

# Book of Romans



## Chapter 14

*Theme: Conviction; conscience*

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## Romans Chapter 14

**Missler:** Section 1: Chapters 1 - 8, Sin and Salvation.  
Section 2: Chapters 9-11, Israel: Past, Present, Future  
Section 3: Chapters 12 - 16, Practical consequences  
Chapter 13:1-7, Civil responsibilities: to the state; to those outside the church.  
Remaining Open Issue (from last time):<sup>1</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Romans chapter 14 requires some explanation before we read this most challenging chapter. We've spent significant time over the years talking about context as regards studying God's Word; and never has context in its broadest sense been more important than in interpreting Romans 14. To sum it up, context doesn't just mean the immediate or surrounding sentences of the passage we're interested in. It isn't limited to the contiguous paragraph or even chapter; it can involve the context of the entire book and at times, especially as concerns Paul, the overall meaning and context of the several Bible books he authored when taken as an entire body of work. However, as it relates to our Hebraic heritage approach to studying the New Testament, the Scriptural context must also include the Jewish identity and mindset of the author and often the characters he is writing about, as taken within the Jewish culture where Judaism dominated during the 1st century A.D. That is no easy task and while I think we have covered this broad contextual cultural background thoroughly in the Book of Acts before we began our study of the Book of Romans, I will borrow from some of my teaching of Acts to reiterate some critical points that makes all the difference in extracting proper meaning from these important and inspired words.

One final point and we'll read Romans 14. One of the best things that ever happened to enhance Bible study was the addition of verse and chapter markings in the Holy Scriptures around 1000 years ago. It gave us a way to more easily communicate what it is we are examining, and it divided up the Bible into more bite-sized chunks for easier mental digestion of its words. At the same time, especially the chapter markings and divisions are one of the worst things that ever happened for Bible study because readers can get the sub-conscious sense of a change in direction, tone, and context each time we end one chapter and begin the next. Or worse, we assume that we can take a chapter as a stand-alone literary unit that is encapsulated and set apart from all that surrounds it. That is, we kind of feel as though a chapter doesn't have to be very connected to all that came before or will come after it. And as you'll soon see, the downside of adding chapter markings to the Bible has contributed greatly to the creation of some misguided and wrong-minded commentaries and interpretations of Romans 14. Open your Bibles to Romans chapter 14.

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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

C.E.B. Cranfield says this to preface his commentary on Romans 14:

“What exactly the problem is with which Paul is concerned in this section is not at all easy to decide, and various explanations have been suggested”.

Cranfield then goes on to name and briefly explain what he sees as the 4 most prevalent viewpoints of what Paul is trying to address in Romans 14, and they are all startlingly different. So, to be clear: there is no consensus within Christian scholars of what problem Paul is attempting to deal with. This disarray about understanding Romans 14 is because Paul’s problem has as much to do with the Traditions and worldview of Judaism as it does with Christianity; and Lord knows that gentile Christian Bible scholars have tended to avoid knowledge of Judaism and Jewish society in considering what to say especially about New Testament writings. What the issue of Romans 14 mostly centers around is what Paul means by those whose faith is weak versus those whose faith is strong. Paul actually uses the word “weak”, but the word “strong” doesn’t appear; it is merely implied since strong is the expected opposite of weak (at least according to the Western gentile Christian mindset). Interestingly the Apostle to the Gentiles is telling the Roman Believers that they need to accept and embrace those who are “weak” in the faith, with “the faith” meaning a faith in Jesus the Jew as Lord and Savior. But what does he mean by weak? What is a weak faith? Again, what Paul means by this term is why we have so much disagreement about what it is that Paul sees as a problem. The way that various Bible commentators have decided upon what Paul means naturally happens according to their particular predetermined doctrines and beliefs that the commentators already hold about Paul, Jews, and Christianity in general. Thus, many assumptions are made, and the assumptions are through the eyes of gentile Christians who are steeped primarily in the Western version of institutional Christianity.

From a top-level what Paul is dealing with in Romans 14 is inter-personal relationships within the mixed congregation of Jewish and gentile Believers located in the City of Rome. No doubt the instructions are meant to address something Paul must have heard about the goings on among Believers there; but at the same time his admonitions are general enough to apply to Believers everywhere provided we can get a good handle on what it is he’s actually telling us. Here is where context plays its enormous role as we ask ourselves this basic question: what is Paul’s rationale behind the instructions he is giving on how to handle those who are weak in the faith, and thus have different views on certain issues of theology and behavior when compared to the more mature or stronger in the faith? Clearly the rationale is to love your neighbor as yourself; this principle has been front and center in Paul’s teaching and thought since chapter 12. Here’s the thing: recognizing that “love your neighbor” is the foundation of Paul’s thought process is far easier to spot when we disregard those pesky chapter markings. Taking out the chapter markings changes our perspective and allows for an easy, uninterrupted flow of that central tenant of the Godly lifestyle to love your neighbor as yourself. Giving attention to the chapter markings causes us to sub-consciously segregate the “love your neighbor” teaching of Paul as if it applies only to a specific section of Paul’s letter in chapter 12 from which we have moved on.

Paul then goes on to give a list of spiritual gifts of which each Believer can expect to be given at least one. So here to start Romans 14 Paul is continuing with the theme that the Body of Believers is going to be quite diverse except that instead of talking about how different Believers will each receive different gifts and each is a necessary part to help form the entire Body of Believers, now it is that those who are judged as having a weaker faith are also to be included and accepted as-is, without prejudice, into the Believing congregation. Still in line with that same thought, back in Romans 12:3, Paul also speaks of how each Believer needs to soberly measure

him or her self against the standard God has imposed upon all Believers; and that standard is trust. Thus, some Believers will have a great trust, and some a small trust; most will probably fall somewhere in between the two extremes.<sup>2</sup>

**McGee:** This chapter brings us to a new section, the final division in the Epistle to the Romans. It is: the separation of the "sons of God." What do we mean by separation? Frankly, I am tired of "separated" and "dedicated" Christians who are not separated or really dedicated.

There are two areas of Christian conduct. In one area the Bible is very clear, as we saw in the preceding chapter. The duty of the Christian to the state is submission. He is to obey the laws of the land, he is to pay his taxes, and he is to show respect to those in authority. Also, chapter 13 was specific on a believer's relationship to his neighbor. He is to pay his bills; he is not to commit adultery, kill, steal, bear false witness, or covet what another has. In fact, he is to love his neighbor as himself. The believer is to be honest, and he is to avoid reveling and drunkenness, strife, and jealousy. The Bible is very clear on these things.

However, there is another area of Christian conduct on which the Bible has no clear word. Let me mention only two things: the use of tobacco and mixed bathing (that is, both sexes swimming together). If you don't think these are questionable, let me give you an illustration out of my own experience. My wife was reared in Texas in a Southern Baptist church. She was brought up by a mother and father and pastor who believed that mixed bathing was sinful. Then when she came to California, you can't imagine the shock she had the first time she went down to the beach with the young people from our church -- even in those days they weren't wearing much. My wife was in a state of shock for twenty-four hours after that! She had never seen anything like it. However, in the area from which she came the use of tobacco was not frowned upon. The officers of her church smoked; in fact, her pastor smoked. When she came to California, she found that using tobacco was taboo. If you were a Christian, you did not smoke.

Is mixed bathing all right in one place and wrong in another place? Is smoking right in one place and wrong in another place? I am sure that the hair on the back of the necks of some of the saints is standing on end, and they are thinking, Dr. McGee, you ought to give a lecture against smoking, and you let this subject of mixed bathing alone. Let me assure you that I am not condemning either one, nor am I condoning either one. I'm not going to stick out my neck on questionable things any farther than Paul stuck out his neck.

In this section Paul puts down principles of conduct for Christians relative to questionable matters. He gives us three guidelines: conviction, conscience, and consideration. A Christian should have a conviction about what he does. Conviction means "that which anticipates." Does he look forward to what he is going to do in high anticipation and enthusiasm? The second guideline is conscience. Does he look back on what he has done, wondering if he were right or wrong? Or does he even hate himself for what he has done? The third guideline is consideration for others. Are other people adversely affected by what he does? These three guidelines give us principles of conduct for our Christian lives.

In our day there are actually two extreme viewpoints about this matter of Christian conduct in questionable matters. And it has created an artificial atmosphere in which one is to live the Christian life. As a result, we have abnormal or subnormal Christians in these extreme areas. One extreme position has no wall of separation from the world; the lives of these folk are carbon copies of the unsaved man of the world. Their lives are no different from what they were before their so-called conversion. They indulge in all forms of worldly amusement. They go everywhere

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

the world goes, and they spend their time and energy in activities that have no spiritual profit. There are certain passages of Scripture that have no meaning for them at all. For example: "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" (Phil. 3:17-19). There are other folk who do not indulge in any form of worldly amusement, yet they are as worldly as they can possibly be. They gorge and gormandize themselves. They don't get drunk, but they certainly overeat. Also, they overtalk -- they are great gossips. They even tell questionable stories.

Again, let me quote Paul: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). My friend, your thought life is bound to affect your conduct sooner or later. What you keep thinking about you will eventually do. I have found that a great many Christians think about a temptation for a long time before they actually submit to it. This sort of thing is done by a great many so-called Christians. Paul seemed to question whether or not they were Christians because they lived exactly as the worldling lived.

Now there is a second group that is extreme in the opposite direction. They have reduced the Christian life to a series of negatives. Paul warned the Colossian believers against the group that was characterized by "Touch not; taste not; handle not" (Col. 2:21). These folks rejoice in salvation by grace and deliverance from the Mosaic Law, but they immediately make a new set of ten commandments -- only they usually double that number. They become very self-centered, very critical, and very proud. These are the ones that Paul labels "weak in the faith" (v. 1), by the way. And they are the folk who have become very "separated."

The following letter which I received several years ago illustrates the sad state of one who adopts this position.

I've returned to California after a year of full-time Christian service in Ohio and an extended trip east. But I've come back almost spiritually shipwrecked! Have been a Christian for three and one-half years and until recently was able to give a glowing testimony about being saved out of Unity.

But lately, I've been so dead that Christ seems way up there, and I'm way down here. I have all the negative virtues of a Christian (don't smoke, drink, play cards, attend movies, use makeup), but those things do not make a happy Christian! My friends tell me I'm becoming bitter -- and oh, I don't want that to happen!

Before becoming a Christian, I was very ambitious, worked hard for whatever I believed in (and incidentally I was listed in Who's Who) -- but now I wonder what's the use? The world is going from bad to worse. Everything is heading for disaster, and the only hope is to wait for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, my friend, this person was in a terrible condition! Notice how "separated" she was, but this kind of separation will not bring joy in the life.

Somewhere between these two extreme viewpoints of questionable matters in Christian conduct the believer is to walk. These are the Scylla and Charybdis through which the believer must sail his little bark on the sea of life.

I have given a great deal of space to these preliminary remarks because I know there are many puzzled Christians who will be helped by what Paul has for us in this important chapter.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

**BKC:** Paul had discussed various aspects of a Christian's responsibilities in interpersonal relationships (12:9-21; 13:8-10), but relationships with other believers loom large and involve special problems that require discussion. Harmonious relationships within the family of God are important.<sup>4</sup>

**<sup>1</sup>Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.**

**Missler:** "Receive ye" = pres. middle imperative, "keep on taking to yourselves"; (cf. 15:7) "...but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. . ."<sup>5</sup>

**Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Paul uses the term "weak" to denote where certain Believers fall in God's standard of faith and trust; they are those who are currently in a condition of having only a very small and fragile faith and trust.

