

Don't Pass Judgment on One Another (Part 1)

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[0:00] Take your Bibles. We're going to be looking at the first several verses.

! The second block of Scriptures in this letter, this tremendous letter to the Romans. Before we even read the text, let me just kind of introduce our subject this way. It is part of our nature, I think, in fact I'm sure, part of our nature to come to quick conclusions about people. People we don't know, or people we do know, or people we have met for the first time. But specifically, and in connection with this text, people who have come into our church. They're maybe new believers, or new to us. They've come from maybe another church from another place. They've come into our fellowship, and it's very easy for us, very natural for us.

[1:25] To come to quick conclusions about them. Based upon maybe snap judgments. Now this is a good introduction, because this is where this text is going to lead us.

And not just what we're going to consider tonight, but really for a couple of Sundays. Because it's quite a large part of Romans, where Paul deals with this issue. And it's kind of born into us to judge people.

Are you with me? It's born into us. To judge them based upon really the slightest of information. In fact, even no information at all sometimes. Just kind of based on preconceived notions. Or conclusions. Or maybe things that are stimulated by first impressions.

You know, because we evaluate surface things. And we tend to allow the surface things to draw, for us to draw conclusions about the inside.

[2:32] The inner things that are going on in a person. I remember a number of years ago, in fact, this just brought to my mind. And I will forget, really, this little cartoon that was in one of my psychology books in college.

And maybe when you were in college about the same time I was, maybe you had the same psychology book. And you'll remember this little cartoon. And it's really kind of interesting. And let's see if I can picture it for you. It is just one snapshot caricature of a loaded commuter bus.

Kind of like one of these buses that you would have in a large city. Mass transit type of bus. And so the picture here has people sitting and people standing and, you know, holding on to things. And they presumably are traveling on down the road. And there in kind of the center of the picture are two people. One seated on the bench on one side of the bus and another seated on the other side.

Though there are a lot of other people all around them. And the fellow that's sitting in the bench has under his arm, and I guess he's carrying it because he's in business and he's just traveling, and he's carrying this sign under his arm.

[3:53] And the sign is shaped like a finger pointing. It just kind of looks like that. You know, just a sign pointing a finger. Well, the finger is pointing to the fellow seated on the other side of the bus.

And then you notice the faces on all the people and the eyes of all the people on the bus, and they're all looking at that fellow to whom the finger is pointing.

And some have suspicious looks on their face and frowns. And they're all evaluating this man and assuming that he's some terrible person just because the sign is pointed to him.

I think that's really a good illustration about the tendency that we have to make assumptions, to draw conclusions about people and to do it too quickly, to make snap judgments, to make false assumptions.

We judge people that way. And not only that, but we judge people based on things that in the final analysis don't really matter at all.

[4:59] Now, all of this, as I've already mentioned, can and is a problem in the church. And Paul takes us, takes all of chapter 14, really, and on end about halfway through chapter 15 to deal with

this issue.

Now, I've just kind of barely identified it. There are many other ins and outs. And Paul goes deeper into various features of this as we go throughout this text.

And we're certainly not going to get all the way through that here tonight. But this is what Paul is going to be teaching us. And it's going to take us several weeks to look at it.

All right, so let me read chapter 14, verses 1 through 9. Paul says, It says,

Now, I'm going to stop right there.

[7:44] And we'll kind of breeze through this. Let me say that this passage, and really extending on into the middle of chapter 15, we really could divide this entire text, very large text, into two parts.

There is the principle. That's verse 1. He just simply gives us the overarching principle or truth that we're to follow. And then from verse 2 on, really all the way to the middle of chapter 15, we have the particulars.

So that's a good way to remember it. The principle, then the particulars. The particulars. He gets very specific. Although I would say to you right now, not as specific as we would want him to be.

But he does give us the particulars. All right, now the principle first. Paul said in verse 1, and this is the statement of the principle. Verse 1 is thematic.

It's the theme of this entire block of text. And he says, again, receive. Some of you might have a translation that says accept.

