

Epistle of Romans XXVIII (Chapters 14-15:5) Take on the Mind of Christ

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Let's understand something here before we begin. Rom. 14:

- has nothing to do with the Sabbath
- has nothing to do with Sunday-keeping
- has nothing to do with the day of observing a Holy Day

The first half of Rom. 14 is one of the most misunderstood and poorly translated of the sections of the New Testament that I can recall. The reason is, because when they translated it, they had in mind a justification for their Sunday-keeping. They miss the whole point as to what it's talking about. So, the place to begin Rom. 14 is not verse one.

We're going to see the whole summary of Rom. 14 has to do with small, incidental physical things. You will notice the whole layout of Romans as we go through from:

- Rom. 1—the introduction
- Rom. 2—difference between the spiritual Jew and the physical Jew and those who are doing what they need to do
- Rom. 3—the righteousness of God is revealed separate from the Law
- Rom. 4—Abraham and how it was by faith that he believed
- Rom. 5—justification and the imputed righteousness of Christ
- Rom. 6—the covenantal baptism and death with Christ
- Rom. 7—the struggle to overcome with the law of sin and death in you
- Rom. 8—you are not condemned and God has called you to be a very son of God
- Rom. 9-11—Israel and Esau and the rest of the world
- Rom. 12—how the Church is to function and run
- Rom. 13—authorities in the world
- Rom. 14—small, incidental, physical things

—which then became blown out of proportion and were destroying the congregation—things that should never have gotten a hold. Paul is writing and telling us: *do not let the physical things become as important as the spiritual things*, and that there are certain individual choices that we can make, which are proper and right to make. You can't have a thing of conscience...

You can't say, 'Well, my father had this idol all the way through his family.' Like a man up in San Jose has over 8,000 crosses and crucifixes and 12,000 religious books, and he's certified by the *Guinness Book of World Records* that he has the most crosses of any individual, and it showed him with the crucifixes and everything.

A person can't come along, in the Church of God, and say, 'I have a conscience that this has always been in my family and, therefore, I want to keep this little idol.' You make a conscience out of that. You can't take a personal opinion and make it a conscience and force it upon someone else either. There are certain things within conscience that you can do, but that conscience has to be based upon something in God's Law.

Romans 14:14: "I understand and am persuaded by *the* Lord Jesus that nothing *is* common of itself..." The *King James* says 'unclean' which is incorrect. Most people who want to eat unclean meats say that we can eat unclean meats because nothing is unclean in itself. *Common* is the word, not unclean.

"...except to the one who regards anything to be common—to that one *it is* common.... [secular] ...But if, because of meat... [here is the subject; a small physical thing] ...your brother is offended, you are no longer walking according to love..." (vs 14-15). The whole emphasis here is you've got to walk *according to love*—love works by faith (Gal. 5:6).

"...**With your meat...** [anything physical] ...**do not destroy the one for whom Christ died**" (v 15). There are certain physical requirements that we are to have. We're to dress decently. Women are to have long hair. That's about the only thing.

Verse 16: "Therefore, do not let your good... [which is good to you] ...be evil spoken of. For the Kingdom of God is not *a matter of* eating and drinking... [or of physical things] ...rather, *it is* righteousness... [imputed by God the Father, the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 5)] ...and peace... [not strife and confusion] ...and joy in *the* Holy Spirit because the one who serves Christ in these things *is* well pleasing to God and acceptable among men" (vs 16-18). Even in the world it doesn't matter; that's what he's saying.

Verse 19: “So then, we should pursue the things of peace and the things that edify one another. Do not destroy **the work of God...**” (vs 19-20)—the *work of God* in that particular individual.

This has nothing to do with a corporate headquarters. This has nothing to do with publishing and media preaching or evangelizing. This has to do with the work that is being done in that individual who is being destroyed. “Do not destroy the work of God...”

Verse 15—“...do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.” You can tie those two together, vs 15 and 19.

Verse 20: “...for the sake of meat... [or a physical thing] ... All things *that are lawful...* [because not all things] ...*are indeed pure...*”

- Is adultery pure? *No!*
- Is a hog pure? *No!*
- Is a skunk pure? *No!*

ALL things are not pure!

“...All *lawful* things indeed are pure, but *it is an evil thing* for the one who eats while causing an occasion of stumbling to *his brother*” (vs 19-20). That’s the whole thing that’s important.

Verse 21: “*It is better not to eat meat, or drink wine, or anything else by which your brother stumbles, or is offended, or is made weak.*”

There’s the whole thing! What happens in all these cases is that the little physical picayunish things are that people start reasoning from nothing. They get emotionally involved in reasoning in a circle, and then they have the vanity of trying to make that person conform to what they think is right or what they are doing. That causes the person to stumble or to offend. God doesn’t want that!

There are some people who did not eat flesh. There were some people who did not drink wine. Let’s look at the source of the problem and what this had to do with. It had nothing whatsoever to do with Sabbath or Sunday, or a person having the capacity to make a day Holy.

Romans 14:5 (KJV)—here’s where all the Sunday-keepers go: “One man esteems one day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regards the day, regard *it* unto the Lord; and he that regards not the day to the Lord he does not regard *it...*” (vs 5-6). Even if you regard a day to be Holy:

- Can you make it Holy?

