

Romans

“Getting Along With Everyone Without Going Along With Everything”

Romans 14:1-12

We don't want to live lives of argumentation and quarreling and judgment, but God be the judge and we'll stand in his presence before the judge by faith in Jesus Christ who gave us his words. And the word today is from Romans chapter 14 as we near the end of our study of the book of Romans. Romans 14: 1-12. This is God's Word.

The Apostle Paul says... As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. ² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master[Ⓜ] that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord.

Now I'm going to interrupt and tell you something. The phrase to the Lord appears five times in verses six and eight and two. God appears two more times. So to the Lord, to the Lord, to the Lord, to God. Listen for it again. One man considers one day more sacred, another considers every day alike. He regards one day as special, does so to the Lord.

The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we 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 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? 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 confess[Ⓜ] to God.”*

¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Let's pray for one more moment. Lord, give us, we pray ears to hear all that you're saying to us, even the sweet words of encouragement and challenges. Lord, may we hear you. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Please be seated.

People love to debate. They love to debate. Now, I was thinking about preparation for this sermon. I used to love to debate who was the best baseball player. Who do you think it is? Well, you're wrong. Clearly I'm right. We can debate anything. If it were not Mother's Day, I would give you a long list of things we could debate.

But instead, I'm going to talk about mothers. Do you know that there is a robust debate going on, rekindled in our society over the last couple of years about the proper or best or ideal roles of women? Now, you know that for years, decades, people have been saying a good mother, a good woman, has a job, has a life, is outside the home is much more than merely a mother.

And for last, I don't know, ten years or so. There was the phrase boss girl or boss mom. A boss mom is somebody who has one, two, three, four kids and is also a boss at work. She can have it all. She can be the perfect mother and have 48 people under her authority at work. The girl boss is the ideal and other people said, are you crazy or what?

I mean really, you think you can have a 55 hour a week job with 45 people under you and four kids, and it'll all work out flawlessly and perfectly. No, we have right now, today, a return to the ideals that seem to have been bypassed. If you follow trends. It's called the trad wife. Trad wife is shortened form of the words traditional wife.

And so if you go to YouTube, you will find women who are 35 and they have a college degree and they're baking bread and they're making muffins and they're ironing the clothes and they're embracing it, and they're saying it is good to take care of my children. It is good to celebrate my husband's job. And other people view trad Wife as sort of some kind of demented return to that Idyllic, so-called idyllic life of the 50s. People debate and, you know, you can debate even looking to Scripture because Titus and chapter two says this. Paul commands older women to I'm quoting Titus train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands. Sounds like a proud wife to me.

On the other hand, Proverbs chapter 31 describes the woman whose children and husband rise up in color, blessed in the city gates. And what do they do? That woman not only makes clothing for her own household, she makes so much that she can sell it in the marketplace. And beyond that, she considers a field and buys it. Sounds like real estate work to me.

Well, we disagree, and I have to tell you that Christianity is if you're a if you're a guest here today, if you came because somebody said, come on Mother's Day, I need to tell you something. Christians disagree with each other a lot, and they do so because Christianity is the most idea laden theologically, philosophically and morally rich religion or faith that the world has ever known.

I don't know if you know this or not, but you can be a Hindu, or a Buddhist or a Jew and an atheist and be considered a good Hindu or Buddhist or Jew because you follow the practices and the customs and the traditions of your religion. Christianity is not like that at all. In Christianity, our practices follow our convictions about God in Buddhism and in Hinduism.

They're not even sure if the gods are good or not. So why would you follow the gods? But in Christianity, we believe that God has in himself all perfections. He's holy and just and righteous and kind and tender and good in everything we do, proceeds from who God is and what he's done in his incarnation. The life of Christ is death, is resurrection.

So everything rests on ideas, on history, on doctrine, on convictions, and because of it, because there's so many ideas in Christianity, we differ a little bit. Sometimes are different a lot. There's other reasons this Bible that you have, maybe it's in your fingers or maybe it's, you know, electronic. This Bible we have has 66 books and about 40 authors.

