

EXEGETICAL GUIDE



Romans 14:1-12



**BE UNITED
IN CHRIST**

Be United in Christ

Exegetical Guide

Romans 14:1–12

BE UNITED IN CHRIST EXEGETICAL GUIDE

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Exegetical Guide Romans 14:1–12

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Be United in Christ

Exegetical Guide

Romans 14:1–12

Unity Despite Diversity

Pride leads to disunity. When a believer thinks he is always right—even over issues not clearly defined in Scripture—he might be tempted to judge his brothers or sisters in Christ who don't agree. In his hope for conformity to his way of thinking, he is misunderstanding true Christian unity.

Christian unity is based on God's acceptance of people into His family. How does one gain the acceptance of God? Faith. This faith guides the day-to-day actions of Christians, and sometimes it leads us to respond to life differently as we give thanks to God. When we rejoice in this diversity, trusting God's judgment, we can truly Be United in Christ.

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HOW TO USE A BE UNITED IN CHRIST EXEGETICAL GUIDE

An exegetical guide models how to study a passage of Scripture. The Introduction provides the context, while **Connection to Be United in Christ** highlights the text's importance for Christian unity. The Passage presents the Biblical text being studied.

We begin by **Studying the Passage** because God's messengers must convey God's words accurately. The Passage Comparison presents the text in its original Greek or Hebrew alongside seven English translations. Comparing translations allows for a better understanding of the passage and provides insight into the intent of the original Biblical manuscripts. The Structural Layout divides the passage into its component parts, because to understand what God said we must understand how He said it. It is an essential step in Bible study, but do not be discouraged if this section seems unfamiliar or daunting. The Narrative Flow explains the Biblical author's flow of thought through the passage. The Passage Overview then presents a simple outline that will form the foundation of subsequent outlines and the sermon manuscript itself. The Passage Focus distills the text into a statement that will be the main idea of the sermon. We then identify several Resources to further your study.

Having studied the passage, we are ready to begin **Preparing the Sermon**. Good preaching feeds God's people on God's Word, so our messages must be both healthful and appetizing. This is why this section begins by laying out several Sermon Ingredients that will be used to prepare a nutritious and appealing message. We must present God's Word accurately and clearly so that God's people will understand it with their minds, embrace it in their hearts, and apply it to their lives. The Passage Outline presents the passage's structure and flow while the Passage Details provide the grammatical, historical, and theological information needed to understand and teach the passage. The message is then fortified with Applications and seasoned with Illustrations. These ingredients are combined to prepare a spiritual meal to feed God's children. The Sermon Outline rephrases the Passage Outline to make it more understandable to an audience. The Sermon Manuscript for Your Use then offers an example of how the passage might be preached. Then we identify several Sermon Examples that model good preaching on the text.

Thus, an exegetical guide presents both a comprehensive analysis of one particular Bible passage and a model for studying and preaching Scripture. We pray that God will use this guide to promote love for Him, fidelity to His Word, and unity in His church.

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INTRODUCTION

The church in Rome was most likely started by Jewish and Gentile converts at Pentecost who made their way back to Rome (Acts 2:10). In Romans 15:25–26, the apostle Paul says that he is on his way to Jerusalem to deliver a financial gift from Christians in Macedonia and Achaia. From the book of Acts, it appears that this letter was written during Paul’s third missionary journey as he began to make his way back toward Jerusalem with this contribution (Acts 18–21).

After Paul’s extended greeting to the Romans (1:1–15), he states the theme of the letter (1:16–17). He makes the case that both Jews and Gentiles are condemned under sin (1:18–3:20). Then Paul argues that justification is based on faith alone, using Abraham as an example of why this is so (3:21–4:25).

An extended section (5:1–8:39) details the results of justification. The Christian’s hope of glory is found only in Christ through the gift of grace (5:1–21). We are free from the bondage of sin due to our union with Christ (6:1–23). We are also free from the law due to our union with Christ and the working of the Spirit (7:1–25). Finally, the Spirit shows us that we have been freed to experience new life in Christ (8:1–13). We have been adopted into the family of God (8:14–17), and we have been guaranteed glory, final redemption, and God’s never ending love (8:18–39).

In the next section, Paul addresses God’s relationship with the Jewish people. He talks about God’s election of Israel (9:1–29), the need of both Jews and Gentiles to pursue righteousness by faith, and how Israel has rejected God’s call (9:30–10:21). Finally, Paul discusses Israel’s future salvation (11:1–36).

In the final section, Paul addresses how justification by faith should affect the believer’s life. Faith should result in self-sacrifice (12:1–2), humility and a willingness to serve others (12:3–21), subjection to secular rulers and love for others (13:1–14), and unity through accepting others (14:1–15:13). Paul concludes with an extended discussion of his future travels, an exhortation for prayers on his behalf, and a series of greetings to his fellow workers in Christ (15:14–16:27).

Connection to Be United in Christ

As we come to understand the gospel more completely, some of us will live out our faith differently than others in areas that are not clearly defined in Scripture. Some will understand the full significance of our freedom in Christ; others might struggle with how faith in Christ allows us to live in relation to the culture around us. As we worship with people of weak and strong faith, it is critical to remember that God is the one who accepts us into His family. He is the final judge of our faith. When we set aside differences over nonessential issues, we can truly Be United in Christ.

PASSAGE: ROMANS 14:1–12

Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written,

“AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME,
AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.”

So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.¹

¹ While there are many fine Bible translations, the New American Standard Bible (NASB) is used here for its consistent, word-for-word translation.

STUDYING THE PASSAGE

Romans 14:1–12

Unity Despite Diversity

PASSAGE COMPARISON

Romans 14:1–12

The Passage Comparison presents the original Greek text alongside seven English translations. Comparing translations allows for a better understanding of the passage and provides insight into the intent of the original Biblical manuscripts.

GREEK	NASB	ESV	KJV
¹ Τὸν δὲ ἀσθενοῦντα τῇ πίστει προσλαμβάνεσθε, μὴ εἰς διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν.	¹ Now accept the one who is weak in faith, <i>but</i> not for <i>the purpose of</i> passing judgment on his opinions.	¹ As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.	¹ Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, <i>but</i> not to doubtful disputations.
² ὃς μὲν πιστεύει φαγεῖν πάντα, ὁ δὲ ἀσθενῶν λάχανα ἐσθίει.	² One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables <i>only</i> .	² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.	² For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.
³ ὁ ἐσθίων τὸν μὴ ἐσθίοντα μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτω, ὁ δὲ μὴ ἐσθίων τὸν ἐσθίοντα μὴ κρινέτω, ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτὸν προσελάβετο.	³ The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.	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.	³ Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.
⁴ σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνων ἀλλότριον οἰκέτην; τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ στήκει ἢ πίπτει· σταθήσεται δέ, δυνατεῖ γὰρ ὁ κύριος στήσαι αὐτόν.	⁴ Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.	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.	⁴ Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.
⁵ Ὅς μὲν [γὰρ] κρίνει ἡμέραν παρ' ἡμέραν, ὃς δὲ κρίνει πᾶσαν ἡμέραν· ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ νοῦ ἢ πληροφορεῖσθω.	⁵ One person regards one day above another, another regards every day <i>alike</i> . Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.	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.	⁵ One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day <i>alike</i> . Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

NKJV	NRSV	NIV	NLT
¹ Receive one who is weak in the faith, <i>but</i> not to disputes over doubtful things.	¹ Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.	¹ Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters.	¹ Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.
² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats <i>only</i> vegetables.	² Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables.	² One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.	² For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables.
³ Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.	³ Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them.	³ The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them.	³ Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them.
⁴ Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.	⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.	⁴ Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.	⁴ Who are you to condemn someone else's servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord's help, they will stand and receive his approval.
⁵ One person esteems <i>one</i> day above another; another esteems every day <i>alike</i> . Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.	⁵ Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds.	⁵ One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.	⁵ In the same way, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike. You should each be fully convinced that whichever day you choose is acceptable.

