

Start your study here

Read Read, Record, Reflect, Respond

Prayerfully	Reflectively	Extensively	Creatively	Intensively	Specifically	Effectively
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Repeated
Alike
Different
Accentuated
Related
Think Context!

Romans 14:1-12

- 1 As for the one who is weak in faith,
welcome him,
but not to quarrel over opinions.
- 2 One person believes he may eat anything,
while the weak person eats only vegetables.
- 3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains,
and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats,
for God has welcomed him.

- 4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?
It is before his own master that he stands or falls.
And he will be upheld,
for the Lord is able to make him stand.
- 5 One person esteems one day as better than another,
while another esteems all days alike.
Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.
- 6 The one who observes the day,
observes it in honor of the Lord.
The one who eats,
eats in honor of the Lord,
since he gives thanks to God,
while the one who abstains,
abstains in honor of the Lord
and gives thanks to God.

- 7 For none of us lives to himself,
and none of us dies to himself.
- 8 For if we live,
we live to the Lord,
and if we die,
we die to the Lord.
So then,
whether we live
or whether we die,
we are the Lord's.
- 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again,
that he might be Lord
both of the dead and of the living.

- 10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother?
Or you, why do you despise your brother?
For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;
- 11 for it is written,
"As I live, says the Lord,
every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall confess to God."
- 12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. (ESV)

Review: Submit to governing authorities who have been given authority by God. Seek to fulfill the Law by loving neighbors and doing good and living right (righteously).
Observations: 1) Rhetorical questions, 2) repetition, 3) two main illustrations—eating meat, esteeming a day
Question: How do we get along with those who have different freedoms?

Topic /Outline:
Romans 14:1-12 Mutual forbearance
Romans 14:13-23 The strong are not to offend the weak
Romans 15:1-6 The strong are to help the weak
Romans 15:7-13 Mutual accountability

Since we are called to love (12:9-10; 13:8-10) and live in harmony (12:16) how do we deal with those who differ? (“as for” = “now”)

One whose conscience or sense of propriety or sense of right and wrong prevents them from fully enjoying their freedom in Christ

Romans 14:1-12

As for the one who is weak in faith,

Issue: judging others

welcome him,

Repetition and structural marker “welcome” 14:1, 3; 15:7

but not to quarrel over opinions.

Quarreling does not exemplify consecrated loving humble lives (Rom 12-13)

2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.

Gray areas—notice this is different than 1 Cor 8, not meat offered to idols

3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

Summary principle
Strong don't despise the weak (abstainers)
Weak don't judge the strong (participants)
“judging” to distinguish, to pronounce doom—in essence to deny someone's salvation

We must answer to the Lord

4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?

Rhetorical question

It is before his own master that he stands or falls.

And he will be upheld,

for the Lord is able to make him stand.

5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike.

Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

Having examined one's heart—individuals should be convinced (assured, certain), having faith not limited by a doubt, that what they do honors God

for the Lord

6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord.

The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Notice that both groups (abstainers and participants) have the same right motivation

belonging to

7 For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.

8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord.

So then,

whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

Summary principle
Be fully convinced you are doing the right things
Do all to the Lord's honor

God is the only

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

Purpose of the death/resurrection—“that he might be Lord” compare 1 Cor 15

10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother?

Rhetorical question

For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;

The judgment of a believer's works (2 Cor 10:5)

11 for it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

Summary principle
Remember—the only Judge that counts is God because we will have to give account before Him

12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. (ESV)

Working Idea (this is to help you see how the main idea was developed)

Having instructed believers to consecrated lives which are proven by humility and love and authenticated by living in peace with those who persecute from outside, Paul turns to practical applications of that principle of love and humility within the community of faith

Don't judge people's freedom
Don't condemn people's constraints
Live for Christ since He is the only true Judge

Main idea:

Accept each other, differences and all, in Christ.

Teaching idea/explanation:

The next three lessons (Romans 14:1-15:13) all build together on an important relational issue—how do we deal with those who differ or disagree with us?

The main question this passage addresses: **How are we to live in the church with those with whom we differ?**

As we work our way through these three lessons, we address issues of mutual submission, giving up our rights, understanding and related with others over “gray” areas or issues.¹ All of these matters challenge us to concretely apply Paul’s instructions in Romans 12-13 to live a consecrated, humble and loving life within a relational context (community).

In this lesson there is little exegetical difficulty, so the notes will seek to provide overview, summary and interaction to enable you to create meaningful discussion. It is easy when dealing with differences to assume the passage is correcting the one with whom we have a disagreement. We can't allow the passage to validate error, sin or misbehavior.

Introduction

Interaction

Should we abstain from every appearance of evil?

Look at the difference in translations of 1 Thessalonians 5:22 below.

Should we not participate in certain activities because they may offend some?

What about Colossians 2:16-17, which tells us not to allow others to judge our Christian freedoms?

Who is “a weaker brother?”

One who is newer in the faith and has not understood freedom in Christ not the mature believer with strong convictions.

How should we deal with conflict in a biblical community?

Basically: personally and proactively

Is conflict ungodly?

No

What attitudes should prevail in conflict?

Love, humility and gentleness (see Romans 12-13)

For the next three weeks we will be studying a very important section of Romans—a topic we as individuals need to understand and we as a church need to learn to apply. How to deal with conflict within the church in areas of difference, disagreement, dislike and potential division.



Talk about it

¹ By “gray issues” I refer to issues that Scripture does not declare right or wrong. Areas in which individuals have personal freedom to determine whether they should participate or not. Areas like what entertainment is acceptable? What kind of music is okay? What can or can not Christians do on Sunday? How you should dress, what you should eat and drink, etc.