Nobody's actually sure 40, 41, 42 authors. It was written over a span of about 1530 years in a variety of genres proverbs, poetry, high drama, low drama, letters, songs. And not only that, not only that, but their styles differ. The written a different lands got interpret it and Christianity is also written for every land. Most religions of the world are promulgated for a people here in this culture.

But Christianity says no, no, we're for the world, which means that you have to take this book and these ideas and explain it to cultures. For 2000 years now, and every continent, every language, every people, group and people disagree because of their cultural background on things like marriage and parenting and technology and views of authority. How to set up society.

Well, no wonder Christians sometimes have debates. And the question is not shall we debate? It's fine to debate, but how will we conduct ourselves as we have our debates? God, actually, I believe, wants us to grow by wrestling with the questions that we discuss. So Romans chapter 14 tells us how to do that. Romans 14 tells us that we can disagree agreeably, that we can get along with everyone without going along with every idea we hear and pretending we agree when we don't.

Of the background is this the church in Rome? Paul's book is Romans because he's writing. The Christians in Rome was about half Jew and about half Gentile, that very different backgrounds. Jews follow the calendar with one day a week for rest. The Romans did not. The Jews had high holy days, the days of sacrifice, especially the Day of Atonement.

The Romans did not. The Jews were very, very careful about what they ate because they wanted to eat pure food. For example, they did not want to eat food that had been offered to an idol or presented to an idol, which actually was a phenomenon in those days. And honestly, in the world today, it still happens. The Jews would never eat such meat, and the Romans couldn't possibly care less about what happened with meat.

Now those are their debates, and we have similar sorts of debates. We debate about meat. We don't debate it for the same reasons people debate meat because they ask questions like, was this animal treated humanely before it was, slaughtered for consumption and is just too much red meat bad for us? And is it bad for the environment, the way we raise the animals?

So those are the questions we asked today. And then the answer, of course, is if God didn't want us to eat meat, why did he make it taste so good?

On the other hand, there's more and more evidence that sugar. Lots and lots of sugar. Not a little, but lots and lots of sugar is really bad for you. And so the question. Yeah, if God made it taste so good, why should we eat it? And the answer is, well, it may cause diabetes and inflammation of your stomach.

And maybe you don't want to hear that. Maybe you want to debate it with me after the service.

Lots of things to debate. Americans are half crazed by activity. People look at Americans and think we're. We're the busiest people that ever lived in the face of the earth. And not only do we work and work and work, but after we're done working, we pursue our hobbies and run after them. And our calendars are so full and the Bible says, hey, it's simple six days you shall labor and do all your work.

That doesn't mean you're paid for six days, but you work and then you take a day of rest, relaxation, meditation, day of worship. Of course, it was more complicated in those days because the Jews didn't simply observe the holy days because they were on the calendar or eat and naughty certain meat because of health questions or marketing questions.

The Jews in those days wanted to set themselves apart because God said, I want you to be holy. And because they were in their infancy as a spiritual people, God protected them by giving them distinctive food and clothing and habits. You could see or notice a fellow Jew as you walked around the Empire, which had millions of Jews scattered through the nations.

But in the New Testament, God tells us we don't have to look or sound or talk different. I'm not against people saying thee and thou, but you don't have to make it clear that you're really dedicated Christian, by saying, thee and thou will wear distinctive clothes like like head coverings, which some people wear, and they wear them in good conscience.

But you don't have to look different. You don't have to dress differently to show that you're a follower of Jesus. In fact, we're supposed to blend in the Jews. We're supposed to look different because God knew there are prone to sin and to compromise, to syncretism, to going into the ways of other religions and worlds. But in the New Testament, we have the Holy Spirit, and the Lord is not worried about us that way.

He wants us to go out, to be bold, to be brave, to be unafraid of being contaminated. We should be more thoughtful that we will give the good contamination of the gospel of peace and the gospel of love. And so we don't have to dress differently and eat differently. And it means that life is simply different for Christian.

I'm not saying no differences right from culture, the culture in our culture today, people use the word Lord and God heedlessly. We don't do that when we say God's name, we mean it. And people dress in ways that are immodest, and we try to be modest, but we're not trying to mark ourselves from the nations. Jesus declared, all foods clean, all foods clean.