- Can you sanctify a day?
- Does any man have the authority to change a day that God has set in motion?
- *NO!*

So, we’re going to see that this has absolutely nothing to do with Sabbath or Sunday-keeping whatsoever. The way that the *King James* translates it, if you don’t know the Bible and you don’t know the subject that it’s talking about, and if you read that one verse, you can make it appear that that’s what it’s talking about. The Jehovah Witnesses say that every day is Holy. One man asked them, ‘When do you work?’ *NO!* Every day is not Holy. Which day did God bless and make Holy? *The seventh day, the Sabbath!*

We’ll see what it’s talking about: eating meat and not eating meat; and eating meat on a particular day and not eating any meat. In the Greek this is considerably more clear when you go through one, then the other.

Romans 14:1: “Receive the one who is weak in the faith, but not for divisive arguments.”

I remember when I was up in Oregon, one minister told me that he was sure going to convert these vegetarian Seventh Day Adventists. So two weeks after they were baptized, he invited them over for dinner and he had a steak barbeque and wine and slapped a steak on their plate and gave them a glass of wine and just about drove them out of the Church. Didn’t even give them any time to grow in grace and knowledge and understanding. Divisive arguments! Do not have divisive arguments over small, picayune, little physical things. That’s what it’s talking about.

Verse 2: “Now on the one hand, one believes he may eat all things *that are lawful...*” Not all things; you can’t eat oysters, you might even get that bacteria that rots the flesh.

“...but on the other hand, another one, who is weak, eats only vegetables” (v 2).

- What are we talking about?
- Are you strong if you eat meat?
- Are you more physically strong? *Maybe! Not necessarily!*
- What are we talking about? *The one who eats only vegetables!*
- Why would he do that? *We’re in a pagan Roman society!*

They had gods everywhere. They had their religious ceremonies that they did. Let’s see why they were vegetarians; this was based upon the commandment:

‘You shall not commit idolatry.’ So, if it’s based on trying to keep a commandment, then you can have conscience toward God. But we’re going to see what automatically happened. The vegetarians were looking down on the meat-eaters, and the meat-eaters were looking down on the vegetarians.

1-Corinthians 8:1: “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols... [let’s understand how far Paul took this, whether it was a sin or not] ...we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but **love edifies**”—to build up. There’s a difference in being puffed up: puffed up is just so much vanity; edify is to build up with:

- the knowledge of God
- the love of God,
- the Truth of God
- the faith of God
- the hope of God

You’re building; you’re edifying!

Verse 2: “But if anyone thinks that he knows anything... [this is so true; the longer you live you know it] ...he knows nothing yet to the degree that he ought to know.”

That’s true concerning the Bible. That’s true concerning almost anything that you do. Look at the scientists 30 years ago and their view of the universe compared to what it is now after we have all these telescopes and the Hubble and everything like that. They’re beginning to find out what they knew 30 years ago was nothing, and what they know today—even after they have gained all that knowledge—is still nothing. Likewise with us. What knowledge we have, *we have!* But do we really know it as we ought to know it. Would God have us know everything perfectly? *No!*

Verse 3: “But if anyone loves God, he is known by Him. So then, concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols...” (vs 3-4). In the temple of Zeus, the temple of Diana and the temple of Dionysus and any other god that they had.

“...we understand that an idol in *the* world is nothing...” (v 4). If it’s sacrificed in front of a potbelly Buddha.

- Does Buddha contaminate it spiritually?
No, because it’s nothing!
- What is an idol? *An idol is something that a man has made!*
- Does an idol have any spiritual power? *No!*

Yes, there are demons behind the idols, but do the demons contaminate the physical food, as long as it’s *lawful* physical food to eat? *No!*

“...and that *there is* no other God except one” (v 4).

So, the one who strong in the faith understands the physical situation here with physical meats sacrificed to a physical idol. It does not spiritually contaminate it so if you eat it you become spiritually sinful before God. How can it? *It’s not possible!*

Verse 5: “For indeed, even if there are *those* which are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are many gods and many lords, still, to us *there is* one God the Father, from Whom *are* all things, and we *are* in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom *are* all things, and we *are* by Him. However, not all *have* this knowledge...” (vs 5-7).

Not everyone understands this. Those newly come to the faith do not understand it. What if you were just two weeks converted from the temple of Zeus? Then you saw someone who was in the Church for five years going over to the Olympiad where the temple of Zeus was and going in and eating right there in the temple. You would think, ‘Man, I’ve been called out of this!’ He didn’t have the knowledge.

“...But some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat *it* as a thing sacrificed to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled... [because they still give mystic qualities to the idol] ...But meat does not commend us to God; for we do not have any *spiritual* advantage if we eat, nor do we come short *spiritually* if we do not eat” (vs 7-8).

In other words, to eat something sacrificed to an idol, with no conscience to the idol, does it make you better? And if you’re afraid to eat it and you don’t eat it, are you in worse standing with God? *No, of course not!* Has nothing to do with spirituality. It doesn’t!

