

Romans 14 - Conduct Under Christian Liberty; Food

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Romans 14

(3) Service toward the weaker brother (Rom 14:1—15:13)

Unbelievers know two things about the Bible, typically: (1) the water to wine miracle (John 2), and (2) that the Bible says Do not judge. One of the things that's very interesting though is that Christians are called to judge. In 1 Cor 2:15, Paul says that a person who is in the Spirit and walking with the Lord judges everything. If we don't judge people or things (ideas), we can't discern anything, and the Bible is filled with exhortations for Christians to be discerning.

But the Bible also puts some limitations on our judgment. One limitation in particular is judging someone's motives. We can't possibly know what is in the heart and mind of another person, no matter how obvious it may seem to us, thus we should not judge another's motives. Another limit placed on a believer's judgment is that should not judge hypocritically (Matt 7:1-5). Jesus gives us the example of one person judging someone about a speck in their eye when the person judging has a log in their own eye.

A third limitation of our judgment is given in Rom 14:1-12, which is to limit judgment on debatable areas of conduct. There are things that we encounter in daily life that are not outright prohibited in the Bible, so-called "gray areas." In this passage, Paul is going to talk about two "gray areas" where a Christian should not be judgmental: (1) OT dietary restrictions, and (2) observance of feast days. There are many relevant applications of this chapter (see below).

Romans was written (57 AD) about 25 years after the church was born (33 AD). Pentecost brought about a huge dispensational change, a transition from the "age of Israel" where God is working solely through the nation of Israel, to the "age of the church" where God is working solely through the church. Some people understand this change as they come to Christ in the years after Pentecost, and some do not. Those who understand get it that the rules have changed, others have not yet come to that reality.

Those who have figured out that the rules of have changed and God is working differently now are called the "stronger brothers"; those who have not yet figured out that God's rules have changed and are clinging onto the rules of the prior age, specifically the Law of Moses, are called the "weaker brothers."

To be fair, this was a hard transition for God's people to make...remember the events surrounding Peter's meeting with Cornelius, the first Gentile convert (Acts 10:10-14). The Lord spoke to Peter, but Peter did not like what he heard. He struggled with understanding the dispensational change that the church age brought about. Paul writes about this same struggle between the Israel dispensation (Law) and the church dispensation (grace) (Cf.

Acts 15; Gal 3:3). The entire book of Hebrews is about a second generation of Jewish Christians who are contemplating going back under the Law of Moses because of persecution from other Jews, who do not like the "new rules." The book of Hebrews was written to tell them not to do it.

Our charts and graphs today make a nice, neat transition...you have the OT, then you have the cross, then the church. However helpful they might be, they do not tell the story of the struggle that went on during that transition period from Israel to the church. Why didn't they just read their Bible? There was no Bible back then...it was just the OT, which spoke nothing of the Church Age.

So in this passage, Paul covers what to do when you have a fuller understanding of Scripture, and you're interacting with others, maybe new believers, who are saved and going to heaven just like you are, who do not yet understand or are struggling with the age of grace that we're living in, and the fact that we are not under the Law. What should be our attitude toward them?

Now 2000 years after Pentecost, there are very few if any Christians who are struggling with the change from Law to grace, so what are maybe some modern day examples where the principles Paul lays out here would apply? I'm glad you asked.

- Drinking alcohol - there is no prohibition in Scripture for drinking alcohol. There are many prohibitions against drunkenness and the behaviors that come out of being in that state, but what about just 1-2 drinks?
- Tattoos - someone gets John 3:16 tattooed on their arm, and uses it as an evangelistic tool. There is no NT (not OT) admonition against tattoos.
- Dressing for church - some people wear shorts, t-shirt and flip-flops to church in the warmer months; others think that women should be in dresses, shoulders covered, skirt below the knees, and men in slacks and collared shirt. Who is correct?
- Worship style and order - communion every week, once a month, once a quarter, once a year? Singing before or after the sermon? Style of worship music?

(A) Do not judge one another (14:1-12)

(1) Both are accepted by God (14:1-5)

1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not to have quarrels over opinions.

