

**Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church**  
**Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter 14, Verses 1-9**  
**Notes from Tuesday April 26, 2011**  
**Last Revised on May 9, 2011**

**Songs**

**Opening Prayer**

**Introduction**

This evening we continue our study of the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

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Last week we finished **Chapter 13**.

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Tonight we will begin **Chapter 14**.

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We are coming very near to the end of our study of Romans. I suppose that, after tonight, we will need only another two or three weeks to finish. So let's start thinking about whether we want the class to continue and, if so, what we will study next.

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Also, please note that next Tuesday, May 3, is a holiday. Do we want to have class, or take next Tuesday off? (Vote)

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*n.b. It was agreed that class would **not** meet on May 3*

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OK, then. Before reading on into Chapter 14, I will briefly **review** what we have read before now.

**Review**

As we have repeatedly reminded ourselves,

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the **overall** theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is the **gospel**.

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The gospel is set forth briefly in the **first four (4) chapters** of this letter.

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We understand that all men, without exception, are **sinners**,

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but that Christ has died in our place, and risen again,

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and that by putting our faith in him, we are saved.

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In the **next** four chapters (i.e. Chapters 5 - 8), Paul examines some of the **implications** of the gospel, for those of us who are being **saved** by it.

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We are no longer slaves to **sin**, but are instead slaves to **Christ**, whom we are called to follow in **obedience**, and are indeed **able** to follow in obedience by the power of his **Spirit** living in us.

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In the third major section of this letter, consisting of **Chapters 9 through 11**, Paul examines the **sad** situation of the Jews who have **rejected** the gospel.

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Yet Paul ends Chapter 11 with an outpouring of **praise** and **worship**, because **he** has understood (and helped **us** to understand), that all of God's ways are **gracious** and **merciful**.

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It is on the basis of the "*mercies of God*" set forth in the first **11** chapters, that Paul calls for proper Christian **behavior**, in **Chapters 12 through 14 and the first part of Chapter 15**, which together constitute the last major section of this letter: the one we are presently studying in this class.

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In Chapter 12 Paul asks his readers to stop being **conformed** to this world, but **instead** to allow God to **transform** them, and he goes on to **describe** the transformed person, who is called to exhibit genuine love in all things, even to those who persecute him.

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In Chapter 13 Paul points out that the transformed Christian person will willingly and gladly **pay** to **governing authorities** and to all other groups and individual men, all of the **taxes**, and **revenues**, and **respect** and **obedience** that is due to them, and hold nothing back for himself, and in this way he will promote **peace** in the church and in the world.

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The only **debt** we should owe, Paul says, is to **love** each other, and in this way we **fulfill** all of the **laws** and **commandments** that there are.

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And the **time** for this transformation is ... **now**.

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That's a **very** quick review of the first 13 Chapters.

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Are there any questions or comments before we move on?

### **Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 14, Verses 1-4**

Will someone please read Romans, Chapter 14, the first four verses, in **Japanese**.

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Thank you. Now will someone please read those same verses in **English**.

**1 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over**

opinions.

**2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.**

**3 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.**

**4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.**

Thank you.

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In Chapters 12 and 13, Paul has been speaking of the sort of **behavior** that should be seen among Christians, who are being **transformed** by the renewing of their minds, and coming closer and closer to the time when they will stand before Christ.

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In Chapter 14, he is continuing this exhortation, but now has picked up the thought that, among the **group** of Christian believers that he is addressing, there will be some **differences**.

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Some will more fully understand all that Paul has been teaching in the first 13 chapters of this letters, and elsewhere, which might be described as “God’s point of view.” (Barth)

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These are the “**strong**” ones among those Christians in Rome whom Paul is addressing.

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Others may have a greater tendency to resist Paul’s teaching and to cling to some of their **pre-Christian** views and practices.

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These are the “**weak**” ones among those whom Paul is addressing.

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Of course in view of all that we have learned in this letter so far, we know that NOBODY is **very** strong, and that **everyone** is VERY weak in relation to God,

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Yet Paul clearly is here drawing a distinction here between “strong” and “weak” Christian's,

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and this is a **real** distinction he is making.

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As we will see he places **himself** in the strong category, for purposes of this discussion.

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But he also reserves some of his strongest **criticisms** for those who are “strong.”

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Verse 1 reads:

**(Verse 1)**

**As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.**

Here Paul begins by addressing himself to the the “**strong in faith**,”

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instructing them regarding how they are to behave toward those who are “**weak in faith**.”

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He tells the **strong** that the are to **welcome** the weak into fellowship.

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This means, conversely, that the weak must not be **excluded** because of their **weakness**.

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And having welcomed the weak into their fellowship, the **strong** are instructed not to **quarrel** with them “*over opinions*.”

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One naturally wonders what sort of “**opinions**” Paul has in mind here,

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and he proceeds to tell us or, at least, to give us an example.

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Verse 2 reads:

**(Verse 2)**

**One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.**

Evidently there were differing opinions among the Christians in Rome regarding what one may **eat**.

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Some of them eat only vegetables, meaning conversely that they do **not** eat any meat,

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These are the ones whom Paul uses as an example of those who are “**weak in faith**.”

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In the **opinion** of these people, eating meat is bad.

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Paul does not **agree** with this opinion.

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But he would not break **fellowship** with them over it.

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And he would not **quarrel** with them over this difference of opinion either.

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Even though he himself is strongly persuaded that **no** food is unclean in itself (v14)

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He urges those who **share** his own strong views on Christian liberty not to quarrel with those

who have more scruples.

