

Judge and jury

Julian Smith *reflects on* Romans 14:1-12

In these days of food fads and lose-weight-quickly diets it may be hard to understand why Roman Christians are so vexed about eating meat. The issue is clear and simple – is it right to eat meat sacrificed to an idol? Such meat is regularly on sale but with no provenance to guide them, how are Christians to know where their meat comes from?

Some believe eating sacrificed meat makes no difference to their faith; others are not so sure and abstain from eating any meat. The issue becomes polarised and judgements are made about people and their faith – some are strong in faith, others weak. Being judgemental leads to division and this is where Paul steps in. He reminds the Romans of God's love and welcome for all who follow the way of Christ. They are called to rejoice in the variety of those whom God calls, not to judge one another. Life would be much easier if they could agree one course of action, right or wrong, but they can't so fear takes over and positions harden.



Perhaps it is part of human nature to be suspicious and fearful of those who are different from us, but it is not God's way, for God loves indiscriminately and lavishly. God also calls a strange assortment of people – something that becomes clear every time we look in a mirror. 🙏

Lord God, you call a strange assortment of people to seek you by following your Son. Help us to celebrate the richness and variety of your creation and call, and to put behind us fear and suspicion. Amen.

Back to university

by Tabitha Francis

At the age of twenty-six Tabitha has gone back to university to study medicine.

Learning how to learn again is an interesting challenge. Graduate medicine is unlike anything I have ever done before. People say it's hard but I don't think you really know just quite how hard it is until you're in the middle of it. The

huge breadth of knowledge that is taught every day is massive and frankly, the word "overwhelming" is an understatement. It is impossible, totally impossible to know everything that they teach. I think I am slowly getting used to that idea, and so the challenge then, is how to pick and choose what is most important to learn.

God has been good so far. God has placed good people around me and is helping me know that I am not alone. In the biggest challenge I have faced yet, God is guiding me, teaching me humility and being the rock that I so definitely need. 🙏

“**Have you sinned today? Have you made your soul old? Do not despair, do not despond, but renew your soul by repentance, and tears, and Confession, and by doing good things. And never cease doing this.**”

St John Chrysostom (died AD 407), Archbishop of Constantinople and Early Church Father

Christian Blind Mission

by Caroline Hodgson

When German missionary Ernst Christoffel arrived in Turkey in 1908, one group of people grabbed his heart – children who couldn't see, who couldn't walk, who couldn't hear, begging in the streets. He called them "nobody's children". Pastor Christoffel set up a home in Malatia, providing care and education for blind and disabled children.

Today, people with sight loss in some of the world's poorest countries often face stigma and discrimination and

are excluded from school, work and participating in their community. They might struggle to access simple surgery that could save their sight.

Inspired by Jesus' radical example of solidarity with, and compassion for, marginalised people, CBM works in the world's poorest places to prevent blindness, improve health and transform the lives of people with disabilities. It's a month until Christian Blind Mission Sunday, so there is time to prepare and make a difference to the world's forgotten people, ensuring they are neither out of sight nor out of mind: www.cbmun.org.uk 🙏