Two things must be made very clear before we proceed: first, everyone Paul is talking about is Believers. And second, at this point there is no distinction being made between gentile and Jewish Believers; thus "weak" doesn't point directly at Jews or directly at gentiles. I can't emphasize how important this is because many Christian commentaries here make the unwarranted leap that the weak in faith must be the Messianic Jews of the Rome congregation, and so they base all their interpretation and conclusions that follows on that assumption. That is, Christian gentiles are elevated in faith and trust above Messianic Jews.

Paul's instruction is to not get into pointless arguments with those Believers who are weak in faith; those who are at the low end of the trust scale. Why? Because they can be turned off and rather easily driven away, even if what they are being told is technically theologically correct. To do this to a person who is weak in faith would not be loving your neighbor. As an illustration: infants are valuable family members, but they cannot eat steak just yet because neither do they have teeth to chew it nor stomachs developed enough to digest it. Similarly, those weak in the faith are valuable members of the Body of Christ; however, they are not spiritually developed enough, yet, to deal with the more difficult or nuanced aspects of the faith so they have to be handled quite deftly and tenderly so as not to discourage or overwhelm them.<sup>6</sup>

**McGee:** To put it another way: Now, the one who is weak in faith, receive him into your fellowship, but not with the view of passing judgment upon his scruples -- that is, upon his conduct and upon his viewpoint.

"Now" connects this chapter to what has preceded it. The law of love will now go into action. Having condemned things (in the last part of Romans 13) which are immoral and obviously wrong, like killing, committing adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, and coveting, Paul now warns against the danger of condemning questionable matters which are not expressly forbidden in Scripture.

"The one who is weak in the faith" does not mean one who is weak in the great truths of the gospel -- the facts of faith -- but rather it refers to the abstract quality of faith. It means the faith of the weak falters and hesitates about matters of conduct. He does not know what he should do

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<sup>4</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>5</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

relative to certain things. This one is to be received into the fellowship of believers with open arms. You may not agree with him, but you are to receive him if he is a believer in Jesus Christ. You are not to receive him in order to start an argument about questionable things. One group of believers is not to sit in judgment upon another group of believers about questionable matters of Christian conduct. Some things are not expressly condemned in Scripture, but some believers separate themselves from these things. And if they want to do this, that's their business. They are to be persuaded" means to be convinced, to be assured in your own mind.<sup>7</sup>

**BKC 1-4:** Christians are at different levels of spiritual maturity. They also have diverse backgrounds that color their attitudes and practices. The first lesson to learn in living harmoniously with other Christians, therefore, is to stop judging others.

The focus in these verses is on him whose faith is weak (lit., "the one being weak in faith"), which appears in the emphatic first position in the sentence. Paul commanded believers to accept (pres. middle imper., "keep on taking to yourselves"; cf. 15:7) such a person, without passing judgment on disputable matters (lit., "but not unto quarrels about opinions"). A believer with certain scruples is not to be welcomed into the fellowship with the intent of changing his views or opinions by quarreling with him about them.

One area of differing scruples pertains to food, in particular the eating of meat. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables (lit., "but the one being weak eats vegetables"). The reason some Christians then were vegetarians is not stated. Since the issue is related to their Christian faith, it could be to insure against eating meat offered to idols (cf. 1 Cor. 8; 10:23-30). The reason for a believer's scruple is not the point, however; its existence alongside a differing opinion was Paul's concern.

In such a situation neither believer should judge the other. Look down on (*exoutheneitō*; also used in Rom. 14:10) should be translated "despise" or "reject with contempt" (cf. "treat... with contempt," Gal. 4:14; 1 Thes. 5:20). The reason a "strong" Christian (cf. Rom. 15:1) should not despise a "weak" one, and the reason that a weak Christian should not condemn (*krinetō*) the strong one is that God has accepted (same verb as in 14:1) both of them. (Another reason for not downgrading others is given later in v. 10.) As a believer, he is a servant of God and he is accountable to God, his Judge. Any Christian tempted to judge another believer must face Paul's question, Who are you to judge (lit., "the one judging") someone else's servant? (*Oiketēn*, "domestic servant," is not the usual word *doulos*, "slave.") The present participle, "the one judging," suggests that Paul sensed some judging of others was occurring among the Christians at Rome. But such criticizing is wrong because a domestic servant should be evaluated by his... master, not by fellow believers. Therefore, Paul concluded, And he will stand (lit., "he shall be made to stand"), for the Lord is able to make him stand. Even if a believer despises the scruples of another Christian, God can defend the second person.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>8</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

**Guzik:** We must receive (accept) the one who is weak in the faith; but we are not to receive them for the sake of carrying on a debate with them regarding doubtful things.

Receive the one who is weak in the faith: These are words to take seriously. Paul warns us to not make spiritual maturity a requirement for fellowship. We should distinguish between someone who is weak and someone who is rebellious.

There are many reasons why a Christian might be weak.

- They may be a babe in Christ (babies are weak)
- They may be sick or diseased (by legalism)
- They may be malnourished (by lack of good teaching)
- They may lack exercise (needing exhortation)<sup>9</sup>

**ESV:** A Call for Mutual Acceptance between the Strong and the Weak. Paul addresses a specific dispute, probably over whether Christians need to abide by Jewish food laws. Paul clearly sides theologically with the “strong” (who did not feel compelled to follow those laws), but he encourages them not to despise or scandalize the “weak.”

As for the one who is weak. The exhortation here is directed to the strong, for they are tempted to enter into quarrels with those who have a weaker faith.<sup>10</sup>

**<sup>2</sup>For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.**

**Missler:** Notice who is “the weak”: the one burdened with (external) rules!<sup>11</sup>

**Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

So, for a majority of Christians who think that at this point in Romans 14 Paul has created a dividing line of faith (Jews are weak and gentile Believers are strong), then when they read verse 2 they automatically think that what is being said is that those strong in faith can eat any humanly edible thing, while Jews who are weak eat only vegetables so as to keep Kosher. Remember who is speaking: Paul the Jew who has said “Heaven Forbid” numerous times in Romans in response to the straw man’s question of whether the Law of Moses was abolished or had perhaps become irrelevant for gentiles or even all Believers. We must again, then, go forward in proper context. The Jewish Rabbi Paul is speaking of eating in the same terms that he automatically thinks: Kosher. Paul doesn’t think like a gentile because he is a Jew! That is, for a Jew food is NOT just any edible thing; food is defined as only what God has set apart as food for those who worship Him. Therefore, many edible things (like Pork or camels) are not food to Paul and to eat “anything” doesn’t mean it in the sense of any edible thing found on planet Earth, without restriction, no matter how weird or disgusting. He means it in the sense of any permissible food as God has listed in the Torah. So, for him (from his Jewish viewpoint) the more-or-less opposite of eating “anything” that is Torah permitted is eating only vegetables.

First of all, Judaism did not and does not promote vegetarianism as the proper religious diet. However, it is true that the real kosher issues occur mainly as it regards meat. That is, there is not a biblical listing of plant life that must be avoided as food; but there is a biblical listing of animal life that must be avoided as food. So, for certain a Jew is highly unlikely to ever become ritually

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<sup>9</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

<sup>10</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

<sup>11</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

defiled by eating vegetables obtained almost anywhere under most any circumstance. However, meat is a much more sensitive issue and it is liable to being either of a prohibited kind of animal flesh or of having been of a permissible kind but mishandled and thus rendered unclean (and the real fear among Diaspora Jews is that if they purchased it from a gentile they wouldn't know before they ate it if the meat had somehow become rendered unclean).

Second: remember Paul is addressing this to Jews and gentiles who live in Rome. Thus, for Jews especially they had to be careful about the meat they bought and ate. Rome was the multi-cultural\capital of the Empire and so it was rife with pagan idols and altars. Roman Jews could buy a perfectly permissible kind of meat (beef for instance), but had it possibly been sacrificed to a heathen god? Had it been properly bled? Had the cow itself been properly killed? Had a ritually unclean person perhaps come into contact with the meat? How could they possibly be certain of any of this? If any of these issues came into play, then the meat became ritually unclean; but there would in most cases be no outward sign of it for a Jew to be able to tell. Some Jewish Believers apparently had become so consumed with being 100% certain about what they ate that they ate nothing that could possibly have been defiled; they decided to play it safe and eat only vegetables. However other Believers took only reasonable precautions and continued to eat the full diet allotted to Believers according to the Torah, while also understanding as we should that Yeshua is the Living Water and should they accidentally eat something unclean they could depend upon Yeshua to ritually cleanse them. So, I think it is fair in this instance to see the weak as those Believing Jews and gentiles who rigidly followed the Torah to the letter, but even more they also applied the strict Jewish laws and customs of Halakhah regarding food that went well above the biblical Torah requirements. And therefore, they took no chances, eating only vegetables as a display of their piety.<sup>12</sup>

**Guzik:** Eats only vegetables: As an example of a doubtful thing, Paul looks at those who refuse to eat meat for a spiritual reason. Perhaps they refused it because they feared it was meat sacrificed to a pagan god (as in 1 Corinthians 8). Perhaps they refused the meat because it wasn't kosher, and they stuck to Jewish dietary regulations and traditions.

Because some Christian saw nothing wrong in this meat and others saw much wrong in it, this was a burning issue among believers in Paul's day. While the issue of not eating meat for spiritual reasons is no longer directly relevant to most Christians today, there are plenty of issues where some believers believe one way and others believe differently.

He who is weak eats only vegetables: In Paul's mind, the weak brother is the stricter one. It wasn't that they were weaker in their Christian life because of what they ate or didn't eat, but they were weaker because of their legalistic attitudes and lack of love towards others.

Undoubtedly these weak ones did not see themselves as weaker. It's likely they thought they were the strong ones, and the meat-eaters were the weak ones. Legalism has a way of making us think that we are strong and those who don't keep the rules the way we do are weak.<sup>13</sup>

**CJSBN:** One person has the trust that will allow him to eat anything. Sha'ul is not proposing that the Jewish dietary laws have been abolished. The issue here is vegetarianism, not kosher laws.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>13</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

<sup>14</sup> Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

**ESV:** The strong are operating in their belief that all foods are permitted. Notice that Paul does not say that the weak are exhibiting faith by their abstaining. The weak eat only vegetables, probably so that they avoid the risk of eating unclean foods (cf. Dan. 1:8, 10, 12, 16).<sup>15</sup>

**FCSBN:** Eats only vegetables. This was most likely a way of maintaining a kosher diet when no kosher meat was available (see Da 1:8–16; 10:3; 2 Maccabees 5:27 [in the Apocrypha]).<sup>16</sup>

**<sup>3</sup>Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.**

**Missler:** [Possibly to insure against eating meat offered to idols? (cf. 1 Cor 8; 10:23-30)]<sup>17</sup>

**Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

So, what is Paul’s ruling about this situation? He says in verse 3 that the one who eats everything that God places on the menu as food for worshippers should not look down upon the one who is so greatly concerned with not letting anything prohibited or unclean accidentally touch his or her lips.....and vice versa. And in another segment of this principle that gets regularly misconstrued, we read: ***and the abstainer must not pass judgment on the one who eats anything, because God has accepted him-***. Too often this is interpreted as meaning that God now accepts humans eating any edible thing that can be obtained. But that is not what it says or what the point is. Rather it is that the one who eats all the foods **and** the one who eats only vegetables have both been accepted by God (both are saved Believers), and so especially as Believers one should not pass judgment on the other based upon laxness or rigidity of diet from one another’s perspective. And why is that? Because for one Believer to pass judgment on another Believer violates the principle of “love your neighbor as yourself”.<sup>18</sup>

**CJSBN 3-4:** The one who eats anything must not look down on the one who abstains. Sha’ul chooses his words carefully in order to pinpoint the sin of each. The one who eats anything might take pride in having thought the matter through and freed himself from his fears and compulsions and might look down on his “weaker brother.” But the abstainer is more likely to develop a “holier than thou” attitude and pass judgment on the other as careless or a libertine.<sup>19</sup>

**ESV:** The strong are liable to ridicule and mock the weak with their delicate conscience. Conversely, the weak are prone to pass judgment on those who feel the liberty to eat anything. The weak must not stand in judgment, for God has accepted the strong believer.<sup>20</sup>

**<sup>4</sup>Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.**

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<sup>15</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes:

<sup>16</sup> First-Century Study Bible Notes

<sup>17</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>19</sup> Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

<sup>20</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

**<sup>4</sup>Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.**

**Missler:** "Servant": *oiketes*, one who lives in the same house as another; spoken of all who are under the authority of one and the same householder; thus, a servant, a domestic. (Not the usual word, *doulos*, a slave.)