This passage may not really be about “gray” as much as differences.

Review

It is imperative that we understand this section in light of what precedes it. In Romans 12:1-2 we are urged to view God’s mercies which have been delineated in chapters one through eleven, and in light of this, to offer our bodies to God as a “living sacrifice.” This in fact, is a reasonable response. We are called upon to reject being pressed into the mold of the world and to be transformed by the renewing of our minds through the Word.

We are told to love without hypocrisy, and to be so devoted to each other that we will honor one another above ourselves (Romans 12:9-10). Paul also exhorts us to live in harmony, not to be proud, but be willing to associate with those of low position, and as far as it depends on us, to live at peace with everyone (Romans 12:16, 18). This requires that we submit to governing authorities because God had delegated authority to them (Romans 13:1-7). And finally, we are instructed to “love your neighbor as you love yourself,” for love does no harm to its neighbor (Romans 13:9-10).

It is with this kind of love that we are to approach our relationships with other Christians—especially when we disagree on disputable matters.

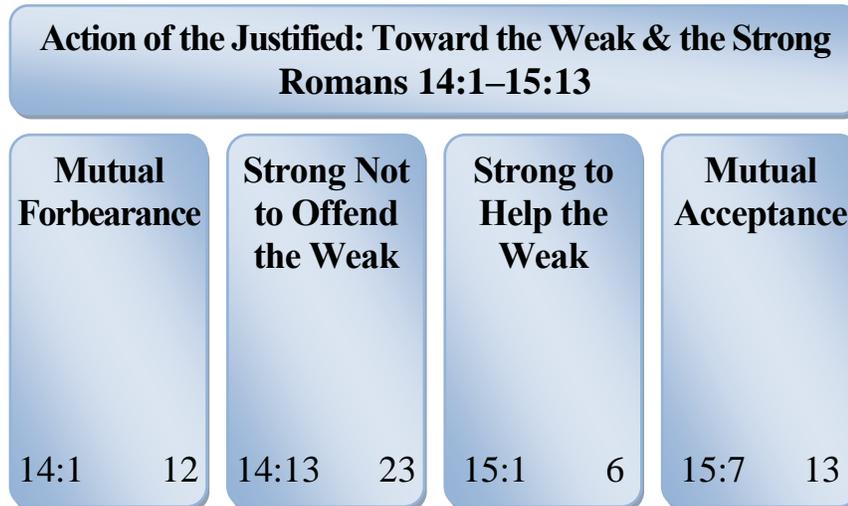
Love one another and the things that are good, hate what is evil. But in the midst of evil, seek to live at peace with all, not retaliating evil for evil, bless and minister to those who are against you. Submit to governing authorities who have been given authority by God. Seek to fulfill the Law by loving neighbors and doing good and living right (righteously).

Summary

Romans 14:1-12	Mutual forbearance
Romans 14:13-23	The strong are not to offend the weak
Romans 15:1-6	The strong are to help the weak
Romans 15:7-13	Mutual accountability

Overview

The main concept address is “opinions” or disputable matters—Matters of opinion that Scripture is silent on.



Preview

In these verses Paul explains how believers should relate to each other in the community, especially in terms of the controversial issue of table fellowship and the observance of certain days. Properly relating to brothers and sisters who have a different understanding on the above questions fulfills the law of love (Rom. 13:8–10) and is part of what it means to live a life that is wholly given over to God (12:1–2).²

²Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 703.

IN CHAPTER 14, Paul moves from the general to the particular. In 12:1 – 13:14 he has touched quickly on some of the basic components of the gospel lifestyle. Beginning in 14:1, he tackles at length one particular issue, rebuking Christians in Rome for standing in judgment over one another (14:2, 13). The community is divided into two groups, those who are “weak [in faith]” (cf. 14:1) and those who are “strong [in faith]” (cf. 15:1). They criticize and condemn each other, and Paul insists this judgmental attitude must give way to tolerance and mutual recognition. As he puts it succinctly in 15:7, “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you.”

The apostle leads up to this climactic exhortation in three stages.

In 14:1 – 12, he rebukes the two groups for looking down on one another and reminds them that it is to God, not to each other, that every believer must ultimately answer.

In 14:13 – 23, he urges those who are strong in faith to act out of love rather than out of a selfish insistence on doing what they feel free to do.

He continues to focus mainly on the strong in 15:1 – 6, identifying with them and calling on them to follow Christ’s example of loving service for the good of the body. After his summarizing demand that believers “accept one another” (15:7), Paul reinforces his exhortation by showing how God himself has intended Gentiles and Jews to form one body for the praise of his name (15:8 – 13).³

Issue/Problem

The weak condemned the strong for cavalierly dismissing God’s laws, while the strong pooh-poohed the weak, looking down on them for clinging to the old ways when the new had come. Paul sides with the strong on the basic issues involved, but his main concern is to get each group to stop criticizing the other and to accept each other in a spirit of love and unity.⁴