Verse 9: “But beware, lest this freedom of yours becomes a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you, who have knowledge, sitting to eat in an idol-temple, will not his weak conscience be emboldened so as to *cause him* to eat things sacrificed to idols?” (vs 9-10)—with conscience to that idol.

What if you saw me coming out of a Catholic Church where they were having a meal for senior citizens? What would you think? ‘Well, I wonder what Fred Coulter is doing in that Catholic Church? I wouldn’t step foot in that Catholic Church for anything, and he’s supposed to be a minister of God.’ I mean, you can almost hear the conversation.

Verse 11: “And will the weak brother, for

whom Christ died, perish on *account of* your knowledge? Now when you sin against the brethren..." (vs 11-12). These physical things cause sin against **brethren!** And this is the whole crux of Rom. 14.

"...and wound their weak consciences in this way, you are sinning against Christ. Therefore, if meat causes my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh—not ever—so that I may not cause my brother to stumble" (vs 12-13). You might put there, *until he has the full knowledge and understanding that an idol is nothing!*

Let's see where you cross over the line. Where you cross over the line is where you get into the religious service of idolatry.

1-Corinthians 10:16: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not *the* fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not *the* fellowship of the Body of Christ?" Fellowship really means that you're conjoined together, brethren. Let's understand that. That's really quite a profound thing in the Greek. What it means is that *you're joined together with Christ!*

Verse 17: "For we, being many, are one body *and* one bread, because we are all partakers of the bread." That is obviously the Passover bread, no question about it. The 'one bread' is *the one body of Christ.*

Verse 18: "Consider Israel according to *the* flesh. Are not those who eat the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What then am I saying? That an idol is anything, or that which is sacrificed to an idol is anything? But that which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not wish you to have fellowship with demons" (vs 18-20).

When it crosses that line; there is a line to where then it should not be partaken of. If I'm in the Catholic Church and I'm there because it's a senior citizen thing and someone invited me over because they were just trying to be friendly and I went and I had a meal there in the community room in the Catholic Church, I have not sinned. But if I walk into the 'so-called sanctuary' and I go to where they're having communion, and I kneel down and take of the bread and drink of the wine, **I have sinned!** That's the difference.

Verse 21: "You cannot drink *the* cup of the Lord, and *the* cup of demons. You cannot partake of *the* table of the Lord, and *the* table of demons. Now do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?" (vs 21-22).

This is what it's talking about in Rom. 14. You had those who did not eat any meat sacrificed to an idol in a temple. With conscience they did not want to eat it. If they, in conscience before God, didn't want to eat it, does it make them less of a Christian? Does it make them worse? Those who eat the meat, does it make them better? *No! It's just a physical thing!*

Romans 14:2: "Now on the one hand, one believes he may eat all things *that are lawful*; but on the other hand, another one, who is weak, eats only vegetables. The one who eats *meat* should not despise the one who does not eat *it...*" (vs 2-3).

So, just the physical things back and forth, and that's what happens. 'I'm a vegetarian. What are you? I'm more righteous than you, I don't eat the meat sacrificed to an idol.' And the one who eats the meat says, 'You're weak in the faith. Don't you understand that an idol is nothing.'

"...And the one [the vegetarian] who does not eat *meat* should not condemn the one who eats *it*, for God has received him. Who are you to be judging another man's servant?... [in other words, you're judging a servant of Christ] ...To his own master he stands or falls. And he shall be made to stand because God is able to make him stand" (vs 3-4).

There is not one thing in here having to do with Sabbath or Sunday-keeping whatsoever. It's whether to eat meat or not eat meat and whether one is righteous by doing so or not. There is no righteousness involved in attributing to eating or not eating meat. How do we know that this has nothing to do with unclean meats?

Most people misunderstand 1-Tim. 4. One of the biggest problems that people have when they come to studying the Bible is, they come with a pre-conceived notion. If you come with a pre-conceived notion and you look hard enough you may find something that justifies your pre-conceived notion. And the pre-conceived notion is based upon:

1-Timothy 4:4: "For every creature of God *designated for human consumption* is good, and nothing to be refused, *if* it is received with thanksgiving." So therefore, if you pray over something in the Old Testament that says it's unclean food, if you pray over it it becomes clean. BINGO! *Not so!* They are clean or unclean by creation, not by prayer.

Verse 1: "Now, the Spirit tells *us* explicitly that in *the* latter times some shall apostatize from the faith, *and* shall follow deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.... [teachings of demons; we've

seen that] ...speaking lies in hypocrisy, their consciences having been cauterized *with a hot iron*" (vs 1-2).

You've seen this—possibly in a John Wayne movie—where someone gets wounded with a gunshot. How do they immediately heal the wound? *They get this hot iron and they cauterize the wound!* That's what it means to be seared with a hot iron.

Notice what the problem is, v 3: "Forbidding to marry... [which is a Catholic doctrine] ...and commanding to abstain from meats, **which God created to be received with thanksgiving**... [so there are certain meats **that God has created to be received with thanksgiving**.... [we're dealing with vegetarianism, having nothing to do with clean and unclean meats whatsoever] ...by the faithful, even by those who know the Truth." What is Truth?