The self-righteous pride of some are the stumbling block for many. [They asked Mahatma Gandhi, "What is the biggest obstacle to Christianity in India?" His answer: "Christians."]<sup>21</sup>

**Guzik:** Judging our brother is inappropriate because we are not their masters.

Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat: It would be easy for a Christian who felt free to eat meat to despise those who did not feel free as hopeless legalists. It would also be easy for those who did not eat such meat to judge those who did - but God has received those Christians who eat meat.

Who are you to judge another's servant? Paul reminds us that it isn't our place to pass judgment on any fellow Christian. They stand or fall before their own Master, God - and God is able to make those "meat eaters" stand.

There is a lot of useless, harmful division among Christians over silly, bigoted things. Paul isn't telling these Christians to erase their differences; he tells them to rise above them as Christian brothers and sisters.<sup>22</sup>

**ESV:** This verse is likely directed to the weak. It is not their place as fellow servants to pass judgment on the strong. The strong stand or fall before God, and they will stand righteous before God on the last day because God will give them grace to keep them from falling away.<sup>23</sup>

**<sup>5</sup>One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.**

Cf. Rom 14:14, 22

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Verse 5 takes up another contentious issue, and the issue is "days". Please follow me carefully on this. The CJB begins this verse this way: CJB Romans 14:5 One person considers some days more holy than others... The word "holy" does NOT appear in the Greek text and most English Bible versions don't have it either. The RSV is more typical of English versions and is more true to the Greek. RSV Romans 14:5 One-man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind. There is nothing in those words that denote some days as holy and others that aren't. This is not about "holy" but rather about personally important days. But the typical Christian take on this verse is that Paul

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<sup>21</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>22</sup> www.blbclassic.org/commentaries

<sup>23</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

has declared all the biblical holy days as abolished; that of course takes direct aim at Sabbath and the 7 Biblical Feasts. Nothing of the kind is said or implied. Paul isn't referring to biblical holy days or Sabbaths or he would have plainly said so. Rather in the Roman world different days of the week were assigned as more or less important or even dedicated to different gods and goddesses. Even the days of the week were named for gods and goddesses. Apparently, there was concern among some Believers in Rome that meeting, or buying, or working, or doing whatever activity on one particular day of the week was better than another day due to some custom and tradition that had arisen. Omens of good luck and bad luck were even assigned to some days, and this sort of superstition went deep into Roman culture and of course affected the local Jewish population.

In order to believe that Paul was abrogating biblical holy days and saying that, for instance, Passover or Sabbath was no more important than any other day of the year or week would require us to take everything else we've read of Paul as hypocritical or false or simply error. And it certainly, wouldn't follow the pattern of Jesus Christ who we find at the Temple in Jerusalem for the biblical feasts, teaching in synagogues on Sabbath, and telling others in the Sermon on the Mount that they were most certainly to continue following the Law of Moses if they wanted to be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. In other words, this is a prime example of why we do NOT take Romans chapter 14 as a separate, self-contained theological unit in the Bible; but rather it is only a part of a whole and is fully connected to all of Romans...even born out of everything Paul has said to this point in Romans.... and it extends to all the others of Paul's epistles as well as to the Book of Acts, which spoke a great deal about Paul. Further, Romans 14 carries no more or less theological importance or doctrinal weight and authority as any other chapter in the New Testament. So, we certainly, can't take Paul's words of Romans 14 as essentially overriding Yeshua or even overriding other things, he's said on the same subject in other passages that he'd written. But the good news is that we don't have any contradiction; the issue for us is to turn off those doctrinal filters in our minds and avoid reading into Romans 14 things that Paul never said nor meant.

As for the last few words of verse 5 that says that the important thing about "days" is for each person to be convinced in his own mind, let's understand what this does NOT mean; it doesn't mean that a free-for-all concerning God's appointed times has just been announced. First this isn't about biblical holy days, and second the concept is that the issue of "days" should not be contentious among Believers. If one Believer wants to hold Mondays aside as a day that portends the best day to go buy food or even maybe to pray, but another Believer thinks that Mondays ought to be avoided for some superstitious or cultural reason, so what? Let each be convinced in his own mind and leave it there. It's not worth a fight between Believers since "days" has nothing to do with the Laws of God, and all such arguments do is sow needless discord. And such differences of opinion and preference certainly ought not to split the congregation.<sup>24</sup>

**McGee:** Now Paul changes his illustration from diet to the day question. Some people insist that the Lord's Day is different. Some observe Sunday as the Lord's Day and others observe Saturday. It is not the day that should be different, but the believer. The particular day is not the important thing. Paul said, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Col. 2:16). Don't you tell me what day I am to observe. I'm not responsible to you; I am responsible to the Lord Jesus. He is my Master.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

When I was a student in seminary, I was in a denomination in the South that were strict Sabbatarians -- Sunday was their Sabbath, as they called it. And they didn't believe in traveling on Sunday. I used to take a train to Augusta, Georgia, to preach, and I left on Saturday evening. Some of the officers of the church wanted to know what time the train got into Augusta! Well, it got in early Sunday morning, and one man said to me, "Doesn't that disturb you?" I said, "It doesn't disturb me at all." Now, I respect that man, and I don't think he ought to travel on Sunday. But when I am traveling from one speaking engagement to another, and it is necessary to travel on Sunday, I do it without the slightest compunction. Paul says that whatever we do, we should be fully persuaded, convinced, and assured in our own mind that it is the right thing to do. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" means literally he is to be filled to the brim -- mind, heart, will, and the total personality. A believer should do only those things to which he can give himself fully and without reserve. My friend, whatever you do for God, you should do with enthusiasm. I think it is sinful the way some people go to church on Sunday. Can you imagine people going to a football game when the alma mater is playing with that same lackluster attitude they have when they attend church? Personally, I don't go to football games because I think they are a waste of time. But I don't criticize other folk for going -- that's their business. But when I go to play golf, I go with enthusiasm. And whatever I do for the Lord, I do with enthusiasm. I teach the Bible because I love to teach it. I would rather do it than anything I know of. One of the reasons church work is bogged down as it is today is that there is a lack of enthusiasm. A man is asked to teach a Sunday school class, and he says, "Oh, if you can't get anybody else, I'll take it." Then don't take it, brother, if that is the way you feel. It would be better for the class to have no teacher than a disinterested, unenthusiastic teacher. Some people are actually committing sin by doing church work! The first great principle is: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Now let's bring this principle over to questionable things. Frequently folk, especially young folk, ask me if doing this or that is wrong. I say, "Well, for you I think it is wrong, but for me it's all right." Of course, they ask me what I mean by that. I tell them, "I have no question about it. If I wanted to do it, I would do it with enthusiasm. The point is, you have a question about it. 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' You wouldn't have come and asked me the question if you had been persuaded in your own mind." My friend, this is a great guiding principle: if you have a question in your mind about something you are doing -- whatever it is -- for you it is wrong. It might not be wrong for me, but it is certainly wrong for you.

You recall that Simon Peter followed the Lord afar off after He was arrested. Peter went that night into the judgment hall of the high priest. I sat in the hotel in Jerusalem in the old city on the side of the Valley of Kidron one morning. When the morning sun had come up, it set that whole city ablaze across the Kidron Valley. Over there is a church called the Church of the Cock Crowing. It is situated on the spot where the high priest's judgment hall was located -- that's where Caiaphas had his home. And that is the place to which Simon Peter came and where he denied three times that he knew the Lord. I am convinced that Simon Peter should not have gone there that night. On the other hand, John, who apparently had a home in Jerusalem and was known in the palace of the high priest, went there and did not deny his Lord. It was all right for John to be there, but it was wrong for Simon Peter. Simon Peter was the weak brother, you see. Today it is the weak brother who is the "separated" brother. That may seem strange to you. But the people who set up a little legal system of "dos" and "don'ts" bear watching. They are the weak ones. When I was a student in seminary, I used to have a water fight on Saturday night in the seminary dorm. One of the students would gather together two or three of the super-duper

saints, and they would pray for us. (I always hoped he would pray that I would win!) We were pretty rough fellows. One night we soaked all the rugs, and we almost got booted out of the place. But this young fellow was a model student. About fifteen years later, I sat down with him and his wife and begged him not to leave her. He told me he had to. I said, "Why?" His reply was this, "Because I have a little daughter by a woman out in Australia, and I want to marry her." He posed as a super-duper saint, but actually he was a weak brother.

Questionable amusements are wrong for the believer if they are questionable to him. If he can participate in them and maintain a close relationship to Christ, they are not wrong for him. Let me tell you a little story in this connection. Many years ago, in Tennessee a young lady went to her pastor with the question, "Do you think it is wrong for a Christian to dance?" He said to her, "Anywhere you can take Jesus Christ with you is all right to go." That made her angry. She said, "Well, I can take Him to the dance." The pastor said, "Then go ahead." So, she went to the dance. A boy whom she had not met before cut in on her and danced with her. She had determined to take Jesus Christ with her, so she asked him, "Are you a Christian?" He said, "No." Wanting to make conversation with her, he asked, "Are you a Christian?" She said, "Yes." And this is what the unbeliever said, "Then what are you doing here?" After she got home that night she decided that maybe she couldn't take the Lord Jesus Christ there after all.<sup>25</sup>

**BKC 5-8:** A second area of differing opinions was the significance of special days. One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike (cf. Col. 2:16). Which position a person held meant nothing to the apostle. His concern was that each one should be fully convinced in his own mind (cf. Rom. 14:14, 22), examining his heart to be sure he is doing what he feels the Lord would have him do. And he should hold his opinion to the Lord. This is true for any issue where an honest difference of opinion among Christians exists, whether in keeping or not keeping special days or eating or abstaining from meat, or in other matters not prohibited by Scripture. All belongs to the Lord and is sanctioned by Him (1 Cor. 10:25-27; 1 Tim. 4:3-5). A believer's individual accountability to the Lord in every area and experience of life is paramount. Each Christian in both life and death is seen by the Lord, and is accountable to Him, not to other Christians. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.<sup>26</sup>

**Guzik:** Judging our brother is inappropriate because these are matters of conscience.

One-person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike: By bringing in the aspect of observing certain days, Paul lets us know that he is talking more about principles than specific issues. What he says has application to more than just eating meat.

