

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 39

I. Exposition of Chapter Fourteen (Continued).

A. Attitudes toward Fellow Believers.

1. In **verses 1-5**, Paul addresses the issues of eating meat and observing days. The key phrase is: **“Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.”** Paul seems to give a certain leeway pertaining to this and states that every believer must follow their conscience in this regard. This again has to do with things which are non-essentials to the faith.
2. **Verse 6** – The whole point, here, concerning days or meats is the attitude toward the Lord as well. Whether one keeps days or not, or eats meat or not, acknowledging the Lord and thanking Him in all things is essential. (cf. **I Corinthians 10:31**).

“He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.”

Romans 14:6 – Amplified Bible

3. **Verses 7-8** – The primary point of **verse 7** is not that what we do affects others but that Christians are not to live for themselves but should live to please the Lord Jesus. Christians live first and foremost for Christ. Secondly, believers’ actions do affect others. They are part of a large spiritual family. Therefore, they must limit their personal freedom in love (cf. **I Corinthians 10:24, 27–33**). **Verse 8** emphasizes the idea that whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord and are accountable and responsible to Him. (cf. **I Corinthians 6:19-20**).

“For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”

II Corinthians 5:14-15

4. **Verse 9** – **“For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.”**

- a. The words, **“For to this end”** might have been translated as **“For this purpose.”** In other words for the purpose of Him being Lord of our lives, He died and rose again. By His blood He purchased us and we now belong to Him. The **“dead”** refers to the believers already in heaven. Picirilli adds;

“The ‘lordship’ stressed here involves not only possession but control and judgment. We are all subject to Him and must give answer to Him, an idea which Paul now moves to expand on.”¹

5. **Verses 10-12 - Judging others and the Judgment Seat of Christ.**

- a. **Verse 10** – **“But why do you judge your brother?”** – In **verses 3-4** we discussed judging. We saw from the whole of Scripture it’s not always wrong to judge but we’re to judge in the right way. Here Paul is talking about not judging our fellow believer on non-essential matters where the Bible gives no commands. Paul corrected the Corinthians because they did not judge a sinning man in the church (**I Corinthians 5**). And Paul was not tolerant of the doctrinal error of the Judaizers (**Galatians 1:6-9**; see, also, **Romans 16:17-18**).
- b. **Verse 10** – **“Or why do you show contempt for your brother?”** – The word **“contempt”** here is the same Greek word translated **“despise”** in **verse 3**, which we defined as **“to treat with contempt”** or **“to scorn”**.
- c. **Verse 10** – **“For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”** - This is understood as something which is going to happen at the resurrection of the believers at the coming of the Lord. Cf. **II Corinthians 5:10**. All give an account of themselves to Him. All our thoughts, words and deeds go through the fire. (**I Corinthians 3:8-15**).
- d. **Verse 11** - The quotation from **Isaiah 45:23** emphasizes the fact that all will all have to appear before God in humility, and give account of himself before God. (cf. **Philippians 2:10-11**).
- e. **Verse 12** – **“So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”** – The word **“account”** is the Greek word **“logos”** which means, **“to speak intelligently. Intelligence, word as the expression of that intelligence, discourse, saying, thing.”²**
This means we’re going to have to answer for some things!

¹Robert E. Picirilli, *Romans*. 285.

²Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*

6. Verse 13 – Don’t cause your Brother to Stumble or Fall.

- a. The term “**stumbling block**” means, “**an obstacle in the way which if one strikes his foot against he stumbles or falls.**”³
- b. The word “**fall**” means, “**the movable stick or trigger of a trap, a trap stick; a trap, snare.**”⁴

7. Verse 14 – “I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”

- a. Paul acknowledges that under the New Covenant, there is nothing unclean for consumption. The word “**unclean**” means; “**common**”; “**unacceptable**” or “**defiled**”. (cf. I Timothy 4:1-4).

8. Verse 15 – “...if your brother be grieved...” – “Grieved” here means, “sorrowful”, “offended”, “saddened” and “to make uneasy”.

“After an introductory summary that goes out to both sides (not to judge one another), Paul turns mostly to the stronger believers. He was concerned that they would flaunt their liberty in Christ to the detriment of weaker believers, who may be influenced to violate their consciences. Paul tells the stronger believers that love for their brothers should trump their use of liberty. As he states (14:15), ‘For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love.’ So the principle is:

Love for others should govern our exercise of liberty in Christ when our liberty would cause a weaker brother to stumble.”⁵ – Steven J. Cole

“Paul is saying, basically, that our relationship to each other, and our obligations to each other, outweigh the individual’s freedom to act as he pleases. In other words, we cannot consider merely our own selfish desires or even our ‘rights’... Thus our liberties have to regulated by love.”⁶

9. Verses 16-17 - Freedom can easily turn into license!

- a. Regarding verse 16, Dr. Utley states:

“The ‘good thing’ in this verse refers to the actions of the strong brother. If a strong Christian acts on his/her freedom in such a way that weak believers are negatively affected and spiritually damaged, the ‘good thing’ becomes an opportunity for the evil one!”⁷

- b. Verse 17 – The “**kingdom of God**” refers to “**the king’s domain**” or “**rule**”. Paul seems to be attempting to emphasize what really matters. Food and drink don’t matter, what really matters regarding God’s kingdom is “**righteousness**” (right-standing with God), “**peace**” (reconciliation with God and possibly referring to being at peace with one another) and “**joy**” (real joy can’t happen with what food you eat or what you drink but the joy that comes from knowing and following Jesus Christ.) If we place food and drink before righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, then we are hopelessly out of touch with God’s priorities and His heart.

10. Verses 19-21 - Use your liberty to build each other up, not to tear each other down.

- a. If eating or drinking something will stumble another brother, then we are not free to do so. Even if we have the personal liberty, we do not have the liberty to stumble, offend, or weaken a brother.
- b. However, Paul speaks about the stumbling of a sincere heart, not catering to the whims of someone’s legalism. For example, when some Christians from a Jewish background were offended that Gentile believers were not circumcised, Paul didn’t cater to their legalistic demands.

11. Verses 22-23 - The concluding principle of faith.

- a. If you have faith, and feel liberty to partake of certain things, praise God! But have your strong faith before God, not before a brother who will stumble.

³Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*

⁴Ibid.

⁵<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-94-love-trumps-liberty-romans-1413-16>

⁶Robert E. Picirilli, *Romans*, 288.

⁷Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 14:16.