- Your Word is Truth (John 17:17)
- All Your commandments are Truth (Psa. 119:142)
- Your Law is Truth

So, if you believe and know the Truth, and there are meats there which were "...created to be received with thanksgiving...."—where do you find that? *Lev. 11; Deut. 14 where it talks about the clean and unclean meats!*

Are there listings of things in there that are not to be received with thanksgiving? *Yes!* Are there things that God talks about that He created which you should not eat, like the swine, the buzzard, the stork, the snake, the camel, the hare and the cooney (which is a cousin to the rat)? *Yes! Those were not created to be received with thanksgiving!* There is the key! This is telling us, with the opposite thrust to it, that you can eat those things that have been created to be received with thanksgiving—the meats—for those who believe and know the Truth.

Verse 4: "For every creature of God designated for human consumption is good..." Which ones? *The ones He created to be received with thanksgiving!* Not every creature, everything, otherwise that would be a contradictory statement.

"...and nothing to be refused, *if* it is received with thanksgiving, because it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. If you are teaching these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Jesus Christ, being nourished by the words of the faith and of the good doctrines that you have closely followed" (vs 4-6). This Scripture does not say it's okay to eat unclean meats.

We're talking about regarding a day and

regarding the day for doing what? What are we talking about? What is the subject? *To eat meat or not eat meat!* Use to be years ago that you all of a sudden would go from eating meat to not eating meat to fasting, then back to something else. That's kind of like making three U-turns in the middle of the highway; it doesn't fit. So, he continues on and it has to do with eating or not eating.

Romans 14:5: "Again, on the one hand, someone may prefer one day above another day *for eating meat*; but on the other hand, another may hold every day *to be alike*...." Why? *Because he's not eating any meat, so it doesn't make any difference!*

"...Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who regards the day *in his eating* is regarding *it* to *the* Lord; and the one who does not regard the day is not regarding *it* to *the* Lord. The one who eats *meat* is eating to *the* Lord because he gives thanks to God; and the one who does not eat *meat* is abstaining to *the* Lord, and is giving thanks to God" (vs 5-6).

That's what it's talking about: the meat-eater/the vegetarian, all the way down through here. It was causing the contention. Then he goes on to give us a broader principle, which is absolutely true, and we need to really fully realize and understand.

Verse 7: "For no one among us lives to himself... [in other words, nobody lives in a vacuum] ...and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we should live unto the Lord; and if we die, we should die unto the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (vs 7-8). That is the whole key in everything that is done in this chapter.

Verse 9: "*It is* for this very purpose *that* Christ both died and rose and is living again, so that He might be Lord over both *the* dead and *the* living. Now then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.... [note sermons/booklet on *Judge Righteous Judgment*] ...because it is written, "For *as* I live," says *the* Lord, "every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then, each one of us shall give account of himself to God" (vs 9-12). Very key and important things:

- we are the Lord's
- each one shall give an account of himself to God

Verse 13: "Therefore, we should no longer judge one another, but judge this instead: Do not put an occasion of stumbling or a cause of offense

before your brother.” God is going to judge them! God is watching over them!

So in our relationships in the fellowship groups and with each other, if we can get away from all these small, picayunish little physical things that really don’t amount to a hill of beans, but cause stumbling blocks and strife and contention, are we not going to be a whole lot better? And besides, you’re going to have to give an account for the stumbling block if you cause the brethren to sin.

Let’s see what Jesus said about offenses. Just being normal, we’re going to cause some offense, somewhere.

Matthew 18:6: “But whoever shall cause one of these little ones who believe in Me to offend, it would be better for him that a millstone be hung around his neck and he be sunk in the depths of the sea.”

A lot of people need to read that verse and put the millstone around their neck and think about it. Sometimes people want to be offended, and you can’t help that. Sometimes just an off-handed comment people get offended. That makes it really difficult. We all offend one way or the other. Just to show you how difficult it is:

James 3:1: “My brethren, do not many of you become teachers, knowing that we will receive more severe judgment; because we frequently offend, every one of us....” (vs 1-2).

So, what he’s talking about here in Matt. 18:6 are intentional offenses, intentional things to cause trouble and strife. Over here in James 3, we’re talking about the unintentional things.

“...If anyone does not offend in what he says, this one *is* a perfect man *and is* able also to hold in check the whole body” (v 2).

I haven’t arrived there, yet. I’ve never met anybody who has arrived there, yet. When I do I’ll be the first one to shake his hand and pat him on the back and say, ‘You have arrived.’ With the *law of sin and death* in us and our own carnality, many times what happens? *BAM! It’s already out of our mouth before we can stop it!* Then someone comes up later and says, ‘Did you realize what you said?’ *Why, no!* So, Matt. 18 is talking about *intentional* offenses.

Matthew 18:7, Jesus says: “Woe to the world because of offenses!...” That gets back to *God will take vengeance* if there are offenses committed against us.

“...For it is necessary that offenses come,

yet, woe to that man by whom the offense comes!” (v 7). It’s ordained it’s going to happen. It’s going to take place.

Verse 8: “And if your hand or your foot causes you to offend, cut it off and cast *it* from you...” This is showing you how you need to overcome this kind of thing. I think that with us it’s about time we grow up in Christ and not have the offenses taking place; or at least keep them to a dull roar. Keep them to a minimal amount! Wouldn’t that be nice? *Yes!*

“...for it is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed than to have two hands or two feet *and* be cast into the eternal fire” (v 8).

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Verse 9: “And if your eye causes you to offend, pluck it out and throw *it* away...” In other words, if you have a lust of the eye that you need to overcome, you work at it as if you’re going to have your eye plucked out. The better thing to do is ask God to take away the lust from you; help you to overcome it; find the cause of the lust and get rid of the cause and then you won’t have to have your eye plucked out.

“...for it is better for you to enter into life one-eyed than to have two eyes *and* be cast into the fire of Gehenna. Take heed *that* you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that their angels in heaven continually look upon the face of My Father, Who is in heaven. For the Son of man has come to save those who are lost” (vs 9-11). Then He goes on to explain about the 99.

Romans 14:13: “Therefore, we should no longer judge one another...” That means to judge in the physical, small things to criticize and cause problems.

“...but judge this instead: Do not put an occasion of stumbling or a cause of offense before your brother. I understand and am persuaded by *the* Lord Jesus that nothing *is* common of itself, except to the one who regards anything to be common—to that one *it is* common. But if, because of meat, your brother is offended, you are no longer walking according to love. With your meat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. Therefore, do not let your good be evil spoken of. For the Kingdom of God is not a *matter of* eating and drinking; rather, *it is* righteousness and peace and joy in *the* Holy Spirit” (vs 13-17).

Here’s what we need to have more of, talking about joy and peace and love; that’s what we need to have, brethren:

Psalm 16:8: “I have set the LORD always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore, My heart is glad, and My glory rejoices; My flesh also shall rest in safety, for You will not abandon My soul to the grave; neither will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (vs 8-10)—a prophecy of Christ being resurrected from the grave.

Verse 11: “You will make known to Me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy. At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Let’s see if we can have some of that in the Churches. Let’s see if we can have some of that in the fellowship groups.

Psalm 5:11: “But let all who put their trust in You rejoice; let them always shout for joy because You defend them. And let those who love Your name exult in You, for You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield” (vs 11-12). This is what God wants the churches to be. It’s very important that we understand that.

Romans 14:18: “Because the one who serves Christ in these things *is* well pleasing to God and acceptable among men. So then, we should **pursue the things of peace**... [There it is! Work at it! Not strife and upset!] ... and the things that edify one another” (vs 18-19).

To build each other up! Not tear each other down. Brethren, if in the Church we tear each other down, who’s going to build us up? I mean, think of it! That’s why we have the Church; so let’s build each other up, let’s edify one another.

Verse 20: “Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of meat...” That means in the individual.

Let’s add one more thing; let’s finalize this about offending the brother and so forth, causing problem in the congregation.

Proverbs 6:16: “These six *things* the LORD hates; yea, seven *are* an abomination unto Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood” (vs 16-17). You might say this could fall into the realm of people using and manipulating people for your own desire, in this case actually leading to killing them. There are people who just have to manipulate other people. They have to ‘push their buttons’ so to speak, and God doesn’t want that. Don’t do that.

Verse 18: “A heart that plots wicked imaginations, feet that are swift in running to evil...

[especially couple that with a big tongue to carry bad news] ...a false witness *who* speaks lies, and he who sows discord among brethren” (vs 18-19). That’s what happens when you have the strife over these physical things.

Romans 14:20: “...All things *that are lawful* *are* indeed pure; but *it is* an evil thing for someone to cause an occasion of stumbling through his eating. *It is* better not to eat meat, or drink wine ...” (vs 20-21).

It was more than just vegetarianism; it was wine, too. There are some people who cannot drink, and should not drink. The only little bit of wine they should take is at Passover. And the only exception would be if someone has vowed a vow to God that he will never ever touch a drop of wine again in his life, then he could use grape juice—no other exception!

Only if they’ve vowed that vow, like the Recabites, the ones who their father said not to drink any wine and they followed their father and God used that as an example. He told Jeremiah, ‘You go out and get the children Rechab and bring them here and set the wine before them, and tell them to drink. So, he did. He brought them in and he said, ‘Drink!’ and they said, ‘No, we won’t drink, our father says we are not to drink any wine.’ Jeremiah said, ‘Drink!’ and they said, ‘No, we won’t drink.’ God said, ‘Jeremiah, you tell the children of Israel this: Look at the children of Rechab, and I give them a blessing through all their generations because they obeyed their father and you won’t even obey My voice to do what I want you to do.’ That’s was really quite an example.

We have the drinking and non-drinking. We have the same thing today. Drunkenness on one hand is wrong. If a person wants to be totally abstaining, that’s fine. But the one who drinks should not look down on the one who doesn’t. And the one who doesn’t should not look down on the one who does. All you’re doing is *setting your standard to impose upon someone else!* That’s where the difficulty comes in. Can everyone wear a size 5, triple E shoe? *or* a size 21, double A shoe? **NO!** The shoe that fits the foot, is it right for the person that it fits—whether big foot, little foot, wide foot, narrow foot, whatever

We cannot condemn people. Besides, what did they have to do with their feet? *They just grew!* You can’t say feet are a sin! It’s the same thing, if we look at some of these things in this way, then we can get a better perspective. Let’s quit beating each other up!

