

# Romans 14

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| SPEAKER  | Matt Ryniker                                                                               |
| DATE     | Sunday, July 19, 2026                                                                      |
| PASSAGES | Romans 14; Mark 7; Galatians 4; Colossians 3; Luke 17; Proverbs 27; Ephesians 5; Romans 15 |
| MESSAGE  | Begins at 1:17:57 in the service                                                           |

## THE BIG IDEA

Paul spends a chapter telling the Roman church not to judge one another over diets and holy days — and he never once says that nothing matters. There is a judgment, there is a judge, and he is neither you nor the person irritating you. Which means the only thing left to govern your freedom is love for the person God paid for in blood.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Obedience is not repayment. You are not working off a low-interest loan to Jesus — you are broadcasting affection to someone you love, in the small things nobody sees.
- ◆ “Weak in faith” is not an insult about vegetables. It describes a believer whose grip on his identity in Christ is not yet strong enough to hold his conscience — and God has welcomed him anyway.
- ◆ Jesus settled the food question himself. What defiles a person comes out of the heart, not in through the stomach.
- ◆ If your conscience says no, then for you the answer is no. Christ called you to peace, and acting against your own conscience is not peace even when your theology is right.
- ◆ “Do not judge” cannot mean “never say anything true out loud.” Jesus commands rebuke, Proverbs prefers an open wound to a hidden love, and Paul says to expose the works of darkness.
- ◆ Not everything is a matter of opinion. Jesus has firm views about the things that come out of the heart, and those were never on the table.
- ◆ Every one of us gets a real meeting with Christ, and it will not be one size fits all. Loving someone means rooting for that meeting to go well.

- ◆ The worth of your fellow man is set by what was paid for him. That price was the blood of Christ, which outranks your right to the bacon.

► 1:17:58

Matt picked up where Romans 12 had left the church: a life offered as an honor offering, not a retro payment. “You’re not paying off a zero or low interest loan back to Jesus. You’re not going to be making license plates in heaven.” Forgiven, adopted, set free — and therefore free to live the rest of it motivated by love.

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## Flirting in his general direction

► 1:19:33

The illustration came from college. Matt and his roommate Johnny played a game with no announced start, only ever in public: say something insane, straight-faced, to make the other one laugh. On a packed morning bus Matt confided that the floors had been feeling slippery lately, so he had taken to putting a small scoop of peanut butter on his shoe before boarding. Johnny would counter with the fortune he was about to spend on custom bingo chips. Nobody else in the crowd was the point.

That is the register of Christian obedience. “I don’t have to be generous when no one’s looking. I don’t have to offer service.” If the Lord nudges you toward a conversation about Jesus and you chicken out, the world does not end and no one gets smitten. The opportunity is a *can*, not a *got to* — motivated by the desire to bring joy to someone you love. That is the motive Paul carries into Romans 14.

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## Why food and holidays were the fight

► 1:22:34

“As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 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.”

ROMANS 14:1-3 ↗

Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome in AD 49. The church that remained went largely Gentile, leadership included, reading the Old Testament and reaching other Gentiles — and then the Jews were allowed back. Hence the identity questions: do I have to become Jewish now that I belong to the Jewish

Messiah, or do Jewish believers have to become un-Jewish because of freedom in Christ? Is it bad that I want bacon? Do we circumcise our son?

Paul's answer runs underneath all of it: do not despise or judge someone God has already welcomed. Matt was careful that this does not swallow every subject — “it wouldn't be all other topics, since not every topic fits under opinion.”

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## Why the food-keeper is the “weak” one

► 1:24:54

Romans 5 through 8 had already established it: we were not merely affected by Adam's sin, we were in him — the way Levi tithed to Melchizedek while still in Abraham's loins ([Hebrews 7:9–10](#)). Matt conceded that one or two people are tired of that analogy, and used it anyway, because the payoff is the whole point: hidden in Christ, we are there with him, and we benefit from a perfect lifetime of obedience, manger to tomb. “Made righteous. Not falsely labeled in some superficial unreal way.” Co-crucified with Christ, we are dead to the law — food guidelines included.

So confidence about who you are in Christ is a *strength* of faith, and sliding back into the dos and don'ts is weakness. But note where Paul puts the accent: weak *and beloved all the same*. “When someone else is wrong right next to you, you can still be primarily motivated by Christ's love for them.” And the other direction, which Matt applied to himself: when my confidence in the gospel is thinner than I would like, I am still among the beloved.

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## Jesus already ruled on this

► 1:27:21

“There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him... since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

MARK 7:14–19 ↗

Two clarifications, both from Matt. You can still get parasites from bad water; that is not the defilement in view, and you may believe in germ theory in good conscience. And Jesus is not against handwashing — [Mark 7:3](#) describes ceremonial washing, one of the many things the people around him went hard on while leaving out justice and love. So keep sending the kids to the sink.

What does defile is listed without mercy: evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness (Mark 7:21–23). “I wonder what it would have been like to stand there. Is he looking at me when he says one?” Which cuts both ways: if Jesus declared it clean, it is clean — “just like you, by the way. If Jesus declares you clean, you are clean.”

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## And yet — if you can’t process it, don’t do it

► 1:32:47

“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... Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.”

ROMANS 14:4–5 ↗

Matt pressed on who gets upheld in verse 4. It is the brother with the weak faith — the one whose opinion is, by Paul’s own reckoning, incorrect. “It’s their conscience that’s burning, but not the truth. However, he is still upheld.” What a relief for the rest of us.

