

Romans 14.1-23 Christian Liberty 184-191  
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[Romans 14.1 Introduction to Liberty 184]

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Application of God's Righteousness to Christian Liberty I see all of chapter 14 and to the middle of chapter 15.

### Introduction

#### 1. Freedom in Christ

I think that at the heart of this passage, Paul is assuming that you understand much of what he has spoken of in the rest of Romans, particularly the doctrinal section, and he doesn't emphasize so much the idea of freedom in Christ but by talking about justification and sanctification underlying those theological concepts is this freedom that in fact we have in Christ.

So we will look at this in order to understand what he says in chapters 14 and 15 I think, that took place in the 1st Century and it will also help you in terms of the culture that we live in as well. Let's look at some passages.

There are two aspects to Freedom in Christ. La primera: freedom from that old life. There are lots of passages that indicate that. We need to understand what it means to be free in Christ because I think underlying chapter 14, this is the main problem—not understanding freedom in Christ. And sometimes those that understand it have a conflict with those who do not.

### Freedom in Christ

#### 1. Freedom from old life -

a. Totally forgiven - Romans 6.6 *knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin.*

Set free from sin, so we are totally forgiven, no longer bound to sin like we were before accepting Christ. So, that is a

very important concept to understand. That old life has been broken; we are free from it.

8.2 *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*

We are free in Christ; there is freedom in Christ. I think most of you understand that.

And that also means that we have been freed from all of the old systems and backgrounds that we come from. All are from different backgrounds and in some cases different cultures, and in our group, different countries. So whatever traditions, old systems—and this was especially important in the 1st Century—we had Jewish people that came out of a Jewish system, that they are now free from, and sometimes not realizing that will cause problems.

- b. Freedom from old systems - 1 Corinthians 10.28 *But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience's sake; 29 I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? 30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?*

This hints at a Jewish background, but it could also include a non-Jewish background in terms of old habits and traditions.

*Galatians 2.4 But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.*

This was a controversy even amongst the apostles. Notice what Paul says: there was bondage to that old system. Judaizers had an influence. There was a debate in the 1st Century, What is permissible?, What is not? in relationship to the old life. And later on in that same Galatians passage, Paul has to even rebuke Peter.

4.8 *However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. 9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? 10 You observe days and months and seasons and years. 11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.*

So going back to that old way of life brings you into bondage, and some people had a hard time breaking away from those old systems.

And certainly freedom from legalism:

c. Freedom from legalism - Romans 6.14 *For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

We have been freed from legalism.

And, we have been freed for a *new* life, a new life in Christ.

2. Freedom for a new life - Romans 6.3 *Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life....11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus....14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace....22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.*

6.3-4 refers to dying with Christ; we now have a way of living in newness of life that we did not have access to before. Then in 6.11, alive to God, a new freedom that we did not have.

Galatians 5.1 *It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery....13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

We have this new life—of freedom that allows us to do things that we never envisioned before in the power of the Spirit. It's newness of life, along with freedom from the old life.

1Peter 2.16 *Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.*

## Introduction

1. Freedom in Christ
2. Problem in 1st Century

## 1st Century

1. Jews - ceremony, ritual, legalism, Sabbaths, foods, clean/unclean  
So this concept of freedom in Christ was a problem in the 1st Century and we have hints of it in some of the passages where, there were Jews who were used to a life of ritual and ceremony.  
And it degenerated into a life of legalism, certain things they could do, certain ones they could not do; they had to observe Sabbaths, there were certain foods they could not eat and everything had to be kosher. It also included things that were clean and others that were unclean.

That is the background, the culture. In fact in some ways even OT specifications had been changed as a result of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, Jesus declared all foods to be clean, so that was no longer an issue.

We have an example in Daniel 1 where Daniel himself, because of his Jewish background, because of the law and the prohibition in Leviticus 11 of certain foods one could not eat and still maintain a clear conscience. So he proposed that they eat vegetables. That is based on this Jewish background.

Daniel 1.2...8 *Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank...16... kept giving them vegetables....20...found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.*

Acts 10.9-16 ...13 *A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." ...*

God commands Peter to eat...but Peter said that these are unclean and he had never had done this before. With a clear conscience he couldn't do it. he didn't understand that God had made all things clean.

What God is illustrating is that Gentiles are no longer unclean; in fact they can receive the same Holy Spirit as the Jews that received the HS on the day of Pentecost. Peter had to see this vision first before going to Cornelius—to realize that in Christ we are free.

Galatians. 2.11-14 ...12 *he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy,*

This is a similar situation where Paul has to rebuke Peter, dealing with the same issues that we are dealing with—I think the same as in chapter 14.

2. Gentiles - pagan festivals, drunken orgies, meats sacrificed to idols. The Gentiles came from a background of pagan festivals and some of them evolved into drunken orgies with immorality, and they would sacrifice meat to the idols that worshipped. So now the issue of eating certain foods was for converts from a Gentile background, just as those from Judaism, brought that background until they begin to realize their freedom in Christ. It takes time to begin to break from those old rituals, legalist patterns for both Jew and Gentile.  
1Corinthians is written to primarily a Gentile audience and the issue of meats sacrifice to idols. Paul deals with similar things in Romans 14 for both Jews and Gentiles.

1Cor 8.1-8 1 *Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies...4 Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one...7 However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. 8 But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.*

### Introduction

1. Freedom in Christ
2. Problem in 1st Century
3. Problem Today

We can see the problem today. People come from a variety of spiritual backgrounds, from all spiritual ages—young and old, mature and immature—different places in their Christian walk with a result of different convictions, different maturity levels, different denominations that include different religious practices that include different backgrounds, and even people who have broken away from cults who have to break from old patterns.

Within the church there are various background and cultural issues that can be a problem. Here is a list of examples:

### Today

1. People from all spiritual ages, maturity levels, denominations, religious backgrounds, cults...
2. Baptism, work on Sunday, wearing head coverings, pacifism, playing cards, movies, TV, parties, home schooling, observance of Christmas/Easter

Some people see baptism different than others and to them, to not practice baptism in the way that they were familiar with, they have a problem.

Some have a problem with working on Sundays, the head coverings or lack of coverings. Even pacifism, or the legalistic issues: playing cards, going to movies, TV, parties, even home schooling. The public schools have been so corrupted that there are some Christians that feel like it's wrong for Christians to go to public schools—and the right way is home schooling or private schools. Even the observance of Christmas and Easter: some believe that there is so much paganism that we need to abandon that all together.

### Introduction

1. Freedom in Christ
2. Problem in 1st Century
3. Problem Today
4. Weak Brother

What describes someone as a 'weak Christian'? Here is a list of what the issue is *not*:

### Issue is NOT:

1. Good/evil. There are standards; there are things that are evil and ought to be avoided. That is not the issue here.
2. Right/wrong. It is not right versus wrong. Some activities are not necessarily right or wrong.
3. Obedience/sin. It's not an issue of obedience as opposed to sin.
4. Spiritual/fleshly. Not an issue of being more spiritual than another.
5. Saving faith/unbelief. He is not talking about saving faith.
6. Strong/weak believers. Not about strong and weak believers though there may be some elements in terms of spiritual maturity and growth.
7. Mature/immature. Even maturity and immaturity is not an issue in chapters 14 and 15.

So what *is* at issue?

### ISSUE

1. Issue of conscience, convictions  
Conscience oftentimes will be hindered based on that background that different people come from which influences the things we sense inwardly in terms of conscience. And some things bother us, make us feel uncomfortable, guilty even. So we are dealing with *convictions*, what we have developed in our Christian walk and in our understanding. I think the issue undermining all of this is the issue of Christian freedom.
2. Weak = one who does not fully grasp his freedom in Christ.  
The weak believer in this context I see as one who does not fully grasp his freedom in Christ. This is important and I will emphasize it throughout the passage. The weak one is not necessarily the one who is immature, but it is the one who does not fully grasp or has not overcome that background, does not grasp his freedom in Christ.
3. Strong = one who does have a firmer grasp or better understanding of his freedom in Christ and has perhaps worked through his background more than the weak. I think this is the contrast that is in view in this passage.
4. **Tendency**  
> Weak - judgmental of strong

> Strong - pride & despising of weak: I have worked through all of that—you are less ‘mature’.

But Paul is going to stress the need for acceptance of others; he is not talking about tolerating clear-cut sin and things that are clearly spelled out in Scripture. He is dealing with background and convictions or lack of convictions. The need is for acceptance:

## ISSUE

1. Issue of conscience, convictions
2. Weak = one who does not fully grasp his freedom in Christ
3. Strong = one who does
4. Tendency - criticize or despise
5. Need - acceptance 14.1 *Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions....*  
*3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.*  
*15.7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.*

God has accepted all who are believers and they are free in Him.

Love does seek its own but is accepting of others!  
(Galatians 5.13 *For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*)

[Romans 14.1-3 Differing Convictions 185]

Paul is discussing an area of the Christian life that is not handled by absolutes like the 10 Commandments. It is in the area of Convictions and Conscience. He concludes that *acceptance* is the answer to the confusion that 1st Century Christians and today’s Christians have.

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| a. Reception of Brothers                | 14.1       |

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

In Greek the first position is the emphasized. The first word is ‘the one who is weak’. The participle (used as a noun) ‘one-who-is-weak’ is in the present tense so it is on-going. It refers to one who is weak in faith. We look at some of these words.

## Major Terms

1. Accept - προσλαμβάνω (prahs-lahm-báh-no) take to one’s self, receive totally

The word ‘to accept’ is a compound Greek word. The main part of the word is λαμβάνω (lahm-báh-no). Very common—occurring over 250 times in the NT—has the basic idea of ‘receive’ or ‘take’ something. And remember, when you add a preposition to a verb oftentimes it *intensifies* the idea of the verb. So here, it probably means to ‘receive *totally*’ or to ‘receive into fellowship’, or to ‘take to oneself’, ‘to draw them in’.

Our tendency is, ‘you are making trouble for me; I am going to repel you’. But the verb here is to draw them in, in a definite and total sense. It is a strong word. This may take some effort and determination. Our tendency is to repel, push away or back away rather than *embracing*—you could translate it that way, wrap your arms around and draw them in. The strong brother is repelled by this one because of his pride, generally. By the way, Paul is *addressing* the stronger brother in these earlier verses of the chapter. Later he deals with the weaker believer.

Acts 18.26 *and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*

Philemon 17 *If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me.*

Then, the second word, ‘weak’:

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

## Major Terms

1. Accept - προσλαμβάνω (prahs-lahm-báh-no) take to one’s self, receive totally
2. Weak - ἀσθενέω (ahs-theh-néh-o) literal y espiritual  
More commonly has the idea of weakness in a physical sense—sometimes translated ‘sick’ as in the Gospels. Jesus healed the

‘weak’ or ‘sick’. But it is also used a few times, as in this context when it is used in a more non-physical sense, like a spatial sense, and here in terms of spirituality.

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

Then we have a ‘but’: ‘but not for the purpose of passing judgment’. Don’t judge on his opinions. This word appears something like 4 times in this chapter.

