

**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
<b>Think Context!</b>

**Romans 14:13-23**

- 13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer,  
but rather decide never to put a  
    stumbling block  
    or hindrance  
    in the way of a brother.
- 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself,  
but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.
- 15 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat,  
you are no longer walking in love.  
    By what you eat,  
    do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.
- 16 So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.
- 17 For the kingdom of God is  
not a matter of eating and drinking  
but of righteousness  
    and peace  
    and joy  
    in the Holy Spirit.
- 18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.
- 19 So then let us pursue what makes  
    for peace  
    and for mutual upbuilding.
- 20 Do not,  
    for the sake of food,  
    destroy the work of God.  
Everything is indeed clean,  
but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble  
by what he eats.
- 21 It is good not to  
    eat meat  
    or drink wine  
    or do anything  
        that causes your brother to stumble.
- 22 The faith that you have,  
    keep between yourself and God.  
Blessed is the one who has no reason  
to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.
- 23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats,  
because the eating is not from faith.  
For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. (ESV)

Review: As a demonstration of love, accept each other, differences and all, in Christ.  
 Observations: 1) 3 key repetitions 2) chiasmic structure 3) continuation of "love" theme 4)  
 Question: Are there times we must give up our Christian freedoms for the sake of others?

Topic /Outline:  
 14:13 Principle stated: do not cause offense  
 14:14-21 Practice stated: be concerned for the weak  
 14:22-23 Principle summarized: act in faith

Since God is the sovereign Judge—don't take His place

**Romans 14:13-23**

Principle Stated: 13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

Practice Stated: 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

15 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.

16 So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.

17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

20 Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.

21 It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

22 The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.

23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. (ESV)

No longer go on passing judgment

Active subjunctive infinite used as an imperative?

Is this an indication that this was going on?

Don't Judge

Compare and Contrast "stumbling block" and "hindrance" Almost synonymous

Use of clean and unclean indicates that the weak still see themselves bound to the OT principles

Restating 14:5

Paul's overarching principle in this section 12:3, 9-10; 13:8-10

Don't Harm

Part of the value of people is derived from our connection to Christ—He valued us—but also the Image of God

Can be used in a number of ways—here it is used of God's

Active subjunctive verb used as an imperative?

See 12:10, 18; 13:10; 14:7 Look at I Cor 6:12; 10:23-24 Mutual Edification

Build up

Paul is not just saying, "give up rights" he is teaching what is right—"nothing is unclean"

Don't be a stumbling block

Don't put a stumbling block in a brother's way

Be willing to give up "things" or freedoms for people

Conviction

To the strong

Clearly honoring God

To the weak

Don't flaunt your freedom

Don't stretch your freedom

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

Not only are we to accept the differences of others, we are not to allow our freedoms to harm others,  
this will mean we should  
not judge others  
not put a stumbling block in a brother's way  
rather seek to build them up  
not sacrifice an individual over our rights

**Main idea:**

Don't offend the weak for the sake of your freedoms

**Teaching idea/explanation:**

The section we are in (14:1-15:13), made up of three lessons all build together on an important relational issue—how do we deal with those who differ or disagree with us?

In the previous section (14:1-12) Paul addressed the issue of differences within the Body, challenging individuals not to judge or regard with contempt those who have different practices in their Christian life.

In this section (14:13-23) Paul will address the need for the strong not only to understand the differences, but to give up their freedoms for the sake of the weak.

Again this section is not difficult to understand, but difficult to apply. Therefore the focus of the lesson should be on practical application of the passage.

Challenge your students to think “outside the box.” To evaluate their presupposition—

Are they the strong or the weak?  
Should they be the strong?

How much does their background impact their understanding of Christian freedoms?  
How much do their traditions impact their freedoms or lack of freedoms?

Are they prone to legalism?  
Are they prone to individualism?  
Are they prone to self-centeredness?  
Are they prone to rationalize their behavior?  
Are they prone to diminish in their minds, their sinful tendencies?

**Introduction**

**Interaction**

Last week we saw that believers have freedom, but that we must ask:  
Is my motive to honor God or simply to please myself?



Talk about it

In this week's study, we will need to add to that question—How will my actions affect others?

Is there a time when I need to forego my freedoms for the sake of others?

When should I forego my freedom?  
To what degree should I forego my freedoms?

Do I have a responsibility to teach (buildup) those who don't have the freedoms I have?

## Review

The mercies of God motivate us to a consecrated life (living sacrifice) that does not allow the world and its belief system to force us into its model, but which results in transformation by the renewing of our minds, leading to doing the will of God particularly in humble service within the Body of Christ.