Let each be fully convinced in his own mind: In such issues, Paul is willing to leave it up to the conscience of the individual. But whatever we do, we must be able to do it to the Lord, not using "conscience" as an excuse for obviously sinful behavior.<sup>27</sup>

**CJBSN:** One person considers some days more holy than others. This reference is not specifically to Jewish holidays, but to any days one might come to regard as especially holy. Each should be fully convinced in his own mind. This principle for dealing with doctrinal or practical disputes applies to matters about which the Bible is indifferent.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>26</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>27</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

<sup>28</sup> Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

**ESV:** The weak thought some days were more important than others. Given the Jewish background here (see v. 14), the day that is supremely in view is certainly the Sabbath. The strong think every day is the same. Both views are permissible. Each person must follow his own conscience. What is remarkable is that the Sabbath is no longer a binding commitment for Paul but a matter of one's personal conviction. Unlike the other nine commandments in Ex. 20:1–17, the Sabbath commandment seems to have been part of the “ceremonial laws” of the Mosaic covenant, like the dietary laws and the laws about sacrifices, all of which are no longer binding on new covenant believers (see also Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16–17). However, it is still wise to take regular times of rest from work, and regular times of worship are commanded for Christians (Heb. 10:24–25; cf. Acts 20:7).<sup>29</sup>

**‘He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.**

Col 2:16-17

**Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Let’s look at verses 6 and 7. Paul says that a person who observes a special day honors the Lord, and a person who eats any permitted food honors the Lord, and so does the person who only eats vegetables also honor the Lord. In the context of these passages all of these different people are Believers and whichever preference they choose they honor the Lord. Does that mean that simply “choosing” is what honors God? No. What Paul is getting at is that Believers pray and thank God every day. Whether it is a “special” day in the eyes of some Believers, or just any day; whether a person partakes of all the permissible foods or greatly restricts himself only to vegetables, a blessing over the day and the food is ALWAYS said as part of Jewish tradition in Jewish culture. So, for the Believer God is part of every equation, and He is always glorified in prayer no matter which of these situations and preferences are chosen. And as concerns inter-personal relationships, for Believers the Lord is a partner in every relationship among Believers because we all share the same Holy Spirit of God. Whether in death or in life, Believers share a relationship with God and with one another in Spirit. And since life does not end at the grave it is indeed a theological truth that, especially as Believers, we belong to God both during this present life and in our life after death. Relationships don’t end upon our death.

Paul’s conclusion is that we are so bonded together as Believers...whether we are of strong faith or of weak faith...and regardless of our personal preferences regarding eating or special days...that we have no business in judging one another about any of these things. In fact, we have no business in criticizing or looking down on one another at all. After all, we are all going to be judged at some point anyway by God Himself. And then Paul quotes Isaiah 45:23. Remember that because in Paul’s day there were no verse numbers and chapter divisions, then the protocol was that a short section of Scripture would be quoted rather than the entire passage from which it came. So, the intent is that the reader or listener would call to mind not only those few words but also the words that preceded and succeeded them. I won’t read all of Isaiah 45, but I will read from verse 21b to the end.

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<sup>29</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

**ISAIAH 45:21b – end** <sup>21</sup>Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the LORD? and *there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me. <sup>22</sup>Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else. <sup>23</sup>I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. <sup>24</sup>Surely, shall *one* say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: *even* to him shall *men* come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. <sup>25</sup>In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

Notice two things: first is that this passage is all about justice and God being the judge of everyone; no one will escape judgment and He is the One who is Judge. But second, just so we don't think that God has elevated gentiles above Jews, or that one group has been left out, or that Paul is talking about interpersonal relationships regarding gentile Christians but not Jewish Believers, note the final few words of Isaiah 45: "but all the descendants of Israel will find justice and glory in Adonai". Here is yet another point of connection between gentile Believers and Jewish Believers that makes us equal in God's eyes: all followers of Yeshua become part of spiritual Israel. It is we who will find justice and glory in God, so there is no need for us to judge one another in this life.

Every Believer, says Paul in verse 12, will have to give an account of ourselves to God and at that time He will hand out justice and judgment as He deems fit. The good news is that as Believers we will not be condemned because Yeshua was condemned in our stead.<sup>30</sup>

**McGee:** Maybe you play golf on Sunday. If you can take Jesus Christ with you, if you can stop out on the ninth hole and have a prayer meeting with the foursome you are playing with, that would be fine. But what will the foursome playing behind you think when their game is interrupted in this way? When they see you are praying, one of them will say, "What in the world are they doing out here on Sunday morning?"

The important thing to note is that the day is to be "regarded" or observed unto the Lord. Also, the one who eats meat gives thanks to God from his heart. The one who does not eat meat gives thanks to God from his heart. It is not what is on the table, but what is in the heart that is noted by God. It is the heart attitude that conditions Christian conduct.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.<sup>31</sup>

**ESV:** Whether one observes a special day, or eats all foods, or abstains from some foods, the important thing is the honor of the Lord and to give thanks to God.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>31</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>32</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

**<sup>7</sup>For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.**

**Missler:** All belongs to the Lord and is sanctioned by Him (1 Cor. 10:25-27; 1 Tim. 4:3-5).<sup>33</sup>

**McGee 7-9:** "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" is generally quoted as a proof text that our lives affect others. However, that thought is not in this passage. The fact is that we as Christians cannot live our lives apart from Christ. Whether you live, you will have to live to Him; whether you die, you will have to die to Him. Our Christian conduct is not gauged by the foods spread out on the table, but by the fact that our lives are spread out before Him. That is the important thing. One day we are going to have to give an account of the things we have done in this life. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2Cor. 5:10). At that time it will not be a question of the meat you had on the table; it will be the question of your relationship to Him when you sat down at that table. You can be godless without meat; and you can be godless with meat, of course.

Christ's death and resurrection are given as grounds for Him to exercise lordship over both the dead and the living:

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.<sup>34</sup>

**Guzik:** For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself: We must understand that from beginning to end our life is connected to other lives. Paul reminds the Roman Christians that "No man is an island."<sup>35</sup>

**ESV 7-8:** Fundamental to the whole discussion is the reality that the Christian's life is not his own. Both in life and in death, Christians belong to the Lord, and he alone is their judge.<sup>36</sup>

**<sup>8</sup>For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.**

**Missler:** A believer's individual accountability to the Lord in every area and experience of life is paramount. Each Christian in both life and death is seen by the Lord, and is accountable to Him, not to other Christians. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.<sup>37</sup>

**Guzik:** Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's: From beginning to end, our lives are to be dedicated to God. Therefore, whatever we do, we do it to the Lord - because Jesus is our Lord (that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>34</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>35</sup> www.blbclassic.org/commentaries

<sup>36</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

<sup>37</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>38</sup> www.blbclassic.org/commentaries

**<sup>9</sup>For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.**

**Missler:** In these verses Paul stated the theological basis for his exhortation for Christians to desist from and to resist judging one another. One of the reasons for the Lord Jesus' redemptive death and resurrection is to be the Lord of both the dead and the living.<sup>39</sup>

**BKC 9-12.** In these verses Paul stated the theological basis for his exhortation for Christians to desist from and to resist judging one another. One of the reasons for the Lord Jesus' redemptive death and resurrection is to be the Lord of both the dead and the living. Since Jesus is the Lord, Christians should not judge (krineis) or... look down on (exoutheneis, "despise" or "reject with contempt"; cf. v. 3) one another, their brothers, in such matters. One Christian is not above another as his judge; all are equally under Christ, the Judge.

As Lord, Jesus will one day review and evaluate the ministry of His servants at His judgment seat (bēma; see comments on 2 Cor. 5:10). Paul affirmed the certainty of this event by quoting Isaiah 49:18 and 45:23, pertaining to everyone standing before Christ and confessing Him as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:10-11). At that event each believer will give an account (lit., "a word") of himself to God. Since Paul was writing to the Christians in Rome (Rom. 1:7) and included himself with them in the first personal plural pronoun and verb ("we will all stand," 14:10), "God's judgment seat" is only for believers in the Lord. What is here called God's judgment seat is the judgment seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10. Because God judges through His Son (John 5:22, 27), this judgment seat can be said to belong to both the Father and the Son. The issue of the believer's eternal destiny will not be at stake; that was settled by his faith in Christ (cf. Rom. 8:1). Each believer's life of service will be under review in which some loss will be experienced (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12-15), but he will be rewarded for what endures (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4-5). This judgment of believers climactically demonstrates God's lordship.<sup>40</sup>

**<sup>10</sup>But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.**

**Missler:** Pride is the real enemy. Judge not . . . Note the "we" that Paul includes.

2 Corinthians 5:10, For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

*bema*, 1) a step, pace, the space which a foot covers, a footbreath;

2) a raised place mounted by steps; a platform, of the official seat of a judge.

Herod built a structure resembling a throne at Caesarea, from which he viewed the games and made speeches to the people (1 Corinthians 3:8-15).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>40</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>41</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

**McGee 10-12:** "Why dost thou judge thy brother?" You remember that the Lord Jesus said to that bunch of Pharisees who wanted to stone an adulterous woman, "...He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). And not one of those boys threw any stones that day. My friend, you and I need to recognize that we have to give account of ourselves to Him. I'll be honest with you, that disturbs me a little. I am wondering how I am going to tell Him about certain things. So I can't sit in judgment upon you; I'm worried about Vernon McGee.<sup>42</sup>

**Guzik:** But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? Probably, the use of both judge and show contempt is meant to have application to both the "strict" and the "free" individuals. In either case, the attitude is wrong because we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

The strict Christian found it easy to judge his brother, writing him off as an unspiritual meat-eater-compromiser. The free Christian found it easy to show contempt against his brother, regarding him as a uptight-legalistic-goody-good. Essentially, Paul's answer is "Stop worrying about your brother. You have enough to answer for before Jesus."

The judgment seat of Christ: "This is the bema seat, equivalent to the judge's seat in the Olympic Games. After each game, the winners came before the judge's seat to receive crowns for first, second and third places. Likewise, the Christian's works will be tested by fire, and he'll be rewarded for those which remain ... The judgment seat of Christ is only concerned with a Christian's rewards and position in the kingdom, not with his salvation." (Smith)<sup>43</sup>

**ESV 10-12:** The strong should not despise the weak, and the weak should not judge the strong, for everyone will stand before God, who will judge all on the last day. The future day of judgment is prophesied in Isa. 45:23. Every person will give an account of his life to God at the judgment. Though justification is by faith alone, what Christians do will affect God's evaluation of their service to him and the rewards they will receive (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10–17; 2 Cor. 5:10).<sup>44</sup>

**<sup>11</sup>For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.**

**Missler:** Paul affirmed the certainty of this event by quoting Isaiah 45:23, pertaining to everyone standing before Christ and confessing Him as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:10-11).<sup>45</sup>

**Guzik:** Every knee shall bow: The quotation from Isaiah 45:23 emphasizes the fact that all will have to appear before God in humility and give account of himself before God. If this is the case, we should let God deal with our brother.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>43</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

<sup>44</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

<sup>45</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

<sup>46</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

**<sup>12</sup>So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.**

**Missler:** “Every one of us . . .”

The issue of the believer’s eternal destiny will not be at stake; that was settled by his faith in Christ (cf. Rom. 8:1). Each believer’s life of service will be under review in which some loss will be experienced (cf. 1 Cor 3:12-15), but he will be rewarded for what endures (cf. 1 Cor 4:4-5). This judgment of believers climactically demonstrates God’s lordship.