### Major Terms

1. Accept - προσλαμβάνω (prahs-lahm-báh-no)
2. Weak - ἀσθενέω (ahs-theh-néh-o)
3. Pass judgment - διακρίσεις (dee-ah-kreé-sayis) discernment,  
(accusative noun) distinctions

Another compound word, διακρίσεις (dee-ah-kreé-sayis).

Sometimes it is used in a positive sense, as in making distinctions. In this context it is making a negative distinction, passing judgment in a negative sense. The passage encourages us against that.

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

Another Greek word, διαλογισμός (dee-ah-lah-guis-máhs). Notice ‘logos’ in the middle of it. We probably get a word like dialogue from that. It has the idea of ‘thoughts, ideas, opinions, thinking, reasoning’. So in your thinking and reasoning, don’t come to judgmental conclusions, even though you may have evaluated and took into account some of the data, don’t judge. You may even be accurate in your conclusion, but it is harmful to fellow believers when we judge them.

### Major Terms

1. Accept - προσλαμβάνω (prahs-lahm-báh-no)
2. Weak - ἀσθενέω (ahs-theh-néh-o)
3. Pass judgment - διακρίσεις (dee-ah-kreé-say-ees)
4. Opinions - διαλογισμός (dé-ah-lah-guis-máhs)  
thought, reasoning, opinion

That brings us to the section 2-11. Paul develops 4 major reasons in this passage to warn us against passing judgment, against not accepting the weaker brother.

There is also lots of encouragement in the Bible to warn brothers of their wrong behavior, for example, as long as we do it with humility, sincerity, kindness and care. He is dealing with particular kinds of things here; in other passages he is warning in more clear-cut areas.

Here he calls for more restraint since the issues are not so clear-cut. There has to be a balance in the Christian walk; there are occasions when we need to encourage, exhort and even rebuke one another. Those are areas that are very clear-cut and there is definitely a possibility of damage. Here these are not those kinds of areas.

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1) Salvation of God	14.2-3

So, the first reason for reception is that God has accepted both. I think this means that God has *saved* both and has accepted them just for their act. And He has a program of developing, sanctifying, strengthening both the strong and the weak.

Love does not seek its own but is accepting of others!

[Romans 14.2-5, 1Corinthians 8.1-13 Reasons for Accepting One Another (1) 186]

14.2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

### Major Terms

1. Accept - προσλαμβάνω (prahs-lahm-báh-no)
2. Weak - ἀσθενέω (ahs-theh-néh-o)
3. Pass judgment - διακρίσεις (dee-ah-kreé-say-ees)
4. Opinions - διαλογισμός (dé-ah-lah-guis-máhs)  
thought, reasoning, opinion
5. Faith - πιστεύω (pees-tyú-o)  
generally = to believe, to trust  
here = have confidence, assurance

This word is used very frequently the OT and NT. Generally has the idea of ‘to believe’, whether believing in Christ for the first time, receiving salvación, trusting in what He has done on

the cross—that's the basic idea—or, believing what God has revealed in His word.

In this context he is probably using it in a more general sense of having confidence. In other words, those that have a belief that it is OK to do certain things and that belief gives them the confidence that they have the freedom to eat pork, for example. Or, they have the assurance that they do not necessarily have to observe the feast days of the Jewish calendar and/or the Sabbath.

If you came from a Jewish background you would have a tendency to look at the Sabbath in a very special way. And in the NT we see that there are *no* special days. That is part of the teaching here—we are not under the law. The Sabbath is like any other day.

(By the way, Sunday is not the Christian 'Sabbath'. We do not attach all the Jewish aspects of the Saturday sabbath to Sunday. In fact, we have *freedom* in that area because all days are alike in terms of our relationship to God. So it is not a sin to work on Sunday and/or Saturday.)

14.2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

He feels he can eat all things...He has this confidence, this assurance, this trust that it is OK and he has the freedom to eat whatever he pleases. But one who is weak because he doesn't have the same freedom says, 'Well, I'm not going to take a chance; that meat might have been offered to idols and I don't want to be contaminated, I don't want to be sinful, or have a problem, so I am going to stay away from all meats and just eat vegetables'. Apparently that was the situation in the 1st Century.

One has the 'faith', not salvación faith but the assurance that he has freedom, but another only has faith that he should only eat vegetables. Notice that this was a **Jewish** problem.

### Freedom

1. Jewish problem - Mark 7.18 *And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.)*

Notice, kind of a parenthetical statement at the end of verse 19. Food doesn't defile, and the little statement 'thus he declared all foods clean', is for the benefit of a Jewish audience who, like Peter, in Acts 10, who could not eat the food that God

commanded him to eat because of his background. God told him 3 times to eat, because He had cleansed all food.

1 Timothy 4.3 *men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; 5 for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.*

'Sanctified', in other words, pork just as set apart as any food that is kosher. The meat that was prohibited is set apart the same. Give thanks to the Lord. They were no longer under the law because Christ basically has fulfilled those aspects of the law that pertain to all of these issues. Christ also declared all foods clean.

The **Gentiles** had a similar problem, but not with respect to the Mosaic Law. Some of the Gentiles came from a pagan religious background. They would visit a temple, worshipping false gods and their worship part was to bring foods and offer them to idols, ie, sacrifice them in a religious sense, giving them over to idols.

Now some of these Gentiles are becoming believers and now in Christ they are thinking 'I want to be careful because I don't want to eat those foods given to idols; I might be contaminated by those idols. Paul addresses an audience at Corinth. Much is very parallel to what we are seeing in Romans 14 and 15.

2. Gentile problem - 1 Corinthians 8.1 *Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.*

Don't let your knowledge and freedom overshadow your relationship with those who don't have the same knowledge. 2 If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; 3 but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

He is addressing this issue of pride and knowledge. Then he continues it in verse 4:

4 Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, This is the cultural issue, the problem of the day. we know [includes himself] that there is no such thing as an idol in the world.

There are no gods: and that there is no God but one.

Only the one true God of the Bible. There is no such things as real 'gods', so all these gods that *unbelievers* worship were false deities; they actually don't even exist. They are dead. In

our minds we create the idea of their reality and think there is a reality behind them, but Paul is saying they don't even exist. And if they don't exist then they can't affect you. He is not denying that there are demonic forces, not denying that there are ideas that can influence your thinking and have an effect on your spirituality. He continues:

5 *For even if there are so-called gods*

That is, gods of your imagination, of your creation, temples that you build to these gods...  
*whether in heaven or on earth,*

There are demonic spirits in the heavens.  
*as indeed there are many gods and many lords,*

They are not real, but are so real in our thinking that they have an impact and can do damage. And demonic forces can use those ideas to do damage to us also. And there are *many lords*—creations in our imaginations, influenced by demonic spirits

6 *yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.*

There is only one true God. All others are false ideas or demonic influences.

7 *However not all men have this knowledge:*

He is not denying the existence of idols, in fact there is idolatry today, idol that *we* create.  
*but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.*

So now they have a guilty conscience. It's a false guilt, but guilt all the same and that false guilt can have an impact on your walk and break your fellowship with God. So it's an issue of conscience here. You have to limit your liberty on some occasions if it is going to have an effect on a weaker brother. He doesn't use the word 'conscience' in Romans but I think he is dealing with the same idea. Then he goes on:

8 *But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.*

It doesn't matter. You can eat whatever you want. Of course there is instruction that we do all things in moderation. Jesus says that it's not what goes into the body that defiles, rather it is the evil that comes out of the heart.

9 *But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.*

The weak are seeing you eat this meat, and thinking about it possibly sacrificed to idols. It doesn't seem right; it bothers

their conscience. They have a different view of *you*: 'you are not as spiritual as I thought. So I can become a stumbling block.  
10 *For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?*

But now he is thinking it might be alright if that one is eating it. 'Maybe I could eat it but I don't have that freedom yet'. But it could strengthen his conscience.

11 *For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.*

You can damage a weaker, fellow brother—for whom Christ also died.

12 *And so, by sinning against the brethren [the damaging of the conscience is the sin here] and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.*

You can sin against Christ by sinning against the fellow brother.

This, then, is a Gentile passage, relating to foods offered to idols. And, if we cannot forsake our liberty for the sake of those around us, we are not really free. Sensitivity is necessary; there is a balance—which we will talk more about later on.

14.2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

Another eats only vegetables. Two different convictions. Both those of Jewish and those of Gentile backgrounds may decide just to be safe to be vegetarians. This may not be so much a problem today, but today we have other issues as well.

14.3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

He identified them in verse 2 and the exhortation here is not to regard with *contempt* because that is our temptation; the one who eats and has freedom, not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat.

The attitudes of the 'strong' and the 'weak'. And we are not to *judge*. They are both accepted and forgiven; Christ died on the cross for them. Each can have the same fellowship or relationship with God. The implication is that God is the one to make such decisions. There is a time to judge and a time not to judge—and Matthew 7 deals with this.

Humility is the key: esteem others more highly—even if they are wrong in your opinion.

### Major Terms

1. Accept - προσλαμβάνω (prahs-lahm-báh-no)
2. Weak - ἀσθενέω (ahs-theh-néh-o)
3. Pass judgment - διακρίσεις (dee-ah-kreé-say-ees)
4. Opinions - διαλογισμός (déeh-ah-lah-guis-máhs)
5. Faith - πιστεύω (pees-tyú-o)
6. Regard with contempt - ἐξουθενέω (ek-su-then-éh-o)  
look down on, despise

The Greek word: to look down on or even despise

14.3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

And the one who does not eat, is not to *judge* which is the tendency: How could you eat that? Isn't that sin? Aren't you a sinner now? Here the exhortation is to correct the problem.

### Major Terms

1. Accept - προσλαμβάνω (prahs-lahm-báh-no)
2. Weak - ἀσθενέω (ahs-theh-néh-o)
3. Pass judgment - διακρίσεις (dee-ah-kreé-say-ees)
4. Opinions - διαλογισμός (déeh-ah-lah-guis-máhs)
5. Faith - πιστεύω (pees-tyú-o)
6. Regard with contempt - ἐξουθενέω (ek-su-then-éh-o)
7. Judge - κρίνω - (kreé-no) judge, condemn

The word *judge* is the same one we saw earlier. In some contexts even to *condemn*, sometimes used in a strong sense.

14.3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

The reason why we are not to look with contempt, the reason why the weak brother is not to judge is because God has accepted him, received him into eternal life, His kingdom. God has saved them when they were sinners. Since God has accepted them, Who are we to look on them with contempt and judge them?

- |                                         |           |
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- |                                        |            |
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| 1. Reception of Differing Convictions  | 14.1-12    |
| a. Reception of Brothers               | 14.1       |
| b. Reasons for Reception               | 14.2-11    |
| 1) Salvation of God                    | 14.2-3     |
| 2) Sustaining of Lord                  | 14.4       |

In verse 4 we have another reason: God is going to sustain them—both the strong and the weak.

14.4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

I think he is addressing the weak believer. You who are the weak believer to judge the servant of another? He uses an analogy from the 1st Century. There were masters and slaves. A master took care of his slaves. He would reprimand them if they weren't doing what they needed to do. He was the owner. In that culture, slavery was not as evil; it depended on the master—he could be good master and you would have a very good situation if you were a slave.

Here: 'the servant of another', i.e, we are servants of Christ; He is the benevolent Master who not only cares for us, but does what is best for us.

14.4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Then he says, to his own master he stands or falls, that is, you can't go into another family and enter a household and tell the house slave he put the fork on the wrong side of the plate. That is the job of the master. Or, you can't say, 'I don't like the way you look'. Can you give me another servant—that's discourteous. You can't deal with somebody else's servant. His point: we are all servants of Christ and it is Christ who is going to reprimand someone for eating something he shouldn't eat.

14.4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

To his own master he will stand. Why? Because the Lord is able to make him stand; in other words, the Lord is in the process of sanctifying



all of us, working in all of us, knowing exactly what we need individually. We have no place, especially in these questionable areas, to come and reprimand *Christ's servants*. Let Christ do it. If you have an issue, then you take it to the Master, to the Lord and let Him deal with it. The Lord is going to sanctify him and make him stand. The Lord will correct.

Today some people are taking moral issue that the Bible has, eg, homosexuality, and making such issues questionable. And they use this passage for justification for it. Another common thing in our culture, post-modernism, where people say different people have a different *truth*.

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a. Reception of Brothers	14.1
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3) Sovereignty of Lord	14.5-9

Another reason to be careful of one another and accepting of one another in these questionable areas where background or baggage are involved, and Christian liberty, is that God is sovereign, so He can deal with these issues as individuals have need. So in verses 5-9 he emphasizes the Lordship or sovereignty of God.

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

So he introduces similar issues, ones where it is also observing certain days—both were issues in the 1st Century. The Gentiles also observed certain days, related to luck and to other gods...

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

Another regards every day alike. By the way, Sunday was the first day of the week and in the 1st Century it was a work day. So the church

worshipped in commemoration and remembering the resurrection. The early church did not make Sunday the 'Christian Sabbath'. They had to worship, especially if they were a slave or servant, either before or after work. But they did so on the 1st day because they commemorated it. There is evidence that it became a pattern or practice. But it was not like the Jewish Sabbath.

Interesting: the word 'regard' is the same that we have just seen in this passage. κρίνω - (kreé-no) which means to *judge*. So notice words in their context are used in different ways. We do this ourselves.

### Judging

14.1 - passing judgment διακρίσεις (dee-ah-kreé-sayis)

14.3-4 - judge κρίνω - (kreé-no)

14.5 - regard κρίνω - (kreé-no) consider, esteem, come to the conclusion, evaluate.

Used two times, in slightly different ways. This is how language works. Words have a semantic range or a range of meaning. And here we have an example of the same word used in different ways.

Since we are talking about 'days', we need a clear perspective on days. We say that Christ declared all foods clean. Now with days...

Colossians 2.16 *Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.*

In the church age, we are not under the Jewish Law where God specified and commanded the observance of the Sabbath and other feast days, eg, the new moon, other feasts or days. We are not under a Jewish system any more, not under the Mosaic Covenant—that was fulfilled in Christ. That was for the nation of Israel, not for the body of Christ. And that pertains to Jewish people that become Christians—which is where the problem lies.

Another passage is Galatians 4.8-10

Galatians 4.8 *However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. 9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? 10 You observe days and months and seasons and years.*

Looking at them differently and adjusting some of your attitudes in terms of your view of these days... Essentially the NT

is saying there are no special days, every day is a day to *worship* the Lord. Every day is a day to *serve* the Lord. Some of us have set aside certain days like Sunday for worship and then live the rest of the week however they want. That is not Biblical.

Tithing is another of those areas that is part of the law, so there are a lot of Jewish and legal things regarding the law that Christ has set us free. Galatians says: Don't go back to those things. So we have tremendous freedom in Christ, but in the Romans 14 context we need to be sensitive to one another and also recognize that my background may influence me today and hinder my freedom. And my freedom might be imposed on others, hindering them and / or my lack of freedom as well, so we need to be sensitive.

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

Individual convictions—Each must be fully convinced in his own mind. The Greek word: πληροφορέω (play-ro-fo-réh-o)

### Major Terms

1. Accept - προσλαμβάνω (prahs-lahm-báh-no)
2. Weak - ἀσθενέω (ahs-theh-néh-o)
3. Pass judgment - διακρίσεις (dee-ah-kreé-say-ees)
4. Opinions - διαλογισμός (déeh-ah-lah-guis-máhs)
5. Faith - πιστεύω (pees-tyú-o)
6. Regard with contempt - ἐξουθενέω (ek-su-then-éh-o)
7. Judge - κρίνω - (kreé-no) judge, condemn
8. Fully convinced - πληροφορέω (play-ro-fo-réh-o)

Romans 4.21 *and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.*

As we grow we develop convictions but they should not be imposed on others and we must take into account the convictions of other who are weaker. In our culture taking alcohol is an issue.

Colosenses 4.12 *Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.*

A living sacrifice lives to do the Lord's will!

[Romans 14.5-10 Reasons for Accepting One Another (2) 187]

14.6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

Paul is going to expand on this and give rational reasons for why we should not hold others to our own convictions and let them have the freedom that God has given—nor to force those who don't have those freedoms to conform to our viewpoint.

These are believers sincerely trying to please the Lord, so they are doing it because they are trying to honor and obey Him. And because they are not free yet, they are observing the Sabbath, for example, observing certain days.

14.6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

So the one that is free to eat—notice he brings the two issues together in the same verse—in the other verses he talked about the days, and now the issue of eating particular meats: one group says 'I'm going to abstain from all meats and just eat vegetables—to be safe'.

One who observes the day does it for the Lord, ie, he is sincere and wants to please the Lord and likewise the one who eats does so for the Lord...

14.6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

...for he gives thanks to the Lord. So there is sincerity here, some reality. It is a matter of needing to have space to grow, and, if they are giving thanks they don't think they are doing the wrong thing—if they can eat meats that have been offered to idols, and are doing it in sincerity and giving thanks.

14.6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

And the one who does not eat those meats is also doing it for the Lord, in sincerity. They need room to grow...

14.6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

...he is also giving thanks. Both of them are sincere and want to please the Lord.

Now here is a recurring theme in this chapter, kind of a sub-idea, which is obvious as we work through it. So, starting in this first verse.

14.6 He who observes the day, observes it for the **Lord**, and he who eats, does so for the **Lord**, for he gives thanks to **God**; and he who eats not, for the **Lord** he does not eat, and gives thanks to **God**.

Notice the interchange between Lord and God. We already have seen in this passage that he is talking about a relationship with Jesus Christ, and we will see kind of an interplay with a reference to Jesus, in this case the same sentence, and a reference to God. He is not making distinctions; I think he is, out of a normal understanding of the nature of Christ, speaking of Christ as Lord, and in the same sentence you can refer to Him as God—because of the Deity of Christ.

This chapter is full of this, several little notes which, if you look at the details, Paul is seeing Jesus as God, supporting the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Verse 6 is a vivid example; I think he is referring to the Lord, giving thanks, and then to God...

#### **Deity of Christ**

14.3 - God, θεός (theh-ós)

14.4 - Lord, κύριος (kúr-ee-os)

14.6 - Lord (3x), God (2x)

In verse 3 we have the mention of God in the same context. Verse 4: Lord. Verse 6: 'Lord' 3 times and God 2 times. He goes back and forth. He sees that Jesus is fully God. It is not the strongest statement in Scripture supporting the Deity of Christ, but it gives some added detail concerning the deity of Christ. There will be several examples, up to verse 12.

14.7-8 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Getting back to individual believers, eating, trying to please the Lord, giving thanks for the food that God has provided. By the way, this is one of the first passages in all Scripture that alludes to the early church offering grace, thankfulness before a meal, even though a 'meal' is not specified. But this is one of the passages where the tradition gets started with the church giving thanks before the meal.

We are a body, a unit, not individually related to Jesus Christ, we are corporately related. Certainly *we have* an individual relationship but

that individuality and freedom should be in consideration of the broader relationship of brothers and sister together. 'Not one of us lives for himself': we have a relationship with one another...

14.7-8 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

... 'not one dies for himself' mentioning the totality of who we are.

14.7-8 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

'for if we live, we live for the Lord.' This is what believers want to do; we have kind of a summary of the Christian walk and our deepest desire, yearning, is to live for the Lord. We have things that sidetrack us and that whole nature that trips us up, but at the heart of every believer, with the weak and the strong, we live for the Lord...

14.7-8 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

... 'or if we die, we die for the Lord'. In the Christian walk we are related to one another, so he come to the conclusion that 'if we die, we die for the Lord'. All of life we are the Lord's, we belong to Him and belonging to Him there is this tie to one another, there is a body of Christ as the Bible indicates.

Also, in verse 8 we have 'Lord' 3 times again. This Lordship of Jesus Christ is an underlying theme, not only with the word κύριος (kúr-ee-os), but he is going to make some stronger statements as we go further.

14.7-8 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the **Lord**, or if we die, we die for the **Lord**; therefore whether we live or die, we are the **Lord**'s.

#### **Deity of Christ**

14.3 - God, θεός (theh-ós)

14.4 - Lord, κύριος (kúr-ee-os)

14.6 - Lord (3x), God (2x)

14.8 - Lord (3x)

Then, in verse 9, he is talking about *Christ*...

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

This is one of the reasons that Christ came and died and was raised. This isn't the totality of the reason, but if you study the rest of Scripture, there are several purposes—you can make a whole list of reasons that Christ came and died and was raised. Here we have an interesting one: He died to be *Lord*, to have sovereignty over the body, over all of us. Certainly he came for the provision of sin, that we might have a relationship with the Lord, one of the main purposes.

Other passages indicate that He came to satisfy all of the legal demands of the Father, the things that the Father requires in order to have a relationship with sinners, sinful man. So from the human perspective He died for provision for sin, but also he satisfied all that God required—was the propitiation—for all that was required legally and judicially by dying not the cross. These are two very broad areas of the reason why Christ died, and here we have a third one.

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

... 'might be Lord both of the dead and of the living'. By virtue of resurrection He is now Lord over all, dead and living, that is, sovereign over all. Remember, when He came he emptied himself, Philippians 2, not diminishing His deity, not emptying Himself of the perfections of God, but emptying Himself of the use of His full privileges or the access of the full deity, and in that sovereignty He is now Lord. Again the word 'Lord' is here.

So, the reason that he gives here is that Jesus is Lord, *we* are not Lord over one another; we should not try to replace Jesus and try to manage somebody else's Christian walk. Now we need to nurture and encourage and teach and minister to people, but we can't *manage* them as 'lords'. There is one Lord. That is one of the reasons why He even came.

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3) Sovereignty of Lord	14.5-9
4) Judgment seat of God	14.10-11

He gives a 4th reason: the Judgment Seat of Christ. Paul is giving 4 reasons why we need to accept one another as he points out in verse one. God has accepted them, brought them into the family, and saved them.

Secondly, God is the one who is going to sustain them and they are going to stand or fall, verse 4, on the basis of God sustaining them. We don't have the power to do it.

And we just looked at Christ as the Sovereign; we are not the master. The 4th reason, then, is the judgment seat of Christ.

14.10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

The 'you' here is emphatic, both in English and the Greek text. 'why do you judge', κρίνω - (kreé-no), 'your brother'? Again, with a rather intimate idea, as he has before. There is a family relationship; we are related as brother/sisters.

14.10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

'Or, you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt?' He is re-iterating this to emphasize it in this context of the 4th reason why we are to accept one another....

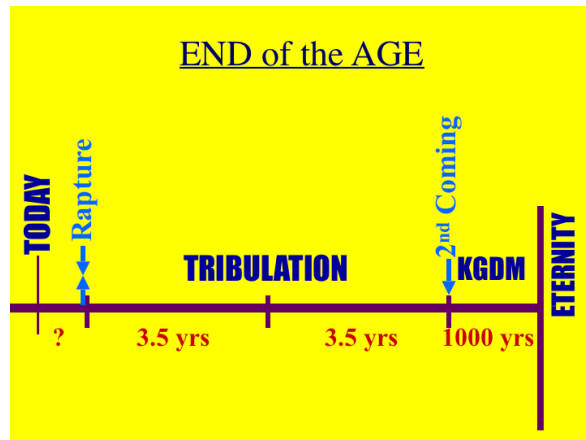
14.10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

And this is the underlying reason, 'for we will all' be evaluated, 'stand before the judgment seat of God'. In the Greek text, 'judgment seat' is one word, but people often misunderstand what the judgment seat is all about. The word is βῆμα (báy-mah). In the end of the age, studying Bible prophecy, we have studied the pre-millennial viewpoint where, the next major point in time, is the rapture, 1Thessalonians 4.

On this timeline, I put a little gap between the rapture and beginning of the 7 years period—precise, from the OT, the book of Revelation adding to that precision. I believe that this time is primarily for the nation of Israel. This is where Romans 11 begins to unfold in terms of God fulfilling that future plan for the nation of Israel—a terrible time, called Tribulation. The Bible divides it into two parts, 3.5 years of each, and then the return of the Lord.

His 2nd coming is in two phases: He comes down, (see arrow) and we meet Him in the clouds. Then we, the church, are with Him. Then the 7-year period which is actually initiated by another event, and then Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom. This is what the Jews expected in the 1st century, but because the nation of Israel rejected their Messiah, the Kingdom was postponed.

I mention all of that in order to explain a little more detail beyond just the βῆμα (báy-mah). The Bible is not specific, doesn't give a timeline—in fact, there is nothing in the Bible that gives us a timeline. Eschatology is *Jewish*, and it is not only detailed but is a very precise and in a specific time frame. This 7-year period is part of that.



We, and others, would put the next major event for the Church as the βῆμα (báy-mah), that is, we go to be with the Lord and this Judgment Seat is where we will appear. The question is: Do *Christians* face judgment?

**Christian Judgment (x3)** 1Corinthians 3

> Past - Paid in Full

Christians have experienced judgment on the cross, where Jesus paid in full all the penalty for sin. So, Christians will not ever face judgment for sin because Jesus pagó in full everything that was required for God's legal standards. In the words of Jesus Himself:

John 5.24 “*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*

> Present - Discipline But God does intervene like a father, in fact that is the analogy of the passage in Hebrews 12, to correct us as His children, and we call that *discipline*. It can be harsh and severe, but it is not judgment for sin, it is *correction*, just like a father with a child in order to keep that child from damaging or destroying himself. Discipline is an important part of the ongoing experience of the Christian life.

> Future - Rewards or Loss And there is a *future* evaluation. When we describe it as a ‘judgment seat’, using the word judgment it almost conveys an idea contrary to the idea that we are not going to be *judged*. Sometimes we describe it as the βῆμα (báy-mah), to avoid the idea of judgment. In reality it is a future granting of rewards or loss; that is the essence of it.

There is a negative aspect; we will look at a passage for that, 1Corinthians 3, where we will be evaluated and how we live today determines this evaluation. And I believe that the rewards or losses will be experienced during that 1000-year Millennial Kingdom. So there will be a review of how we live the Christian life and there is the potential to live in disobedience and to live apart from Christ as a believer. The Bible is clear: we don't lose salvation but we do lose rewards. This is like a bonus. You go to work, you earn a salary as you work the hours, Then, at the end of the year, if you were very good as an employee, the boss gives you a bonus. Paul is using imagery very common in the 1st Century. We can see the remains of a βῆμα (báy-mah) in Corinth, somewhat in the center of the city.

[Romans 14.10, 1Corinthians 3.8-15 Judgment Seat of Christ 188]

This little structure here dates back to the 1st Century is a βῆμα (báy-mah). This is a place where a judge, on the top of it, would have a seat and pass judgment. It was a civil judgment where, if crimes were committed or complaints were brought before a judge, the judge would sit in judgment.

In Acts 25.6 and 10 we have an example of this very thing. In the context of the passage, Festus, a Roman leader, bringing Paul for judgment,

*6 After he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal [βῆμα (báy-mah)] and ordered Paul to be brought.*

So Paul was going to stand on trial before the tribunal [βῆμα (báy-mah)], before Festus. Discussion followed,  
10 But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, [i.e.,

## βῆμα (báy-mah)



with the full authority of Caesar himself] *where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know.*  
So he was going to present a legal case before the βῆμα (báy-mah). And this was used, not only for legal issues, but as we see in Acts 12.21 it could also be used as a place for an oration, a speech or a public address.

12.21 *On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum [βῆμα (báy-mah)] and began delivering an address to them.*

So it was a platform for a public message.

Also in the 1st Century, we don't have a NT example of it, there was also a platform related to the Olympic games (for which in Corinth there would have been a stadium and on the designated years there would be the Olympic games). The winner would be placed on the public platform and given his award and honored. That platform was also called a βῆμα (báy-mah).

That is the background or imagery of the NT. And what is in view in passages that refer to this 'judgment seat of Christ', this βῆμα (báy-mah) is used in a more spiritual sense, in a future sense of standing before the ultimate judge, the Lord Jesus Christ. But it was *not* for judgment in terms of judgment of sin, so the first usage would apply to the βῆμα (báy-mah) here, but it would also include the 3rd one, the platform for reward because an individual will stand in the future before the Lord Jesus Christ if he is a genuine believer—he has passed from death to life as John 5.24 tells us.

What will be judged is the life of the believer after he has believed in Christ and Christ has promised rewards for faithfulness. But for

*unfaithfulness* there is also a possibility of *losing* something; it's not clear exactly what but we can probably come to some conclusions.

That is the background to it. There are passages that seem to describe more of the βῆμα (báy-mah). We know, for example, that Christ, in the upper room told His disciples that He must depart. Now He is preparing them for his death, but He will also return, John 14: He would go to prepare a place for believers.

### **Description**

1. Place - heaven

It appears that the passage in 1Thessalonians 4 that describes the Rapture of the Church, which is in the 'heavenlies'.

2. Time - after Rapture

The βῆμα (báy-mah) or 'judgment seat' occurs probably shortly after or simultaneous with the Rapture. We will stand before Him. There is not a passage that indicates that, but that seems to be the more logical time that we can conclude from all the passages that describe it.

There are several passages that refer to the judgment seat, but the word itself is only used in a few of them. Romans 14.10 and 2Corinthians 5.10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*

3. Judge - Since all judgment has been given over to Jesus Christ, He will be the one to bring judgment. Interestingly in Romans, we have been seeing that Paul seems to switch back and forth with terms that relate to God the Father and his term for Jesus is 'the Lord', Christ Himself. So in 2Corinthians 5.10 he refers to Christ but in this Romans passage it is the 'judgment seat of God'.

Romans 14.10 *But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.*

With Christ in view. This is another of those passages that I mentioned recently where the deity of Christ possibly is in view. But elsewhere we see that Christ is the judge. For example in 2Corinthians 5.10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

There is an *accounting*, not a judgment for sin—that's paid in full—an accounting for how we live our life after we believed in Jesus Christ. If you understand the justice of God, that's justice, it's only *right*; there should be a distinction between those that are faithful to the Lord and those that perhaps are not as . And the Lord Jesus Christ has set up promising us reward above and beyond

eternal life, forgiveness of sin and beyond salvation. That is what the βῆμα (báy-mah) is all about.

4. Subjects - church

If you study all the contexts related to the βῆμα (báy-mah) y the concept of rewards, they deal with believers or the believers of the church age. This is the *true* church, composed of only those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their savior. Those are the subjects of the βῆμα (báy-mah).

5. Basis - grace

Some of the passages stress the concept of the *basis* of this evaluation or review is the basis of grace. Everything in the Christian walk is on the basis of grace: in the beginning we are saved by grace and grace alone; we have no claim on God, do not earn anything before God—we *could* not do *enough* to earn God's goodness, so it must be on the basis of grace.

6. Purpose - rewards

And also, these rewards—it's not that we are earning them. I think they are more as motivation to encourage, but in His goodness He wants to grant good gifts. We can view these rewards as gracious gifts that God has provided for us, and He has given us a lot of detail concerning the future rewards. Passages include a central one, in the context of Paul addressing the believers at Corinth, the very church where the archeologists have uncovered this βῆμα (báy-mah) and Paul describes what goes on there:

1 Corinthians 3.8 *Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.*

Those that share the gospel are going to receive a reward according to his own labor. That's the context. Paul even introduces this passage with the idea of reward. Then:

9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Now he is going to use an analogy, these workers are evangelists, believers that are sharing the gospel and they are building a building and this building, as any building would have different components so he is using an analogy from engineering and construction. And he starts with the foundation in verse 10

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me,  
Notice the emphasis on *grace*, so the ministry that God has given is on the basis of grace  
*like a wise master builder*

So Paul is a construction worker, a master builder  
*I laid a foundation, and another is building on it.*

The imagery of a structure

*But each man must be careful how he builds on it.*

That is, you can make different kinds of structures, good or bad, sound or not so sound, depending on what you use in terms of construction materials and the technique that you use to build. Then verse 11 elaborates.

11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The image of the foundation—the whole experience of salvation.

12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

A list a materials. There are two classifications: one is the very precious ones, very durable, stable ones, and others not so: wood, hay and straw very easily blown away and destroyed with fire.

13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

'each man's work': remember the analogy, ministry, building the church in terms of spiritual development of people—broadly in ministry. Each man's ministry or work will become evident—'for the day will show it'. He doesn't refer to the judgment seat of Christ but he is talking of a particular day when an accounting will be made. 'It is to be revealed with fire', i.e., this structure will be put through the test. 'And the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work'.

So what we do in terms of our Christian walk, and if we are faithfully ministering in what God has given us, in spiritual gifts, that will come before the judge, the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't mean we are going to lose salvation, or that our sin of unfaithfulness is judged, but ...

14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains,

If it was from building materials that are permanent and stable, *he will receive a reward.*

Now this is a reward above and beyond that foundation of salvation. And God has graciously promised that we have award awaiting on the basis of faithfulness. *But:*

15 If any man's work is burned up,

That is, built on hay, wood, straw, 'is burned up'  
*he will suffer loss;*

So there is a loss; something will be lost.

*but he himself will be saved,*

No losing of salvation; it doesn't impact salvation at all.  
*yet so as through fire.*

There is going to be a cleansing or purification, a removal of that is useless and has no place in the eternal state of the Father. But the point being that we will stand accountable before a Holy God and have to give and account.



There is a future time of evaluation, called the βῆμα (báy-mah) of Christ or of God where, in fact, how we have lived the Christian walk, whether faithful or unfaithful, and in that evaluation we will receive rewards for all that we have done in the area of faithfulness and the possibility of loss.

### Rewards

> Rewards - 1Corinthians 3.8-15

Matthew 16.27 *For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.*

Jesus speaks in Matthew 16.27, and Paul in Ephesians:

Ephesians 6.8 *knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.*

> Crowns - 2 Timothy 4.8 *in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

There are several passages about crowns. This one focuses on service. Others, all relate to the βῆμα (báy-mah) and what we have discussed here.

### Crowns

1. Imperishable - 1Corinthians 9.25 *Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.*

2. Believers - Philippians 4.1 *Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.*

Interesting in Philippians 4.1 and also 1Thessalonians 2.19, Paul says that believers that believed in Christ as a result of *his* ministry, *they* are his crown. So any believers that have come as a result of your ministry, they will be your crown in the future, at least that is what seems to indicate with regard to his ministry.

1Thessalonians 2.19 *For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?*

3. Service - 2Timothy 4.8 *in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

4. Perseverance- Revelation 2.10 *'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so*

*that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

Crowns are promised for persevering and particularly through trouble, tribulation, so that those who are persecuted will receive a crown.

5. Shepherding - 1Peter 5.4 *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

And leaders, if they are faithful in their ministry, for shepherding, that's the specific context there, but I think it would extend to other ministries as leaders as well.

6. **Returning crowns** - Revelation 4.10 *the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*

In the heavenly scene here, probably the church or believers in John's vision. And interestingly those believers are casting their crowns back before God the Father. And I think they are recognizing the grace involved and the thanksgiving for the granting of these crowns.

### Rewards

> Rewards - 1Corinthians 3.8-15, Matthew 16.27, Ephesians 6.8

> Crowns - 2 Timothy 4.8

> Inheritance - Colossians 3.23 *Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.*

And, the whole concept of inheritance in Scripture. There are passages referring to it, using the analogy of a physical inheritance. There is also a spiritual inheritance which is contingent on how we live the Christian walk. Verse 23: Work hard and do your work for the Lord and not for men. Doing your work—that's ministry, involvement, faithfulness. Verse 24: you will receive the reward of the inheritance from the Lord. It is Christ whom you serve.

1Peter 1.4 *to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,*

> Reigning - Revelation 3.21 *'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*

Revelation 3.21 give more specifics concerning what that reward may be: addressed to believers at Laodicea, he is encouraging them, motivating them, even though there is some unfaithfulness that He rebukes, but in the end of the passage, 'he who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My



throne'. That's the Millennial throne, so in the Millennial Kingdom there will be rewards, 'to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne'.

That's one passage that gives us a little picture of at least one way that these rewards may manifest themselves as reigning with Him. We will be a part of His administration during the thousand year reign on earth that completes world history.

This is the conclusion of the book, Jesus speaking:

Revelation 22.12 "*Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.*

That's the βῆμα (báy-mah) and it is a future evaluation or judgment or a time where we will be evaluated on the basis of how we live the Christian walk. So it is important how we live today because there is future reward. Sadly, for those that are *not* faithful there is the possibility of loss. But it is a glorious thing to think we have so many, abundant gifts that the Lord has given and promises of even things in the future. May we be motivated to live faithfully for our Lord.

How we live now will determine our place in the Millennial Kingdom!

[Romans 14.13-23 Restraints of Liberty for benefit of others 189]

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1) Salvation of God	14.2-3
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4) Judgment seat of God	14.10-11

14.10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

We noted that we will receive rewards like the athletes on the 'judgment seat', the βῆμα (báy-mah).

14.11 For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD."

Now he is going to support his statement from Scripture 'for it is written', referring to the Old Testament and he is quoting first from Isaiah 49.18, 'As I live says Jahweh..' In Isaiah Jahweh es God, the intimate way of identifying or referring to *elohim* the more formal, the more general term for God, but in the OT Jahweh would be translated 'Lord' in these passages. *Elohim* is the creator God and is more transcendent and distant. And 'God' obviously is both.

So 'AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD,' we call attention to that because in this context he is talking about Christ. Later on we will see that he mixes the two: Christ and God: Jahweh is used for both. You can use Romans 14 to support the Deity of Christ. Not overtly and not as clearly as Hebrews 1 where Jesus is actually called God, but kind of implied. It is almost like Paul freely thinks of Jesus as Jahweh, as God, because of the Deity of Christ.

'AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME,' that is, everyone will some day stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and, in this context, worship Him. This is support that Paul uses in terms of us all standing before the judgment seat and we will bow down; we will worship him. This Isaiah passage is rather a broad passage and could refer to both believers and unbelievers. And interestingly he is applying this to the believers—remember we said that only genuine believers stand before the βῆμα (báy-mah). There are other judgments where the *unbeliever* will stand, like the Great White Throne, but I think the Isaiah passage is broad, ie, includes *every* knee to bow to Him. And not only every knee, but because it is Hebrew poetry it gives another line, 'AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD' from Isaiah 45.22-23 where God is *Elohim*.

Notice here it is 'GOD' and in the OT we have Jahweh and we have *Elohim* in a context that is talking about a judgment seat and, even though it says God here, everywhere else that talks about the judgment seat it is in reference to Christ. 2Corinthians 5.10, calls it the βῆμα (báy-mah) of Christ; that judgment is before Jesus Christ. So Paul just mixed these words freely because Jesus is fully Jahweh, fully God...and the Doctrine of the Trinity, I show this.

## Deity of Christ

- 14.3 - God, θεός (theh-ós)
- 14.4 - Lord, κύριος (kúr-ee-os)
- 14.6 - Lord (3x), God (2x)
- 14.8 - Lord (3x)
- 14.10 - Judge
- 14.11 - YWHW, God

We have been seeing throughout the passage, beginning in verse 3 referring to θεός (theh-ós) or God, in a context of Christ. In verse 4, κύριος (kúr-ee-os) which in the NT would be, in some contexts, the equivalent of Jawheh in the OT, 'Lord'. In verse 6 we have the word 'Lord' 3 times and God 2 times in the context of Jesus. Verse 8, 'Lord' 3 times referring to Him as the master of the believer. Verse 10, we saw the judgment seat of 'God' but it is of Christ. And now we have, in verse 11, Yahweh and God. All this is implying and subtly supporting the Deity of Christ.

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a. Reception of Brothers	14.1
b. Reasons for Reception	14.2-11
c. Review before God	14.12

We have already seen the receiving of brothers in verse 1 and then we saw 4 reasons, 2-11, why we are to receive one another, and now he kind of re-emphasizes that judgment idea in verse 12, the review before God. I break it up because grammatically it is a little bit different. It's more of a conclusion:

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

It is kind of a summary as well: 'So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. Here it is 'God' again. We stand before the judgment seat of 'Christ'.

## Deity of Christ

- 14.3 - God, θεός (theh-ós)

- 14.4 - Lord, κύριος (kúr-ee-os)
- 14.6 - Lord (3x), God (2x)
- 14.8 - Lord (3x)
- 14.10 - Judge
- 14.11 - YWHW, God
- 14.12 - God

Again, verse 12 he refers to 'God', subtly supporting the deity of Christ.

That ends the sección 1-12 with the main emphasis of being that receiving of one another...

## Context

1. Preventing conflicts in questionable areas
2. 14.1-12 - Acceptance of other with differing convictions
3. 14.13-23 - Restraint of one's own convictions for others

...And the context from 13-23, to the end of the chapter, will continue this same issue: preventing conflicts in these questionable areas....

IV. Application of God's Righteousness	12.1-15.3
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1. Reception of Differing Convictions	14.1-12
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a. Exhortations on Restraints	14.13-18
1) Exhortation against Stumbling Blocks	14.13

...These conflicts are inevitable unless we keep in mind that there are going to be differences between different people, depending on their level of understanding of freedom and depending on the background, the things that they come out of. I have said several times, as we looked at verses, that in the 1st Century they were often Jewish people that came from a very legalist background. They had a hard time eating bacon or a ham sandwich—in fact I think it would have been a fun time the very first time someone put a ham sandwich before Paul; I wonder what expression he would have had on his face. That was a major problem.

They also have a problem observing the Sabbath; they just felt guilty unless they observed the Sabbath. After they became a believer and didn't realize that some of the passages in the NT said that now we are free to enjoy everything that God has created. There are parameters, such as not to excess, for example, but basically we can enjoy all the

good things that God has given us—and enjoy the time frame, we are not restricted in terms of time. But from our backgrounds we, as believers are in different places and some things cause some believers to become stricken in their conscience because of their background and we want to prevent that.

So that is the theme of the whole sección from 14.1 to 15.13, preventing these conflicts for which Paul is giving guidance to prevent them. The weak are to accept the strong and the strong are to accept the weak.

14.13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

Now he takes a different turn, beginning in verse 13, through the end of the chapter. I describe this as the *restraint* of one's own convictions for the benefit of others. It is another major theme and he will have several verses—11—to hammer home that concept. We are totally freed and we don't lose our freedom. In some cases we might *die* for that freedom that we have in Christ in the right circumstance. But in another circumstance, if it is going to have an effect on a brother or sister, then we voluntarily and willingly restrain that freedom in love towards them. We don't lose that freedom; we are free in Christ, but for the benefit of those around us, there is sometimes an occasion when we need to restrain the freedom that we have.

Paul talks about this a lot in 13-23. These verses are primarily directed at the stronger believer. Verses 1-12 dealt with both, with some verses emphasizing one over the other but in general he was dealing with both, the strong and the weak, each accepting the other. But now the majority of these verses deal with the strong and when he is to restrain himself in his freedom in Christ. That is certainly applicable today. There are people that have the freedom to partake alcoholic beverages, wine in particular, but there are others that do not have that freedom.

In my case, I could have some beer, but I choose not to mainly because of what I saw it do to my father. If I partook, I wouldn't necessarily feel guilty; I would be free, but because of that background I restrain from doing it. Others that are free that participate in that area will restrain themselves because it is an issue in our culture, some feel it's a dangerous thing and in some contexts it is a dangerous thing if you are amongst those that have a problem in that area. Verses 13-23 deal more with the occasions when we need to be sensitive to those around us and for the benefit of them we restrain. Another thing that comes to mind: I think leaders, because of their position, have to be especially careful of what things they partake of; they have to be extra sensitive

and limit their freedom. So we are shifting from accepting one another to restraining one's freedom.

We can break the passage down into 2 parts. There are several exhortations, up to 14, some not being direct commands or imperatives, but they are phrased in such a way that their encouragement is along certain lines.

13-18 has exhortations on these restraints and then further breaking it down, 13 is exhortation against stumbling blocks. This is kind of the broad, general statement that he gives and everything else is supporting and adding to it.

14.13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

'Therefore', i.e., based on what he said in verses 1-12, based on accepting one another, 'let us not judge one another anymore', probably focusing on the 'strong', with the word κρινῶ (kreé-no) again, applying it to the strong believer because he is also making judgments, regarding the weak believer as 'weak' (or a nuisance to my freedom!).

I am going to give you a list of these exhortations, maybe not all of them.

### Exhortations

1. Don't judge convictions 13

... 'let us not judge one another anymore...

14.13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

... 'but rather determine this'... Now you can't tell from the English, but we have seen this before. The word 'determine' here is κρινῶ (kreé-no). You can even translate it 'but rather judge this—same word as for 'judge' just before it. We won't explain again about word studies and the way language works, but the same word has different nuances depending on the context. And this is a striking example where even the translator make it very evident that there is a different sense here. So the word 'to judge' has not only the idea to stand in condemnation of something or somebody, but it simply has the idea of making determinations, 'I'm going to do this rather than that,' determining between different options. We also saw it translated 'regard', regarding one day a certain way and someone else regards it in

a different way. We don't think about it but we use words in our own language the same way.

### Judging

- 14.1 - passing judgment διακρίσεις (dee-ah-kreeé-sayees)
- 14.3-4 - judge κρίνω (kreeé-no)
- 14.5 - regard κρίνω (kreeé-no)
- 14.13 - judge, determine κρίνω (kreeé-no)

14.13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

'Not to put an obstacle'. Remember Christ, Romans 9.33 *just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."* That is the first word.

14.13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

The second, has more the idea of setting a trap; it was used in hunting animals, putting it out in the field to catch an animal. They are two images of ways of harming other believers, and by no restraining our freedom in some areas it's like causing somebody to stumble and suffer harm, and/or it's like getting them in a trap, following a weakness in an area that they see another brother free with it. If you are disregarding anyone around you that has a weakness it is like setting a trap for them. When we have social activities with believers we need to be careful and voluntarily restrain that freedom. Again he is talking about 'brothers', believers. This leads to the 2nd exhortation:

### Exhortations

- 1. Don't judge convictions 13
- 2. Don't cause harm (imperative)

In the first it is a subjective, and including himself, but this one is a clear Greek imperative, a strong, aorist command.

- IV. Application of God's Righteousness 12.1-15.3
  - A. Application to God 12.1-2
  - B. Application to Church 12.3-21
  - C. Application to Society 13
  - D. Application to Christian Liberty 14.1-15.13
    - 1. Reception of Differing Convictions 14.1-12

- 2. Restraint for Edification 14.13-23
  - a. Exhortations on Restraints 14.13-18
    - 1) Exhortation against Stumbling Blocks 14.13
    - 2) Issue of Liberty 14.14

Now he is going to specify and clearly define this issue of freedom, talking to the strong believer who is free, but you have to restrain considering the situation.

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

In verse 14 also we have two words as well: 'know', not knowing by experience, but knowing intuitively or inherently, οἶδα (oí-dah). This is reality, this is inherent knowledge. '...and am convinced', in other words, all of the evidence points to this conclusion; so he is emphasizing this idea of freedom. And, if that is not enough, he says, 'in the Lord', that is, the Lord has revealed this to me; this is certainty, true knowledge, is absolute, not questionable.

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

'...that nothing is unclean in itself;' This is very broad, it can extend beyond the issues listed here. Whatever God has created, he has created very good things for us to enjoy, to benefit from and in fact to be even fulfilled in them. Every food is available and there are no restrictions with regard to certain days.

Again, as I have said, Sunday is not the Christian Sabbath. That is, we do not have the requirements of the Sabbath imposed on a different day. Sunday was the day that basically we celebrate our freedom because of the resurrection. We celebrate Christ's resurrection and it does not have all the legalistic requirements. Some people who come from those backgrounds impose that on Sunday. For example, 'you should worship on Sunday; you can't watch football.' You can't do certain things because it is the Sabbath; you need to keep it holy; it's the new Christian Sabbath. But we are *free*, even on Sunday; there are no particular days.

So, nothing is unclean in itself; God has provided all these things for our benefit and our good. Guidance on excess is in other passages. And, we exercise self-restraint in situation where it will be a trap or stumbling block for others.

## New Condition

Mark 7.18-23 ‘18...*Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?*’...

Even a Jew is not defiled by pork or anything else he eats, Jesus says, changing to a new dispensation. He gives a long list of attitudes and behaviors that defile and they all come from the heart.

...23 “*All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.*”

All kinds of evil things come from the heart—that is what defiles, not what goes into the stomach. Thusly Jesus makes a radical change from the OT dispensation.

Acts 10.9-15 This is where Peter has a vision of a sheet with unclean animals on it and God tells them 3 times: Eat! Peter says, ‘I can’t. I’m a Jew. I don’t want to be defiled’. At the end God declares all things clean. This is an illustration of not only what you can eat, but of how to treat other people as that vision is used to open the door to Gentile conversion.

1 Timothy 4.2-4 *by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 3 men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;*

We can eat any creature, animal, if it is received with thanksgiving. This is different from the law that God had specified for a period of time—but we are not under the law any more.

1 Corinthians 8.8-13 This is the context of eating meat that had been offered to idols to which people had bowed down. This is more a Gentile context. Some Gentile believers that came out of that culture, thought that meat is tarnished in some way, so they would avoid it. And if they had not understood the freedom they had in Christ and the reality that there are no real idols, they could cause them to stumble.

It is a matter of conscience, as we see in the last part of 14.14:

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

Pablo is not saying that sin is relative to what we think. We have made it clear that there *are* absolutes. The context here is of these questionable things in the areas of freedom and background. It is not that sin is relative, there are absolutes.

But in *these areas* of questionable things, if somebody thinks that something is unclean from his background, a Jew that can’t eat ham, for example, he hasn’t grown as a believer; to *him* it is unclean because it is going to affect his conscience: his conscience is going to be hindered, and when the conscience is hindered it affects the spiritual life and walk. And the stumbling block or obstacles can damage another’s conscience. It can even go back to their background, as in the case of alcohol, and it can even ruin their life. We need to be sensitive to those things.

IV. Application of God’s Righteousness	12.1-15.3
A. Application to God	12.1-2
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1. Reception of Differing Convictions	14.1-12
2. Restraint for Edification	14.13-23
a. Exhortations on Restraints	14.13-18
1) Exhortation against Stumbling Blocks	14.13
2) Issue of Liberty	14.14
3) Exhortation against Damaging	14.15

Then, in verse 15, an exhortation against damaging, now looking at it from a different angle. This is a strong passage:

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

Hurting your brother in the area of food results in not walking in love. It is not that your food is inherently evil. But if it causes damage to your brother’s conscience, or it makes him think you are doing something wrong, they you are doing something bad. This is put in the negative but the encouragement from the positive is, in fact, to take these into account, and when we do that we are walking in love.

## Terms

1. Hurt - λυπέω (lu-péh-o) distressed, grieved, hurt  
‘Hurt’ is a general term. It can be used in the sense of grieving in some contexts, or more broadly to hurt or damage in some way.

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

I framed it as a positive, walk in love; it is not strictly an exhortation, but it is an encouragement in that as we are careful in these areas we are walking in love. Paul is not stressing it, but love is underlying this whole passage. Here, framed in the negative, he is reminding us to be walking in love.

### Exhortations

- |                                  |           |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Don't judge convictions       | 13        |
| 2. Don't cause harm (imperative) |           |
| 3. <u>Walk in love (implied)</u> | <u>15</u> |

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

This is a strong passage: 'Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died'. That is just one example, including days or other convictions that people may have. And if Christ went to the extent of dying on the cross—a gruesome crucifixion that He did on behalf of our fellow believers, doesn't that mean that we can do the simple thing of restraining temporarily that freedom.

That word 'destroy' can be used in an eternal sense, of perishing for eternity, as in John 3.16. In this context, it does say that you can do severe spiritual damage, but you are not taking away anyone's salvation—we are secure in that.

Some people use this word in this passage to refer to eternal things, but in the total context it is not referring to eternal things. It can also be used referring to taking a life, and in reference to believers, like here, it is about damaging a spiritual walk, for example, going back into alcoholism. Even though he says, 'do not destroy with your food', I think he is referring to any of these areas in which we should restrain our freedom. He adds then, that God sent His Son to *die* for the very one that is a weak believer. Love is actually what determines our restraint of the freedom that we have. We don't lose that freedom and we can exercise it in other contexts, but in certain ones we need to be more careful.

### Terms

- |                       |                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Hurt -             | λυπέω (lu-péh-o)        | distressed, grieved, hurt                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 2. Destroy -          | ἀπολλύμι (ah-po-lú-mee) | 91x en NT                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| a. Things destroyed - | Mathew 9.17             | "Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are <u>ruined</u> ; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved." |

- |                         |               |                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| b. Physically destroy - | Matthew 27.20 | <i>But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to <u>death</u>.</i> |
| c. Perish eternally -   | John 10.28    | <i>and I give eternal life to them, and they will never <u>perish</u>; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.</i> |

- |                     |                   |                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     | John 3.16         | <i>"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not <u>perish</u>, but have eternal life.</i> |
| d. Spiritual loss - | 1Corinthians 8.11 | <i>For through your knowledge he who is weak is <u>ruined</u>, the brother for whose sake Christ died.</i>                                           |

### Exhortations

- |                                         |                                |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Don't judge convictions              | 13                             |
| 2. Don't cause harm (imperative)        |                                |
| 3. <u>Walk in love (implied)</u>        | 15 ( <i>positive command</i> ) |
| 4. Don't destroy believers (imperative) |                                |

So we have a 4th exhortation, 'Don't destroy believers', in the imperative mood in the Greek text. In this context of brothers or believers, it is a matter of losing fellowship with believers or ceasing to grow spiritually—not of losing their salvation, of course.

[Romans 14.13-18 Cautions on Damaging Believers 190]

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|-----------------------------------------|------------|
| IV. Application of God's Righteousness  | 12.1-15.3  |
| A. Application to God                   | 12.1-2     |
| B. Application to Church                | 12.3-21    |
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| D. Application to Christian Liberty     | 14.1-15.13 |
| 1. Reception of Differing Convictions   | 14.1-12    |
| 2. Restraint for Edification            | 14.13-23   |
| a. Exhortations on Restraints           | 14.13-18   |
| 1) Exhortation against Stumbling Blocks | 14.13      |
| 2) Issue of Liberty                     | 14.14      |
| 3) Exhortation against Damaging         | 14.15      |
| 4) Issue of Best Things                 | 14.16-18   |

14.16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The issue of 'best things'. Don't let a good thing be spoken of as evil. Don't let it be a problem for other others. And he gives an

example of higher priorities than just eating and watching games on television. The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. He is just adding support to the restraining of ourselves in certain contexts because we are motivated by love and we want to walk according to love and think more of our brothers rather than enjoying all of the freedoms that God has given us.

