

Introduction

A few years ago, we were doing a study about church discipline. We found that there is a wide array of views about this topic. There are churches that are very strict, almost to the point of being legalistic. Their members and leadership believe it is their duty to make sure every member looks, acts, and presents themselves in a particular way. They might quote Luke 17:3, where Jesus taught us that if our brother sins, we are to rebuke them. Or, they may quote Matthew 18:15-17, where Jesus instructed us that if our brother sins, we should go and show him his fault in private. If he listens, we have won our brother, but if he does not listen, we go to the next level in the correction process.

(Luke 17:3) “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.”

(Matt 18:15-17) “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. {16} “But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that **BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.** {17} “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

These churches would also cite the example in 1 Corinthians where Paul told the church that he had already judged the person, and that they were not to associate with immoral people in the church. He asked, “For what have I do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?” He told them that God judges those outside the church, but we are to judge those inside the church. Then, he commanded them, “Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.” One thing was very clear to our study group was that there is a clear distinction between those inside the church, and those outside. Membership in a local church is something very Biblical, and it is an important prerequisite of any church discipline, particularly in the litigious culture we live in today.

(1 Cor 5:9-13) “I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; {10} I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. {11} But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. {12} For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*? {13} But those who are outside, God judges. **REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.**”

There are other churches where church discipline is not something they would even talk about, much less carry out. Their view is that we accept everyone and we are not to judge anyone. They would quote Romans 14:4, which is in our text today, which states, “Who are you to judge the servant of another?” They may quote Matthew 7:1, which says, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged.” They do not believe it is right to judge anyone in the church, and we have to accept everyone and that includes everyone’s behavior. We have to leave all judging up to God.

(Rom 14:4) “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.”

(Matt 7:1) “Do not judge so that you will not be judged.”

There are churches at both ends of the spectrum, and everywhere in between. As I have thought and prayed about this, I believe that one of the reasons for this wide range of views is a lack of understanding of our passage today about receiving one another (and not judging), and the passages that tell us to judge those in the church. So, I want to spend some time laying out a framework for our passage so that we have a good understanding.

I have titled the message, Edification of the Body – Part 1, and I hope to lay the foundation and cover the first twelve verses. This passage is part of a larger passage that goes from Romans 14:1 through Romans 15:13. In our passage today, we are to accept or receive everyone, and are not to judge them, or regard them with contempt. In Romans 14:13-23, we are to build up one another without offending anyone. In Romans 15:1-13, we are to please one another. All three of these exhortations result in the whole body being edified, which results in joy and hope in the Holy Spirit. Today, we will look at the first part, accepting one another. We will look at four reasons that we should accept one another without judging or showing contempt. Let's look at the first thirteen verses of Romans 14.

(Rom 14:1-13) “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*. {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. {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. {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. {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." {12} So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. {13} Therefore let us not **judge** one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.”

Why We Should Accept Another Without Judgment or Contempt

1. God has accepted him.
2. He is God's servant (not ours)
3. Every person must be convinced in his own mind
4. God will judge all of us

1. God has accepted him. (Rom 14:1-3)

In verse one, Paul lays out the main idea of the passage: we are to accept others without judging or regarding with contempt. Paul says, “Accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.” In verse three, he wrote, “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.” In verse ten, Paul wrote, “why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt?” Finally, in verse thirteen, he wrote, “Therefore let us not

judge one another anymore...” This passage is about receiving or accepting one another rather than judging one another or showing contempt for one another. In this section Paul gives four reasons why we are to accept one another without judging or regarding with contempt.

(Rom 14:1-13) “Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions....* {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... {10} But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt?... {13} Therefore let us not judge one another anymore...”

The first reason to accept one another is that God has accepted him. In verse three, Paul wrote, “for God has accepted him.” The KJV says that we should receive because God has received him. If God has accepted or received him, then who are we to refuse to accept or receive him? We need to align our thoughts and ways with God. This applies to more than just our acceptance of one another, but in all areas. When God says something is evil, we should see it as evil. When God says something is good, we should see it as good. Lots of people asked me why we had so many children. One of the many reasons that I gave is what God says about children. God says that children are a gift; therefore I need to see children as a gift. God says that children are a blessing; therefore I need to see children as a blessing. The world has a different attitude about children, but we tried to align our attitude with God’s attitude. The same is true about accepting one another. We should accept those that God accepts.