[Salvation vs. Rewards . . .]<sup>47</sup>

**CJSBN:** Every one of us will have to give an account of himself to God. Compare to the Mishnah: “For it is not by your own will but in spite of yourself that you were created and born, that you go on living, that you will die, and that you will have to give account before the King over kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he” (Sacks 110–11; Pirke Avot 4:22).<sup>48</sup>

**<sup>13</sup>Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother’s way.**

**Missler:** “Therefore, let us stop passing judgment [condemning] on one another”

*krinomen*: subjunctive, present tense, active, 1st person plural.

Instead, a Christian should judge himself and his actions so that he does not place a stumbling block (*proskomma*, lit., “something a person trips over”) or obstacle (*scandalon*, lit., “trap, snare,” and hence “anything that leads another to sin.”)<sup>49</sup>

**Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Verse 13 is a midrash on Leviticus 19:14. That makes sense because Paul has used “love your neighbor” from Leviticus 19 as his theme and rationale for his instructions to the Roman Believers since Romans chapter 12. In Leviticus 19:14 we read: 14 “Do not speak a curse against a deaf person or place an obstacle in the way of a blind person; rather, fear your God; I am ADONAI.

At first it might be hard to see why Paul would use this particular verse as his basis for what he has to say in Romans 14:13 until we realize that in Judaism of his day the term “blind” was used metaphorically for a person who didn’t know or follow the Torah. So “blind” typically meant the educationally unlearned; in Jewish society all education was religious education. This, then, relates to the opening verse of Romans 14 when Paul speaks about the weak in faith. So, we get a bit of an insight into Rav Sha’ul’s meaning of “weak” by seeing that from his Jewish worldview the root cause for being “weak in faith” is a lack of knowledge of Torah. So, who is it that wields the stumbling block thrown in front of the weak? It can only be the strong in faith. Paul does not want the strong in faith to put a stumbling block in the path of the weak in faith so in this case the strong in faith refer to those Believers who are more learned in God’s Torah and are thus more stringently Torah observant. Therefore, Believers who have studied and practiced Torah (which would be mostly Jews) are not to be prideful, arrogant, or hurtful to those Believers who are “blind” (that is they don’t know Torah likely because they are mostly

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<sup>47</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>48</sup> Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

<sup>49</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

gentiles). I realize that you have probably never heard a Bible commentator speak about this passage in this way before; but that is because we are exposing Paul's intrinsic Jewishness and remembering that this man is a self-proclaimed Pharisee of Pharisees and extremely learned in Torah having attended one of the most prestigious religious schools in Jerusalem. Paul is not writing as though he is in the shoes of a 21<sup>st</sup> century Western, English speaking Christian so we must put away our Evangelical Christian filters. Rather to dig down and extract his intended meaning, we must put ourselves into his sandals; the shoes of this 1st century Greek and Hebrew speaking, learned Jewish Rabbi. And when we do, revelation pops out!<sup>50</sup>

**McGee:** Paul is going to develop the thought that our conduct has to be for the sake of the weak brother. If I am traveling in the same car with a fellow who believes he should not travel on Sunday, I'm going to have to stay with him -- not because I agree with him, but for the sake of a weak brother.<sup>51</sup>

**BKC 13-14:** Paul's warning against judging relates to Christians' attitudes and actions toward the convictions of other believers (vv. 1-12). The other side of the coin is evaluating the impact of one's own convictions and actions on other Christians. In this section Paul warned against causing other Christians to stumble (hindering their spiritual growth) by asserting that one is free to live in accord with convictions not shared by other believers.

Paul's opening sentence is both the final charge on the previous subject and the introduction to the new one: Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on (*krinōmen*, "condemning") one another (pres. tense subjunctive, "no longer let us keep on judging or condemning one another"). Instead a Christian should judge himself and his actions so that he does not place a stumbling block (*proskomma*, lit., "something a person trips over"; cf. 1 Cor. 8:9 and comments on Rom. 14:20-21) or obstacle (*skandalon*, lit., "trap, snare," and hence "anything that leads another to sin"; cf. 16:17) in his brother's way (lit., "to the brother").

Returning to the subject of food (14:2-3, 6), Paul expressed his own conviction (cf. v. 5) as a Christian that no food (lit., "nothing") is unclean (*koinon*, "common") in itself (cf. Acts 10:15; Rom. 14:20; 1 Cor. 8:8). The problem, however, is that not all Christians—especially some from a Jewish heritage—shared Paul's conviction. Therefore, Paul properly concluded, But if anyone regards (lit., "but to the one reckoning") something as unclean ("common"), then for him it is unclean (cf. Titus 1:15). But if someone persisted in holding that conviction, he could bring harm to others. That is the point Paul made next (Rom. 14:15-18).<sup>52</sup>

**Guzik:** Let us not judge one another: In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus helped us to understand what this means - it means judging others according to a standard that we would not want to have applied to our self.

This does not take away the need and the responsibility for admonishment (Romans 15:14) or rebuke (2 Timothy 4:2). When we admonish or rebuke, we do it over clear Scriptural principles, not over doubtful things. We may offer advice to others about doubtful things, but should never judge them.

Not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way: We might stumble or cause our brother to fall in two ways. We can discourage or beat them down through our

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<sup>50</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>51</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>52</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

legalism against them, or we can do it by enticing them to sin through an unwise use of our liberty.<sup>53</sup>

**CJSBN:** Not to put a stumbling block or a snare in a brother's way. As a midrash, Sha'ul references Lev. 19:14: "Do not. . .place an obstacle in the way of a blind person." The rabbis interpreted "blind" metaphorically to mean those unlearned in Torah. This meaning for "blind" would include both those whom Sha'ul calls weak in trust and those whom he considers strong in trust but inclined to pride.<sup>54</sup>

**FCSBN:** Stumbling block or obstacle. This concept comes from the Torah (see Lev 19:14). Paul may have been speaking primarily to Gentile Christians. If so he was arguing that a Gentile Christian should not put a stumbling stone before a non-believing Jew ("brothers and sisters") at the risk of compromising the message of Christ. Love is the counterbalance to Gentile freedom in Christ. If the righteous Gentiles kept the basic expectations of purity (Ac 15), they might prevent the observant Jew from stumbling as Jews interacted with Gentile followers of Christ.<sup>55</sup>

**<sup>14</sup>I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.***

**Missler:** No food (lit., "nothing") is unclean (*koinon*, "common") in itself; ( cf. Acts 10:15; Rom. 14:20; 1 Cor. 8:8).<sup>56</sup>

#### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

But now we hit one of the most challenging yet significant verses in this chapter: verse 14. We won't be able to complete discussing it in this lesson. Here Paul says that Yeshua Himself has persuaded Paul of something and, says the CJB (and the majority of other translations), it is that nothing of itself is unclean. But if a person considers something unclean, then to him it is unclean. Here is where we need to go back to our Acts chapter 10 lesson about Peter's vision of the animals coming down from Heaven in a 4 cornered sheet of cloth. Like in Acts chapter 10, it is the typical Christian assumption that Paul says kosher eating has been abolished along with the concept of clean and unclean. Let's park here awhile because there are a few stereotypes and assumptions that need to be dealt with so that we can properly interpret Paul's words. We're going to get technical, but there is no other way to explain the issue without doing so. Besides, if you like a good mystery you'll like where we're going with this.

First, I'll whet your appetite by telling you that the 3 times that English Bibles insert the word "unclean" in Romans 14:14 are all typical but questionable translations. The Greek word is *koinos* and in all other usage in the Bible it means common or ordinary; not unclean. The Greek word for unclean is *akathartos* but *akathartos* does not appear in Romans 14:14. These two words *koinos* and *akathartos* are, however, used side by side as separate and different adjectives in Acts 10:14 as further proof that they cannot possibly be synonyms and it is further proof that

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<sup>53</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

<sup>54</sup> Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

<sup>55</sup> First-Century Study Bible Notes

<sup>56</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

translators have had much trouble trying to figure out how to present the meaning of this word. The CJB, for instance, translates this verse in Acts as follows: CJB Acts 10:14 But Kefa said, "No, sir! Absolutely not! I have never eaten food that was unclean or treif." In this verse David Stern is translating *koinos* to unclean (the rather standard Christian translation) and *akathartos* to *treif*. We'll only find the translation to *Treif* in the CJB as it is actually a Yiddish derivative from a Hebrew word that means torn...that is, it speaks of prey that was torn (attacked and killed) by a wild animal. Any meat animal that has been killed by a wild animal may not be consumed; therefore, in a kind of slang, *treif* indicates something that can't be eaten by followers of the God of Israel because the rules of Judaism don't allow it (whatever that reason might be).

But the KJV has translated that same verse this way: KJV Acts 10:14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. This seems to be more correct and it accords with the actual literal translations of *koinos* and *akathartos*. So even before we try to understand what the word common means in this context of diet, it does not seem to precisely mean ritually unclean because there is an entirely separate word for unclean in the Greek language: *akathartos*. So why are verses containing the word *koinos* (common) usually translated in English to unclean? I suspect it is because it works to reinforce long held Christian stereotypes and doctrines that allow us to manipulate the meaning of the key word (*koinos*) in this verse, and therefore change the key meaning of this verse in Romans 14:14 from a discussion of common to unclean. Let me say it again: it is doubtful that the term "ritually unclean" appears in this verse; rather, Paul used the word common and Christian translators have nearly universally decided to change it to unclean to better fit with a doctrinal agenda that claims that Yeshua and Paul together abolished the biblical dietary laws.

So, what does the term common mean as it applies to food? The reality is that within the Torah itself there is no status of edible things called common, so we are left with a bit of a head-scratcher. Rather the Torah describes food in terms of prohibited and permitted food items and in another and different set of rules that includes food, but it extends to other matters as well, there are the clean and unclean categories. But, again, the term "common" is not a term used to describe food in the Torah. Rather we only find it used that way in the New Testament. Why? I believe it can only be the result of the influence of Halakhah, Jewish Law and Tradition, on Judaism and on Jewish society in general. I've demonstrated in both the Book of Acts and in the Book of Romans that terms and meanings used in Jewish Law can be found in the New Testament because they were just an unconscious way of speaking and thinking within Jewish culture in that era. Actual Jewish Law, Halakhah, Tradition, did not exist in the Old Testament era because Judaism did not exist in the Old Testament era. Judaism, and thus Jewish Law, only sprang up during the 400-year span in between the end of the Old Testament and beginning of the New and thus we only find its societal influence in the New Testament. As an aside, most Jewish scholars will tell you that (much to their disappointment) the single largest and best recorded body of knowledge about Judaism in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. is the New Testament! But most important for our purposes, clearly common (*koinos*) can't mean ritually unclean mainly because there already was a precise Greek word in wide use that means unclean and that word is *akathartos*. To repeat: as we looked at Acts 10 we saw that both of these words were used in the same verse, as different adjectives that mean different things, and the King James version is one of the few English Bible versions to acknowledge that it is self-evident that *koinos* and *akathartos* can't both mean ritually unclean.