1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

1 Accept anyone who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of arguing over differences of opinion.

1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

- Paul speaks here to those who understood the implications of Christian liberty

- The other group, the “weak in the faith,” were those whose faith was not strong enough for them to exercise the full liberty they had in Christ
- Paul sets the tone for the entire passage here by saying to accept these weaker brothers, but not so that you can pass judgment or argue about differences of opinion
- “...accept” - *proslambano*, receive, take to oneself; present tense, middle imperative: “keep on accepting”
- “...weak” - in this chapter, this is not weakness in basic Christian faith but weakness in assurance that one’s faith permits one to do certain things
- Notice who is “weak”: the one burdened with (external) rules!
- In view of what Paul wrote about them, they appear to have been mainly Jewish Christians who refrained from certain foods and observed certain days because they remained loyal to the Mosaic Law
- Peter, at one point, struggled with the extent of his liberty (Acts 10). In the process of his growth, he had a relapse (Gal 2:11-12).
- The “weak” have an overly-sensitive conscience about doing things that are permissible for a Christian
- “...faith” - as in v22-23, does not refer to the teachings of Christianity, but to what a person believes to be the will of God for him
- “...opinions” - differences of opinion [ISV]; amoral or disputable matters
- Such issues do not involve salvation or sin. They are matters about which faithful Christians may disagree, but they never undermine the truth of God’s grace in Christ through faith or deny God’s commands.

(a) Differences over food (14:2-4)

(i) Differences stated (14:2)

- 2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but the one who is weak eats *only* vegetables.
- 2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*.
- 2 One person believes that he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.
- 2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.
- Here is a specific case of disagreement, one involving food. It did not matter to Paul the reason why the weaker brother chose not to eat meat.
- The one who is weak believes that he would please God more by not eating meat than by eating it. He was wrong. God has not forbidden Christians from eating any food (1 Tim 4:3-4).
- Eating food is neither morally good or morally bad; it is amoral

- The weak have strong consciences, but not necessarily consciences trained and matured by God's Word
- Paul may have had several issues in mind:
 1. Jewish food laws
 - OT Law: while Rom 14 does not mention the Mosaic Law, Jewish scruples about diet were likely one of Paul's concerns. Jews who lived among Gentiles sometimes found it easier to avoid meat (Dan 1:8-16) than to maintain Jewish kosher diet restrictions (Ex 23:19; Lev 11; 17).
 2. Gentile asceticism (self-denial for spiritual reasons)
 - Gentile Asceticism: The excesses of Roman life at the time caused some citizens to flee to opposite extremes. They adopted severely self-disciplined lifestyles, eating only vegetables and drinking no wine. When they later became Christians, their dietary views remained important to them.
 3. Food previously offered to idols
 - Idolatry: What should a Christian do if a friend or relative served them meat that was previously offered to idols? In Corinth, when a similar question emerged, Paul answered, "An idol is nothing at all." (1 Cor 8:4). Paul taught the Corinthian Christians they were free to eat the meat, but they were not free to impose their freedom on other Christians who thought eating the meat was wrong.

(ii) Exhortation: forego judgment (14:3)

- 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**.
- 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.
- 3 The person who eats any kind of food must not ridicule the person who does not eat them, and the person who does not eat certain foods must not criticize the person who eats them, for God has accepted him.
- 3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.
- Paul's command: forego judgment in these circumstances
- The stronger brother is not to judge with contempt the weaker brother, and the weaker brother who wants to honor these traditions should not judge or hate the one who does not want to honor these traditions
- "...God has accepted him"- why would I think I'm in a position to judge someone else if God isn't judging them for their actions or beliefs? That person has been accepted by the same God who has accepted me, so who am I to judge them?

— I may have a much better handle on Bible doctrine than that new believer, and that new believer may be doing some things that are off the wall a little bit, but are not clearly condemned

(iii) Illustration (14:4)

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.

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.

4 Who are you to criticize someone else's servant? He stands or falls before his own Lord —and stand he will, because the Lord makes him stand.

4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

- The illustration is of a servant-master relationship...the servant is only responsible to his own master, not to another servant

— When we understand that the weaker brother has only to answer to God Himself, we take comfort that God will eventually straighten him out in His timing and His providence, this should give the stronger brother an attitude of deference toward them

— Your spiritual gift is not criticism, and God doesn't need you to go around condemning everyone in the body of Christ. God is very good at fixing people over time, if we leave room for Him to work.