So says Mark seven, verse 20, so says the spirit in acts chapter ten. No food is unclean in itself, and so we can eat whatever we want. Not gluttony, not greed. We can eat whatever we want. We can drink, not drunkenness, but we can drink. Now the Apostle Paul, Apostle Paul, categorizes the two people having this discussion as the strong and the weak.

Now, when he calls the people who won't eat meat and who observe special days and demand those days weak, he means they are wrong. But he actually waits until two verses after a passage to say in chapter 14, verse 14, all meat is clean in itself. The most important thing to him is not to get it right. The most important thing is to recognize we disagree and to keep unity in the body of Christ, even while we differ about things like food and things like days.

Let me say it a different way. It's fine to observe Mother's Day, but it's not mandatory. It's fine to observe Father's Day and Memorial Day and Labor Day and July 4th and Thanksgiving. But it's not universal. It's not demanded. There's no part of God's law that says you have to do that, and we shouldn't obligate others and say, that's God's way.

Paul says, disagree agreeably. Don't pass judgment. Don't despise. Now the way he says it is very precise. In verses two and three he says, those who have more laws, the weak tend to

condemn those who don't follow their rules. That's the way it goes, for people have more rules. That's what the weak have. They have more rules. You can't eat this meat.

You have to observe that day. In general, the weak tend toward legalism. Toward reach. They're my rules, but they're God's rules. And if you don't keep them, you're breaking God's law. And then they condemn people. That's what happens. That's the pattern for people with a lot of laws. The pattern for people who are aware of their Christian liberty is to look down on those legalists who don't know.

We know that we have freedom, and they don't. And condemnation is deadly, and despising others is deadly. So how do we live without being quarrelsome? How can we be right without being obnoxious about it? So the stronger right. All food is clean and every day is holy. But we also need to walk in love when we do that.

Chapter 14, verse one says, by accepting or welcoming the one who was weak, treat them as family. Treat them as friends. Treat them with respect. Yes, they have too many rules. Yes, they want you to keep their rules. Yes, they're irritating, but we welcome them and we love them. We don't despise them or scorn them. People who love rules and have many rules do tend to condemn.

I once heard a child say, my nana has a lot of rules.

Don't pass judgment and don't be afraid of talking about it. You know, one of the things that's risen in our culture in recent years is a fear of debates. We're afraid it's going to get heated. We're afraid to talk about things because it could blow up. But honestly, I'm deeply convinced that it is very important not to avoid having conversations about difficult things, but have them in Christian love.

In fact, when we refuse to have discussions, we're actually following a secular trend that became very robust around 2012 to 2000, 21 or 22 when elite universities got Ahold of some theories and students at places. The first place was actually Cornell, the second was Stanford. Then it went over to Harvard and Yale and Duke and Princeton, and they started saying, when you're about to say something that will trouble me, you need to give me a trigger warning and say, here comes something that could upset someone in class.

And for a number of years, the universities have spread to many more universities, even Christian schools. The schools said, okay, okay, we don't want to upset anyone. And then eventually the professors and teachers began saying, you know, I have a class of 400 people. How on earth can I anticipate what 400 different people might find difficult or unpleasant?

You're asking the impossible of me and the professors, Christians and secular people alike began to say, you're banishing us from the free interchange of ideas. I mean, isn't education all about

meeting new ideas that made challenges and addressing ideas that are unhelpful and does freedom from debate make people strong? Really? Doesn't that make them weak because they can't state their convictions without fear?

Surely it's better? Doesn't. In fact, doesn't the Bible say that we become stronger through trials, which would include, among other things, physical trials, but also into actual trials? Somebody disagreeing with us doesn't sometimes help us to sharpen our faith when we say, I'm sorry, but I disagree with you, Mr. Atheist. Mrs. Agnostic, I believe this, that I believe it for this reason.

And they push back and then we slowly get more and more convinced of our own positions by arguing them. Jonathan Hite, in his book The Coddling of the American Mind, said, divided ideas out there during these years, and they include the idea that what doesn't kill you makes you weaker, which is the exact opposite of what the Bible says.

Bible says where we're made strong, we gain endurance. We gain hope by persevering through trials. Even science backs this up. You know, I know I'm saying some things today you might disagree with, but I've tried to read the scientific literature. You know that our immune system gets stronger not by avoiding anything, but by taking things in and slowly making our immune system stronger.

