

Rom. 14:1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

“receive” = to take to oneself, admit (to friendship or hospitality)

I like the wording of the NLT for this verse: *Accept Christians who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.*

Faith is defined in the Greek as “moral conviction of the truth, especially reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstractly, constancy in such profession....” One who is “weak in faith” hasn’t had the opportunity or hasn’t taken advantage of the opportunity to grow in their faith. Faith is a fruit of the Spirit at work in our lives. The more we submit in obedience to the direction of the Spirit according to the Word, the stronger will be our faith.

A strong faith and spiritual maturity seem to go hand-in-hand. Those who are weak in the faith are not ready to reason with spiritual wisdom regarding matters that aren’t specifically spelled out in scripture. Enjoy fellowship with the believer whose faith is weaker than yours, but don’t debate with him in these areas.

Rom. 14:2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

Those with a weak faith tend to lean a bit more toward legalism and caution. Those with a strong faith seem to have a better understanding of their freedom in Christ with a better understanding of the intent of the law. Those who are impostors of the faith manipulate God’s word according to their own intents and desires.

I believe Paul uses the example of eating meat because it was an obvious issue in the culture of that time. Meat that was sold in the shops was often that left over from sacrifices to pagan gods. Paul takes up this issue in more detail in 1Corinthians 8. He basically sums up the situation by saying that a Christian is free to eat this meat, but should be careful not to cause a weaker brother to stumble by exercising this freedom. By refraining, one is showing more concern for a brother’s spiritual well-being than in satisfying his own desires.

Rom. 14:3 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.

The point Paul is making here is that believers are not to judge each other with condemnation in matters that are “doubtful.” God accepts us into fellowship on the basis of faith. Matters of opinion regarding what constitutes the freedom of the believer should not disrupt fellowship among believers. Faith in God’s provision of our salvation through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the determining factor for Christian fellowship.

Rom. 14:4 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.

Again, I like the wording of the NLT for this verse: *Who are you to condemn God's servants? They are responsible to the Lord, so let him tell them whether they are right or wrong. The Lord's power will help them do as they should.*

The Greek does not necessitate the wording "another man's servant"; it also allows for "another's servant," which I think is a better translation.

"standeth or falleth" – In looking at the Greek, this phrase seems to indicate standing fast and persevering or failing. "In the faith" seems to be the implied reference. In other words, God is the power that preserves the believer in his standing. This truth is affirmed more clearly in Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

"he shall be holden up" – ...not, "he might be." This is another statement that supports the security of the believer. His faith is preserved by the power of God.

Rom. 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Rom. 14:6 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.

Another "doubtful/debatable" issue is that of which day is the right day to assemble as believers and dedicate to the Lord's service.

The Sabbath day was set apart by God in the week of creation.

Genesis 2:2-3 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

The first time the word "Sabbath" is used is in Exodus 16 when Moses was giving instructions to the people regarding the gathering of the manna. The next time is in the giving of the commandments in Exodus 20. Interestingly, this is the first time that I noticed the word "Remember" in that command.

Exodus 20:8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

This emphasizes that this day had been set apart since creation. Throughout their history, the Jews had honored this particular day in obedience to God's command.

Throughout His ministry, Christ emphasized the intent of the law over the letter of the law. His teaching is aimed at the heart of the person. His teaching emphasizes that His demands of us are high, but that His provision to meet those demands is sufficient. When we “rest” in His provision through the ministry of the Spirit, He becomes our “Sabbath.” Suddenly, every day becomes set apart as holy unto the Lord because our lives are to be lived as set apart and holy unto the Lord. I believe this is what is being said in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 4:9-10 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, **he also hath ceased from his own works**, as God did from his.

I believe this is what is being pictured in John 15 when the Lord compares the believer to branches on a vine. The work is done by the husbandman or gardener. The branch is fruitful because of the work of the gardener; the branch just has to be connected to the life source, the vine, Jesus Christ.

John 15:1 & 4-5 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman....Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Again, holy days should not be an issue that prevents fellowship among believers.

Rom. 14:7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

Rom. 14:8 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.

The key phrase that jumps out in this section of verses is “unto the Lord.” The deciding factor in the choices we make should be made according to our conscience as honoring to the Lord. The whole being of the believer from the moment of salvation throughout eternity is to bring honor to the Lord. He has graciously given us His Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit to give us direction in those choices. Still, it is up to us to obey. As long as we are in this cursed body, we will still struggle with making holy choices. We don't become holy robots. There is a verse in James that applies here.

James 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

In defining this sin of omission, James is acknowledging that the believer is accountable for the choices he makes. He has the freedom of choice.

Rom. 14:9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

When Jesus came in obedience to the Father to provide salvation through His death, burial and resurrection to new life, it was to provide salvation and new life for all people of faith—those from times past who had already died

physically as well those who would live after His resurrection. Faith is the key that identifies one as belonging to the Lord.

Rom. 14:10 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.

This verse has direct reference to verses 3-4 above. The believer has no right to sit in judgment of another believer and avoid fellowship over matters of opinion. (Keeping in mind that we are referencing “debatable” issues.)

God is the only one that has the right to judge, and the Father has delegated that responsibility to the Son, Jesus Christ.

John 5:22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son....

For the believer, this will be a judgment of works—not of eternal destiny.

2Corinthians 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.

Those works will be judged to determine our rewards.

1Corinthians 3:12-15 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Our position in Christ through faith is secure.

Rom. 14:11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

Rom. 14:12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

“it is written” – Where?

*Isaiah 45:22-23 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. 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.***

I included verse 22 since it clarifies that God is addressing all nations of the earth in that scripture. It would seem that these two verses broaden our understanding to know that every person who has ever lived is one day going to have to acknowledge God as God—every professed atheist, every follower of a false god.

The believer will have to give an account of himself to determine rewards. (See 1Corinthians 3:12-15 above.)

The unbeliever will have to give an account of himself to determine his destiny.

Revelation 20:12 & 15 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works....And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Rom. 14:13 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.

I like the wording of the Complete Jewish Bible for this verse.

Therefore, let's stop passing judgment on each other! Instead, make this one judgment — not to put a stumbling block or a snare in a brother's way.

It's much easier to put our focus on what is "wrong" in someone else's life than it is to focus on our own responsibility in a given situation. Our responsibility is to reflect the Lord Jesus in everything we do and say. We are to be humble and have the mind of a servant toward others. Toward those who are weaker in faith than we, our priority should be to encourage them and strengthen them in their faith. We should be careful not to let our freedom be the cause of their stumbling.

Rom. 14:14 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.*

Rom. 14:15 But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

In context, we can see that the reference to "unclean" is connected to "meat." This would have been especially significant to any Jews who would hear this letter. The book of Leviticus is very specific regarding what they were to consider *clean* and *unclean*. I was reading through Eerdman's Dictionary on this subject and found this statement:

"The distinction between clean and unclean was a reminder of Israel's call to holiness (Exod. 22:31[MT 30]; Lev. 20:22-26; Deut. 14:2). Holiness implied separation from the common or the profane."

When Jesus came, He "fulfilled" the law; He met every requirement. Through faith in Him, man can now be declared "righteous." By fulfilling the law and overcoming the curse of sin, Jesus began to emphasize what really *defiles* a man, or makes him truly unclean or unholy.

Mark 7:15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

“am persuaded by the Lord Jesus” – Paul is careful to emphasize that he is declaring the truth as revealed to him by the Lord. He is more specific in this regard in his letter to Timothy.

1Timothy 4:1-5 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils....Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

The last half of verse 14 presents a very interesting spiritual principle. It is a truth that comes into play in my life constantly. If we consciously make a choice to do something that we believe makes us unclean/unholy, it is a sin for us.

Finding the balance in the practice of my freedom in Christ vs. discernment between what is right and wrong has been a real area of concern for me. I have erred so often in making compromises in my past, that I tend to be a bit more legalistic in the choices I make now. I believe that I need to be more circumspect than others because of the weakness of my flesh. I also have to work at not being judgmental towards those who seem to exercise too much freedom in their choices in my opinion. I have learned to be strong in the choices that are right for me while hopefully not alienating others. This struggle is by far greater in fellowship with my extended family than in fellowship with friends.

Rom. 14:16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

Rom. 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

I like what David Guzik had to say about verse 16:

“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.”

The concerns and priorities of life and service in the kingdom of God, the body of believers, are not food and drink. We are not to give thought to what we eat or drink. God will provide for those of His kingdom. Our priorities are regarding our relationship to our God and our brothers and sisters in the faith. I believe that is what Christ was teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:25-33 Therefore I say unto you, **Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.** Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of

the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

I like the following comment from JFB on verse 17.

The first — "righteousness" — has respect to *God*, denoting here "rectitude," in its widest sense (as in Matthew 6:33); the second — "peace" — has respect to *our neighbors*, denoting "concord" among brethren (as is plain from Romans 14:19; compare Ephesians 4:3; Colossians 3:14, 15); the third — "joy in the Holy Ghost" — has respect to *ourselves*.

Rom. 14:18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

"in these things" – This phrase seems to be referring back to "righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

"Righteousness" in verse 17 is defined in the Greek as "equity (of character or act)." Webster defines equity as "according to reason, and the law of God to man." I would conclude that to serve God in righteousness is to live so that our character and our actions reflect submission to God and obedience to His commands.

"Peace" is a reference to being "set at one again" in our relationship to God. When we serve God in *peace*, we are again reflecting an attitude of submission and contentment in our relationship to God that will in turn produce *peace* in the kingdom of God.

"Joy in the Holy Ghost" seems to be the direct result of serving God in righteousness and peace. When we are living in submission and obedience to God, the Holy Spirit will be able to bring forth the fruit of love in our life that expresses itself in *joy*.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...

Rom. 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

I conclude from the previous verses that peace is a result of serving God in submission and obedience. As each believer finds peace through his relationship to God, he will in turn promote peace among other believers. To edify is to improve and strengthen; peace in the body of believers only strengthens and improves our testimony before others.

Again, I am reminded of my life verse: *Isaiah 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*

As I continued to look at this verse, the phrase “follow after” jumped out. This references a choice that results in action. We never benefit from knowing what is right if we are not willing to act upon that knowledge.

Rom. 14:20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure; but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence.

Paul again emphasizes the main truth of this passage. Although referencing the example of whether or not it is right to eat meat, the issue is freedom in Christ vs. responsibility to the brother in Christ. We are not to use our liberty to cause another to stumble; that would destroy the work of God.

In the second half of the verse the issue is freedom in Christ vs. our responsibility to obey Him according to our understanding of the truth. Even if an action is not sinful in and of itself, it becomes a sin in one’s life when that action is taken in disobedience to what one believes is right before God.

Rom. 14:21 *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.*

Paul is very consistent at hammering home his message. We are to take no action that we know would cause a brother or sister in the faith to stumble in his/her faith.

Rom. 14:22 Hast thou faith? have *it* to thyself before God. Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

Rom. 14:23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin.

I really like the NLT translation of these verses.

“You may have the faith to believe that there is nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God. Blessed are those who do not condemn themselves by doing something they know is all right. But if people have doubts about whether they should eat something, they shouldn’t eat it. They would be condemned for not acting in faith before God. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.”

I think it is important to again reference the fact that this whole chapter is regarding things that are truly “doubtful/debatable” regarding Christian conduct. There are many areas of conduct today that are presented as being acceptable according to God’s Word, but clearly go against His Word. Homosexuality, the sanctity of life, the inerrancy of the scripture, the fact that Jesus is THE Way to salvation are all hot issues of the day that are not debatable according to the scripture. May we each truly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God without a preset agenda and with the desire to obey according to God’s revelation.