Connection with 1 Corinthians 8

Significant contact between 1 Cor. 8–10 and Rom. 14–15 cannot be denied. But it does not follow from the areas of overlap between the two that Rom. 14–15 contains general parenthesis. It is more satisfying to say that Rom. 14–15 reworks some of the same material found in 1 Cor. 8–10 and applies it to a new situation, a situation that reflects particular circumstances in the Roman churches.⁴ Indeed, the similarity of subject matter between Rom. 14–15 and 1 Cor. 8–10 may also blind us from seeing the significant differences between the two sections (see Murray 1965: 173–74; Cranfield 1979: 692; Käsemann 1980: 367; Reasoner 1995: 288–89). These differences reveal that Rom. 14–15 can scarcely be limited to a rewriting of 1 Cor. 8–10. For instance, food sacrificed to idols (*εἰδωλόθυτον*, *eidōlothyton*) is the central issue in 1 Corinthians (8:1, 4, 7, 10; 10:19; cf. 10:28). In contrast, there is no reference at all to food sacrificed to idols in Rom. 14–15.⁵ Abstinence from meat (14:2, 21) and wine (14:21) are specifically mentioned in Romans, but there is no reference to these in 1 Corinthians. The “weak” in 1 Corinthians were pagans who were accustomed to idolatry and felt defiled by it (1 Cor. 8:7, 10, 12). The “weak” in Romans were attracted by Jewish food laws and were concerned about whether particular foods were “clean” and “pure” (Rom. 14:14, 20; see below). It is likely that the weak abstained from certain foods because they were considered to be ritually defiled according to the OT law (Moo 1996: 830–31). Thus the situations are remarkably different. The “conscience” comes to the fore in 1 Corinthians (8:7, 10, 12; 10:25, 27–29), but it is not mentioned in Rom. 14:1–15:13. The difference between the two situations emerges clearly in 1 Cor. 10:19–22, for there the eating of food in the temple of the idol is absolutely prohibited. The issue of whether it is appropriate to eat in the temple of an idol does not even arise in Romans. Paul summons the different groups to “accept” one another in Romans (14:1, 3; 15:7), whereas such an exhortation is lacking in 1 Corinthians. Finally, Romans is not confined to matters of diet. Whether one should specially observe certain days (Rom. 14:5–6) also surfaces. These specific features in the text preclude us from seeing Rom. 14–15 as a carbon copy of 1 Cor. 8–10. Indeed, the differences between the sections are as important as the similarities. In composing Rom. 14–15 Paul doubtless drew on some of the material

³ Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) pp. 446–447.

⁴ Moo, Douglas J. *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) 447.

⁴ So Minear 1971: 20–22; Donfried 1991a; Käsemann 1980: 365; Wilckens 1982: 87–88, 115; F. Watson 1986: 88–105; Wedderburn 1988: 30–35; Dunn 1988b: 795; Segal 1990: 234–36; Reasoner 1990 passim; Fitzmyer 1993c: 68–84; Heil 1994: 252, 254–55; Moo 1996: 827–31.

⁵ Abstinence from meat may have been motivated, however, by a desire to evade any chance of eating food that had been sacrificed to idols, but Paul never explicitly states this in Romans.

that he used in 1 Cor. 8–10. The differences between the two sections, however, are best accounted for by the particular circumstances in Rome that called forth these chapters.⁵

It is uncertain to what extent Paul possessed definite information about the internal affairs of the Roman church. Consequently, it is difficult to know whether his approach to the problem of the "weak" and the "strong" is dictated by awareness of the precise nature of the problem in Rome or whether he is writing out of his own experience with other churches, especially the Corinthian congregation (1Cor 8:1-11:1). His treatment in Romans is briefer and couched in more general terms, though there are obvious similarities, such as the danger that by his conduct the strong will cause the weak to stumble or fall, and the corresponding danger that the weak will sit in judgment on the strong. The differences are numerous: there is no mention in Romans of idols or food offered to idols; the word "conscience" does not appear; the strong are not described as those who have knowledge. On the other hand, we read in Romans of vegetarians and of those who insist on observing a certain day in contrast to others who look on all days as being alike. Neither of these features appears in 1 Corinthians.

Possibly the weaker brethren at Rome should be identified with the Jewish element in the church, because believing Jews might easily carry over their avoidance of certain foods from their former observance of the dietary laws of the OT. It is possible that information had reached Paul to the effect that with the return of Jewish Christians to Rome after the death of Emperor Claudius in A.D. 54 tension had developed in the church with the Gentile element that had been able for several years to enjoy without challenge its freedom in the matter of foods.

Judging from his discussion in 1 Corinthians, Paul would place himself among the strong. Yet he was careful not to become an occasion of stumbling to a weaker brother. He has words of warning and words of encouragement to both groups. His primary concern is to promote a spirit of unity in the church (15:5).⁶

Catch Phrase / Key Phrase:

“Can’t we all just get along?”

Outline

I. Prologue: Paul’s commission to preach Christ to the nations 1:1-17

II. Doctrine: Justification—The Righteousness of God Revealed 1:18–11:36

God’s Gracious Provision of Righteousness is Acquired by Faith in Jesus Christ

III. Duties of the Justified—Righteousness of God Reflected 12:1–15:13

The Justified Believer is to Act According to His Position before God

A. Duty Toward the Assembly 12:1-21

Action of the Justified: Toward the Assembly

“Therefore” Service 12:1

1. Foundation of Conduct: Consecration 12:1-2
2. Function of Conduct: Focused on Others 12:3-21
 - a. In humility: Using God-given Enablement 12:3-8
 - b. In love: Demonstrate Christian Ethics 12:9-21

B. Duty Toward the State 13:1-14

Action of the Justified: Toward the State⁷

1. Submission to the Government 13:1-7
2. Loving Neighbors 13:8-10
3. Proper Conduct 13:11-14

C. Duties toward the Weak and the Strong 14:1-15:13

Third, those believers whose faith is strong and who have a good grasp on their death to the Law should not be judgmental on weaker brothers (14:1–15:13). Neither the weak nor strong brother should condemn the other, but instead should recognize the freedom that all have in Christ (14:1-12). But his freedom should not become a stumbling block to the weak: liberty must give way to love (14:13-23). That is to say, one believer’s freedoms should not cause another brother to sin by the latter’s imbibing in something against his conscience (14:23).

⁵Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 705.

⁶*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Pradis CD-ROM: Romans, Book Version: 4.0.2

⁷Dr. Harold W. Hoehner’s outline (DTS, Spring 1991, Exegesis of Romans 206, unpublished class notes).

Ultimately, the strong believer (as well as the weak) should imitate Christ in his selflessness (15:1-13), rather than using liberty as a means to please oneself.⁸

1. Mutual forbearance 14:1-12
 - a. Introduction—The Issue: Judging others 14:1-3
 - b. Each believer answers to the Lord alone 14:4-9
 - c. God is the only right Judge over believers 14:10-12
2. Exhortation for the strong not to offend the weak 14:13-23
 - a. Principle stated: do not cause offense 14:13
 - b. Practice stated: be concerned for the weak 14:14-21
 - c. Principle summarized: act in faith 14:22-23
3. Exhortation for the strong to help the weak 15:1-6
 - a. Obligation of the strong toward the weak 15:1-4
 - b. Petition for unity 15:5-6
4. Exhortation to mutual acceptance 15:7-13
 - a. Exhortation to acceptance 15:7a
 - b. Example of acceptance 15:7b-2
 - c. Entreaty of joy and peace 15:13

Exposition / Key Exegetical Issues to be Aware



12—16 “Therefore”

Moving from the more doctrinal to the more practical—keeping the practical anchored in the doctrinal and making sure the doctrinal is practical.

12:9–15:13

How do you live in the Body—accepting one-another’s differences while maintaining unity
 How do you live in the world—accepting the reality of rules

14:1-12 Mutual forbearance (tolerance, self-control, restraint, patience)

Interaction/Question

What are issues (categories) that cause conflict?

- Possessions
- Personalities
- Preferences
- Propriety—conduct
- Proper doctrine

So if there are so many opportunities for conflict—isn’t it better to just splinter into smaller homogeneous groups?

How would the instructions of Romans 12:3-21; 13:8-10 along with 1 Corinthians 12-13 help us answer that question?

Paul is clear throughout his writings that believers have been (positionally) placed within the Body of Christ and therefore must learn to live out in practice this interconnectedness. Our personal growth cannot be viewed in isolation; it must be viewed in community. Therefore, maintaining community is vital and this will require conflict resolution.

What are our “sacred cows?” That is, what are the issues/events/things that could never be changed, though perhaps not primary in importance, they are primary by passion?

Teachers—here are additional introductory thoughts but I don’t think you will have time for them. The topic of Romans 14:1—15:13 is important and it is a repeated theme in the New Testament.

Group Interaction (groups of 3-6, each looking at one passage and answering the same questions)

⁸ Daniel B. Wallace, *Romans: Introduction, Argument, and Outline*, bible.org

Ephesians 4:1-3
 Ephesians 4:14-16
 Ephesians 4:25-32
 James 4:1-3

Group activity (3 or 6 groups) each group look at one passage and answer:

1. What does it teach us about the body of Christ?
2. What does it tell us are the priorities?
3. How are individuals in the body to relate?

On a whiteboard or flip chart, have someone record group observations

Summarization activity (3, 2, 1)

- 3 general observations
- 2 key lessons
- 1 principle I need to practice this week

14:1-3 The Issue: Judging others

Paul begins by addressing the “strong,” exhorting them to accept the weak in faith and not to quarrel over the scruples of the “weak” (v. 1). Verse 2 elaborates on and explains verse 1, so that we learn that the “weak” referred to in verse 1 refuse to eat meat whereas the “strong” feel free to eat anything.¹ After providing an explanation in verse 2, Paul returns to exhortations in verse 3. He exhorts the “strong” not to despise the “weak” and the “weak” not to judge the “strong.” Verse 4 addresses the “weak.” Here Paul drives home the reason why the “weak” are not to judge the “strong”: God has accepted the “strong,” and therefore it is quite inappropriate for the “weak” to usurp God’s place and stand in judgment over the “strong,” since whether the “strong” stand or fall depends on God alone. The verse is rounded out by an assurance that the “strong” will surely stand, for God will provide them the strength to do so.⁹

14:1 “weak in faith”

They do not have assurance or conviction about a freedom (see more at 14:5).

Weaker brother—One who has scruples that will not permit him to participate in an activity of Christian liberty. There are two possibilities:

1. A brother who is relatively strong in his faith, but his conscience does not allow him to participate, and his faith is strong enough that he will not be tempted to follow your lead.
2. One who is weak in his faith (“powerless”) and whose convictions are not strong enough to keep him from following you into an act of Christian freedom that his conscience will condemn him for; therefore causing him to stumble and fall.

The second is the preferable definition of the weaker brother in this passage.

Please notice that the weaker brother is one whose faith will be shaken by the behavior of the strong. The issue is not just what I like and don’t like. Too often in the church, those who are “mature” act immaturely and demand their preference. And too often in the church, those who are “mature” rather than looking out for the interests of others—seek their own comfort and convenience.

If we are to understand the point of this section as a whole, we must recognize that the phrase “whose faith is weak” (lit., “one who is weak with respect to faith”) has a special nuance in this context. “Faith” refers not directly to one’s belief generally but to one’s convictions about what that faith allows him or her to do. The weak in faith are not necessarily lesser Christians than the strong. They are simply those who do not think their faith allows them to do certain things that the strong feel free to do.¹⁰

¹ Contra Reasoner (1990: 170, 196–99), it is doubtful that eating all things suggests gluttony.

⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, vol. 6, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 711.

¹⁰ Moo, Douglas J. *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) 448.

Moo does a good job summarizing who the “weak” might be, as well as what the issue is. He presents six options.