— Many times we interfere with God's work by clamping down on people in a certain way over these "gray areas" when we don't have Scripture on our side when we're making certain demands

— If they are doing something that directly contradicts revealed Scripture, that's another story. But if the disagreement is in a gray area, I should defer to God to handle the situation.

(b) Differences over days (14:5)

(i) Differences stated (14:5a)

(ii) Be convinced (14:5b)

5 One person values one day over another, another values every day *the same*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

5 One person regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

5 One person decides in favor of one day over another, while another person decides that all days are the same. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind:

5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

- Paul says effectively...do what you must do in these debatable matters, whether it be dietary restrictions or the observance of certain feast days
- Here, Paul gives a second illustration: in this case, the weaker brother does something and the stronger brother does not (opposite of the previous illustration, v2-4)
- Again, its irrelevant *why* the weaker brother observes a particular day over another
- If you're fully convinced in your own mind about dietary restrictions or feast days, and you're convinced in your mind that you want to do that, Paul says Go for it, but do not pass harsh judgment on those who would do it differently, because we don't have clear admonitions from Scripture one way or the other
- The issue is not knowledge in these disputable matters, it is attitude...have the appropriate, godly attitude toward the weaker brother, don't pass judgment on them when the Scripture is not clearly on your side

(2) Both belong to God (14:6-9)

(a) Both should be thankful to the Lord (14:6)

6 The one who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and the one who eats, does so with regard to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and the one who does not eat, *it is* for the Lord *that* he does not eat, and he gives thanks to God.

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.

6 The one who observes a special day, observes it to honor the Lord. The one who eats, eats to honor the Lord, since he gives thanks to God. And the one who does not eat, refrains from eating to honor the Lord; yet he, too, gives thanks to God.

6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

- Both the stronger and the weaker brother, the one with more mature knowledge and the one with less mature knowledge, both should be thankful to the Lord

— Loving God with our whole hearts frees believers to serve the Lord either way in either area

- The diagnostic question in this verse is: Can you be thankful?

— The ability to give thanks helps us discern God's will in doubtful situations

— Do other Christians with different practices give thanks to God for these things? Then their thanksgiving shows that what they do, they do "to the Lord," so let them do it.

— We need to embrace how God works through other believers as He sees fit

— Address doubts about your own actions in these areas by asking, "Is this a gift from God for which I am able to give thanks?" (James 1:17) If so, then enjoy it in the Lord with a good conscience.

All foods are clean, says...

- Jesus (Mark 7:14-23)
- Peter (Acts 10:9-15)
- Paul (Rom 14:1-12; 1 Cor 8:4,8; 10:23-33; Col 2:16-17; 1 Tim 4:4)

(b) Both belong to the Lord (14:7-9)

(i) Both are not to live and die selfishly (14:7)

7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself;

7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself;

7 For none of us lives for himself, and no one dies for himself.

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

- Both the stronger and weaker brothers are not to live or die selfishly...

(ii) Both are to live and die for the Lord (14:8a)

(iii) Both belong to the Lord (14:8b-9)

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.

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.

8 If we live, we live to honor the Lord; and if we die, we die to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

- ...but instead, both the stronger and weaker brothers are to live and die for the Lord (v8)

9 For to this end Christ died and lived *again*, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

9 For this reason the Messiah died and returned to life, so that he might become the Lord of both the dead and the living.

9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

- Both the stronger and weaker brothers belong to the Lord because Christ died and paid the sin penalty for both of them
 - Jesus is the One who made it possible for both the stronger and weaker brother to receive the righteousness of Christ. It was neither one of their blood that was spilled for the other, but Christ's blood for both.

When we understand who we are in Jesus Christ, when we understand the awesome debt that was paid for all Christians, it changes our attitude. We move away from a judgmental, harsh, vitriolic, condemning spirit toward other brothers and sisters in Christ who may not see things the same way I do, and I move toward an attitude of grace toward them. I let the Lord deal with them in His timing, and the Lord needs to deal with me in a lot of things too. Even though Paul calls you a stronger brother in this passage, you don't have everything figured out either.