[8:55] Accept or maybe even welcome. I think that would be a good verse. Welcome one who is weak in the faith. But not to disputes over doubtful things.

For literally, not over disputable opinions. Arguable matters. All right? Not that he's condoning argument.

But there are things that we can have differences of opinions about. And so we're to receive, accept those who come or brought into the church. We're not just talking about people who visit.

Though part of this could apply to that. But people who profess Christ as Savior. Who have come into the body. The local body.

And we're to accept them. Accept them. And not for purposes of putting them on the examination table. And picking apart everything that they believe or everything about their lives.

[10:00] That's basically the principle. Kenneth Wiest. And I recommend Wiest's word studies. And in his expanded translation. He puts it this way.

Now to the one who is weak with respect to the faith. Be giving welcome. Not with the view to critical analysis.

Of his inward reasonings. Now that's very kind of expanded. And that's the idea of that translation. Now this is a difficult passage.

I mean it really is. And the more you think about it. The more you'll agree with me. Difficult to preach. And it's difficult to hear. And the reason is this. We all have our own idea about what a Christian should look like.

Do we not? Whether we would admit that or not. Or whether we could just kind of articulate that.

[11:03] You know. But inside of us. And in our minds. We all have kind of this Christian paradigm. This is what a Christian looks like.

Be it the style of dress. Or behavior. Or lifestyle. Or language. Including. You know. Whether or not this person uses spiritual talk.

And if they don't. Then maybe there's just something not quite right about them. Or whether it's the level of commitment. You know. They come on Sunday morning.

But they don't show up on Sunday night. And they're certainly not here on Wednesday. And you know. I'm just not sure about them. You know what I'm talking about. Habits. Certain habits in their life.

That. Kind of. Hurt our sensibilities. Personal hygiene. I mean. We could just go on. And on. With the list. The way a person dresses.

[12:00] And so forth. And so. You know. We have kind of this. Or there exists. What. I've thought about this. Exists. What we might call. A. Cultural.

Christianity. That's different from place to place. Church to church. Person to person. But it's a. Kind of. Cultural. Christianity. Not necessarily.

Based upon. The clear teaching. Of God's word. But it's based upon. How we interpret. Some of it. And then we go beyond that. And kind of. Put together. Our own. Kind of. Criteria. And it's a.

Cultural. Christianity. That is. Largely. Artificial. Artificial. I mean. Artificial. Because it's not based upon. Absolute truth. It's artificial.

And it's. One that we. Try. To fit. Everyone into. And. They must. Fit into it. Before. We will. Accept. [12:55] Them. Now that's. The issue. Here. And so. Sadly. We welcome. Or accept. People. Based on.

Their own. Set of. Our own. Set of. Sensibilities. Religious. Sensibilities. And. Assumptions. And so forth. So we evaluate. Them. Based upon. These sensibilities. And we accept.

Or reject. Them. Accordingly. But what does Paul say? Paul says. Receive. Them. Receive.

Them. Now. Before. You. Make some. Assumption. About what I'm saying. Let me say. That the issue. Here. That Paul.

Is addressing. Is not. The issue. Of moral. Or doctrinal. Compromise. On. The clear. Teaching. Of God's word. The issue. Here. Is not. Whether or not.

[13:48] A person. Believes. In. Has believed. In. The core. Doctrinal. Truths. We're talking. About people. Who are saved. Who hold. To those.

Core doctrinal. Truths. But there. Are. Peripheral. Things. Other. Things. That maybe. Are not. Quite. As clear. From scripture. That they.

Either. Have embraced. Or have not. Embraced. Or. Or you. They do not. Exhibit. In their lives. And so. What we're talking. About. Here. Is. The issue. Of a weakness.

A weakness. Or. Immaturity. In the faith. That is. Listen. Not everyone. In fact. I would say. Really. Not anyone. Has arrived.

When it comes. To understanding. Fully. And living out. Completely. The truth. Of the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. Not any of us. Have arrived.