GREEK	NASB	ESV	KJV
⁶ ὁ φρονῶν τὴν ἡμέραν κυρίῳ φρονεῖ· καὶ ὁ ἐσθίων κυρίῳ ἐσθίει, εὐχαριστεῖ γὰρ τῷ θεῷ· καὶ ὁ μὴ ἐσθίων κυρίῳ οὐκ ἐσθίει καὶ εὐχαριστεῖ τῷ θεῷ.	⁶ He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.	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.	⁶ He that regardeth the day, regardeth <i>it</i> unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard <i>it</i> . 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 οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἑαυτῷ ζῆ καὶ οὐδεὶς ἑαυτῷ ἀποθνήσκει·	⁷ For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself;	⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.	⁷ For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.
⁸ ἂν τε γὰρ ζῶμεν, τῷ κυρίῳ ζῶμεν, ἂν τε ἀποθνήσκωμεν, τῷ κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκομεν. ἂν τε οὖν ζῶμεν ἂν τε ἀποθνήσκωμεν, τοῦ κυρίου ἐσμέν.	⁸ for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.	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.	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 εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἔζησεν, ἵνα καὶ νεκρῶν καὶ ζώντων κυριεύσῃ.	⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.	⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.	⁹ For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.
¹⁰ Σὺ δὲ τί κρίνεις τὸν ἀδελφόν σου; ἢ καὶ σὺ τί ἐξουθενεῖς τὸν ἀδελφόν σου; πάντες γὰρ παραστησόμεθα τῷ βήματι τοῦ θεοῦ,	¹⁰ But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.	¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;	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.
¹¹ γέγραπται γάρ· ζῶ ἐγώ, λέγει κύριος, ὅτι ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται τῷ θεῷ.	¹¹ For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD."	¹¹ for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."	¹¹ For it is written, <i>As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.</i>
¹² ἄρα [οὖν] ἕκαστος ἡμῶν περὶ ἑαυτοῦ λόγον δώσει [τῷ θεῷ].	¹² So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.	¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.	¹² So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

NKJV	NRSV	NIV	NLT
<p>⁶He who observes the day, observes <i>it</i> to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe <i>it</i>. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.</p>	<p>⁶Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.</p>	<p>⁶Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.</p>	<p>⁶Those who worship the Lord on a special day do it to honor him. Those who eat any kind of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God.</p>
<p>⁷For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.</p>	<p>⁷We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves.</p>	<p>⁷For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone.</p>	<p>⁷For we don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves.</p>
<p>⁸For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.</p>	<p>⁸If 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.</p>	<p>⁸If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.</p>	<p>⁸If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.</p>
<p>⁹For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.</p>	<p>⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.</p>	<p>⁹For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.</p>	<p>⁹Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—to be Lord both of the living and of the dead.</p>
<p>¹⁰But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.</p>	<p>¹⁰Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.</p>	<p>¹⁰You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.</p>	<p>¹⁰So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.</p>
<p>¹¹For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God."</p>	<p>¹¹For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God."</p>	<p>¹¹It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'"</p>	<p>¹¹For the Scriptures say, "'As surely as I live,' says the LORD, 'every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will declare allegiance to God.'"</p>
<p>¹²So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.</p>	<p>¹²So then, each of us will be accountable to God.</p>	<p>¹²So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.</p>	<p>¹²Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God.</p>

STRUCTURAL LAYOUT

The Structural Layout shows how the passage fits together. The left column contains the Biblical text divided into its structural elements. Main clauses are aligned left and related elements are highlighted in color. The right column explains how the various elements function in context.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>¹ Now accept the one who is weak in faith,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.....</p> | <p>This clause is the main command of the first section.</p> <p>This clause explains what accepting the weak in faith does not mean.</p> |
| <p>² One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.....</p> | <p>These clauses illustrate an example of the difference between strong and weak faith.</p> |
| <p>³ The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and.....</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats,</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">for God has accepted him.....</p> | <p>This clause illustrates how the strong might pass judgment on the weak.</p> <p>This clause illustrates how the weak might pass judgment on the strong.</p> <p>This clause provides the reason believers should not pass judgment on one another.</p> |
| <p>⁴ Who are you to judge the servant of another?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To his own master he stands or falls;.....</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">and he will stand,</p> <p style="padding-left: 120px;">for the Lord is able to make him stand.....</p> | <p>This question introduces an argument for why the strong and weak are to accept one another.</p> <p>This clause provides the reason one shouldn't judge another.</p> <p>This clause asserts Paul's confidence in our ability to stand before God, our master.</p> <p>This clause explains Paul's confidence.</p> |
| <p>⁵ One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.</p> | <p>This illustration begins the explanation of how believers can live for God and yet hold different opinions.</p> <p>This clause provides the necessary condition for how one should live for God.</p> |
| <p>⁶ He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord,.....</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">for he gives thanks to God;</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat,</p> <p style="padding-left: 120px;">and gives thanks to God.....</p> | <p>These two clauses are the first illustration of what it means to be "fully convinced." It is something done "for the Lord."</p> <p>This clause is how we know a person does what he does "for the Lord."</p> <p>This clause is the second illustration of what it means to be "fully convinced."</p> <p>This clause explains how we know a person does what he does "for the Lord."</p> |

7	For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself;	These two clauses explain whom we are <i>not</i> to live for.
8	for if we live , we live for the Lord, or if we die , we die for the Lord;	These two clauses explain whom we <i>are</i> to live for.
	therefore whether we live or die , we are the Lord's	This clause shows why we don't live for ourselves but for God.
9	For to this Christ died and lived again;	This clause clarifies why believers are the Lord's.
	that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living	This clause gives the purpose for Christ's death and resurrection.
10	But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt ?	These two questions mark the beginning of the last section, which returns to the original point.
	For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.	This clause explains why we are not to judge a brother or regard him with contempt.
11	For it is written,	This clause introduces the quote in the second half of the verse.
	“AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.”	This OT quotation provides affirmation of Paul's statement in verse 10b.
12	So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.	This clause summarizes verses 10b–11.

NARRATIVE FLOW

The apostle Paul challenges those who are strong in faith to accept those who are weak in faith (v. 1). He illustrates the issue by using the example of eating and not eating certain foods (v. 2). The reason that the strong and weak must not judge one another is because God has accepted them both (v. 3). We are acceptable to God because He is able to make us stand before Him (v. 4).

Believers must be convinced about their choices regarding food and the observance of certain days for worship (v. 5). Believers should do all things for the Lord (v. 6). Everyone's life from beginning to end should be lived for God because we belong to Him (vv. 7–8). The reason we belong to Him is because Christ died and rose again for us (v. 9).

The final section repeats the point of the first section: Christians must not judge or show contempt toward other believers because God is the one who is the ultimate judge (v. 10). Paul quotes Isaiah 45:23 as confirmation of this statement (v. 11). He finishes the section by reminding the believers that they each will give an account to God (v. 12).

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Romans 14:1–12 has three main sections:

- I. CHRISTIANS MUST ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE GOD MAKES US ACCEPTABLE (14:1–4)**
- II. CHRISTIANS MUST LIVE BY FAITH WITH THANKSGIVING BECAUSE WE BELONG TO GOD (14:5–9)**
- III. CHRISTIANS MUST NOT JUDGE ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE GOD WILL BE THE FINAL JUDGE (14:10–12)**

PASSAGE FOCUS

Christians must accept one another, avoid judging one another, and instead do all that we do for God because He is our ultimate master and judge.

RESOURCES

Basic Resources

Bruce, F. F. *Romans*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985.

MacArthur, John F. *Romans 9–16*. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994.

Moo, Douglas J. *Romans*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000.

Intermediate Resources

Moo, Douglas J. *The Epistle to the Romans*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996.

Thielman, Frank S. *Romans*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018.

Advanced Resources

Cranfield, C. E. B. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Vol. 2. The International Critical Commentary. London: T&T Clark, 1979.

Dunn, James D. G. *Romans 9–16*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988.