While you're treating the weaker brother gently and patiently, think of all the strange ideas you had when you first came to Christ. Many times we can look back in embarrassment and laugh at ourselves, because our understanding of Scripture was very incomplete, and we were advocating things, teaching things and doing things that are not clearly taught in the Bible. Because of this, who am I to come along today and clobber a person because they believe some weird things, when I also believed weird things as a new Christian, particularly in a disputable matter.

The issue is not knowledge, it's attitude. If I choose to have a harsh, condemning attitude toward an unbeliever, who does something that I personally disagree with but is not directly condemned in Scripture, then I am not living out in my Christian life the grace that I have received from God. It is fascinating that we can receive the unmerited favor of God and watch as God patiently deals with us as we walk through the Christian life, but then when we interact with another believer, who may be more immature than we are, grace goes right out the window because we want to straighten people out for the Lord.

Fact of the matter is...that person that we're trying to "straighten out" doesn't belong to us, they belong to the Lord. And that person we're trying to "straighten out", we didn't spill one drop of blood for their redemption. The Lord did. And we turn around and are unwilling to display that same patient attitude that the Lord exhibited toward us during our journey, we turn around and are clearly unwilling to display that same patient attitude toward a less mature believer. We demand instant maturity from others when God didn't demand instant maturity from us.

If that is your attitude, you do not understand the grace of God that He has for you.

(3) Both will be judged by God (14:10-12)

(a) Exhortation not to judge (14:10a)

(b) All will stand before God (14:10b-12)

(i) Reality of judgment (14:10b)

10 But as for you, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or you as well, why do you regard your brother or sister with **contempt**? For **we will all** appear before the judgment seat of God.

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.

10 Why, then, do you criticize your brother? Or why do you despise your brother? For all of us will stand before the judgment seat of God.

10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

- I don't need to pass judgment on another believer in a disputable matter because it's not my job...it's God's job. Mind your own business.

— Judgment happens in the next life...for believers, it happens at the Bema Seat judgment (2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:10-15)

— "...contempt" - it's not just voicing a difference of opinion, it's an attitude of resentment towards another Christian who may not see the world exactly like you see it

— It's an attitude of hatred and antagonism, which develops very quickly and easily in the heart of a believer

— In Luke 9:51ff, Jesus and His disciples were en route to Jerusalem and Jesus sent messengers ahead to make arrangements for Him in Samaria, but the Samaritans did not receive him. When James and John heard about this, they asked Jesus if they could command fire down from heaven to consume them (showing their utter hatred for the Samaritans). Jesus rebuked them by saying You don't know what kind of spirit you are of.

— However, it's encouraging to note that the same John the apostle who said these words was later called the "love apostle" because the Lord changed his attitude. What did God do to change John's attitude? We have a clue in John's Gospel, where he never identifies himself directly, but instead as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

— Jesus showed John love, which in turn moved John to show that same love to others. The Lord gave John so much unconditional grace, loving Him over and over again, showing patience toward him over and over again, that it eventually softened his heart. He changed from a "son of thunder" to "the apostle whom Jesus loved."

— This is how the Lord changes all of us...He keeps showing us grace after grace after grace, and we fail, and He gives us more grace, and eventually something happens in our character where this harsh attitude that we once had toward others begins to wane.

— How can I bask in the unmerited favor of God, then turn around and treat another believer with vitriolic contempt because they don't agree with me on something that Scripture is not clear on. It's not about knowledge, it's about attitude.

- "...we" - Paul is writing to believers, and includes himself in with his audience. Paul will stand in judgment before God just like every other believer (2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:10-15).
- "...will" - future tense; the judgment of the believer will take place in the next life, just after the Rapture
- "...all" - both the weaker and the stronger brothers will stand before Christ in judgment
- Therefore, we can postpone or withhold judgment from another believer on disputable matters because Jesus will handle the judgment in the next life. We don't have to worry about it right now.
- The point of the judgment is not to determine heaven or hell...that judgment was already made at the cross. The result is heaven for every believer.
- The issue of this judgment is accountability: what did you do with the life Christ gave you. Did we allow Jesus Christ to express Himself through us during our earthly sojourn?