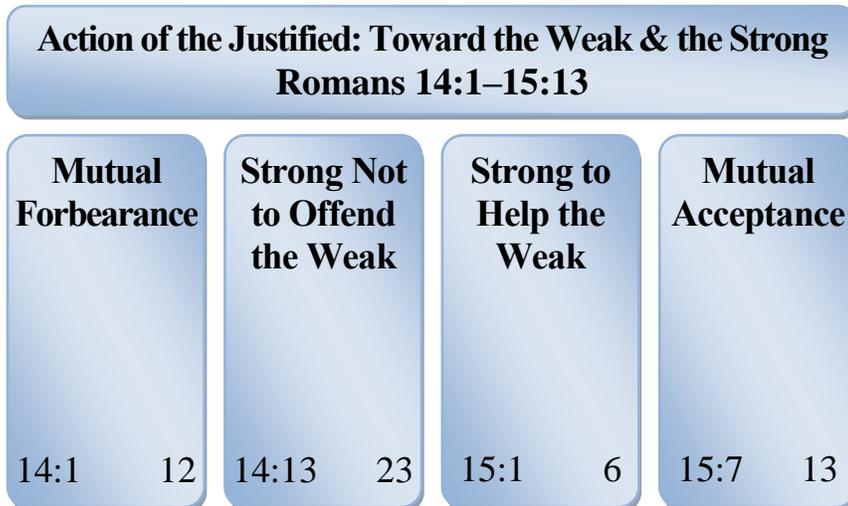
Love one another and the things that are good, hate what is evil. And in the midst of evil, seek to live at peace with all, not retaliating evil for evil, bless and minister to those who are against you. Submit to governing authorities who have been given authority by God. Seek to fulfill the Law by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

A practical demonstration of love is seen in our acceptance of other believers, differences and all. Seeking to do all we do, to the Lord and out love and humility we seek the greater good of others to the glory of God

## Overview/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

WHILE PAUL IN 14:1 – 12 addresses both parties in the dispute at Rome, his main criticism is directed at the weak, who stand in judgment over the strong. In 14:13 – 23, he redresses that imbalance by focusing on the strong. Negatively, Paul warns these believers not to use their liberty in a way that brings spiritual harm to their weaker brothers and sisters (the idea of stumbling; see vv. 13b, 20b – 21; also vv. 15, 20a). Positively, he wants them to use their freedom on these matters in accordance with love in order to edify the body (vv. 15, 19).<sup>1</sup>



## Preview

Paul now turns to exhort the strong concerning the conduct which their love for the weak demands. When the strong use their freedom, they are not wrong in their position (v. 14), but they must never consciously allow their freedom to jeopardize the spiritual life and growth of a brother in Christ. Though nothing (material) is evil (unclean) in itself, it may be viewed as evil by a person whose mind is more influenced by his cultural background than by the truth of God's creation taught in Scripture (Mark 7:15).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 458.

<sup>2</sup> Alan F. Johnson, *Romans: The Freedom Letter*, Vol 2, Everyman's Bible Commentary, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985) pp. 122-123.

## Connection with 1 Corinthians 8

See appendix

## Catch Phrase / Key Phrase:

Don't let good be spoken of as evil because of you.  
Pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.  
Don't harm—build up

## 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 State*<sup>3</sup>

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). 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.<sup>4</sup>

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

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Harold W. Hoehner's outline (DTS, Spring 1991, Exegesis of Romans 206, unpublished class notes)

<sup>4</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Romans: Introduction, Argument, and Outline*, bible.org

**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.

**12:9–15:12**

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

**14:13-23 The strong are not to offend the weak**

Paul structures this exhortation to the strong much as he did [verses 1 – 12](#). His key concern, that strong believers avoid being a “stumbling block” to the weak, is expressed at the beginning and the end ([vv. 13b – 16](#) and [vv. 19 – 23](#)). These two sections follow a chiastic order:

A Warning about stumbling blocks ([v. 13b](#))

B Nothing is unclean ([v. 14a](#))

C Don’t destroy one for whom Christ died ([v. 15b](#))

C’ Don’t tear down the work of God ([v. 20a](#))

B’ All things are clean ([v. 20b](#))

A’ Don’t do anything to cause a believer to stumble ([v. 21](#))

In between, we find the theological rationale for this concern: the nature of the kingdom of God ([vv. 17 – 18](#)).<sup>5</sup>

Paul himself was fully convinced that nothing was intrinsically unclean.<sup>6</sup> To Timothy he wrote, “Everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving (1 Tim 4:4; cf. Titus 1:15). The old taboos on certain ceremonial foods were no longer in force. Jesus taught that it is not what goes into the mouth that makes a person unclean but what comes out (Matt 15:10–11, 16–20). Nevertheless, Paul was concerned with the affect of this new freedom on the lives of those Christians who still felt that in some way the regulations of Judaism were not totally obsolete. Although no food is unclean in itself, if someone regards it as unclean, then for that person it is<sup>7, 8</sup>.”