In other words, let your kids eat stuff that falls on the floor. To be blunt, it's good for them, and studies seem to indicate that the best way to avoid peanut allergies is to meet and greet and eat peanuts. When you're 1 or 2 years old, and then your body gets used to it. And I know some of you may want to discuss that with me afterward.

Our society says, always trust your feelings, and if you feel like somebody is hurting you, if you feel threatened by something, then you are threaten them. The Bible does not say always trust your feelings. Now, of course, our feelings or emotions are a gift from God and we give thanks for our emotions. We'd be lost without them. They give us direction.

We work on what we care about. But every faculty a human has mind, will, body, emotions. Every faculty we have is good and fallen and tainted by sin. So we can't simply trust our feelings. So the idea that we should never get into a debate is actually a secular idea, not a Christian idea at all. But what the Bible says is accept people who disagree with you.

Love them, receive them, don't despise them, don't condemn them, and go study the matter. 14 five says, let each person be fully convinced in his own mind. It doesn't say ignore it. If there's a dispute about food or about days, let each person be fully convinced in their own mind. Study the matter. Think it over. Talk it over with friends. But don't give your time over to ignoring and then judging the other person with whom you disagree. Now that's the statement found in verse four. Who are you to pass judgment on? The servant of another is before his own master, that he stands or he falls, and he will be upheld, because the Lord is able to make him stand.

What that means is two things. Number one, it means that it is not our place to judge each other. Everybody stands and is judged by their own master. So, for example, if someone is a truck driver, you don't want kindergarten teachers and balloonists to be judging the traits of a truck driver. You want other truck drivers to do that.

If your field is real estate, you don't want to be judged by vegetable farmers. You want other real estate agents. If you are a kindergarten teacher, you don't want plumbers to judge your work. You want other experts in education to do your work. That's common sense. That's a Paul saying. Now the next question is, so who is our master? Who's the judge? And the answer is God. God is the one who's qualified to judge us. Also, we don't judge each other and condemn each other. We leave it to God and we remember the gospel which says God can make anyone stand before him. Talking about baseball at the beginning, somebody came up to me after the first service said, hey, whatever you think about the best baseball hitter of all time, you need to know it's Hank Aaron. Because Hank, Aaron's dad, was a friend of our family. Something like that.

Well, let God be the judge of that. Let God be the judge. It's not our place to judge each other in matters of that nature. And if you're prone to condemn someone for disagreeing with you about food or drink or days or other habits, please remember that God is the judge. And before you condemn that person, please know that God is able to make everybody stand, no matter how wrong they are.

If they trust in Jesus as Lord and Redeemer and Savior. So we don't judge and condemn each other. We believe that to the Lord, the one who is able to make a stand. John said something about this in one of his books. He said, you know, we love the Golden rule. Treat one another, do unto others as they would have you do to them.

Jesus said, it's good, but it's you know, it said at the beginning of his ministry, training disciples is not the last word about discipleship and how you treat other people. We treat people with love. And he said this. He said the best way to treat others is to determine God's attitude toward them. That is even better than the Golden Rule.

It is safe to treat others as we would like them to treat us. Golden rule, but it is still safer to treat them as God does. And how does God treat us? He does not condemn us as we trust in Christ. So let us not condemn each other. We are prone to judge. Over the last decades my life, I have heard Christians get into not only disagreements, but heart arguments, angry arguments about movies and facial hair and men wearing long hair.

I heard people say, why are you? Why do you have a beard? Don't you know? I didn't know alcohol, tobacco, music styles, worship formats, tattoos, clothing trends, petty gambling on sports events that spice it up and make it more fun? Or does it ruin everything? We debate

everything. Moderate use of alcohol. Praise be the Lord who makes wine that gladdens the heart of men.

People call it that. And then there are 70 passages that warn against drunkenness. Then there's tobacco. Don't you know how deadly tobacco is? But you know, a celebratory cigar or little pinch in your gum? There's no harm in that except I've had friends, two friends of mine, two friends of mine have had strokes. One came within an eyelash of dying, started with a celebratory cigar, and then it led to a cigar three nights a week. And then he almost died. And then, of course, I mentioned it before. Trigger warning. I'm going to say something, you don't like... sugar. I don't know, lately, every time I look at the internet, sugar is bad for you. Seems like it is ... a little bit as good. I think that we could debate a lot of things. I just lost 200 friends. No more muffins, no more chocolate chip cookies.

