

# Romans 14:17-19

- The kingdom of God is a matter of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit -

**Author: Evert Jan Hempenius**

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## Introduction

- ❖ The apostle Paul has urged the church (in Rome) to accept one another and not to look down or to judge someone in disputable matters (Rom 14:1). He has especially the "weak in faith" in mind. "Weak in faith" probably implies lack of liberty of conscience because the believer is dependent on faith plus observing certain practices, the disputable matters. He is showing wisdom in action.
- ❖ It is far more important to "make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (Rom 14:19).
  - The following summary serves as a background:
    - (1) We must accept the other because God has accepted him (Rom 14:3) in his household (1 Tim 3:15).
    - (2) Each one should be fully convinced in his mind (Rom 14:5).
    - (3) So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord (Rom 14:8).
    - (4) So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Rom 14:12).
  - What is leading?
    - "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17).
      - This is also true for secular politics in the wider society.
      - The opposite is also true: where there is unrighteousness, there will be no peace and no joy.

- “because anyone **who serves Christ in this way** is pleasing to God and approved by men” (Rom 14:18).
  - “Let us therefore make every effort to **do what leads to peace and to mutual edification**” (Rom 14:19).
- ❖ This outline is a companion to the study of Romans 14:7-9.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Letter to the Romans. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

## Context

- ❖ An overview of the Letter to the Romans. This overview serves also as a summary of the contents of this letter.

<b>Greetings and Introduction (Rom 1:1-17)</b>	
Romans 1:1-17	Greetings, Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:1-10)  Plan to visit the Romans and to share the Gospel with them (1:11-17)
<b>The righteousness from God (Rom 1:18-8:39)</b>	
Romans 1:18-3:20	The wrath of God against all unrighteousness:  Of this world (1:18-32)  Of the Jews (2:1-3:8)  Conclusion:  The Jews and the Gentiles are alike under sin (3:9-20)

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.christianstudylibrary.org/files/pub/word/Romans%2014.7-9.pdf> (to be published)

Romans 3:21-8:39

**The righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ** (Rom 1:16, 17):

To which the Law and the Prophets testify (3:21-31)

Abraham was justified by faith (4:1-25)

Through faith, we have been justified and are reconciled with God (5:1-11)

The contrasts:

Death came through Adam, life came through Christ (5:12-21)

We are dead to sin, and alive in Christ under grace (6:1-14)

We are slaves not to sin but to righteousness and God (6:15-23)

In the mind a slave to God's law, in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin (7:1-25)

The children of God:

The Spirit has set us free from sin. He has made us children and heirs of God (8:1-17)

As his children, we share in the suffering of Christ and will share in his glory (8:18-30)

There is nothing that will separate us from the love of God in Christ (8:31-39)

### **What about Israel, the chosen people of God? (Rom 9:1-11:36)**

Romans 9:1-11:36

Not all Israelites came to faith in Christ (9:1-29)

Because they pursued righteousness by works (9:30-10:21)

Did God reject Israel? By no means! (11:1-32)

Glory to God (11:33-36)

### **Live according to the Gospel (Rom 12:1-15:13)**

Romans 12:1-15:13

Renew your mind (12:1-21)

Submit yourself to the authorities (13:1-7)

Clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ (13:8-14)

Accept each other in Christ (14:1-15:13)

### **Purpose, Plans, Greetings (Rom 15:14-16:27)**

Romans 15:14-16:27	Purpose of the letter, Paul's plans to visit Rome and Spain (15:14-33) Greetings to different groups and individuals (16:1-16) Final words and greetings from (16:16-27)
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## Form and structure

- ❖ The structure of Romans 14:1-15:13 is outlined below in detail. The text consists of four parts:
  - (1) Acceptance (14:1-3)
  - (2) Don't judge one another, because Christ is Lord (Rom 14:4-12)
  - (3) Therefore, make up your mind to do what leads to peace of the Kingdom  
(14:13-23)
  - (4) Acceptance (15:1-13)
- ❖ (2) and (3) both show an ABA'-structure:
  - A = Don't judge (14:4-6) because God has accepted each one of us.
    - B = We live to Christ the Lord (14:7-9).
  - A' = Don't Judge (14:10-12) because we all have to give account to him.
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  - A = Make up your mind (14:13-16)
    - B = We serve Christ the Lord – the Kingdom of God (14:17-19)
  - A' = Make up your mind (14:20-23)

(1) ACCEPTANCE	
Acceptance (Rom 14:1-3)	<p>Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.</p> <p>One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.</p> <p>The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does,</p> <p>for God has accepted him. (See also Rom 15:7)</p>
(2) DON'T JUDGE ONE ANOTHER	
Don't judge	Who are you to judge someone else's servant?

<p>(Rom 14:4-6)</p>	<p>To his own master he stands or falls.</p> <p>And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.</p> <p>One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike.</p> <p>Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.</p> <p>He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord.</p> <p>He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.</p>
<p>Christ is LORD (Rom 14:7-9)</p>	<p>For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.</p> <p>If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord.</p> <p>So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.</p> <p>For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.</p>
<p>Don't judge (Rom 14:10-12)</p>	<p>You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother?</p> <p>For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.</p> <p>It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God."</p> <p>So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.</p>
<p><b>(3) MAKE UP YOUR MIND TO DO WHAT LEADS TO PEACE OF THE KINGDOM</b></p>	
<p>Make up your mind (Rom 14:13-16)</p>	<p>Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.</p> <p>As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself.</p> <p>But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.</p> <p>If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love.</p>

	<p>Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.</p> <p>Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil.</p>
<p>Christ is LORD (Rom 14:17-19)</p>	<p>For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.</p> <p>Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.</p>
<p>Make up your mind (Rom 14:20-23)</p>	<p>Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.</p> <p>All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.</p> <p>So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.</p>
<b>(4) Acceptance</b>	
<p>Acceptance (Rom 15:1-13)</p>	<p>We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.</p> <p>Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”</p> <p>For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.</p> <p>May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.</p>

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (See also Romans 14:1, 3)

For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written:

“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name.”

Again, it says,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

And again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples.”

And again, Isaiah says,

“The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.”

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

### ❖ Date of writing:

- “Romans was drafted in the winter of 56–57 c.e. or the early spring of 57”<sup>2</sup> and was sent from the Corinth or Cenchrea (Rom 16:1, 2) which was in the vicinity of Corinth. The letter was probably carried by Phoebe to the churches of Rome.

### ❖ The City of Rome and the Letter to the Romans:<sup>3</sup>

- “An extensive building program paid by” Emperor Augustus “and his wealthy supporters transformed Rome into a gleaming city of marble that grew to house a million people. Under his loyal son-in-law Agrippa, a new aqueduct was built along with numerous public fountains; temples were restored; public gardens, baths, and theaters were erected; and the city administration was reorganized with fire brigades and police

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<sup>2</sup> Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 18).

<sup>3</sup> This paragraph is a summary of Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 47,48).

protection; enhanced grain deliveries to Roman citizens were also provided. All of these improvements served to demonstrate that the golden age of peace and plenty had finally arrived.”

- “Of more direct relevance for the situation of Paul’s Letter to the Romans were the reigns of Claudius (41–54 c.e.) and Nero (54–68 c.e.)” “Claudius continued the process of urban development with the creation of a new harbor for the grain trade, the improvement of the roads and aqueducts, the reorganization of the court system, and the creation of an imperial bureaucracy consisting of slaves and freedmen/women who administered the affairs of the empire in areas where the emperor had direct control.”
- “Nero came to power with the pledge to restore the role of the Senate and the rule of law, and was celebrated for ushering in a golden age.” “At the time Romans was written, the Nero administration was providing an exemplary form of government and law enforcement, despite the profligate personal habits of Nero himself—an aggressive bisexual who enjoyed stalking the streets of Rome with his crowd of sycophants demanding sexual services from passersby and ‘indulging in brawls and petty thieving.’ The combination of Paul’s denunciation of immorality (*Rom 1:25-32*) combined with the command to respect governmental agents as the source of law and order (*Rom 13:1-7*) may derive in part from these peculiar circumstances.”
- “A crucial element in understanding the situation of Christian congregations in Rome is the crowded urban environment. At the time of Paul’s letter, most of the population in Rome lived in the upper levels of ‘multistory tenement houses’ or in the rears of shops, while the nobility and the wealthy citizens of Rome occupied lower floors of these buildings or in mansions in the better parts of the city.”<sup>4</sup>
- “The large Jewish community in Rome had played a major role in the formation of the Christian congregations prior to the time of Paul’s letter.”<sup>5</sup>
- “Julius Caesar granted the right of Jewish communities to follow their own laws, which was confirmed by the Senate in 44 B.C.E. and later by Augustus and Claudius. The ‘right to live according to Jewish Laws and Customs’ included permission to have meetings for worship and meals together, to organize a communal life, the right not to give bonds on the Sabbath, to have kosher markets, and to send funds to the Jerusalem temple.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 53).

<sup>5</sup> Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 55).

<sup>6</sup> Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 56).



- "Although there may have been others, there is solid evidence of at least eleven synagogues in Rome; the word συναγωγή (*synagogue*) may refer to congregations rather than buildings."<sup>7</sup>
- ❖ The recipients of the letter:
  - "To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints" (Rom 1:6). A distinction can be made between the first recipients and the second. To these second recipients belong all those who are mentioned in Romans 16:
    - Individuals like "Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Rom 16:3).
    - Members of one household, like "those who belong to the household of Aristobulus" (Rom 16:10).
    - Small groups like "Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them" (Rom 16:15).
    - (Small) congregations like "the church that meets at their house" (Priscilla and Aquila; Rom 16:5).
  - "All this suggests that the Christian groups formed something of a spectrum (some more Jewish in composition, some more Gentile, most mixed)."<sup>8</sup>
    - The Letter to the Romans is dealing with the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles. The (main) church of Rome had not been founded by Paul. It looks like they were still unaware of the decisions made by the Apostle Convent (Acts 15:1-21).
      - "Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: 'Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved'" (Acts 15:1-7).
      - Peter's reaction was: "'Brothers, (...) God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them (Gentiles) by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. (...) We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.'" (See also Eph 2:8)
  - Jews and Gentiles:
    - "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in

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<sup>7</sup> Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 57).

<sup>8</sup> Dunn, J. D. G. (1993, p. 839). *Romans, Letter to The*. In G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, & D. G. Reid (Eds.).

the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" (Rom 1:16, 17).

❖ The main theme of the Letter:

- Righteousness from God
  - "In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" (Rom 1:17; Hab 2:4; Gal 2:16; 3:11).
    - **Important note.** There is no difference between the Old and the New Testament concerning "The righteous will live by faith."
    - Genesis 15:6: "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." (See also Romans 4:1-25!).
  - How does the New Testament supplement the Old?
  - "But now (NT) a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify OT). This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:21-24).
- This has consequences on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. (See above.)

## Exposition

### Bear in mind

- ❖ The following key texts must be born in mind while studying and expounding Romans 14:1-15:13:
- "'The righteous will live by faith.'" (Rom 1:17; Hab 2:4). "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Rom 3:21, 22).
  - "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom 12:1, 2).

- “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: **Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.** Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, **so in Christ we who are many form one body,** and each member belongs to all the others” (Rom 12:3-5).
- “**Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.** Honor one another above yourselves” (Rom 12:10). “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law” (Rom 13:8). “Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom 13:10).
- “**For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men**” (Rom 14:17, 18).

#### Verse 1-12 Summary

- ❖ This is a summary of Romans 14:1-12.<sup>9</sup>
  - Accept another, not only one's differing views but welcome him at your home and in the Christian community because God has welcomed (same verb) and justified him by his grace. He or she is your brother or sister (Rom 14:10, 15, 21). The brother who is weak in faith must be accepted and welcomed as a full member of the Christian community.<sup>10</sup> It is an opportunity for love (Rom 14:15).
  - This faith seeks support in certain moral choices, such as not eating meat. **His “lack is not strength of self-control but liberty of conscience.”**<sup>11</sup> Paul calls these choices disputable matters and mentions three:
    - (1) “One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, **whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables**” (Rom 14:2). All food is clean (Rom 14:20) but some regard something as unclean (Rom 14:14). See also **Acts 10:9-15**, the vision of Peter, and Acts 15:19, 20.
    - (2) “One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike” (Rom 14:5).
    - (3) “It is better not to eat meat or **drink wine** or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall” (Rom 14:21; 1 Cor 8:13).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.christianstudylibrary.org/files/pub/word/Romans%2014.7-9.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1973, p. 255).

<sup>11</sup> Stott, J. R. W. (2001, p. 355); Dunn, J. D. G. (1988, p. 798).

- We must not judge one another or look down on someone. Instead: “Accept one another, then, **just as Christ accepted you**, in order to bring praise to God” (Rom 15:7). Acceptance is based on the justification by God: “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:22-24; Rom 1:17).
- We belong to Christ and to God, the Father. And the believer “**will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand,**” by his Spirit (Rom 8:15) and by his grace.
  - “Paul is announcing his confidence that the Lord of the community, having once received a member, can cause him to stand.... **Grace is stronger than human frailty.**”<sup>12</sup> Paul is not only writing about the weak but also about the strong.
  - The emphasis is on **the power of the Lord**. Human judgment will not do good but can become a stumbling block (Rom 14:20).
- A Christian must be fully convinced (about eating/not eating meat; special days/or not; drinking/not drinking wine) and give thanks to the Lord. “**If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.**”
  - This is the central passage. “**Live to the Lord**” means **serving him in his Kingdom with joy and thanksgiving and peace** (Rom 14:17).
  - “The lordship of Christ is all-important.”<sup>13</sup> “If Christ rules over everything from life to death, he certainly is the final arbiter in matters of calendar and diet.”<sup>14</sup> And: “Because he is our Lord, we must live for him. Because he is also the Lord of our fellow Christians, we must respect their relationship to him and mind our own business. For he died and rose to be Lord.”<sup>15</sup>

❖ “**So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God**” (Rom 14:12) and not to other Christians in the first place.

Verse 13-16 no stumbling blocks

- ❖ “**Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another.**” This is the conclusion of the preceding paragraph (Rom 14:1-12).
- “**let us stop.**” Paul includes himself. He deemed it necessary to pass judgments on both sides, “the strong” and “the weak.” If these two groups stop judging, there will be room for peace, joy, and edification.

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<sup>12</sup>Käsemann quoted by Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 843).

<sup>13</sup> Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 848).

<sup>14</sup> Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 849).

<sup>15</sup> Stott, J. R. W. (2001, p. 362).

- “passing judgment on” = “κρίνω”: 2.b. especially **pass an unfavourable judgment upon, criticize, find fault with, condemn**<sup>16</sup>
- ❖ **“Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way.”**
  - **“make up your mind”** = “κρίνω”: 4. **to come to a conclusion after a cognitive process, reach a decision, decide, propose, intend**<sup>17</sup>
    - “The wordplay on κρίναι (“passing judgment on”/“make up your mind”) in this verse shows that Paul is not attempting to eliminate judgment entirely, but to eliminate ‘contemptuous’ and ‘disdainful’ judgments and to promote ‘a new concern for the brother.’”<sup>18</sup>
  - Both the strong and weak are in view. Paul continues his argument of verse 1. He addresses in particular those who look down on the weak (Rom 14:1, 2).
  - **“stumbling block or obstacle.”** Compare this with Romans 14:4: “To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”
    - What is the difference between Romans 14:4 and 14:13? In Romans 14:4, Paul is reacting to the fear of “one whose faith is weak” that someone will fall because of **“eating everything.”** In Romans 14:13, **“eating everything”** can become a stumbling block in the “weak” brother’s way.
  - **“Make up your mind”**, let your mind be guided by love, and act in love (Rom 14:15). “Love honors both the liberty which is the concern of the strong (for freedom comes to fullest expression in acts of love), and the law which is the concern of the weak” (for **‘Love does no harm to its neighbor. Love is the fulfillment of the Law,’** Rom 13:10) to the praise of God (Rom 15:5–12).<sup>19</sup> He is your brother!
- ❖ **“As one who is in the Lord Jesus”** (NIV) = “I know and I have been persuaded in the Lord Jesus.”<sup>20</sup>
  - Dunn observes: “The triple emphasis (I know, am convinced (I have been persuaded), in the Lord) is very forceful and makes it clear that the following statement is one on which

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<sup>16</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 567).

<sup>17</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 568).

<sup>18</sup> Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 857) refer to Calvin Roetzel.

<sup>19</sup> Chamblin, J. K. (1993, p. 316). *Freedom/Liberty*. In G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, & D. G. Reid (Eds.).

<sup>20</sup> Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1973, p. 263).

Paul puts great stress.”<sup>21</sup> This emphasis is partly lost in the NIV. Paul has a strong conviction.

- Paul wants to gain confidence in his argument and he adds weight to it, “persuaded in the Lord Jesus.”
  - **“in the Lord Jesus”:**
    - “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **we too may live a new life**” (Rom 6:4) united with Christ (Rom 6:5, 8). “He is offering himself as an **instrument of righteousness** living not under law but under grace” (Rom 6:14).
    - Newman and Nida remark: “Several translations take this phrase to mean ‘on the authority of the Lord Jesus’ (NAB; footnote in NEB; see JB<sup>22</sup> ‘and I speak for the Lord Jesus’). Either of these interpretations is possible, though the meaning of ‘in union with the Lord Jesus’ has stronger support based on similar passages.”<sup>23</sup>

❖ **“I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself.”**

- This conviction is based on being in Christ. See especially Acts 10:14, 15. For Jewish Christians, this must have been a great step.
- **“unclean” = “κοινός”:** specifically, of that which is ceremonially impure.<sup>24</sup>

❖ **“But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.”**

- This conviction with regard to unclean food created a problem for “the weak” worshipping together with someone who had eaten everything. “If a man believes it is wrong and does it, then he commits a sin against his own conscience.”<sup>25</sup>
- At the same time, Paul accepts the position of “the weak.” Regarding something as unclean is one of the disputable matters (Rom 14:1; 1 Cor 8:7).

❖ Paul shows three consequences, therefore **“make up your mind”:**

- **“If your brother is distressed because of what you eat,”** (1 Cor 8:10)

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<sup>21</sup> Dunn, J. D. G. (1988, Vol. 38B, p. 818).

<sup>22</sup> NAB = New American Bible; NEB = New English Bible; JB = Jerusalem Bible

<sup>23</sup> Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1973, p. 263).

<sup>24</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 552).

<sup>25</sup> Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1973, p. 263).

- **“distressed” = “λυπέω”**: passive: *be sad, be distressed, grieve,*<sup>26</sup> *irritated, offended.* Dunn writes: “What Paul has in view is not merely a passing sense of irritation or momentary pang of grief, but **an actual wounding of conscience (Küsemann) which destroys the whole balance of the brother’s faith**”<sup>27</sup>
- (1) **“you are no longer acting in love”**
  - **“acting in”** as a lifestyle.
  - “Love does no harm to its neighbor” (Rom 13:10).
  - For brotherly love, see Ephesians 5:2, and especially John 15:9-17.
- If you do harm your brother, this can lead to destruction:
  - (2) **“Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.”**
    - Note the contrast “your eating destroy your brother” <> “your brother for whom Christ died.” He is your brother! Christ died for him! It is rather selfish to insist on eating everything. Destroy does not mean eternal destruction because Paul has asserted previously that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:38, 39).
    - John Stott remarks: “Here the opposite of to ‘destroy’ is to ‘build up’ (19f.; 15:2). Paul’s warning, therefore, is that the strong who mislead the weak to go against their consciences will seriously **damage their Christian discipleship.**”<sup>28</sup>
    - The ultimate love is displayed by Christ: “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13).
    - Jewett and Kotansky write: “‘To act without regard to one’s own conscience is to enter into destruction through the dissolution of the self,’ through a loss of ‘personal unity’ and integrity. The priority ascribed to personal unity is a prominent feature of Hebrew thought that evil comes from ‘the divided heart’, that individual integrity must be preserved against all assaults.”<sup>29</sup>
  - (3) **“Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil.”**
    - Note the second contrast “what you consider good” (= eating

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<sup>26</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 604).

<sup>27</sup> Dunn, J. D. G. (1988, Vol. 38B, p. 820).

<sup>28</sup> Stott, J. R. W. (2001, p. 366).

<sup>29</sup> Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 862).

everything) <> “to be spoken of as evil” by others.

- “to speak evil of” = “βλασφημέω”: **to speak in a disrespectful way that demeans, denigrates, maligns.**<sup>30</sup>
- Who will speak evil? This could be the brother, who reacts angrily, frustrated and irritated. This can also be the Gentile, the outsider, who sees Christians condemning one another for eating every kind of food.
- Dunn writes: “A house church, small in number as it would have to be, which was careless of the anguish of spirit being caused to one of its members, would be a very poor advertisement for the body of Christ.”<sup>31</sup>

#### Verse 17-19

- ❖ “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking,”
  - “**Make up your mind**” (Rom 14:13). The kingdom of God is a matter of:
- ❖ “righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”
  - “righteousness” = “δικαιοσύνη”: 3. **the quality or characteristic of upright behaviour, uprightness, righteousness.**<sup>32</sup> In this context: upright behaviour towards your brother.
    - Keep Romans 1:16, 17 in mind! And also Romans 8:10: “But **if Christ is in you,** your body is dead because of sin, yet **your spirit is alive because of righteousness.**”
    - Not passing judgments or looking down, or putting a stumbling block = Love each other as Christ has loved you.
    - Matthew 6:33: “**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,** and all these things will be given to you as well.” See also Matthew 5:6.
  - “peace” = “εἰρήνη”: 1. **a state of concord, peace, harmony**<sup>33</sup> in personal relationships among brothers. See also Romans 8:6.
    - Romans 5:1, 2: “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, **we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,** through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” Note the plural “we” (Rom 5:1, 2), which also implies

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<sup>30</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 178).

<sup>31</sup> Dunn, J. D. G. (1988, Vol. 38B, p. 831).

<sup>32</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 248).

<sup>33</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 287).



peace among the brothers. The church is meant to be a new peaceful community.

○ **“joy in the Holy Spirit”**

- “in” = “ἐν”: designates a close personal relation in which the referent of the ἐν-term – the Holy Spirit – is viewed as the controlling influence: *under the control of, under the influence of, in close association with.*<sup>34</sup>
- Thus, this righteousness, peace and joy are fruit of the Holy Spirit. Compare Galatians 5:22, 23 and Acts 13:52.
- Compare John 15:10-12: “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”
- The apostle Paul concludes Romans 14:1-15:13 with: **“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”**

○ Newman and Nida suggest the following translation of Romans 14:7: “When one speaks of God’s ruling one does not talk about rules concerning eating and drinking, but one talks about righteousness, and peace, and joy.”<sup>35</sup>

- Righteousness as fruit of the Holy Spirit will bring about peace and joy. See also John 15:9-12 and Romans 5:1-5. The opposite is also true. Unrighteous behaviour will establish discontent and grudge.

❖ **“because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.”**

- Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, **holy and pleasing to God**—this is your spiritual act of worship.
- Proverbs 3:3, 4: “Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. **Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.**”
- Galatians 5:13: “You, my brothers, **were called to be free.** But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, **serve one another in love.**”

❖ **“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”**

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<sup>34</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 327).

<sup>35</sup> Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1973, p. 265).

- **“Let us therefore.”** As in Romans 14:12, the words introduce the concluding remark of this paragraph (Rom 14:13-19).
  - **“edification”= “οἰκοδομή”:** 1.b building as **spiritual strengthening.**<sup>36</sup>
    - Newman and Nida: to do “‘what helps one another become strong,’ ‘... what causes other believers to become strong,’ or ‘... what causes other people to become strong in their faith.’”<sup>37</sup> These other people are still “weak” in faith.
    - Romans 15:2: **“Each of us should please his neighbour for his good, to build him up.”** (See also: 1 Cor 8:1; 10:23; Eph 4:12, 16, 29; 1 Thess 5:11)
  - **“every effort”** and **“edification”** is elaborated in verse 20-23:

#### Verse 20-23

- ❖ **“Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.”**
  - **“Do not destroy”** (Rom 14:15) contrasts with **“edification.”** “Do not destroy” by putting obstacles in your brother's way, because you want to eat everything.
  - This is a sharp contrast: “the work of God” <> “the sake of food.”
  - **“The work of God”:** salvation, justification, reconciliation, the new community of believers. He has made us alive by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, as a free gift (Eph 2:8).
- ❖ **“All food is clean.”** Even the apostle Peter had difficulty accepting this: “The voice spoke to him a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean’” (Acts 10:15; see also Mt 15:11; 1 Tim 4:3-5; Tit 1:15).
- ❖ **“but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble....”**
  - This translation implies that the **“strong”** by eating anything will cause the **“weak”** (**“someone else”**) to stumble. Someone else has been added by the translators for clarity. A literal translation offers another possible explication. “It is bad for the man who eats **through** a stumbling block.” Newman and Nida comment: “Most exegetes understand this as a reference to the man who is strong in faith and who may cause someone else *to fall into sin* by what he eats. A few take this **as a reference to the man who is weak in faith and who by eating injures his own conscience and so causes himself**

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<sup>36</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 696).

<sup>37</sup> Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1973, p. 266).

**to fall into sin.**<sup>38</sup> "Fall into sin is explained in Romans 14:22, 23.

- In the second case **"through"** = **"διά"**: 3. **marker of instrumentality or circumstance whereby something is accomplished or effected, by, via, through.**<sup>39</sup>
- This is can be made visible by looking at this part of the discourse:
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Verse 19	Let <b>us</b> therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.	
Verse 20	<b>Do not destroy</b> the work of God for the sake of food.	It is bad for <b>the man</b> who eats through a stumbling block. (literal translation)
Verse 21	<b>It is better not</b> to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause <b>your</b> brother to fall.	
Verse 22	So whatever <b>you</b> believe about these things <b>keep</b> between <b>yourself</b> and God.	Blessed is <b>the man</b> who does not condemn himself by what he approves.
Verse 23		But <b>the man</b> who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

**"us"** (verse 19): Paul includes himself, "the strong" and the "weak."

**"you"** (verses 20, 21, and 22), addressed by three **admonitions/imperatives**.

**"the man"** (verses 20, 22, and 23), third person; three statements.

- A stumbling block can cause a man to condemn himself:

<b>The man</b> (who)
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<sup>38</sup> Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1973, p. 267).

<sup>39</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 224).

Verse 20	It is bad for <b>the man</b> who eats through a stumbling block.	
	<b>Positive effect</b>	<b>Negative effect</b>
Verse 22, 23	Blessed is <b>the man</b> who does not condemn himself by what he approves.	But <b>the man</b> who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

- In the presence of someone who refrains ("the strong") therefore from eating "meat" or drinking "wine" or "anything else."
- ❖ **"So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God."**
  - See also verse 5: "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind;"
  - verse 6: and give "thanks to the Lord;"
  - and verse 12: and be prepared "to give an account of himself (yourself) to God."
    - Compare this with Matthew 6:4, 6, 18.
    - And accept one another although convictions differ, because God has accepted both of you.
  - Compare NIV with the New American Standard Bible: "**The faith which you have**, have as your own conviction before God." "Faith" recurs in verse 23.
- ❖ **"Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves."**
  - He is convinced and has no feelings of guilt. Newman and Nida suggest restructuring the sentence "as conditional: 'A man is truly happy if he does not condemn himself when he does what he thinks is right.'"<sup>40</sup>
- ❖ **"But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats."**
  - **"is condemned"** by God because he cannot "give an account of himself to God" (Rom 14:12) due to his doubts.
- ❖ **"because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin."**
  - **"sin" = "ἁμαρτία": 1. a departure from either human or divine standards of uprightness<sup>41</sup>** due to doubts.

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<sup>40</sup> Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1973, p. 268).

<sup>41</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 50).

- “his eating” is based on doubts, fear for judgments, and not being accepted by others. Dunn cites Käsemann: “Christ remains the only measure for all. No one must make his faith a norm for others as they seek to serve Christ. The weak want uniformity by making their law binding for brothers, and the strong seek it too by forcing their insight on the weak. We thus try to make others in our own image and in so doing sin, since faith has to do always and exclusively with the image of Christ.”<sup>42</sup>
- Newman and Nida suggest “to translate *faith* as ‘confidence that what we do is right’— for example, ‘and if we do anything without the confidence that it is right, then it is sin.’”<sup>43</sup>
- John Stott concludes: “This final epigram exalts the significance of our conscience. Although, as we have seen, it is not infallible, it is nevertheless sacrosanct, so that to go against it (to act *not from faith*) is to sin. At the same time, alongside this explicit instruction not to violate our conscience, there is an implicit requirement to educate it.”<sup>44</sup>

## Application

### Praise God

- ❖ He is the Creator and Judge of this world (Rom 1:20; Rom 2:3, 16 14:10-12).
- ❖ He has revealed his righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 1:16, 17; Rom 3:21, 22; Rom 10:4-6).
  - He has accepted sinners in his household (Rom 14:3).
  - He has declared all food clean (Rom 14:20).

### Praise Christ

- ❖ Christ is Saviour and Lord. He died for all of us who believe.

### Different situations

- ❖ Although Paul is addressing a particular problem in the Jewish-Gentile churches of Rome, the main thoughts are applicable in different contexts and even applicable in the wider society.
  - Different contexts:

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<sup>42</sup> Dunn, J. D. G. (1988, Vol. 38B, p. 829).

<sup>43</sup> Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1973, p. 269).

<sup>44</sup> Stott, J. R. W. (2001, p. 368).

- Where Christians from different cultures, liturgical and theological traditions, and personal convictions meet each other.
- Where new converts come from an Islamic background, where eating pork is not allowed.
- Where new converts have had problems with drinking alcohol.
- **This requires love, wisdom, sensitivity, and discernment.** Stott wrote: “There is a similar need for discernment today. We must not elevate non-essentials, especially issues of custom and ceremony, to the level of the essential and make them tests of orthodoxy and conditions of fellowship.”<sup>45</sup>
  - “The liberty of the Christian assembly should be able to embrace divergent views and practices without a feeling that they must be resolved or that a common mind must be achieved on every point of disagreement.”<sup>46</sup> “the overarching concern and priority in what follows is that a church should be able to sustain a diversity of opinion and lifestyle as an integral aspect of its common life.”<sup>47</sup>

#### What is important?

- ❖ Love towards your brother and sister because they are the work of God in Christ (Rom 14:15). Love overcomes social distinctions and barriers. See also Galatians 5:22, 23.
- ❖ The Kingdom of God, the new community where God reigns:
  - Righteousness (Rom 1:16, 17; 3:21-24);
  - Peace;
  - Joy in the Holy Spirit: the church is a spiritual community.
    - Prayer: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust (righteousness) in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13).
  - Mutual edification by love (acceptance), faith, wisdom, words, and behaviour.

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<sup>45</sup> Stott, J. R. W. (2001, p. 358).

<sup>46</sup> Dunn, J. D. G. (1988, p. 799).

<sup>47</sup> Dunn, J. D. G. (1988, p. 799).

- Serve Christ: “because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men (Rom 14:18). What is necessary for mutual edification?
  - And sometimes, it is necessary to refrain from certain habits, which in themselves are not wrong but can become a stumbling block to a brother (Rom 14:20). Try to apply this to your congregation and context.
    - Be aware of the sometimes severe consequences of your behaviour (Rom 14:23).
- ❖ Be convinced in your own mind.
  - “It is a reminder to each member that, whether his faith leads him to adopt the practice of the strong or the practice of the weak, it can, and must be allowed to, set him free for an obedience which (according to his own particular way of faith) is firm, decisive, resolute, courageous, joyful.”<sup>48</sup>

### Conclusion

- ❖ Chamblin aptly concludes: "It is most significant that Paul, himself one of the strong (Rom 15:1), does not employ his apostolic authority to impose his personal convictions upon the weak.
- ❖ Nor does he counsel the strong to try by whatever means to convert the weak into the strong.
- ❖ Not for a moment does he ask the strong to renounce their liberty (which would be to repudiate their very being as Christians), but he does challenge them to practice it in a certain way.
- ❖ They are free both to exercise and to restrict their freedom, for they are enslaved to Christ and not to the liberty he has granted them. The strong are free to defend expressions of the very weakness from which they themselves have been liberated. More than that, they are strong enough and free enough actually 'to bear the infirmities of the weak'<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cranfield, C. E. B. (2004, p. 705-706).

<sup>49</sup> Chamblin, J. K. (1993, p. 315). *Freedom/Liberty*. In G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, & D. G. Reid (Eds.).

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