



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.
ROMANS 14:13



Romans 14:13b-18

Romans

14:13b-18



Introduction

As you may recall from last Sunday, we ended the first half of chapter 14 with a “hinge” verse: **“Therefore let us judge one another no longer” (13a)**. This verse forms a “bridge” between the two halves of chapter 14, which introduces a new theme that you will soon see is Paul’s positive side of his exhortation.

Paul’s basic exhortation is found at the beginning and at the end of this chapter, which we will highlight. Today, this last half of chap. 14, is Paul’s central section that sets forth his basic theological rationale for his exhortation.

Romans

14:13b-16



To the
Strong

^{13b}But, rather, judge this: not to place a [cause for] stumbling or offense to [your] brother. ¹⁴I know and I have been persuaded and remain convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean through itself, except to the one who considers something to be unclean; to that person [it is] unclean. ¹⁵For if on account of food your brother is being grieved, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not by your food destroy that person in behalf of whom Christ died. ¹⁶Therefore do not let that which is for your good be slandered.

Romans

14:13b



**Cause No
Stumbling -
Give No
Offense**

13^bBut, rather, judge this: not to place a [cause for] stumbling or offense to [your] brother..

The exhortation properly admonishes both factions, the “*strong*” and the “*weak*,” in Rome. Paul’s target is very narrow: instead of judging, Paul calls the “*strong*” (though he will not use the term [δυνατοί] until 15:1) to make a different judgment—to resolve not to trip up a “*weak*” brother in the faith. To do this, Paul uses two synonymous nouns “**[cause for] stumbling**” and “**offense**,” which Paul used in 9:32-33 (*from Is. 8:14 & quoted in Rom 9:33*).

Who is the cause for stumbling and the “*rock of offense*” in 9:33? **Jesus!** He is the cause for stumbling and the rock of offense to the Jews pursuing their “*own*” righteousness (cf. 10:3). Also in chapter 9, it was unbelievers who found the Gospel of Jesus Christ scandalous.

Romans

14:13b



**Cause No
Stumbling -
Give No
Offense**

13b But, rather, judge this: not to place a [cause for] stumbling or **offense** to [your] brother..

How is the scandal or offense found in the Church? It is scandalous when there are competing factions in a congregation due to convictions. The context of the offense, in Rome, is that fellow Christians are negatively impacting each other by either being oppressive or being accused of lawbreaking. This interpersonal dimension coincides with Paul's use of the noun "*stumbling*" (πρόσκομμα) in 1 Cor 8:9 and the verb "*cause offense, scandalize*" (σκανδαλίζω) in 1 Cor 8:13, which is also a verb our Lord employs in St. Matthew 18:6.

Romans

14:13b



*Cause No
Stumbling -
Give No
Offense*

^{13b}But, rather, judge this: not to place a [cause for] stumbling or offense to [your] brother..

Therefore, in Rome, Paul deals with the ongoing applicability of OT regulations within and among the house churches. The issue would be most acute for Jewish-Christians, although some Gentiles too may have been inclined to adhere to the OT strictures. The most prominent concern is the OT grouping of foods, though instructions governing the Sabbath, festivals, and other holy days may have cause stumbling and offense, though apparently to a lesser degree.

Romans

14:14



*Affirming Our
Lord's
Declaration
with
Qualification:
No Food is
Unclean!*

¹⁴I know and I have been persuaded and remain convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is *unclean* through itself, except to the one who considers something to be unclean; to that person [it is] unclean.

Paul begins this verse with an unique and emphatic quadruple emphasis: (1) ***“I know;”*** (2) ***“I have been persuaded;”*** (3) ***“[I] remain convinced;”*** and, (4) ***“in the Lord Jesus.”*** The outcome is that Paul is absolutely convince that Jesus has declared that all foods, in and of themselves, are not ***“unclean”*** (κοινόν). Paul uses this Greek adjective in a distinctly OT sense. Again, from St. Mark 7:2 and 5, the same adjective describes what the Pharisees considered to be ritually ***“unclean.”*** Furthermore, all of the NT instances of the cognate verb (κοινώω) have the meaning ***“to render/declare (someone or something) [ritually] unclean.”*** These NT words reflect the categories of ***“clean”*** and ***“unclean”*** in the Law.