Verse 21: “*It is* better not to eat meat, or drink wine, or *anything else...* [that’s a broad, inclusive statement] ...by which your brother stumbles, or is offended, or is made weak. Do you have faith?...” (vs 21-22). Every one of them says, ‘I have faith. I’m doing what’s right. I have conscience before God.’

“...Have *it* to yourself before God...” (v 22)—and quit judging your brother and shut your mouth; that’s what he’s saying.

“...Blessed *is* the one who does not condemn himself in what he approves” (v 22). If you pretend that you have conscience toward something and you really don’t believe it, you’re going to condemn yourself.

Verse 23: “But the one who doubts is condemned if he eats because *his eating is* not of faith; for everything that *is* not of faith is sin.” What does this mean?

- you can apply this spiritually
- you can apply this carnally
- you can be self-righteous

and say, ‘If you don’t do what I’m doing, then you don’t have faith.’ ***That’s not true!*** Or You can have conscience of something which is really not of faith. It’s not conscience of anything toward God, but just your own picky, self-righteous stupidity.

Hebrews 3:19: “So we see that they were not able to enter in **because of unbelief.**” *Lack of faith!* This is where faith begins. Do not put faith in the physical little things that you prefer. Those physical little things that you prefer may not suit other people. It’s neither sin nor righteousness. It’s neither of faith nor of conscious.

Hebrews 11:6: “Now, without faith *it is* impossible to please *God*. For it is mandatory *for* the one who comes to God to believe that He exists...” It’s obligatory that you believe that God exists. What happens when your faith is based upon beginning with that?

- you believe that God exists
- you believe that His Word is true
- you believe His Word is right
- you believe that Christ is the Son of God

That changes the whole complexion of everything. *No question about it!* Then comes out of the realm of your own personal belief, your own self-righteous faith. There are people who have self-righteous faith. It will carry them to a certain degree, but it’s not the faith of God.

“...For it is mandatory *for* the one who

comes to God to believe that He exists, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who **diligently** seek Him” (v 6)—not just haphazardly, not just when you’re in trouble, not just when things are going tough for you—but “...diligently seek Him.”

Hebrews 10:38: “Now *it is written*, ‘**The just shall live by faith...**’” That’s how you are to live; not by sight, not by the physical things—you have to take care of those, but you don’t put your trust in them—***you live by faith!***

“...but if anyone draws back...” (v 38) from that faith and gets involved in the physical things. That’s what was happening and why he wrote the book of Hebrews, because they were drawing back from Christ and going back to the animal sacrifices. They were going back from the things of faith into the things that had no faith. They could see it, so they could rely on it. Whereas, faith you can’t see. ***Faith comes from God! Faith is a gift of God!*** You have to live by that.

“...if anyone draws back, My soul does not delight in him.’ But we are not of *those* who draw back unto destruction; rather, we are of faith unto *the saving of the soul*” (vs 38-39).

Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is *the substance...* [Greek: ‘hypostasis’—*the spiritual substance* and it comes from God] ...of *things* hoped for, *and the conviction* of things not seen.”

This is the kind of faith that God wants us to have, that spiritual faith! Beginning by believing in Him, so that we won’t put faith in the physical little things that we do to come along and then cause other people to offend, and it is neither here nor there! Very important.

If we can grasp this, brethren; if we can really understand this, we are going to go a long way in overcoming all the problems and difficulties that have been created in the various Churches of God, because they went back to the physical things and were using that as a means of judging. That’s what they did to give up on the Sabbath. That’s what they did to give up on the Holy Days. They went from the faith of God to the faith in the physical things that they could do. Now they’re doing it, and ***they’ve lost the faith of Jesus Christ!*** When you substitute that faith and put faith in the physical things in preference to the true faith of God, then you are going to go backward.

Romans 15:1—this is quite an admonition here: “Now, we who *are* strong *in the faith* are obligated to support the ones who are weak, and not to please ourselves. Accordingly, let each one of us

please *his* neighbor for good, unto edification; for even Christ did not please Himself; rather, as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who are reproaching You have fallen upon Me.’ For all the things that were written before were written for our instruction, so that through patient endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (vs 1-4).

Psa. 69—where it talks about the reproach. This Psalm has a lot to do with the real detailed and emotional suffering that Christ went through in enduring the things that He did.

Psalm 69:7: “Because for Your sake I have borne reproach, shame has covered my face. I have become a stranger to My brothers and an alien to My mother’s children, for the zeal of Your house has eaten Me up, and the reproaches of those who reproached You have fallen upon Me.... [there’s a direct quote of the Scripture] ...When I wept in my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. I also made sackcloth my clothing, and I became a proverb to them” (vs 7-11).

You will see as you go through some of these Psalms is some of the words apply to David—like with the sackcloth—because Jesus never wore sackcloth. But then it comes right back and the next phrase applies directly to Christ.

