

A Church With Open Arms (4)
Living Peaceably in a Divided World

Text: Romans 14:1–12

Big Idea: *Mature believers pursue unity over preferences.*

Introduction: *Romans 14 deals with genuine believers whose consciences and understanding differ on secondary matters, yet whom God commands to receive rather than despise or condemn them.*

Swindoll: *God calls His church to unity without requiring uniformity.*

I. The principle of reception: (vv. 1–3)

A. “Receive” — *welcome, take to yourself; not just “put up with”* (Rom. 14:1; Rom. 15:7)

MacArthur: *embrace in genuine fellowship, not tolerate at arm’s length.*

Wiersbe: Rom. 14–15 is framed by “receive” The picture is one of open arms.

B. Receive the “weak in faith” — *not unsaved, immoral, or gospel-rejecting*

Piper: Weak believers still act **toward the Lord** and give thanks; their understanding of liberty is not yet fully developed.

C. Two temptations (v. 3)

Strong: despise — liberty → superiority.

Weak: judge — conviction → legalism.

Wiersbe: *The weak tended to judge the strong; the strong were tempted to despise the weak. Neither response is consistent with grace.*

D. “God has received him” (v. 3b)

Don’t close your arms to someone God opened His arms to.

The Fence: Rom 14 is not everything There are some things the Bible clearly calls sin. (Gal 1 — false gospel. Jude 3 contend for the faith. 1 Cor. 5 — unrepentant immorality.)

Piper: “Don’t judge” does not erase confronting sin or error.

The principle: *Never turn your preference into God’s precept.*

II. The place of conviction (vv. 4–6)

A. “Who are you to judge another’s servant?” (v. 4)

He belongs to Christ; God is able to make him stand. (Gal 6:1) — but you don’t have to play Holy Spirit in everybody else’s life.

B. “Be fully convinced in his own mind” (v. 5)

Paul does **not** say, “Who cares?”

Piper: *Rom. 14 does not teach convictionlessness.*

Barclay: *Act from conviction before God, not convention or superstition.*

Commands — we obey.

Convictions — we hold sincerely.

Preferences — we hold loosely. “I don’t like it” is not “God forbids it.” “Thus says the Lord” is not “Thus says me.”

C. Different practices, same Lord (v. 6)

Both can arise from a desire to honor Jesus. (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17)

Unity = harmony, not unison.

III. The priority of Lordship (vv. 7–9)

A. Theological escalation: menu → empty tomb

v. 7: *None of us lives to himself.*

v. 8: *If we live or die, we do so **to the Lord**.*

v. 9: *Christ died and rose that He might be **Lord**.*

*Sometimes what our petty disagreements need most is a fresh vision of a **big Christ**.*

B. Diagnosis: when preference outgrows the Savior

Beware of the “my” list: *my music, my schedule, my ministry, my way, my tradition, my seat, my opinion, my preference which drive division.*

Whose church? Who is Lord? — Jesus!

C. Lordship changes the definition of maturity

Wiersbe: Both strong and weak believers answer to the **same Lord**.

Maturity is NOT: “Everybody does it my way.”

Maturity IS: “Jesus gets His way, and I’m content.” (1 Cor. 6:19–20; Phil. 2)

D. Living sacrifice connection (Rom 12:1) — Present your bodies as “a living sacrifice.” *Surrender with an escape clause isn’t surrender.*

E. The test - Can you worship when you don’t get your way?

IV. The prospect of accountability: (vv. 10–12)

A. The two dangers and the judgment seat (v. 10) *“we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (vv. 11–12; Js. 4:12)*

Wiersbe: *spend far more energy examining your own life than sitting in judgment over fellow believers.*

B. The balance: discernment not judgment - the Bible commands discernment — *Matthew 7 doesn’t mean never distinguish right from wrong*

C. The humble reality – (2 Cor. 5:10) We will all give an account!

Stanley reminds us: *accountability before Christ, is not fear of losing salvation Christ already secured (Rom. 8:1)*

The good question to ask when I am tempted to judge another: *“How am I doing with what God has clearly told me to do?”*

“This Week: *Put the preference back on the altar and replace “What do I want?” with “What honors our Lord?”*