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Verse 3 continues

**(Verse 3a)**

**Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains,**

Those who, like Paul, have no objective concern over what they eat, even though they are correct in this assessment, should not **look down** on those who have a different opinion and refuse to eat certain foods.

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Likely in Paul's day this included those Christians who had grown up **Jewish**, knowing only a Jewish diet, and found it difficult to modify their **eating habits** and **opinions** now that they had become Christian.

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And likely among the Christians in Rome in Paul's day, these Jewish Christians were in the **minority**.

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And among the Jewish Christian minority, those with special eating habits were probably an even **smaller** minority.

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Paul says, **welcome** them and don't give them a hard time about their eating habits.

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At the same time Paul has a word for the minority with special eating habits

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Verse 3 concludes:

**(Verse 3b)**

**and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.**

Clearly those who **refrain** from eating meat, do so because in their **opinion** it is **wrong** to eat meat.

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While Paul would let them **alone** to follow their own minority opinions on this,

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he would not permit them to require **others** to embrace their opinions

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or pass **judgment** on those who do **not** share their opinions,

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because, after all, God **himself** welcomes the meat eaters.

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To impose their opinion as **law**, would be an evil to be spoken against.

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A sentiment which is reflected in Verse 4, which reads:

**(Verse 4)**

**Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.**

The “vegetable eaters” have no high ground on which they can stand to look down in judgment on the great mass of meat eaters among whom they find themselves.

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God in Christ has flung open the doors of the Church to everyone who believes.

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and God in Christ alone rules there. He has appointed no judges!

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Questions? Comments.

**Paul’s Letter to the Romans, Chapter 14, Verses 5-9**

Will someone please read Romans, Chapter 14, Verses 5-9, in **Japanese**.

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Thank you. Now will someone please read those same verses in **English**.

**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.**

**6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.**

**7 For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.**

**8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.**

**9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.**

Thank you.

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Verse 5 begins:

**(Verse 5a)**

**One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike.**

Previously Paul examined ritual **food** purity as an example of something regarding which Christians may have different opinions.

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Now he turns to a **second** example.

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Just as some people think that no **food** is impure in itself, some people think that all **days** are alike.

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I think Paul would agree that these are the “*strong in faith*”

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Yet just as there are people who think that some foods are **polluted**,

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there are also some people who think that certain days are **special**,

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and different people may have different ideas regarding which **particular** days are special.

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It is easy to imagine how the Christians in Rome in Paul’s day would include those from Jewish and other religious and secular traditions, including some who had different ideas about **which** days were special and why and how best to celebrate them.

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We have the same thing today.

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How do we handle this?

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Paul allows for individual differences in views on this, saying in the latter part of Verse 5

**(Verse 5b)**

**Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.**

That there can be a **variety** of permissible opinions on this, implies, inescapably, I think, that there are no days which are **intrinsically**, **objectively**, special.

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Yet we **do** set aside days for the worship of the Lord: Sundays, Christmas, Easter, and many or a few others depending on one’s church tradition.

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Probably there is even a **wider** variety of opinions on this point in **our** day that there was in Paul's,

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Nevertheless, **now and then**, Christian men and women practically needed to set aside some times and places to come together and honor the Lord and, Paul says, each of us should be clear in our own minds about this.

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We should **not** just do "**whatever we want**" which is essentially an invitation to **sin**.

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We should each do what we are **convinced**, in our own mind, is the **right** thing to do.

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Verse 6 continues

(Verse 6)

**The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.**

In all these things, the key is that our **motive** is to honor the Lord.

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If we celebrate **Easter**, **Christmas**, and a variety of other special days each year, that is fine so long as it is clear in our minds that we do so in order to **honor the Lord**.

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If we attend church **every Sunday**, that is fine so long as it is clear in our minds that we do so in order to honor the Lord.

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If we attend church on **Saturday**, or **Wednesday**, or **less** or **more** frequently than once per week, all is well so long as we are clear in our own minds that we are honoring the honor the Lord.

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And the same is true for **eating** and for **abstaining** from eating certain **foods**.

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**Even to this day** some people abstain from eating certain **foods** at certain **times** for various **reasons** ("prayer and fasting" during Lent and at other times) which is great if it honors the Lord.

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Some people may pretty much **always** eat three or more meals per day, which is also fine if that honors the Lord.

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The Lord is honored when we are truly **mindful** of him and **thankful** to him.

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And the **Lord** (not Man) is the **measure** of all things.



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Verse 7 reads:

**(Verse 7)**

**For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.**

Each Christian man and woman goes down to **death**, trusting themselves to the Lord, in hope of the **resurrection**, and **life eternal**.

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Our life **beyond** death is absolutely and entirely in the hands of God.

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Likewise our life **before** death has its origin only in God,

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and nothing that we **do** or **refrain from doing**, has **any** significance, except in **relation** to the Lord.

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**His** opinion is the **only** opinion that counts!

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Verse 8 continues

**(Verse 8)**

**For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.**

Wherever we go in **time**, **space**, and **eternity** the only things that **matter**, the only things that even **exist**, exist in reference to God.

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Verse 9 reads:

**(Verse 9)**

**For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.**

You and I have never been any place, nor we will never go anyplace, where Christ has not **already** been or where Christ does not **already** and **eternally** rule.

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He is the Lord of all, and we can only understand our **eating**, and **abstaining**, and **worshiping**, and whatever **other** human doing and being that there may ever be, in relation to Him.

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Questions? Comments?

**Closing Prayer**