(ii) Scriptural proof (14:11)

11 For it is written: "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, TO ME EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, AND EVERY TONGUE WILL GIVE PRAISE TO 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."

11 For it is written, "As certainly as I live, declares the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will praise God."

11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

- Quoted from Is 45:23 (Cf. Phil 2:10-11)...

- Paul now gives scriptural proof of this coming judgment...

— Paul's point is that if you're a Christian, you're operating with a completely different worldview than an unbeliever. The unbeliever doesn't believe in a coming judgment, but the Christian does. Not just a judgment for the unbeliever, but also a judgment for the believer.

— Because this is a theological, biblical reality, it changes my attitude toward the weaker brother right now. I don't have to put myself into the position of judge, jury and executioner over someone in the church with whom I disagree with on a disputable matter, because God will deal with that person in their progressive sanctification in this life, but also in judgment (if necessary) in the next life.

(iii) Conclusion (14:12)

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

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

12 Consequently, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

- Paul says, Don't worry about your brother, worry about yourself. What kind of choices are you making? Don't worry about that guys lack of theological understanding, worry about your own lack of theological understanding, because you have to give an account to God just like that weaker brother.

— This is review information as far as Paul is concerned because Romans is his 6th epistle, and he has already written 1 Cor 3:10-15 and 2 Cor 5:10

Name	Sheep & Goat	Judgment of the Jews	<u>Bema Seat</u>	Great White Throne
Scripture	Matt 25:31-46	Ezek 20:33-44	<u>1 Cor 3:10-15</u>	Rev 20:11-15
Place	Earth, Jerusalem	Earth, wilderness	<u>Heaven</u>	Earth
Audience	Gentile Tribulation survivors	Jewish Tribulation survivors	<u>Church Age believers</u>	All unsaved
When	After Tribulation	After Tribulation	<u>After Rapture</u>	After Millennium
Purpose	Saved Gentiles enter kingdom	Saved Jews enter kingdom	<u>Reward believers</u>	Degree of punishment in hell
Evaluation	Treatment of Christ's brethren	Passing under shepherd's rod	<u>Works taken through fire</u>	Not in the book; judged by the books

(B) Strong are not to destroy the weak (14:13-23)

(1) Love (14:13-18)

(a) Introduction (14:13-14)

13 Therefore let's not judge one another anymore, but rather **determine** this: not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a **brother's or sister's** way.

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.

13 Therefore, let's no longer criticize each other. Instead, make up your mind not to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

- "Therefore" - because of Paul's arguments given in v1-12

- Now Paul is going to talk about a new topic: not putting a stumbling block in the way of another Christian
- "...determine" - *krinō*, to resolve, choose; make it a priority ahead of time, to avoid unnecessarily stumbling that weaker brother
- "...brother's or sister's" - the other believer may not have reached the level of maturity of understanding that you have, but they are believers nonetheless, blood-bought saints, going to the same heaven and you, and the apostle Paul

14 I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to the one who thinks something is unclean, to that person *it is* unclean.

14 I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.

14 I know—and have been persuaded by the Lord Jesus—that nothing is unclean in and of itself, but it is unclean to a person who thinks it is unclean.

14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.

- Paul is making a general statement that nothing is unclean...he's referring specifically in the context to foods that may be consumed

- Paul, like the stronger brother, is convinced that no foods are unclean in and of themselves

— However, he says that if a weaker brother believes a food is unclean, to them it is unclean

— This is where Peter was in Acts 10:13-16

(b) Love (14:15-16)

15 For if because of food your brother or sister is hurt, you are no longer walking in accordance with love. Do not destroy with your choice of food that person for whom Christ died.

15 For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

15 For if your brother is being hurt by what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not destroy the person for whom the Messiah died by what you eat.

15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

- Which is more important...your rights in Christ, or your brother's walk with Christ?

— Are you going to be so insistent upon your rights that the moment you exercise that right that you would "hurt" or "destroy" a fellow Christian?