Which is why conscience decides the case. [Colossians 3:14–15](#) — put on love, and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which you were called. Living against your conscience is not living in peace. “Jesus didn’t call you into anxiety. We bring that. Jesus didn’t call you into fear. We’re plenty good on that on our own. He’s called you to peace.”

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## Celebrate or don’t — but not as a slave

► 1:35:19

The same freedom runs through the calendar. The one who observes the day observes it in honor of the Lord; the one who eats and the one who abstains both give thanks ([Romans 14:6](#)). Celebration is good. What is not good is forgetting your identity and falling back into *have to*.

“But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days and months and seasons and years.”

GALATIANS 4:9–11 ↗

And the second reason freedom is not a private possession: Romans 14:7–9 — none of us lives to himself, none of us dies to himself, and whether we live or die we are the Lord's. Christian freedom was never meant for self-indulgence.

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## Four things that are all true at once

► 1:40:35

Matt put the whole tangle on the table: Romans 14:10–13 says plainly that we do not judge one another and do not lay a stumbling block. But Jesus says

“if your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.” Proverbs says better is open rebuke than hidden love; faithful are the wounds of a friend. Paul says take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

“There is one judge, and he's not you, and you're not him — but he's still real.” None of the four collapses. What collapses is the enemy's version, whispered as humility: never rebuke, only kiss profusely. That reading makes Proverbs nonsense.

Matt was direct about the part that stings: “Your growth as a person surely matters more to God than always protecting your feelings.” He had received it himself. After a service, a brother suggested he consider a Toastmasters class. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

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## The meeting that puts it in order

► 1:44:26

“You will not be answering to me after this life.” We all stand before Christ, and Matt insisted the Bible does not describe two identical meetings, one Christian and one not. Jesus said he would discuss what we did — you fed me, you clothed me, you visited me — and Scripture warns of differing degrees of reward and correction for believers.

Hence a healthy fear of God, which Matt, an admitted amateur linguist, noted is the ordinary word for fear in both Testaments. Not fear of someone evil, or of someone who means you harm, or of a cartoon villain. If the raw power of a single angel keeps flattening people in Scripture, what happens standing before Christ? His picture: a potato goes soft in the microwave, changed by nothing but radiation.

“How much more powerful is Christ than just a little Cuisinart watt?” Even granted that he is pure love personified, our lingering rebellion will squirm — and we will fall in love with him more than ever.

► 1:49:28

Then the question that reframes rebuke entirely. If Matt had one year left and you were rooting for him to stand before Christ with less pain and sorrow, you would tell him to reconcile with so-and-so, to put things in order. “Would my response be, ‘Hey man, don’t judge, the Bible says don’t judge?’” None of us is promised a day. If you had one shot to help someone repent of what is twisting them up, what would love do?

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## The price already paid for the person next to you

► 1:51:11

“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. 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.”

ROMANS 14:14–16 ↗

Worth is what someone is willing to pay. The worth of your fellow man is the blood of Christ. Matt’s test case: insisting on your favorite beer in front of someone who just got sober, and defending it as your right as an American and as a Christian. “Imagine me before Jesus and him saying, ‘Why did you treat this person for whom I died so selfishly?’ Would it be real smart for me to say, ‘Well, Jesus, it was my right?’”

► 1:53:25

The kingdom is not eating and drinking but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, so pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding (Romans 14:17–21). Matt would gladly talk a kosher-keeping brother into more freedom, for that brother’s own benefit — “but that doesn’t mean I just show up at their house with a briefcase of bacon just to rub it in their face.”

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## Who the strong actually are

► 1:56:03

“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself.”

ROMANS 15:1–3 ↗

“The strong are not just the mighty beef eaters.” They are the ones with a working grasp of who they are in Christ — and no one gets to cash that in for indulgence. We are free, and we do not belong to ourselves.

Matt landed on two things to work backwards from: you will have that meeting with Jesus, and you are to be motivated by Christ’s love for others. “No one in the whole Bible taught that the reason we don’t judge is because nothing matters. Everything matters, especially your fellow man.” The people in the room, the ones you came with, the ones bickering at you — God’s treasures.

He closed by refusing to let it wait until lunch, giving the room a minute of silence to ask the Spirit for one way to respond to Romans 14, then praying that the Shepherd’s rod and staff would nudge, and speak loudly enough to be heard.

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**FOR FURTHER STUDY****SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Romans 12](#)
- [Romans 14:1–3](#)
- [Hebrews 7:9–10](#)
- [Mark 7:14–19](#)
- [Mark 7:3](#)
- [Mark 7:21–23](#)
- [Romans 14:4–5](#)
- [Colossians 3:14–15](#)
- [Romans 14:6](#)
- [Galatians 4:9–11](#)
- [Romans 14:7–9](#)
- [Romans 14:10–13](#)
- [Luke 17:3](#)
- [Proverbs 27:5–6](#)
- [Ephesians 5:11](#)
- [Matthew 25:35–36](#)
- [Romans 14:14–16](#)
- [Romans 14:17–21](#)
- [Romans 15:1–3](#)

**FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP**

1. Matt described obedience as flirting in God's general direction — small gestures nobody else notices. What does that look like in your week, and where has it turned back into obligation?
2. Where are you the weak one in Romans 14 — a place your conscience burns even though you suspect you are free?
3. Think of someone whose convictions you quietly despise, or who you suspect despises yours. What would it change to start from the fact that God has already welcomed them?
4. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." When has a rebuke shaped you, and what keeps you from offering one now?
5. If someone you love had a year left and you wanted their meeting with Christ to go well, what would you say to them? What does that tell you to do this week?

**ABOUT THE SPEAKER**

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

**Watch the full message:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6d5BdwCCcw&t=4677s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.