PREPARING THE SERMON

Romans 14:1–12

Unity Despite Diversity

SERMON INGREDIENTS

Romans 14:1–12

PASSAGE OUTLINE

I. CHRISTIANS MUST ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE GOD MAKES US ACCEPTABLE (14:1–4)

A. The strong must accept the weak in faith (4:1–2)

1. Christians don't accept others in order to pass judgment on them
2. Different levels of maturity result in different actions by Christians

B. We must accept one another for God accepts us (4:3–4)

1. The strong should not treat the weak with contempt
2. The weak should not judge the strong
3. Christians should not judge God's servants

II. CHRISTIANS MUST LIVE THEIR LIVES BY FAITH WITH THANKSGIVING BECAUSE WE BELONG TO GOD (14:5–9)

A. Faith should guide our convictions (14:5)

B. We live our lives for the Lord with thanksgiving (14:6)

1. When we observe days and eat, we do so for the Lord
2. When we choose not to eat, we do so for the Lord
3. Thanksgiving should characterize Christians' actions

C. Christ died and rose again that we might be His (14:7–9)

1. We don't live or die for ourselves
2. We live and die for Christ
3. Christ died and rose again that He might be Lord of all

III. CHRISTIANS MUST NOT JUDGE ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE GOD WILL BE THE FINAL JUDGE (14:10–12)

A. All Christians will stand before God in judgment (14:10)

B. Scripture speaks of God's future judgment (14:11)

C. All Christians will give an account of themselves to God (14:12)

PASSAGE DETAILS

Romans 14:1

Now accept the one who is weak in faith,

“Accept” means “to extend a welcome, to receive into one’s home or circle of acquaintances.”² It is the same word the apostle Paul uses in verse 3 in reference to God accepting Christians. He does not want the Christians in Rome to play favorites based on spiritual maturity. Christian unity applies to both the mature and the immature members of God’s family.

“Weak” means to “experience some personal incapacity or limitation.”³ To be “weak in faith” means at least some of the believers in Rome were not fully living out their freedom in Christ. They had not grasped all the implications of the gospel for daily life in terms of what they ate and how they celebrated together.

“Weak in faith” cannot mean insufficient faith for salvation. Nor can it mean misguided faith—placing faith in what or how they ate or how they celebrated together as a means to earn God’s favor. Paul would certainly not have tolerated anything that replaced salvation by faith alone in Christ alone.⁴ So “weak in faith” means lacking assurance to do certain things that a relationship with Christ would allow.⁵

but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

“Passing judgment” is one word in Greek. It means “engagement in verbal conflict because of differing viewpoints.”⁶ “Opinions” means “thought, opinion, reasoning.”⁷ “Passing judgment on his opinions” is explained in various ways by both Bible translators and commentators.⁸ The idea behind these words is “don’t make a big deal about things that aren’t clearly right or wrong.”

Christians are not to invite people into their lives in order to judge how others live out their faith in relation to matters that are not essential to salvation. Christian unity does not mean making sure everyone agrees with everyone else’s opinions.

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Fredrick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 883. This important reference work is the standard dictionary of New Testament Greek and is commonly referred to as BDAG after its four editors.

³ BDAG, 142.

⁴ See Galatians 1:6–10 for how Paul responds when the gospel is threatened. Romans 14:3 also implies that this is not a salvation issue.

⁵ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 836; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, The International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 1979), 697–698.

⁶ BDAG, 231.

⁷ BDAG, 232.

⁸ See pages 9 and 11 in this exegetical guide. See also F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 245; Cranfield, 700–701; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, World Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 798–799; Moo, 836–837.

Romans 14:2

One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

This is the first of three examples that Paul uses to illustrate what “weak” means.⁹ He first discusses the confidence to eat certain foods. This is most likely a Jewish versus Gentile issue.¹⁰ It is not an issue of keeping the Jewish food laws for salvation but rather of still being influenced by culture and conscience and not fully embracing the freedom that comes from salvation in Christ.

Paul does not state the reason why the “weak” Christian eats only vegetables, but, by using the term “weak,” he reveals that eating other items should not be an issue for a mature Christian.¹¹

Romans 14:3

The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat,

“To regard with contempt” means “to show by one’s attitude or manner of treatment that an entity has no merit or worth.”¹² Mature believers should not pass judgment on the less mature, and they should not be condescending toward immature believers. Paul doesn’t seek to avoid just the verbal arguments but also the negative attitudes.

and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats,

That both sides are at fault in this issue is clear from this clause. Both weak and strong Christians are not treating each other as believers should. Those brothers and sisters in Christ whose consciences are limiting their food choices should not hold every believer to their conviction.

There can be no Christian unity if contempt and judgment are the default responses toward another believer with a differing opinion.

for God has accepted him.

The reason both contempt and judgment are wrong is because God has already accepted all His children. God is the ultimate judge; no one has a higher standard. If God welcomes, who are we to judge or look down on another? God does not welcome us for the purpose of showing contempt. The apostle John expresses the same idea by saying, “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Romans 14:4

Who are you to judge the servant of another?

Paul now begins a fuller explanation of why judgment should be withheld. “Servant” means “house slave.”¹³ Paul’s metaphor here relies on a common understanding and acceptance of slavery in the Roman world. Paul is neither endorsing nor condemning slavery but is using the universal practice at that time to make a greater point: a person doesn’t have the right to interfere with a neighbor’s expectations for his servants. A servant is answerable to his master, not to his master’s neighbor.

⁹ The third example, drinking wine, appears in Romans 14:21.

¹⁰ Note the language of clean and unclean in the further discussion of verses 13–23. See also Dunn, 800.

¹¹ There is a debate on whether the issue here is meat sacrificed to idols as in 1 Corinthians 8–10. For a discussion on this issue see Dunn, 799–802; Moo, 827–828. The idea that what is not eaten is meat can be implied from 14:21.

¹² BDAG, 352.

¹³ BDAG, 694.

With this statement, Paul is doing two subtle things. First, he is reminding each believer that neither the weak nor the strong is a master over another believer. Second, he is implying that the strong and the weak are servants of someone else.¹⁴

To his own master he stands or falls;

“Master” is the same word used for “Lord” in the New Testament. It can refer to the master of a slave (Matthew 18:25) or to Christ (Acts 2:34–36). Paul is using his language in a purposeful way. While he begins talking about a common occurrence in the Roman world, his word choice naturally points to Christ as the Lord—the master of all believers.

“Stands or falls” means to “be accepted or not”: “It is the Lord ... whom the believer must please and who will ultimately determine the acceptability of the believer and his or her conduct.”¹⁵ God ultimately determines the acceptability of each person, because He is the master of His people.

and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Why does a person stand or fall? “The Lord’s approval is attained not by following rules pertaining to food but by the Lord’s own sustaining power.”¹⁶ Regardless of how other Christians view each other, a believer’s acceptance and approval by God are not based on a right understanding of issues not clearly spelled out in Scripture.

Romans 14:5

One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike.

“Regards” is the same Greek word translated in verse 4 as the word “judge.” This word can also mean “to prefer” or “recognize, approve.”¹⁷ It is not completely clear what the issue with days refers to, but most scholars believe it is related to observing Jewish ceremonial days.¹⁸ Verse 6 below implies that the issue had to do with fasting on these days.

Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

To “be fully convinced” is similar to “fully assured,” which occurs in Romans 4:21. This phrase refers to Abraham’s belief in God’s promises that led to Abraham’s righteousness. Paul argues that the Romans can’t make God accept them by what they do or don’t do. When faced with an issue that is not clearly spelled out in Scripture, faith must be the guiding principle.

Romans 14:6

He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

Paul is highlighting the proper motivation for the actions believers should take when faced with an issue not clearly spelled out in Scripture. Whatever the Roman Christians are doing, they should be doing it “for the Lord” and not for someone else. The Christian’s motivation for behavior should always be for God and His glory.¹⁹

¹⁴ In Romans 6, Paul has already shown that believers are no longer slaves to sin but to righteousness and to God.

¹⁵ Moo, 841.

¹⁶ Moo, 841.

¹⁷ BDAG, 567.

¹⁸ Cranfield, 705; Dunn, 804–806.

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 10:31; see also Colossians 3:17–24.

