

26-1004sc - Detailed Summary

26-1004sc - *The Book of Romans*, Steve Cain

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26-1004 - The Book of Romans 14:1-23

Summary of Transcript (0:04 - 43:35), Teacher: Steve Cain

(0:04–1:44) Opening Prayer for the Study

Steve opens the class on Romans 14 with prayer. He thanks God for the chance to gather on the first day of the week to worship, to commemorate Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, and to partake of the communion Jesus instituted for that day. The group is also assembled to study the word God provided through the Holy Spirit and the human authors, now focusing on Paul's letter to the Romans. He asks for help understanding what Paul wrote, for wisdom and insight, and especially for the comfort of knowing they grasp the teaching and can apply it. He asks blessing on the students so they can comprehend both Paul's words and the work of those who translated the Scriptures into English, trusting that God has overseen that work. The prayer closes in Jesus' name.

(1:44–3:35) Background of the Roman Congregation

After the prayer Steve notes that he has again read through Romans in preparation for chapter 14. He reminds the class that Paul is writing to an existing congregation he did not plant; no one knows which apostle, if any single apostle, established the church in Rome. Because Rome drew travelers from everywhere, some who had been in the Pentecost crowd likely carried their faith there and helped form the church. The congregation therefore included converted Jews who had lived under the Mosaic law and a substantial number of converted Gentiles.

(3:35–8:41) Weak Faith, Diet, and Freedom

Steve turns to the opening appeal: accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for quarrels over opinions. One person believes he may eat all things; the weak person eats only vegetables. The eater must not despise the non-eater, and the non-eater must not judge the eater, because God has accepted him. Who is anyone to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls, and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. Steve reflects that dietary change would have been hard for a Jew then, as it remains hard for many Jews today who still carry restrictions. The question is whether those restrictions continue after a person leaves Judaism for Christ. He sees people steeped in "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," and notes that many prefer that regulated life—one reason some denominations thrive on strict rules. He mentions Islamic dietary rules as another example of rigid food laws, recalling Muslim buyers at the Ziegler farm near Wellington who purchased sheep, slaughtered them on the spot, and ate them according to their requirements, and noting similar concerns when such diets meet institutional food. In Christ, he argues, all foods

became edible; a believer may eat anything so long as he prays and dedicates it to God. Paul is helping people move from Judaism to Christian freedom. They are no longer under law.

(8:41–14:17) Love as the Real Restriction

Steve stresses that Christians do not live by a list of thou-shalts and thou-shalt-nots, which is another reason some prefer denominations that still supply such lists. The average person dislikes the freedom to decide right from wrong, yet believers have that freedom. The restriction Paul points to is love—the factor that governs how they treat one another. When Paul later gathers “you shall not murder,” “you shall not commit adultery,” and any other commandment, he is referring to the Ten Commandments and summing them under love. Verse 23 says the one who doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith, and whatever is not from faith is sin. Steve links this to the saying that whoever knows to do good and does not do it sins. Christians therefore operate from concern for their neighbor’s well-being. Last week he noted that the word describing God’s affection is *agape*; 1 John teaches that we love because God first loved us. The same concern is what believers are to show. The most important question is whether a person is going to heaven and what that person’s relationship with God is. Paul urges latitude: do not stand still for someone who challenges your faith or says you are out of step; let others hold their thoughts and opinions and do not fight over them. What counts is believing that God, through the gospel, extends reconciliation—accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, being baptized for the remission of sins, and rising to walk in newness of life. Those who have done so are God’s children and heirs; the inheritance is heaven. Newness of life means concern for fellow human beings, so that love itself keeps a person from cheating, lying, and the other wrongs named in the Ten Commandments. Believers do not need those commandments as an external code in order to know how to treat others. Latitude therefore extends even to matters such as Easter and Christmas.

(14:17–16:45) Observances, Piety, and Who Is Weak

Steve describes conversations near Christmas or Easter in which Methodists or Baptists mention a cantata or special service and react with surprise when told those days are not observed—“What kind of Christian are you?” He asks why sunrise services and similar customs are kept. The class suggestion is that the observers are weak; Steve adds that people also want to be known as pious, more Christian than others. He finds it striking that Paul does not treat closer adherence to something like Jewish law as the mark of the stronger Christian. The freer person is the stronger; the one still bound by restrictions is the weaker. That difference is a matter of knowledge, and knowledge puffs up—something to be avoided.

(16:45–19:11) Galatians on Gentle Restoration

Steve turns to Galatians 6:1 and following in the New American Standard. Brothers and sisters, even if someone is caught in wrongdoing, those who are spiritual are to restore that person in a spirit of gentleness. He contrasts this with the common boast of having “pinned his ears to the wall” because one knew the Scriptures. Each person must watch himself so he is not tempted. Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each must examine his own work; then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone and not in regard to another, for each will bear his own load. Believers are not to compare themselves with other people but with Christ and with the Scriptures, asking whether they are doing what God wants, and that comparison is itself an act of love. Steve

then returns to Romans 14.