So, let's substitute the more literal and usual English word for *koinos* in Romans 14:14 and see what we get: "I know....that is I have been persuaded by Lord Yeshua the Messiah....that

nothing is common of itself. But if a person considers something common, then for him it is common.” Another definition of *koinos* is ordinary, in the sense of meaning not-special. Or, in Jewish thought, not set-apart or not holy. I believe what we have in the term *koinos* is sort of a relatively new Tradition in Judaism that was created as a middle ground between holy and unclean as regards food and it came about for practical reasons because 95% of all Jews in Paul’s era lived NOT in the Holy Land among thousands of their fellow Jews, but in the Diaspora among millions of gentiles. That is, the vast bulk of Jews in the 1st century lived scattered all over the Asian, European and North African Continents in a pagan world of gentiles where often just one or a few Jewish families would live in a tiny ghetto among the majority gentiles. Kosher eating would have been especially problematic for Jews because the requirements of Judaism added many nuances and rules to the rather simple and straightforward dietary rules as found mostly in Leviticus chapter 11. Rules of Jewish Law made it nearly impossible to eat meat if it hadn’t been raised, fed, killed, butchered, handled, cooked and served exclusively by Jews. This issue weighs heavily on proper doctrine for Believers so I don’t want to hurry through it because I know that many of you are unsure about the issue of kosher eating and whether it applies to you or if it has somehow become irrelevant because of Christ.

In Romans chapter 14 we again encountered an issue that simply will not go away: the issue of kosher eating. Although Western gentile Christianity has tried to solve the matter by declaring simply and succinctly that the Levitical dietary laws have been abolished for Christians, some clever reconstruction of certain New Testament passages was needed to try to validate that questionable position. So, when we look at the oldest New Testament manuscripts ever found (all of them written in Greek) we find discrepancies from what we find in most English Bible versions when it comes God’s dietary laws. Interestingly the KJV tends to stay more true to the original Greek in its rendering of words concerning eating and diet, and so sometimes it tells a different story....but not always. Let me give you an example.

**Acts 10:11-15 KJV** 11 And (Peter) saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: 12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

Notice in this passage in Acts that the word “common” is used to describe something that Peter said he has never eaten, and that God said that Peter should not call common what God has cleansed. You will not find the word “common” in most standard English translations or in the CJB; instead the word “unclean” is used. So why the discrepancy? It is because the Greek word that is translated “common” in the KJV, but “unclean” in almost all English translations, is *koinos*; however, *koinos* means ordinary and common and not “unclean”. There is a separate Greek word that means unclean, and it is *akathartos*. *Akathartos* is not used here. So why, when it comes to the discussion of food, do English Bible translations change the meaning of *koinos* from common to unclean? Clearly it is because a certain doctrinal agenda is being taught that doesn’t necessarily agree with the plain Scripture reading so some adjustments to the Scriptures had to be made to make the words fit the doctrine that kosher eating has been abolished for Christians.

So, what does “common” mean when it applies to food? Before we delve into that I want to throw out a question that I’m sure many of you might be asking at this moment; why does Tom Bradford address the issue of kosher eating so regularly? It is because I have noticed that within

Western culture and especially within Western Christianity the issues of dietary restrictions and Sabbath are among the most difficult to deal with. It isn't that hard for Westerners to understand and obey God's biblical moral standards that make murder, stealing, and lying wrong. However, we simply don't like the idea of being told what we can eat and what we can't, or what day we should set aside to cease our regular work or if we are obligated to do and not do certain activities on the Sabbath. Somehow the concepts of a God designated Day of Rest and of God regulating our food such that some foods are permissible, and some is prohibited goes against our values of individualism and personal choice. After many decades of life and my personal experience with God I have learned a valuable lesson; it is that those areas in our life of which we demand God keep His hands off are the ones He may well meddle in the most. Why? It is for our benefit; obedience to Him in all areas of our life is the forgotten element of our relationship with the Lord in modern Christianity.

As much as I love democracy, the Kingdom of Heaven is not democratic and God is not the President of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven is a theocracy with but one absolute ruler who established Himself as that ruler: Yehoveh. We don't get to vote in our relationship with God. We have no right or mechanism to establish new divine rules or abolish established ones. He gives us no options when it comes to morality, although He gives us wide latitude in matters of preference. God has made eating and Sabbath matters of The Law and thus they are moral issues; not issues of personal preference. He has made clear rules and regulations about what we should and should not eat, and about what day we are to set apart as holy and different from all the other days of the week.

Therefore, let me be clear: is it wrong to disobey God's laws concerning diet and Sabbath? Yes, it is. Is it sin to disregard God's regulations about what we eat and what day we set aside as the Day of Rest? Yes, it is. And I can tell you from personal experience (and I have heard the same from so many other Believers) that after you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, and then you also make the decision to obey God in all areas of your life including diet and Sabbath, an entire new world of intimacy and relationship with the Lord opens up. Why? Because obedience is God's love language. It is an oxymoron to say you love God but in the same breath make it clear that you won't obey Him in certain areas of your life and lifestyle that you wish to continue to control according to your own standard. As I have pointed out before: God originally gave Adam and Eve only one rule; and interestingly that rule concerned their diet. They could eat everything God gave them for food except the fruit from one particular tree. The Scriptures acknowledge that the prohibited fruit was edible, beautiful, and tasty.

**Genesis 3:1-7 CJB** 1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any wild animal which ADONAI, God, had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You are not to eat from any tree in the garden?'" 2 The woman answered the serpent, "We may eat from the fruit of the trees of the garden, 3 but about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, 'You are neither to eat from it nor touch it, or you will die.'" 4 The serpent said to the woman, "It is not true that you will surely die; 5 because God knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it had a pleasing appearance and that the tree was desirable for making one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her; and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together to make themselves loincloths.

The very first law God ever gave to mankind He gave in the Garden of Eden.... before there was a Law of Moses or a Hebrew to obey it....and it concerned food. What we eat matters to

God and has since Creation. And since it matters to God naturally Satan is going to interfere and try to get us to go against what the Lord wants. It rubbed Eve the wrong way that God restricted her from that gorgeous fruit; it must have seemed pointless and unreasonable. Because of our inborn evil inclinations, we carry with us that same attitude about food that Adam and Eve had; we demand total freedom to choose as we please. If we like the taste and it doesn't physically harm us, then we feel as though we should have the right to eat it. Just because some of the Early Church Fathers were deceived, and because the Church in general remains deceived on this matter, doesn't mean you have to be. Remember: the rules of kosher eating are found in the Holy Scriptures, primarily in Leviticus chapter 11, and they don't amount to great deal. The food rules that Judaism follows include much more than God requires and even Yeshua Himself railed against those extra rules. So, this is why I speak so regularly about kosher eating and about Sabbath.

So back to the issue of what common means as it applies to food. It is important to understand that in the Torah the term "common" is not used in reference to food. Food is basically divided into two categories: permitted and prohibited. And then the permitted food is divided into two categories: ritually clean and ritually unclean. So, the use of the term common by Paul creates a real challenge in trying to discern what he means by it. Surely it doesn't mean unclean because there was an everyday Greek word for unclean that we regularly find used in the Bible. My best educated guess is that because the Synagogue and Judaism had taken firm hold in the lives of Jews well before Paul's day, certain terms had their meanings altered to reflect conditions of the times. I think "common" is one of those altered terms and it reflects the difficulties of proper eating for the vast bulk of Jews who lived among millions of gentiles in a predominately gentile world. I also think that in the NT era the word "common" referred to food (probably mainly meat) that is on the list of permissible foods as found in the Torah, but because Jews in the Diaspora more often than not had no hand in the raising, butchering, and handling of the food they could never be sure if it had been done according to God's laws. If any of that was done improperly it could render the food unclean. And depending on how pious a Diaspora Jew was, the details of the food handling were either extremely important or not important at all. Thus, for many Jews they ate only vegetables so that kosher issues were removed, and they could be certain that they ate nothing that they shouldn't.

We've discussed verse 14 with the pertinent info being that the word unclean doesn't actually appear here. However, the principle Paul speaks of "nothing is common of itself" means that food has no intrinsic condition. That is, no food is automatically created holy; no food is automatically created common; and no food is automatically created unclean because of its chemical makeup. Pig meat doesn't have some evil genetic quality about it that makes it prohibited for food while cow meat has some good genetic quality about it that makes it permissible for food. Rather the issue is obedience by God's worshippers to whatever the Lord ordains. This fact was long recognized by the Rabbis and I'd like to quote you a rather interesting narrative from the *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana*, which was created as early as the 5th century and is essentially a series of Jewish religious homilies.

A heathen questioned *Rabban Johanan be Zakkai*, saying: The things you Jews do appear to be a kind of sorcery. A heifer is brought, it is burned, is pounded into ash, and its ash is gathered up. Then when one of you gets defiled by contact with a corpse, two or three drops of the ash mixed with water are sprinkled upon him, and he is told, "You are cleansed!" Rabban Johanan asked the heathen: "Has the spirit of madness ever possessed you?" He replied: "No". "Have you ever seen a man whom the spirit of madness has possessed?" The heathen

replied: “Yes”. “And what do you do for such a man?” (The heathen said) “Roots are brought, the smoke of their burning is made to rise about him, and water is sprinkled upon him until the spirit of madness flees”. Rabban Johanan then said: “Do not your ears hear what your mouth is saying? It is the same with a man who is defiled by contact with a corpse; he, too, is possessed by a spirit, the spirit of uncleanness, and, as of madness, Scripture says, I will cause false prophets as well as the spirit of uncleanness to flee from the Land”.

Now when the heathen left, Rabban Johanan’s disciples said: “Our master, you put off that heathen with a mere reed of an answer, but what answer will you give us?” Rabban Johanan answered: “By your lives, I swear: the corpse does not have the power by itself to defile, nor does the mixture of ash and water have the power by itself to cleanse. The truth is that the purifying power of the Red Heifer is a decree of the Holy One. The Holy One said: I have set it down as a statute; I have issued it as a decree. You are not permitted to transgress my decree. This is the statute of the Torah.

So, holiness, commonness, and uncleanness have nothing to do with the substance of the object or the creature; they only gain such status as the Lord deems it. And if, as says Rabban Johanan, God says pig meat is not food for you, then it isn’t. If God says chicken is food for you, then it is. There is nothing more to it than that; however as much as we humans might question why pork is forbidden but chicken is permitted, we have no right to do anything but obey. Here in Romans 14:14 the issue is the “commonness” of some kind of edible item thus meaning (according to Paul) that it should not be eaten as food. But interestingly the rationale and the point for Paul’s injunction about food has less to do with obedience to the Torah food laws and much more to do with loving your neighbor as yourself. Paul’s injunction is that we are to respect the other person’s stance on such matters and not make it a bone of contention that causes division. He is in no way saying it doesn’t matter; but rather that it is up to God, and not to a fellow Believer, to judge that person for not obeying the kosher food laws.<sup>57</sup>

**McGee\14-15:** Since Christ was willing to die for that weak brother, certainly we ought to be willing to refrain from eating something or doing something that would hurt him in his Christian walk.<sup>58</sup>

**BKC 14-18:** How should a Christian whose convictions allow him to eat everything respond to one with scruples against certain foods? In Christian love he ought to forgo his liberty in Christ to avoid being a spiritual hindrance to his spiritual brother. If he persists in exercising his liberty so that his brother is distressed (lypeitai, "grieved, hurt"), Paul concluded, then the Christian exercising his liberty is no longer acting (lit., "walking") in love. Such persistence could cause the spiritual destruction of a brother for whom Christ died. Destroy renders the word *apollye*, which often means eternal ruin. Here it may mean temporal ruin; a Christian forced to act contrary to his scruples, even though more strict than necessary, may find himself ruined by his wounded conscience (cf. 1 Cor. 8:10-12). Persisting in one's freedom could also result in his Christian liberty (what you consider good) being blasphemed (spoken of as evil, *blasphēmeisthō*).