[14:44] But. We all have. Rough edges. We do. Every one of us. Don't look so. Pious. Out there. We all do. And some.

Are rougher. Than others. Maybe. They are new Christians. Maybe they are new. To our church. Maybe they are new. Baptists. Maybe they. They have been raised. In a different kind of. Culture.

Than you have. Maybe it's not. It was not a Christian. Culture. And. Maybe their background. And environment. Is somewhat different. And maybe. They are immature. In the faith. Or.

Even. Untaught. And need to be taught. Maybe this. Maybe that. But what are we to do? That's the issue here. What are we to do?

We who are. Quote. Strong. Or. Stronger. Paul says. Receive them. Receive them. And say. Well that's.

[15:38] Fine with me. I. Have no problem. I'm not going to kick anybody out. They can come worship with us. They can come be a part of us. But you don't understand. Understand. The word receive here.

Is really a very strong word. In the Greek language. It is. A word. That has a preposition. On the front of it. And I won't.

Go into great detail. But basically. It means. This. To take. Alongside. It's a very strong word. It's more.

See. Than just acceptance. Accredience. Or maybe. A kind of cordial. Acquiescence. Sure. They can come. I acknowledge them.

I know they're here. But you've not opened their heart. Your heart to them. Because of some kind of. Difference. Or something that. That just. Grates on your.

[16:32] Character. Or grates on your. Sensibilities. And so forth. That's not what the. Word means. It means to take. Alongside. It. Means.

To welcome. Them. Into your. Fellowship. And into your. Heart. It implies. Genuine. Love. And acceptance. Of. Without.

Strings. Attached. The same word. By the way. Appears. Twice. In Romans. Fifteen. Seven.

Where. Paul says. Therefore. Receive. One. Another. That's the same.

Word. But then. Notice. The second. Time. It's used. Just. As. Christ. Also. Received. Us. To the glory. Of God.

I thank. The Lord. And so. You know. We. We're to. Do so. Paul says. Not. To. Dispute. Over. Doubtful.

[17:27] Things. Here's. The J.B. Phillips. Translation. Welcome. A man. Or woman. Whose faith. Is weak. But not. With. The idea. Of arguing.

Over. Scruples. That is. Not. With. The desire. To. Judge. Him. Or. Judge. Her. Over. Questionable. Or.

Unclear. Matters. Now. They may. Seem. Clear. To you. Maybe. They are. Clear. But not. Yet. Clear. To. The immature. The more. Immature. In faith. And. We're still.

To accept. Them. And. Not. Judge. Them. NIV. I think. Is helpful. Here. And some of you. Might. Have it. Let me read it. Accept him. Whose. Whose. Faith.

Is weak. Without. Passing. Judgment. On. Disputable. Matters. And. By the way. The word. Translated. Passing. Judgment.

[18:21] Does not. Point. To. Just. Some. Process. Of. Honest. And. Gracious. Gracious. Evaluation. Not talking about that. But rather.

The word. Means. To. Judge. With. The intent. Or. The result. Being. A negative. Conclusion. Not just about a person's character. But it goes deeper than that.

It. It. It. Is. To come up. Come to a negative. Conclusion. About a person's spiritual condition. To judge them. And say. Because.

You don't match. The kind of. Christian. I see. I think of. My set of. Set of criteria. For.

Christianity. Because you don't meet that. Then you must not be saved. Or there's some doubt in your mind about that. You judged it. In a negative sense. And Paul says. Do not. Do that. Do not do that.

[19:16] Welcome them. Accept them. Into your fellowship. Into your circle. Into your heart. Not just a cordial.

Acquiescence. Acquiescence. You know. Kind of. A superficial. Acknowledgement. That you're here. But. An embracing of them.

Is this easy to do? Not always. But we must do it. To embrace them. To bring them into your circle. To bring them into your fellowship. To bring them into your heart. And we let God. Take care. Of all. That other.

Thank you.