— To Paul, love trumps freedom every day of the week and twice on Sunday (1 Cor 8:1; 13:1-3)

— Paul is not interested in your freedoms in Christ, he's interested in whether or not you will give them up in order to not "destroy" a fellow believer

This does not mean the strong have to forego everything about which some weaker believer might object. A new list of "do's" and "don'ts" is exactly what Paul wants to avoid. We would fall into a new legalism if we tried to live by other believers' standards. However, we are not free to hurt weaker Christians over matters that are more or less inconsequential. Nor may we allow our freedom to cause others to regard it only as an excuse for sin.

16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;

16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;

16 Do not allow what seems good to you to be spoken of as evil.

16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

- The freedom we have in Christ in this dispensation, as opposed to the Law the governed the OT, is a "good thing." Praise the Lord that you understand this freedom.

— But the moment that this freedom flaunts itself so as to agitate or offend another Christian, is the moment that glorious freedom we have in Christ is "spoken of as evil" because it tears down a fellow believer, for whom Christ died

Why does Paul not give advice to the weak? The obvious reason is because the weak are able only to abstain from what they believe to be wrong. The strong are able to abstain or not abstain. The strong can accommodate the weak, but the weak cannot accommodate the strong.

(c) Priorities (14:17-18)

17 for the kingdom of God is **not eating and drinking, but** righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

17 For God's kingdom does not consist of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy produced by the Holy Spirit.

17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

- In the millennial kingdom, there will be eating and drinking. Ok Paul, thanks for telling us that, now what does that have to do with the topic at hand?

— Well, Paul says, the millennial kingdom will be just as literal and physical, tangible, as life is today. I will recognize you and you will recognize me. I'll be able to hear you and you'll be

able to hear me. We will eat and drink together (Cf. Matt 8:11).

- "...is" - *estin*, futuristic present tense (Cf. v10-12; 1 Cor 15:42-44); Kingdom Now sees this as evidence that we're presently in the kingdom; however doesn't necessarily mean that the kingdom is a present reality

— But this verse is not saying that the kingdom of God is a factual reality at the moment of Paul's writing (or even today for that matter). If it were, he'd have to rewrite all the passages that indicate that the kingdom is yet future. Paul uses the present tense "is" to emphasize a believer's present legal right to the kingdom, once it comes.

— Paul's point is that believers have a legal right to the kingdom, not that we're in it currently. The kingdom is not *de facto* here presently, but believers *de jure* (legal) have a right to it.

— See [The Coming Kingdom 68 Kingdom Now Passages: Rom 14:17; 1 Tim 6:15](#) for the use of *de jure* (legal) vs *de facto* (factual) distinctions.

- "...not...but" - it was common for the Jews to say 'not...but' and simply mean that the emphasis is not *this* but *that*. We see this format of comparison for emphasis but not exclusion throughout Scripture (Hosea 6:6; Zeph 3:9; Zech 8:23; Matt 6:19-20; 1 Cor 4:20; 1 Peter 3:3-4)

— Paul is using a Jewish figure of speech, not a statement of exclusion but a statement of emphasis. The emphasis during the millennial kingdom will not be eating and drinking, although those things will take place, but it will be the spiritual truths of righteousness, peace and joy.

— For people to interpret this verse as stating we're currently in a spiritual form of the kingdom is to abuse how biblical writers (in Greek) emphasize one thing over another

— Another time this Jewish figure of speech is used was by Jesus in Matt 6:19-20. If Jesus was speaking literally in this passage, it would be wrong to save money, invest, or open a bank account.

— Another example is 1 Peter 3:3-4, where Peter talks about a woman's outward appearance, he doesn't exclude a woman from looking nice, wearing jewelry and nice clothes, he makes the point that the inward appearance is the more important of the two. Honor the latter more so than the former.

— In the future kingdom, the emphasis will not be on food, but on spiritual realities. If this is true in the future, the believer's conduct today should reflect it. A knowledge of the future should change how we live in the present. We need to organize and prioritize our lives with kingdom priorities (Cf. 2 Peter 3:10-11).

— It's a misreading of the verse to state that "righteousness and peace and joy" excludes "eating and drinking." It's a question of emphasis, not exclusion.