Romans

14:14



*Affirming Our
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14 I know and I have been persuaded and remain convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean through itself, except to the one who considers something to be unclean; to that person [it is] unclean.

Even after the resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus, Peter, likely the representative of the early Jewish Christians, initially deemed it vital to maintain these categories; when God offered him “*unclean*” foods he protested (cf. Acts 10:14). Thus, Paul does not speak simply to matters of indifference, but to those with strong biblical precedence. The ecclesiastical term “*adiaphora*” (ἀδιαφορα) technically refers to “...ceremonies and church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God” (FC SD X 1).

Romans

14:14



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Romans 14, however, reflects the transitional period of the early NT era, when the question is whether the dietary and calendar observances commanded and forbidden in the OT still remain in force or whether they have been fulfilled and/or transformed in and through the coming and work of Christ Jesus. If they have been fulfilled in Christ, have some OT commandments now moved into the category of NT adiaphora?

Romans

14:14



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In response, Paul now asserts that “*nothing*” is “*unclean.*” He reinforces the point positively by adding that all things are “*clean*” (καθαρά) (v.20), of which Paul translates St. Mark’s writing of the Lord’s word: (καθαρίζων, St. Mark 7:19). So Paul’s repeated references to “*food*” and “*eating*” evaluated by the Levitical categories of “*clean*” and “*unclean*” indicate the specific contextual application. Together these terms provide almost indisputable proof that the discussion is within the context of uniquely Jewish concerns. The question regarding the specific nature of the conflict which divides the house-churches are decisively answered.

Romans

14:14



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14| know and I have been persuaded and remain convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean through itself, except to the one who considers something to be unclean; to that person [it is] unclean.

Underlying the food laws is the whole concept of God's holiness. He sanctified Israel from all the other nations via liturgical and sacramental rites. Thus, the only way Israel could enter into His presence, into the realm of the holy, and to commune with Him is through their obedience to His ordinances. Those that were "*unclean*" could not come near to Him and live.

Now, Jesus Christ is the Temple (Jn 2:19-22), the locus of holiness, the Holy One of God (Jn 6:69; 1 Jn 2:20), the One who cleanses and sanctifies His people through His Word & Sacraments. The OT food laws were given to testify to Christ and to be accomplished and surpassed by His Person, work, and ongoing ministry; literal obedience to OT regulations, including food laws, is no longer necessary. Indeed, Jesus has fulfilled all the Law and the entirety of the OT!

Romans

14:14



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No Food is
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St. Matthew 15:10-20 and St. Mark 7:14-23 settles the issue! The words of our Lord Jesus in Mt.15:11 are very concise: *“Not what is entering into the mouth defiles the man.”* His words in Mk 7:15a is much fuller: *“There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him.”*

Lastly, Paul's argument concerning one's convictions isn't about boundaries that are to be used to divide the congregations, but as an issue affecting the expression of liberty within the congregations which embraces diverse viewpoints.

Romans

14:15-16



Cautionary
Warnings
about
Negative
Consequences

¹⁵For if on account of food your brother is being grieved, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not by your food destroy that person in behalf of whom Christ died. ¹⁶Therefore do not let that which is for your good be slandered.

Romans

14:15a



***Watch Out
for the
Weak***

15a For if on account of food your brother is being grieved, you are no longer walking according to love.

Paul's conditional sentence is assuming reality for the sake of argument. He does not insist that the fulfillment exists as a present reality; neither does the form of this sentence imply that the situation is contrary to the current situation. Paul isn't saying that the issues being discussed are occurring in every house-church in Rome. Though, it is seemingly occurring in specific house-churches, since the practice of some of the stronger congregations are giving offense to the weaker congregations who are observing the OT food laws.

Romans

14:15a



**Watch out
for the
Weak**

15a For if on account of food your brother is being grieved, you are no longer walking according to love.

Paul then uses an important word at the end of his sentence: *“love”* (ἀγάπη). And, very importantly, Paul combines *“love”* with *“walking”* (περιπατεῖς).

These two together indentifies with the renewal of life or newness of life only possible by Holy Baptism into Christ Jesus and in accord with the Spirit’s leading (cf. 6:4; 8:4). Remember, Paul has already rejected other indecent ways of *“walking”* in 13:13.

Romans

14:15b



The Gospel Motivation

15b Do not by your food destroy that person in behalf of whom Christ died.

The “*key motive*” for not wounding your brother in Christ derives from the heart of the Gospel as expressed above. This echoes the glorious truth of 5:6-8 very loudly: “*While we were still being weak, ... Christ died in behalf of the ungodly. ... God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still being sinners, Christ died in behalf of us.*” Therefore, how dare you, a fellow believer, destroy another one whom Christ has died for by being so trivial in your convictions!

Romans

14:15b



The Gospel Motivation

15b Do not by your food destroy that person in behalf of whom Christ died.

So, you may ask, “What does the Greek word *“destroy”* (ἀπόλλυε) mean? Each time that Paul uses this word (cf. 2:12; 1 Cor. 1:18; 8:11; 15:18; 2 Cor. 2:15; 4:3; and 2 Thess 2:10) he is referring to spiritual ruin.

Destroy, in this context, does not mean to annihilate, but the loss of faith, something Paul makes clear in 14:23. Since to abandon faith in Christ Jesus entails forfeiting the reception of His righteousness and salvation; it equates with the final eschatological ruin.

Romans

14:15b



The Gospel Motivation

15b Do not by your food destroy that person in behalf of whom Christ died.

As we think through this, Paul meaning is directed toward the weak believer who would be appalled by the dietary conduct of the strong that he would take serious offense and then walk away from Christ and the congregation. Thus, today, we could add numerous other trivialities which unnecessarily and grievously wound fellow Christians who end up suffering the same destructive consequences. Once again, the bottom line: *do not value anything more than Jesus valued His life.*

Romans

14:16



***God's Good
Gifts Being
Slandered***

¹⁶Therefore do not let that which is for your good be slandered.

The **“good”** denotes those foods which may now be received in thanksgiving from the hand of God. In regard to such eating, what is **“good”** is our freedom, which we do have in our Lord Jesus, so that everything is clean. Indeed, freedom from the dietary laws is a **“good”** thing, a legitimate implication of the coming of Jesus, our Christ, our Messiah!

Romans

14:16



God's Good Gifts Being Slandered

16Therefore do not let that which is for your good be slandered.

Again, Paul uses a very strong word with the use of the verb “βλασφημείσθω” that can be translated as “*slandered*,” or even more forcefully as “*spoken of as evil*.” So this verb, in the context, points to the judging being done by the “weak” as they revile those whom they adamantly disagree. You wouldn’t be far off by seeing in your mind’s eye the weak pumping their fists and shouting at the “strong,” **Unclean! Unclean!**

How should the strong react? Paul’s mandate for the “strong” is not to allow this to happen (“*do not let*”); the strong are to avoid eating “*unclean*” foods – even though it is “*good*” – so as not to cause offense with the result of the “weak” renouncing the faith!

Romans

14:17-18



God's
Kingdom at
the Center

¹⁷Indeed, the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in [the] Holy Spirit. ¹⁸For the one who serves [as a slave] to the Christ in this [is] well-pleasing to God and tested and approved by people.

Romans

14:17



The Kingdom Defined

***17*Indeed, the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in [the] Holy Spirit.**

At the heart of the discussion aimed primarily at the “strong” who, like Paul, properly consume all foods; Paul will now reinforce what really matters! In doing so, he moves away from imperatives and offers these central realities. To begin, Paul’s phrase ***“the kingdom of God”*** occurs about a hundred times in the Synoptic Gospels. Paul uses this phrase, surprisingly, very rarely (once here; and thirteen other times). The vast majority of Paul’s uses refer to the future eschatological kingdom. However, here, as in 1 Cor 4:20; Col 1:13 and 1 Thess 2:12, Paul also speaks of the kingdom in its present reality. Therefore, he would be in agreement with the Synoptic use. Paul’s use here fits squarely within his theological frame of ***“now”*** and ***“not yet!”***

Romans

14:17



The Kingdom Defined

17Indeed, the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in [the] Holy Spirit.

