**GRAPPLING WITH THE GRAY AREAS**

**Wednesday, July 2**

*Romans 14:10* You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. *11* It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" *12* So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. *13* Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. *19* Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

Life is full of gray areas that the Bible does not speak to directly. These things become a matter of opinion or conscience as Christians decide if they are right or wrong. In Paul’s day, some of these issues included eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols or the keeping of the Sabbath or other feast days. Today’s church might debate over such things as whether a Christian should attend movies or listen to certain styles of music. My Grandma would not use playing cards because they reminded her of the sins of her past. None of these issues have a direct bearing on eternity, but Christians still like to “pick a fight” over them. In Romans 14 and 15, Paul gives us some principles when dealing with these gray areas of life.

All believers are to accept one another because Christ has accepted us. It is useless and harmful to get irritated or upset with another believer over matters that are based on personal opinions and preferences. Each Christian must decide in their own heart whether this action is acceptable to their godly walk with Christ (14:1-9).

It also helps in these areas to remember that it is God who will judge. It is not the place of believers to condemn each other on areas which are gray or cloudy in Scripture. Each believer will answer to God for the choices they made and how they lived their lives (14:10-12).

Finally, Paul instructs us to focus on what the Christian life is really all about. As believers, the way we live our lives should bring harmony to the body of Christ and build each other up (14:13-23). If the gray area we believe to be totally fine hurts another believer who disagrees or causes them to sin against their conscious and feel guilty, then the mature believer should be willing to give up his or her rights in order to show love and build up their fellow brother or sister in Christ.

Where the Bible is clear, there is no room for debate. But where the Bible does not directly speak to an issue, believers are to deal with these differences of opinion in love, not in disputes and division.