner may have had his own

arrangements, but ownership has changed. Christ purchased us. Therefore, the question is not: **"What do I want to do with my life?"** but: **"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"** That was Paul's question in **Acts 9:6** at conversion.

3. STOP PLAYING GOD AS WE WILL ALL STAND BEFORE CHRIST

Paul now confronts the most dangerous problem in Romans 14:10 - judging **and despising fellow believers over disputable matters**. He asks two penetrating questions: **"But why dost thou judge thy brother?"** And: **"or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?"** Then comes the reason: **"for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."** Consider these 4 salient points:

A. Do not judge what God has not commanded you to judge

There is a legitimate place for biblical discernment. Jesus said: **"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."** — John 7:24. The Bible commands believers to identify false doctrine, expose sin and exercise discernment. But Romans 14 deals particularly with **disputable matters**. The problem arises when we take a personal conviction and elevate it into a universal law. Then we begin saying: "If you do not do it my way, you cannot be right with God." Paul says: **Be careful**. You are not the Lord of your brother.

B. Do not despise another believer

The other danger is contempt. Paul says: **"Why dost thou set at nought thy brother?"** You may think: "I am more spiritual than him." Or: "He doesn't understand Scripture like I do." Or: "My Christian practice is superior." That attitude can become spiritual pride. **Philippians 2:3** warns: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

C. Remember that your brother belongs to Christ

This brings the whole passage together. Earlier Paul said: **"We are the Lord's."** Your brother is the Lord's. Your sister is the Lord's. The person you are tempted to condemn is somebody for whom Christ died. Therefore, treat Christ's property with respect.

D. The Judge is coming

This is the sharpest point of the passage. Paul says: **"We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."** Not some of us. **All of us.**

- The preacher will stand there.
- The congregation will stand there.
- The strong believer will stand there.
- The weak believer will stand there.
- The person you criticised will stand there.
- And **you will stand there.**

2 Corinthians 5:10 warns: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body..." Therefore, before judging another Christian, ask: **"Am I prepared to give account for my attitude before Christ?"**

Romans 14:5–10 gives us three searching questions to regularly consider:

1. WHAT DO I BELIEVE? “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”

— Romans 14:5. Do I have biblical conviction, or am I simply following tradition, culture or people?

2. WHO DO I BELONG TO? “Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.”

— Romans 14:8. Is Jesus genuinely Lord over my life?

3. BEFORE WHOM WILL I STAND? “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” — Romans 14:10 Am I living in such a way that I can give account to Christ with a clear conscience?

In Conclusion, always remember that “WE ARE THE LORD’S”. Romans 14:5–10 is not ultimately about **days** or **food**. It is about **lordship, liberty, responsibility and accountability**. Paul’s message is:

- **Have conviction — but do not become contentious.**
- **Have liberty — but do not become arrogant.**
- **Have knowledge — but do not despise the weak.**
- **Stand for truth — but do not make personal preference equal to God’s command.**

And above everything else, remember that: **“Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.”** That is our identity. That is our security. That is our responsibility.

And one day: **“We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”** So let us:

- stop asking: **“How close can I get to the line?”** and start asking: **“Lord, how can I please You?”**
- stop asking: **“What is everybody else doing?”** and ask: **“What would honour Christ?”**
- Let us stop looking sideways at our brother and sister— and start looking **upward to our Lord. **CHRIST IS LORD. WE ARE HIS. WE WILL GIVE ACCOUNT.**** Therefore, **let us live unto the Lord.**

Closing Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus,

Thank You because we are not our own—we belong to You.

Help us to be fully persuaded by Your Word, while walking in humility and love towards our brothers and sisters.

Deliver us from spiritual pride, unnecessary judgement, criticism and contempt.

Give us wisdom to distinguish between biblical truth and personal preference.

Help us to use our liberty in a way that honours Christ.

Let Jesus truly be Lord over our thoughts, decisions, words, relationships and actions.

And when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, let our lives testify that we lived—not for ourselves—but **unto the Lord.**

In Jesus’ mighty name.

Amen.