

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on January 28, 2018**

**"Judging or Discerning – Transformed Living:
Matters of Judgment (Romans 14:1-12)
Romans 12-15 - Part 7"**

[In today's sermon, "Transformed Living: Matters of Judgment (Romans 14:1-12) ", Pastor Craig Kuhlman shows from what Paul is writing here in Romans is that we should treat our fellow Christians with love and respect and not with criticism and contempt.]

Notes

Introduction:

- We are going to continue our series on “Transformed Living.”
- Today, we’re going to go through the first 12 verses of Romans 14 and show what Paul tells us about matters of judgment.
- But first, let’s remember the key point of last week’s message: “Darkness is discouraging so flourishing needs nourishing.”

- So here’s pastor Craig’s challenge: for those of you who heard his message last week – “How many of you nourished your flourishing these last 7 days?”
- He then asked the members: “Now did you notice any more love or peace or grace from God afterwards?”
- So, here’s the encouraging part: what Paul tells us in Scripture are living words not ancient words because they change our lives.
- Now some may ask, “Why all this fuss about flourishing?”

New Hope’s Mission Statement:

- Glorifying God by developing or transforming fruit-bearing disciples that have a flourishing relationship with Jesus without fear, shame, guilt, or doubt.
- After salvation is accepted, this shows us how our lives should change.
- Now the purpose of the church is to reach out with mission to others in our community and develop disciples.
- As we develop a flourishing relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit will prompt us to reach out to others.

Flourishing relationship:

- Now to develop a flourishing relationship with Jesus, it’s really about spending time together, just like developing a flourishing relationship with your spouse.
- And pastor Craig talked about how we develop that flourishing relationship with Jesus is through conversation (meaning prayer), curiosity (meaning studying the Word of God) and contemplation (meaning meditating about what God has to say to us).

- Now, we brought out last week that having a flourishing relationship with Jesus doesn't mean that every day we always live on that "mountain top" with God coursing through our veins.
- That's because there is also "valley" times and "wilderness" periods in our lives.
- There is this natural "ebb" and "flow" in our relationship with God, just as there is in our personal relationships with each other.

- Paul has shown us in Romans how our transformed life will happen or go about – there are some minuses that occur (ebbs) and also some very positive occurrences (flows).
- Ebb – walking in the flesh or having deeds of darkness gives us discouragement and diminishes our flourishing relationship with Jesus.
- Flow – walking in the Spirit or walking in the light enhances our flourishing relationship with Jesus and gives us more love, joy and peace through the Holy Spirit.

- Now we can't access that love, joy and peace directly, we do it indirectly.
- That's because only the Holy Spirit gives us that love, that joy, and that peace, which Scripture calls "the fruits of the Spirit."
- So, our response and our participation then is to walk in the Spirit and to exercise disciplines of the Spirit through prayer and study and meditation.

- Dr. Gary Deddo encourages the church to focus on Bible study.
- And Joe Tkach, president of GCI, sent out in his January letter asking us to make this coming year a year of prayer.
- So, when we exercise that conversation (prayer), when we exercise that curiosity of the Father, Son and Spirit (Bible study) and when we exercise that contemplation (meditation) those are all things that places us on that path of grace and experience those fruits of the Spirit.

- So, it's important to know that if we want to establish and maintain a flourishing relationship with Jesus, we need to focus on what gives us a positive flow in that relationship.
- Now we need to realize that it won't always happen because we're human.
- And in our valley times, we need to realize that it's not about losing our salvation, it's not about whether God loves us or doesn't love us.
- God always loves us, whether we are in that valley and walking in darkness for whatever reason or we're on that mountain top walking in the Spirit.
- Here Paul is reminding us that there are going to be times when we, from our standpoint, don't feel that God is loving us very much. But that's not true.

- So, it's important to know what diminishes and what flourishes our nurturing relationship with Jesus.
- As we said before, our response and our participation then, is to walk in the Spirit and to exercise disciplines of the Spirit through prayer and study and meditation.
- With our human nature, and all of the pulls and distractions that we face, our life is set up to re-inforce the ebb and not the flow of our relationship with Jesus.
- That's why we need to intentionally let the Holy Spirit work through us to lead us and guide us so we can have a more flourishing relationship with Jesus.

- So, as a result, we need to set aside time to have a conversation with God, we need to set aside time for study and meditation which are supernatural experiences.
- Now, if you want to sum up and define Scripture in two words – it's about belief and it's about response.

Romans 14 intro:

- These verses address a certain situation or occasion that was going on in the church at Rome.
- Apparently there were some members that were being a little snarky to other members.
- One group of people, as Paul described, were “weak in the faith” while another group were called “strong in the faith.”
- Apparently each group of people had a set of thoughts and opinions about the other group.
- We will see in these 12 verses that Paul is addressing attitudes more than he is addressing actions.
- He's really speaking about how we treat one another.
- There is a certain way that we need to show our love, care and consideration towards those in our spiritual family.
- Last week, one of the “deeds of darkness” that Paul talked about in Romans 13, was “strife or contention.”
- So, as we all sit around the family table of God, there isn't any time to exhibit strife or contention to one another.
- Rather, we need to build up, bless and edify each other.

Romans 14:1 (NASB), Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. 2) One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

- So, here's the contrast – some were weak in faith while others were strong in faith.
- Those, whom Paul is describing here as “strong in the faith”, today we probably would describe as being more liberal – meaning that they have found freedom in Christ to do as they wish within the context of the church.
- Those, whom Paul is describing as “weak in the faith”, today we probably would describe as being more conservative or being more scrupulous, thinking that they have to be careful in what they do, because they haven't yet experienced that flourishing relationship with Jesus.

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.

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.

