

ROMANS

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STUDY THIRTY-FIVE

Putting Grace into Action

Romans 14:1–12

Those who are strong in faith have the tendency to kind of slap around those who are weak. They need to be told, “Calm down, lighten up. You may see your freedom in doing this, but don’t throw out the weak brother.” And, by the way, weak brother, don’t become a legalist trying to make the strong brother live with your convictions.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

LIVING with other Christians in the body of Christ *sounds* easy. We serve the same Savior and affirm a common faith. We should be able to get along. But overlooking differences, making room for people to breathe, and accepting one another . . . that’s another story!

Church congregations are cultural melting pots. Believers have different tastes in music, food, scheduling—you name it! Despite our differences, though, God calls His people to “live together in harmony” (Psalm 133:1). He longs for us to open our arms to one another in love and for our churches to flourish as *havens of grace*.

On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus prayed for “all who will ever believe” in Him that “they will all be one,” just as He and the Father are one (John 17:20–21). Despite our oneness in Christ, conflicts are inevitable. Even Paul disagreed with his friend Barnabas, and they went separate ways for a while.

When conflicts erupt into factions and mudslinging, however, leaders must step in. In most of his letters, Paul had to address some church flare-up, urging his readers to stop bickering, to accept one another, and to *practice grace*.

Now, in Romans 14, Paul applies the ointment of grace to two particularly contentious issues. In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we’ll sit in the Roman congregation to hear the Holy Spirit teach us how to uphold unity despite having differing consciences.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Lean on God as you study His Word. Ask Him to help you live in awareness of His grace. This posture turns every task—menial or important—into true worship. Pause in a moment of prayer to let the Holy Spirit hold your hand and lead your heart as you continue your adventure through Romans.

Now, Father, we lay bare ourselves before You. We have nothing to hide. We couldn't if we tried. We have nothing to prove. You've never asked us to do that. This worship time is all about Your Son, about the good Word that You have, by Your grace, preserved for us to see with our own eyes and put to use.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The key to understanding the text is knowing the social context. The church in Rome included Jews and gentiles who loved and worshiped Jesus but who also struggled to overcome their long-standing differences. Two touchy cultural issues in the Roman congregation had the believers on edge: diet and holy days.

Jewish believers were used to keeping dietary customs based on the Mosaic law and Jewish tradition. Although Jesus had declared all foods clean ([Mark 7:19](#)) and the barrier between Jews and gentiles had been eliminated ([Acts 10](#)), Jewish converts often retained their special diet. Concerns over food and its proper preparation, however, made it almost impossible for Jews to share a meal with gentiles.

Another sensitive issue in the first-century church was the veneration of certain days. The Sabbath and the Hebrew feasts were pillars of Jewish identity. On the other hand, gentile Christians observed holidays with pagan roots.

What we eat and which holidays we celebrate aren't essential to our faith, but, then as now, Christians tend to judge one another over these matters—as well as many other morally grey areas. So, Paul urges us to put grace into action by letting other Christians live according to their conscience. Name some modern-day issues you think might be nonessential matters or matters of conscience and explain why.

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The goal is that we learn to live together even though we disagree. We can disagree, but why do we have to become disagreeable? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Observation: Crucial Issues in the Roman Congregation

Take the first step of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method by observing [Romans 14:1–12](#), looking for contrasts, key words, and commands.¹ Carefully read the statement that Paul used to open his argument in [Romans 14:1](#). Note how he applied the verb *accept* to both sides in [14:1, 3, and 15:7](#). How did this concept set the tone for Paul's teaching?

Regarding Diet—Romans 14:2–4

Paul instructed the Roman congregation to accept one another regarding the first hot issue: diet. Look carefully at [Romans 14:2–4](#). What is the divided opinion in [14:2](#)? What natural tendencies must they guard against in [14:3](#)? According to [14:4](#), what must they remember concerning judging another believer in this matter of conscience?