- "...eating and drinking" - Kingdom Now theologians take this phrase to indicate that the kingdom is not physical, so it must be spiritual; they deny the physicality of the kingdom

- Instead of Christ reigning from David's Throne in Jerusalem one day, they believe it's the current reigning of Christ in our hearts, a present reality
- But Jesus states clearly that there will be eating and drinking in the kingdom (Matt 8:11; Matt 26:29)
- See [The Coming Kingdom 68 Kingdom Now Passages: Rom 14:17; 1 Tim 6:15](#) for more details on the argument against a Kingdom Now interpretation of this verse.
- Paul's bottom line: as you're thinking about flaunting your freedoms, I want you to think about divine priorities. What is more important to God...eating and drinking, or righteousness, peace and joy? And if you want an example, I'll give you one: during the millennial kingdom, when Christ will personally rule and reign over the entire earth, His priorities will be righteousness, peace and joy. Thus, these things should be emphasized in our lives now over any type of dietary restrictions that someone may have, and we should allow God's priorities rather than our own freedom to dictate how we respond.

18 For the one who serves Christ in this *way* is acceptable to God and approved by *other* people.

18 For he who in this *way* serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

18 For the person who serves the Messiah in this way is pleasing to God and approved by people.

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ *is* acceptable to God, and approved of men.

- Every time you are confronted with the choice to either indulge your freedom in Christ or stumble another believer, every time I choose to forego my freedom for the good of another, I am acceptable to God because I am aligning my life according to His priorities, and I am approved by others because I am no longer throwing a stumbling block in front of them.

(2) Edification (14:19-21)

(a) Positive: build (14:19)

19 So then we pursue the things which make for **peace** and the **building up** of one another.

19 So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

19 Therefore, let's keep on pursuing those things that bring peace and that lead to building up one another.

19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

- As you make a decision whether to indulge your freedoms or stumble another, Paul says that we need to pursue the edification (building up) of others

- "...peace" - a divine priority because Paul already said (v17) that peace will characterize the kingdom age when it comes
- So as I'm making my choice, I need to ask myself whether my decision will bring peace to the body of Christ or not
- "...building up" - edification; the moment I decide to flaunt my freedoms and stumble or destroy (v13) another believer is the moment I have chosen to not edify/build up another believer, but to tear them down and stumble them
- Our job as Christians is to build up the body of Christ. Eph 4:29 says to Let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth, but if *there is* any good word for edification according to the need of *the moment, say that*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.
- The unwholesome words described in this verse does not refer to profanity (although that's a sub-category to be sure), but to any words that do not edify the hearer. In the Rom 14 context, it refers to flaunting freedoms that the Bible says I rightly have, with no consideration or sensitivity to how it would affect a weaker brother in Christ.
- The interesting thing is...we can be theologically correct and yet not be edifying if we explain or go about certain things in the wrong way, with the wrong motives, or with the wrong words/tone

(b) Negative: do not destroy (14:20-21)

- 20 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.
- 20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.
- 20 Do not destroy God's action for the sake of food. Everything is clean, but it is wrong to make another person stumble because of what you eat.
- 20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence.
- "...the work of God" - do we see other Christians as the work of God, or do we see them as an annoying nuisance who need to grow up an mature and understand the freedom we have in Christ, just like we do?
- Flaunting our freedom and stumbling a fellow, less mature believer is tearing down the work of God
- "...food" - we just learned that food, along with any other physical/material liberties a Christian may have are low on God's priority list, below spiritual things such as righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (v17)
- "...All things indeed are clean" - yes, you're living in the age of grace; yes, you have significant freedoms in Christ, particularly around food and drink; yes, the Law of Moses

has been set aside; yes, things that were previously prohibited by the Law of Moses you are now free to partake of...

Freedom is a right, it's not necessarily a guide for conduct. Love should drive our conduct. Our rights should be laid aside in the interest of love.

21 It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or *to do anything* by which your brother or sister stumbles.

21 It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or *to do anything* by which your brother stumbles.

21 The right thing to do is to avoid eating meat, drinking wine, or doing anything else that makes your brother stumble, upset, or weak.

21 *It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

— If you take something good and use it to stumble a brother, something good becomes something evil. When freedom is flaunted in such a way that someone else begins to stumble, you have just turned a blessing into a curse.