Christian freedom is a good thing, but we restrain our liberty in love for the benefit of some believers. We don't have to hide our convictions but we do have to be careful for others' sake. A lot of it is our attitude and how we express ourselves to fellow believers. Some of these issues come up in the unbelieving world, but they are going to be offended at everything relating to Christ.

### Exhortations

1. Don't judge convictions 13
2. Don't cause harm (imperative)
3. *Walk in love (implied)* 15 (*positive command*)
4. Don't destroy believers (imperative)
5. Don't let good be evil (imperative) 16

So we have another exhortation: Don't let good things be evil for others.

14.16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Here he introduces the 'Kingdom of God'. Interestingly, this is the only place in the book of Romans that he refers to the Kingdom of God. He refers to the Kingdom in other letters, but this is the only time in Romans.

### Términos

1. Hurt - λυπέω (lu-péh-o) distressed, grieved, hurt
2. Destroy - ἀπολλύμι (ah-po-lú-mee) spiritual loss
3. Kingdom - only here in Romans

Commentators are a little divided, even the conservative Bible teachers and I am not going to be dogmatic in what I have concluded in this passage, but we will look at different ways it is taken:

#### a. A-millennial Kingdom

I will reject the a-millennial view. This is one of that passages that they use and say that Paul is talking about a present Kingdom that exists now during the church age, using it in this context in Romans of the church age. There is not a

future, earthly Kingdom. This is probably the viewpoint of the majority of even genuine Christians today. The reformed church is generally a-millennial as are a lot of other evangelicals, and Roman Catholicism historically and to this day has mostly been a-millennial.

#### b. Future Millennial Kingdom

There are many references to that future millennial kingdom and there is some support in this passage for that. People say that Paul is using it to look forward to this future kingdom, and if this is where we as believers are going to end up, our focus should not necessarily be on these 'days' and 'foods', etc. We should have a different focus. We should be living as kingdom members now, looking for that future kingdom.

#### c. General rule of God -

There is a sense in which God *always* rules and the kingdom of God is *always* in operation. And God is *always* sovereign over all things. So I think Paul is using it in a broader, more general sense, not necessarily referring to that future. So it is the general rule of God; we have the verse that says we have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light—that is present. So there is a sense in which God rules in the hearts of believers today and a sense in which that rulership, part of His kingdom, is in operation today.

Paul does use that word βασιλεία (bah-see-láy-ah), kingdom, in reference to that future, 1000-year, earthly, visible reign of Christ. But there are a few places like here and 1Corinthians 4.20 where he is speaking of the general rule of God: *For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.* It is God ruling, at the present time, amongst believers, in the hearts of believers; he is our master, Lord, sovereign—our King—right now. But He will, in the future, come and set foot on earth and reign in a millennial kingdom on earth that will have economic aspects, in the land of Israel, with Israel as a prominent nation.

14.16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The kingdom of God is not these questionable, earthly things like eating and drinking.

14.16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

This is a fairly comprehensive statement of what the Christian life is all about: righteousness, a right standing before God—remember this is a key term in the whole book of Romans—and living a life that expresses that righteousness. That is the heart of who we are: we are justified in Christ and have a right standing, and, if you have God’s righteousness, the product of that is *peace*, no longer enemies of God but part of the family of God, with a positional and experiential peace as well.

Paul describes it as peace beyond description, beyond our comprehension and understanding (Philippians 4.7). We are experiencing, we might say, *foretastes* of the millennial kingdom. One of the characteristics of the millennial kingdom is the outpouring of the HS, and we have a taste of it with the indwelling presence of the HS in the church age. And, with that peace we have *joy*, regardless of the circumstances—in the power of the HS who produces all these things within us. So, in the light of the context here, I take Paul’s reference to the kingdom of God to be more general, including the aspects of it that we experience today, but *not* the sense of the kingdom on earth that the a-millennialist holds to.

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

‘He who in this way’—that is, in righteousness, peace and joy—‘serves Christ’, if this is characteristic of who we are, then we are ‘acceptable to God’. This can be translated ‘pleasing to God’. This is what God desires. It’s not a command, but it is an encouragement, we are encouraged to please God...

### Exhortations

- |                                         |                       |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Don’t judge convictions              | 13                    |
| 2. Don’t cause harm (imperative)        |                       |
| 3. <i>Walk in love (implied)</i>        | 15 (positive command) |
| 4. Don’t destroy believers (imperative) |                       |
| 5. Don’t let good be evil (imperative)  | 16                    |
| 6. <i>Serve Christ</i>                  | 18 (positive command) |

...and we can add it to our list. The reason we are here, in the essence of the kingdom, we are serving Christ. And if we are concerned about brothers and their well-being this is what helps us to not cause them to stumble, but do the very opposite. That is the negative aspect, but in verse 19, he is going to look at it from a more positive perspective.

### Terms

1. Hurt - λυπέω (lu-péh-o) distressed, grieved, hurt
2. Destroy - ἀπολλύμι (ah-po-lú-mee) spiritual loss
3. Kingdom - only here in Romans
4. Acceptable - εὐάρεστος (you-áh-res-tos) well-pleasing  
12.1 - *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*

The Greek word, ‘acceptable’ goes back to 12.1 where he started this whole section. We are well-pleasing to the Lord when we are not conforming to the world but in fact renewing our minds and are a living sacrifice.

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

And not only that but I think it is going to have an impact, to men in general, even the unbeliever. The gospel offends, and sometimes, because we are related to the gospel the unbeliever rejects us, but if we are doing what is expected here we can see even an unbeliever approve us.

### Terms

1. Hurt - λυπέω (lu-péh-o) distressed, grieved, hurt
2. Destroy - ἀπολλύμι (ah-po-lú-mee) spiritual loss
3. Kingdom - only here in Romans
4. Acceptable - εὐάρεστος (you-áh-res-tos) well-pleasing
5. Approved - δόκιμος (dó-kee-mos) approved after testing  
δόκιμος (dó-kee-mos) has approval after testing, that is, it is like taking a metal and putting it through the fire, and now that metal is shown to be genuine, it is purified and now you have the reality of the testing. People can see that we are real, are genuine. We can take abuse and grow in different situations. The word is very commonly used in the NT, approved after testing.

And this is in contrast after the passage in verse 14.16 *Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil.* The word for ‘spoken of as evil’ is the same word as *blasphemy*. People blaspheme God because of how we live; this is an encouragement to go against that.

13-18: We *restrain* our freedom in Christ in order *not* to cause a brother to have difficulty, stumble, have an obstacle, be damaged or even destroyed. But now he is going to look at it



from the *positive*; we when we do the same thing, now we can build up, edify, encourage believers to grow. This will be the essence of the kingdom.

[Romans 14.18-23 & Ephesians 4.11-12 Encouragement to Edify Believers 191]

God has accepted all of us and he desires that we accept others also. We are restrain our use of certain liberties if they are going to cause others to have a problems. So we restrain one's own convictions for the benefit of others. That is the theme that runs from 14.13-23.

In 13-18, then I have been stressing the exhortations that Paul is giving us. It begins with a major one:

14.13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

'Therefore let us not judge one another anymore': he is kind of reviewing what he said in the first 12 verses.

14.13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

'but rather determine this'. The emphasis is now more on the positive, whereas from 1-12 it is somewhat from a *negative* perspective, but now he will deal with more *positive* issues.

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

Then in verse 18, 'For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God'. Now I am going to emphasize, beginning in verse 18, but especially 19 through to the end of the chapter, some of the main priorities concerning what God desires from us; that is, God's priorities. In that verse we have at least a hint of the first thing. Anyone that is a believer needs to think about these things: 'Am I involved in these things, these priorities that God has specified, some of them including major priorities that we as believers in Him need to be doing?' We need to be doing what God desires us to do. These also are things that you might want to stress if you are discipling—what God expects of us.

'For he who in this way serves Christ'. In relationship to the Lord, one thing that the Lord desires of us is some level of *service*. Every

believer should be involved in some way, based on their spiritual gift, (in chapter 12 we looked at these gifts). God has given us spiritual gifts in order to serve Him, not just do be doing something or to occupy our time, but we, in service, we also grow, and it is in service that we experience the enablement, the relationship with the Lord because we have to depend on Him as we minister to others. And, I think much of the Christian life should be occupied with an attitude at least of serving the Lord through the body that He has put us in, or the circle of believers that he has put us with.

Now I know the typical attitude of most believers is just to go to church, 'that's my Christian experience, and then on Monday I go to work and spend the rest of the week doing 'secular things'. Maybe there also a 5-minute prayer in the morning...but our whole life should be oriented around what the Lord is doing, and the ministry He has given us, and except for a 'baby' Christian—one that has just recently come into a relationship with the Lord. One of the attitudes we should have is 'How could I serve the Lord'? This is not only the means by which God blesses others, but also the means by which God fulfills us and fills the purpose that He has for us here on earth. So we have a hint of that here.

So that was the last exhortation on restraining our liberty. Now in 19-23 we have more exhortations, but these are more oriented to the *positive*, that is, building up which starts with an attitude of service to the Lord and then it takes some definite decisions and choices that we make regarding relationships with other people.

### God's priorities

- |                                        |            |
|----------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Lord -                              | Service    |
| IV. Application of God's Righteousness | 12.1-15.3  |
| A. Application to God                  | 12.1-2     |
| B. Application to Church               | 12.3-21    |
| C. Application to Society              | 13         |
| D. Application to Christian Liberty    | 14.1-15.13 |
| 1. Reception of Differing Convictions  | 14.1-12    |
| 2. Restraint for Edification           | 14.13-23   |
| a. Exhortations on Restraints          | 14.13-18   |
| b. Exhortations on Edification         | 14.19-23   |
| 1) Exhortation to Edify                | 14.19      |

In verse 19 is the next exhortation:

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

‘we pursue the things which make for peace’, now in this context that is what he has been talking about all along: unity, relationships, the things that divide us, these differences and things from our past, our misunderstanding of liberty or our lack of understanding of liberty or our overt exercise of that liberty in the midst of those that are not in the same place which can cause conflicts in the body of Christ.

So, he then says: ‘we pursue the things which make for peace’. That is an interesting word. We have looked at ‘hurt’, ‘destroy’ (a very strong word)—in this context, spiritual loss or damage. We saw the only time Paul uses the word ‘kingdom’ in Romans and I concluded that it looks at the broader perspective of the kingdom; then ‘acceptable’ and ‘approved’.

### Terms

1. Hurt - λυπέω (lu-péh-o) distressed, grieved, hurt
2. Destroy - ἀπολλύμι (ah-po-lú-mee) spiritual loss
3. Kingdom - only here in Romans
4. Acceptable - εὐάρεστος (you-áh-res-tos) well-pleasing
5. Approved - δόκιμος (dó-kee-mos) approved after testing
6. Pursue - διώκω (dee-ó-ko) 12.13-14 - persecute, pursue after

Now ‘pursue’ is used in almost a drastically different sense, same word διώκω is use in many passages where it is translated to ‘persecute’, the idea being a pursuit for the purpose of doing damage, to try to silence or suppress another person. ‘Persecute’ is essentially what happens when people are under persecution from the government or individuals, they are pursued for a negative purpose, a damaging one.

But it is also used in a more neutral or even positive sense, as in this context, where it is for a positive effect, ‘pursue the things that make for peace’. This is an active and definite purpose, the pursuing of peace.

### Exhortations

1. Don’t judge convictions 13
2. Don’t cause harm (imperative)
3. *Walk in love (implied)* 15 (positive command)
4. Don’t destroy believers (imperative)
5. Don’t let good be evil (imperative) 16
6. *Serve Christ* 18 (positive command)
7. *Pursue peace* 19 (positive command)

It is in the category of a positive command. In the midst of these differing convictions, conflict is inevitable and problems can arise from that conflict. This portion is probably directed more to the strong; that is, they are to take the initiative, the leadership in terms of pursuing peace. So whenever we have a sense of problems,

our first thought should be to see how we can resolve this issue, pursue this area of peace.

### God’s Priorities

1. Lord - Service
2. Relationships - Peacemakers

In terms of relationship, this is another of God’s priorities. There are so many things that divide us, not only the cultural background issues but personalities. But Jesus says on the Sermon on the Mount: *blessed are the peacemakers*. This passage essentially commands us to pursue peace. This is one of God’s priorities for us in dealing with relationships where conflicts arise.

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

Then the verse gives us another positive one, the ‘building up of one another’. That is kind of an expansion of the service of the Lord because this inevitably involve the body of Christ and other believers. Our mindset should be ‘what to do to build up the body of Christ, one another’, and certainly in this context, how can I build up the weak in faith and encourage them—and not be a stumbling block, not be all the things that are in the negative.

### Terms

1. Hurt - λυπέω (lu-péh-o) distressed, grieved, hurt
2. Destroy - ἀπολλύμι (ah-po-lú-mee) spiritual loss
3. Kingdom - only here in Romans
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5. Approved - δόκιμος (dó-kee-mos) approved after testing
6. Pursue - διώκω (dee-ó-ko) 12.13-14 - persecute, pursue after
7. Building up - οικοδομή (oi-ko-do-máy) 15.2 (noun), 15.20 (verb)

The word is used quite frequently. Ephesians 4, rather a central passage in the NT that deals with ministering to one another in our spiritual gift. In the context of spiritual gifts,

Ephesians 4.7 *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift....*

He uses grace there in a context of spiritual gifts, calling them ‘grace’.

11 *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;*

We have two words there that are related to ‘building up’: the equipping of the saints. So these primary leadership gifts are intended to equip the saints. This is how churches should function; the leaders should *equip the saints, the believers, for the work of service*. These leaders need to give all the insight and grounding that the others may be able to do the *work of service*. God intends for all believers be involved not only in serving Him but ministering to the body. And the outcome of that is the building up of the body of Christ, the maturing, development, growth, stimulation of the body so that people are not only drawn closer to the Lord but *they* are, in turn, equipped as well.

We have the noun form of ‘building up’ here, but also in Romans 15.2 *Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.*

This verse reinforces 14.19. Then the verb form with the same idea in

15.20 *And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man’s foundation;*

In that context Paul is explaining his ministry and he states that he is not going to take someone else’s ministry, but let them have the joy, encouragement and fulfillment of ministering. The idea is that all of us have a part and are given the opportunity to build up.

### Exhortations

- |                                         |                              |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Don’t judge convictions              | 13                           |
| 2. Don’t cause harm (imperative)        |                              |
| 3. <i>Walk in love (implied)</i>        | 15 <i>(positive command)</i> |
| 4. Don’t destroy believers (imperative) |                              |
| 5. Don’t let good be evil (imperative)  | 16                           |
| 6. <i>Serve Christ</i>                  | 18 <i>(positive command)</i> |
| 7. <i>Pursue peace</i>                  | 19 <i>(positive command)</i> |
| 8. <i>Edify believers</i>               |                              |

So we can add two to the list of Exhortations, positive ones, pursuing peace and edifying believers.

### God’s priorities

- |                    |             |
|--------------------|-------------|
| 1. Lord -          | Service     |
| 2. Relationships - | Peacemakers |
| 3. Believers -     | Edification |

One of the main things that God wants is for us to be active in the maturing and encouraging and growth of others—and we do it through the spiritual gifts that He has given us. So there is service and more specifically the building up of the body, ie, believers.

Service is broad; it can involve things behind the scenes that don’t directly affect people, or it can involve the unbeliever.

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|----------------------------------------|------------|
| IV. Application of God’s Righteousness | 12.1-15.3  |
| A. Application to God                  | 12.1-2     |
| B. Application to Church               | 12.3-21    |
| C. Application to Society              | 13         |
| D. Application to Christian Liberty    | 14.1-15.13 |
| 1. Reception of Differing Convictions  | 14.1-12    |
| 2. Restraint for Edification           | 14.13-23   |
| a. Exhortations on Restraints          | 14.13-18   |
| b. Exhortations on Edification         | 14.19-23   |
| 1) Exhortation to Edify                | 14.19      |
| 2) Exhortation against Tearing Down    | 14.20-21   |

In verse 20: the opposite or negative aspect, reminding us of this, since we are so prone to it, the exhortation against ‘tearing down’

14.20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.

‘Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food’: now he relates the stumbling blocks, obstacle, damage and hurt in previous verses which affect the word of God. Demanding that we exercise our liberty, that we maintain it, and if it causes another brother to stumble, it ‘tears down’ the work that God is doing in the world, especially in the world where we have influence or a place.

### Exhortations

- |                                            |                           |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 7. <i>Pursue peace</i>                     | <i>(positive command)</i> |
| 8. <i>Edify believers</i>                  | <i>(positive command)</i> |
| 9. Don’t undermine God’s work (imperative) | (negative command)        |

A negative command, a definite imperative. Don’t undermine God’s work. I think it’s specific in this context, but I think it can be applied on a broader basis as well. Anything that does damage, does *not* edify is actually undermining what God is doing in the world today and particularly in the immediate place where we have influence and where God has put us as a church body or influence amongst believers. So the negative is ‘don’t undermine the work of God’ and the positive is the opposite, building up. Both ideas are almost of the construction image, even though not strictly images, but you can think of a physical image, building something by putting things together as opposed to tearing things down.

14.20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.

In verse 20 we have ‘All things indeed are clean’, re-emphasizing what we saw in verse 14, that God has declared all things clean. We talked about pork; there is nothing inherently bad about it. It was prohibited in the OT, but in fact Christ declared all things clean and the things in God’s creation were created for our benefit or pleasure....

14.20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.

...But that which is good, can be ‘evil’—not the meat or the day in itself, that’s clear—and what makes it evil is the damage that it can do to somebody’s conscience. ‘they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense’. If someone is offended by what we are eating or doing, and in our culture it may not be limited to these things, but whatever it is, the damage is what it can do to someone else.

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

‘It is good’, he expands upon it, ‘not to eat meat or to drink wine’, which was probably not a Jewish issue but probably an issue amongst the gentiles who came from a lifestyle of debauchery and where orgies were part of a pagan worship scene. And now they have an aversion to drinking alcohol at all. But it would apply in our culture where that *is* an issue with regard to alcoholism and people who come from backgrounds where that has been a damaging thing as well.

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

So it is good not eat meat or drink, even though you have the *liberty* to do so in Christ. It’s the same theme of limiting our liberty for the benefit of others, or to do *anything*—the broader statement—by which your brother stumbles. That’s the bottom line: we limit our liberty if in fact it causes others damage—and when it does that, that is what causes the evil. It is not the eating; we never lose the liberty, but we restrain it voluntarily because of sensitivity of those who may be offended or their conscience hurt by it.

### God’s priorities

1. Lord - Service
2. Relationships - Peacemakers
3. Believers - Edification
4. Personal - Self-control

Another major priority of God’s is Self-control. We don’t lose liberty; we set it aside for the benefit of others.

So God has priorities in terms of our relationship to Him, an attitude of service en terms of relationships—particularly with those that involve conflicts, to be peacemakers. In regards to the body of Christ, an attitude of building them up, doing whatever we can. And, personally we have a responsibility to our personal self-control in being sensitive to others as well.

That’s verses 19-21 and now he will deal with the issue of faith.

- |                                        |            |
|----------------------------------------|------------|
| IV. Application of God’s Righteousness | 12.1-15.3  |
| A. Application to God                  | 12.1-2     |
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This is an interesting set of two verses about faith which will probably help us, keeping it in the context.

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

We have seen this subject of faith, even defined it. In the context of chapter 14 and 15, we said it was ‘confidence or assurance’. He is using it in the sense of those things that we have confidence in or convictions of, or assurance of. He is not talking about faith in Christ, justification; that’s another way it is commonly used in terms of believing what God has said concerning the doctrine of salvation or believing what God has said regarding the Christian walk. The word is used in those senses in other contexts, but in *this* context he is not relating to justification; it’s more the idea of these *convictions*, the confidence we have in the freedom we have in Christ.

So the faith which we have, for example, the assurance that we have that we have in eating pork, or the freedom to drink alcohol beverages in Christ—that confidence, that faith which you have, you have as your own conviction before God. So this is the context; you interpret words in their context: ‘The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God.’ You don’t lose your freedom; you have it with convictions before God. But now, in sensitivity to those that don’t have that same faith, are weak in faith, lacking the assurance of freedom, you limit your freedom. That conviction you have, you maintain it when you are away from anyone that is weak.

### Exhortations

7. *Pursue peace* (positive command)
8. *Edify believers* (positive command)
9. Don’t undermine God’s work (imperative) (negative command)
10. *Keep convictions* (imperative) (positive command) 22  
Imperative mood; a strong encouragement; it’s a positive one.  
You have the full freedom in Christ; you simply limit it for the benefit of others.

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

‘Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.’ Make sure that in Christ you do in fact have a free conscience in these areas. But if your conscience bothers you and condemns you, then a little warning here: you will be happy if you do not condemn yourself.

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

‘But he who doubts is condemned if he eats,’ if you have a question, you still haven’t sorted it out and you don’t have the freedom—the opposite of the faith idea—he who doubts will have his conscience ‘condemning’ him. Paul doesn’t use the word ‘conscience’ here, but he does in 1Corinthians 8, as we saw earlier. So ‘condemning’ is in the sense of doing some damage to the conscience. If you haven’t clarified that you are free, your doubts will condemn you...

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

‘because his eating is not from faith’, it’s not from that conviction and confidence that God has given you that freedom. Some of us don’t

have the same freedom in some areas because of our background and it’s a personal condemnation of a guilty conscience.

And then the last phrase, I think we need to keep in mind the context...

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

‘and whatever is not from faith is sin’. The question might be: how far do you take that, and what does it mean? First of all, looking at the context and how Paul has been using ‘faith’. I don’t think it is as broad as we sometimes take this verse, this broad ‘trusting in God’. I think he is using it in the same sense as he has been in chapter 14: this conviction, confidence, this idea of freedom. So whatever is not from this confidence is sin. I think that is the primary meaning here.

We are to express love by restraining our freedom to edify others!