The believer today is faced with similar issues. How should a believer engage in entertainment, from movies to music to video games? What should a believer's relationship to alcohol be? Believers are also not immune from issues over food. How healthy should a believer eat if our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?

Paul is not telling the Romans what they should do but is reminding them what they are doing. Those who observe or don't observe certain days and those who eat or don't eat certain foods do so because each "sincerely believes this honors the Lord."²⁰ It is this kind of faith that brings unity to believers, because each person is looking to please the same God.

Thanksgiving is the hallmark of Christians. Paul states earlier in his letter that it is the lack of thanksgiving that begins the downward spiral into sin (Romans 1:21). The writer of Hebrews also maintains that gratitude is our acceptable service to God (Hebrews 12:28). Both the strong Christian and the weak Christian show they belong to God by their thanksgiving to Him.

Romans 14:7

For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself;

The "for" introduces the argument of verses 7–9, which is the "basis for Paul's assertions in verse 6 that both the 'strong' and the 'weak' do what they do 'to the Lord.'"²¹

"For himself" was a familiar phrase in the Greco-Roman world and meant "to live selfishly."²² In verse 8 Paul makes a clear contrast with the phrase "for the Lord." Even though Paul is talking about living for the Lord, we cannot forget that our actions affect those around us. Loving God with our entire being will necessarily affect how we treat others.²³

"Lives for ... dies for" most likely is used to encompass all of life. From the moment of salvation to death, believers make decisions based not on their own desires but on how they may please God.²⁴ Paul reminds the Corinthians, "Do you not know ... that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Romans 14:8

for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord;

Paul reminds the Romans that they are living for and dying for the Lord. All of life is to be lived with Christ and His work on the cross in view. Adopting this view removes the selfishness in man that keeps him separated from his brother or sister in Christ. Without this view, man will always choose to live for himself. When he lives for himself, he will necessarily resort to judging others or to showing contempt for their actions.

therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Paul gives one last reminder that we do not belong to ourselves but to the Lord. Jesus is the final authority in our lives and in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to be careful that

²⁰ Moo, 843.

²¹ Moo, 844n80.

²² Dunn, 807.

²³ See Dunn, 807. Contra Cranfield, 707n3; Moo, 844.

²⁴ Moo, 844.

we are not seeking to put ourselves in place of God in the lives of other Christians by dictating to them how they are to behave regarding issues not clearly spelled out in Scripture.

Romans 14:9

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

Paul points his audience to the source of Lord-focused living: Jesus Himself. Christ died and rose again that He might be master of both the dead and the living and that we might serve Him by our life and our death.²⁵

Paul also makes clear that it is Christ's death and resurrection that supremely position Him as Lord of all. This is not to deny His eternal deity (to claim that it's only after His resurrection that He became Lord) but to confirm that the character of the kingdom of God is brought about through Christ's death and resurrection.²⁶

Romans 14:10

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt?

Paul returns to the terms he used in verse 3 as he begins to close this section of his argument. He uses the pronoun "you" to make his point personal. Each member of the Roman church must evaluate how he is treating the others. No one has the right to cast "doubt on the status of a fellow member of the spiritual family."²⁷

Paul uses the term "brother" to highlight the close relationship that exists among the believers and to remind them that they are all under the fatherhood (and authority) of God, which he makes clear in the next clause. This is not written just to men. The same issues apply to women as well.

For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

A "judgment seat" was, in general, "a dais or platform that required steps to ascend."²⁸ It is used in the Bible to refer to a place for a politician to make a speech²⁹ but also to refer to a place of judgment.³⁰ It is used by Paul specifically to refer to the final judgment in 2 Corinthians 5:10, and most commentators see Paul making the same argument here.³¹

This is why those in the family of Christ must not act as judges in this way toward one another.³² All believers have to stand before God to give an account for the way they lived out their faith. The brother or sister in Christ who faithfully does not eat has to stand before God in the confidence of his or her faith in the same way as the one who faithfully does eat. God is the final judge of issues of faith.

²⁵ See 2 Corinthians 5:15.

²⁶ Philippians 2 makes this point clear: Christ "existed in the form of God" (2:6) but emptied Himself of those prerogatives (2:7) and was willing to die in obedience to the Father (2:8). The result was His exaltation as Lord of all (2:9–11).

²⁷ Moo, 846.

²⁸ BDAG, 175.

²⁹ Acts 12:21.

³⁰ Matthew 27:19; John 19:13; Acts 18:12; 25:6.

³¹ Cranfield, 709; Dunn, 808–809; Moo, 846–847.

³² That Christians are to judge one another, as passages like 1 Corinthians 5 make clear, is not the issue here. The issue is judgment concerning disputed matters.

Romans 14:11

**For it is written,
“As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall give praise to God.”**

Paul quotes Isaiah 45:23 as proof for his previous statement that God is the final authority. The immediate context of Isaiah 45:23 speaks of God’s uniqueness, righteousness, and power. He is both an able and a just judge of any situation. The point of the quote is “that those who take upon themselves to pass judgment on others are [taking over] the authority of God alone.”³³

Romans 14:12

So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

This is a summary of Paul’s argument in verses 10–11. The wording Paul chooses highlights the personal responsibility each person has for his actions before God. It also reminds the believers that they must not judge one another.

³³ Dunn, 809.

APPLICATIONS

- To avoid judging a brother or sister over matters that are not essential to salvation or are not sinful, Christians themselves must know which matters are essential to salvation and what the Bible clearly says is sin. Christians must be students of the Bible.
- Christians must know that God accepts people by faith and not by how that faith leads them to think about certain foods, certain days, or any other issue that is not clearly defined in Scripture.
- We must understand that we belong to Christ. Because we are His, all our life is to be lived for Him with thanksgiving.

ILLUSTRATIONS

- A fellow Christian asked me if I wanted to go see a certain movie. There was an awkward moment when I told him I had chosen not to see that kind of movie. I was worried he would think I was judging him.
- Several college friends and I were sitting by a lake arguing about whether or not a Christian could drink alcohol. Various opinions were given from both sides. Several others held positions in between. How could so many believing Christians hold such widely different opinions?
- Peer pressure often leads people to do activities without careful thought as to why they are doing them. In the Christian life, the phrase “everyone’s doing it” is not a sufficient reason to engage in an activity. Christians must have faith that every aspect of their lives are pleasing to God.
- A parent teaching a child to talk knows that learning a language is a long process. It takes time to communicate clearly and effectively. A good parent will not judge a child for using a word incorrectly but will help him through repeated practice and conversation. A Christian whose faith is immature will often not grasp the fullness of grace. A mature Christian will not judge him for not knowing the full extent of grace but will help him grow in his knowledge and understanding of grace.

SERMON OUTLINE

Unity Despite Diversity (Romans 14:1–12)

INTRODUCTION

I. ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER (14:1–4)

- A. Christians respond to life differently (vv. 1–2)
- B. Christians don't judge these different responses (v. 3a–b)
- C. God accepts these different responses (vv. 3c–4)

II. LIVE BY FAITH (14:5–9)

- A. We are responsible for living by faith (v. 5)
- B. We are responsible for living for the Lord (vv. 6–8)
- C. Christ took the responsibility to live and die for us (v. 9)

III. REST IN GOD'S FUTURE JUDGMENT (14:10–12)

- A. Don't assume God's role (v. 10)
- B. God is the righteous judge (vv. 11–12)

PRAYER

SERMON MANUSCRIPT FOR YOUR USE

Unity Despite Diversity (Romans 14:1–12)

INTRODUCTION

Whether we are in a restaurant or walking down a street, shopping in a store or hanging out with friends, we will most likely see people everywhere staring at their smart phones—those mini computers we carry around like an extra arm. They appear to have become attached to us—and we to them—their small size disguising a great power and usefulness.

A smart phone can help you find the nearest bookstore hidden just around the corner or allow you to communicate with someone halfway around the world. It can provide you with coupons for shopping or the best route to avoid a traffic jam. It can even monitor your health and keep tabs on your children. But it will only do these things if you have made the effort to study it and master how to use it.