Where the gospel is not at stake, the question is not, "If it's not wrong, why can't I do it?" Being right is not the issue. We are not to do anything that may cause a brother to stumble or doubt.

Some Christians abstain from all alcoholic beverages not because they fear ritual contamination, but because they are leery of a product that has a history of enslaving those who partake in it. Many others abstain to not set a bad example for others, who may not be able to handle alcohol. Abstinence on these grounds is admirable, but it is not what Paul is arguing here.

The "weak" in Paul's argument are not those who cannot control their drinking. They are people who are not convinced that their faith in Christ allows them to do a particular thing. They are not "weak" in respect to handling alcohol, they are "weak" in respect to their faith. So Paul urges the "strong" to abstain, not because their example might lead the "weak" to drink to excess, but because their example might lead the "weak" to drink and so to violate their conscience (v22-23).

1 Cor 10:23: All things are permitted, but not all things are of benefit. All things are permitted, but not all things build *people* up.

(3) Conscience (14:22-23)

There may be Christians who sincerely believe that every Christian should adhere to the dietary laws of the OT, and to him, that is an issue of conscience. It is their heartfelt belief.

But if you flaunt your freedom in Christ in front of them, even though you may have deeper theological knowledge, you damage that brother's conscience.

(a) Strong: act in faith (14:22)

22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is the one who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

22 As for the faith you do have, have it as your own conviction before God. How blessed is the person who has no reason to condemn himself because of what he approves!

22 Hast thou faith? have *it* to thyself before God. Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

- The stronger brother is theologically correct...God does not condemn you, you have God on your side

(b) Weak: follow conscience (14:23)

23 But the one who doubts is condemned if he eats, **because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.**

23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *his eating is* not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

23 But the person who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not act in faith; and anything that is not done in faith is sin.

23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin.

- The weaker brother, who does not understand the light of the NT yet, who doesn't understand doctrine yet, that person should do what his conscience tells him to do. If your conscience is telling you to stay away from those foods, stay away from them. If your conscience tells you to stay away from alcohol, stay away from it.

— If the stronger brother flaunts his freedom in front of the weaker brother and causes him to stumble, he is violating the weaker brother's conscience

— "...because *his eating is* not from faith" - the weaker brother, who does not have the theological knowledge of the stronger brother, is operating in faith, and he should continue to do what he understands theologically

— "...whatever is not from faith is sin" - if the weaker brother eats, contrary to what his conscience is telling him to do, he's committing sin

— 6x in the Bible sin is identified specifically:

1. Lawlessness - living my life independently of the principles of God's Word (1 John 3:4)
2. Unrighteousness (1 John 5:17)

3. Something emanating from a lack of faith (Rom 14:23)
4. Haughty eyes, proud heart (Prov 21:4)
5. Knowing right yet refuses to do it (James 4:17)
6. Self injury - lowering yourself below what God says that you are (Prov 8:36a)

James 4:17: So for one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, for him it is sin. Whatever is done without the conviction that God has approved is by definition sin. God has called us to a life of faith. Trust is the willingness to put all of life before God for His approval. Any doubt concerning an action automatically removes that action from the category of that which is acceptable.

For a Christian, not a single decision or action can be good which he does not think he can justify on the ground of his Christian conviction and his liberty before God.

Most Christians still struggle to use their freedom in Christ to love one another well.

Love avoids taking offense as well as avoids offending.

Ask God to help you grow less sensitive to how people offend you and increase your sensitivity to how you offend others.

When a relationship seems too hard, bring your need to God. As we lay aside our rights and preferences out of love for God, we show those around us a small picture of how the Son did His Father's will.

In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, tolerance; in all things, love. — Augustine

The final chapters of Romans (12-15) show how God's righteousness works out in His people's lives:

- The foundation of a transformed mind took two verses (12:1-2)
- A right estimate of ourselves and the need to serve the Church, six verses (12:3-8)
- The call to love took 13 verses (12:9-21)
- Our relationship with the governing authorities, seven verses (13:1-7)
- Right conduct in light of Jesus' return, seven verses (13:8-14)
- Practical advice on how crucial it is to accept Christians with diverse practices, 30 verses (14:1—15:13)