We can debate mothers. I have two brothers. We sometimes debate our mother. Our mother was a good mother. She's been a little lord about for four and a half years now, but not perfect. And we can debate the job she did. She was insanely trusting. She once put one of her grandchildren on a ledge over a 40ft waterfall at the age of two and a half and then walked away saying, she's a sensible child. She's two and a half. Nobody is sensible at two and a half. She trusted people who mistreated her repeatedly. She wasn't a very good housekeeper. We can discuss all of that, but my goodness, did she love us, she said over and over. The best thing that ever happened in my life was having three boys like you, funny and strong and smart. She even thought we were handsome. Her eyesight was poor.

She even thought our mischievous deeds were somehow good, especially if nobody got hurt. So give thanks for your mothers, even if they weren't perfect. Focus on the essentials. That's what I'm saying. And that little illustration invites us to focus on the essentials of God's nature. Right? God is one, and yet father, son, and Holy Spirit, God sent his only son into the world not to condemn the world, but to redeem the world is coming again to judge living in the dead to make all things new, to give us not only new souls, but also new bodies on a renewed earth.

These are fundamental matters. We disagree on other matters. You know, we're looking for a lead pastor right now, and we expect our lead pastor to agree with us on all the most important things. But the truth of the matter is, in this church, we actually expect the next pastor to disagree, to agree with us, not disagree with us on some secondary matter.

So if we had a lovely interview and we're thinking about somebody, there are wonderful candidates and they say, and there's one more thing I need you to know, and that is, I believe in the power of the bishops and the cardinals. And we say, thank you for coming and spending your time with us. Thank you for your candor.

And you need to go to another church, because sometimes it's important to track down secondary matters, but it's always important to track down the primary matters, always. Now, one more time, Paul says, in all this, we are never permitted to be lazy thinkers, to luxuriate in indecision. And this hero says this and that hero says that. And there's a tradition for this, and there's your tradition for that.

And why should I think that I can solve a debate that's been going on for centuries? Paul says each of you should be fully convinced. That means you study. You think it through in your own mind. Don't be lazy thinkers come to conviction. Practice what you believe. If you think it's good to eat meat and eat meat. If you think it's bad, eat sugar, then stop eating so much sugar.

If you think tattoos are great, get a tattoo. If you think tattoos are horrible, don't get a tattoo. You may. We may disagree about that. We probably do disagree about some of these matters, but be fully convinced in your own mind. In all of this, we're striving to honor the Lord even as we accept each other. Now, look, there are very clear answers on some of these things.

I have a very strong conviction about days. The Bible teaches beyond a shadow of a doubt, that every single day is important. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Every day is a day to give thanks and rejoice every day. Exhort one another every day, as long as is called today.

What day is called today? Every day. Every day is a day in which we exhort one another. Every day is the same in very important ways. And yet there are days that are uniquely important. In Exodus chapter 13, Moses said to Israel, today we leave Egypt. We leave today. Tomorrow is not good enough, and yesterday is not right either.

Today, Jesus in the gospel, Luke proclaimed who he is and said, today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. And he went to the house of a man named Zacchaeus and said, today salvation has come to this house. This is the day today Jesus said to a man who was crucified next to him on the cross today you will be with him in Paradise.

And the Bible says that we should make the most of the opportunity. We should be ready in season and out, out of season, timely and untimely. We should be ready every day because you never know what the big day is going to be. The opportune moment today, hear the Lord's voice. In my opinion, the Bible's clear on days, but you have to have your opinion.

Strong on primaries, studying secondaries. Now, all of this leads us to the core idea, and that is we accept each other because God is the judge and we are not. Paul asks the question in verse four, who are you to pass judgment on your brother? He says in verse nine, for this very reason

Christ died and returned to life, so that he, not you, he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

Jesus died and rose so he could have the role of the judge of mankind. That role is now taken. That means it's not your role. Your role is to be convinced to study the welcome people who might disagree with you a little bit. Not on primary matters, but secondary matters. Paul also gives us the true answer about food.