**Interaction/Question (If you did not ask these questions last week, they could be used this week.)**

Should we abstain from every appearance of evil?

Look at the difference in translations of 1 Thessalonians 5:22 (see appendix: Weaker Brother)

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?

We all know we are not under the law but grace. We know that one of the benefits of salvation is freedom from the law and legalism.

But what are some of the issues of “freedom” that might cause or do cause conflict in our Church?

What “activities” do some Christians at Calvary feel the freedom to participate in and others don’t?

Examples might be:

Dancing

Drinking

Entertainment (movies, TV, etc)

How to raise children

Sending children to public school

<sup>5</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 458.

<sup>6</sup> κοινός was a semitechnical term describing those customs of the non-Jewish world that were forbidden to the devout Jewish believer.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce comments that “defilement is located in people’s minds, not in material objects” and adds that this truth has “far reaching implications” (*Romans*, 237).

<sup>8</sup> Mounce, Robert H. Vol. 27, *Romans*. Logos Library System; The New American Commentary, Page 255. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1995.

**Tradition**

I am reminded of a story my pastor, Todd Habegger, tells. In a family he knows, a ham always had an inch or so sliced off from one side before it was put in the oven. He asked why this was done. The woman cooking the ham replied, “Because my mother always prepared ham that way.” With her interest stimulated, she in turn asked her mother about the ham. Her mother said, “Because my mother always prepared ham that way.” When she then asked her great-grandmother about it, she laughed and explained: “The oven in our first home was so small that a whole ham would not fit into it. So I had to cut off part of it.”<sup>9</sup>

The passage before us should challenge our traditions, at least causing us to acknowledge them and perhaps even to appreciate the diversity of traditions within our church.

**14:13 The Principle Stated**

Romans 14:1–13 makes clear that there is no room for judgment from either side of an issue that is “disputable.” Instead of passing judgment we are to make sure not to put a stumbling block in the way of our brother (v. 13). The sense of time in verse 13 is important. Literally it is “let us *no longer judge one another.*” It is natural to judge and it regularly happens without thought. We must go against that tendency and stop judging.

Paul was not specific here, but it follows from his instruction about judgment that the instruction not to cause stumbling applies to both sides. It is obvious how to put a stumbling block in the way of the “weaker” brother—by doing the thing that causes reservations to the weaker brother. But how would the weaker brother put a stumbling block in the way of a “stronger” brother? He would do so by projecting his opinion from his weak conscience upon the stronger brother and attempting to condemn him for his actions. Neither brother should cause the other to stumble. This is exactly what verses 1–13a are about.<sup>10</sup>

Don’t pass judgment

Does this mean never evaluate someone’s actions or don’t be judgmental?



It is interesting that Paul uses the word “judge” twice in verse 13.

“not pass judgment”

“decide”

stumbling block or hindrance

Could be viewed as synonymous

Or

Stumbling block

An occasion for stumbling—that which causes stumbling—a Wounding

Hindrance

The term *skandalon* literally refers “to a device for catching something alive” in a *trap* (BDAG, 926; cf. Matt 16:23; 1 Cor 8:13). Therefore, whether a believer wants to or not, to condemn a brother over these issues will trap him. Consequently this will stunt a person’s spiritual growth (cf. 1 Tim 6:3–4; Titus 3:9), since arguing about such issues may cause one to become more stubborn and ingrained in his belief.<sup>11</sup>

Godet, who refers *stumbling-block* to that which results in a *wound*, and *cause of stumbling* to that which causes a *fall* or *sin*.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 463.

<sup>10</sup> Jay Swisher, “What Kind of Music Does God Like?” *Emmaus Journal Volume 13* (Emmaus Bible College, 2004; 2005), vnp.13.2.281.

BDAG *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, 3d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)

<sup>11</sup> René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked Power to Deliver* (Springfield, Missouri: 21st Century, 2005), 269.

<sup>12</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2002), 3:169.

→ **What does it mean when we say, “cause them to stumble?”**

Romans 14:13

Romans 14:15-16

Romans 14:19-21

**1 Corinthians 8:9** But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. (ESV)

**1 Corinthians 8:11-12** And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. <sup>12</sup> Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. (ESV)

1. Cause a wound
2. Cause them to lose faith, because you do and say that something is allowable for Christians and they equate those practices with pagan practices, immorality, of something less than “spiritual.”
2. Cause them to do something that in their conscience they think is wrong—therefore, sin
3. Cause them to be offended by your actions

**The Issue:** Judging others

**Point:** Don’t cause offense

**14:14-21 The Practice Stated**

Notice how Paul states his agreement with the strong. This is for at least two reasons.

One, he is convinced there is nothing unclean (notice this is not an issue of pure versus evil, but clean and unclean, sanctified and common).

For the sake of his argument, he states his agreement with the strong at the beginning so that they are more likely to continue to listen rather than to begin defending their actions.

**But while the strong have the theory right, they must come to grips with the practice.** Although God now pronounces all foods to be kosher, people who have always believed that avoiding certain foods is necessary to maintain their holiness are probably unable immediately to internalize this new perspective. They may not be convinced — at least emotionally and psychologically — that they can eat anything. For them certain foods are still “unclean.”<sup>13</sup>

Paul then gives the reason why the strong should forgo their rights for the weak.

14:14-15/16 For the sake of the individual (weaker brother)

14:16/17-18 For the sake of the gospel

14:15 “grieved” or distressed

To grieve or to hurt, to be brought to disaster, to be destroyed (Romans 14:15; 1 Corinthians 8:10-11)

**Be grieved** (λυπεῖται). The close connection with *destroy* indicates that the meaning falls short of *be destroyed*, but is stronger than *made to feel pain*. It is a *hurt* to conscience, which, while not necessarily fatal, may lead to violation or hardening of conscience, and finally to fall. Compare 1 Cor. 8:9–12.<sup>14</sup>

Having explained how food can bring spiritual downfall to a person, Paul moves on in [verse 15](#) to show that this is just what the strong are doing to the weak. Their eating food that weak believers feel convinced is unclean “distresses” (*lypeo*, to cause pain) them. More than that, it may even “destroy” (*apollymi*) them.<sup>15</sup>

Care in the application

<sup>13</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 460.

<sup>14</sup>Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2002), 3:169.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 460.

We must be careful not to generalize on the principle expressed in this teaching. Paul was not saying that sin is a matter of personal opinion. He was not teaching that as long as we think something is okay it is okay for us. Scripture clearly teaches that certain things are wrong. There are, however, other matters about which there may be legitimate differences of opinion. They are secondary issues about which Christians may be of differing persuasions. In such cases “strong” believers are to be willing, as an expression of Christian love, to allow the sensitivities of the “weak” to condition how they live.<sup>116 16</sup>

#### 14:16-18

Paul reminds him that his eating without concern for its effect on the weaker believers is a violation of the cardinal Christian principle of love (12:9–10; 13:8–10). Moreover, by tacitly encouraging the weaker believer to eat against his or her conscience, the strong believer may *destroy* one for whom Christ died. The word *destroy* (*apollymi*) is a strong one, usually denoting eternal damnation (2:12; 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:18; 2 Cor. 2:15; 2 Thes. 2:10). This may be the meaning here, although, if so, Paul may not think of this eventuality literally. Or it may be that ‘destroy’ is used in a weaker sense here: ‘cause spiritual damage to’.<sup>17</sup>

#### Kingdom of God

After all, the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteous living.<sup>119</sup> For people to insist on eating whatever they want (since nothing is unclean in itself) is to reduce the kingdom to matters of dietary preference. God’s kingdom simply cannot be trivialized in this way. His kingdom has to do with righteous living.<sup>120</sup> Its concerns are significantly broader and relate to issues such as peace and joy, which come from our relationship to the Holy Spirit.<sup>121</sup> Those who serve Christ in this way, that is, “by recognizing that food and drink are secondary matters,” bring pleasure to God and are accepted by others.<sup>122</sup> Pursuing the higher priorities is something “approved by men” and “pleasing to God.”<sup>18</sup>

#### 14:19-21

Restate the principles in positive terms

Do what leads to peace and upbuilding.

The main principle—walking in love in the Body requires evaluating one’s behavior in light of others. **Do my attitude and actions demonstrate love?**

**The Issue:** Be concerned for the weak

**Point:** Seek to build up, not tear down

#### Interaction:

<sup>116</sup> Black writes, “It is better to tolerate another’s prejudice than to advocate one’s beliefs at the expense of a breach of *agape*” (*Romans*, 196).

<sup>16</sup>Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, p. 256.

<sup>17</sup>D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.,: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

<sup>119</sup> Only eight of the sixty-five occurrences of βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ in the NT are in Paul’s letters. It has been suggested that he made little use of the concept because as an itinerant preacher traveling throughout the Roman Empire to proclaim another kingdom could lead to charges of sedition (cf. Dunn, *Romans*, 2:822). On the other hand it may have been because non-Jews did not have the OT background to comprehend it fully.

<sup>120</sup> Thomas says the three main principles of the kingdom of God are moral uprightness, fellowship among Christians, and the joy of genuine exaltation (*Romans*, 375).

<sup>121</sup> Some hold that the phrase “in the Holy Spirit” belongs only with the final term in the triad (i.e., joy). Others connect it to all three. Although the Spirit is certainly involved in both righteousness and peace, it seems better to read the phrase primarily with “joy.” See Rhys for other interpretations of the triad (*Romans*, 180). Cranfield would have us remember that “the joy which is the sign of the presence of God’s kingdom is specifically the joy given by God’s Spirit.” It must be distinguished from any joy “which is merely the temporary result of the satisfaction of one’s own selfish desires” (*Romans*, 2:718). Cf. 1 Thess 1:6; Acts 13:52.

<sup>122</sup> Barrett, *Romans*, 265.

<sup>18</sup>Robert H. Mounce, p. 256.

A heart to heart discussion on dancing, drinking and dress

Does the way people dress to come to church bother you? Does it cause you to stumble?

Is there freedom when it comes to how people dress to come to church?

Should we judge people by what they wear?

This may not be an issue of “mature”/strong and “young”/weak. But one of cultural upbringing.

This may solely be an issue of “taste” or “preference.”

Those who desire to dress up—because they feel that honors God—should do so.

Those who desire to be not focused on dress—because they don’t feel it honors or dishonors God—should do so.

Neither group should judge the other.

#### Guiding Principles

What does the Bible clearly teach?

What is appropriate in a given situation?

What is modest and will not control me?

What is modest and not cause others to stumble?

How will this impact future opportunity for ministry?

What do I do in attitude and actions that will lead to peace and mutual upbuilding?

Am I making the essential the issue or making the incidental essential?

#### 14:22-23 Principle Summarized

“whatever is not of faith is sin”

Paul is again using “faith” (*pistis*) in the specific sense he gave the word at the beginning of the chapter (14:1 – 2): a conviction that one’s faith allows one to engage in a certain activity. So, as true as it may be that any action that does not arise from faith in a general sense is sin, this is not Paul’s point here.<sup>19</sup>

The need to limit the expression of our liberty out of love for God and fellow believers is the key principle in this chapter. Our culture insists on rights, and it is easy for Christians to bring that attitude into the church. But the spiritual health of the body is far more important than our rights. The freedom God has purchased for us through his Son is a precious gift, but it is a freedom to live as God wants, not as we want. Luther put it well in his famous comment on Christian liberty: “A Christian man is a most free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”<sup>20</sup>

**The Issue:** Act in faith

**Point:** Don’t flaunt your faith

#### Summary

→ **Key Issue:** In issues over differing opinions

Don’t judge (14:13)

Don’t put a stumbling block in a brother’s way (14:13, 20-21)

Don’t sacrifice an individual over your rights (14:15)

**Principle:** (14:19)

Pursue the things which make for peace

Building up one another

Be fully convinced of the motivation and merit of your actions (14:22)

Be willing to give up rights out of love for others

<sup>19</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 462.

<sup>20</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 469.

## Key Points

**Principle:** *Out of love and humility, we should seek the greater good of others to the glory of God*

### Key Principles<sup>21</sup>

So what do we do if we are concerned about the weak so as not to cause them to stumble?

1. **Accept** them without judging them (Romans 14:1, 13; 15:7).  
Accept them with warm heartedness and without usurping the place of God and passing judgment on them.
2. **Qualify:** Will this action cause my brother or sister distress? Or are they trying to influence me with their preferences?  
If it is a preference, and will not cause him or her to stumble, we may have to agree to disagree—but I must examine my motives. One caveat, be fully convinced in your own mind (14:5) realizing you will have to give an account to God (14:12).
3. **Abstain:** If in fact it will cause them to stumble, then I must refrain (14:13, 21). My priority is not simply to do what I know to be allowable, but what is beneficial to our brother or sister in the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23). A warning, if I persist in expressing my liberty, it is I who is in sin (1 Corinthians 8:11-12).
4. **Support** the weaker Christian. Uphold them with love and work at edifying them (15:1-2). Follow the example of our selfless minister Jesus Christ.
5. **Teach** the weaker brother or sister making sure you fully understand and can convey the truth to him or her.  
Notice how Paul twice in this section affirms the truth that “nothing is unclean.” He does not simply say, avoid your freedoms for the sake of others, but he demonstrates a humble self-sacrificing building-up model.



What do we learn  
About God?

God can deal with diversity



Act on it

Is there ever a time when should we not give way to the desires of the “weak?”

What if they prefer hymns to choruses?

Is this a stumbling block or a preference?

The key questions are:

What is my attitude?

Do I value others more than my comfort?

Is there a specific issue that this passages raises in your mind?

Does it require a change in attitude or actions?

Does it require forgiving someone?

Does it require seeking forgiveness?

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<sup>21</sup> I do not remember where these key lessons come from. Since there is nothing new under the sun, I’m sure someone should get credit and when I identify the source, I give them due credit.

## Appendix 1: Weaker Brother

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*Context: What is Christian Freedom?*

**Galatians 5:** I 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: *ecuosia* — 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** 15 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)

## Appendix 2: When should I forego my freedom?

Comparison: 1 Corinthians 8

### Background

<b>1 Corinthians</b>		
<b>Growing up and Getting Along</b>		
<i>Written to a very selfish, self-centered and immature group of Christians</i>		
Foundational Concerns: Written in response to the things Paul had heard from the Corinthians	Specific answers to the Corinthians' concerns: Written in response to specific questions from the Corinthians.	
Divisions	Disorder	Difficulties
Reveal Paul's <i>Concern</i> Egocentric Immaturity produces <i>Disunity</i>	Reveal Paul's <i>Condemnation</i> Egocentric Immaturity produces <i>Impurity</i>	Reveal Paul's <i>Counsel</i> Egocentric Immaturity produces <i>Difficulty</i>
Chapters 1–6	Chapters 7–10	Chapters 11-16

### Overview of 1 Corinthians 8:1—11:1

- 8:1-13 Principle #1 Response to a question/challenge from the Corinthians  
Freedom, in principle, to eat when there are no inherently anti-Christian implications involved—but voluntary abstention when other Christians might be damaged by one's freedom.
- 9:1-18 Principle #2 Paul's personal example  
Love should temper freedom in morally neutral areas
- 9:19-27 Principle #3 Paul's personal example  
Adaptation of morally neutral "gray areas" for the sake of bring more people to Christ
- 10:1-13 Command #1 Illustration from Israel's history—lack of self-restrained led them to embrace idolatry  
Do not use freedom as a license for immorality
- 10:14-22 Command #2 Contrast between pagan feasts and the Lord's supper  
Do not eat meat sacrificed to idols in overtly pagan religious rituals—flee from idolatry
- 10:23–11:1 Conclusion  
Our driving motivation must be glorifying God and edifying others  
Though you have freedom to eat anything, to the glory of God, if informed that meat has been sacrificed to idols, refrain for the sake of others.

The Corinthians had asked Paul another question, evidently in a combative spirit judging by the apostle's response. It involved a practice common in their culture.

The commentators understand the situation that Paul addressed in two different ways. Some of them believe that the eating of marketplace food that pagans had previously offered to idols was amoral in itself, but it was controversial enough to cause division among the church members. If this was indeed the issue that Paul addressed, it is only one of many similar "doubtful things." Advocates of this view believe that the apostle's directions to his readers here give us guidance in dealing with contemporary doubtful (amoral) matters.

Other interpreters believe that eating food sacrificed to idols involved a specific form of idolatry and was, therefore, not amoral but sinful (cf. 5:10-11). They assume that Paul was responding to the Corinthians' objection to his prohibition of this practice that he had written in his former letter to them. This view sees 8:10 and 10:1-22 as expressing the basic problem to which Paul was responding. I believe the text supports this interpretation of the facts better than the former one.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, Published by Sonic Light, <http://www.soniclight.com>, Copyright 2004.

This section focuses on the next question the delegation from Corinth put to Paul: "What about eating food offered in heathen sacrifices to idols?" Paul's answer leads to a discussion of the larger question of how a believer should use his Christian liberty. Paul lays down the principle that love for one's brother in Christ should be the motivating factor in contemplating one's Christian liberty (8:1-13). Then he gives a personal example of how he was ready to forego the exercise of his own rights as an apostle for the sake of God's people (9:1-18). He argues that though he was under obligation to no man, he showed his self-restraint and love by placing himself on the cultural and social level of all men so that he might reach some for Christ (9:19-27). By way of warning, he speaks of the lack of self-restraint of the OT Israelites, who actually embraced the idolatry they toyed with (10:1-13). So God's people must avoid participation in idol feasts and "flee from idolatry," because they belong to the Lord and have their own feast with him, the Lord's Supper (10:14-22). So Paul's conclusion is this: Live your testimony with loving concern for your brother, but, do not make an issue of meat sold in the market. Eat it as a gift from God. Do this, except when the point is explicitly made that the meat was offered in sacrifice to an idol. For you would in such a case seem to be participating in this religious heathen practice. Refrain, then, for your weaker brother's sake and for your own peace of mind. Above all, do everything for the glory of God (10:23-11:1).<sup>23</sup>

First Corinthians 8:1–13 and 10:14–11:1 clearly address this topic. At first glance, 9:1–10:13 does not appear to do so; but on closer inspection, these verses form an integral part of Paul's argument after all. First Corinthians 8:1–13 introduces the problem and its two-pronged solution: freedom in principle to eat when there are no inherently anti-Christian implications involved, but voluntary abstention when other Christians might be damaged by one's freedom. First Corinthians 9:1–18 then gives a second application of the principle of freedom tempered by love in morally neutral areas by discussing the issue of accepting money for ministry. First Corinthians 9:19–27 generalizes further by enunciating Paul's underlying principle for all of his behavior in these "gray areas of life"—what is most likely to bring more people to Christ. First Corinthians 10:1–13 prepares for Paul's absolute prohibition in the coming section by warning against using one's freedom as a license for immorality. First Corinthians 10:14–22 then lays down Paul's one unbending requirement on the topic of idol meat: It should never be eaten in overtly pagan religious rituals. First Corinthians 10:23–11:1 brings the discussion full circle by repeating the two key principles of 8:1–13 but ultimately tips the balance of the scales in favor of freedom.<sup>24</sup>

#### Consideration related to 1 Corinthians 8—"Meat offered to idols"

1. *Meat offered to idols is specifically prohibited for Gentile saints, which must certainly include the saints at Corinth.*

**Acts 15:28-29** For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: 29 that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." (ESV)

**Acts 21:20-25** And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, 21 and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. 22 What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. 23 Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; 24 take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. 25 But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality." (ESV)

Therefore it seems that "meat offered to idols" is not a "Christian liberty."

2. *While Paul initially appears to grant the premise that eating meat offered to idols is a matter of liberty in chapter 8, this same permissiveness is not found at the end of Paul's argument on the subject.*

**1 Corinthians 10:14-22** Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. 18 Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? 19 What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, I imply that what pagans

<sup>23</sup> *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Pradis CD-ROM: 1 Corinthians, Book Version: 4.0.2

<sup>24</sup> Bloomberg, Craig. *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: 1 Corinthians*. 160. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1994.

sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 22 Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? (ESV)

3. *Paul's approach to correcting error in 1 Corinthians is to grant his opponents some slack at the beginning of his argument, only to show they are wrong by the time he concludes.*

What Paul allows to stand initially in his argument, he may eventually prove to be wrong. This is the case in 1 Corinthians 8-10. In chapter 8, he allows those Corinthians who view themselves as being more spiritual than others to retain this false notion momentarily. But by the end of chapter 10, those who think they have the liberty to eat meat offered to idols are shown up for what they are. The "weaker brethren" of chapter 8 seem to be the "stronger brethren" in chapter 10. Those supposedly "weaker brethren" who refrained from eating meat offered to idols were not only in compliance with the decree of the Jerusalem Council, but with the teaching of Paul.

The background of our text may be summarized in this way. The question of eating meat offered to idols is not new, but a question which was raised shortly after Gentiles began to come to faith in Christ. The apostles and early church leaders at Jerusalem considered the matter and concluded that Gentile Christians should not eat meat offered to idols, along with avoiding blood, things strangled, and fornication. A group of Corinthian Christians, thinking themselves to be wiser than the apostles, developed a reasoned argument that meats offered to idols could be eaten. They even went so far as to look down on those who refrained from eating idol-meat. These meat-eaters seem to have taken pride in their superior knowledge and spirituality. Paul has some things to say to these stronger brethren. Using their own premises, Paul will show that they have fallen short of true spirituality.

It is this broader perspective of chapter 8 which resolves some of the apparent problems in its interpretation and application, and which makes sense of Paul's teaching. This text may seriously reverse or revise some of our "convictions" and cause us to look at our liberties in a different light.<sup>25</sup>

## 1 Corinthian 8

### Outline

- 8:4 God is the only God and idols are impotent
- 8:1-3 Knowledge should exist in the framework of love
  - 8:9 Responsibility
  - 8:11-13 Christian community

*Even true knowledge, which is wrongly interpreted or applied, can puff up the pride of the knower, while genuine love places others ahead of self and seeks to build them up.*<sup>26</sup> The "knowledge" which these "stronger" Corinthian brethren possessed was producing the wrong effect. True love is not puffed up with pride, and it does not serve self-interest (1 Corinthians 13:4-5).<sup>27</sup>

I would like to suggest that we take a good, long look at these two categories of the "stronger" brother and the "weaker" brother. As I understand chapters 8-10 and Romans 14-15, the stronger brother is the one whose grasp of the Scriptures may free him from unnecessary prohibitions. **The stronger brother is quite often the one who understands his Christian liberties. But if the "stronger" brother is to be a spiritual saint, he must also be willing to set aside those liberties. To exercise one's liberties at the expense of a weaker brother is certainly not spiritual.**

**The stronger brother is also the one who recognizes those things which are contrary to God's Word.** In the case of meats offered to idols, the stronger brother must be the one who knows they are forbidden, and who therefore abstains from eating them. The "weaker brother" would be the one who concluded that eating idol-meats was a Christian liberty, in spite of the decree of the Jerusalem Council. From Paul's final words on this issue in chapter 10, I think we must conclude that the more spiritual brother is the one who abstains from idol-meats, grasping its evil associations.

All too often today, the "weaker brother" is defined as the one who does not grasp his Christian liberties.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Robert L. Deffinbaugh, *True Spirituality: A Study in 1 Corinthians*, Biblical Studies Press, www.bible.org, 1999.

<sup>26</sup> That is Paul's point here, it seems, but in Philippians 1:9, Paul indicates that love must be informed lest it degenerate to mindless sentimentalism.

<sup>27</sup> Robert L. Deffinbaugh, *True Spirituality: A Study in 1 Corinthians*, Biblical Studies Press, www.bible.org, 1999.

<sup>28</sup> Robert L. Deffinbaugh, *True Spirituality: A Study in 1 Corinthians*, Biblical Studies Press, www.bible.org, 1999.

## Toward Application

Although he shared their knowledge that God is one and that idols are impotent (8:4), this knowledge existed for him within a framework of love (8:1–3), responsibility (8:9) and Christian community (8:11–13). In stark contrast, many Corinthians were characterized by pride, selfishness, a preoccupation with their rights, and an inclination to flaunt their freedom without regard for others. Left unchecked, their potential to do irreparable spiritual damage to weaker brothers was staggering. This explains Paul's high-powered rhetoric and driving ethical argumentation designed to make misbehaving Corinthians feel the gravity of the problem, and draws our attention to Paul's own exemplary conduct. His every move was calculated to bring glory to God (10:31) and to avoid causing others to stumble (10:32). His own interests were all but forgotten for, in his mind, selflessness, flexibility and compromise on non-essential matters were totally consistent with his apostolic credibility and authority. In fact, he expected such behavior of all who claim to follow Christ (11:1). Christian leaders inclined to wield authority in order to advance their own agendas will do well to take note.<sup>29</sup>

Paul insists that they flee the ungodly activities themselves (10:7, 14, 20–22). . . , Paul's decision to focus upon a Christian's *behavior* in its social context rather than upon *location* is noteworthy, for it preserves important distinctions along three lines, each of which is frequently ignored today.

First, Paul distinguishes between what is amoral (food, places, buildings, etc.) and what is moral (human conduct), in language reminiscent of Jesus' teachings.<sup>30</sup> Certainly Paul would never promote pagan temple attendance, but neither does he desire to define Christian morality in terms of how scrupulously one distances oneself from pagan territory. Second, Paul is not only concerned with surface behavior but also with underlying attitudes and intentions. He saw that the same act (i.e. eating idol meat) could be innocent for some but devastating for others (8:7). It is always dangerous to define sin exclusively in terms of violating *God's* moral law (Rom 14:23; 1 Cor 8:7). Finally, while Paul is deeply concerned about dangers threatening weak individuals, there is a distinctly corporate dimension to his thought. This dimension surfaces when Paul shows that any act which harms an individual Christian is really an affront to Christ himself (8:12), and especially when he argues that although an act performed in isolation may be insignificant and harmless, as a social act it can become intensely meaningful (10:16–30). This takes us to the heart of Paul's understanding of *κοινωνία*. Celebration of the Lord's Supper clearly presupposes Christian community; only those who share corporately in the life of Christ should share the bread of communion (10:17). And the same holds for non-Christian worship as well; any Christian who casually joins the circle of those worshipping another god, gratuitously assuming spiritual immunity, is open to charges of idolatry. In our own age, characterized at all levels by moral relativism, rampant individualism and an accelerating return to pagan forms of spirituality, these principles serve as desperately needed correctives.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Trinity Journal Volume 10, Vol. 10, Page 69, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1989; 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Mark 7:14–23

<sup>31</sup> *Trinity Journal Volume 10*, Vol. 10, Page 70, 1989; 2002.

## Romans 14:13-23

13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer,  
but rather decide never to put a  
stumbling block  
or hindrance  
in the way of a brother.

14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself,  
but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

15 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat,  
you are no longer walking in love.  
By what you eat,  
do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.

16 So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.

17 For the kingdom of God is  
not a matter of eating and drinking  
but of righteousness  
and peace  
and joy

in the Holy Spirit.

18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19 So then let us pursue what makes  
for peace  
and for mutual upbuilding.

20 Do not,  
for the sake of food,  
destroy the work of God.  
Everything is indeed clean,  
but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble  
by what he eats.

21 It is good not to  
eat meat  
or drink wine  
or do anything  
that causes your brother to stumble.

22 The faith that you have,  
keep between yourself and God.  
Blessed is the one who has no reason  
to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.

23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats,  
because the eating is not from faith.

For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. (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