Some people have ignored or failed to grasp its power. For them the device is no more than an irritating, intimidating phone. They struggle to send a text. They can't download apps. They can't even figure out how to get driving directions.

It's easy for those who have mastered the smart phone to look down on those who struggle with it. It's also easy for those who choose to limit their use to stand in judgment of those who use them constantly. One group takes pride in mastery. Another group takes pride in self-control.

Sadly, these differences can deteriorate into name-calling:

“She's so stupid. She can't even send an attachment with her text.”

“I'm glad I'm not addicted to my phone. He can't even think without one.”

Could it be that it's not that simple? Does putting people in categories or judging them help? Should we demand perfection from others when we, ourselves, are so flawed? Do we need to see if we hold these attitudes in other areas of our life?

There are many areas of life where the Bible provides wisdom but not specifics on how Christians are to live out their faith. Can how we spend our money, for example, look different for believers? Can one action be a sin for one person and not another? How does belonging to God or being accepted by our heavenly Father in Christ affect our relationships in His body, the church?

Romans 14:1–12 addresses this issue. The apostle Paul is writing to a group of believers who are not experiencing the unity they should because they are seeking conformity over issues that are not clearly defined in Scripture or essential for salvation. One group is looking down their noses at others while another group is sitting in judgment over their brothers and sisters in Christ. So Paul addresses this conflict and explains why both groups are wrong and how they can achieve true Christian unity despite their differences.

I. ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER (14:1–4)

A. Christians respond to life differently (vv. 1–2)

Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

Paul begins with a command to accept the weak in faith. By “weak” he means those who have not fully realized their freedom in Christ. There may be many reasons why Christians—especially new Christians—would not live free in Christ.

It is possible that two Christians will view issues in different ways as Paul explains in verse 2. My faith may allow me to eat whatever is put before me. But someone else may still be working through what freedom in Christ means. A new believer may have come out of a culture that placed restrictions on what could or could not be eaten. We need to be gentle with others who might experience great guilt over certain activities due to their upbringing or culture.

Paul says that those who are stronger in their faith are to accept those who are weaker. While that may not seem surprising, his next statement is his main point. Don’t invite them in and then judge them for their weak faith.

Just because your faith allows you to engage in certain activities doesn’t mean that your convictions apply to everyone else. The beauty of the body of Christ is that people who disagree over minor issues can truly love one another and display a Christian unity to the world around them.

Let’s not think that this applies only to food. Family and culture influence how we live and dictate what we find acceptable in many areas. You may have been raised in a home with few rules regarding how one should dress. Or you may have been raised in a culture where dancing was permitted. Because the church is a diverse community, you will no doubt come in contact with other believers who don’t see issues—especially those not clearly defined in Scripture—in the same light as you. You can’t let your freedom in Christ negatively affect how you relate to another believer.

B. Christians don’t judge these different responses (v. 3a–b)

The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats,

So that we don’t think that Paul is favoring one side over another, verse 3 shows that Paul is concerned with how both the weak and strong in faith treat each other. No one should look down on another believer whose faith responds to life differently. And no one should judge another who doesn’t hold the same convictions.

Before we go further, we need to clarify something. Paul is not talking about clear issues of sin such as adultery, homosexuality, theft, or murder. The Bible says that we are to evaluate and judge sin in the body of Christ. Both Matthew 18:15–20 and 1 Corinthians 5 make that clear. In Romans 14, Paul is talking about preferences in food or celebrations and other concerns that may or may not indicate the strength of our faith. It is in these issues that we are to leave judgment to God, for we trust that He will judge correctly.

It is common when we have a conviction to want others to embrace it as well. If we think we’re right, it is tempting to want everyone else to know and follow *our* truth. If they don’t, as Paul shows here, there are two divisive outcomes. First, we might be tempted to display a superior attitude toward, to look down on, and to make fun of them for their lack of understanding of the “true” Christian life. Second, we might be tempted to judge them. We might elevate an issue to a greater importance than it actually holds. We then impose guilt on the person for not doing things the way we do them. Paul does not tolerate either action.

We need to always be aware of our motivation in dealing with brothers and sisters in Christ. Are we seeking to help them grow into the image of Christ or into our image? This requires both a knowledge of the Scriptures (what is and what is not actually required of us as Christians) and a love for others.

C. God accepts these different responses (vv. 3c–4)

for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

The reason Paul does not tolerate either action is because God accepts all true followers of Christ. It doesn't take long in reading the Bible to see that it is full of people who do not practice faith consistently. Many names honored in Hebrews 11 also had periods in their lives marked by shortcomings. Abraham lied about his wife on two occasions and later foolishly listened to her when she offered her maid Hagar as a shortcut to God's plan to provide a son. Despite the weakness of Abraham's faith, God still accepted him. God accepts His children.

Returning to verse 3, we need to understand Paul's metaphor to not misunderstand his point. He is not condoning or condemning slavery but using what was a universal practice to make a point. Because slavery was a universal practice in the Roman Empire, no one would even consider interfering with another's servant. Each servant was only answerable to his own master.

Paul's question ("Who are you to judge the servant of another?") and closing statement ("for the Lord is able to make him stand") imply that we are all servants of God. Since this is true, no one has the right to step in and take over God's job.

The final clause in verse 4 is a great reminder of God's concern and care for us. Regardless of how weak we think another believer's faith might be, God is the one who ultimately matures us and conforms us to the image of His Son. God can take what we think are weak-faithed brothers or sisters in Christ and make them acceptable.

II. LIVE BY FAITH (14:5–9)

A. We are responsible for living by faith (v. 5)

One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

Verse 5 lays the foundation for how two believers can hold different views about an issue and still live for God. Paul uses the example of how some believers celebrate certain days while others don't. The issue is not *whether* one views certain days differently but *how* one does it: one must be fully convinced, that is, it must be done in faith. We can't simply say, "Well, I just hold this view because that's what everyone else does." No, each believer must live his life to honor God, not in going along with the crowd or with the goal of pleasing others. God is not going to ask us what our best friend's opinion was or what the pastor thought.

This is how a relationship with God has always worked. Each person is responsible for living out his faith before God. This does not mean we don't need one another. Living out our faith requires others to help us, encourage us, pray for us, rebuke us, and continually point us back to Christ. Christianity has always been a family affair. At the same time, each of us is personally responsible for our faith.

Many teenagers share a similar testimony where they realize that they are living their parents' faith and not their own. There comes a time in each child's life when he needs to make sure that his faith is his—that he is not just parroting what others do. I've heard numerous teenagers say, "I need to make my faith my own."

In the same way, we also live the Christian life by personal conviction. What should be our motivation? Does it really matter why we do what we do, as long as we hold that belief tightly? Paul answers this question by talking about our motivation.

B. We are responsible for living for the Lord (vv. 6–8)

He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

One believer does what he does for the Lord, and the other believer does a different thing for the Lord. And both give thanks to God. One gives thanks for all he has to eat. The other gives thanks for what he has to eat, even if it is limited. But for each, the choice to eat or not to eat, to celebrate or not to celebrate, is done for God.

Is that a hallmark of your life? Is pleasing God the foundation of your decisions? It should be. Is thanksgiving the constant companion of your actions? You may be tempted to ask, "Why is this important? Why do I have to do what I do for the Lord?" Paul explains this beginning in verse 7.

For not one of us lives for himself, and not one of us dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Note the language here. Paul does not say, "Not one of us *should* live for himself." Paul assumes his audience understands that they don't live to please themselves. He has already stated in Romans 6:5 that we have been united with Christ "in the likeness of His death." We belong to God; therefore, our lives are to be lived for God. By saying, "Not one of us lives for himself, and not one of us dies for himself," Paul argues that all of life belongs to God. In fact, even the act of dying can be done for God. At the time of our death, we still testify by our actions whether we think we belong to ourselves or to the Lord. A good friend of mine, while in considerable pain, continued to show love to his wife and even witness to his nurse on the day of his death. But this was normal for him. He never felt like his life belonged to him. He was intent on serving God with every hour he had.