- Now that's a pretty powerful statement by Paul.
- Sometimes we feel compelled to share our strong feelings and opinion with others even though they didn't ask us to share that opinion with them.
- Unless our opinion helps to build up and edify the church and expresses love and encouragement, we shouldn't express it to others.

5) One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. 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. 7) For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself;

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

- So, we need to remind ourselves that there is one Lord, and that's Jesus Christ.
- And we know that at the end of all things, Jesus will ultimately be judge.
- Now we can feel comfortable about that, because Jesus is also our Rescuer and Savior.
- So, Jesus, as judge, should be perceived in a positive way and not a negative way.

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 is saying that if we have this judgmental, critical, snarky attitude toward each other, then it's going to diminish our flourishing relationship with Jesus.
- Now pastor Craig, as pastor of New Hope, welcomes all comments and opinions, whether they are snarky or not, because he wants to be able to better serve everyone in the congregation.
- But please be careful, in what and how we share our opinions with others.
- Now, if our opinion comes from the Holy Spirit, we know that it will lift up and build and edify others in the church.
- As brothers and sisters in the church, all of our opinions and thoughts need to be checked at the door if it's not showing love or building up our members or our church.
- So we need to come together to build each other up and then to reach out to help build others up.
- That's why we are here – to show Jesus' love to others.

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." [Isaiah 45:23] 12) So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

- The time of accountability for the not-yet-believers is in the future when Jesus is going to bring them into a relationship with Himself.
- We, as believers, have come before the loving judge, Jesus, who has already taken away the sins of the world and saved us and has brought us into a relationship with Himself.
- Peter tells us that judgement is already at the house of God, the church (1 Peter 4:17). God is already in the process of purifying and sanctifying us.
- Now even if we, as believers, have to go through some sort of fiery shower to get from sanctification to glorification, it will be quick and nothing to fear.

Romans 14:1 (Mirror), Welcome those who are young in their faith with warm hospitality. Avoid controversial conversation.

- That's what we should be about, giving warm hospitality to others as we nourish our relationships.
- At the last Forerunners luncheon, pastor Craig said that "unrequested advice is really criticism in disguise."
- We so often want to give our advice to others, even though they don't ask for it, because we think we know of a better way of doing things than they do.
- Now if the Holy Spirit lays on your heart that you need to give a word to a friend or share something with them, it's going to be given out of love and warm hospitality.
- Thoughts coming from the Holy Spirit are actually going to build that person up.
- But, if you think the Holy Spirit has inspired you to share some thoughts or advice with someone else that is snarky and negative, reconsider about saying anything.
- Please remember that "Unrequested advice is really criticism in disguise."

2) One may feel free to eat anything, while another believes one should only eat vegetables. 3) By having faith to eat anything does not qualify you to judge the one who abstains; God doesn't treat the vegetarian any differently.

4) You are in no position to criticize the hospitality of God; he invited both to the same table and he is well capable to uphold and establish someone who still stumbles and seems weak in faith.

- So here's what we need to do.
- If we see someone doing something we know that they shouldn't be doing, we need to realize that it's not our responsibility, but rather God's.
- God can either speak into their heart in a very clear way or bring someone that has a very close relationship with them to talk with them about it.
- That, then, would be perceived advice given to them that is out of love and uplifting.
- Friendship is so very important in matters like this.

5) One person may see more religious importance in some days while another values every day the same. Let everyone come to the full conclusion of what the day means in their own understanding.

6) Whoever esteems the specific importance of a certain day does so to the Lord, so does he who values every day equally. One eats while another abstains; both honor God in gratitude.

- So, if it's of faith, then that action is not a sin.
- We need to realize that our relationship with God is different from another person's relationship with God.
- We need to realize that God loves each of us, in spite of how we might differ from one another.

7) No one can live or die in isolation; our life and death touch others. 8) Neither can our life or death distance us from him; we remain his property. 9) The death Jesus died and his resurrection and the conclusion of his life now in us is the only relevance of life and death.

- So, it all comes back to that relationship we each have with the Father, Son and Spirit.

- We need to be nourishing that flourishing relationship with Jesus, as best we can, by walking in the Spirit.
- This flourishing relationship will inspire us to live out the life of love, first to God, and then to others.
- That's the walk of the believer.

10) What qualifies you to be your brother's judge? On what grounds do you condemn your brother? All of us stand in the footprint of Christ.

- Once again, "Unrequested advice is really criticism in disguise."

11) The prophet recorded what he heard God say, "My own life is the guarantee of my conviction, says the Lord, every knee shall freely bow to me in worship, and every tongue shall spontaneously speak from the same God-inspired source."

- Now this is one of those Scriptures that those who believe in universal salvation recite showing that all will come to Jesus and accept Him.
- So we can relax in the fact that at some point, God is going to take care of each one of us.
- He's going to bring our brothers and sisters together to honor and worship Him so we don't have to try to accelerate that process.
- God has it all covered.

12) Thus the logic of God will find its personal expression in every person.

- So the Holy Spirit is the One that changes us.
- The Holy Spirit is the One who moves us and provides that love, joy and peace.
- And our role is simply to just get out of the way and to allow the Holy Spirit to do what He does.

Conclusion: when it comes to matters of judgment:

- We need to remember to tread cautiously the next time we feel the need to evaluate someone or a situation or to give our opinion and also remember what God desires the most from us is our warm hospitality and love for others.
- When we do that, we lift up and edify the church.
- And finally, once again, "Unrequested advice is really criticism in disguise."
- So, the next time we get this strong urge to give unrequested advice to someone, reconsider it and keep it to ourselves.
- So, be sure that what we do doesn't diminish our flourishing relationship with Jesus.

Closing Prayer: