

# ROMANS 14 & THE ONE WHO IS WEAK IN FAITH

## ECIC 2025

### I. Introduction

- A. Romans 14 is often used in discussions of fellowship as guidance to deal with areas of disagreement.
- B. Paul instruct patience and love toward one another throughout this chapter, but what sorts of issues does he have in mind.
- C. Virtually no one puts ALL disagreements in the category of what is being discussed in this chapter.
- D. So what are the boundaries? How do we identify the weak and the strong brother? What is required of the weak and what is required of the strong?
- E. These are the sorts of questions we hope to address in this lecture.

### II. Weak & Strong

- A. Who is weak?
  - 1. The weak brother is acting under greater restriction than required (Rom. 14:2; 1 Cor. 8:10-13).
  - 2. The weakness involves an inability to participate in liberties not a taking of liberties.
- B. Weak in "faith".
  - 1. This weakness of faith is not the same as "ye of little faith." (Matt. 8:26).
  - 2. The faith being discussed here is aimed in the direction of the liberty, not in the direction of God (Rom. 14:2, 23).
  - 3. These are matters of opinion (Rom. 14:1).
  - 4. I don't mean we shouldn't be patient with those who have little faith, but this passage isn't addressing that.
- C. Both are accepted by God (Rom. 14:3, 6).
  - 1. Neither of these brethren are required to change practice, only attitudes.
  - 2. This excludes the situation where we are "allowing for growth."
- D. Consider two examples (1 Cor. 8-10; Jer. 35).
  - 1. In Corinth, the solution is not "it doesn't matter." The solution is to practice caution on both sides of the issue (1 Cor. 10:19-32).
  - 2. The Rechabites have practiced restrictions against liberties and even blessings that God has provided and it has left them in a stronger spiritual position than their "stronger" brethren.
  - 3. The weak are not necessarily spiritually weak. They are weak toward a particular liberty. Being strong in that liberty is not bad but neither is it automatically good.

### III. Practicing Unity

- A. Accept the weak without judgment or contempt (Rom. 14:1, 3).
  - 1. The most likely attitude toward a stricter brother is contempt.
    - a) "You don't have a TV?"
    - b) "You don't do social media?"
    - c) "You don't have a smart phone?"
    - d) "You don't let your kids play organized sports?"
  - 2. You don't have to accept those restrictions, but you do need to respect them.
  - 3. You don't even need to try and convince them otherwise. They are accepted.

4. If you say, “they are foolish, but I accept them anyway,” then you are not obeying Romans 14.
- B. Do not judge the stronger brother (Rom. 14:3, 22).
  1. The most likely attitude toward someone practicing a liberty we don’t practice is judgment.
    - a) “I can’t believe you allow your kids to participate in organized sports. Don’t you know that can become an idol.”
    - b) “Don’t you see that this is the safest path?”
    - c) “I guess they don’t love the Lord (or their brethren) as much as I do.”
  2. The weaker brother is required to acknowledge this issue as a matter of opinion.
    - a) Practicers of the “one-cup” doctrine do not see themselves as weaker brethren and are not willing to practice Romans 14.
    - b) I do not see myself as a weaker brother toward institutional brethren. If I did, I would need to say, “they are approved by God.”
  3. Paul does not advocate for a “tender conscience” to “run the show.”
    - a) My conscience restricts my actions, not those of others.
    - b) I need to be thoughtful of my brother’s conscience, but not ruled by it (1 Cor. 10:29).

#### **IV. Conclusion**

- A. Weak in this context refers to one’s ability to engage in a liberty, not to someone taking a liberty and not to the spiritually immature or weak (necessarily).
- B. These are matters of opinion and ought to be recognized as such by both sides.
- C. While God’s word provides room for growth in knowledge and understanding, this passage does not really address that circumstance.