These truths also apply to how Christians should view each other. Christian unity relies on trust—trust that my brother or sister in Christ is living life by faith. You and I won't experience true unity if my pride assumes I am living life correctly but you are not. You and I need humility in our relationships, especially when your life looks different than my own. If I begin every relationship assuming I am right about all things, I will only try to get you to conform to my image instead of Christ's.

C. Christ took the responsibility to live and die for us (v. 9)

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

This is not just Paul's idea of what makes for good Christian fellowship and unity. No, this is Christ's idea. Christ died and rose again so that He might be Lord of the dead and the living. When He conquered death through His resurrection, He became Lord over everything. His willingness to submit to the Father in everything led to the Father giving everything to Jesus. Paul writes in Philippians 2:8–11, "He humbled

Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in Heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Each of us belongs to God. Treat one another accordingly. God cares for each member of His family far more than you ever could. God wants what’s best for each one of His people far more than you do. When a fellow believer is doing something differently from the way you might do it, don’t judge him. Instead, trust that he belongs to God in the same way you do, and seek to get to know him instead. Find out why he does what he does. You might learn something in the process about him, his family, or the way he grew up that can help you understand and love him better. If he needs to grow in maturity, you now have a relationship through which you can help him.

III. REST IN GOD’S FUTURE JUDGMENT (14:10–12)

A. Don’t assume God’s role (v. 10)

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

Paul introduces his final point with another question, which is really the same question found in verse 4. Paul has already pointed out that we are not to judge one another because God accepts each of us. He has also stated that we are not to judge one another because we belong to God. Now, Paul wants the Romans to know that we are not to judge one another because a final judgment is coming. Everyone will stand before God one day.

This, like his previous argument, has two applications. First, I must not judge my brother, because if he is wrong, God is a fair judge. Nothing slips by Him. I can have assurance that God will judge all wrongs with righteousness and holiness. I am not the perfect judge that God is, and, therefore, I should leave judgment to Him.

Second, I must know that I, too, will stand before God. This should give me pause about how I treat a brother or sister in Christ. Do I love myself and my ways above my fellow believer? Do I care more about spreading my opinions than helping another Christian grow? We need to always be asking God to show us our motivations as we interact with other believers.

B. God is the righteous judge (vv. 11–12)

For it is written, “As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.” So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

Paul quotes Isaiah 45:23 to back up his claim that God is the final authority over how each person lives out his faith. When we seek to judge others, we are taking for ourselves what should be God’s right and authority. We are acting like God. Ultimately it is a rebellious act to stand in the King’s place, and we will all give an account of how we lived life in relation to God. My hope is that we will all seek unity in Christ despite our diversity of opinions.

Throughout life we will come across other believers whose day-to-day activities and preferences differ from ours. From the food they eat to the clothes they wear, some will appear vastly different than we do. From sporting events to movies, some will engage in entertainment with a different priority than we

do. From Christmas trees to sunrise services, some will celebrate holidays differently than we do. Some churches will respond differently to things like social media, politics, and music. Our first priority in seeking unity in the church is to know what the Bible says are the priorities we should unify around. Do we know God's Word well enough to distinguish between the essentials and nonessentials of our faith?

When we do differ with another believer on issues, we need to know what actually makes someone acceptable to God. Faith in the gospel is what grants righteousness, not upholding a certain standard—especially a standard that is based on the way I view life. Do we get to know people well enough to see what kind of faith they have?

Finally, while we are responsible to encourage and build one another up in the faith (1 Thessalonians 5:11), our brother does not belong to us. Each of us belongs to God. When we are tempted to judge a brother or sister in Christ, let's make sure that our first priority is helping them grow in the image of Christ, not in our own image.

Prayer

Lord, keep our pride at bay. Convict us through Your Spirit to live faithfully for You and You alone. Father, before we try to change one of Your children, show us where we need to change. Remove the log from our eye, so we can see our brothers and sisters in Christ clearly. Help us be united despite our many differences so that the world will see and know You better. Thank You for making us Yours through the death and resurrection of Your Son, our Savior. Help us to fix our eyes on Him as the author and perfecter of our faith and trust that Christ is also perfecting the faith of our brothers and sisters in Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

SERMON EXAMPLES

Begg, Alistair. “Guard Your Freedom, Part Two (Colossians 2:16–23; Romans 14:1–23).” *Truth for Life*.
www.truthforlife.org.

The well-known pastor of Parkside Church helps us navigate the waters of differing convictions. He develops four guiding principles from these texts. We must accept one another in Christ and avoid judging one another. We must also be personally convinced in debatable areas. Finally, we shouldn't cause distress and destruction when we differ with our fellow Christians.

Ferguson, Sinclair B. “Romans 14:1–12, The Diets and Days Disagreement.” *Monergism*.
www.monergism.com.

This Reformed Presbyterian pastor examines what it means to be a weak believer. He examines Paul's description of the situation and the two dangers of the situation. He concludes with Paul's directives for the situation.

Piper, John. “How to Welcome a Weak Brother (Romans 14:1–6).” *Desiring God*.
www.desiringgod.org.

Well-known preacher John Piper addresses several practical questions that arise from this text. How do we define the weak? What exactly makes them weak? And how do we love them? His answers demonstrate a commitment and encouragement to Christian unity, harmony, and fellowship.

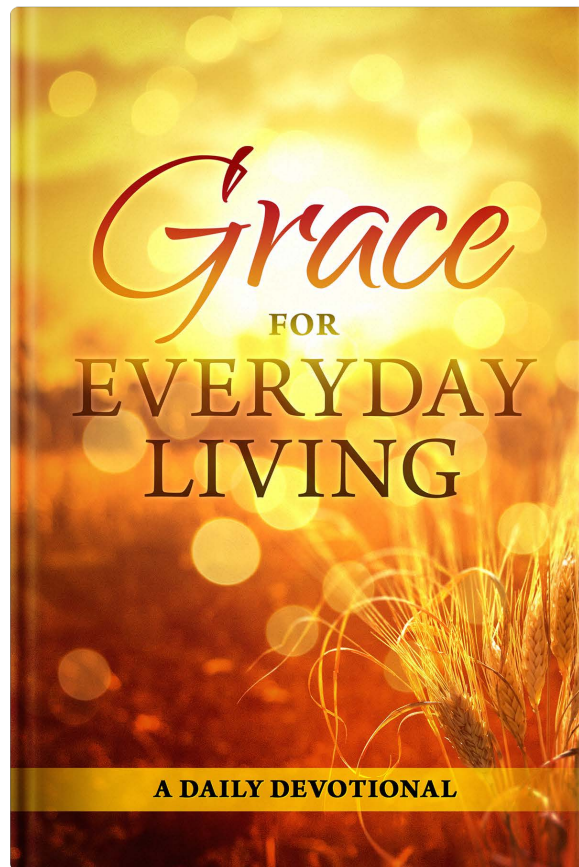
Schreiner, Thomas. “Don't Judge or Despise One Another (Romans 14:1–12).” *Clifton Baptist Church*.
www.cliftonbaptist.org.

Schreiner, who is both an elder and a Biblical commentator, blends his extensive study of Romans with a shepherd's heart for his own local body. He argues that Christians must receive and welcome one another. We also need to recognize that God keeps us believing and that we all live under Christ's lordship. Finally, Christians must remember that we are to give an account to God for how we lived our lives.