(Rom 14:1-3) “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.* {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.”

I want to pause here for just a minute to discuss a few important things. First, God tells us to accept the one who is weak in faith. In verse two, he uses the example of food, and says that a person who is strong in faith may eat all things, “but he who is weak eats vegetables only.” Then, the one who does not eat, who is weak in faith, is not to judge the one who eats. So, the weak are not to judge the strong, and the strong are not to judge the weak. All of us, no matter what stage of faith or maturity we are at, should receive and accept one another. All of us are included in this principle of accepting one another.

Second, in verse one Paul says that we are not to pass judgment on his opinions. This is an extremely important clarification that must be made. In the opening I mentioned that some churches practice church discipline and judge one another. Other churches disagree about bringing any kind of judgment against someone, and say that we need to accept everyone, which includes their personalities, lifestyles, attitudes, and actions. We are not to judge anything about a person, but to accept them wholly. The clarification that needs to be made is opinions versus sins.

In some churches, women need to wear a hat or other cloth covering, so that their head is covered in the service. In other churches, they believe that a woman’s hair is her covering, and the principle being taught is that women need to be under proper authority, and a separate head covering is not needed. The hair covering is just one of numerous examples that could be given. Paul gives two examples, one of food and the other of days. In the food example, the strong in faith realize that all food is now considered clean, and that all food can now be eaten. Others may

think that the meat might have been sacrificed to idols, or may not be kosher, so they do not eat it. Eating meat is not a sin, and it is only their opinion that we should not eat meat. If someone thinks that we are in sin if we work on Saturday, but take Sunday off, that is their opinion. We are not to judge one another for our opinions. The KJV says disputable matters, and that is a good way of looking at it.

Sin, on the other hand, is quite different than opinions. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul was dealing with sexual immorality. Someone in the church was having a sexual affair with his father's wife. This was not a matter of opinion, it was a hideous sin. It was such a despicable sin that Paul wrote, "such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles." Paul said that the church was arrogant because they did not mourn and remove from their midst the one who did this deed. Paul judged the one, as though he were present. Paul went on to say that we are to judge our members, but not outsiders. We are not to judge opinions, but we are to judge sin in the body. We are to accept and give grace to one another about things that are not clearly defined sin. Are there some gray areas? Yes, and we will have to be led by the Spirit on those matters, but we need to err on grace in my opinion. But in the areas of sin, we need to deal with those matters.

(1 Cor 5:1-3) "It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. {2} You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. {3} For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present."

A number of years ago we were in a church, and I was not on the pastoral staff. I was leading the men's ministry and doing some other things, but was not there in an official capacity. The youth group leader was living with a woman outside of marriage, and it was a bad example to the youth. To me, this was not a matter of opinion; it was a bad witness. I told the elders of the church that they should deal with the matter, especially since I did not have a relationship with the man, and they did. The elders met with the youth leader and the two stopped living together. Again, this was not an opinion or even a gray area to me; it was wrong.

At the same time, there was another man in the church that was a widower. He had two children that really needed a mother. This man took a liking to a single woman in the church, and they began dating. They began to go camping together, and it was not long before she moved in with him, and they began living together. To me, this was not a matter of opinion; it was a matter of sin, and it needed to be confronted. Because I had a relationship with the man, and spoke with him every Sunday, I was free to speak with him about the matter.

Some churches that do not understand this principle have accepted people who are involved in sexual immorality when they should have been confronting and going through the process of church discipline. One such church in Denver says that no matter what you believe or what your sexual orientation is, they are one with you. They are not rigid in their interpretations of Scripture so you can believe whatever you want, and they are okay with that. You can come as often or as little as you want and still call it your church. God accepts everyone and they do to. They would not be a church that practiced church discipline.

Some churches that do not understand this difference are legalistic and judgmental, correcting anyone and everyone that does not conform to their hair style, clothing style, musical preference, or diet. The clarification is that we are to judge sins, but to give grace in matters of opinion.