Notice what God's kingdom is not; it does not consist in *"eating"* and *"drinking."* So Paul then succinctly describes what God's kingdom is! He uses the positive terms of: **"righteousness" and "peace" and "joy."**

- 1. Righteousness:** This will be Paul's last use of this term in Romans. Paul has already defined his meaning in 5:1 – *"...therefore, after being declared righteous from faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*
- 2. Peace:** Is also relational and this relationship has been enacted by God despite our enmity toward Him, who has reconciled us to Himself through the death and resurrection of Christ (5:10).

Romans

14:17



The Kingdom Defined

¹⁷Indeed, the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in [the] Holy Spirit.

Notice what God's kingdom is not; it does not consist in **"eating"** and **"drinking."** So Paul then succinctly describes what God's kingdom is! He uses the positive terms of: **"righteousness" and "peace" and "joy."**

3. Joy: This is the first of three uses by Paul in Romans. The Greek noun is "χαρά" from which we get the English word, charity. The cognate verb "χαίρω" and noun "χάρις" all point to the same meaning of ***"cheerfulness, a calm delight, gladness, and an exceeding joyfulness."***

"In [the] Holy Spirit" joins to all three nouns. Note that **"peace"** and **"joy"** are fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). Paul also associates the Spirit especially with **"joy"** (cf. 1 Thess 1:6). All three gifts of grace received from the Holy Spirit are ***"through the mercies of God"*** (12:1).

Romans

14:18



**The
Kingdom
Lived Out -
Horizontally**

18For the one who serves [as a slave] to the Christ in this [is] well-pleasing to God and tested and approved by people.

In Romans 1:1, Paul identifies himself as a “*slave of Christ Jesus.*” This entails, first and foremost, belonging to Christ because He has paid the redemption price (3:24; 14:9; 1 Cor 6:19-20). In chapter 6, Paul uses the language of slavery again and it must be understood in the context of the Biblical motif. All who sin are slaves to sin (St. John 8:34; also Rom 3:9), in bondage to the Law (5:20-21; 7:7-11) and the result: ***God’s wrath and spiritual death!*** However, being a slave to Christ Jesus entails reigning in life now and eternally (5:17; 6:23). It follows that those who are slaves to Christ will live out that relationship responsibly (6:18, 19, 22) with the full knowledge that they will give an account to their Lord at His Bema seat (14:11-12)!

Romans

14:18



*The
Kingdom
Lived Out -
Horizontally*

¹⁸For the one who serves [as a slave] to the Christ in this [is] well-pleasing to God and tested and approved by people.

Therefore, Paul is calling the Christians in Rome to conduct themselves in a way that is both ***“well-pleasing to God and tested and approved by people.”*** This is in contrast where earlier people were being slandered (v.16). Such ***“well-pleasing”*** behavior toward God combined with the discernment necessary for one’s actions to be well regarded by others is applied to the ongoing situation in Rome.

Romans

14:18



**The
Kingdom
Lived Out -
Horizontally**

18For the one who serves [as a slave] to the Christ in this [is] well-pleasing to God and tested and approved by people.

Yet, Paul's instructions are not simply moralistic guidelines as if one pursues these virtues for virtue's sake! Both Jesus and Paul provide Gospel-motivated, positive role models for our willing, self-sacrificial living for one another (e.g., Mt 20:28; Luke 22:27; John 15:12-15). Those who love one another in such a way also provide a positive witness that extends outward and is **"approved by people."** Therefore, the hope is that unbelievers will recognize such laudable actions and behaviors by Christians and then they will regard Jesus and the Father favorably (Mt 5:16; John 13:35).

Romans

14:18



**The
Kingdom
Lived Out -
Horizontally**

18For the one who serves [as a slave] to the Christ in this [is] well-pleasing to God and tested and approved by people.

Sadly, and all too often, Christian conduct toward those within and among various churches has been sorely lacking throughout history. It has been replaced, instead, by slandering one another within the Church universal (v.16) and, then, as a result, by *“the name of God...being blasphemed”* (2:24) by unbelievers. Paul is pointing the Christians in Rome and those at Shepherd of the Springs to a different and better way!

NEXT
SUNDAY



Romans
14:19-23

To the Strong:



**Implications and
Applications**

PEACE
IN CHRIST
JESUS