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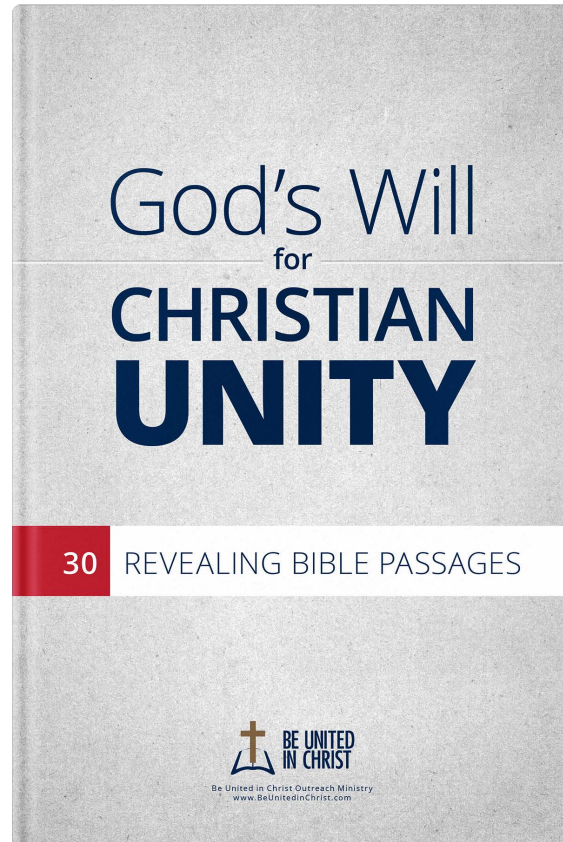
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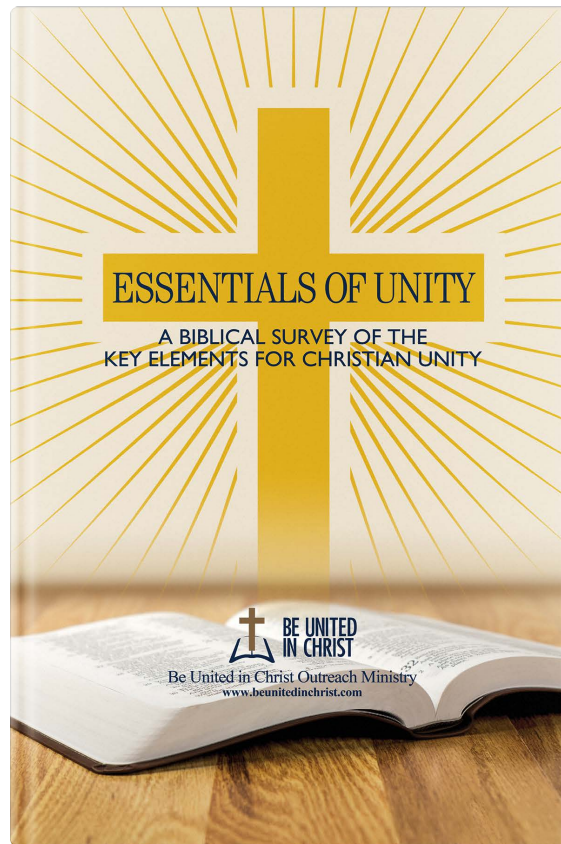
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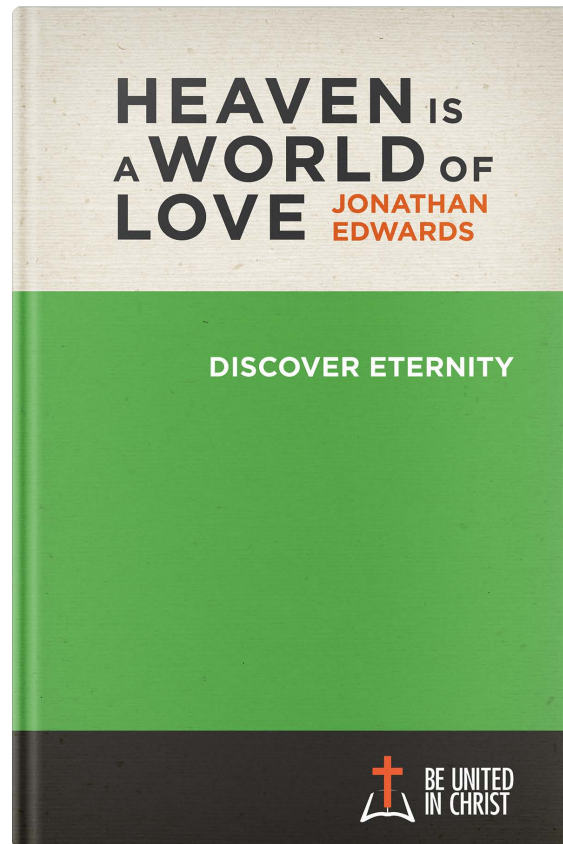
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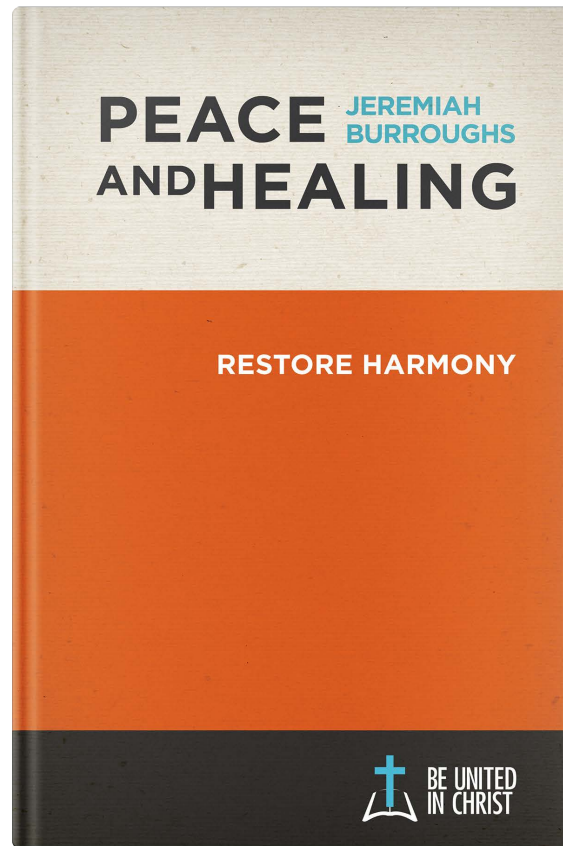
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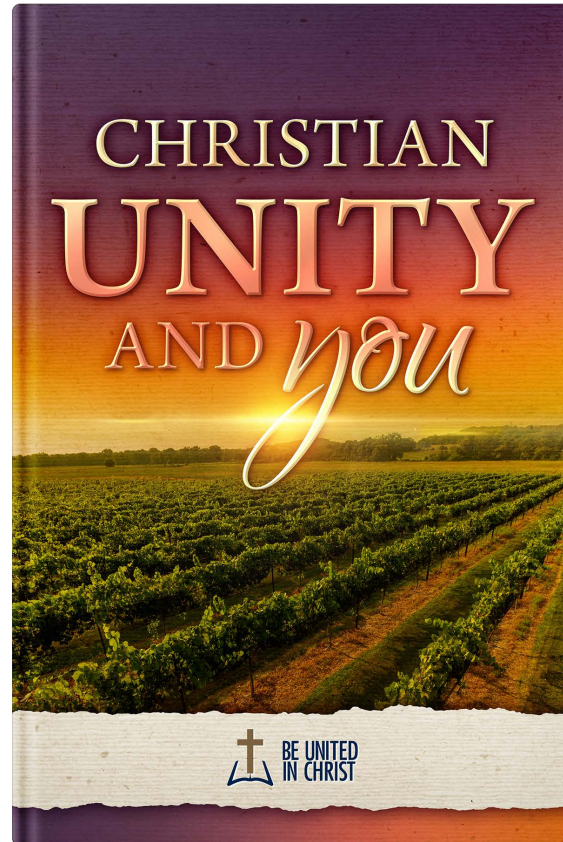