This passage is about accepting and receiving one another, not about judging, so I will not go into much detail about church discipline. However, I will make four brief statements. First, the Scriptures clearly teach us that when our brother sins, we are to correct him. Second, the goal is not to judge, but to win and restore those who have sinned. Third, we need to have the right attitude when we confront others. Fourth, Jesus laid out a process in Matthew 18 that should be followed when church discipline is exercised.

(Matt 18:15) “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”

(Gal 6:1) “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”

2. **He is God’s servant** (not ours) (Rom 14:4)

The second reason that Paul says that we need to accept one another rather than judge is that other members are God’s servants, not ours. He said, “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.”

(Rom 14:4) “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.”

There are times that we clearly need to confront someone; the issue is clearly sin. At other times, it may be a gray area, and we need to leave it with God, because the other person belongs to God. Other members of the body are not our servants; they are God’s servants. Therefore, we need to let God deal with them. Keep in mind that our passage is about disputable matters, not sin, so we should give grace, accept the person, and let God handle these things.

I have found that it is good to pray for those that I have a different opinion about something. Since the other person is God’s servant, not mine, I leave it up to the Lord to deal with him. I simply share my thoughts with the Lord.

One thing we should not do is tell others about the matter and cause division and factions. We should leave the matter with God and not involve others. When we speak with others about another person, telling them things that tear down the other person or make him look less favorably, we are slandering the other person. Since the other person is God’s servant, leave it with God and do not go to others about the matter. The Lord is able to make him stand.

3. **Every person must be convinced in his own mind** (Rom 14:5-9)

The third reason that Paul gives for accepting one another without judgment, is that every person must be convinced in his own mind. Paul said that one person regards one day above another, and another regards every day alike. Then, he brings up food again, saying, “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. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind about these matters of opinion.

(Rom 14:5-9) “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.”

Remember, this passage is about opinions, not clearly-defined, sin issues. Fornication, adultery, sodomy, theft, lying, and stealing are not opinion issues; those are sins. It is not up to an individual to decide whether one of these issues is okay; God has made it clear those are all sins. But, on the issues about food, days of the week, length of hair, style of music, and many other things, it is a matter of opinion. I would include divorce in this list of opinions, as theologians are greatly divided upon whether Christians who are divorced can remarry. I would include end-time theology in this opinion list of topics.

Twelve years ago, I was planting a church in New Mexico, and there was a man that I referred to as Johnny Appleseed. He was zealous for the Lord and told me that God had told him he was to be part of our church. As a church planter, you get excited about people coming to the church. That excitement wore off pretty quickly as I began dealing with Johnny. He came out of a Messianic Jewish background, and he was caught up in a number of legalistic doctrines. We initially met on Friday evenings, and he was fine with that. When we began meeting on Sunday mornings, he believed and was convinced that we were in sin. He believed that we had to meet on the Sabbath, and that we were in sin if we met on Sunday. It was not just the Sabbath; it was a host of other beliefs. He believed that we needed to celebrate the three major feasts of Israel, and all other holidays that we celebrated were sinful. He judged and condemned everyone in our congregation, and me, in particular, for leading the congregation astray and causing them to sin. My reasonings with Johnny went nowhere. My corrections to him were not received. To me, the day we met was up to us and we had freedom. However, sowing strife and discord among members was not an opinion, but a sin. Paul said in Titus 3:9-11, “Avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a factious man after a first and second warning.” Finally, after several warnings, I had to tell him that he was not welcome to come to our meetings any longer. He was sowing too much strife and upsetting too many people. I told him that he should belong to a church where his opinions and the church’s practices were in alignment.

(Tit 3:9-11) “But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. {10} Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, {11} knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.”

How do we become convinced in our own mind? I believe that a lack of conviction about an issue should motivate us to study the Word of God and develop a clear conviction about what we believe. I do not want to live with my own opinions; I want to line up my opinions and convictions with God’s word. In your study of God’s word, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you. I would also ask spiritual advisers and mentors, and get their input. Don’t just take their answer, but study to become convinced in your own mind. The Bereans were great examples. They received the word being taught with great eagerness, and then they examined the

Scriptures to see whether these things were so. They became convinced in their own minds about the things they were taught.

(Acts 17:11) “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.”