Verse 12: “Those who sit in the gate speak about me; and I was the song of the drunkards.... [all of the *spiritual* drunkards] ...But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, in an acceptable time; O God, in the abundance of Your mercy answer me, in the Truth of Your salvation. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those who hate me and out of the deep waters” (vs 11-14)—also part of the very prayer that Jesus was praying just before He was arrested and led off to be crucified.

Verse 15: “Do not let the flood of waters overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut its mouth upon me. Answer me, O LORD, for Your steadfast love is good; turn unto me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. And hide not Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; answer me speedily. Draw near unto my soul and redeem it; deliver me because of my enemies. You have known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonor; my enemies are all before You. Reproach has broken my heart ...” (vs 15-20). It was so heavy that Christ did experience being brokenhearted; that’s why He can heal the brokenhearted.

“...and I am full of heaviness; and I looked

for sympathy, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They also gave Me gall for My food; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink. Let their table become a snare before them; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap” (vs 20-22).

And that’s exactly what happened to the whole religious system of Judaism. By 70_{A.D.} it was completely destroyed.

Verse 23: “Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; and make their loins shake without ceasing. Pour out Your indignation upon them, and let the fierceness of anger take hold of them. Let their encampment be desolate; let none dwell in their tents, for they persecute him whom You have stricken, and they recount the grief of those You have wounded. Add iniquity unto their iniquity, and let them not come into Your righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be written with the righteous” (vs 20-28).

This is really quite a prayer, and Jesus warned that some of them would suffer the unpardonable sin. Notice how these words fit in with what Christ did and said:

Verse 29: “But I am poor and sorrowful; let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high. I will praise the name of God with a song and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD better than a bullock that has horns and hoofs” (vs 29-31). In other words, His perfect sacrifice—that’s what it’s talking about here.

Verse 32: “The humble shall see and be glad; and your heart shall live, you who seek God, for the LORD hears the needy and does not despise His prisoners. Let the heavens and earth praise Him, the seas, and everything that moves in them, for God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah; so that they may dwell there and possess it. And the seed of His servants shall inherit it, and those who love His name shall dwell in it” (vs 32-36).

That’s getting into *heavenly Jerusalem and the Sion above*. All of that is there contained in this Psalm. Note these Scriptural references:

- Isa. 53—where He took upon all our sorrows
- Psa. 89:50—this has to do with reproaches
- Psa. 39:8
- Psa. 74:18

This is the thing that is important: If we seek to please God and if we seek to serve the brethren, and not serve ourselves. That’s the whole problem

that we have in the Church today, and the reason why it's all being disintegrated and torn apart; everyone has a secret little agenda: everyone has a little doctrine, everyone has something that they want to do to force upon someone else, rather than seeking God and letting God's Spirit lead them in what they need to do. What is happening, in their vanity they're all serving themselves, rather than serving God and serving the brethren. That's why this is written.

We have almost the same thing here, Galatians 6:1: "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in some offense, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ" (vs 1-2). That's almost the same thing here in Rom. 15 that we are not to please ourselves.

We're to do this so that we might have hope. (refer back to Rom. 4—the hope of God; showing in detail about the hope of God.)

Romans 15:5: "Now, may the God of patience and encouragement... [God is the One Who comforts us; and the word *encouragement* here could also be comfort] ...grant you to be likeminded toward one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord and one mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vs 5-6).

This is what's important. If we're going to grow and have the mind of Christ (Philip. 2)—and that's the whole thing we need to do, then we will be of one accord and of one mind. The problem with all the splits and divisions and schisms that people have, they try and be of one mind socially and one mind on some basic things that they may agree on, and then they agree to disagree on the other things that they don't agree on. That's not what God wants us to do. He wants us to all be of one mind.

2-Corinthians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and *the* God of all comfort." So, comfort and encouragement are synonymous words in the Greek. If you are comforted, you are *encouraged!* So, He's the God of all comfort, *spiritual comfort*, not necessarily physical comfort, because we may suffer things. But even in that, in our pain, God can still comfort us *spiritually*.

Verse 4: "Who comforts us in all our tribulation... [all the trials, all the afflictions, all the difficulties that we go through] ...in order that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trial, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (v 4).

This shows the experience. That's why we go through things for the experience that later on we can help someone else who's going through something else exactly the same. Sometimes in the trials that we go through, we wonder why we are going through them. Sometimes that's the very reason we're going through them; so we can learn from the things that we suffer; just like Christ learned from the things that He suffered.

Verse 5: "For to the degree *that* the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. And if we are in distress, *it is* for your comfort and salvation, which is being worked out by *your* enduring the same sufferings that we also suffer; *and* if we are comforted, *it is* for your comfort and salvation (and our hope *is* steadfast for you); knowing that as you are partners in the sufferings, *you are* also *partners* in the comfort" (vs 5-7). That's the whole purpose of it, that we might have that, and that we might have the hope and be like-minded.