We're not to eat meat. The Corinthians debated the question can we eat meat that's been offered to idols? Seems like it was a question in Rome to Paul says, here's the answer. Idols are nothing. When you take meat and offer to an idol, you're not doing anything. The idol is nothing. You're waving a piece of meat before nothing.

Nothing happened. So you can go ahead and eat the meat. But he also says if someone thinks the meat is unclean because of that ritual, then you shouldn't eat it. Let me put it in contemporary terms. You and I probably had conversations with people who think that you must pray every time you eat anything. A quarter of a piece of tiramisu, you better pray three carrot sticks.

You better pray. Now, if someone really believes that and they're wrong, you don't have to pray before three carrot sticks, especially the baby carrots. If you don't have to pray. It's not mandatory, but that person thinks they should. You ought not to go about persuading them. Go ahead and eat it. Just eat it. They have to be fully convinced in their own mind.

If you think it's a sin for you, it's rebellion to do it. Don't push people to do things that you know are okay. If they don't know, it's okay. Everyone must be fully convinced. In his own mind. We have to live with integrity before God. That's what the Apostle Paul is saying to us. All right, let's give a couple of applications.

Number one, may the Lord help us recognize the differences between primary issues, the great issues about God and Christ and salvation and human nature and secondary issues that we can let go. Let us have clarity about what's required. That's number one. Number two, may God give us humility to be kind and understanding with people who disagree with us.

I'll put it differently. May we have a desire that we all tremble before God's Word instead of causing people to tremble at our word, our word of judgment.

Number three be careful of despising people who disagree with you. Be careful of judging or condemning people who disagree with you. Maybe learn to love and trust and respect each other through our disagreements. And let's remember that all of us live to Lord and die the Lord, which we heard seven times in the passage that we read, we eat to God.

One way to look at the question about what we can and can't do is this. If you're wondering if something is legitimate or not, if it's legal or illegal, lawful, pleasing to God or not, you can always ask the question, can I say the words, Lord, I do this in your presence. Lord, what the food I'm about to eat, what I'm about to drink, what I'm about to do.

I offer to you. I do it to the Lord. If you can say that it's a good sign, not a final sign. But it's a good sign. You can do that. And if you can't, you probably shouldn't, because you should offer everything to the Lord. We live to the Lord. We die to the Lord. We make every judgment to the Lord.

I didn't say the first service, but I must say that the second service about a month ago, my grandson sent me Flat Stanley. You know what Flat Stanley is? You know, you send that picture around, you get pictures all over the place. And he wanted some pictures here in Birmingham. And I thought, you know what I want to do?

I'm going to go to the top of the bell tower, and I'm going to get some pictures up there serving Birmingham and this beautiful property that we have. And then I found out that you have to take 40 rungs vertically twice, and there's nothing below but concrete. And I thought, suddenly my hands feel a little slippery and my feet a little slippery, and I thought, I'm, you know, actually not afraid of dying. I'm afraid of falling down to the bottom, being crippled. That's what I'm afraid of.

We live and die to the Lord. We make a decision. I decided to go with Flat Stanley and to bless my grandson. He liked it. And I didn't die. As you can tell. And I decided I had time to think about it before the Lord. I'm going to do this. I'm going to be careful. It's going to be okay.

You may disagree with me, but the Lord is my judge. He's the judge, and we need to be ready to give an answer to him. And I will tell you, it was a minor blessing because I was a little bit afraid it would have been a big blessing. It was a minor blessing to say, you know what? I'm actually not afraid of dying.

I'm going to stand before the Lord. I know him, I love him, and he's going to say, I receive you and I hope you're all in that position. I hope you're all in a position that you are ready to meet the Lord. He's the judge. He's the Savior. We stand before him and through Christ we can stand. He is able to make us stand.

I hope everyone here knows that. That we stand before the Lord, the righteous judge, but also the forgiving and the merciful Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father, we thank you for your Word. The word that says Christ died. Return to life, that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living, those who live now and those who live

forever. By your work, by your love, by your word that reveals all these things to us. We pray in
Jesus' name,

Amen.