Such things should not happen. After all, food is not that important an issue (1 Cor. 8:8); it is not the sum and substance of the kingdom of God. But... righteousness (upright living), peace (cf. Rom. 12:16, 18; 14:19) and joy in (the sphere of) the Holy Spirit (cf. 15:13) are essentials of

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>58</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Christian fellowship and harmony. A concerned believer insists on right conduct, harmony, and joy rather than forcing his own lifestyle on others. As a result the Christian who serves (pres. participle, *douleuōn*, "who keeps on serving as a slave") Christ in this way—in Christian love, pursuing righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit—is pleasing (cf. 12:1; 15:1; Heb. 13:21) to God and approved by men (in contrast with being evil spoken of, Rom. 14:16).<sup>59</sup>

**Guzik:** I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself: Paul knew that there was nothing intrinsically unclean about meat that was not kosher or sacrificed to an idol. Yet there was nothing that could justify the destruction of a Christian brother over food.

Trapp on I know and am convinced: "Many, on the contrary, are persuaded before they know; and such will not be persuaded to know."

The issue now is not my personal liberty; it is walking in love towards a brother that Jesus loves and died for.<sup>60</sup>

**CJSBN:** Nothing is unclean in itself. Sha'ul is certainly not espousing moral relativism. His remark has to do not with human behavior but with ritual uncleanness. It is not surprising that Sha'ul, having alluded in the previous verse to Lev. 19 (a chapter full of commandments about uncleanness) continues with a dictum on that subject. The Bible does not always explain why some things are pure and others not.<sup>61</sup>

**ESV:** Christians are no longer under the old covenant; hence Paul no longer accepts the view that some foods are unclean (cf. Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14). Still, if anyone thinks certain foods are unclean, then they are unclean for that person.<sup>62</sup>

**15But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.**

#### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Now notice verse 15: it continues the subject by speaking of your brother (your fellow Believer) being upset by the choice of food you eat. Thus, by eating food that you know upsets your fellow Believer (I'm assuming this means eating it in the presence of your fellow Believer) you are going against the fundamental principle of loving your neighbor. Who is Paul speaking to in his letter? Most often it is said that this is aimed at Believing Jews for being especially rigid about food by maintaining kosher eating standards and thus when gentiles see them eat a restricted diet it upsets the gentiles; but that is exactly the opposite of what these words say. In fact, simple logic asks why would gentiles be upset with Jews because Jews only ate certain foods? So, it is not an issue of what Jews eat, but what they don't eat. Further, nothing a Jew eats would upset a gentile, even if that gentile thinks that restrictions don't apply to him. Rather the upset occurs when it is gentile Believers who eat things that Believing Jews consider common or unclean (and thus forbidden) that is the issue. It is gentiles Paul is admonishing by saying that what they eat may be upsetting their brothers in Christ who are Jews who eat kosher. So, says

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<sup>59</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>60</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

<sup>61</sup> Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

<sup>62</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

Paul in verse 15, gentiles don't let your unrestricted eating habits (of eating things that upset those who eat kosher) destroy someone for whom the Messiah died (that is, another Believer). To destroy in this context means to offend. Thus, gentiles should honor Jews' convictions by eating kosher in their presence in order to show them respect and not offending them. One can only imagine the contentious issues of diet when gentile Believers began to be saved and especially at first joined Jewish synagogues.

So here is the application for us in modern times: yes, Believers, God does instruct us to eat Kosher. But if you don't first have the Holy Spirit in you, and you feel no conviction to follow God's dietary laws, then to do so anyway is pointless and especially so if you do it only as an outward show. At the same time if you are saved, and you do have the conviction to obey God's dietary laws, then not only should you do so but you should not judge or ostracize other Believers who have not come to that same conviction. Why is this? Because the spirit of God is not one of slavery to the Law, but one of devotion to the Law out of love and gratitude for the Law's creator. Thus, while I fully believe that following God's dietary laws are for all Believers, I will not make or end relationships with fellow Believers based on whether or not they, too, hold that same conviction. At the same time, those Believers who have no conviction to obey God's dietary laws need to honor my convictions should they invite me over for a meal. It is a two-way street and never should we get into battles with one another over kosher eating. And Paul says in verse 18 that if we will go forward with this type of attitude then this is the proper service of worship to our Messiah because it pleases God and it also allows others to see us (as Messiah's representatives) in a good, proper, loving light that well represents our Savior.

It can only be that the issue of food and drink was a contentious one among the Roman congregation (a mixed congregation of Jews and gentiles) that Paul spends so much time on it. And Paul says that of all things to not battle over, it is this.<sup>63</sup>

**Guzik:** Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died: If Jesus was willing to give up His life for the sake of that brother, I can certainly give up my steak dinner!<sup>64</sup>

**ESV 15-17:** The strong should not cause sorrow to the weak by what they eat but rather should refrain for the sake of the weak. They must beware lest they destroy the faith of a brother or sister. If the strong do not act in love, the goodness of the gospel may be wrongly identified as evil, for their lack of love for the weak contradicts Christ's love. God's kingdom centers on the gifts of righteousness, peace, and joy granted by the Holy Spirit, so that bodily appetites become secondary.<sup>65</sup>

**<sup>16</sup>Let not then your good be evil spoken of:**

**Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Verse 16 is a bit cryptic but here's how we should take it. Paul is talking to those on one side of the issue in verse 15, and then to those on the other side of issue in verse 16. So to paraphrase these two verses to help us understand better let's try this: On the one hand don't let your eating habits, gentiles, offend fellow Believers (Jew or gentile) who eat kosher. But on the other hand,

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<sup>63</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>64</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

<sup>65</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

kosher eaters don't let your devotion to eating kosher (a good thing) be turned into something bad by demanding that your fellow Believer eat kosher because to do so violates the overriding principle of loving your neighbor. And then in verse 17 Paul says this is the case because the Kingdom of God is not based on wooden, mechanical instructions about what you eat or what you drink such that it can cause divisions among Believers. Rather the Kingdom of God is based on the righteousness, peace and joy given to us by means of the Holy Spirit.<sup>66</sup>

**McGee:** In other words, liberty does not mean license. The believer is to use his liberty, not abuse it. We are always to keep in mind how our conduct will affect weaker Christians.<sup>67</sup>

**Guzik:** Do not let your good be spoken of as evil: Our liberty in Jesus and freedom from the law is good, but not if we use it to destroy another brother in Christ. If we do that, then it could rightly be spoken of as evil.<sup>68</sup>

**17For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.**

**Missler:** Wine with meals? In Christian love one ought to forgo his liberty in Christ to avoid being a spiritual hindrance to his spiritual brother. If he persists in exercising his liberty so that his brother is distressed (*lypeitai*, "grieved, hurt"), Paul concluded that the Christian exercising his liberty is no longer acting (lit., "walking") in love.<sup>69</sup>

**McGee:** This is the only reference in this epistle to the Kingdom of God. I do not believe the "kingdom of God" is synonymous with the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew's Gospel, which finds its final fruition in the millennial and messianic Kingdom here on earth. I believe that the Kingdom of God embraces all that is in God's created universe, which, of course, includes the church. It is broader and larger and includes God's reign over all His creation. Lange's definition is satisfactory: "The heavenly sphere of life in which God's word and Spirit govern, and whose organ on earth is the Church." This was our Lord's use of the term. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Well, that is the heavenly sphere of life in which God's Word and Spirit govern. As Stifler has said (The Epistle to the Romans, p. 245), "God rules everywhere, but there is a realm where he governs by spiritual forces or laws alone" -- which is in the area of the life of the believer. Man is totally incapable of seeing or entering this kingdom without the new birth. This kingdom has nothing to do with eating or drinking, fasting, no meat on Friday, no pork, or a vegetarian diet. These things just do not enter into it.

"Righteousness" in this verse means the same as it does in chapters 1 and 3. It means to be right with God; it means a life lived well-pleasing to Him.

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<sup>66</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>67</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>68</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

<sup>69</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

"Holy Ghost" apparently goes with righteousness and refers, not to our standing, but to our walk -- we are to walk in the Spirit. It is practical rather than theological. It is moral rather than oral. It is a righteousness in the Holy Spirit rather than righteousness in Christ.

"Joy" is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Unfortunately, it is often absent from the lives of believers. There should be joy in our lives. This doesn't mean you have to run around smiling like a Cheshire cat, but it does mean you are to have a joyful feeling deep in your heart.<sup>70</sup>

**18For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.**

**McGee:** Although, of course, there will be a literal kingdom on this earth, he is talking here about the spiritual realm that you enter by the new birth. Christ is not served by eating and drinking, but our service to Him must pertain to righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. In these things a believer is well pleasing to God and approved of men.

"Approved of men" does not mean that men will get in your cheering section and applaud you because you are a believer. They may even persecute you. But underneath, men do approve of genuine believers, while they despise and reject that which is hypocritical and phony.

This is a great principle of conduct. The walk and talk of the believer should please God and meet the approval of the conscience of men.<sup>71</sup>

**Guzik:** 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.

Serving God with a heart for His righteousness and peace and joy is the kind of service that is acceptable in His sight and will be approved by men.<sup>72</sup>

**ESV 18-19:** Those who show such love for the weak please God and stand out before others as selfless servants of Christ. All Christians are summoned to edify others and to strive for peace.<sup>73</sup>

**19Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.**

**McGee:** This is a twofold exhortation. To "follow after the things which make for peace" is to eagerly pursue this course of action. The believer is to make a definite effort to avoid the use of food or any physical thing which offends a Christian brother. This would be the negative aspect of the exhortation. The positive aspect is to press toward the mark of spiritual values: righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. These are the things which build up the believer.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>71</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>72</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

<sup>73</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

<sup>74</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

**BKC 19-21:** Continuing his emphasis on not hindering another Christian's spiritual life, Paul urged his readers, Let us therefore make every effort (lit., "Let us keep on pursuing") to do what leads to peace (lit., "the things of peace"; cf. v. 17) and to mutual edification (lit., "and the things of building up one another"; cf. 15:2; 1 Thes. 5:11). To Paul food and one's personal convictions about it were not so important as the spiritual health of a fellow Christian and the work of God. Therefore, it is wrong to insist on one's personal freedom in Christ concerning food (all food is clean; cf. Rom. 14:14, "no food is unclean") and drink if it causes someone else to stumble (*proskommatos*, "a stumbling block"; cf. vv. 13, 21). Meat or drink or anything else should be put aside if it causes a brother to fall (*proskoptei*, "stumble"; cf. *proskomma*, in vv. 13, 20). At times one's Christian liberty must be relinquished for the sake of others. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Everything is permissible—but not everything is constructive" (1 Cor. 10:23). And "be careful... that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak" (1 Cor. 8:9).<sup>75</sup>

**FCSBN:** Live at peace. A similar idea appears in rabbinic literature: "Be disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and drawing them near to the Torah."<sup>76</sup>

**<sup>20</sup>For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.**

**Missler:** To Paul food and one's personal convictions about it were not so important as the spiritual health of a fellow Christian and the work of God. Therefore, it is wrong to insist on one's personal freedom in Christ concerning food (all food is clean; cf. Rom. 14:14, "no food is unclean") and drink if it causes someone else to stumble.<sup>77</sup>

#### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Then we are thrown another typical Paul curve ball in verse 20 when he says that all things are clean (and indeed he uses the Greek word for clean, *kathartos*), but at the same time no one should cause anyone else to fall away from Messiah due to food. What does he mean here? Naturally Western Christianity claims that Paul says that because of Christ, the food laws are gone and now every edible thing is OK for Believers to eat. And yet that doesn't fit with what Paul says here and in others of his epistles. In fact, the wording says that ALL things are clean; that is, this statement although it includes food goes beyond food such that the entire principle of clean and unclean has been abolished as it applies to anything at all. That would make sense because otherwise we have Paul saying that the principles of clean and unclean remain, but they now apply to everything but food. However, this can't be right either because Paul talks about the need to be cleansed in a number of his epistles. One of the more well-known of his statements in this regard is found in 1 Corinthians.