Regarding Days—Romans 14:5–6

Look at the second issue in [Romans 14:5–6](#). What are the different convictions? What was Paul's admonition? According to verse [14:6](#), what should be every believer's motive?

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Standards for Christian Living—Romans 14:7–12

Paul exhorted the Roman believers to quit looking to people as their standard. According to [Romans 14:7–12](#), what should be the believer's standard? Summarize the two rhetorical questions in these verses and the answer that Paul provided.

What a great thing to remember in your life. Keep your eyes focused on Christ. When you try to please someone else, you'll fail. Or you'll fall under his or her thumb, and that person will control you. Focus your life on Christ. Let Him guide your decisions, your thinking. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Mutual Acceptance Among Believers

Paul told the Roman believers that they should “accept the one who is weak in faith, but not to have quarrels over opinions” (Romans 14:1 NASB). How else is the word *opinions* in [14:1](#) translated in the NIV, NLT, and NKJV?

The term *weak* conveys frailty, like a toddler whose muscles are developing and who needs handholds to walk. In this context, it refers to a person whose faith is still maturing and can't yet walk spiritually without the handholds of concrete rules and regulations, strict dos and don'ts. The strong walk confidently in their freedom in Christ, relying on the Spirit to lead them. Reread [14:1](#) in the NET and MSG. Rewrite this verse in your own words.

Strong folks, please, stop putting down the weak ones. Accept them.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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After explaining to the Roman believers how they were to accept one another in issues that involve no clear command of Scripture, Paul asked them, “Why do you *condemn* another believer?” and “Why do you *look down on* another believer?” (Romans 14:10, emphasis added). The weak tended to “condemn” the strong for their liberties. While the strong tended to “look down on” the weak for their immaturity.

Think about how the two errors look in our day. List a couple of modern-day concrete examples of each tendency.

Do I have convictions? I have convictions you know nothing about. And I will not foist them on you because I can't find a book, chapter, and verse for that conviction. But you have the freedom to find out what yours are, because you're going to grow. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Living a Life of Grace

Scripture exhorts all believers to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus, who is himself full of grace and truth (*John 1:14; 2 Peter 3:11–18*).

As members of the body of Christ, we have biblical standards of conduct. How do passages such as *1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1–2; and James 5:19–20* show that we should hold one another accountable in matters of biblical truths? Outline the process that Jesus Himself gave for confronting things that are wrong in *Matthew 18:15–17*.

There are times we must confront things that are wrong. We have a biblical basis for doing it, and there are times that confrontation may lead to a division in relationships. There's everything right about that. It isn't pleasant, but it's right. When those convictions are set forth in the Scriptures, and when you have to compromise your convictions for there to be a relationship, there needs to be a break in the relationship. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Put Grace Into Action!

Pastor Chuck Swindoll provides three workable, wise, and timeless principles that will help us put grace into action.

First, *a life of grace begins with mutual acceptance*. Do you struggle to accept certain believers and their lifestyles? How does Paul's teaching help you show grace?

Lighten up on your severity if you tend to be severe toward those who disagree with you. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Second, *an attitude of grace requires releasing others to be who they are*. Does anyone come to mind whom you might need to release from an offense?

Is there somebody you need to let go? Would you please do that? A lot of people need room to heal. Would you please give them room to heal? We all need space. Give space. Space and grace, they go together. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Third, *a commitment to grace means that I never assume a role I'm not qualified to fill*. At times, we feel the temptation to impose our convictions on others—acting like their self-appointed life coaches. Since we cannot know all the facts and be totally objective, Christ is the only One qualified to judge. In the closing moments of your Bible study, take a moment to request God's help to embrace the freedom that grace brings to you and the courage to extend it to those around you.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, how gracious You have been toward me! Thank You for patiently loving and pursuing me, patiently teaching and building me, and patiently waiting on me to grow in the likeness of Your Son, Jesus Christ. I confess to You the many times I did not extend the grace that I receive from You. Help me to put grace into action. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2008, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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