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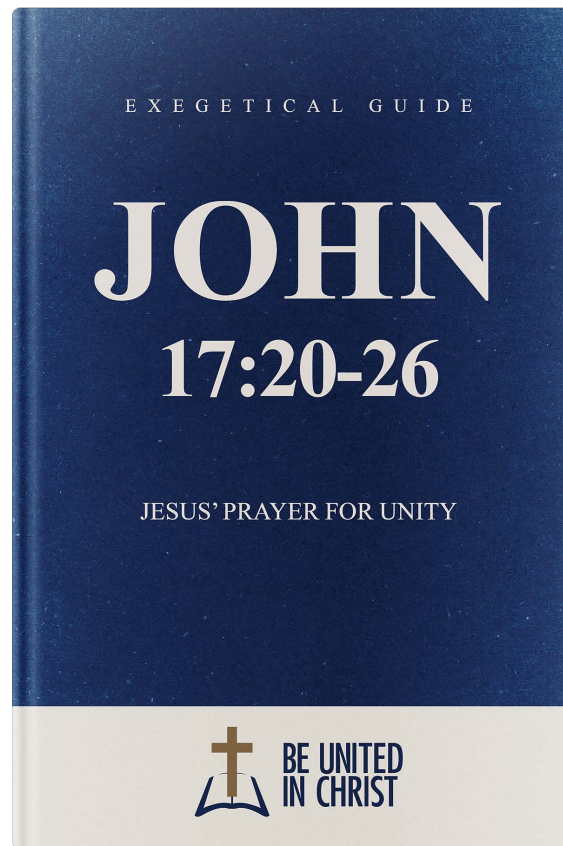
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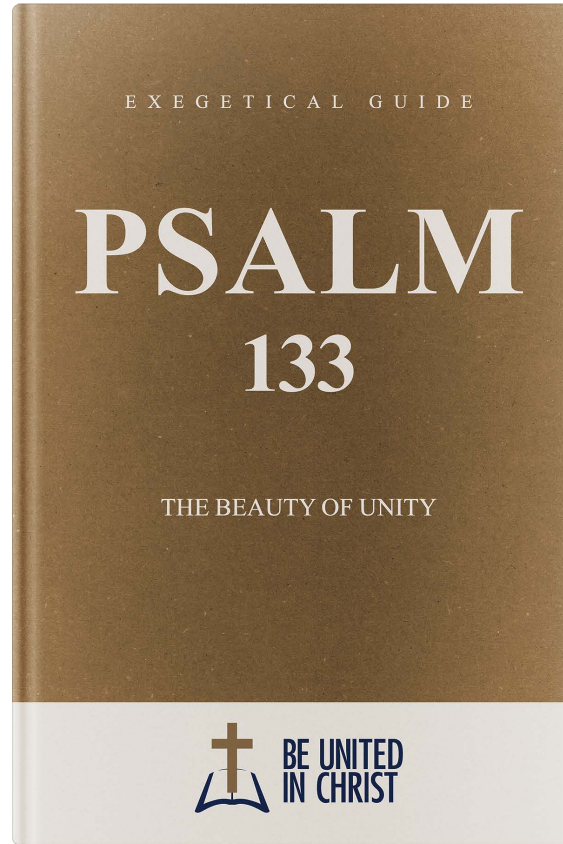
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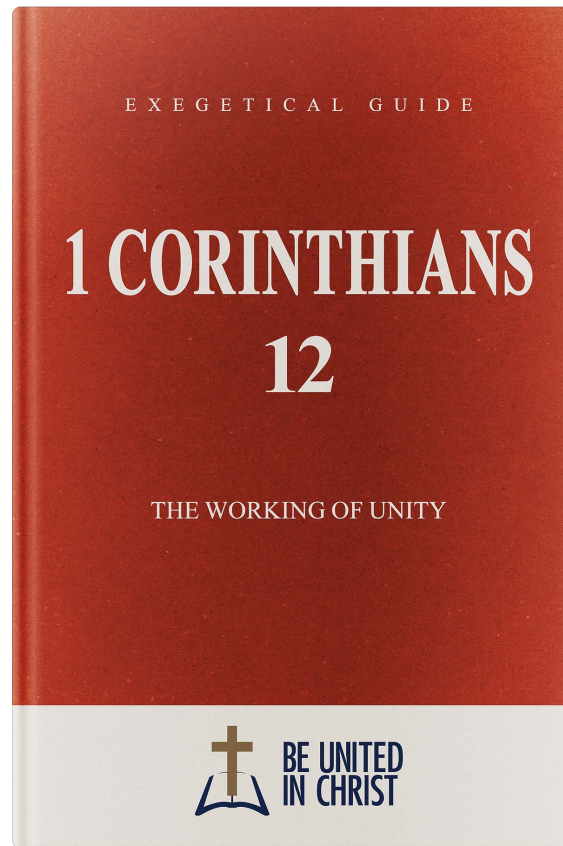
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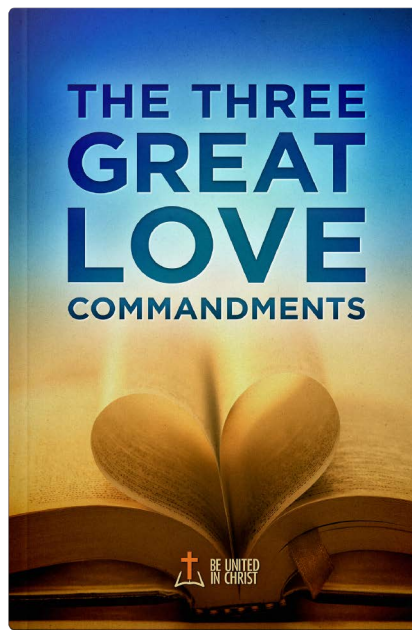
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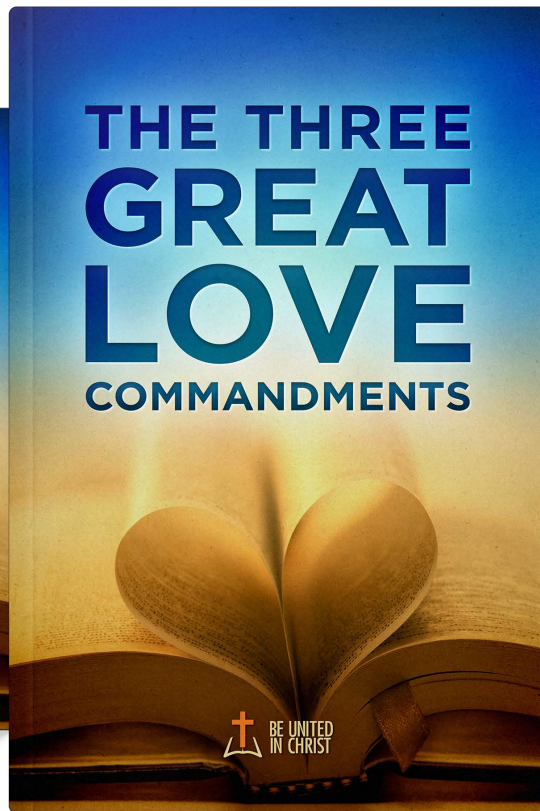
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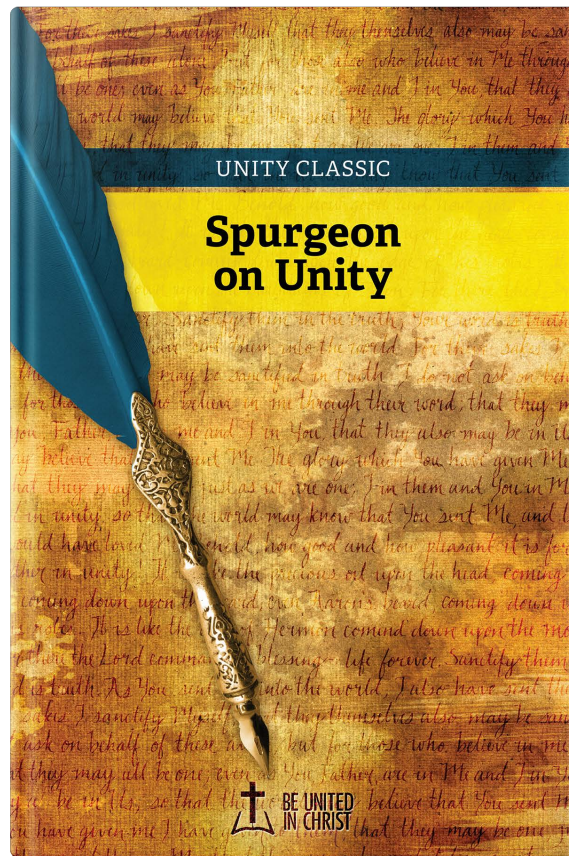
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