(19:11–21:58) Days, Eating, and Full Conviction

He reads from verse 5. One person values one day above another; another values every day alike. Each must be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day does so for the Lord; the one who eats does so for the Lord and gives thanks to God; the one who abstains abstains for the Lord and gives thanks. Steve grants that latitude because he takes the people to be godly and God-fearing. What pleases God is to believe that he exists and that he rewards those who diligently seek him. They want to be right before God so they do not miss heaven. He recalls the charge to make sure of one's own salvation. Whatever is done must be done in the full conviction that it is right, with justification drawn from God's word. Where there is no law there is no transgression; under the law of Christ there is greater freedom, and from that standpoint a person still needs to be fully convinced.

(21:59–23:34) Vindication by the Lord

Steve continues that one believer is not to judge another by his own conviction, nor is the other to judge him by his. Each stands or falls before his own master, and the Lord will vindicate them. What they want is for God to vindicate them. Jesus himself was vindicated: the Holy Spirit declared him righteous and innocent, and the Scriptures record that vindication. Believers are waiting for Jesus to come and vindicate them. On the day of resurrection, the judgment day, he will come and say to God that this person is one of his, his disciple, one for whom he has been praying and interceding. Judgment will be the moment when Jesus says of each of his own, he is vindicated, she is vindicated.

(23:34–27:29) Second Thessalonians and the Waiting Saints

Steve points the class to 2 Thessalonians 1, beginning just before verse 6. It is right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict them and to give relief to the afflicted when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire. He will deal out retribution to those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel; they will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. He will come to be glorified among his saints and marveled at among all who have believed. Paul prays that God will count them worthy of their calling and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of the Lord Jesus is glorified in them and they in him. Steve takes this as Jesus vindicating his people: he was right and the opposers were wrong.

He then connects the idea to Hebrews 11. One reason those who have gone before have not yet entered heaven, he believes, is that they are waiting for the judgment day to be vindicated together with those still living. God wants them to experience the same vindication and not miss the blessings believers will receive, blessings the earlier saints have longed for. The last verse of Hebrews 11 points to that shared completion. John in Revelation is permitted to see the saints under the altar asking how long until they are vindicated; they are being held for the day when all are vindicated together.

(27:29–29:38) Living and Dying for the Lord

Returning to Romans 14, Steve reads verse 7 and following. Not one of them lives for himself, and not one dies for himself. If they live, they live for the Lord; if they die, they die for the Lord. Whether they live or die, they are the Lord's. Christ died and lived again for this end, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Steve asks how Christ is Lord of the dead. They cannot say they did not know, or that it was impossible to know. If it truly was impossible for someone to know, God will allow that person in. That is one reason the class does not believe those born without understanding, or innocent children who die at birth, are held to a knowledge they could not have.

(29:38–32:16) Judgment Seat and the Purpose of Judging

Verse 10 asks why anyone judges a brother or sister, or regards a brother or sister with contempt. All will appear before the judgment seat of God. It is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God." Each one will give an account of himself to God. Steve ties this to the word pious: people want to be better than another. They judge in order to condemn, to find a fault that makes them look better. Observing Easter or Christmas while another does not becomes an occasion for pride and piety. They are not to judge one another.

He asks what judging is for. It is to find fault. The Bible judges; the Ten Commandments judged, looking either to find fault and condemn or to pronounce righteous and vindicate. When something is put up for judging, the judge compares it with a standard. His mother was an artist and entered paintings; a judge might condemn one for brush strokes, another for color, another for subject matter, measuring each against what he perceived to be right. An animal put up for judging is examined for particular qualities and condemned where it falls short. Believers are not to judge or condemn one another that way. Therefore they are to stop judging one another and instead determine not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's or sister's way. That is where love enters.

(32:16–36:43) Love, Clean Food, and the Kingdom

Steve reads that he knows and is convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but to the one who thinks something is unclean, it is unclean. If because of food a brother or sister is hurt, the stronger person is no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with a choice of food the person for whom Christ died. Do not let what is good for you be spoken of as evil. The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God and approved by other people.

He urges them, when reading the Gospels, to notice how Jesus dealt with people: out of the love he asks of them, and he wants them able to deal with sin as Jesus did. What was Jesus chiefly condemned for? He ate and drank with sinners. How do they look on sinners? Jesus said he did not come to save the righteous but to seek and save the lost. That was his whole purpose, and that is how they are to deal with fellow human beings. With brothers and sisters they are to give leeway and latitude, believing that those brothers and sisters worship God and care about their relationship with God as much as anyone else does.

From verse 18 he continues: the one who serves Christ this way is acceptable to God and approved by people. So then pursue what makes for peace and the building up of one another. Do not tear

down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the person who eats and causes offense. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything by which a brother or sister stumbles. The faith you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is the one who does not condemn himself in what he approves. The one who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith, and whatever is not from faith is sin.

(36:43–43:35) Freedom, Alcohol, and a Closed Door

Steve applies the principle to online warnings he has seen: do not use certain coffees, dishwashing lotions, or foods. He thinks such voices can be worse than the advertisers, because people have freedom to choose. If someone does not want a product, he should not buy it, but he should leave the other person free to choose.

He then offers an illustration he hesitates to use, noting that his time is nearly gone. All his life he was raised to abstain from alcohol in any form. He has never had a beer or any alcoholic drink. When he visits someone and sees evidence of beer or whiskey, the upbringing tells him that is wrong. Yet the passage says not to judge them by what they drink. Are they then to say “do not drink”? Psalms and Proverbs warn against drink, and Paul says he will not be brought under the power of anything; if he drank he would not become an alcoholic or let it master him. Steve’s reading is that if a person truly believes a practice is allowable, he should do it in private, at home, not as a public stumbling block.

He gives an actual case, speaking loosely of an elder who holds that drinking is wrong, and a brother who has no conviction against an occasional martini, shot, or beer taken by himself. That brother is a traveler. At a wedding or festivity someone films a toast and posts it; the brother is seen with an alcoholic drink in his hand. The elder later tells him he may no longer make announcements from the pulpit or lead prayer in the worship until he repents. The brother’s wife tells him not to go back. He shuts the door and has yet to darken the door of any church, including a church of Christ. Steve asks where the Christian love is in closing the door so that the person never returns, and leaves the judgment of the case with the class.

He restates his own practice: he has never had an alcoholic beverage, for several reasons, and he knows the church teaches total abstinence rather than being a drinker. He brings the question with fear and trembling, not knowing what to think, and closes because his time is up.

Verses Steve Covered in this class

Steve's text was Romans 14, read and discussed in pieces from the opening through verse 23. He also brought in these other passages.

Romans 14

- Verses 1–4: accept the one weak in faith, but not for quarrels over opinions; one eats all things, the weak eats only vegetables; do not despise or judge, because God has accepted him; who are you to judge another's servant?
- Verses 5–6: one person values one day above another, another values every day alike; each must be fully convinced in his own mind; the observer and the eater, and the one who abstains, do so for the Lord and give thanks.
- Verse 23 (cited early, then again at the close): the one who doubts is condemned if he eats, because it is not from faith; whatever is not from faith is sin.
- Verses 7–9: no one lives or dies for himself; whether we live or die, we are the Lord's; Christ died and lived again so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.
- Verses 10–12: why judge or despise a brother or sister? All will stand before the judgment seat of God; "As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow... and every tongue will give praise to God"; each will give an account of himself.
- Verses 13–18: do not judge; do not put a stumbling block in a brother's way; nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean to the one who thinks it so; if food hurts a brother, you are no longer walking in love; do not destroy one for whom Christ died; the kingdom is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.
- Verses 19–23: pursue peace and the building up of one another; do not tear down God's work for food; it is good not to eat meat, drink wine, or do anything that makes a brother stumble; keep your faith as your own conviction before God.

Other Scriptures he used

- Galatians 6:1 and the verses following: restore the one caught in wrongdoing in a spirit of gentleness; bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ; do not think you are something when you are nothing; examine your own work; each will bear his own load.
- 1 John 4:19: we love because he first loved us (agape as the word for God's love).
- James 4:17, cited by sense: whoever knows to do good and does not do it, sins.
- Hebrews 11:6, cited by sense: believe that he is, and that he rewards those who diligently seek him.
- 2 Thessalonians 1:6–12: God will repay those who afflict you and give relief when the Lord Jesus is revealed with his mighty angels, dealing out retribution and glorified among his saints.
- Hebrews 11:39–40, the close of the chapter: those who went before have not yet been made perfect apart from us; Steve used this for his point that they wait to be vindicated with us.
- Revelation 6:9–11, cited by sense: the saints under the altar asking how long until they are vindicated.

- 1 Corinthians 6:12, cited by sense: Paul will not be brought under the power of anything (Steve's "not chained down by what I do").
- Luke 19:10 and the Gospel scenes of Jesus eating with sinners: he came to seek and save the lost, not the righteous.
- Isaiah 45:23, as quoted inside Romans 14:11.
- A general appeal to Psalms and Proverbs against drinking, with no single verse read.
- Plan-of-salvation language drawn from Acts 2:38 and Romans 6: baptized for the remission of sins and raised to walk in newness of life. He also alluded to the commandments against murder and adultery (Romans 13:9) as summed up under love.