Before moving on, Paul makes one more statement in this section that I want to highlight. He said that whether we celebrated one day over another, or ate or didn’t eat, we did it for the Lord. In verse seven he said, “for not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live for the Lord or we die, we die for the Lord; therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. In Pat Barrett’s song, *Build My Life*, there is a phrase in the chorus, “We live for You...” Each of us should be living our lives unto the Lord and for the Lord. When you and I live for the Lord, it is not about personal comfort, gain, or opinion; it is about pleasing the Lord. That is the attitude that we need to have. Controversial issues, gray matters, and opinions will all be easier to deal with when our attitude is to live for Christ and glorify Him in all things.

4. God will judge all of us

We are to accept one another without judging or regarding others with contempt because God has accepted them, and they are God’s servants, not ours. We should also accept them because each person must be convinced in his own mind, and live his life based on those convictions. This leads to the fourth reason, which is that God is going to judge all of us. In verse ten, Paul wrote, “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.” One day, everyone of us will have to stand before God and give account for our lives. That should be another motivation to study the Scriptures and live our lives with conviction.

(Rom 14:10-11) “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. {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.”

I want to make a clarification about this verse before moving on. In John 5, Jesus said that those who hear His word and believe Him who sent Him, have eternal life and do not come into judgment. Our text today says that we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. This seems like a contradiction. There are two keys to understanding this. The first key is understanding our righteousness obtained at salvation. Jesus was made sin on our behalf and we have been made the righteousness of God in Him. Those who believe and receive Christ into their lives are righteous. Because they are righteous, they do not come into judgment, but pass out of death into life. The second key is understanding that there are two judgments. There is a judgment of the wicked and a judgment of the righteous. Believers have passed out of the judgment of the wicked, but they will still stand before God and give account.

(John 5:24) “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

(2 Cor 5:21) "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

In the judgment of the righteous, we will all have to give account. In Hebrews 13:17, we see that those in a body that do not obey their leaders will not have a profitable time. They may lose some possible rewards, as their sins are already forgiven.

(Heb 13:17) “Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

There are a number of rewards or crowns that can be awarded to believers. Here is a list of those crowns.

1. **Crown of Righteousness.** This crown is rewarded for purity in life by living in light of the return of Christ and loving His return. (2 Tim 4:7-8)
2. **Crown of Life.** This is a crown given for persevering through trials and tribulation, sometimes at the expense of one’s own life. It is sometimes called the martyr’s crown. (James 1:12, Rev 2:10, 3:10-12)
3. **Crown of glory.** This is a crown given to elders for their faithful care of the flock of God. Many believe that it will also be given to those who faithfully support their overseers, based on the promise in Matthew 10:41. (Matt 10:41, 1 Pet 5:1-4)
4. **Crown of Beauty.** This is also called the crown of wisdom. It is given by the Lord for those who have sought and acquired wisdom. (Pr 4:5-9)
5. **Crown of Rejoicing.** This is also known as the soul winners crown, or the crown of rejoicing. It is given as a reward to those who win people to Christ. (1 Thess 2:19, Pr 11:30, Phil 4:1)
6. **The Incorruptible Crown.** This crown is rewarded for discipline in the Christian life. It is mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, where he compares the Christian life to the life of an Olympic athlete who is competing for a perishable wreath. He says that our wreath (crown) is imperishable or incorruptible. Therefore, we must run our race in such a way that we might win, living with purpose and discipline, buffeting our body and making it our slave. (1 Cor 9:24-27)

The judgment of the wicked is also known as the Great White Throne Room Judgment. In this judgment, the wicked are judged and sent to the eternal fire that had been prepared for the devil and his angels.

(Matt 25:41, 46) ""Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels... {46} And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'""

In Revelations, John gives us another glimpse of this day of judgment. All the dead, great or small, stood before the throne, and the book of life was opened. Each person was judged according to their deeds. If anyone’s name was not found in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

(Rev 20:12-15) "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. {13} And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. {14} And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

{15} And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

In Revelations 21:6-8 John wrote that the unbelievers and unrighteous will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. The immoral and unrighteous people, those who had not trusted and believed in Christ, were thrown into the lake that burns with fire.

(Rev 21:6-8) "And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. {7} "He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. {8} "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.""