- (1) The weak are Gentile Christians who abstain from meat (and perhaps wine), especially on certain fast days, under the influence of pagan religious traditions.
- (2) The weak are Christians generally who are devoted, for whatever reason, to an ascetic lifestyle.
- (3) The weak are mainly Jewish Christians who think they need to observe certain rituals of the Mosaic law in order to be justified before God.
- (4) The weak are mainly Jewish Christians who, under the influence of widespread religious trends in the first century, are expressing their devotion to God by following an ascetic lifestyle (see [Col. 2:16 – 23](#)).
- (5) The weak are Jewish Christians who, like some of the Corinthians (see [1 Cor. 8 – 10](#)), refuse to eat meat because it may have been tainted with idolatry in the marketplace.
- (6) The weak are mainly Jewish Christians who do not eat certain food and observe certain days (and perhaps do not drink wine) out of loyalty to the Mosaic law.

Four specific arguments combine to make the last of these alternatives the most likely.

(1) The dispute Paul refers to has its roots in the tension between Jews and Gentiles in Rome. Why else would Paul conclude his exhortation with a series of Old Testament quotations celebrating the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the people of God ([15:8 – 12](#))? Moreover, Paul’s use of the word “common” (*koinos*) in [14:14](#) to refer to what the NIV calls “unclean” food also suggests a Jewish basis for the position of the weak. This word was widely applied to food forbidden to God’s people by the Mosaic law (cf. [Mark 7:2, 5](#); [Acts 10:14](#)).

(2) Paul’s exhortation to strong believers to accept the weak makes clear that the weak are not holding a view Paul thinks is antithetical to the gospel. As we know from his other letters (e.g., Galatians), Paul can be harsh toward Christians who hold views contrary to the gospel of God. If the weak thought their obedience to the law was necessary for their salvation (view 3), Paul would do more than simply urge the strong to accept them into Christian fellowship.

(3) Paul never suggests that the meat the weak believers refuse to eat has been sacrificed to idols. We do not have sufficient basis to read the situation of [1 Corinthians 8 – 10](#) into Romans. Moreover, had that been the problem, we cannot explain why the observance of days is also an issue.

(4) On a positive note, the practices Paul attributes to the weak in this passage are easily explained against the background of Jewish attempts to keep the Mosaic law in a Gentile environment. The observance of holy days, including the major festivals and the Sabbath, were important Jewish identity markers in the first-century world. The Mosaic law did not, of course, demand abstinence from meat or wine. But scrupulous Jews often avoided eating meat if they could not be sure it had been prepared in a kosher manner. They would similarly abstain from wine out of a concern that it had been tainted by the pagan practice of offering wine as a libation to the gods.

The classic biblical example of such care to avoid pagan contamination is Daniel, who “resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine” ([Dan. 1:8](#); see also [10:3](#); [Tobit 1:10 – 12](#); [Judith 12:2, 19](#); Add. [Esth. 14:17](#); *Joseph and Aseneth* 14). It would not be surprising if many, perhaps most, Jews in Rome, surrounded by pagans, had decided to adopt similar practices in order to maintain their purity before the Lord.

If this background makes this scenario plausible, the whole tenor of Romans confirms this direction of interpretation. For the letter is preoccupied from the beginning with the question of the Mosaic law and the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. In other words, the theology developed in [Romans 1 – 11](#) perfectly applies to a situation in which Christians in Rome are divided over the continuing relevance of certain provisions of, or drawn from, the Mosaic law. This does not, of course, prove that this is the issue, but the “fit” between theology and practical exhortation does support this scenario.¹¹

¹¹ Moo, Douglas J. *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) 451-452.

14:1 “opinions”

Romans 14:1 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. (ESV)

Romans 14:1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but* not for *the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions. (NASB95)

Romans 14:1 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. (NIV)

Romans 14:1 Now receive the one who is weak in the faith, and do not have disputes over differing opinions. (The NET Bible)

Opinions or disputable matters—Matters of opinion on which Scripture is silent

Or areas that at one time were not allowed (under Law) but to which the gospel gives freedom

While Paul is dealing with a Jewish-Gentile conflict, we could apply this to a number of different cultural issues.

Gray areas

12:2-3 Difference over food

Within the context, this is not a discussion of “meat offered to idols” as in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10. It probably has more to do with the “kosher” laws of the Old Testament and what Jewish believers were comfortable eating.

Notice that Paul’s point here is not to “put down” the weak but to instruct both the weak and the strong. When dealing with tradition and preferences our first step must be to accept, not correct each other.

Both groups were made up of people who were considered genuine believers and who had a sincere desire to please God (14:3, 13).

Both groups were being critical of those who were “different.” The two groups despised each other, holding each other at a distance except to debate (14:2–3). “The weak tended to regard the exercise of liberty on the part of the strong as a falling down in their devotion to Christ and therefore subjecting them to the Lord’s disappointment.” One can almost imagine the weaker brother whispering “bunch of antinomians” under his breath, making sure he kept his distance from that group of “liberals.” Equally guilty, the stronger Christian was being critical of his weaker brothers and sisters. It doesn’t take too much imagination to hear this church member muttering to his friends about those “legalists” in the church with their scruples concerning diet and days. Apparently there were relational boundaries being erected by people on both sides of this issue. No doubt attitudes were being expressed such as “Why should I fellowship with him? I know I’m right and he’s wrong!”¹²

Interaction:

Most of us feel the freedom to eat whatever and how much we want. So what is the point for us?

Start by accepting others

Application/Implications

Can we apply these principles to drinking alcohol?

What principles can we draw?

Summary Principles

Weak don’t judge

Strong don’t regard with contempt

There are disputable matters—differing opinions, but they should not cause division, disregard or disapproval in the Body.

¹²Larry McCall, “Accepting Those Who Differ: Lessons On Unity From Romans 14 And 15,” *Reformation and Revival Volume 8* (Reformation and Revival Ministries, 1999; 2003), vnp.8.3.92.

14:4-9 Insistence that each believer answers to the Lord alone 14:4-9

Rhetorical Question: “Who are you to judge the servant of another?”

Does Paul prohibit discernment?

No, he prohibits a judgmental spirit.



14:5 Differences over days

As with the first illustration (14:2-3) of eating, Paul’s second illustration also has to do with laws of the Old Testament, or at least the application of those laws through tradition.

Romans 14:5c Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. (ESV)



Does being “fully convinced” equal being right?

No. The issue is not “right or wrong.” The issue is freedom—liberty. Paul is addressing “gray areas” where what one chooses to do is not a moral decision.

πληροφωρέω (*plērophoreō*) “fully convinced” –certain, to be completely certain of the truth of something, to be absolutely sure, to be certain, complete certainty.¹³

This phrase makes it clear that the decision (about a day) is well thought out. The individual has fully examined the issues and determined his course of action based on his beliefs. Then the practice that is adopted is based on conviction “which leaves no room for the least hesitation.”¹⁴

Paul previously used this term in Romans 4 (v. 21) see the context.

Romans 4:11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, (ESV)

Romans 4:21 fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. (ESV)

The natural questions that the phrase, “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind” raise are:

Does this mean that as long as you are not “convicted” by your conscience you can do whatever you want?

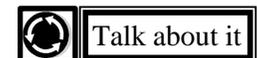
Does this mean that if someone is persuaded they are right, does that make it right?



Does this mean that truth is relative? That individuals walk with the Lord in different ways and with different rules?

This may make us uncomfortable. We like a “one-size-fits-all” model of spirituality. But notice that the issue is not “truth” or “doctrine” but the practice. Paul is discussing how we live out our relationship with Christ and in the extended section, what foods people feel the freedom to eat, and what days people believe are significant or special.

So the issue is not relative truth, but a person (individual) relative application—principles for living—how will we live out what we claim to believe?



Implication/Application

This means we should not be the “compliance officers.” It is not our job to determine what freedoms others should have. Our responsibility is to be fully convinced that what we practice is what God wants us to practice.

¹³Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989), 1:370.

¹⁴F. Godet, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1883, 1956) p. 456.

For example, I choose not to drink alcohol. I do that based on several reasons.

First, I grew up in an environment that saw drinking of alcohol as wrong. So I am preconditioned against drinking alcohol. I have to admit that my “tradition” impacts my decision.

Second, I drink constantly and in high quantities—coffee, Diet Coke, water, iced tea. Because of the quantity I drink, I don’t want to have a problem with alcohol. (One of my ancestors may also have been an alcoholic, so there could be some predisposition.)

Third, I am a father of teenage boys.

Fourth, I am a pastor in a conservative church.

Having said that, I don’t believe the Bible outlaws the drinking of alcohol. It does forbid drunkenness.

Is this one of those areas that Paul is addressing? That an individual would be free to drink alcohol as long as they are fully convinced they have the freedom to drink?

I have very good friends (pastors, professors at seminaries, and godly businessmen) who drink wine with dinner. They feel totally comfortable having a beer with a friend. Paul, under inspiration from the Lord seems to say to me, “It is not your job to judge their freedoms.”

This particular passage is dealing with “gray areas” not issues of morality. We do know that there are beliefs and practices that are not appropriate. We do have a responsibility in these situations to “judge” and to be involved in the lives of others.

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (ESV)
Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. (ESV)

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. (ESV)

Jude 20-23 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. (ESV)

But that is a different issue that the one Paul is addressing here.

Next week we will seek to ask the question; is there a time when I need to forego my freedoms for the sake of others?

Summary Principles

Be fully convinced you are doing the right things
Do all to the Lord’s honor

Application/Implications

What affect would truly “doing all to the Lord’s honor” have on conflicts?

14:10-12 God is the only right Judge over believers

Rhetorical Question: “But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt?”

In this concluding paragraph, Paul places a warning on the discussion. Individuals are free to choose, free to live out their lives as long as they are fully convinced they are doing what is right—but they must remember that God is their Judge.

The primary concern is not “what will others say?” but “what does God say?”

Summary Principles

Remember—the only judge that counts is God because we will have to give account before Him

Application/Implications

Could we accuse Paul of using a “scare tactic?” Or is this simply a reminder of reality, that we will have to give account for our actions?

Judgment Seat (bema)--

In the concluding verses (Rom. 14:10–12) Paul draws the implications from the lordship of Christ. Since Christ is Lord and judge, it is totally inappropriate for some believers to judge or despise other believers (v. 10). All believers will stand before God’s judgment seat. The verb *παραστησόμεθα* (*parastēsometha*, we shall stand) is a technical term for standing before a judge (Acts 27:24; Pol. *Phil.* 6.2; cf. BAGD 628; MM 494–95).

