

Exegetical Notes - Romans 14:1-23

**“Weak & Strong”**

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**Romans 14:1-23**

**Verses 1-4**

***Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. <sup>2</sup> One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. <sup>4</sup> Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.***

- Not all Christians are at the same place in their understanding of things. Some have a “weaker” faith than others. Those who are more advanced should accept, be tolerant of those who are not as advanced as are they in their understanding.
- “Disputable matters” are those matters over which the Scriptures do not declare right from wrong. If the Bible speaks decisively on any matter, that issue is resolved. However, there are some issues on which the Bible does not declare right or wrong decisively. In these matters there is leeway. One Christian may see it one way and another may see it another way. On these debatable matters, Christians should not quarrel.
- Paul uses eating meat as an example. Meat was sold from pagan temples. The pagan temples had cornered the meat market and no one could buy meat except from them. The meat sold in these markets was meat that had been offered in sacrifice to pagan gods. Some Christians believed that they could not eat meat offered in sacrifice to pagan gods, so they refrained from eating meat at all. Other Christians argued that since the pagan gods did not exist, they could eat the meat sold in these butcher shops.
- Those who ate the meat purchased in the temple butcher markets were not to judge or mock those who did not. God honored both groups.

- Since God honored both groups it would be wrong for one group to judge another on this matter.

### Verses 5-9

***One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. <sup>6</sup> Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. <sup>7</sup> For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. <sup>8</sup> If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. <sup>9</sup> For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.***

- Another “disputable matter” was the day on which Christians should worship. Some Christians believed that the Church should worship on the seventh day, the day of the Jewish Sabbath. Others believed that Christians should worship on the first day, the day on which Jesus rose from the dead. Paul says that the day one worships is not important. What is important is that one worships.
- The point is driven home in verses 7-9. The argument is this: (1) Christians do not live for themselves alone; (2) Christians belong to the Lord; and (3) Jesus Christ is Lord of all Christians -- those who are alive and those who are with him in Heaven. Therefore, we live for Christ and not for ourselves. Christians live to honor God above self.

### Verses 10-13

***You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat. <sup>11</sup> It is written: “As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.’”***

***<sup>12</sup> So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. <sup>13</sup> Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.***

- Every Christian will stand before God and will give account for themselves before God.
- The verse quoted is Isaiah 45:23.

- God is sovereign Lord. He alone will judge His servants. Therefore, Christians should not judge each other in “disputable matters.”

### Verses 14-18

***<sup>14</sup> I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean. <sup>15</sup> If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup> Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. <sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, <sup>18</sup> because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.***

- “Nothing is unclean in itself,” unless the Lord has spoken and declared it to be so. These verses do not give Christians permission to do as they please in all matters. Remember we are speaking only of “disputable matters.”
- In these matters on which the Scripture does not speak decisively, there is leeway. One Christian sees it one way and one sees it another way.
- The rule is this. If what I do causes another Christian to sin in judging me, I should be careful not to cause them to sin in this way. Christians live for Jesus and not for themselves. They should be concerned for other Christians.

### Verses 19-23

***Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. <sup>20</sup> Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. <sup>21</sup> It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.***

***<sup>22</sup> So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. <sup>23</sup> But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.***

- Now the problem. When Paul wrote the words we read in this chapter, he was writing a letter to the Church in Rome. He did not consider what he was writing to be Scripture. But, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church has ordained what Paul wrote to be Scripture. Therefore, what the

Scripture did not speak about decisively, it now speaks about decisively.  
“ALL FOOD IS CLEAN.”

- However, if eating something or drinking something causes another Christian to take offense, it is better for me to abstain than to cause my brother or sister offense. At the same time, I must be careful not to take offense if my brother does something of which I do not approve.
- I should not insist that my brother see everything my way. If I cause him to act against his own conscience, I cause him to sin because he believes he is doing what honors God.

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