So, there are two judgments, one for the righteous, who will give account for their lives, and also be awarded various crowns. There is also the judgment of the wicked, where they will be cast into the eternal fire. Paul's exhortation is that we should not judge one another because we will all be judged by God. In verse thirteen, Paul concluded, "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this, not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way." Our focus should not be on doing anything that will tear down or cause others to stumble. Instead, our focus should be on building up our brother. This is a transitional verse. The overall passage is about edifying the body. We do this first by accepting one another and not judging them. The second way is to build one another up without offending them, which we will cover next week.

(Rom 14:12-13) "So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. {13} Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way."

Conclusion and Applications

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he discussed the things that we do when we assemble. He said that each one has a psalm, teaching, revelation, tongue, interpretation, and that all things should be done for edification. Our overall passage in Romans 14-15 is about three ways to edify the body, and the first is to accept one another, and not for the purpose of judging. A healthy church body must accept and receive one another. We are all at different stages of our spiritual journey and we have to accept one another and give grace to one another. A body that is critical and judgmental, and regards others with contempt, is an unhealthy body. God wants His church to be a place that is filled with joy and peace.

(1 Cor 14:26) "What is *the outcome* then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification."

We looked at four reasons why we should accept one another. First, we should accept one another because God has accepted them. Second, they are God's servants, not ours. Third, we should accept and not judge because each of us have to live our lives being convinced in our own minds. Fourth, we should accept and not judge because we are all going to stand before God and give account.

My goal this morning was to give understanding about accepting and judging one another. For some listening today, you may need to learn to give grace to those in the body about non-essential and non-sin issues. For others, you may have shied away from speaking to someone when they were clearly in sin. I hope that this message has given you the freedom to protect the purity of the church, and to speak to people that need correction. My hope is that you will take time to pray and gain understanding about the process and attitude of correction before correcting others.

There may be some listening who have not yet decided to follow Christ. When you have to stand before God and give account, it will not be for receiving a crown, but it will be a day of judgment, where you will be cast into the eternal lake of fire. There is but one way to escape that judgment, and that is to place your trust in Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God, who took away the sins of the world. There are a couple of requirements that God gives in order to receive Christ. First, we must believe in our heart that He is the Son of God and that he died for our sins and was raised from the dead. Second, we must confess Jesus as Lord, which means that we are following His lead and will, not our own will. If you believe and would like to confess Jesus as Lord, pray with me.

Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God, that You died for my sins, and were raised from the dead on the third day. I ask You to come into my life and forgive me of my sins. I confess You as Lord and Savior of my life today. I yield my life to You and want to follow You from this day forward. Help me to live a life that pleases and glorifies You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Q & A

- Have you ever been part of a church where people were critical and judgmental of others? How did that make you feel? Was there a lot of joy in the congregation?
- Have you ever been part of a church where everyone accepted one another and encouraged one another? Did you feel welcome? How did people make you feel accepted? What are some ways to show acceptance of people?
- What are some examples of things that are opinion issues rather than sin issues?
- How do we strike a balance between loving and accepting people, but not accepting certain behaviors or lifestyles?
- What is one thing that you learned this morning? How is that going to change the way you approach church life?

Introduction (Luke 17:3, Matt 18:15-17, 1 Cor 5:9-13, Rom 14:4, Matt 7:1, Rom 14:1-13)

1. **God has accepted him.** (Rom 14:1-3, 1 Cor 5:1-3, Matt 18:15, Gal 6:1)

2. **He is God's servant** (not ours) (Rom 14:4)

3. **Every person must be convinced in his own mind** (Rom 14:5-9, Tit 3:9-11, Acts 17:11)

4. **God will judge all of us** (Rom 14:10-11, John 5:24, 2 Cor 5:21, Heb 13:17, Matt 25:41, 46, Rev 20:12-15, Rev 21:6-8)
 1. **Crown of Righteousness.** (2 Tim 4:7-8)
 2. **Crown of Life.** (James 1:12, Rev 2:10, 3:10-12)
 3. **Crown of glory.** (Matt 10:41, 1 Pet 5:1-4)
 4. **Crown of Beauty.** (Pr 4:5-9)
 5. **Crown of Rejoicing.** (1 Thess 2:19, Pr 11:30, Phil 4:1)
 6. **The Incorruptible Crown.** (1 Cor 9:24-27)

Conclusion and Applications (1 Cor 14:26)