The OT citation in verse 11 supports the claim in verse 10 that all must stand before God’s judgment seat. The citation is a conflation of the oath formula and Isa. 45:23.³⁰ Perhaps the combination of OT texts stems from Paul’s memory of the OT passages (Stuhlmacher 1994: 225) and thus functions as a rough paraphrase. The “bowing” (*κάμψει*, *kampsei*) and “confessing” (*ἐξομολογήσεται*, *exomologēsetai*) indicate submission to and acknowledgment of God’s lordship. The term *ἐξομολογήσεται* does not refer to confession of sins (Michel, *TDNT* 5:215). The idea conveyed is restated in verse 12. Each person will give an account of his or her life to God.³¹ Since he will pass judgment on the lives of the “weak” and the “strong,” they have no business judging fellow servants¹⁵

Now he affirmed that **all** Christians will be evaluated at **the judgment seat of Christ** (cf. Rom. 14:12), which will follow the Rapture of the church. Believers will be recompensed **for the things** they have **done** in their earthly lives (**while in the body**). Their **good** deeds will evoke one response (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5; Eph. 6:8) and the **bad** (*phaulon*, “worthless”) will evoke another (1 Cor. 3:15; Col. 3:25). Salvation is not the issue here. One’s eternal destiny will not be determined at the judgment seat of Christ. Salvation is by faith (Eph. 2:8-9), but deeds issuing from that faith (1 Thes. 1:3) will be evaluated.¹⁶

Verse 10 states without equivocation that all believers will be judged. The judgment will not entail a decision regarding one’s salvation because according to John 5:24 the believer has already crossed over from death to life. Eternal life is a present possession (cf. 1 Cor 3:10–15). There will, however, be for every believer a judgment of the quality of his or her life. In 2 Cor 5:10 Paul said, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one

Pol. Polycarp, Letter to the Philippians

BAGD A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, by W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979)

MM The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources, by J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan (reprinted Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976)

³⁰ Some scholars say the oath stemmed from Isa. 49:18 (and possibly Jer. 22:24; Ezek. 5:11; so, e.g., Koch 1986: 184–85). But C. Stanley (1992: 177) is probably correct in seeing “a general appropriation of biblical language.”

TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich; translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

³¹ Moo (1996: 847) thinks the text refers to “praising” God. This is possible linguistically, but seems less likely contextually.

¹⁵Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 722.

¹⁶John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:566.

may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”
This will be a judgment based on works (cf. Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6; Rev 22:12). In the long run the validity of faith is established by the quality of life it produces. What people do is the most accurate indicator of what they really believe.¹⁷

Romans 2:6 He will render to each one according to his works: (ESV)

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (ESV)

Matthew 12:36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, (ESV)

Hebrews 4:13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (ESV)

1 John 4:17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. (ESV)

Revelation 22:12 “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. (ESV)

→ **Summary of Key Issue:** In issues over differing opinions—

If you feel you have freedom—don’t condemn/criticize or view with contempt those who don’t.
If you feel you can’t do something—don’t judge those who do.

Whether you feel you have freedom or are restricted from doing a specific thing—be convinced and keep your conscience clear. (14:5, 22-23)

How do you do this? Ask:

Is my motive to honor God or simply please myself?

Next week we will add to this question, because Paul will teach us that freedom does have boundaries.

Key Points

Principle: Accept each other, differences and all, in Christ.

Whatever we do—do it as to the Lord

Out of love and humility we should seek the greater good of others to the glory of God

Absolutes—Convictions—Preferences—Opinions

Areas of Decision¹⁸

We use these categories even though we don’t always think about it.

1. **Absolutes**—Areas in which there is clear biblical teaching on which you are not willing to make any compromise: firm convictions (for which you are willing to pay a price).

Moral issues, Doctrinal specifics, Family concerns, Integrity
This should be a short list

Need to clarify—Incremental revelation may change for a new generation, something that was restricted for a former generation—i.e. no longer under the Law.

Only Scripture can modify an absolute.

Our goal when it comes to absolutes—unity.



¹⁷Robert H. Mounce, vol. 27, *Romans*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1995), 254.

¹⁸ Visual adapted from Matthew McAlack, PBU class notes

2. **Convictions**—Beliefs based on biblical principles
Beliefs based on interpretation of the Bible in areas that are not fundamental to salvation nor part of the essence of orthodoxy.

Our goal when it comes to convictions—love.

3. **Preferences**—Areas of desire (strong) where you are willing to compromise, if persuaded and if needed, for unity. (Bias, partiality, ideals)

Another possible description is “traditions.” These are things we are comfortable with but that are not synonymous with truth.

Our goal when it comes to preferences or traditions—openness.

4. **Opinions**—Issues that are not clear cut or black and white, but in which you have developed an opinion based on personality and background. Things you like but could live without.

We need to understand how our personality and background impacts our opinions and be open to those with differing opinions.

Our goal when it comes to opinions—acceptance of the individual.

Our tendency is to move our “beliefs” one step up the ladder.

Our opinions become preferences.

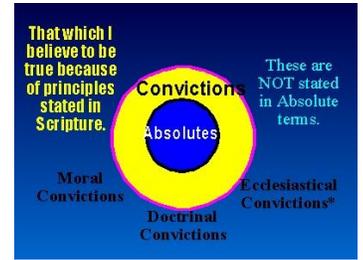
Our preferences become convictions.

Our convictions become absolutes.

This results in more intense conflict. Our list of absolutes becomes too long, our convictions too passionate and our preferences cause division.

The bottom line is that in order to overcome conflict we first must develop relationships which allow for us to discuss issues not argue. We must develop relationship in which we know the personality and passion of others.

Unity is based on mutual submission and love and does not require unanimity. When unanimity cannot be achieved, unity must be maintained: through the submission of one to the many, by submission of one to another, by the maturity to work past the disagreement or to leave the disagreement (issue) behind never to be uncovered again. Learn to develop respect for those with whom you have disagreement. Find areas of strength and common ground.



First, we need to recognize and discern the four levels of commonly held beliefs: absolutes, convictions, preferences and opinions.

Absolutes are those ideals the Bible clearly teaches: the 10 Commandments, the commands of Christ and the Epistles—the “where stands it written” absolutes found in Scripture.

Convictions are those beliefs we choose as personal practices based on biblical principle but not explicitly commanded in Scripture. These issues might include entertainment choices, personal habits, the use of alcohol and how we “keep the Sabbath holy.”

Preferences are those beliefs we personally think are best for us and our families. These include choices such as what church we attend, what school options are best, what kind of house or car we buy, or how many children we have.

Opinions are those ideas we hold to that are subject to change: the kind of music we like, the color of the carpet or the best sports team.

Now here’s the challenge: To live together well, we must discern which of the four beliefs we are addressing. Are we discussing an opinion, a preference, a conviction or an absolute? If you think your opinion is an absolute, and I think it is just an opinion, or at best a preference, we are headed for a conflict.¹⁹

¹⁹ <http://www.efca.org/today/media/summer05impressions.pdf>

<p>What are some issues that cause division?</p> <p>Dancing Drinking Entertainment (movies, TV, etc.) How to raise children</p>	<p>In the church?</p> <p>Music styles Role of woman Issues related to “spiritual gifts” Divorce and remarriage Role of leadership</p>
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Putting the Non-Negotiables into Practice²⁰

Descriptive vs. Prescriptive

Is this a description or a command?

Negative vs. Positive

Negative: If a practice isn't found in the Bible, then we shouldn't do it.

Positive: Though something is not found in the Bible, we are free to do it as long as it doesn't contradict any other clear teaching of Scripture.

Patternism vs. Principialism

Patternism: The New Testament provides a pattern for the church to follow. Although these are not stated as commands, the practices and patterns of the early church must be followed.

Principialism: the commands of Scripture should be followed without question. However, the practices of the early church form a guide for the church of today. The church of today is free to draw from the principles from the early church, but is not bound to the exact way that things were done.

Form vs. Function

“Form ever follows function.”

Function: purpose, principle

Form: the way that this purpose or principle is accomplished.



What do we learn
About God?

God must not only be creative (since He created the universe with such beauty) but He must like diversity. Look at how differently He has gifted and wired us.



Act on it

Questions to ask yourself

How gracious are you towards those who are different or disagree?

Would people say that you “breathe out grace” over differences and in the midst of disagreement?

Do you give people the benefit of the doubt?

Do you assume the best or the worst of people?

Do you assign motives to people's actions and then judge them by the motives you perceive?

Can you overlook people's differences—dress, taste in music, etc?

Do you avoid or seek to engage those who are different than you—race, age, dress, personality, etc?

Can you/do you praise God for the diversity in the Body of Christ at Calvary Church?

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (ESV)

²⁰ Matthew McAlack, PBU class notes

Appendix: Weaker Brother

Context: *What is Christian Freedom?*

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (ESV)

Galatians 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (ESV)

1 Thessalonians 5:22

Abstain from all appearance of evil. (KJV)
Avoid every kind of evil. (NIV)
Abstain from every form of evil. (NASB)
Abstain from every form of evil. (ESV)
Stay away from every evil that is seen (SCK)

The word “kind” can mean “appearance” and does so in other NT passages, but the context dictates meaning. Notice the contrast between 5:21 and “hold fast to what is good.” Should we only “look” good, or “be” good? So the idea of “every form” is “every evil that is seen”— not the appearance of evil but all evil.

Freedom: Colossians 2:16-23 (do’s and don’ts don’t lead to spirituality)

1 Corinthians 6:12-13 “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be enslaved by anything. 13 “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. (ESV)

1 Corinthians 6:12 “Everything is permissible for me” -- but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me” -- but I will not be mastered by anything. (NIV)

Main argument against sexual immorality for glorifying God in /through the Christian body

Gnosticism: Legalist or licentious

“All things are lawful for me” or “Everything is permissible for me” — probably a Corinthian theological slogan, which Paul will so qualify as to almost negate it, at least as an absolute.

Not is it lawful or allowable but is it *good*.

Word Play: *ecousia* — freedom to act, right
exousiaqhsomai — will be enslaved, overpowered

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 “All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. 24 Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. (ESV)

1 Corinthians 10:23 “Everything is permissible” -- but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible” -- but not everything is constructive. (NIV)

What is beneficial for *someone else*, constructive

1 Cor. 9:12, 18 *ecousia* — the right to be the slave of all

Titus 1:15-16 To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. (ESV)

Matthew 10:16 “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. (ESV)

Romans 14:1-12

- 1 As for the one who is weak in faith,
welcome him,
but not to quarrel over opinions.
- 2 One person believes he may eat anything,
while the weak person eats only vegetables.
- 3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains,
and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats,
for God has welcomed him.

- 4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?
It is before his own master that he stands or falls.
And he will be upheld,
for the Lord is able to make him stand.
- 5 One person esteems one day as better than another,
while another esteems all days alike.
Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.
- 6 The one who observes the day,
observes it in honor of the Lord.
The one who eats,
eats in honor of the Lord,
since he gives thanks to God,
while the one who abstains,
abstains in honor of the Lord
and gives thanks to God.

7 For none of us lives to himself,
and none of us dies to himself.

8 For if we live,
we live to the Lord,
and if we die,
we die to the Lord.

So then,
whether we live
or whether we die,
we are the Lord's.

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

10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother?
Or you, why do you despise your brother?
For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;

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

12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. (ESV)

Action of the Justified: Toward the Weak & the Strong
Romans 14:1–15:13

**Mutual
Forbearance**

14:1 12

**Strong Not
to Offend
the Weak**

14:13 23

**Strong to
Help the
Weak**

15:1 6

**Mutual
Acceptance**

15:7 13