#### **1Corinthians 6:9-11 CJB**

9 Don't you know that unrighteous people will have no share in the Kingdom of God? Don't delude yourselves people who engage in sex before marriage, who worship idols, who engage in

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<sup>75</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>76</sup> First-Century Study Bible Notes

<sup>77</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

sex after marriage with someone other than their spouse, who engage in active or passive homosexuality, 10 who steal, who are greedy, who get drunk, who assail people with contemptuous language, who rob- none of them will share in the Kingdom of God.

11 Some of you used to do these things. But you have cleansed yourselves, you have been set apart for God, you have come to be counted righteous through the power of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah and the Spirit of our God.

But then there is also this from the John the Revelator:

**Revelation 21:22-27 CJB** 22 I saw no Temple in the city, for ADONAI, God of heaven's armies, is its Temple, as is the Lamb. 23 The city has no need for the sun or the moon to shine on it, because God's Sh'khinah gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. 25 Its gates will never close, they stay open all day because night will not exist there, 26 and the honor and splendor of the nations will be brought into it. 27 Nothing impure may enter it, nor anyone who does shameful things or lies; the only ones who may enter are those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

So clearly the issues of obedience and of clean and unclean (ritually pure and ritually impure) continue into the Messianic age and we should not take Paul as meaning that the status of unclean has been abolished. So, what does he mean? Considering his Jewishness, that he is an educated Pharisee, what he has said throughout Romans, and that he lived during the era of Judaism, Tradition and the Synagogue, then I think those several factors are the necessary context for interpreting what Paul means by “all things are clean”; and he means that nothing is created by God as unclean. At Creation God did not create unholy or unclean substances or creatures or things. That is, inherently the physical substance of every created thing is acceptable to God since He’s the one who did the creating. We know this because it is recorded in Genesis that God looked over everything that He created and pronounced it as “good”. However, the spiritual and ritual status of unclean can be and is assigned by God to some things under some circumstances for His own good reasons. This status, however, never changes the physical make-up of a person, animal or object itself (in some magical way). A few minutes ago, I read you an excerpt from an ancient Jewish document that said essentially the same thing. So Paul is but stating what was an accepted spiritual principle among Jews that all things are created inherently clean, even if some are later deemed unclean (and therefore unusable) by God for ritual purposes. Nonetheless, says Paul to finish up this section, these issues (what we eat and what we drink) should not be the cause of making a fellow Believer to stumble due to religious arguments within a congregation. And since trust is the standard God uses to determine our salvation, then it is on account of this trust and nothing else that we are to make the decision to eat according to the Torah food laws. We should not eat kosher because of being brow beaten; not because of thinking that somehow, we are more pious or have more merit for doing so; and not simply to conform to others in our group. However, this same trust that leads us to eat according to God’s food laws also compels us to be respectful and loving to Believers who don’t.<sup>78</sup>

**McGee:** On account of food, do not tear down the work of God. Of course, the believer has the liberty to eat meat or abstain from it -- but neither will commend him to God. We are not to tear down the work of God in the heart of some weak believer for the sake of some physical gratification. That old bromide is active: one man's porridge is another man's poison. Esau, for

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<sup>78</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

instance, had no regard for God or for his birthright. He exchanged it for a bowl of soup. Well, don't sell your birthright just to satisfy your appetite.<sup>79</sup>

**Guzik:** Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food: 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.

**ESV 20-21:** Paul urges the strong not to destroy God's work in the weak by eating food that will scandalize the weak. He assures the strong that all food is clean (another indication that Jewish food laws are in view), but even the strong who have no convictions against eating such food fall into sin when others stumble and fall away from Christ upon observing how the strong behave.<sup>80</sup>

**<sup>21</sup>*It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.***

**Missler:** 1 Corinthians 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.<sup>81</sup>

**McGee:** Paul returns to these two points: eating and drinking. Then he goes beyond them with the sweeping statement: nor anything. Anything that is questionable and is a matter of conscience for a weak brother becomes wrong for the strong one.<sup>82</sup>

**Guzik:** All things indeed are pure: Paul will concede the point that there is nothing impure in the food itself; but he likewise insists that there is nothing pure in causing a brother to stumble.

Nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak: However, we shouldn't think that Paul would permit this kind of heart to cater to someone's legalism. 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.<sup>83</sup>

**CJSBN 21-22:** What is good is not to...do anything that causes your brother to stumble. Compare with, "It was taught: If there are things which are allowed but which some treat as prohibited, you must not permit them in their presence" (Nedarim 15a).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>80</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

<sup>81</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>82</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>83</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

<sup>84</sup> Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

**22Hast thou faith? have *it* to thyself before God. Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.**

**Missler:** So, whatever you believe about these things (lit., “The faith that you have,” or “Do you have faith?”) keep between yourself and God.

A Christian must not insist on influencing a believer with tighter scruples to change his ways. It should be something “in his own mind” (v. 5), for he lives “to the Lord” (v. 8).<sup>85</sup>

**McGee:** Let me give you my translation of this verse; The faith which thou hast, have thou thyself in the sight of God. Happy is the man who condemneth not himself in the things which he approves -- that which he does.

This is the second principle of conduct for Christians. He has already dealt with the aspect of conviction. As we look toward doing something for God, we ask ourselves the questions: Will it be right for me to do this? Can I do it with excitement and anticipation and joy? Now this second exhortation looks back at what has been done. Happy is the man who does not condemn himself in what he has done. The believer should be able to look back upon his conduct without any qualms of conscience.

Let me use an illustration, and I trust you will not misunderstand it. I have been asked the question: "Can a Christian get drunk?" The answer is yes. The prodigal son in Luke 15 was a son out in the far country. I am confident that he got drunk in addition to a few other things, but he was always a son. Then what was the difference between him and the pigs? The difference was that none of those pigs said, "I will arise and go to my father." You see, as the prodigal son was there with the pigs, he said to himself, I hate it here, and I'm going to get out of this. I am going back to my father and confess what a sinner I am. What, then, is the difference between the Christian who gets drunk and the non-Christian who gets drunk? The difference is simply this: the next morning the man of the world will get up with a headache, put an ice pack on it, and say, "Boy, I sure had a big time! I'm going to get a bigger bucket of paint and a bigger paint brush, and I am really going to paint the town red the next time!" But what will the child of God do? When he wakes up the next morning with a head as big as a barrel, he drops down by the side of his bed and cries, "Oh, God, I hate myself! I don't want to do that again." He confesses his sins to God. And the interesting thing is there is no record that the prodigal son went back to the pig pen. He didn't like it there. That is the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

My Christian friend, do you look back and hate yourself for what you have done? That is your conscience condemning you. Regardless of what it was and regardless of how many other people do the same thing, for you it was wrong. You might have been in a church (and a church can be a very dangerous place because Satan is there -- he goes to church every Sunday morning, and he goes to the best churches). Do you come home from church and say, "I could bite my tongue off. I wish I hadn't said what I did." Well, you should not have said it. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."<sup>86</sup>

**BKC 22-23:** Concerning personal convictions in areas where different views exist, Paul concluded, so whatever you believe about these things (lit., "The faith that you have," or "Do you have faith?") keep between yourself and God. A Christian must not insist on influencing a

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<sup>85</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>86</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

believer with tighter scruples to change his ways. It should be something "in his own mind" (v. 5), for he lives "to the Lord" (v. 8). Paul considered a Christian like himself who had a clear conscience on such matters blessed (lit., "happy"). On the other hand, a Christian who has doubts is condemned (perf. pass. verb, "stands condemned") if he eats. If a Christian eats food or does anything when he has doubts in his own mind as to whether it is right or wrong before God (one who is "weak" in faith, vv. 1-2), his action does not spring from (*ek*, "out of") his faith or trust in God and is therefore wrong. As Paul generalized, everything that does not come from (*ek*, "out of") faith is sin. The principle is, "When in doubt, don't." The "strong" Christian (15:1) is wrong if he causes a weak brother to sin (by doing something while doubting, 14:20), and a weak brother (vv. 1-2) who goes against what he doubts also sins (v. 23).<sup>87</sup>

**Guzik:** Do you have faith? If you have [strong] 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.

Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves: Not every Christian knows this happiness. There are things God may challenge us to give up, but we go on approving them in our life - thus we condemn ourselves. It may not be that they thing itself is clearly good or bad, but it is enough that God has spoken to us about this matter.

Each of us must ask: "God what is there in my life hindering a closer walk with You? I want to know the happiness that comes from not condemning myself by what I approve in my life." This takes faith, because we often cling to hindering things because we think they make us happy. Real happiness is found being closer and closer to Jesus, and by not being condemned by what we approve.<sup>88</sup>

**ESV:** The strong are likely addressed here. The faith that you have means their faith that they may eat anything (cf. vv. 1–2, 23). They are not asked to surrender their convictions, but they should not behave in a way that injures the faith of others and thereby brings judgment on themselves.<sup>89</sup>

**23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.**

**Missler:** On the other hand, a Christian who has doubts is condemned (perf. pass. verb, "stands condemned") if he eats. If a Christian eats food or does anything when he has doubts in his own mind as to whether it is right or wrong before God (one who is "weak" in faith, vv. 1-2), his action does not spring from (*ek*, "out of") his faith or trust in God and is therefore wrong. As Paul generalized, everything that does not come from (*ek*, "out of") faith is sin.

The principle is, "When in doubt, don't." The "strong" Christian (15:1) is wrong if he causes a weak brother to sin (by doing something while doubting, 14:20), and a weak brother (vv. 1-2) who goes against what he doubts also sins (v. 23).

James 4:17, Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>88</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

<sup>89</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

<sup>90</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

**McGee:** "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." My friend, you are to believe in what you are doing. If you don't believe in it, you should not be doing it. Here is a new definition of sin for the believer: Any line of conduct or any act which is not the outflow of faith becomes sin. This is the Holy Spirit's answer of questionable things. As the believer is saved by faith, just so the believer is to walk by faith.<sup>91</sup>

**Guzik:** Whatever is not from faith is sin: Paul concludes with another principle by which we can judge "gray areas" - if we can't do it in faith, then it is sin.

This is a wonderful check on our tendency to justify ourselves in the things we permit. If we are troubled by something, it likely isn't of faith and likely is sin for us.<sup>92</sup>

**ESV:** No one should eat unclean food if he has doubts about the rightness of the activity. Indeed, anything believers do apart from faith is sin, for faith glorifies God by trusting him (4:20), and lack of faith dishonors him.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>92</sup> [www.blbclassic.org/commentaries](http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries)

<sup>93</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes