

Romans Chapter 14

Before we begin studying Romans chapter 14, please review what we learned in Romans chapter 13 by circling the correct answers.

1. In Romans 13, does the Bible tell us that the government should run the church? **a.** Yes, that's exactly what the Bible says. **b.** No, the Bible doesn't say anything like that in Romans 13.
2. Does Romans 13 command Christians never to resist the government? **a.** No, that's not what Romans 13 says. **b.** Yes, that's what Romans 13 says.
3. Are there OT examples where believers resisted the government? _____
4. Are there NT examples where Christians resisted the government? _____
5. What should we conclude from those biblical examples? **a.** Christians should never resist the government. **b.** Sometimes God wants Christians to resist the wicked commands of corrupt government. **c.** It could go either way.
6. Romans 13:14 - What does it mean, *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*? **a.** It means to always keep the Ten Commandments. **b.** It means, try to be kind to all people everywhere. **c.** It means to follow Christ as His Christian disciple.

Introduction to Romans 14

Romans 14 naturally follows Romans 13. In Romans 13, we learned that Roman Christians had been seduced by the world, the flesh and the devil and were asleep spiritually. They were focused on pleasing themselves and chasing after the flesh. Roman Christians were living selfish lives, drinking and partying, seduced by strong drink, seduced by lust, seduced by pleasure, seduced by sexual sins, seduced by the world.

*“And that, knowing the time,
that now it is high time
to awake out of sleep:
for now is our salvation nearer
than when we believed.”
Romans 13:11.*

Paul is talking to saved and born again Christians in Rome. He tells them: You Roman Christians need to wake up, Romans 13:11, and start living like Christians. You have work to do for God in the capital city of the Roman Empire and instead of doing that work for God, you're living like you're still unsaved and headed for hell, Romans 13:12-14. Once you've awakened and cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of God, Romans 14 is about: **1.** your freedom in Christ and, **2.** the grace of God and the limits of Christian freedom and, **3.** how to obey the Holy Ghost, Romans 14:17, and also how to obey your biblically informed conscience in issues related to the local church.

Our biblically informed Christian conscience is important, Romans 13:8, but Paul doesn't specifically mention the conscience in Romans 14, although conscience is what he is talking about. We know that Paul has the conscience in mind in Romans 14 because, in the analogous passage in 1 Corinthians 10:23-33, Paul mentions the conscience 4 times. The word, conscience, is not used in the OT. In the NT, Paul mentions the conscience 27 of the 31 times it is found.

**The conscience is good but
remember this about the conscience.**

1. Your individual conscience is not infallible.
2. Your individual conscience is not the Bible.
3. Your individual conscience is not absolute truth.
4. Your individual conscience must be biblically informed.
5. Other Christians are not required to live by your conscience.

Here's something else to remember. In the mid-first century AD, when Paul is writing Romans, a great biblical, religious, spiritual and theological transition is occurring. There were conflicts that needed to be addressed: Conflicts between saved Jews and saved Gentiles, conflicts between sin and righteousness, conflicts between OT law and NT grace. In the midst of this great transition, Paul is intensely focused on melding saved Jews and saved Gentiles into a harmonious whole in the local church at Rome. Here is the transition that was happening back then.

**The Great Transition Happening
As Paul Writes Romans**

1. From OT Law to NT Grace.
2. From OT Israel to the NT Church.
3. From a completed OT to the NT being written.
4. From ministry to Jews to ministry to Gentiles.

5. From Messiah is coming to Messiah has come.
6. From Israel broken off to the Gentiles grafted in.
7. From the blindness of Israel to the Gentiles seeing.
8. From an OT priesthood to a NT priesthood of believers.
9. From OT temple and synagogue to local NT churches.
10. From focus on Israel to focus on evangelizing Gentiles.
11. From the dispensation of law to the dispensation of grace.
12. From a church of mostly saved Jews to mostly saved Gentiles.

That transition, to be successful, required: **a.** obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit, **b.** openness to what God was doing, **c.** willingness to let OT law lapse, **d.** willingness to accept NT grace, **e.** willingness to leave behind the yoke of OT law, Acts 15:10, and, **f.** willingness to embrace the glories of NT grace.

In AD 57-58, since the NT was far from complete, Christians were walking by faith, trusting God, learning as they went along. Everything was not cut and dried then. It never is in a transition. This transition from OT law to NT grace took a long time. In many ways it was an experiential thing since it was all new to them. Their doctrinal view of things in the mid-first century AD was still being formed.

They didn't have the completed NT to read and study for themselves and then form their doctrinal beliefs based on what the NT said in context. And so, in Romans 14 and 15, Paul wisely counsels Roman Christians to treat each other with love and grace instead of disputing with each other. Give God time, over the next three or four centuries, to get the NT completed and accepted and circulating in the churches and while that is happening, teach sound doctrine and grow up Christians who are strong in the grace of God.

Love in Romans

One of the themes of Romans is love. Paul has been building his argument about love, Romans 5:5, 8, 8:28, 36, 39 by pointing out the love of God which compels us as family members of the body of Christ to love one another. In Romans 14-15, Paul explains how the body of Christ as manifested in the local church at Rome should love one another, Romans 12:9-10, 13:8-10, 14:15.

Now, in Romans 14, without mentioning love, Paul describes what Christian love should look like and how that love should work in the local church. If you love God, will you obey His written words or will you blaze your own trail, regardless what the Bible says? _____ If you love your brothers and sisters in Christ, will you always be fighting with them, will you always be at odds with them?

Here is how Paul says to love our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. Christian love in the local church is not focused on satisfying yourself. It is not focused on personal pleasure. It is focused on edifying your brothers and sisters in Christ. It is focused on learning to be a blessing and making it your goal to be a blessing to others in the congregation every time you go to church. That is all done through the power of the Holy Ghost, Romans 14:17, not by your own power, Galatians 2:20.

Christian love is not narcissistic nihilism. Narcissism is an obsessive focus on self, a preoccupation with self, a desire to be the center of attention, a self-absorption so intense that a narcissist feels little empathy for others, little self-sacrificing love for others.

Nihilism rejects the idea of God, rejects biblical moral values and believes life is meaningless. Nihilism believes in nothing, has no loyalties, has few goals and sees no purpose in life beyond exalting self. Narcissistic nihilism then, is being so focused on self and pleasing yourself that you have no love or loyalty to your fellow Christians or even to Christ. A narcissist obsesses over doing his own thing regardless of how that affects others.

**Romans 14 does not
back us off from biblical truth.**

Paul is not, in Romans 14, giving a message contradicting his instructions to Timothy to: *Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine.* 2 Timothy 4:2. Romans 14 is dealing with personal relationships between Christians and Christian liberty in the local church, not preaching and teaching the Bible. Paul is not dumbing down doctrine, is not saying, doctrine and truth no longer matter.

Romans 14:2 - 1 Timothy 4:3-6 - 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, 8:1-13, should guide our understanding of Romans 14. Edification of the entire body, building up every saved person in the congregation, is more important than dividing over doubtful things, over non-essentials, over petty disputes and quarrels and yet, Paul is definitely not saying to tolerate gross sin in the congregation, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

This is about getting every Christian on the same page, eventually, about OT law and NT grace. It isn't about downplaying Bible doctrine and denying biblical Christian morality. This is about non-essentials in the first century AD - what they ate and what they drank and what days they observed to glorify God. In plainer words, all three of those items should become biblical non-issues once the NT is completed and available to be read in the churches, Nehemiah 8:1-13,

Colossians 4:16. The fact that those first century items are still issues today for some Christians shows how little biblical knowledge they have.

Christian unity around NT grace and the gospel (not around OT law) is more important than the petty quarrels that often divide Christians and harm our brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul isn't saying to ignore doctrinal truth or to promote or tolerate false teaching under the guise of Christian unity. He is saying that we need to stop majoring on minors and be about the work of loving one another, edifying one another and working together to evangelize the world, Colossians 1:9-10.

OT law vs. NT grace

The place of OT Jewish law was probably the greatest controversy Paul had with his Jewish brethren. For many Jews, the law of Moses was the greatest good God ever gave His chosen people. The law also marked out *Israel mine elect*, as separate from all the Gentile nations, because they were God's chosen and elect people, Isaiah 45:4. Paul argued:

*“What advantage then hath the Jew?
or what profit is there of circumcision?
Much every way: chiefly,
because that unto them (the Jews)
were committed the oracles of God.”*

Romans 3:1-2.

Oracles of God refers to the words of God in the OT, because the OT was inspired by God and given to the Jews. Every human author of the thirty nine books of the OT was a Jew. Both Paul and the Jews loved God's law and highly esteemed it. Paul's task is to make the Jews understand the purpose of God's OT law and help them understand the great transition, from OT to NT, from law to grace, from Israel to the church, which was going on in the first century AD.

*“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster
to bring us unto Christ,
that we might be justified by faith.
But after that faith is come,
we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”*

Galatians 3:24-25.

Paul intends to point out that, on the grace side of Calvary, nothing in OT Judaism, neither the law of Moses nor the Oral Talmud, can save any Jew anywhere, Romans 10:4. On the grace side of Calvary, the function of OT law is to be our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ so that we can trust Christ by faith, without the works of the law, Galatians 2:16, 3:21-26.

Jesus Christ, on the cross of Calvary, is the focal point of time and eternity and is God's only way to heaven, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, for Jews and for Gentiles. After the bodily resurrection of Christ, keeping the OT Jewish law and offering animal sacrifices was no longer the way to be pleasing to God, Matthew 27:51.

For OT Jews, that reality meant that everything was on the line if they received Jesus as Messiah. To OT Jews, trading OT law for NT grace seemed like an enormous step of faith. It was like starting over and experiencing an utterly new reality. Such a transition could only be done by faith like Abraham, Genesis 15:6.

The Christian love Paul teaches in Romans 14 is a self-sacrificing love where believers in the local church get out of their comfort zone and accept each other and work together despite their different beliefs and practices. Their love and unity is not simply outward tolerance maintained by concealing or ignoring their differences. Beyond that, their Christian love is not achieved by giving veto power over everyone else in the church to the whims of the weakest Christian in the congregation. Paul makes those truths clear as we will see in our study of Romans 14.

Great Truths About Romans 14

1. Romans 14 is not a spiritual gag order forbidding us to preach and teach the truth of the Bible.
2. Romans 14 does not prohibit us from judging the doctrinal beliefs and moral practices of other Christians, Romans 16:17-18.
3. Romans 14 does not require us to ignore or be silent about immorality and drunkenness or any of the sins Paul just condemned at the end of Romans 13.
4. Romans 14 does not say that Christians who live an immoral worldly life are the strong Christians and Christians who don't live an immoral worldly life are the weak Christians.
5. Romans 14 does not cancel out or nullify Paul's doctrinal teaching in the rest of Romans or the doctrinal teaching of the rest of the Bible.

6. Romans 14 does not tell us to stop judging fellow Christians who are living sinful lives. Paul teaches us to condemn ungodly behavior and ungodly lifestyles, 1 Corinthians 5:1-9.
7. Romans 14 isn't about strong tolerant Christians refusing to judge anyone's beliefs or behavior while weak intolerant Christians are always judging everyone else's beliefs and behavior.
8. Romans 14 doesn't tell us that the beliefs and convictions of the weakest Christian in the local church must set the standard for what the local church believes, practices and teaches.
9. Paul isn't telling strong Christians to keep quiet about their faith in Christ.
10. Paul isn't telling strong Christians to keep quiet about Bible doctrine and Bible truth and biblical evangelism.
11. Paul isn't telling strong Christians that weak Christians get to decide what the church can believe and teach and practice.
12. Paul isn't giving weak Christians veto power over what their local church can believe and teach and practice.
13. Paul isn't telling strong Christians to follow the lead of weak Christians and never grow beyond the baby Christian weak Christian stage of life.
14. Paul isn't telling the church in Rome that they must let weak Christians lead the congregation and make spiritual decisions for the church.
15. Paul isn't telling the church in Rome that their church can only grow as strong as their weakest Christian.
16. Paul isn't commending weak Christians for their spiritual weakness and lack of biblical knowledge and lack of doctrinal knowledge.
17. Being a weak Christian should always be a temporary situation, never a permanent disability. It's not natural or normal for a five year old or a ten year old to still behave like a baby.
18. Romans 14 does not tell us that those practicing righteousness should never judge those practicing evil.

19. Romans 14 does not forbid us from calling out and exposing false teachers, Romans 16:17-18.

20. Romans 14 doesn't say that a strong Christian must violate his own conscience so he can get along with weak Christians.

21. Romans 14 doesn't say that Christians who practice biblical morality are weak and Christians who live immoral lives are strong Christians.

22. Romans 14 does not say immoral Christians are free to reject biblical morality and no one is allowed to judge them for their sin.

23. Romans 14 doesn't say that people who live in sin with an allegedly untroubled conscience are strong Christians.

24. Romans 14 is not a Pauline echo of Jesus in Matthew 7:1 telling Bible believing Christians to stop judging professing Christians who live like the devil.

25. Romans 14 does not instruct strong Christians to hide the exercise of their liberty from weak Christians. Obviously weak Christians already knew that strong Christians ate meat, Romans 14:3.

VII. Application: Behavior of God's Righteousness (12:1–15:13)

A. 12:1-21 - God's Righteousness And Behavior In The Church

B. 13:1-14 - God's Righteousness And Behavior Toward The Government

C. 14:1-23 - God's Righteousness And Behavior Toward The Brethren

Romans 14 And The Limits Of Christian Freedom - Acts 10, 15 and 21 provide biblical commentary on Romans 14.

*"Now as touching things offered unto idols,
we know that we all have knowledge.
Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."*
1 Corinthians 8:1.

**Our rules of interpretation
as we study Romans 14 are:**

1. Never read a Bible verse in isolation from its context.
2. Always read the context along with the verse.

3. The Bible means what it says.
4. The Bible does not mean what it does not say.
5. The Bible says what it says.
6. The Bible does not say what it does not say, regardless what anyone thinks it means.

14:1 - Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

Christians can always find something to fight about. In the church at Rome, they were fighting over dietary rules and whether or not every Christian had to observe Jewish feast days and Jewish rituals about days. My oh my how the brethren love to fuss, fight and argue.

In the first century AD, weak Jewish Christians struggled with Paul's teaching on free grace and free salvation vs. the teaching of Jewish law. This controversy was about OT law vs. NT grace. Sometimes baby Christians and weak Christians are obsessed with diets and days. What can we eat and what can we drink and how many holy days can I observe to draw closer to God?

Because there was so much ceremony in OT Judaism, some Jewish Christians found it difficult to separate ceremonial ritual from genuine biblical and Christian spirituality. They found it difficult to feel spiritual if they were shortchanged on ritual, pomp and circumstance in their weekly church services.

These weak Jewish Christians questioned the new teaching about NT grace which seems not to value OT law with its dietary restrictions and its emphasis on holy days. Wasn't this NT grace teaching Paul that taught just a tricky way to continue in sin? Wasn't this NT grace teaching a sneaky way to evade the OT law that God gave to Moses? If the law of Moses was good enough for Jews for 1450 years, who are you, Paul, to change things up and switch to grace now?

Instead of viewing grace as the terminus and fulfillment of OT law, Romans 10:4, which by the way, is the biblical view, saved Jews struggled with their fear that, if they accepted NT grace, they were abandoning their 1450 year heritage in the law of Moses.

So, in Romans 3:8, Paul had said, No, believing in God's grace isn't an excuse to sin and grace isn't a loophole to get away with sin. This was a major stumbling block to saved Jews. They had serious problems with grace which needed to be addressed. Notice the amazing contrast between OT law and NT grace.

**When you were unsaved,
under OT law, you were:**

1. A Slave to sin - Sin was your master.
2. A Servant of sin - Trapped in sin's prison.
3. Under sin's dominion - Can't escape sin's power.
 4. Living under the law.
5. An Errand boy for a corpse.
6. Free from righteousness.

**Now that you are saved,
under NT grace, you are:**

1. Dead to sin - Sin's reign over you is broken.
2. Made free from sin doesn't mean sin-free.
 3. A servant of righteousness.
 4. Walking in newness of life.
 5. Not under sin's dominion.
6. Living in freedom under grace.

**When you study the Bible,
Always mind the context.**

Context is important when we wrestle with understanding scripture - always mind the context. Remember that Paul wrote Romans about twenty five years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. At that early point in the church, NT grace was still a fresh new idea for people who were used to living with the yoke of OT law upon their neck, Acts 15:10. Grace was present all through the OT. The word grace is used 39 times in the OT but not as a competitor or a replacement for the law of Moses.

Grace was/is such an extreme blessing from God that it's difficult, even for us, after two millenniums of radical grace, to get our minds around it. Grace isn't a sneaky way to get away with sin. Grace isn't a legal loophole so we can do our own thing instead of following God. Free grace is God's radical game changing gift to everyone in the human race who gets in Christ.

Grace has been God's plan from the start. The grace of God flows from Mount Calvary, not from Mt. Sinai. Quoting Ephesians 2:8-9, about the grace of God, doesn't normally send cold shivers down our back but God's amazing grace is so radical and so game changing that it ought to.

Him that is weak in the faith - Some of the saved Jews in the church at Rome did not understand the grace of God in Christ. They had all of the blessings in the list above but they didn't understand what they had by virtue of being, in Christ. Lacking that basic understanding of grace is what made them weak Christians.

What makes someone weak in the faith?

1. They may be a newly saved baby Christian.
2. They may be ensnared by religious legalism.
3. They may have never had sound Bible teaching.
4. They may need encouragement to grow up in Christ.
5. They do need good honest examples of strong Christians.

The status of the NT when Paul wrote Romans in AD 57-58

As we study Romans 14, it helps to remember that more than half of the NT had not been written at the time Paul wrote Romans in the winter of AD 57-58. Luke, John, Acts, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude and Revelation, were all written, after Paul wrote Romans.

That's around 139 chapters of the NT (out of 260), which had not been written and were not available to anyone in AD 58. Imagine trying to understand NT grace if you didn't even have the NT.

*“For when for the time
ye ought to be teachers,
ye have need
that one teach you again
which be the first principles
of the oracles of God;
and are become such
as have need of milk,
and not of strong meat.
For every one that useth milk
is unskilful in the word of righteousness:”*

*for he is a babe.
But strong meat
belongeth to them that are of full age,
even those who by reason of use
have their senses exercised
to discern both good and evil.”
Hebrews 5:12-14.*

Therefore, in the real world context of the mid-first century, AD 57-58, people who are saved believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are at different stages of spiritual growth, different stages of scriptural knowledge, different stages of scriptural understanding, different stages in the walk of faith. Some are weak in the faith and some are strong in the faith. Neither the weak nor the strong should use their weakness or their strength in a way that hurts the harmony, love and unity of the local church.

Strong Christians have greater responsibility to edify weak Christians, to take care in the way they exercise their liberty in Christ, to be careful not to destroy the work of God in the local church by offending their weak brothers and sisters in Christ or causing them to stumble on the topics of eating meat, drinking wine and observing days. This doesn't mean strong Christians must give up all of their freedoms in Christ. It means strong Christians must exercise their freedom in Christ in a way that edifies their weak brethren instead of tearing them down.

Characteristics Of Weak Christians - Romans 14

1. Don't yet understand that NT grace has replaced OT law
2. Believes he must keep OT law to be right with God
3. Tends to judge strong Christians - Romans 14:3
4. Doesn't know the truth on this issue - Romans 14:14, 20
5. Disagrees with Jesus on this issue - Romans 14:14

Characteristics Of Strong Christians - Romans 14

1. Understand that NT grace has replaced OT law
2. Knows he needn't keep OT law to be right with God
3. Tends to despise weak Christians - Romans 14:3
4. Knows the truth on this issue - Romans 14:14, 20
5. Agrees with Jesus on this issue - Romans 14:14

It is important to keep in mind that in Romans 14, **1**. Paul is not talking about doctrinal issues like propitiation and justification by faith and sanctification by

faith and salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. How do we know that?

Non-essentials vs. Non-negotiables

Non-essentials are things like diets and days, mentioned by Paul in Romans 14 and 15. Paul lists three things in particular: eating meat, drinking wine and esteeming days. In general Paul says, there may be other things which are non-essentials, Romans 14:5, 21. **a.** Non-essentials are also called: **b.** matters of individual conscience or, **c.** matters of Christian liberty or, **d.** morally indifferent matters or, **e.** morally neutral matters.

Those descriptions encompass choices we make and issues and matters and practices where scripture doesn't give a clear and definitive answer. In cases where there is no clear and definite answer in scripture, it is up to the saved and born again Christian to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and his biblically informed conscience. When we do that, we may disagree with some Christians and some Christians may disagree with us. On other non-essentials which are not mentioned in Romans 14, we should follow Paul's advice about the three examples of non-essentials that Paul does mention in Romans 14.

*“It is good (1) neither to eat flesh,
(2) nor to drink wine,
(3) nor any thing
whereby thy brother stumbleth,
or is offended, or is made weak.”
Romans 14:21.*

Christians down the centuries have argued, discussed and debated issues like gambling, what kind of music is Christian, what worship styles are Christian, should Christians serve in the military, should Christians work in places that are anti-Christian, where should Christians shop, where should Christians eat, what should Christians eat, what kind of entertainment may Christians enjoy?

7 Biblical Guidelines For Dealing With Non-essential Issues

1. Don't expect other Christians to live by your conscience, Romans 14:5.
2. Is what I'm doing hurtful to my fellow Christians, Romans 14:20?
3. Can I do what I'm doing for God's glory, 1 Corinthians 10:31?

4. Will exercising my liberty be a stumbling block, Romans 14:13?
5. Will exercising my liberty harm my conscience, Romans 14:23?
6. Am I edifying my weak brother in Christ, Romans 14:19.
7. Am I following Jesus or rebelling in what I am doing, Romans 14:9?

**Non-negotiables are different
from non-essentials.**

Doctrinal truths and moral truths in Romans and the rest of the Bible are non-negotiables, Romans 16:17-18. What Paul is talking about in Romans 14 and 15 are non-essentials or matters of individual conscience or matters of Christian liberty or morally indifferent matters or morally neutral matters, like diets and days, not doctrinal and moral non-negotiables. Non-negotiables are hills to die on, vital Bible truths we cannot compromise on or surrender to anyone.

Non-negotiables are doctrinal things and moral things about which the Bible makes a clear statement. Non-essentials are non-doctrinal and non-moral things about which the Bible doesn't provide clear guidance. Those things are left up to the individual to figure out, based on what the Bible says, based on examples, if any, in the Bible and based on the Spirit-led example of fellow Christians. Of course, this presupposes that all of the Christians involved in making these decisions are walking in the light, walking in the Spirit and seeking to obey 1 Corinthians 11:1.

2. In Romans 14, Paul is not talking about moral issues, like adultery, fornication, incest and lust. How do we know that? We know that because in Romans 14, Paul tells us what he is talking about - meat, drink, days, Romans 14:2, 5, 21.

Those are all related to the law of Moses and were issues for the first century church as it transitioned from a membership of mostly saved Jews to mostly saved Gentiles. First century Christians struggled to get along with each other and find common ground, especially the generation of saved Jews who had personally witnessed the earthly ministry of Christ under OT law.

In Romans 14, Paul is not saying: If someone in the church is living an immoral life, don't judge them and don't make an issue of their immorality. The focus in Romans 14 and 15 is how to deal with conflicts arising from legalism related to keeping or not keeping OT law in the NT dispensation of grace. Romans 14 is not about conflicts over essential doctrinal beliefs and essential moral beliefs. We don't change what the Bible says and what we believe doctrinally and we

don't back off from teaching biblical truth because a weak brother disagrees with us.

Unity in the body of Christ is a wonderful blessing
but not at the expense of biblical truth.

Unity in the body of Christ is a wonderful blessing
but not at the expense of sound doctrine.

All unity is not good unity. Any unity which denies Bible doctrine and Bible truth is false unity and all Christians should avoid false unity. If we have to abandon truth to have unity, we are better off without unity. Genuine Christian unity in a local church thrives upon the foundation of grace, love and truth.

There is a false religious unity in some churches, that false unity being a lack of conflict, a lack of disagreement, a shallow unity that is rooted in not believing the Bible and not taking a stand for biblical truth. Often, that false unity springs from an unbiblical emphasis on social justice and cultural wokeness instead of preaching the gospel, evangelizing the lost and teaching the Bible. Bible believing Christians never engage in religious ecumenism. We never walk away from the gospel and the Bible rightly divided and embrace false churches and false Christians and false doctrines and false religions and false teachers.

God doesn't admire carnal ecumenical unity in Christians and God doesn't admire false religions and unsaved religious leaders, 1 Kings 18:17-40. Have you ever read anything in the Bible which contradicts that statement? _____

The real Jesus of the real Bible is never ecumenical. Ecumenical Jesus is a religious fake made up Jesus. Christians shouldn't follow fake Jesus anywhere. The God of the Bible never makes common cause with false religions and false teachers. Lukewarm wishy washy religionists make God sick, Revelation 3:14-16.

The truth is, regardless of how some Christians misuse Romans 14 and try to make it about doctrine, Romans 14 is not about doctrinal issues like whether we baptize by immersion or by sprinkling or whether we sprinkle babies and incorrectly refer to that as baptism or whether we are pre-tribulational or pre-millennial or preterist or a-millennial or post-tribulational or whether salvation is by keeping the OT law or whether Christians can work for or lose their salvation.

In Romans 14, Paul is not saying that everything else he has taught us in Romans can now be changed or ignored if a weak Christian disagrees. Does that make spiritual common sense to you? _____

Romans 14 is written to Christians in the church at Rome and the topic is: How to get along with each other or, how to have harmonious fellowship and real biblical unity with real Christians in the local church or, how to exercise your freedom in Christ in a way that doesn't damage your weak brothers and sisters. Because we are not under law but under grace, Romans 6:14, 10:4, we have great freedom in Christ, always under the leadership of the Holy Spirit but our freedom in Christ brings responsibility with it.

Paul's pastoral advice is: You are responsible before God to handle your freedom with charity, Romans 14:15. Be careful not to allow your freedom in Christ to blind you to how exercising your freedom in Christ may adversely affect your saved brothers and sisters in the local church. Exercise your freedom in Christ in a way that is not selfish so as not to hurt the weak Christians who look up to you and follow your example as a strong Christian.

receive ye, - What we believe as Christians is important but what we believe should not be isolated truth which exists only in our head. What we believe in our head and our heart should radically affect how we live and how we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ. Christianity is not a sterile set of propositional beliefs which never impacts our daily life.

Biblical Christianity and biblical discipleship are part of biblical sanctification, Acts 26:18, Ephesians 2:10, designed by God to make us like Christ in our daily lives. If that isn't happening in your life, then you're doing something wrong and you need to figure out how to do biblical discipleship right. A good place to start is studying and learning Romans. Biblical discipleship starts with obedience.

Receive ye isn't just about letting saved people join your local congregation as church members. Here *receive ye* means receive them because they are genuinely your brothers and sisters in Christ. *Receive ye* goes beyond church membership or putting their names on the roll. *Receive ye* is talking about accepting them and loving them as brethren and treating them with the love of Christ even though they haven't got the transition from OT law to NT grace figured out yet.

Receive ye means edifying your weak brothers and sisters in Christ. It means putting in time and effort and thought and prayer while being careful not to argue with them and debate them and browbeat them. *Receive ye* means trusting God enough that you are willing to watch Him work on them at His own pace.

Christian kindness is important. Reaching out to weaker Christians is important. Imagine that you are weak in the faith. Please think about how you would like to

be received by your stronger brothers and sisters in Christ and list seven things we can do to receive weak brothers and sisters in Christ into our church and into our hearts. For example, Sit with them so they won't feel alone. Take them out for a meal after church or invite them for a meal at your house. Be willing to answer questions about the Bible and about Christian life if they ask you. Please list seven things you can do to receive weak brothers and sisters in Christ.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

There will always be brothers and sisters in Christ who are weak in the faith. The biblical command is: Receive them. In plainer words, the local church should not reject Christians who are weak in the faith; the local church should lovingly receive them into the congregation and help them grow strong in biblical Christian faith. Why? First, because God has received him. Who are we to reject someone God has received? Since God has received him, we must receive him.

Second, because it is the job of the local church to make living breathing biblical evangelistic disciples of Christ, to teach Christian discipleship, to teach biblical doctrine, to teach weak Christians how to live by the faith of the Son of God, Galatians 2:20. The local church receives weak Christians into warm and loving fellowship and then, teaches the Bible in such a way that weak Christians grow spiritually to the point where they are joyful disciples of Christ who are no longer weak but instead, are spiritually strong and mature, 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

Members of the body of Christ are supposed to edify one another. Edify means to build each other up in biblical faith, to help each other grow spiritually in our knowledge of the Bible and doctrine, to teach each other and learn from each other, Romans 14:19, 15:2, . If the members of a local church are not edifying one another, then that local church has serious problems which need to be fixed.

*“Iron sharpeneth iron;
so a man sharpeneth
the countenance of his friend.”
Proverbs 27:17.*

**A man sharpeneth the countenance
of his friend when he:**

1. Refines his wisdom.
2. Encourages his virtue.
3. Increases his empathy.
4. Enlightens his judgment.
5. Encourages his walk of faith.
6. Informs his biblical understanding.
7. Instructs his doctrinal knowledge.
8. Challenges him to servanthood.
9. Makes him a better man of God.
10. Encourages his faithful prayer life.

Edify means to build each other up in Christian faith, to help each other grow to spiritual maturity in Christ by encouraging each other in learning the Bible, believing the Bible, obeying the Bible and daily living what the Bible says in context, Romans 14:19, 15:2, 1 Corinthians 3:9, 14:5, 12, 26, 2 Corinthians 10:8, 12:19, Ephesians 2:21, 4:12, 16, 29. Being a Christian isn't just head knowledge; it is heart knowledge that causes a radical change in the way we live out day by day, what we profess to believe. Are you edifying anyone? _____

Strong Christians should not reject a weaker brother or sister who disagrees with us on matters of conscience. A matter of conscience is your personal beliefs and convictions (they should be biblically informed personal beliefs and convictions) about keeping or not keeping the law of Moses on issues which are not explicitly commanded or explicitly prohibited in the NT.

This conflict Paul teaches us about in Romans 14 and 15 arose because there were saved Jews in the church at Rome who still tried to keep the law of Moses and there were saved Gentiles in the church at Rome who were not interested in keeping the law of Moses. Both of those groups were interested in following Jesus as His disciples and Paul gives practical instruction on how to do that together, as friends instead of as bickering enemies.

but not to doubtful disputations. - not to arguing and debate, not to fussing and fighting with each other, not to browbeating weak Christians until they agree to agree with you. This is not talking about what is preached and taught in the pulpit or what is taught in Sunday School classes or what is taught in discipleship classes.

This is not dumbing down doctrine or backing off from teaching the truth of the Bible. *Not to doubtful disputations* describes how individual strong Christians should receive individual weak Christians in the local church. This is about the personal interactions of Christians who love each other or should love each other in the local church.

We as individuals should not receive weak Christians into the congregation and then argue, debate and dispute with them over non-essentials, over their doubts and fears and browbeat them into agreeing with us about non-essential issues in the law of Moses, or over issues of conscience about eating and drinking and days, because they are still weak in the faith. On issues where the weak brother has doubts, don't keep disputing with him. Instead of disputing with the weak brother, make it your purpose in life to edify and encourage him, to help him grow spiritually, Romans 14:19.

Teach God's truth and live God's truth in your daily life and the weak brother will eventually come to believe God's truth, if you give him room and time to grow. Give him opportunity to be nurtured and disciplined and take time to disciple him. Sit with him under sound Bible teaching and sound Bible preaching. Take him soul winning with you. Give him opportunity to learn Bible truth through the teaching of the local church and through observing the lives of stronger Christians as he learns what they believe and observes how they serve Christ.

How to treat weak Christians

*“Let all bitterness,
and wrath,
and anger,
and clamour,
and evil speaking,
be put away from you,
with all malice:
And be ye kind one to another,
tenderhearted,
forgiving one another,
even as God for Christ's sake
hath forgiven you.”
Ephesians 4:31-32.*

List seven of the nine biblical ways to treat weak Christians based on what Ephesians 4:31-32 actually says.

1.

- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

*“Put on therefore,
as the elect of God,
holy and beloved,
bowels of mercies,
kindness,
humbleness of mind,
meekness,
longsuffering;
Forbearing one another,
and forgiving one another,
if any man have a quarrel against any:
even as Christ forgave you,
so also do ye.
And above all these things
put on charity,
which is the bond of perfectness.
And let the peace of God
rule in your hearts,
to the which also
ye are called in one body;
and be ye thankful.”
Colossians 3:12-15.*

List seven of the ten biblical ways to treat weak Christians based on what Colossians 3:12-15 actually says.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

14:2 - For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

For one believeth that he may eat all things: - Paul had already commented on this a few years earlier when he wrote 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23 and he comments again around AD 64-65, about seven years after he wrote Romans, when he writes 1 Timothy 4:3-4.

**Bible truths weak Christians need to learn
about what we can eat and drink and do.**

*“Forbidding to marry,
and commanding to abstain from meats,
which God hath created to be received
with thanksgiving of them
which believe and know the truth.
For every creature of God is good,
and nothing to be refused,
if it be received with thanksgiving:
For it is sanctified
by the word of God and prayer.
If thou put the brethren
in remembrance of these things,
thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ,
nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine,
whereunto thou hast attained.”*
1 Timothy 4:3-6.

1. What animals can Christians eat based on what 1 Timothy 4:3-6 actually says? _____ 2. What does a good minister of Jesus Christ remind Christian about: **a.** Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, **b.** God created some people to be vegetarians, **c.** God wanted saved Jews to abstain from eating meats, **d.** God created meats to be received with thanksgiving, not refused, **e.** If you avoid the topic of eating meats, you’ll be a peachy keen minister of Jesus Christ. 3. Does God view commanding to abstain from meats as a good thing or a bad thing? _____

*“All things are lawful unto me,
but all things are not expedient:
all things are lawful for me,
but I will not be brought under the power of any.
Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats...”*
1 Corinthians 6:12-13.

*“All things are lawful for me,
but all things are not expedient:
all things are lawful for me,
but all things edify not.*

*Let no man seek his own,
but every man another's wealth.
Whatsoever is sold in the shambles,
that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:*

*For the earth is the Lord's,
and the fulness thereof.*

*If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast,
and ye be disposed to go;
whatsoever is set before you, eat,
asking no question for conscience sake.*

*But if any man say unto you,
This is offered in sacrifice unto idols,
eat not for his sake that shewed it,
and for conscience sake:
for the earth is the Lord's,
and the fulness thereof:*

*Conscience, I say, not thine own,
but of the other:
for why is my liberty judged
of another man's conscience?*

*For if I by grace be a partaker,
why am I evil spoken of
for that for which I give thanks?*

*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink,
or whatsoever ye do,
do all to the glory of God.*

*Give none offence,
neither to the Jews,
nor to the Gentiles,
nor to the church of God:*

*Even as I please all men in all things,
not seeking mine own profit,
but the profit of many,
that they may be saved.”
1 Corinthians 10:23-33.*

According to 1 Corinthians 10:27-33, is it clear that we should be careful not to offend weaker Christians by the way we exercise our Christian liberty? _____

The Christian who believes he may eat all things, because he is not bound by OT Jewish dietary laws, has the correct biblical view, the grace view, the NT view, the Jesus view, Romans 14:14, and is the strong Christian, Romans 15:1.

The Christian whose conscience will not allow him to eat all things is the weak Christian and has the unbiblical legalistic OT view. Keep in mind that a few years later, in another place besides Rome, Christians are still struggling with the issue of eating meats or not, 1 Timothy 4:3-6. Paul leaves us in no doubt about the truth of the matter in Romans 14:14.

*“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.” Romans 14:14.*

Notice the clues given to us by the Holy Spirit in Romans 14:14. **1.** Nothing is unclean of itself - We can eat anything, regardless of what the Rabbis and the Oral Talmud teach, regardless of what Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 says about clean and unclean foods, regardless of the opinions of weak Christians. God made that clear to Peter three times in Acts 10:9-16, and the Lord Jesus made that clear to Paul and so Paul made it clear to us in Romans 14:14.

2. Paul knows that biblical truth from his interaction with the Lord Jesus so he is a strong Christian. **3.** The truth that we can eat anything was given to Paul by the Lord Jesus so that truth isn't in dispute here. **4.** Therefore, if we're going to follow Christ as Paul followed Christ, 1 Corinthians 11:1, we need to line up with Jesus and Paul and believe what they believed about our freedom to eat meat. This isn't a case of maybe both sides are right or maybe the weak side is right and the strong side is wrong.

That being said, remember the historical context of Romans 14. Only about 139 chapters of the NT, out of 260, had been written in AD 58. No one in the church at Rome had a personal copy of the OT or NT that he could read whenever he

wanted to. The saved Jews who were weak in the faith were going by what they had been taught before they got saved and perhaps, were going by what they had been taught by saved Pharisees and saved legalists after they got saved, Acts 15:1-5. If that's true, how does a Christian keep from being taught wrong? We do that by making it our personal priority to read and study and learn what the Bible says in context. We do that by learning sound Bible doctrine.

The weak brothers were genuinely saved, Romans 14:1, 10, and yet, they hadn't fully understood and embraced the NT grace of God and what it means to be in Christ. So Paul's pastoral advice is: Even though I Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles have the truth direct from Jesus Christ and you saved Gentiles have the truth, don't fuss, fight and argue about it with your weak Jewish brothers and sisters because disputing with your weak brethren isn't the right way to fix this problem.

The rubber meets the road issue in Romans 14:2 is the individual conscience of the individual Christian. Paul isn't saying that it doesn't matter what your weak brethren believe. Obviously, all Christians should understand the grace of God and all Christians should have moved from OT law to NT grace as their rule for life.

Paul wants the weak brethren to believe God's truth about everything in the Bible. But when Paul writes Romans, all of the NT hasn't been written yet. And the NT grace teaching is brand new doctrine in the first century AD. They are coming to terms with it as the NT is being written and as the first century unfolds, coming to terms with NT grace replacing OT law takes time.

What Paul is saying in that context is: Give the Holy Spirit time to work. Give God time to inspire the rest of the books of the NT. Let God convince your saved weak Jewish brothers and sisters about NT grace on His timetable, not on your timetable. Meanwhile, as you trust God to bring weak Christians into a full understanding of grace, treat weak Christians with exquisite loving kindness. Do not fuss, fight and argue with them.

**There is progressive revelation going on here.
They didn't know these truths in the OT.
The truth about NT grace is fresh new revelation.**

We need to give our weak brothers and sisters in Christ enough space to learn this truth from: **1.** the Lord Jesus and, **2.** from the Holy Spirit and, **3.** from the written scriptures of truth and, **4.** from what they are taught in church by their

pastors and Bible teachers and, **5.** from the example of grace that is set for them by strong Christians in the local church.

That process of being taught truth, learning truth, understanding truth and learning to live truth, putting truth into practice daily, doesn't happen overnight. In the first century context, it may take two hundred years or more before everyone is up to speed on the grace issue.

Why did it take so long to get up to speed on NT grace?

- 1.** In AD 57-58, the NT was still in the process of being written.
- 2.** As individual books of the NT were written, it took time for those books to be accepted as part of the NT canon.
- 3.** It then took time for the individual books of the NT which were accepted as canonical to be copied and circulated to churches across the Roman Empire.
- 4.** It then took time for the books of the NT to be read, understood and taught to individual Christians in the local churches across the Roman Empire.
- 5.** As saved Jews struggled with the NT grace message, it took time for them to understand and accept how NT grace had superseded OT law.
- 6.** It took time to fully embrace God's amazing grace in their own daily lives.

Until all of that happens over several centuries, Paul says: receive one another but not to doubtful disputations. It's not your job as a strong Christian to argue weak Christians into agreeing with you.

another, who is weak, eateth herbs. - The weak Christians were the ones who didn't eat meat and stuck to herbs and vegetables. They may have been avoiding meat in the marketplace because it had been sacrificed to false gods and idols. Or, they may have been following Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 and avoiding some meat because of OT law which was no longer binding on them, Romans 10:4.

Where in the Bible would someone get the idea that eating herbs is good? The OT has good things to say about eating herbs, Genesis 1:11-12, 29-30, 3:18, 9:3, Psalm 104:14, Proverbs 15:17. Yet those verses are not God's final answer on the topic of herbs vs. meat.

The Bible is crystal clear about who is right on this issue.

There is no doubt about who is right on this issue and who is wrong on this issue or the two sides of this Romans 14 issue. The original church in Rome, before Paul wrote Romans, was made up mostly of Jewish believers. Claudius Caesar ordered the Jews to leave Rome in AD 49, Acts 18:2, and as a result of the edict of Claudius, the Roman church then had only saved Gentiles.

When Claudius Caesar died on October 13, AD 54 and Nero became Emperor, the Jews were allowed to return to Rome. As saved Jews began returning to Rome and going back to the Christian church, conflicts arose between saved Gentiles and saved Jews in the local church over whether or not Christians had to keep the law of Moses to be saved and to be right with God, Acts 15:1, 5.

Specifically at issue were the dietary laws and apparently also the laws governing Nazarite vows. Saved Gentiles had been growing in NT grace and saved Jews were still struggling with their bondage to the yoke of OT law. Think back to our Bible study in Romans 6:14, all of Romans 7 and Romans 10:4. Saved Jews had not yet got their hearts and minds around the truth of NT grace. Their lack of understanding of NT grace and OT law meant that they were weak Christians.

The weak Christians were the saved Jews who would not eat meats and seafood from the list of unclean animals in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. The strong were perhaps a few of the saved Jews and most of the saved Gentiles who ignored the Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 lists of unclean animals and thought they could eat everything.

Sometimes the saved Jews thought the saved Gentiles were living in sin because they ignored Leviticus 11. Sometimes the saved Gentiles thought the saved Jews were living in sin because they lived as if they were still under OT law. They hadn't yet grasped the concept of God's amazing NT grace which saved them but which apparently hadn't yet freed their weak conscience from bondage to OT law, Acts 15:1, 19-31. The saved Jews in the church at Rome had probably been listening to the wrong teachers, as we noticed in Acts 15:1-9.

Dinner on the grounds

Can you imagine going to church and having dinner on the grounds afterwards, when the meal has been blessed and people line up to fill their plates? There is good roast lamb and vegetarian salad from the saved Jewish ladies and good roast pork and country potato salad with chunks of crispy bacon from the saved

Gentile ladies. The weak Jewish brethren avoid the pork roast and the country potato salad with crispy bacon.

Some of the weak Jewish brethren may feel judged by the strong Gentiles who are enjoying the pork roast and potato salad with chunks of crispy bacon and so they go against their conscience and take a slice of roast pork and a spoonful of potato salad but as they eat, their conscience is troubled because they are not eating in faith, Romans 14:23.

They haven't settled the Leviticus 11 issue yet, in their hearts and they are trying to go along to get along. Paul wants everyone to have a good conscience before God. Paul wants everyone to grow up spiritually so that they are no longer weak Christians. Paul wants everyone to love each other so that the church is not divided into warring factions over non-essential issues like food and drink and days and clinging to OT law when they should be embracing NT grace.

Why is the meat, drink, holy days problem still an issue today? We're more than 19 centuries past the first century AD and people are still struggling with these non-essential issues. We can understand why these issues were problems in the first century AD. The NT was about half completed at that time and no one in the first century had a complete NT he could read, study and memorize.

Yet that is not our situation today. We have the complete NT and we can read, study and memorize it if we want to. We can even obey it if we are so inclined. So what excuse does anyone today have for fussing and fighting about eating meat and drinking wine and keeping holy days?

14:3 - 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.

Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; - Weak Christians already knew that strong Christians ate meat. Strong Christians are not told to never again eat meat in order to appease the feelings of the weak Christians.

Strong Christians are not told they must eat meat in secret or that they must hide their meat eating from the weak Christians. Instead of that, Paul's instructions are: The strong are not to despise the weak and the weak are not to judge the strong. In plainer words, all of you stop carping at each other and accept that you have differences. Your differences shouldn't kill your friendships. Your differences shouldn't keep you from working together, worshipping together and appreciating each other. Christian depends on receiving each other despite your differences.

Him that eateth is the strong Christian, Romans 15:1. The strong Christian knows there is nothing wrong with eating meat offered to idols. He knows there is nothing wrong with eating bacon, pork, ham or catfish and shrimp. His conscience is not captive to Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. The strong Christian is sure about grace and sure about his standing in grace. Strong Christians are crystal clear that NT grace has superseded OT law.

Him that eateth not is the weak Christian. The weak Christian has not moved past Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. The weak Christian is still stuck on OT Jewish dietary laws. His conscience tells him he has to keep OT law, at least he has to keep the Leviticus 11 part of OT law and so, he cannot eat what is forbidden in Leviticus 11. It is probable that the reason the weak Christian refuses to eat meat is, he wants to please God and he thinks obeying Leviticus 11 and not eating some kinds of meat is the way to please God.

Do you have a biblically informed conscience?

A misinformed conscience or an uninformed conscience is not reliable. That's why we train our conscience by reading, believing and obeying what the Bible says in context. We call that having a biblically informed conscience. The problem in the first century AD was, they didn't have a Bible they could hold in their hands and read and they didn't have a NT they could hold in their hands and read. They had the indwelling Holy Spirit and, the risen Christ dwelt in their hearts by faith but imagine trying to understand NT grace without the NT. That wasn't an easy challenge for Jewish believers.

The weak Christian has not yet learned that NT grace has superseded OT law, meaning he doesn't yet know that he is entirely free from OT dietary restrictions. Because of that doctrinal truth, the weak Christian is living in the past, stuck on an issue he should not be stuck on. Certainly he is saved - *God hath received him* - but he cannot move past OT law and that's a problem that makes him weak.

The weak Christian needs to be lovingly, carefully, patiently taught more truth about NT grace. Until the weak Christian embraces the truth of NT grace, he will remain a weak Christian. The only way to grow up and stop being a weak Christian and become a strong Christian is by embracing God's truth about grace. That will happen slowly, over the course of time as the NT is completed and copies are made and pastors and teachers have the written word in their own hands, to read and teach and believe and pass on to their congregations.

Grace is a big issue.

The grace of God is a major issue for all Christians everywhere. Our spiritual growth to maturity in Christ depends on understanding the truth that NT grace has superseded OT law. We are justified by faith, Romans 5:1 and we are also justified by grace, Romans 3:24, and justified by his blood, Romans 5:9.

1. Do you understand that NT grace has superseded OT law? _____
2. Do you understand the enormous difficulty our first century Christian brethren had, coming to terms with OT law vs. NT grace, when they didn't have a complete NT or a complete Bible to hold in their hands and read? _____
3. Should the church at Rome stop teaching Bible truth about OT law and NT grace? _____
4. Should the church at Rome ignore the radical truth of Romans 6:14 and 10:4? _____
5. Paul wrote Romans 6:14 and 10:4. Is Paul now saying, in Romans 14:1-4, that we cannot teach the truth he wrote a few chapters earlier in Romans? _____ Why? _____

- This isn't a matter where both sides are right. Paul is clear that the weak brother is wrong, Romans 14:14.
6. Is it clear to you that Paul is saying in Romans 14:14, that the weak brother is wrong? _____
 7. How do you know that's what Paul is saying in Romans 14:14? _____
 8. Who persuaded Paul that the weak Christians were wrong? _____
 9. Did Jesus agree with the weak Christians or the strong Christians? _____

Notice how Paul addresses this disagreement, this lack of understanding about OT law and NT grace. Both strong Christians and weak Christians are in danger of having the wrong attitude toward their brother in Christ. Both are in danger of acting in an unloving way toward their brother in Christ, whom Christ has received. The strong Christian has a tendency to despise his weak brother for his lack of understanding, for his lack of faith.

Paul says: Don't despise your weak brother just because he isn't up to speed on the issue of eating meats, just because he isn't up to speed on the issue of NT grace, just because his spiritual growth is slower than yours or because he struggles with the concept of grace more than you do. When you treat your weak brother that way, you're not acting *charitably*, Romans 14:15.

How should strong Christians treat our weak brothers and sisters in Christ and how should our weak brothers and sisters in Christ treat us? Romans 14:19 is clear. Stop judging each other about non-essentials. Instead of arguing, debating and disagreeing, Paul says try this. *Follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

How to follow after things which make for peace.

1. Always obey 2 Timothy 2:15.
2. Refuse to fight with the brethren.
3. Refuse to argue with the brethren.
4. Refuse to dispute with the brethren.
5. Refuse to debate with the brethren.
6. Be conciliatory toward the brethren.
7. Be kindly affectioned toward the brethren.
8. Be genuinely loving toward the brethren.
9. Treat the brethren as you would like to be treated.
10. Don't insist on arguing about minor issues.
11. Don't expect everyone to always agree with you.
12. Trust the Holy Spirit to teach the brethren truth about NT grace.

What is a sweet Christian way we can *follow after the things which make for peace*? _____ What are some sweet Christian ways *one may edify another*? _____

and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: - Him that eateth not is the weak brother. He is still following OT dietary laws because he doesn't fully understand NT grace. The weak brother is in danger of judging his strong brother so Paul says: Don't judge your strong brother because he has a better grasp on grace and doesn't follow OT dietary laws. Responsibility goes both ways. You don't get to misbehave or act in an unloving manner just because you're a weak Christian.

The weak Christian doesn't get a pass because he is weak and the weak Christian doesn't get to run things in the church, doesn't get to make everyone who is strong go by his weak understanding. The church at Rome was not to be dumbed down doctrinally, practically and spiritually because some of its members were weak.

for God hath received him. - This is the biblical imperative and this is the key to understanding what Paul is saying - *God hath received him*. If you don't like that God has received him, that's your problem. Take it up with God but don't take it out on your weak brother. Your judging of your brother on non-essentials like eating meat or regarding holy days, contradicts God's view and God's will. That brother in Christ whom you are judging - stop judging him because *God hath received him*.

Here's the problem. When weak Christians don't understand God's truth about OT law vs. NT grace, they start judging strong Christians who do understand God's truth about OT law vs. NT grace. The brouhaha doesn't stop with judging. The weak Christians move on from judging to try to exclude the strong Christians, Galatians 4:17. Weak Christians judging strong Christians leads to schism in the body of Christ and divisions in the local church and Paul wants to stop the church from dividing up into factions and competing groups. Galatians 4:1-17 is a good explanation of what might happen if the church at Rome gets this issue wrong.

God has received the strong brother and God has received the weak brother, so all of you, stop kicking up dust. Stop fighting and arguing with each other about matters of conscience, about non-essentials, about eating meat and drinking wine and regarding days. Both weak and strong are *justified by faith*, Romans 5:1. Both weak and strong are *sanctified by faith*, Acts 26:18.

Both weak and strong have been given *all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*, Ephesians 1:3. Both weak and strong are sealed unto the day of redemption, Ephesians 4:30. Both weak and strong are seated *in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, Ephesians 2:6. That's why Paul says in Romans 14:1, *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye*.

As Paul uses it here, *received* means: saved eternally, justified by faith, born again, in Christ, sealed unto the day of redemption. How can we reject anyone whom God has *received*? Christians who disagree with us on matters of conscience must still be *received* by us personally and by the biblical local NT church.

**The issue here is the glorious
NT grace of God in Christ.**

Why? Because God has already received the weak brothers and the strong brothers. If God has received them, then we must receive them. Why? Because the local church is where our weak brothers and sisters will grow up spiritually and come to believe God's Bible truth about OT law and NT grace. Remember, this is all about NT grace and growing as Christians and leaving OT law behind.

*“But grow in grace,
and in the knowledge of
our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
To him be glory
both now and for ever. Amen.”*
2 Peter 3:18.

The weak brother is under grace because he got saved by grace through faith, Ephesians 2:8-9, and God intends him to grow, Ephesians 2:10, but the weak brother hasn't yet learned that NT grace supersedes or replaces or takes the place of OT law, Romans 6:14, 10:4. Where will weak Christians learn that glorious truth?

They will learn about NT grace in the local church, under the Spirit filled Bible teaching of Spirit filled pastors, therefore, receive the weak brother and don't argue with him. Give him/her room to grow and time to grow spiritually. Give him/her space to learn about NT grace. God is patient with you so you be patient with your weak brothers and sisters in Christ about these non-essential issues.

Why might weak Christians be slow to accept NT grace?

Why might weak Christians be slow to accept that OT law has been replaced by NT grace? **a.** They thought OT Judaism would last forever, Genesis 13:15, Exodus 12:17, 24, 19:9, Leviticus 10:9, 16:29, Numbers 18:23, Deuteronomy 5:29, Isaiah 59:21. Can you see where they got that idea? _____ **b.** They cannot imagine there is anything better than OT law. **c.** They haven't yet got their minds around the radical life-changing reality of the NT grace of God in Christ. **d.** They may think there is still an element of works that contribute to salvation, Deuteronomy 6:24-25. **e.** They don't yet have a NT to read and explore under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Can you think of other reasons why saved Jews might struggle with transitioning from the bondage, Acts 15:10, Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:9, 24, 5:1 of OT law to the freedom of NT grace? _____

14:4 - 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.

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? - The one doing the judging is the weak brother, Romans 14:3. Is that clear to you? _____ If that isn't clear to you, take a moment and read Romans 14:1-4 out loud several times and think about what Paul says.

Strong Christians who eat meat are not to despise weak Christians who don't eat meat. Both sides should have Christian charity and Christian love toward each other. Weak Christians who don't eat meat are not to judge strong

Christians who do eat meat. Do you see that the weak Christians know that strong Christians eat meat? That strong Christians ate meat was not a secret. It was common knowledge. Paul instructs weak Christians that strong Christians are not the servants of weak Christians; strong Christians are the servants of Christ, therefore, don't judge them.

to his own master he standeth or falleth. - What a difficult lesson to learn is this vital truth - *to his own master he standeth or falleth*. We need to learn that lesson and trust the Holy Spirit to do His work instead of setting ourselves up as the Holy Spirit and trying to do His work for him. Repeat this out loud to yourself as often as needed.

**I am not the Holy Spirit therefore
I need to stop judging my brother
on non-essential issues.**

Yea, he shall be holden up: - In the context, the one doing the judging is the weak brother. The weak brother is judging the strong brother. The weak brother who doesn't eat meat is judging the strong brother who does eat meat. Paul says: God will hold up the strong brother. Why does God hold up the strong brother? Because the strong brother is right according to Romans 14:14 and the weak brother is wrong. Is that crystal clear to you from what Romans 14:14 actually says? _____ Why? _____

If you are the weak brother judging the strong brother, then you'd better stop judging him because God is holding him up. To be clear - God disagrees with your judgmental attitude toward your strong brother and God is holding up your strong brother even while you are judging him. In a contest between weak Christians and God, who is going to win? _____ Can you see why God says to stop judging your brother? _____

for God is able to make him stand. - God is able to make the strong brother stand. Since God makes the strong brother stand, that means the strong brother is the one who is right on the issues Paul mentions in Romans 14:5-6, 21 - meat, wine and holy days. If the strong brother is right, then the weak brother is wrong. They cannot both be right. It is clear then, the weak brother is wrong? _____

And yet, Paul says in essence: Treat your brothers and sisters with exquisite kindness, exquisite grace. Treat them *charitably*, Romans 14:15. Don't harangue them, don't browbeat them, don't shame them, don't argue with them, don't try to psyche them into agreeing with you, don't bully them spiritually, don't try to make them look foolish over these non-essential things.

Charity is love in action. Don't run your mouth about love. Anyone can do that. Instead of talking about love, be a living demonstration of your love by the way you treat your brothers and sisters in Christ. Show your love by the kindness and grace and generosity with which you treat your weak and strong brothers and sisters in Christ.

14:5 - One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

One man esteemeth one day above another: - Which group in the church at Rome would tend to esteem one day above another? **a.** Saved Jews who were used to living under OT law with all of its holy days. **b.** Saved Gentiles who had never lived under OT law. **c.** Saved Baptists, **d.** Roman Catholics, **e.** Charismatic Christians.

Christians are at different stages of spiritual growth and different stages of spiritual understanding. Remember that in the winter of AD 57-58, no one had the New Testament to read and study. About three fifths of the NT hadn't been written yet when Paul wrote Romans.

another esteemeth every day alike. - Which group in the church at Rome would tend to esteem every day alike? **a.** Saved Jews who were used to living under OT law with all of its holy days. **b.** Saved Gentiles who had never lived under OT law with all of its holy days.

Progressive revelation in the Bible

God didn't reveal all of His truth in the OT. God reserved much of His truth for the NT. In OT times, God's people: **a.** didn't know there would be a NT, **b.** they didn't have the NT and therefore, **c.** God's people in the OT didn't have NT truth. God's people in the OT had OT truth. God's truth in the OT time frame was revealed gradually, slowly, over the centuries. The process of God inspiring the OT scriptures and God's prophets writing down the OT scriptures took a long time.

It took 1400 years, from about 1900 BC when Job, chronologically the first book of the OT, was written, to about 400 BC, when Malachi, the last book of the OT was written, for God to give the Jews His word, Romans 3:1-2. It took centuries for all 39 books of the OT to be accepted as canonical, to be gathered together as one book and be hand copied on vellum scrolls and then used by Israel's priests and Levites to teach God's people.

That process of slow, rather than immediate, revelation of God's truth also applies to the NT. Remember, when Paul wrote Romans in AD 57-58, he had not yet written Colossians. Colossians was written six years later, in AD 64. Remember also that the revelation of God's doctrinal truth in 27 books of the NT, wasn't given all at once, in one completed book. It was a gradual process.

The process of writing the 27 books of the NT took 60 years, from about AD 35, when Paul wrote Hebrews, chronologically the first book of the NT, to about AD 95, when John wrote the book of Revelation, the last book of the NT. Even then, it took more time for all 27 books of the NT to be accepted as canonical and gathered together as one book and it then took time for those 27 NT books to be hand copied and circulated around the Roman Empire so that Christians had some kind of access to them and could read, believe, study and teach them.

We are not living the NT in the first century AD but our spiritual ancestors were living the NT as it was being written. When we read Romans, we already have the entire NT and so, we read it a bit differently. We have the complete NT revelation of God's truth but first century Christians didn't have that.

This issue of regarding days, of trying to figure out if we have to observe days and keep OT law to be right with God, what does the NT clearly tell us about that?

*“But now, after that ye have known God,
or rather are known of God,
(God hath received him, Romans 14:3)
how turn ye again
to the weak and beggarly elements,
whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?
(to the law, Galatians 4:24)
Ye observe days, and months,
and times, and years.
(he that regarded the day, Romans 14:6)
I am afraid of you,
lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”
Galatians 4:9-10, AD 49-60.*

*“Let no man therefore judge you
(let not him that eateth not judge him, Romans 14:3)
in meat,
or in drink,
or in respect of an holyday,
or of the new moon,*

or of the sabbath days:”
Colossians 2:16, AD 64.

In Romans 14:3, written in AD 58, Paul warns judgmental Christians not to judge their Christian brothers. In Colossians 2:16, written in AD 64, Paul warns strong Christians not to let weak legalistic Christians judge them about meat, drink and holydays. There has been some Christian preaching and teaching in those intervening six years and the recipients of Paul’s ministry have grown in their knowledge of God’s truth about OT law vs. NT grace.

Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. - This isn’t talking about doctrinal issues. Paul isn’t saying: If you disagree with justification by faith, that’s okay; it’s no big deal; *let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*. Paul isn’t saying: If you don’t want to have faith in the risen Christ as the only way to heaven, Romans 10:9-13, don’t worry about it; it’s no big deal; *let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*. How do we know that absolutely for sure?

*“Now I beseech you, brethren,
mark them which cause divisions and offences
contrary to the doctrine
which ye have learned; and avoid them.”*
Romans 16:17.

**Do not receive folks who teach false doctrine.
If they teach false doctrine, avoid them.**

Did you see that? We are supposed to receive them who are weak in the faith but those who cause divisions and offenses about doctrine are not to be received: they are to be avoided. Amen and amen! This reminds us yet again that Romans 14 is not about doctrinal issues. Romans 14 is not telling us to ignore doctrinal truth, 2 Timothy 3:15-17. Romans 14 is about weak Christians who are still struggling to come to terms with OT law being replaced by NT grace. We are to graciously and kindly receive people who struggle with that because in the mid-first century AD time frame when the NT was being written, they were in a transition period and transitions can take a long time.

Why receive weak Christians who were not yet up to speed on OT law vs. NT grace? Because the first century AD was a time of transition and transitions don’t happen overnight. Transitions take time and patience and give Christians opportunity to grow in grace, to grow in knowledge, to grow spiritually in the sense of learning to trust God when He hasn’t yet given you all the answers you seek.

A Great Transition Is Going On While Paul Writes Romans

1. From OT Law to NT Grace.
2. From OT Israel to the NT Church.
3. From completed OT to NT being written.
4. From ministry to Jews to ministry to Gentiles.
5. From Messiah is coming to Messiah has come.
6. From Israel broken off to the Gentiles grafted in.
7. From the blindness of Israel to the Gentiles seeing.
8. From an OT priesthood to NT priesthood of believers.
9. From OT temple and synagogue to local NT churches.
10. From focus on Israel to focus on evangelizing Gentiles.
11. From the dispensation of law to the dispensation of grace.
12. From a church of mostly saved Jews to mostly saved Gentiles.

Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. - The kind of persuasion Paul is talking about is persuasion that comes from the Holy Spirit leading them to believe God's truth and perhaps from the written scriptures if they had memorized any of the OT or any of the 139 chapters of the NT which had been written by AD 58.

Persuasion also came from the preaching and teaching of Paul and the pastors and evangelists who had been taught Pauline doctrine and were teaching those truths to others, 2 Timothy 2:2. Paul speaks of persuasion based on biblical facts, not persuasion based on arguments and debates and emotions and feelings and selfish desires to please one's self.

Paul by the grace of God and the personal calling of Jesus Christ, Acts 9:15, is, for Christians, the great doctrinal teacher of the NT. Paul first, last and always, expects saved people to live up to the truths of inspired scripture which are written in the Pauline epistles, 2 Timothy 3:15-17. In no way is Paul providing in Romans 14:6, an excuse for any believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to live a life of sin, self-will and wickedness and excuse it by saying, I'm fully persuaded in my own mind.

14:6 - 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.

He that regardeth the day, - The weak brethren are the ones who regard the day. They are saved but still view themselves as having to keep OT law and keep OT holy days. *Regardeth the day* means to observe the day, to keep it holy in the OT sense as if you are obligated to keep the day holy. Paul assumes good motives on both sides, those who regard OT holy days, are probably saved Jews, and those who do not regard or keep OT holy days, are probably saved Gentiles.

regardeth it unto the Lord; - It was possible to be saved in the first century AD and still think you had to live under OT law and keep the law of Moses. Remember, none of them had a NT they could hold in their hand and read. That is the situation Paul describes here. Paul says the saved weak brethren who regarded the day regarded it unto the Lord. Take note: **a.** They were saved. **b.** They regarded OT holy days. **c.** They regarded those days unto the Lord. **d.** They were wrong to regard those days, even when they regarded them unto the Lord, Romans 14:14 but it wasn't a sin on their part; it was more a lack of understanding.

The point is, God and Paul knew the weak Christian brethren would eventually grow out of their false beliefs and practices when they were taught God's NT truth about grace and had time to take God's truth to heart. Also, when the NT was completed over the span of the first century AD and became available in the second century, that would go a long way toward helping weak Christians grow into the grace they already possessed but didn't fully understand. As you study Romans, remember the great transition from OT law to NT grace that was ongoing as Paul wrote Romans.

and He that regardeth not the day, - The strong brethren are the ones who do not regard the day, who do not keep Jewish holy days, who do not view themselves as closer to God because they keep putting themselves under bondage to OT law. They are saved strong Christians. They are not carnal or worldly because they left OT law as a means of righteousness in the past, Romans 10:4. Strong brethren have moved beyond OT law as a means of pleasing God and as a means of righteousness. Strong Christians know they are justified by faith, not by works.

Strong Christians understand that they are complete in Christ, Colossians 2:10 and in Christ, they have the righteousness of God right now, as a present possession, 2 Corinthians 5:21. They have embraced the glorious liberty of NT grace, Romans 8:21. Therefore, they do not regard the day because regarding OT holy days is meaningless when you are free in Christ, Galatians 5:1. Aren't you glad you are not under the yoke of bondage to OT law, Galatians 5:1? _____

to the Lord he doth not regard it; - It was possible to be saved in the first century AD and know for sure that God didn't expect you to keep OT law in order to be saved or to be right with God or to have God's blessings upon your life. It was possible to be a strong saved Christian in the first century AD and not be under bondage to OT law.

Although some saved folks in the first century AD kept trying to keep OT law, God never required any of them to do that. God expected the men He called to preach and teach and evangelize to clearly explain OT law vs. NT grace and lead Christians everywhere into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, - This is the strong Christian who eats meat and never has a troubled conscience about it because he knows he is not under OT law. NT grace changed everything including the diets of Christians.

for he giveth God thanks; - Paul is absolutely clear that it is perfectly fine to eat meat. God doesn't have a problem with eating meat and the Bible doesn't have a problem with eating meat. The strong Christian can legitimately give God thanks for the meat he is eating and still have a clear conscience before God.

The problem that might arise is when the strong Christian ignores the weak brother or sister who cannot eat meat with a clear conscience before God. There is a greater issue here. As a strong Christian I have the right to eat meat but I do not have the right to offend my weak brother with my freedom under NT grace, to eat meat. I am not allowed to destroy my weak brother by rubbing my freedom in his face. Doing that wouldn't be Christian, wouldn't be Christ like.

**My freedom in Christ isn't free;
it comes with responsibilities.**

I do not have the right to *set at nought* my weak brother, Romans 14:10. I do not have the right to put a *stumblingblock* in front of my weak brother, Romans 14:13. I do not have the right to put *an occasion to fall* in my weak brother's way, Romans 14:13. I do not have the right to grieve my weak brother, Romans 14:15. I do not have the right to walk *uncharitably* in front of my weak brother, Romans 14:15. I do not have the right to spiritually *destroy* my weak brother *for whom Christ died*, Romans 14:15. My freedom in Christ comes with responsibilities.

and he that eateth not, - This is the weak Christian, probably a saved Jew who has not yet got his mind and heart around NT grace. Spiritually speaking, he is stuck in the past, trying to mix OT law and NT grace. That never works but God is patient with weak Christians and strong Christians. God is gracious to all of us

and brings us into His truth when our hearts are open to the preaching and teaching of His infallible word.

When we are struggling with believing something God wants us to believe, the problem is usually our heart instead our head. Our proud self-obsessed human heart is often our downfall. Pride keeps us from obeying God, keeps us from believing God, keeps us from being fruitful for God. The weak Christian's lack of understanding of NT grace is one of life's hurdles that he must overcome if he is to grow up in Christ and become a strong mature Christian. God's way of growing up in Christ is found in Ephesians 4:11-18. Please list two things from the Ephesians passage that you need to do to grow spiritually.

to the Lord he eateth not, - This is the weak Christian who believes he is more pleasing to God if he clings to OT laws about meat, Leviticus 11. All of us ought to take comfort here in the grace of God. Even when we don't understand, even when we are wrong, God still loves us and still has grace toward us. But don't let that be your excuse for being content to be wrong. Obey 2 Timothy 2:15.

Part of our progressive sanctification, Acts 26:18, is learning doctrine and embracing God's truth and learning to live God's truth every day of our lives. In plainer words, God does not intend any of us to be weak Christians all of our life. God expects us to read and study and believe and obey and grow up spiritually. It is unnatural for a baby to stay a baby it's whole life.

and giveth God thanks. - The weak Christians in Romans 14 and 15 are not sneaky, dishonest charlatans. They are not bad people and God is not mad at them. Paul says that what they are doing is genuine and they are giving God thanks. For that reason, Paul says in essence: Be gentle with your weak brothers and sisters in Christ. Edify them and help them grow stronger but don't argue with them, don't debate them, don't coerce them into agreeing with you.

14:7 - For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

For none of us liveth to himself, - Sometimes we have the wrong idea about the local church. Local churches are not networking centers so you can find business contacts and grow your wealth. Local churches are places where the Bible is taught and living as disciples of Jesus is modeled so that weak Christians can grow up into Christ and become strong evangelistic disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For none of us liveth to himself - The general rule is that we are not Lone Ranger Christians. God created the church as a called out assembly of saved and born

again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. God expects us to live and grow in the spiritual environment He created. We are part of the body of Christ.

We are not an arm or a hand or a foot or an eye or a brain in isolation from the rest of the body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:13-27. God intends us to work together to help each other grow up as strong mature Christians, evangelizing the world and in particular, the world where we live and work every day. Our individual Christian life has purpose as part of the body of Christ.

and no man dieth to himself. - Our life and our death have meaning in the eyes of God. Once we get saved, God has great expectations for us. It has never been God's plan to save us and then walk away and leave us, saved but still slaves to sin, saved but still sin-focused, saved but living weak powerless lives.

If your death as a Christian doesn't mean anything to anyone, then you lived your Christian life wrong. If you're reading this, you still have time to change how you live and start getting it right. Live for Christ now so that, when you die, you will be missed. Live for Christ now so that, when you die, people won't be happy you're gone; they'll be sad because they miss your joyful Christian spirit and your strong and positive influence for Christ.

14:8 - 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.

For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; - Is this true of you? _____ He lived for the Lord. Is that what people who know you will say about you at your funeral? _____ Would you like to have that testimony in front of the people who know you, that he lived for the Lord, he loved the Lord, he always encouraged me to be a better stronger more faithful Christian? _____ Or will they say: I can't remember him ever talking to me about Jesus or about being a faithful Christian who believes the Bible? _____

What does it mean, *we live unto the Lord*? What does it mean to you to *live unto the Lord*? If you had to list seven biblical things that indicate someone is living *unto the Lord*, what biblical NT things would be on your list?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

1. Is being religious a biblical way of living for the Lord? _____
2. Is wearing ashes on Ash Wednesday a biblical way of living for the Lord? _____
3. Is abstaining from hard liquor for Lent a biblical way of living for the Lord? _____
4. Is financially supporting false teachers a biblical way of living for the Lord? _____
5. Is keeping quiet and not witnessing a biblical way of living for the Lord? _____

and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: - In Romans 14, Paul is clear that both the weak brethren and the strong brethren are saved - *God hath received them*. The weak brother goes to heaven when he dies just as surely, just as safely, just as quickly as the strong brother. Paul puts emphasis on the fact that Christians, whether weak or strong, live unto the Lord and die unto the Lord.

None of us gets a pass because we are weak. None of us gets a pass because we are strong. Weak or strong, God expects us to *live unto the Lord*. Not only that, God expects us to *live unto the Lord* from the time we get saved to the day we die. We never outgrow our need to live unto the Lord. As far as God and Paul are concerned, being a Christian should mark our life from the time we get saved to the time we die.

whether we live therefore, or die, - Live so you will be missed. If people hear about your death and breathe a sigh of relief, your way of living was probably wrong. The Roman Christians, weak or strong, are the Lord's. God has received them and if they're good enough for God to receive and save, then we ought to receive them and walk the path of discipleship with them.

we are the Lord's. - When we die, Jesus still watches over us. When we die, we are as safe in death as we were in life. Aren't you glad that, when God saves you, He takes care of you for the rest of your life and then for all eternity? Since this is true, let's start treating each other like we are the Lord's. Paul says strong Christians shouldn't despise weak Christians and weak Christians shouldn't judge strong Christians. Whatever happens to us as Christians, *we are the Lord's*.

When we got saved, we became the Lord's - we are God's property - and from then on, throughout our life, *we are the Lord's*, 1 Corinthians 6:18-20. We have access to God throughout our life because *we are the Lord's*, Hebrews 4:14-16. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit because *we are the Lord's*. God doesn't stop being our Lord when we die. Getting saved is just the start of our grand spiritual adventure in Christ. Dying is just a great acceleration of our grand spiritual adventure in Christ. Can you list some benefits of the Bible truth that, *we are the Lord's*?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

14:9 - For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, - That's the gospel in a nutshell. The gospel isn't that God loves you although God does love you, John 3:16. The gospel isn't that you need to get saved although you do need to get saved, Romans 10:9-10. The gospel isn't that you should be going to a Bible preaching Bible teaching church although you should be doing that. The gospel in five parts is found in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

What is the five part gospel? _____

that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. - Believing on Christ as Messiah is the best thing for life and the best thing for death. Being a Christian doesn't end when we die. Christ is Lord of the dead and the living. Christ has plans for us while we live and after we die. Getting saved and living for Christ is just the beginning. Christ is lord of the dead too.

When we die, Jesus will still be our Lord. That indicates that, in heaven, we won't be sitting on a cloud strumming a harp and being lazy. Eternity will be an even grander adventure than being Jesus' disciple on earth. We will still serve the same Savior for all of eternity and enjoy His fellowship and presence forever.

14:10 - 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.

But why dost thou judge thy brother? - How would you answer that question? Why do you judge your brother? _____

If God has received your brother, why do you judge your brother about all of these non-essential issues? Why don't you just receive your brother like God has received him? Your judging indicates you do not trust God to do the right thing in the life of the brother you are judging. That means your judging shows that you have a spiritual heart problem and you need to get right with God.

or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? - *Set at nought* means: to treat him as if he is not important, to disregard him, to despise him, to hold him in contempt, to mock him, to devalue him, to act as if he is not important to the work of Christ and the body of Christ. Setting at nought your brother is like bullying your brother or harassing your brother instead of loving him. You wouldn't want anyone to treat you that way so why treat your brother in Christ that way? No one likes to be *set at nought* so Paul asks: *Why dost thou set at nought thy brother?*

Can you answer the question? Why were the weak Christians setting at nought their saved Gentile brothers? _____

Paul uses the Greek word, ἐξουθενέω *exoutheneō*, pronounced: ἐξουθενέω *ex-outh-thin-nayō* which is translated in the Bible as: despise, mock, view as least esteemed, contemptible. Here are some of the relevant verses which also use this word.

Luke 18:9, 23:11 (*set him at nought and mocked Him*), Acts 4:11 (the stone is Jesus), Romans 4:3, 1 Corinthians 6:4, 2 Corinthians 10:10. Did you notice that unsaved Gentiles treated Jesus with despite (Ezekiel 25:6) in Luke 23:11. Here in Romans 14:10, it appears that saved Jews were treating saved Gentiles with despite (Hebrews 10:29). Despite means: to treat with contempt, to provoke to anger.

for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. - Every person on earth will not stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ because this judgment is only for saved and born again people. Everyone who is saved in the church age, aka, during what is known as the dispensation of the grace of God, will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. No one at this judgment will be judged as to whether or not he is saved. Everyone who shows up at the judgment seat of Christ is already saved and there's no doubt about that.

**If we're not judged here for whether or not we are saved,
what are we judged for at the Judgment Seat of Christ?**

Paul goes into some detail about that in 1 Corinthians 3:9-15, 4:5. In 1 Corinthians 3:9-15, our works get judged, to see if they are: wood, hay, stubble - all of which burn up, or to see if they are: gold, silver, precious stones - all of which pass the test and are not burned up. Wood, hay, stubble are the fleshly, selfish temporal works we do, which were not really for the Lord. They are probably the show-off show-boating works we do to be seen of men. Those works originate in our unsaved flesh. Gold, silver, precious stones works are the

works we do out of love for God, out of obedience to God's direct leading or in obedience to what scripture tells us to do.

Which are you most focused on?

Wood - Hay - Stubble? These are worthless.

Gold - Silver - Precious Stones? - These are priceless.

In 1 Corinthians 4:5, God also judges *the hidden things of darkness* and *makes manifest the counsels of the hearts*. Those two go together. They cannot be our secret sins because all of our sins have already been judged at Calvary, have already been paid for at Calvary and God has signaled His acceptance of that payment by raising Jesus from the dead, Colossians 2:11-16.

It may be that 1 Corinthians 4:5 refers to our motives, our secret inner reasons for doing what we did or not doing what we didn't do. Sometimes people describe that as our sins of omission (what we didn't do that we should have done) and our sins of commission (what we did do that we shouldn't have done). Sometimes we do things as Christians, not because we have a biblical command or a godly motive but because we're hot-dogging it just to be seen.

To the Christians around us, we want to appear to be more than we are in real life: more in the scriptures, more sanctified, more serious, more spiritual. The sad story of Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5:1-11 illustrates the danger of serving God out of bad motives. If our motives are bad motives, those bad motives will cause our works to burn up at the judgment seat of Christ, meaning, we will lose rewards we could have won if we had done things God's way. Did you know there were this many crowns in the OT and NT? Crowns speak of: authority, blessing, honour, leadership, power, rank and reward.

OT Crowns - Not Given At The Judgment Seat Of Christ

1. Aaron's Crown

Exodus 28:36-38

Exodus 29:6

Exodus 39:30

Leviticus 8:1-2, 9

2. Saul's Crown

2 Samuel 1:6-11

3. Jehoash's Crown

2 Kings 11:12

4. Ammon & David's Crown

Ammon was Lot's bastard son

2 Samuel 12:26-30

1 Chronicles 20:1-3

Psalm 21:3

5. Vashti's Crown

Esther 1:11, 2:17

6. Ahasuerus' Crown

Esther 6:1-11

7. Solomon's Wisdom Crown Of Glory

Proverbs 4:1-9

8. The Husband's Crown = A Virtuous Woman

Proverbs 12:4

9. The Crown Of The Wise

Proverbs 14:24

10. The hoary head Crown Of Glory

Proverbs 16:31

11. The Crown Of Old Men

Proverbs 17:6

12. The Crown Of Pride

Isaiah 28:1-3

13. The Crown Of Glory

For the residue, remnant

Isaiah 28:5, 62:3

14. The Fallen Crown

Israel under judgment

Lamentations 5:16

15. The Beautiful Crown

Godly Israel
Ezekiel 16:12

16. The Counterfeit Crown - OT

Rebellious Israel
Ezekiel 23:36-42

17. The Removed Crown

Judgment upon Israel
Ezekiel 21:25-27

18. The Crown Of Restored Israel

Zechariah 9:16

NT Crowns

1. The Crown Of Thorns

Matthew 27:29

2. The Crown Of The Souls You've Won

Philippians 4:1
1 Thessalonians 2:19

Crowns At The Judgment Seat Of Christ

1. We Must Strive Lawfully

*“And if a man also
strive for masteries,
yet is he not crowned,
except he strive lawfully.”*

2 Timothy 2:5.

1. What must you do if you want to be crowned?

2. The Incorruptible Crown

*“And every man
that striveth for the mastery
is temperate in all things.
Now they do it
to obtain a corruptible crown;
but we an incorruptible.”*

1 Corinthians 9:25.

2. What must you do to win an Incorruptible Crown?

3. A Crown Of Righteousness

*“Henceforth there is laid up for me
a crown of righteousness,
which the Lord, the righteous judge,
shall give me at that day:
and not to me only,
but unto all them also
that love his appearing.”*
2 Timothy 4:8.

3. What must you do to win a Crown Of Righteousness?

4. The Crown Of Life - in James

*“Blessed is the man
that endureth temptation:
for when he is tried,
he shall receive the crown of life,
which the Lord hath promised
to them that love him.”*
James 1:12.

4. What must you do to win this Crown Of Life?

5. A Crown Of Life - in Revelation

*“Fear none of those things
which thou shalt suffer:
behold, the devil
shall cast some of you into prison,
that ye may be tried;
and ye shall have tribulation ten days:
be thou faithful unto death,
and I will give thee a crown of life.”*
Revelation 2:10.

5. What must you do to win this Crown Of Life?

5. In your opinion, what is the difference
between these two Crowns Of Life?

6. A Crown Of Glory

For Good Pastors Who Are Shepherds
*“And when the chief Shepherd shall appear,
ye shall receive a crown of glory
that fadeth not away.”*

1 Peter 5:4 (5:1-5)

6. What must you do to win a Crown Of Glory?

6. Who can win a Crown Of Glory?

7. The Taken Crown

Don't let them take God's word.
Don't let them make you deny Christ.
Revelation 3:11

7. How might this Crown get taken?

8. The Counterfeit Crown - NT

Worn by Antichrist, not Christ.
Revelation 6:2 vs. Revelation 19:12

9. The Crown Of Israel

This is Israel during the Tribulation.
Revelation 12:1

10. The KING OF KINGS Golden Crown

Revelation 14:14

11. The KING OF KINGS Many Crowns

Revelation 19:12

The NT says some people will get crowns. Those crowns will probably be awarded at the judgment seat of Christ.

Everyone who doesn't appear at the judgment seat of Christ will be judged at the Great White Throne judgment, Revelation 20:10-15. It is infinitely better to be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ than at the Great White Throne.

14:11 - For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

For it is written, - It is dumb, dangerous and wicked to try to divorce the OT from the Christianity of the NT. We know that with certainty because Jesus and

Paul constantly quoted the OT in their NT ministry. When Jesus and Paul say: *It is written*, they are appealing to the divine authority of the OT. Paul here in Romans then quotes the OT, Isaiah 45:23. There is no higher authority to which Paul can appeal than the written scriptures of the OT, 2 Peter 1:14-21. What is the *more sure word of prophesy* that Peter mentions in that passage? _____ Are you taking heed to the more sure word of prophesy? _____

According to 2 Peter 1:14-21, which is most authoritative: **a.** the voice of God Himself speaking from heaven, **b.** the voice of the Pope speaking ex cathedra, **c.** the written scriptures of the Holy Bible.

As I live, saith the Lord, - God swears by Himself because there is no one greater that He can swear by, Genesis 22:16-18, Hebrews 6:13. No one has more authority, more believability, more character, more power than God.

*“For when God made promise to Abraham,
because he could swear by no greater,
he sware by himself,”
Hebrews 6:13-14.*

every knee shall bow to me, - This quotation originates in Isaiah 45:22-25 and is quoted in the NT in Romans 14:11, Ephesians 3:14 and Philippians 2:6-11. Every knee shall bow to me reinforces the truth of Revelation 19:16, that the Lord Jesus Christ is KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. As such, our KING is always victorious. He is incapable of defeat, incapable of failure, incapable of loss.

That every knee shall bow to Christ the Creator of all things demonstrates the truth of 1 Timothy 6:15-16. Writing under inspiration, the apostle Paul wrote the title, King of kings and Lord of lords about thirty years before the apostle John used it in Revelation 19:16.

*“Which in his times he shall shew,
who is the blessed and only Potentate,
the King of kings, and Lord of lords;
Who only hath immortality,
dwelling in the light
which no man can approach unto;
whom no man hath seen,
nor can see:
to whom be honour*

and power everlasting. Amen.”
1 Timothy 6:15.

and every tongue shall confess to God. - Unsaved people often use God's name as a cuss word. They cannot imagine a time when they will bow their knee and confess to God. And yet, the Bible is clear. Those angry foul-mouthed pagans will bow the knee and confess to God. At the great white throne judgment, they will not be taking a knee for black lives matter or for critical race theory or whatever virtue signaling woke ideology is popular in the moment.

They will be taking a knee and acknowledging God, something they never did when it would have made a difference, when it would have mattered to their eternal destiny. It's best to humble down and bow now, while it makes a difference. *“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,”* Ephesians 3:14.

14:12 - So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

So then every one of us - That's the interesting thing about the judgment of God. No one escapes judgment. Judgment is coming, all will be there; each one receiving justly his due. Hide in the sin cleansing soul saving blood, and I will pass, will pass over you.

1. What should Christians do since every one of us shall give account of himself to God? _____ 2. Should that sobering truth change the way we live our lives? _____ How does the bedrock truth that you will stand before God change the way you live your day to day life?

shall give account of himself to God. - God sees you and knows your name. God sees what you do, knows what you're going through, knows what you're struggling with, Genesis 16:1-14. God has seen every agonized tear you've shed. None of your hurts or sorrows went unnoticed by God. So when every one of us gives account to God, we will give account knowing that God knows all of the facts. God knows the whole story in minute detail.

Have you ever wondered what God does all day up in heaven? We don't always think of it this way but sometimes, God is pondering what we're doing down here, Proverbs 5:21, 21:2, 24:12. God sees everything you do, God ponders everything you do and by the time you get to the judgment seat of Christ, the judge will have done his due diligence and.

*“For the ways of man
are before the eyes of the LORD,
and he pondereth all his goings.”*

Proverbs 5:21.

God ponders your ways.

*“Every way of a man
is right in his own eyes:
but the LORD pondereth the hearts.”*

Proverbs 21:2.

God ponders your heart and your motives.

*“If thou sayest,
Behold, we knew it not;
doth not he that
pondereth the heart consider it?
and he that keepeth thy soul,
doth not he know it?
and shall not he render
to every man
according to his works?”*

Proverbs 24:12.

Having carefully considered your goings and your heart motives and having carefully considered your heart, God will render to every man according to his works. The judgment seat of Christ is not about our salvation; it's about our works.

What does it mean, we will give account to God? _____
Is that a real judgment we're going to face? _____

14:13 - 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.

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: - Just so we are clear about what Paul is saying: Paul isn't telling us not to judge whether or not someone is saved. Paul is not telling us not to judge whether someone is believing false doctrine about salvation or teaching false doctrine about salvation or justification by faith. And Paul isn't telling us not to judge if someone

is living an immoral life or an adulterous life. In context, this is about not judging our brothers about non-essentials. We should judge doctrinal matters and moral issues.

Here in the context of Romans 14, the judgment is weak Christians judging their strong brothers about non-essential issues or strong Christians judging their weak brothers about non-essential issues. Judging each other over issues that are not doctrinal issues or moral issues damages the local church, damages our brothers and sisters in Christ and doesn't accomplish anything good.

but judge this rather, - This reminds us of 1 Corinthians 12:31 - "*and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.*" It's like Paul is saying: You want to judge? Okay, judge yourselves and make sure the way you live your Christian life does not offend your brothers and sisters, does not make your brothers and sisters stumble, does not make your brothers and sisters weak in their Christian faith. The fact that Paul tells them this indicates they are capable of living the Christian life the right way. They don't have to keep getting it wrong.

that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall - No man has a right to insist on exercising his freedom in Christ when exercising his freedom in Christ is a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall for his weak brother. This doesn't mean that the weak Christians control the lives of the strong Christians. It means that, when they go to church, they love each other and make sure they're not flaunting their freedom in Christ and hurting their weak or their strong brothers and sisters.

in his brother's way. - What are you focused upon when you go to church? Are you moderating your conduct and your conversation so you don't offend your weak brothers and sisters? Is it your goal to be a blessing to the people at church, to edify them and help them grow in their biblical faith? _____

Do you pray for wisdom to help your partner grow in biblical faith, to help your fellow Christians grow in Christian faith? _____ Do you read the Bible and pray with your partner or with other Christians as part of your efforts to help them grow spiritually? _____ Are you intentional about that? _____

Why is it important how you treat your brothers and sisters in Christ? It's very important because some day all of us are going to give account to God. We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. When is the best time to live for Jesus? **a.** Next week, **b.** Next month, **c.** Next year, **d.** When I retire, **e.** Now.

14:14 - 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.

I know, - This isn't an issue where both sides are right. Paul is clear that the weak brother is wrong, Romans 14:14. We know that because he says: *I know*. Is it clear to you that Paul is saying in Romans 14:14, that the weak brother is wrong? _____ How do you know that's what Paul is saying in Romans 14:14? _____

and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, - Since Jesus persuaded Paul that nothing is unclean of itself, then the weak Christians are in the wrong. They are not partly right or a little bit right. They are 100% wrong on the issue of eating meats. In spite of that, the Bible says not to eat meat if that is a stumbling block or an occasion to fall for the weak brother in Christ. Consider what impact your freedom in Christ will have on your weaker brothers and sisters in Christ.

What lessons in life can we learn from that? First, the topic is non-essentials - not doctrinal things and not moral things where the Bible gives us crystal clear instructions. Second, on non-essentials, we must have grace and treat our weak brethren with grace. We do not have the right to despise them. Third, we must trust God enough to wait on Him to show our weak brethren the truth on the issues where they are weak and wrong.

In the first century context, since the NT was not available and wouldn't be available for many years, it might take two or three centuries for everyone to get on the same page, the right page, about these issues of non-essentials. Now that we are about 1964 years down the road from AD 58, should we expect that Christians who have the entire Bible including the entire NT, should be up to speed now? **a.** Yes indeed, **b.** No, they may have the NT but not read it, **c.** They may have the NT but not believe it when they read it, **d.** They may simply be spoiled and unwilling to conform their beliefs to the NT, **e.** They may have an agenda which doesn't include learning what the NT teaches.

Fourth, in the context of Romans, we remind ourselves that about half of the NT hadn't even been written then, therefore the weak brethren in first century churches had a genuine excuse for being weak and being wrong. Fifth, giving our weak brothers the benefit of the doubt on non-essentials is the kind gracious Christian thing to do. If we are the strong Christians, then our faith in God should be strong enough for us to trust Him to show weak Christians the truth of God. If our faith isn't strong enough to wait on God in cases like this, then we probably are not strong Christians.

that there is nothing unclean of itself: - This a a marvelous nugget of spiritual common sense and spiritual truth. Paul is talking about food, not poison, not drugs. What God created is not unclean of itself. Let's see if we can follow the reasoning. **1.** God created all things and God called His creation, *very good*, Genesis 1:31. **2.** Nothing God created is unclean of itself. It is unclean to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean. **3.** God expects every Christian in the first century church to get with the NT grace program and leave the OT law program behind.

Notice again, the clues given to us by the Holy Spirit in Romans 14:14. **1.** Nothing is unclean of itself - We can eat anything, regardless of what the Rabbis and the Oral Talmud teach, regardless of what Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 says about clean and unclean foods, regardless of the opinions of weak Christians. God made that clear to Peter three times in Acts 10:9-16, and the Lord Jesus made that clear to Paul and so Paul made it clear to us in Romans 14:14.

2. Paul knows that biblical truth from his interaction with the Lord Jesus so he is a strong Christian. **3.** The truth that we can eat anything, any animal God created to be eaten, was given to Paul by the Lord Jesus so that truth isn't in dispute here. **4.** Therefore, if we're going to follow Christ as Paul followed Christ, 1 Corinthians 11:1, we need to line up with Jesus and Paul and believe what they believed about our freedom to eat meat. This isn't a case of maybe both sides are right or maybe the weak side is right and the strong side is wrong.

That being said, remember the historical context of Romans 14. Only about 139 chapters of the NT, out of 260, had been written in AD 58. No one in the church at Rome had a personal copy of the OT or NT that he could read whenever he wanted to. The saved Jews who were weak in the faith were going by what they had been taught before they got saved and perhaps, were going by what they had been taught by saved Pharisees and saved legalists after they got saved, Acts 15:1-5. If that's true, how does a Christian keep from being taught wrong? We do that by making it our personal priority to read, study and learn what the Bible says in context. We do that by learning sound Bible doctrine.

but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, - This isn't a mystery. There are two main groups in the NT church in the first century AD - saved Jews and saved Gentiles. We don't need to speculate that there may be other groups in the Roman church who are not mentioned in the Bible or in history. We don't need to approach this as if scripture is unclear about the conflict between saved Jews and saved Gentiles in the NT time frame.

In the mid-first century church in Rome, who would esteem certain fish and meats to be unclean, Leviticus 11:1-47? **a.** Muslims, **b.** Catholics, **c.** Baptists, **d.** saved Gentiles, **e.** saved Jews, **f.** Hawaiians, **g.** Libertarians.

to him it is unclean. - It is *unclean* to him because he is weak in his understanding of OT law vs. NT grace. It is *unclean* to him because he hasn't received enough biblical teaching to give him a good conscience about leaving OT law behind. It is *unclean* to him because, in the first century time frame, he doesn't have a NT which he can read, believe and obey. It is *unclean* to him because they were in a transition period, from OT law to NT grace and people with weak faith were struggling to embrace the truth of NT grace.

Just so we are clear, even though weak Christians viewed eating some meats as unclean, those meats were not unclean in God's eyes and those meats were not unclean in the eyes of strong Christians. Let us never forget that weak Christians are still Christians, our brothers and sisters in Christ. They are still saved. God has received them and the Bible tells us we must receive them and we must not fuss, fight, argue and debate when we receive them.

Why must we receive weak Christians in the local church? **a.** Because God has received them. **b.** Because they are just as saved as we are. **c.** Because, over time, God will help them believe His truth about meat, drink and holy days. **d.** Because loving our weak Christian brethren is the good, godly, grace-filled thing to do. **e.** Because God tells us to treat them with loving grace. **f.** Because if we don't love our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ, we are not living like Christians. **g.** All of the above.

14:15 - But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, - The biblical commentary from Paul on this issue is found in Acts 10:9-20, 28, 34-35, 11:1-20, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and Ephesians 4:1-32.

Notice how Paul addresses this disagreement, this misunderstanding about OT law and NT grace. Weak Christians genuinely don't understand NT grace and their lack of understanding causes their heart to be grieved when their strong Christian brethren live NT grace.

For God and for Paul, that is a big problem which can easily be solved by strong Christians. This disagreement over non-essentials like eating meat and drinking

wine and keeping Jewish holy days has the potential to destroy weak Christians before they have time to become strong Christians.

now walkest thou not charitably. - Paul addresses the heart of strong Christians and appeals to their common sense, their spirituality and their love for God and for their weak brethren. When you grieve your weak brothers and sisters by eating meat in front of them or at a restaurant or at a love feast at church, *now walkest thou not charitably*.

No matter how convinced you are of the rightness of eating meat, and no matter that Jesus agrees with you on that issue and disagrees with your weak brethren, still, you are not walking charitably if your eating of meat grieves and destroys your weak brother and weak sister in Christ. Sometimes you can be right and yet still be wrong, if you're not taking into account the needs of your weak brethren.

Destroy not him with thy meat, - This is not a suggestion. This is not a weak hint to perhaps reconsider whether you should eat meat where and when it grieves the heart and destroys the faith of your weak brethren. This is the command of God. Even though you are right, you don't get to destroy your weak brother with your meat.

for whom Christ died. - The idea is, consider your weak brother. Christ died for him too. Christ died for your weak brothers and sisters as much as He died for you strong Christians. Follow the logic. Strong Christians believe Christ died for them because He loves them. That same logic applies to weak Christians. Christ died for them because He loves them. Since God loves them, you strong Christians should love them enough to nurture them and stop doing things that grieve them and destroy them. Since Christ died for them, strong Christians shouldn't live in ways that will destroy weak Christians for whom Christ died.

14:16 - Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

Let not then your good - This is addressed to strong Christians. Paul says: Hey guys, you're right about eating meat. You understand the truth about OT law vs. NT grace. *Your good* means, your understanding that it is perfectly fine to eat meat is correct. Yet because we are in a transition period, because everyone is not yet up to speed on OT law vs. NT grace, you need to show some love and show some grace and stop flaunting your freedom to eat meat in front of your weak brothers and sisters. You have a responsibility before God to edify your brothers and sisters in Christ instead of offending them or making them stumble in their walk with Christ, instead of tearing them down with your actions.

be evil spoken of: - Paul says: *Let not then your good be evil spoken of.* If you're parading around showing off your freedom in Christ to eat meat, and you grieve and destroy your weak brothers and sisters in the process, *your good* will be evil spoken of. You'll be destroying weak Christians and that destruction will negatively affect the local churches in Rome. Your exercise of your freedom in Christ can negatively impact weaker Christians. For that reason, you need to understand who your weak brothers and sisters are and then, make sure your exercise of your freedom in Christ doesn't harm them.

14:17 - For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

For the kingdom of God - Words that are different are not equal. The Kingdom of heaven and the Kingdom of God are different kingdoms. These kingdoms sometimes overlap during the earthly ministry of Christ yet they are not the same.

During the earthly ministry of Christ, the KOG was within those who believed on Messiah Jesus, Luke 17:21. During the earthly ministry of Christ, both the Kingdom of Heaven, KOH, and the Kingdom of God, KOG, were present at the same time. They overlapped during the earthly ministry of Christ. That was then, this is now. Today the Kingdom of Heaven, KOH, is not present upon earth. Now the Kingdom of God, KOG, is present. What is the Kingdom of heaven, KOH and what is the Kingdom of God, KOG? The list below points out some of the differences between the two Kingdoms.

The kingdom of heaven is mentioned 31 times in the NT and is found only in Matthew's gospel. The phrase, *kingdom of heaven*, is never used in the OT and is never used anywhere else in the NT except in the gospel of Matthew. The Kingdom Of Heaven or KOH is the earthly physical Davidic Kingdom, always associated with the nation of Israel as God's chosen people, always associated with the earthly ministry of Messiah Jesus. After the resurrection of Christ, no one in the Bible mentions or preaches the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of God is mentioned 68 times in the NT. The phrase, *kingdom of God*, is never used in the OT. The Kingdom Of God is the spiritual kingdom of Christ, in contrast to the KOH, the physical kingdom of Israel. The KOG is associated with the earthly ministry of Christ as Israel's Messiah.

Before Christ came as Israel's Messiah, there was no Kingdom of God on earth. The KOG on earth only became possible when Christ was born and began His

earthly ministry. During the earthly ministry of Christ, both the KOH and the KOG were present on earth together, at the same time.

After the resurrection of Christ, no one in the Bible from NT times to now ever preached the kingdom of heaven again. The kingdom of God, the spiritual kingdom which now, can only be entered by the new birth, John 3:3, 5, superseded the kingdom of heaven and is mentioned and preached 7 times in Acts 1:3, 8:12, 14:22, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 31, and 8 more times by Paul in Romans 14:17, 1 Corinthians 4:20, 6:9, 10, 15:50, Galatians 5:21, Colossians 4:11, 2 Thessalonians 1:5. Paul preached the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of heaven, Acts 14:22, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 31.

KOH vs. KOG **Kingdom of Heaven vs. Kingdom of God**

1. KOH overlaps with KOG during Jesus' earthly ministry
2. KOH is earthly - KOG is spiritual
3. KOH is physical - KOG is not physical
4. KOH is Davidic and Jewish - KOG is Christian
5. KOH is OT - KOG is NT
6. KOH is under OT Law, Mt 5:19-20 - KOG is under NT Grace
7. KOH is outward & physical - KOG is inward & spiritual
8. KOH is related to Israel - KOG is related to Christ
9. KOH entered by physical birth - KOG now entered by the new birth
Matthew 5:21, 18:3 - John 3:3, 5
10. KOH is about binding, Mt 16:19 - KOG is about salvation
11. KOH has unsaved people - KOG has only saved people
12. KOH related to Christ's earthly ministry - KOG is post-resurrection, Ac 1:3
13. KOH is keeping religious rules - KOG is R., peace and joy in HG
14. KOH is meat and drink - KOG is not meat and drink, Ro 14:17
15. KOH is not on earth now - KOG is on earth now
16. No KOH after Christ's resurrection - All KOG after resurrection
17. Can't serve God in the KOH now - Can serve God in KOG now
18. Jesus preached KOH to Israel - Paul preached KOG to Gentiles
19. KOH is primarily to Jews - KOG is primarily to Gentiles
20. Don't focus on the KOH - Focus on the KOG

is not meat and drink; - *Meat and drink* here refers to what OT law said about what Jews can eat and drink and what they cannot eat and drink, Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14. The KOG has nothing to do with meat and drink - *for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink*. Meat and drink is not what the KOG is about because the KOG is a spiritual kingdom, not a physical kingdom.

We can only enter the KOG via the new birth, John 3:3,5. When you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit baptizes you into the body of Christ, no water involved, 1 Corinthians 12:13, and that Spirit baptism puts you into the body of Christ and into the kingdom of God.

The KOG only has saved people in it. There are no unsaved people in the KOG. On the other hand, the KOH had lots of unsaved people in it - most of national Israel was unsaved - and there are also some saved people in the KOH, which would be, any Israelite who had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as his Messiah. When Christ was on earth in His earthly ministry as God's Messiah to Israel, the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God were both here at the same time.

is not meat and drink - Please don't interpret Romans 14:7 as a free pass to get drunk. Romans 14:17 is not a free pass to drink alcohol and is not a free pass to get drunk. Every Christian who gets drunk is sinning against our holy God. Any Christian who plans on going out drinking and arranges for a designated driver because he plans on getting drunk, is not living as a Christian.

There is nothing biblical or Christian or sane or sensible or spiritual about getting drunk, Romans 13:11-14, 14:21, Ephesians 5:18, Proverbs 20:1. If drunk is your way of life, shame on you. If you get drunk with unsaved people or if you get drunk with saved people or if you get drunk with both or if you help others get drunk or if you get drunk alone, God will not bless that sinful behavior. Getting drunk is never Christian behavior; getting drunk is always sowing to the flesh and is always sinful behavior.

*“Be not deceived;
God is not mocked:
for whatsoever a man soweth,
that shall he also reap.
For he that soweth to his flesh
shall of the flesh reap corruption;
but he that soweth to the Spirit
shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”
Galatians 6:7-8.*

but righteousness, and peace, - Since the KOG is the spiritual kingdom, and is not the earthly physical Davidic kingdom of Israel, don't focus on OT law and legalism. Don't make the focus of your fellowship whether or not someone agrees with you on meat or drink or holy days. That's what the weak Christians were doing. As long as you do what baby Christians and weak Christians do,

you will continue to be a weak baby Christian. It's time to grow up, Ephesians 4:15, 1 Peter 2:2, 2 Peter 3:1.

1. Are you a growing Christian? _____ 2. In Ephesians 4:15, what does a Christian have to do to grow? _____ 3. In 1 Peter 2:2, what does a Christian have to do to grow? _____ 4. In 2 Peter 3:1, what does a Christian have to do to grow? _____

For God's and Paul's purposes in Romans 14, the KOG is about three things - *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. Those are not part of the earthly physical KOH. The kingdom of heaven is the earthly physical Davidic Kingdom of Israel. The KOH will show up again in the millennium with King David, Jeremiah 30:9, Ezekiel 34:23, 37:24-25, Hosea 3:5, and KING JESUS, Revelation 19:16, Matthew 1:21, in charge.

Why is that important? It is important because Paul is making clear that the problem Romans 14 addresses is conflict between saved Jews and saved Gentiles over OT law and NT grace. Romans 14 isn't about a secret conflict we don't know about between two groups we cannot identify, whose identities, after two thousand years, are lost in the mists of time.

We know what this conflict is about and we know the two groups involved in the conflict. This is about saved Jews who are weak and saved Gentiles who are strong. This is about OT law and NT grace. The saved Jews who were weak didn't understand NT grace yet and the saved Gentiles who were strong did understand NT grace. Remember Genesis 15:1-6. Abraham was a pagan Gentile when he got saved by believing God and God imputed it (his belief) unto him for righteousness.

The saved Gentiles were doing exactly what Abraham did, believe God, while the saved Jews were struggling to believe what God said after they got saved. As a Christian, how fast you grow spiritually and how much you grow spiritually depends on how much of the Bible you believe and how much of the Bible you obey. If you're one of those Christians who prefers to doubt the Bible, instead of believing the Bible, you won't ever grow much.

Don't be content to live the first year of your Christian life over and over year after year, never caring much, never reading much, never studying much, never believing much, never throwing yourself into the Christian life much, never giving much, never witnessing much, never sacrificing much, never amounting to much as a Christian. Christians like that are a dime a dozen. Don't be that Christian.

**There is not a shred of doubt about
who is right in the Romans 14 conflict.**

The saved weak Jews are in the wrong. The saved weak Jews misunderstand OT law and NT grace. They don't want to give up OT law and they don't want to embrace NT grace. Even so, Paul doesn't write off the saved weak Jewish brethren who want to keep OT law and reject NT grace.

Instead Paul says: *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.* Romans 15:1. Paul's elegant solution to this problem is grace and patience with and love toward the weak brethren. In other words, Christians should live like loving and lovable Christians. You strong saved Gentiles need to start living the NT grace you claim to understand.

Grace-filled Christian love is God's solution to this problem. Remember the saying: You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar? You can be more helpful to weak Christians with gentle loving grace than with arguing, disputing and fighting. This is rubber meets the road NT Christianity.

1. Are you living that kind of gracious loving Christianity? _____ 2. What will happen in the first and second and third centuries AD to help Christians start growing consistently? **a.** Many professing Christians will focus on being as religious as possible. **b.** Halley's comet will appear and dazzle the elect. **c.** The Pope will allow people to bow before him and kiss his ring. **d.** The NT will be written, copied and circulated to churches and pastors and Christians.

and joy in the Holy Ghost. - Living the way Paul encourages us to live - not letting our lives be run by meat and drink, meaning OT law or OT legalism - is joyfully better than selfishly pleasing ourselves and eating meat, to the detriment of our weak brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul wants Christians in the local church to help each other grow up in Christ. That is God's plan for the local church. How can that happen when many modern Christians won't even go to church? _____

Think about Romans 14:17 and 15:13. Paul wants every Christian to kick legalism to the curb. The KOH - Kingdom of Heaven is the OT law and OT Judaism. That is past, over, done, finished. Paul wants every Christian to stop focusing on what is now, since the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, nothing more than OT religiosity.

Paul wants every Christian to turn their back on OT law as a means of serving God, as a means of being right with God, as a means of pleasing God, and start

living NT grace. Keeping OT law as your path to God or converting to Judaism as your path to God is not pleasing to God any longer. How do we know that absolutely for sure? Matthew 27:51.

“And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;”
Matthew 27:51.

Think about what that means. The veil of the temple hid the holy place from everyone including Israel’s priests. Once a year, the high priest would go into the holy place to sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat. When God tore that huge thick veil and opened the holy place to the view of men, that was God’s declaration that OT law was over, done, ended, Romans 10:4. From that point on, no more Jewish sacrifices were accepted by God, even if they were offered. When the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, OT law was over as a way of obeying and pleasing God.

14:18 - For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

For he that in these things serveth Christ - Remember that when we live like Paul encourages us to live in Romans 14, we are serving Christ. That is our motivation and our reward. The Christian life isn’t about getting all of your needs met while not caring about others. When you discipline your desires and rein in your Christian freedom so as not to hurt your weak brothers and sisters, you are serving Christ. When you refuse to rein in your Christian freedom so you aren’t a stumblingblock, that behavior is not serving Christ.

When you show grace toward and have patience with your weak brothers and sisters in Christ, six things happen. **1.** You are serving Christ. **2.** Your grace and patience is acceptable to God. **3.** Your grace and patience is approved of men. **4.** Christ your Savior is pleased with your behavior. **5.** The local congregation is pleased with your behavior. **6.** The local church has peace because your Christian grace and patience avert conflict and make room for the spiritual growth of your weak brethren.

is acceptable to God, - Remember that all of us are going to give account to God some day. Having enough common sense to back off from picking fights about food and fights about drink and fights about days is acceptable to God. Why would some of the strong brethren pick fights with the weak brethren over non-essential issues like meat, drink and observing days?

It could be spiritual pride on the part of the strong Christians or the reason could be a genuine desire of the strong Christians to see the weak brethren grow spiritually. If the reason is to see the weak brethren grow in their knowledge of doctrine and grace and truth, the way to do that is not by arguing with them.

The right way to help weak brethren grow is found in Matthew 28:18-20 and 2 Timothy 4:2. Steak is good food but spiritually speaking, we don't feed the meat of the word to baby Christians and weak Christians. Babies start off on milk, 1 Corinthians 3:1-2. That's good old-fashioned spiritual common sense.

Paul and God are not willing to accept conflict in the church over non-essentials. Do you agree with God and Paul? _____ Strong Christians fighting with weak Christians over things like eating meat vs. eating herbs or what you drink or what days you observe is not acceptable to God. That doesn't mean that we should stay silent when weak Christians start forming the habit of drinking and drunkenness. God and Paul are not telling us that getting drunk or becoming a slave to alcohol is perfectly fine behavior for Christians.

and approved of men. - It's hard to argue with self-sacrificing kindness. It's hard to take issue with the loving attitude of a genuine grace-filled Christian. People can tell if we are behaving charitably or uncharitably. People recognize grace and lovingkindness when they see it. When we treat people with Christian grace, it makes a difference.

14:19 - Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Let us therefore follow after - This is Paul's practical poignant pastoral instruction for how to get along in the body of Christ in the local church. *Follow after* means: make it your goal or work toward this end, to be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker. Stop stirring the pot. Be a lifeboat, not a showboat. Stop starting arguments in the Sunday School class, in the small group meetings, in the home Bible study, in your personal interactions at church with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Learn to listen and take notes and then take the initiative and do some personal study on your own before disagreeing. Perform due diligence as part of your spiritual responsibility to grow in Christ.

the things which make for peace, - Some people love to argue and dispute instead of following after the things which make for peace. Some people seem to thrive in chaos. It's their way of being a leader, their way of showing off, their way of being the center of attention, their way of stirring the pot. Paul says: Cut it out! There's enough anger and malice, envying and strife in the world without

bringing it to church. Browbeating a weak brother or sister until they get tired and agree with you just to end the argument, when they are not convinced in their conscience, does not make for peace.

Remember 2 Timothy 3:15-17? Since *all scripture is given by inspiration of God*, in Romans 14, God has shown us through Paul's pen, how He expects us to behave toward each other, strong Christians and weak Christians. Why should we back off from arguing and disputing over non-essentials like meat, drink and days? We should back off for these reasons.

1. All Christians have a God given conscience - Romans 2:15.
2. All Christians have the indwelling Holy Spirit - Romans 8:11.
3. All Christians are in Christ - 2 Corinthians 5:17.
4. All Christians have the indwelling Christ - Ephesians 3:17.
5. All Christians are justified by faith - Romans 5:1.
6. All Christians are sanctified by faith - Acts 26:18.
7. All Christians are being worked on by God - Philippians 1:6.
8. Most Christians have the written word of God - 2 Tim 3:15.

Will you trust God to do His work in the lives of your brothers and sisters in Christ in His own way, in His own time? _____

and things wherewith one may edify another. - Edify means to build each other up in Christian faith, to help each other grow to spiritual maturity by encouraging each other in learning, believing, living and obeying what the Bible says in context. The word *edify* means to build or to build up so sometimes in the NT, the word edify refers to a building. Have you ever said to yourself on Sunday: When I go to church today, I need to focus on others today and see if the Holy Spirit will help me edify my brothers and sisters in Christ? _____
Would you try doing that? _____

In each the following verses, what truth does the Bible give us about edify or edifying or edification?

Romans 14:19 _____

Romans 15:2 _____

1 Corinthians 3:9 _____

1 Corinthians 14:5 _____

1 Corinthians 14:12 _____

1 Corinthians 14:26 _____

2 Corinthians 10:8 _____

2 Corinthians 12:19 _____

2 Corinthians 13:10 _____

Ephesians 2:21 _____

Ephesians 4:12 _____

Ephesians 4:16 _____

Ephesians 4:29 _____

We have a responsibility before God to lovingly build up our brothers and sisters in Christ instead of tearing them down by selfishly doing our own thing and harming them in the process. Edifying each other requires thought and prayer and intention. Edifying doesn't happen accidentally. Arguing about non-essentials is the opposite of edifying and is not a biblical way, not a Christian way, not a Godly way, not a Spirit-filled way to treat our brothers and sisters in Christ. Don't be the one who provokes arguments over non-essentials.

We have a responsibility before God to live and interact as Christians in such a way that we edify one another, meaning, we build each other up in biblical knowledge, in biblical belief, in biblical faith, in Christian living, in Christian witnessing, in Christian spiritual growth. What are you doing to edify/build up your brothers and sisters in Christ? _____

14:20 - For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

For meat destroy not the work of God. - Eating meat or not eating meat and eating herbs or not eating herbs are not hills to die on. We have enough spiritual battles to fight without stirring up trouble and turmoil over non-essentials.

Destroy means: to throw down, Matthew 5:17, to bring to nought, Acts 5:38, to overthrow, Acts 5:39, to dissolve, 2 Corinthians 5:1. It conveys the idea of tearing down and subverting. Paul says we should not destroy, bring to nought, overthrow, dissolve, tear down or subvert the body of Christ by exercising our freedom in Christ in a way that hurts our weak brothers and sisters.

We should read this phrase as excellent spiritual instruction from the greatest Christian who ever lived. *For meat destroy not the work of God.* **1.** Are you so intent on arguing over non-essentials that you will destroy the work of God? _____ **2.** Is arguing with your brothers and sisters in Christ loving or is it full of pride and self-will? _____ **3.** Are you exercising your freedom in Christ in a way that hurts your weak brothers and sisters? _____ **4.** List some ways you can avoid destroying the work of God and hurting your weak brothers and sisters in Christ. _____

The work of God - As used here, *the work of God* is in the context of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost in the church at Rome. All of those should be evident in the lives of the weak Christians and the strong Christians in the church at Rome and in local churches everywhere.

Notice what Paul is saying. When strong Christians exercise their freedom in Christ in a way that doesn't take into account the effect their exercise of freedom will have on their weak brethren, the strong Christians are damaging the righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost of their weak brethren. Our freedom to eat meat should not be exercised in a way that hurts our weak brothers and sisters in Christ.

That doesn't necessarily mean you must stop eating meat and become an herbivore or a vegetarian or a vegan. It does mean you shouldn't bring pork chops and hot dogs to the next dinner on the grounds at your church if eating meat is a genuine controversy in your church.

God holds you to account for how you live and what you do. The remedy for you wrongly using your freedom in Christ isn't church discipline or God smacking you down. God and Paul see this as an issue of Christian conscience, an issue in which Christian love (not a written rule - not a written law) compels you to adjust the way you practice your Christian freedom to edify your weak brothers and sisters. Remember, Romans 14 is the practical outworking of the love Paul taught us in Romans 12:9-10, 13:8-10.

If we major on minors like meat and drink and days and ignore majors like righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, we risk destroying the work of God in the local church. The work of God in the local church is growing weak baby Christians into strong mature Christians. Can you see how important it is to consider our impact on others as we enjoy our liberty in Christ? _____

What is the work of God? The work of God in the local church is growing baby Christians and weak Christians into strong Bible believing evangelistic

Christians, growing them to doctrinal and spiritual maturity in Christ, Philippians 1:6-9. Please don't lose sight of this because this is the real issue.

None of us are Lone Ranger Christians. God made us to be part of the body of Christ and the family of God. God intends us to work together to grow together because we can accomplish more together for God as the body of Christ than we can accomplish separately. It's not always easy but we can and should work together as the body of Christ.

*“God setteth the solitary in families:
he bringeth out those which are bound with chains:
but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.”
Psalm 68:6.*

All things indeed are pure; - It should go without saying but just so we are clear, Paul is not saying: Poison is pure or spoiled food is pure or rotten meat is pure. Paul isn't saying gossip and backbiting are pure. Paul isn't saying that being mean spirited is pure. Paul isn't saying being selfish is pure. In the context, meats are pure in the sense of Acts 10:10-17. Do you understand what that means? _____ What does it mean? _____

but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. - Eating with offense describes someone who eats meat with a bad conscience or with an offended conscience. In plainer words, he is a weak Christian who thinks it wrong to eat some meats like seafood or pork or shark but he eats it anyway because he saw a strong Christian eating it.

After the weak Christian eats it, his conscience smites him because of Leviticus 11. Paul says: it is evil for that man *who eateth with offense*, the man who does it even though he hasn't thought it out, hasn't studied it biblically, hasn't tried to figure out what the Bible says about it and therefore, doesn't have a clear conscience about it.

14:21 - 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.

It is good neither to eat flesh, - This stands in opposition to Romans 14:20 - *but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.*

nor to drink wine, - Paul never says: It is good to drink wine. Instead, Paul says, It is good not to drink wine - *nor to drink wine*. Nor to drink wine is a negative, meaning, it is good not to drink wine. Git it? Get it? Got it! This is not

Paul recommending that we all drink wine. The only time Paul recommended drinking wine was when wine was used in a medicinal way, 1 Timothy 5:23. Notice that even then, Paul says, Use a *little* wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities. Paul never recommends drinking wine to get drunk or to loosen up so you can have a good time or to party down.

Many people cannot handle drinking alcohol. They are not temperate and they tend to overdo it when they drink alcohol. There are at least six biblical reasons which may have motivated some Christians not to drink wine in the first century AD.

1. *nor to drink wine* - This statement does not stand in isolation from the rest of Romans. *Nor to drink wine* is in the context of Paul exhorting Roman Christians to wake up, Romans 13:11, and start walking honestly and stop your drinking and drunkenness and partying, Romans 13:13.

2. There may have been some saved members of a Jewish sect in Rome which followed the Nazarite proscriptions, Numbers 6:1-5 or were influenced by the example of John the Baptist, Luke 1:15, and therefore, they didn't drink wine. They may have been offended by Christians who did drink wine or who drank too much wine and made fools of themselves in the process.

3. There may have been a group of saved Jews who were descended from Jonadab the son of Rechab, Jeremiah 35:5-19, who refused to drink wine in honour of its eternal prohibition to their family line. They may have been offended or made weak by Roman Christians who did drink wine and who got drunk and behaved like Paul describes in Romans 13:13. Their flesh was out of control and their wine drinking was out of control. Paul says: Wake up, cut it out, behave yourselves.

4. The mention of wine may also be related to the fact that wine was part of the worship of pagan Gentile gods, Exodus 34:12-16, 1 Corinthians 10:20-21. Some saved Gentiles who used to drink wine were perhaps, not scrupulous to avoid wine after they got saved. That may have offended the weak Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ.

5. There may have been some Roman Christians who took Deuteronomy 14:26 out of context and mistakenly used that verse as their faux spiritual excuse to spend their tithe money on wine or strong drink and get drunk. Of course, according to Deuteronomy 29:5-6, no Jew actually drank the wine in Deuteronomy 14:26. Instead of drinking that wine, they poured it unto the LORD,

as a drink offering, Numbers 28:7. It was a sacrifice to God, not an adult beverage they consumed.

6. The drinking and drunkenness unsaved Gentiles indulged in to worship their false gods may have continued after they got saved, 1 Corinthians 10:20-21. That may be what Paul has in mind here. It should go without saying that any alcohol that gets you drunk or partially drunk is meant here, not just wine. Paul isn't saying that wine is bad but other kinds of alcoholic beverages are a-okay.

On the other hand, because wine was linked in their minds to the pagan religions they got saved out of, it may be that saved Gentiles were the ones who detested drinking wine. Saved Jews scrupulously avoided anything related to Gentile paganism and that may also be what Paul has in mind here.

Paul has more teaching about wine in his other epistles and his other teaching indicates Paul was not a teetotaler, however, that truth is not a good reason to drink alcohol and encourage others drink alcohol. It is important to remember Romans 14:21. If you have Christian liberty to drink wine because you understand that you are not under OT law, that doesn't mean wine is good for you or that you have no genetic predisposition toward drunkenness and that doesn't make it right for you to drink wine when it offends your Christian brethren or to offer wine to other Christians who visit your home and try to get them to drink wine or other alcoholic beverages.

If you have liberty to drink wine, that doesn't make it right for you to encourage other Christians to go bar hopping and wine drinking with you. If you use your Christian liberty to the detriment of other Christians, you are not serving Christ when you do that. That isn't my conclusion - that is what God and Paul said. Instead, you are harming your brothers and sisters in Christ and possibly destroying the work of God, Romans 14:20-21. Please have enough common sense to tread carefully here. There's a God up on high watching you and He sees everything you do.

**The path of least resistance
makes men and rivers go crooked.**

It is easy, especially for weak Christians, to follow the crowd, to farm out critical thinking to others, to take a pass on acquiring a biblically informed conscience, to just go along to get along but that is the wrong way to live the Christian life because the path of least resistance makes men and rivers go crooked. That idea about the path of least resistance may have motivated some Roman Christians to avoid wine because of its biblical connection to paganism and pagan sacrifices.

Paul's Teaching About Wine

Wine is mentioned 231 times in 212 verses in the Bible. Paul mentions wine 7 times in the NT. Paul never commends drinking wine in social situations. Were you aware of that? _____ Paul never says, "What the hay, it's the weekend, let's get drunk." No matter what your presuppositions are about how neutral alcohol is and how free Christians should be to drink wine and strong drink, that isn't what Paul taught. Your presuppositions on this issue are misconceptions.

If you ever drink enough wine to need a designated driver, you are not following Paul and you are not living as a Christian. There is never a valid biblical reason for any Christian to ever get drunk. Paul only recommended drinking wine for medicinal purposes, as we see below.

*"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."
Romans 14:21.*

*"And be not drunk with wine,
wherein is excess;
but be filled with the Spirit;"
Ephesians 5:18.*

*"Not given to wine,
no striker,
not greedy of filthy lucre;
but patient,
not a brawler,
not covetous;"
1 Timothy 3:3.*

*"Likewise must the deacons be grave,
not doubletongued,
not given to much wine,
not greedy of filthy lucre;"
1 Timothy 3:8.*

*"Drink no longer water,
but use a little wine*

*for thy stomach's sake
and thine often infirmities.”*
I Timothy 5:23.

*“For a bishop must be blameless,
as the steward of God;
not selfwilled,
not soon angry,
not given to wine,
no striker,
not given to filthy lucre;”*
Titus 1:7.

If a bishop is given to wine, he is not blameless.

*“The aged women likewise,
that they be in behaviour
as becometh holiness,
not false accusers,
not given to much wine,
teachers of good things;”*
Titus 2:3.

nor any thing - The biblical principle Paul teaches here is not limited to meat, drink and holy days. Those may or may not be big issues in our day but if they are not the main issues in our day, we probably wrestle with other issues that may also be considered non-essentials.

Romans was written in the winter of AD 57-58. Today there are different matters of conscience which affect the modern church. What matters of Christian conscience about non-essentials might impact us today besides meat, drink and holy days? Here are two lists to help us figure out what modern non-essentials might be.

**Let's figure out some modern non-essentials
and how to deal with them.**

To do that, ask yourself these questions.

1. Does the Bible specifically forbid it?
2. Does the Bible warn against it in a general way?

3. What, if anything, does the Bible say about it?
4. Is the Bible silent about it and if so, what does that tell us?
5. Are there any biblical principles I will violate if I do this?
6. If people see me do this, will it hurt my Christian testimony?
7. Do I want to encourage other Christians to follow my lead in doing this?
8. If people see me doing this, will they think I must not be saved?
9. Will doing this harm my Christian life?
10. Will doing this stunt my Christian growth?
11. Will doing this damage my testimony for Christ?
12. Do I want to have a good clean Christian testimony for Christ?
13. Will doing this make me a better witness for Jesus?
14. Will doing this make me a worse witness for Jesus?
15. Can I honestly witness for Jesus while doing this?
16. Will doing this work against my Christian sanctification?
17. Will doing this help me become a better Christian?
18. Will doing this make me a stronger Christian?
19. Can I honestly ask God to bless me while I'm doing this?
20. Can I do this with confidence, knowing that God will bless it?
21. Would Jesus do this if He were here today?
22. Would the apostle Paul do this if he were here today?
23. Will I feel ashamed when other Christians find out I do this?
24. Would I want to be doing this when the Rapture happens?

25. If I have children, would I want them to follow my example in doing this?
26. Will doing this draw me into closer fellowship with Christ?
27. Will doing this make me a better stronger more faithful Christian?
28. If I do this, will people think I'm religious instead of Christian?
29. Will doing this identify me with Christ or identify me with the world?
30. Will doing this become a habit which negatively impacts my life?
31. Will doing this cause me to be giving place to the devil?
32. Does God really care about how I live after I get saved?
33. Am I free to do whatever I want and still go to heaven?
34. Is the Bible negative, neutral or positive about doing this?

**Does the Bible specifically mention
any of the things on the list below?**

**Which things on the list below might be examples
of Non-essentials that could destroy
your brother in Christ in the 21st century?**

1. Getting an abortion
2. Voting for a political candidate who supports abortion
3. Home Schooling your children
4. Not home schooling your children
5. Allowing your children to drink alcohol
6. Serving beer in your home
7. Serving wine in your home
8. Serving hard liquor in your home

9. Drinking beer
10. Drinking wine
11. Drinking hard liquor
12. Smoking cigarettes
13. Smoking marijuana
14. Smoking cigars
15. Smoking a pipe
16. Smoking hookah
17. Smoking crack
18. Vaping marijuana
19. Getting a few tattoos
20. Getting lots of tattoos
21. Working as a tattoo artist
22. Owning a tattoo shop
23. Getting body piercings
24. Owning a body piercings shop
25. Wearing shorts to church
26. Wearing flip-flops to church
27. Going to church barefooted
28. Ladies wearing slacks to church
29. Not having a family pew at church
30. Having a family pew at church

31. Owning a bar
32. Managing a bar
33. Working in a bar
34. Drinking in a bar
35. Getting drunk in a bar or getting others drunk in a bar
36. Working as an events bartender
37. Owning a restaurant that serves alcohol
38. Owning a commercial building and renting it to a bar
39. Owning a building and renting it to a restaurant that serves alcohol
40. Owning a building and renting it to Seventh Day Adventists
41. Owning a building and renting it to Jehovah's Witnesses or another cult
42. Getting a blood transfusion
43. Dating an unsaved man or an unsaved woman
44. Dating an unsaved drunk or an unsaved drug addict
45. Dating a saved drunk or a saved drug addict
46. Dating someone who is an active member of a cult
47. Marrying an unsaved man or woman
48. Marrying an unsaved drunk or an unsaved drug addict
49. Marrying a saved drunk or a saved drug addict
50. Marrying someone who is an active member of a cult
51. Watching porn on your phone or tablet or computer
52. Buying and looking at porn in printed form

53. Working in a business that sells porn
54. Watching R rated movies
55. Reading R rated books
56. Listening to gangster rap
57. Listening to dirty music
58. Listening to contemporary Christian music
59. Cross dressing in private
60. Cross dressing in public
61. Being a drag queen
62. Working as a drag queen
63. Living as a transsexual without getting surgery
64. Taking hormones to look like a woman
65. Taking hormones to look like a man
66. Taking hormones for health reasons, not for transsexual reasons
67. Living as a transsexual after getting surgery.
68. Getting gender reassignment surgery
69. Getting breast augmentation surgery for cosmetic reasons
70. Using profanity in your speech from time to time
71. Using profanity in your everyday speech
72. Women wearing a head covering
73. Christians celebrating secular holidays
74. Using musical instruments in church services

75. Women keeping silent in the church

How many items from that list of 75 qualify as modern day non-essentials? ____

nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, - In matters where Christian conscience and personal convictions are involved, when we're dealing with things that are not explicitly commanded in the Bible and are not explicitly prohibited in the Bible, Paul provides three rules for Christians.

1. Don't despise or judge your brother for disagreeing with you on those non-essential matters. Trust God to bring your brother to truth as he walks with the Lord and lives for Christ.
2. Don't use your freedom in Christ in a way that makes your brother stumble or offends your brother or makes him weak spiritually.
3. Christian love should always mediate your interactions with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul lists three negative consequences of strong Christians exercising their freedom in Christ in a selfish way. We need to get this list into our hearts. This isn't about being right. If you're right and then you behave in a way that harms your brother, you are wrong even though you are right. Paul is crystal clear about who is right and who is wrong. The weak brothers and sisters are wrong. There is absolutely no doubt about that, Romans 14:14, 21.

the weak brother stumbleth - Romans 14:21
the weak brother is offended - Romans 14:21
the weak brother is made weak - Romans 14:21

Strong Christians are accountable before God, Romans 14:12, if they handle their freedom in Christ in an irresponsible way. Weak Christians and strong Christians will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give account for how they interacted with their brethren, Romans 14:10.

Paul leaves it open ended as to what other matters of Christian conscience might cause a weak brother to stumble when he says: *nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth*. Remember, Paul is not talking about doctrinal issues and moral issues in Romans 14.

He is talking about what Christians eat and drink and some Christians observing holy days because saved Jews and saved Gentiles had different beliefs on those matters of conscience based on their religious background and religious experience. It was a question of OT law vs. NT grace. Paul isn't saying in Romans 14:21, I had my fingers crossed when I wrote Romans so now it's okay

to ignore all of the doctrinal truths I've taught you in the book of Romans, Romans 16:17.

Paul is also not saying: The weak brother gets veto power over everything the pastor preaches and over everything the church teaches and over everything strong Christians believe and practice. He is also not saying: If the Bible doctrines and Bible truths you teach offend a weak brother, stop teaching those Bible doctrines and those Bible truths. Romans 14:21 is also not saying: If your evangelizing of lost hell-bound sinners offends a weak brother, then stop evangelizing lost hell-bound sinners.

Food and Wine and Holydays

In Romans 14, Paul is addressing matters of conscience related to food, wine and holy days, non-essential things, not non-negotiable doctrinal truths that every Christian should believe, not Bible basics that every Christian should believe, not moral truths that every Christian should believe and practice.

All Christians, including weak Christians, are responsible before God to learn, believe and teach Bible doctrine and Bible truth. No Christian is exempt from learning and faithfully living Bible doctrine. No Christian is exempt from learning and understanding and living NT grace. Jesus taught us that in Matthew 28:18-20 and Paul taught us that in 1 Corinthians 11:1 and 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

or is offended, - *Offended*, Romans 14:21, describes one who stumbles or is caused to stumble in this usage. It is not literal stumbling like tripping over a tree root. Paul refers to being offended because of being weak spiritually or stumbling spiritually because one is weak spiritually. How does anyone move from being a weak Christian to being a strong Christian, 1 Peter 2:2?
_____ How does a weak Christian grow his faith, Romans 10:17? _____

or is made weak. - When Paul writes, *or is made weak*, he has in mind that a weak Christian might see a strong Christian eat meat or drink wine or not observe a holy day and follow the lead of that strong Christian when the weak Christian's conscience hasn't yet been enlightened or illuminated to God's truth in the Bible on those matters. Remember, they didn't have a NT to read for themselves when Paul wrote Romans. The completed NT came later and ordinary Christians having individual access to a complete NT came many centuries later. Do you see that as an important consideration, an important factor to consider when we discuss the issue Paul deals with in Romans 14, OT law vs. NT grace?

In AD 58 the weak Christian doesn't have the NT to read and study because it hasn't been completed yet. He is going by the OT law he learned and trying to make that fit what he is hearing from his pastor about the grace of God in Christ. What scripture he gets, comes second hand when a pastor or Bible teacher quotes it or reads it out loud in a church service. He has simply watched strong Christians do those things and followed their lead and then discovered that his conscience troubles him about eating meat and drinking wine and not observing Jewish holydays. Since that is the case with the weak Christian, he needs more teaching, more thought, more understanding, more time to learn God's truth.

In that situation, the weak Christian is sinning because he is not personally at liberty, in his conscience to eat meat or drink wine or not observe a holy day because his conscience convicts him when he does those things, yet he is doing those things anyway. In plainer words, he hasn't thought it out or studied it out or been led by the Holy Spirit or been taught on those issues. He is living a sloppy Christian life. In AD 58 Rome, the weak Christian has a bit of an excuse.

14:22 - Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

Hast thou faith? - Romans 14:22 is instruction for the strong. Paul aims this at strong Christians who know, recognize, believe and practice the truth of Acts 10. They have faith that it's okay to eat meats that the weak Christian will not eat because he is trying to please God by living under OT law in Leviticus 11.

**God never tells NT Christians
to live under OT law.**

The words in bold should be memorized and never forgotten. Some twenty first century weak Christians make the same category of mistake as the first century Roman Christians when they place themselves or others under OT law in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.

God never tells NT Christians to live under OT law. God tells NT Christians that we are not under law, Romans 6:14 and, *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth*, Romans 10:4. Do you believe Romans 6:14? _____ Do you believe Romans 10:4? _____ Do you live your Christian life like those verses are true? _____

have it to thyself before God. - When you're around your weak brothers and sisters in the local church, don't flaunt your faith and don't flaunt your freedom to eat meat or drink wine and don't flaunt your freedom to refrain from observing

Jewish holy days. Give God time to teach the weak Christians His truth from Acts 10 without making an issue of it with your weak brothers and weak sisters in Christ, without creating a spectacle of yourself and your freedom, without turning your disagreement with weak Christians into a big disruptive thing. Can you do that for Christ? _____ Will you do that for Christ? _____

**When we ignore Paul's instructions,
we are condemning ourselves.**

Happy is he that condemneth not himself - Do you want to be a happy Christian? Start living what the Bible says every day of your life. Don't disagree with God and insist on doing things your way. Ignoring what God says in the Bible is a sure fire recipe for disaster in your life.

If after receiving this practical instruction, you still insist on flaunting your freedom, you are condemning yourself. You know better now, based on what Paul wrote in Romans 14:22 so start doing what Paul says. Now that Paul has told you this inspired truth about how to treat weak brothers and weak sisters in Christ, God expects you strong Christians to do the right thing which is, have your faith before God and don't hurt and destroy the work of God as He builds weak Christians into strong Christians in the local church.

in that thing which he alloweth. - You are in charge of your decisions. God holds you responsible for reading, believing and learning the Bible. Once you've done that, God also holds you responsible for living the Bible. You are in charge of your actions in the local church and you are in charge of how you interact with weak Christians in your local church. You can help them grow or you can be a stumblingblock to them. Which will it be for you? Can God count on you? _____

Pay attention to what you are allowing yourself to do. If weak Christians see you eating meat or drinking wine or if they see you not observing a Jewish holy day, they may be emboldened to follow your example without understanding the grace of God that allows you and them to do that.

In plainer words, they may do what you are doing but they may doubt as they're doing it. If their conscience troubles them and they keep doing it and ignoring their conscience, they are condemning themselves. Doing that makes them stumble and offends them and makes them weak.

Just so we are clear about this, Paul isn't telling strong Christians they must forever kowtow to weak Christians. He isn't saying: If you eat meat, you've got to

hide that from weak Christians. He isn't saying to strong Christians: You've got to change your beliefs and practices and become a vegetarian.

What he's saying is: Don't make an issue of these things with weak Christians and don't allow them to make an issue of these things with you. No one should dread coming to church because they hate the arguments and mean-spirited debates over non-essential issues. Practice 1 Corinthians 13. Treat your brothers and sisters in Christ the way 1 Corinthians 13 tells you to.

14:23 - And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, - Romans 14:23 is instruction for the weak. Paul aims this at weak Christians who have not yet learned the truth of Acts 10. Have you learned the truth of Acts 10? _____ What is the truth of Acts 10? _____

Do you see the problem here? If a weak Christian with a weak faith and a weak understanding and a troubled conscience does what you, the strong Christian are doing, their conscience will bother them because their faith isn't yet developed to the point where they can do what you're doing.

If the weak Christian doubts, while he is eating meat, Romans 14:23 says: *he that doubteth is damned if he eat*. This doesn't mean eternal damnation in hell. It means damnation in the sense of condemnation. The conscience of the weak Christian condemns him because he is doing something he has doubts about. His doubts come from his under-informed conscience or mis-informed or biblically ignorant conscience, Romans 2:16.

When the NT is completed and becomes available in some way to local churches and local pastors over the next centuries, it will be easier for weak Christians to understand OT law vs. NT grace. As their understanding develops, they will come around to God's truth and start believing what Jesus has already showed Paul, Romans 14:14, in AD 58.

because he eateth not of faith: - The weak Christians in the Roman church don't have strong faith yet. Paul isn't talking about saving faith here. The weak Christians do have saving faith. Here Paul is talking about faith that, because they are under grace, they no longer have to keep OT law to be right with God. Remember their situation. Only about half the chapters of the NT had been written when Paul writes Romans. About half the chapters of the NT hadn't yet been written and the part of the NT that was written was not available or widely circulated in AD 57-58.

For that reason, saved Jews and saved Gentiles had to learn NT doctrine and the truth about NT grace by listening to preachers and Bible teachers. Some progressed more rapidly than others in their faith, in their understanding and in their spiritual growth. The church at Rome and all of the Christians in the church at Rome were works in progress just as all of us are works in progress. All of them were in the process of learning and living NT grace and all of them were doing that at different speeds.

**How weak Christians grow up in Christ
and stop being weak Christians.**

*“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
by taking heed thereto according to thy word.
With my whole heart have I sought thee:
O let me not wander from thy commandments.
Thy word have I hid in mine heart,
that I might not sin against thee.”
Psalm 119:9-11.*

*“Keep thy heart with all diligence;
for out of it are the issues of life.”
Proverbs 4:23.*

*“So then faith cometh by hearing,
and hearing by the word of God.”
Romans 10:17.*

*“As newborn babes, desire
the sincere milk of the word,
that ye may grow thereby.”
1 Peter 2:2.*

*“And I, brethren, could not
speak unto you as unto spiritual,
but as unto carnal,
even as unto babes in Christ.
I have fed you with milk,
and not with meat:
for hitherto ye were not able to bear it,
neither yet now are ye able.”
1 Corinthians 3:1-2.*

*“Brethren, be not children in understanding:
howbeit in malice be ye children,
but in understanding be men.”
1 Corinthians 14:20.*

*“That we henceforth be no more children,
tossed to and fro,
and carried about with every wind of doctrine,
by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness,
whereby they lie in wait to deceive;
But speaking the truth in love,
may grow up into him in all things,
which is the head, even Christ:”*
Ephesians 4:14-15.

1. How does any Christian grow his faith, Romans 10:17? _____
2. When a Christian reads the Bible, does the faith of that Christian grow if he rejects the truth of what he reads? _____
3. When a Christian reads the Bible and rejects the truth of what he reads, what happens? **a.** His unbelief and rejection of truth makes him grow strong in faith, **b.** His unbelief and rejection of truth guarantees that he will always be a weak Christian, always offended and always stumbling.
4. If a weak Christian wants to grow his faith, what should he do? **a.** Keep rejecting the truth of the Bible, **b.** Keep reading the Bible while rejecting the truth of the Bible, **c.** Start reading the Bible with a believing heart, **d.** Believe and obey what he reads in the Bible in context, **f.** Never make an effort to study the Bible in context so he'll have a basis for believing the Bible. **h.** Just drift along in unbelief and refuse to make God's truth a priority in his life. **g.** Become a serious Bible believing, Bible obeying Christian.
5. Does it please God when weak Christians reject God's truth in the Bible? _____
6. Does God praise weak Christians for rejecting His truth? _____
7. Does God expect weak Christians to grow spiritually by reading and believing the Bible? _____
8. Is it natural for a weak baby Christian to stay a baby or is it natural for him to learn and grow up and and become mature? _____

for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. - When a Christian, in this case a weak Christian, makes decisions about how to live but doesn't take into account the truth of God, *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*. In plainer words, these weak Christians in the church at Rome may have been doing the right thing - there's nothing wrong with eating meat or not observing holy days - but they were doing that while believing in their heart that what they were doing was wrong. That's the sin here in Romans 14:23.

**If you can't do it in faith,
then it's a sin for you to do it.**

Of faith means, because you are convinced by scripture in context, that is is okay with God. *Of faith* never means, I don't care what the Bible says, I'm gonna do it anyway because I enjoy it. It helps to remember that the weak Christians

probably had a plausible reason for what they were doing and not doing. They grew up under OT law, keeping the commandments and abstaining from meats and observing holy days and in some cases, abstaining from wine. Remember, there are at least six biblical reasons Christians may have chosen not to drink wine in the first century AD.

Reasons Not To Drink Wine In First Century Rome

1. This is not an isolated statement that has no relationship to the rest of Romans. *Nor to drink wine* is in the context of Paul exhorting Roman Christians to wake up, Romans 13:11, and start walking honestly and stop your drunkenness and partying, Romans 13:13. Roman Christians were abusing wine and probably other types of strong drink. It seems many of them had a drinking problem, based on Paul's exhortation to them.

Drunkenness starts with drinking alcohol and progresses to drinking alcohol frequently. Most people don't drink alone; they drink with drinking buddies. Once they convince themselves it is normal to drink alcohol frequently, once they associate drinking alcohol with loosening up and cutting loose, they are well down the path to drunkenness. Did you ever notice, Proverbs 20:1 doesn't say anything about getting drunk or being drunk. Every drunk who ever lived thought he could handle drinking but discovered that drinking was handling him. Do you believe the truth of Proverbs 20:1? _____ Is wine mocking you? _____ Are you deceived by wine and strong drink? _____

*“Wine is a mocker,
strong drink is raging;
and whosoever is deceived thereby
is not wise.”
Proverbs 20:1.*

2. There may have been some saved members of a Jewish sect in Rome which followed the Nazarite proscriptions, Numbers 6:1-5 or were influenced by the example of John the Baptist, Luke 1:15, because he didn't drink wine. **3.** There may have been a group of saved Jews who were descended from Jonadab the son of Rechab, Jeremiah 35:5-19, who refused to drink wine in honour of its eternal prohibition to their family line.

3. The mention of wine may also be related to the fact that wine was part of the worship of pagan Gentile gods, Exodus 34:12-16, 1 Corinthians 10:20-21, 1 Peter 4:3. Saved Gentiles who used to drink wine were perhaps, not scrupulous

to avoid wine after they got saved. Saved Jews scrupulously avoided anything related to Gentile paganism and both of those may be what Paul has in mind here.

4. There may have been some Roman Christians who took Deuteronomy 14:26 out of context and used that verse as their faux spiritual excuse to spend their tithe money on wine or strong drink and get drunk. Of course, according to Deuteronomy 29:5-6, no Jew actually drank the wine in Deuteronomy 14:26. Instead of drinking that wine, they poured it unto the LORD, as a drink offering, Numbers 28:7.

5. The drunkenness unsaved Gentiles indulged in to worship their false gods may have continued after they got saved, 1 Corinthians 10:20-21. That may be what Paul has in mind here. It should go without saying that any alcohol that gets you drunk or partially drunk is meant here, not just wine. Paul isn't saying that wine is bad but other kinds of alcoholic beverages are a-okay.

On the other hand, because wine was linked in their minds to the pagan religions they got saved out of, it may be that saved Gentiles were the ones who detested drinking wine. Saved Jews scrupulously avoided anything related to Gentile paganism and that may also be what Paul has in mind here.

Paul has additional teaching about wine in his other epistles and his other teaching indicates Paul did not teach total abstinence. However, don't jump from that to believing that Christians can and should drink wine whenever they want to, wherever they want to, for whatever reason they want to. It is important to remember Romans 13:12-14 and 14:21.

If you have liberty to drink wine, that doesn't make it right for you to flaunt your freedom to drink wine and thereby harm weak Christians. And that doesn't ever make it right for you to get drunk or for you to get one third drunk or half drunk so that you need a designated driver or for you to offer wine or beer or beverage alcohol to other Christians who visit your home and thereby, encourage them to drink.

1. Are you sure that they have Christian liberty to drink alcohol? _____ 2. Have you considered whether or not they may be weak Christians and you are harming them by offering them alcohol? _____ 3. Are you absolutely certain that being a drunk doesn't run in their family? _____ 4. Do you know for sure that they do not have a genetic predisposition toward alcoholism? _____ 5. Is it possible for you to be a kind and gracious host without offering alcohol to people who visit your home? _____

If you personally have liberty to drink wine, that doesn't make it right for you to encourage other Christians to drink or go bar hopping and alcohol drinking with you. If you use your Christian liberty about alcohol to the detriment of other Christians, you are not serving Christ when you do that. Instead, you are harming your brothers and sisters in Christ, offending them, making them stumble and possibly destroying the work of God, Romans 14:20-21. And in the process of doing those things, you may also be helping them become full-fledged drunks. God, Paul and the Bible say: Cut it out!

God didn't put you on this earth to push alcohol on your brothers and sisters in Christ. God didn't save you so you can promote alcohol to your brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. God does not want you to be an ambassador for alcohol to anyone. If you're going to be an ambassador, be the kind of ambassador God says to be in the Bible, 2 Corinthians 5:20. Encouraging your fellow Christians to use alcohol is not now and never will be the job God assigns you. Volunteer to be a witness for Jesus; don't volunteer to be a backslidden bartender.

*“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ,
as though God did beseech you by us:
we pray you in Christ's stead,
be ye reconciled to God.”
2 Corinthians 5:20.*

Review Questions For Romans 14

1. Romans 14 is about: **a.** Letting go of doctrinal truth, **b.** Letting go of moral truth, **c.** Letting go of denominations, **d.** Not arguing over non-essentials.
2. Romans 14 is about: **a.** Living under OT law, **b.** Living under the Islamic State, **c.** Living under Roman Catholicism, **d.** Living under Baptist Princes, **e.** Living under NT grace.
3. Is Romans 14 a spiritual gag order forbidding us to teach the truth of the Bible? Yes - No.
4. Is Romans 14 about letting weak Christians run the church so that they don't get offended by strong Christians? Yes - No.
5. In Romans 14, being a weak Christian should be: **a.** A temporary situation, **b.** The default situation for all Christians, **c.** Only for people who have been saved less than ten years, **d.** A permanent situation due to Covid-19.
6. In Romans 14, are strong Christians told to hide their meat eating from weak Christians? Yes - No.
7. Romans 14:1 - The church is to: **a.** Reject weak Christians, **b.** Send weak Christians to the Catholics, **c.** Send weak Christians to Seminary, **d.** Receive weak Christians and teach them God's truth.
8. Romans 14:1 - The church should receive weak Christians as long as we agree to: **a.** Constantly argue with them, **b.** Browbeat them into agreeing with us on non-essentials, **c.** Shame them into agreeing with us, **d.** Not argue with them about doubtful disputations.
9. Romans 14 - Non-essentials are things that are not doctrinal issues or moral issues. Yes - No.
10. Romans 14 - Please circle the non-essentials in this list. **a.** Salvation by grace alone through faith alone. **b.** Justification by faith. **c.** Sanctification by faith. **d.** Eating meat. **e.** Water baptism by immersion. **f.** Drinking wine. **g.** Jesus is the only way to heaven. **h.** Observing Jewish holy days. **i.** Hell is a real and literal place. **j.** We should always listen to false teachers to learn what they believe.
11. Romans 14 - What is the difference between non-essentials and non-negotiables? _____
12. Romans 14 - Which is most important, biblical truth or unity in the body of Christ? **a.** Biblical truth. **b.** Unity in the body of Christ.
13. Romans 14 - God is: **a.** Always in favor of unity at any cost. **b.** Never in favor of unity at any cost. **c.** Always in favor of truth over unity. **d.** A great admirer of false religious leaders. **e.** A great opponent of false religious leaders.
14. Romans 14:1 - If weak Christians don't believe something they should believe, what should a local church do? _____

15. Romans 14:1 - The best way to deal with weak Christians is: **a.** Get snarky with them. **b.** Make fun of them. **c.** Argue with them at church. **d.** Set an example of loving Christianity for them. **e.** Treat them with kindness. **f.** Pray for them. **g.** Welcome them and fellowship with them. **h.** Gently teach them Bible truth.

16. What are the underlying issues in Romans 14? **a.** Being religious vs. not being religious. **b.** Street preaching vs. being a quiet witness. **c.** Getting all denominations together vs. everyone being independent. **d.** OT law vs. NT grace.

17. Romans 14:3 - Is it all right for strong Christians who eat meat to despise weak Christians who don't eat meat? Yes - No.

18. Romans 14:3 - Is it all right for weak Christians who don't eat meat to judge strong Christians who do eat meat? Yes - No.

19. Roman 14:3 - The weak Christians who don't eat meat are probably: **a.** Bedouins from the desert. **b.** Essenes from the Qumran community. **c.** Saved Jews. **d.** Saved Gentiles. **e.** Pashtuns from Afghanistan.

20. Romans 14 - What is a biblically informed conscience? _____

21. Romans 14:3 - What is true about weak Christians and strong Christians? **a.** God has rejected them. **b.** God has put them aside for questioning. **c.** God is wondering what to do with them. **d.** God has received them.

22. Romans 14:5 - Does this verse give us the right to believe or not believe any doctrine in the Bible? **a.** Yep, it's up to us. **b.** It only applies to important doctrines. **c.** It applies to conflicts between Baptists and Catholics. **d.** No, it applies only to non-essentials issues like meat, drink and observing holy days.

23. Romans 14 - Please explain what progressive revelation is. _____

24. Why did God say: *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*? **a.** So strong Christians wouldn't get too pushy. **b.** So weak Christians could lord it over strong Christians and run the church. **c.** So Christians would have time for the NT to be written, accepted and circulated among the churches allowing everyone to get up to speed about OT law and NT grace.

25. Romans 14 - There was a great transition going on as Paul wrote Romans. Which FIVE of the following are NOT part of that great transition?

1. From OT Law to NT Grace.
2. From Adam to Noah.
3. From OT Israel to the NT Church.
4. From Abel to Cain.
5. From completed OT to NT being written.
6. From ministry to Jews to ministry to Gentiles.
7. From Messiah is coming to Messiah has come.
8. From Israel broken off to the Gentiles grafted in.

9. From the wilderness wanderings to Israel in the land.
10. From the blindness of Israel to the Gentiles seeing.
11. From Elijah's ministry to Elisha's ministry.
12. From an OT priesthood to NT priesthood of believers.
13. From OT temple and synagogue to local NT churches.
14. From David's kingdom to Solomon's kingdom.
15. From focus on Israel to focus on evangelizing Gentiles.
16. From the dispensation of law to the dispensation of grace.
17. From a church of mostly saved Jews to mostly saved Gentiles.

26. Romans 14:6 - Christians who didn't regard the day were: **a.** Being too squeamish. **b.** Being hard to get along with. **c.** Worshiping idols. **d.** To the Lord he doth not regard it.
27. Romans 14:6 - Both the weak Christians and the strong Christians were doing what they were doing for the Lord. **a.** Yes indeed. **b.** No, of course not. **c.** Some were secretly Baal worshipers.
28. Romans 14:7 - All of us are alone in this life? True - False.
29. Romans 14:7 - All Christians should be: **a.** Lone Ranger Christians. **b.** Team players. **c.** Independent agents. **d.** An important part of the body of Christ even if we don't always feel like we are important to our fellow Christians.
30. Romans 14:8 - How does the truth of this verse comfort you? _____
31. Romans 14:9 - What do we see in this verse? **a.** The glory of God. **b.** The reality of faith. **c.** The glorious gospel of Christ. **d.** A warning about the new age.
32. Romans 14:10 - Does this verse encourage us to judge our brothers about non-essential issues? Yes - No.
33. Romans 14:10 - This verse proves that: **a.** Only backsliders will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. **b.** Only Episcopalians, Methodists and Pentecostals will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. **c.** Only religious fakirs will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. **d.** We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.
34. Romans 14:10 - At the judgment seat of Christ, we get judged for: **a.** How religious we were. **b.** How high we rose in the church. **c.** Whether or not we are saved. **d.** Our works get judged concerning our motives but our salvation doesn't get judged here. **e.** Our diet gets judged to see how much junk food we ate.
35. Romans 14:10 - Which ones make it through the judgment seat of Christ? **a.** Earth, wind, fire. **b.** Wood, hay, stubble. **c.** Sin, sorrow, tears. **d.** Gold, silver, precious stones. **e.** Only my best religious works.
36. Romans 14:12 - What does it mean, *so then every one of us shall give account of himself to God*? **a.** All of us have an appointment with the Lord Jesus Christ. **b.** All of us get to explain why we lived like we lived and made the

decisions we made. **c.** All of us will one day be eyeball to eyeball, toe to toe with the Creator of the Universe and our risen Savior. **d.** All of the above.

37. Romans 14:13 - Since we're all going to give account of OURSELVES to God, Paul says: **a.** Keep judging one another. **b.** Judge everyone outside the church. **c.** Let us not therefore judge one another any more.

38. Romans 14:13 - When weak Christians don't understand that NT grace has replaced OT law, we should: **a.** Keep harassing them about it. **b.** Try to drive them out of the church. **c.** Be careful that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

39. Romans 14:13 - In essence, in this verse, Paul tells us to stop judging our weak brothers and start judging ourselves for our conduct toward our weak brothers. **a.** Absolutely true. **b.** Definitely true. **c.** Indubitably true. **d.** Unquestionably true. **e.** All of the above.

40. Romans 14:14 - According to this verse: **a.** There's no way to know which side is right. **b.** The weak brethren who don't eat meat are right. **c.** The strong brethren who do eat meat are right.

41. Romans 14:14 - Who convinced Paul that it is all right to eat meat? **a.** King David. **b.** Elijah the prophet. **c.** Nero Caesar. **d.** The apostle John because he was so close to Jesus. **e.** The blessed Holy Spirit. **f.** The Lord Jesus Himself.

42. Romans 14:14 - In the first century AD, what was the determining factor in deciding what was clean and what was unclean? **a.** What OT law said. **b.** What the Rabbis said. **c.** What strong Christians said. **d.** What each individual esteemed to be unclean.

43. Romans 14:14 - Does Paul's experience with the Lord Jesus persuading him on the issue of clean and unclean track with Peter's experience in Acts 10:15, 11:9-10? **a.** I gotta say Yes. **b.** I gotta say No. **c.** It sure seems that way.

44. Romans 14:14 - This verse proves that: **a.** Saved Jews are no longer under OT law. **b.** Saved Gentiles don't have to keep OT law. **c.** NT grace has replaced OT law. **d.** All of the above.

45. Romans 14:15 - What best describes the situation when you offend a weak brother over the eating meat issue? **a.** I am defending my freedom in Christ. **b.** I am standing up for God's truth. **c.** I am within my rights as a Christian. **d.** I am not walking charitably. **e.** I am grieving a weaker brother in Christ. **f.** I may be spiritually destroying a brother for whom Christ died.

46. Romans 14:15 - In this verse, who is right? **a.** The weak brother. **b.** The strong brother.

47. Romans 14:16 - This verse is aimed at: **a.** Baptist pastors. **b.** Roman Catholic nuns. **c.** Weak Christians. **d.** Lukewarm Christians. **e.** Strong Christians.

48. Romans 14:16 - *Let not your good...* What is *good* referring to in this verse? **a.** Eating a low fat diet. **b.** Eating a high carb diet. **c.** Eating meat. **d.** Not eating meat.

49. Romans 14:17 - The KOG - kingdom of God is the same as the kingdom of heaven. True - False.
50. Romans 14:17 - The KOH - kingdom of heaven is present on earth right now. True - False.
51. Romans 14:17 - Who rules the kingdom of heaven right now? **a.** King David. **b.** King Solomon. **c.** Queen Elizabeth. **d.** Queen Esther. **e.** The Lord Jesus. **f.** The kingdom has no ruler right now.
52. Romans 14:17 - How do we describe the KOH - kingdom of heaven? **a.** It is earthly, physical, Davidic and linked to Israel and Christ's earthly ministry. **b.** It is spiritual, intangible and linked to Christ and the church age.
53. Romans 14:17 - How do we describe the KOG - kingdom of God? **a.** It is not about OT law and OT religious practices. **b.** It is not about physical things like meat and drink. **c.** The KOG is about *righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*.
54. Romans 14:17 - What point is Paul making in this verse? **a.** Since the KOG is not about meat and drink, Christians in Rome should stop arguing about meat and drink. **b.** Since the KOG is about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, wise Christians will focus on those things. **c.** All of the above.
55. Romans 14:17 - Were both the KOH and the KOG on earth at the same time during the earthly ministry of Christ? **a.** Yes, that is true. **b.** No, that isn't true. **c.** Yes, now that makes sense to me.
56. Romans 14:17 - If national Israel had believed on Christ as their Messiah, the KOH would have been set up and there would have been no church age. **a.** Yep, that makes perfect sense when you put it that way.
57. Romans 14:17 - The KOH, Kingdom of heaven is only mentioned in Matthew's Gospel. True - False.
58. Romans 14:17 - The KOH is associated with OT law and the KOG is associated with NT grace. True - False.
59. Romans 14:17 - The KOH has unsaved people in it but the KOG never has any unsaved people in it. True - False.
60. Romans 14:17 - Which Kingdom is on earth now? **a.** The KOH, Kingdom of heaven. **b.** The KOG, Kingdom of God. **c.** The Kingdom of Saints. **d.** The Kingdom of Light. **e.** The Millennial Kingdom. **f.** The Eternal Kingdom.
61. Romans 14:17 - What is the focus of the KOG? **a.** Meat and drink. **b.** Jewish religious rules. **c.** Doing lots of good works. **d.** Working your way to heaven. **e.** Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.
62. Romans 14:18 - Which is acceptable to God? **a.** Meat and drink and observing holy days. **b.** Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.
63. Romans 14:18 - According to this verse, does focusing on OT law and meat and drink count as serving Christ? **a.** Yep, sure does. **b.** Nope, sure doesn't.

64. Romans 14:18 - As far as our service for Christ, what is God looking for? **a.** Lots of religious good works. **b.** Lots of rules about what we eat and drink. **c.** Service that is focused on the flesh. **d.** Service that is focused on a saved and born again heart. **e.** Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

65. Romans 14:19 - What does God want us to follow after? **a.** Religious good works as long as we're really serious about them. **b.** Keeping Jewish law because that's the only way to please God. **c.** Things which make for peace, not things which make our weak brothers stumble. **d.** Things which edify another, which build up our brothers and sisters in their Christian faith.

66. Romans 14:19 - What does the process of edifying one another look like? **a.** It is hard-nosed and tough. **b.** It is being kind and compassionate. **c.** It is love in action, working for the good of our weak brothers and sisters in Christ. **d.** It promotes peace in the local church instead of arguing, disputing and fighting.

67. Romans 14:20 - What does this mean, *For meat destroy not the work of God*? **a.** It means never backing down for a good fight. **b.** It means have enough spiritual common sense to stop arguing and start loving each other.

68. Romans 14:20 - What does eating with offense mean? **a.** Eating to spite another Christian. **b.** Eating meat when you don't have a good conscience about it. **c.** Eating meat when you're still wrestling with the question of OT law vs. NT grace.

69. Romans 14:20 - What does, *For meat destroy not the work of God mean*? **a.** It means insisting on your freedom to eat meat when doing so offends or is a stumblingblock to your weak brothers. **b.** It means you exercising your legitimate liberty in Christ can sometimes spiritually destroy a weak brother or sister in Christ. **c.** It means we must be careful when exercising our liberty in Christ, so we do not destroy the weak brethren who don't yet have enough knowledge about grace to eat what we eat. **d.** All of the above.

70. Romans 14:20 - What is the work of God? **a.** The work of God is the spiritual life of a weak Christian. **b.** The work of God is the potential spiritual growth of a weak Christian. **c.** The work of God is the spiritual health and joy of a weak Christian. **d.** All of the above.

71. Romans 14:21 - In this verse, does Paul say: **a.** It's okay for strong Christians to ignore the effect their exercise of Christian liberty may have on weak Christians? **b.** It is good to moderate your exercise of Christian liberty like eating meat, so as not to hurt your weak brothers and sisters? **c.** No one needs to worry about hurting weak brothers and sisters because they just need to grow up and stop being weak?

72. Romans 14:21 - In this verse, is Paul recommending: **a.** Drinking wine? **b.** Not drinking wine. **c.** Hiding your wine drinking? **d.** Drinking wine from a jar? **e.** Being strong enough to do your own thing without worrying about anyone else?

73. Romans 14:21 - In this verse, what does, *nor any thing*, include? **a.** It only refers to eating meat and drinking wine. **b.** It also refers to eating chocolate donuts. **c.** It may refer to eating sushi although that is debatable. **d.** It refers to doing anything in the non-essentials category which makes your brother stumble or offends him or makes him weak spiritually.
74. Romans 14:21 - Does Paul ever recommend drinking wine? **a.** Nope, Paul never does that. **b.** Yes, he does but only as a medicine. **c.** He mentions wine but never recommends social drinking. **d.** He mentions wine but never encourages anyone to drink wine so they can loosen up and have a good time.
75. Romans 14:21 - In this verse, is, *nor to drink wine*, referring back to Romans 13:13 and Paul's warning to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light? **a.** Yes, I think that's correct. **b.** No, I don't see any connection. **c.** Yep, that makes good sense in the context.
76. Romans 14:21 - The path of least resistance makes men and rivers go: **a.** Wild. **b.** Straight. **c.** Crazy. **d.** Crooked. **e.** Bald.
77. Romans 14:22 - Does God ever tell NT Christians to live under OT law? Yes - No.
78. Romans 14:22 - How can I be a happy Christian? **a.** Keep disobeying the Bible. **b.** Keep doing things my way instead of God's way. **c.** Start believing and obeying the Bible.
79. Romans 14:23 - Who is this verse aimed at? **a.** Overweight Christians. **b.** Ethnic Christians. **c.** Weak Christians. **d.** Strong Christians.
80. Romans 14:23 - What does it mean: *because he eateth not of faith*? **a.** He eats meat when his conscience tells him not to. **b.** He eats meat when he isn't convinced it's okay ignore OT law. **c.** He eats meat because he saw strong Christians eating meat, not because he believes in his heart that it's okay to eat meat. **d.** All of the above.
81. Romans 14:23 - What does it mean: *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin*? **a.** It means, be sure you can do what you do with a biblically informed clean conscience. **b.** It means you are convinced by the Lord Jesus that you can eat meat without displeasing God. **c.** It means you now understand the Bible truth that NT grace has superseded OT law.

We appreciate you studying Romans 14 with us.

Keep returning to and reviewing Romans.

Romans is a great book to love and learn and live.

God bless you!