Phil. 2—this is very important and I don't think we can cover this one enough, but we need to have it so that we understand. This is the whole goal and purpose, brethren, of what where we're going, what we're doing, what God wants us to become. That's why in the sermon series: *Why God Hates Religion*, 'religion' then becomes a structured thing that men devise. Yes, they use the Bible; yes, they use the words of God; but they do not encourage the kind of relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ that we need to have to be converted and grow, change and overcome. Then 'religion' gets in the way! Then 'religion' becomes very judgmental! We do have to have judgmental things in time. We have to judge righteous judgment, that is true! *No question about it!* But we should not be judgmental against each other. We should *judge righteous judgment*. There is a distinct difference between the two.

Notice again how Paul covers the same thing. In almost all of his epistles somewhere, Paul has something written very similar to this:

Philippians 2:1: "Now then, if *there be* any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of *the* Spirit, if any *deep* inner affections and compassions, fulfill my joy that you be of the same mind, having the same love, being joined together in soul, minding the one thing.... [attaining to the Kingdom of God] ...*Let* nothing *be* done through contention or vainglory... [all based upon vanity and human reasoning and things like this] ...but in humility, each esteeming the others above himself" (vs 1-3).

That's hard to do; but you can do it this way: If you know that God has called the individual. Once in a while you'll run into a tare or two. Those are not the children of God; those are the children of the devil. They're generally the 'religious' ones that cause problems. But, we're talking here about the brethren. If you truly understand:

- that God the Father Himself has called the individual
- that Jesus Christ has died for the individual
- that God the Father has begotten them with the Holy Spirit

—then there needs to be that kind of love and honor given to them.

If we do happen to run into some tares, then we can handle them in a different way. Right now God is eliminating the tares. The only problem is, it seems like most of the Church are tares, when you look at the greater Church overall. That's why the sermon *Teacher, Teacher, Who's Got a Teacher?*

Verse 4: "Let each one look not *only* after his own things..." That doesn't mean *don't neglect it*. In other words, don't be so self-centered that the only thing you see is just what you need. This means to look and see what the other person needs.

"...but *let* each one also *consider* the things of others. **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus**" (vs 4-5). There is the highest pinnacle of conversion; that's what it needs to be!

If you want to really understand about the mind of Christ, then go back and study through the Gospels. You are really going to be surprised how much is there. When you go through word for word you really pick up an awful lot. You will see when you study through the Gospels, that 95% of the Gospels are direct quotes from Jesus Christ, then you will be able to have the mind of Christ. You'll have the:

- Spirit of Christ
- the words of Christ
- the quotes of Christ

—and that becomes a part of you, and that's the way that you think. This does not make you a 'religious' person. This makes you a son or daughter of God! That's what needs to be.

Now, look what He was able to give up, and we're going to see what our response needs to be in return, v 6: "Who, although He existed in *the* form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God." He was sharing the same existence.

John 1:1: "In *the* beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in *the* beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and not even one *thing* that was created came into being without Him" (vs 1-3).

Philippians 2:7: "But emptied Himself..." — and became that pinprick of light so that He could be born into this world as a human being. Currently, they're (false doctrines) cycling through again:

- Jesus was a created being
- Jesus was not God before He became a human being

{note sermon series: *Who is Jesus?*}

It's been reported to me that in the *Journal* there are articles in there by men who do not believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Let me just state it very clearly: ***If you do not believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, you are an antichrist!***—period! That's just the way it is. That's all a part of the mind of Christ. We need to be able to say what they really are; that's what John says: ***If you don't believe that Jesus came in the flesh, you are an antichrist!*** That's currently going on and some brethren are being blown away by this.

Do you see the tactics of Satan the devil? ***Dumb down, dumb down!*** Get you comfortable, get you soft, everything's just fine and everything is just going along and then BAM! After that comes, then all the confusion. 'Have you heard... Were you ever told... Did you ever study... Did you ever read...' These things get cycled through again. All of this confusion comes from Satan the devil. God is not the author of confusion. The only way we become like-minded and one-minded and have the mind of Christ is to really study His Word and to *know it!* Not just read it; *study it!* Not to just be familiar with it; *know it!* Have it written in your mind and inscribed upon your heart; that's where God wants it!

Verse 7: "But emptied Himself... [willing to give up everything] ...*and* was made in *the* likeness of men, *and* took the form of a servant... [slave—Greek: 'doulos'—bought and sold slave] ...and being found in *the* manner of man... [having the *law of sin and death* within Him] ...He humbled Himself, *and* became obedient unto death, even *the* death of *the* cross" (vs 7-8).

- Have any of us given up anything compared to what Christ did?
- Have any of us been humbled to anything like Christ was humbled?
- Can you imagine the Creator God coming in the flesh,

- ✓ being rejected by His creation
- ✓ being spit upon
- ✓ being beat upon
- ✓ being crucified
- ✓ being rejected by His own creation

—and yet, he did it in an act of love to save them! I mean, think on that! None of us have done anything! That's why we need to have the mind of Christ so that we comprehend it.

*God is not necessarily going to require something like that of us, but that's why **we have to have the mind of Christ!***

Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*
(except where noted)

Scriptural References:

- 1) Romans 14:14-20, 15, 20-21, 5-6, 1-2
- 2) 1 Corinthians 8:1-13
- 3) 1 Corinthians 10:16-22
- 4) Romans 14:2-4
- 5) 1 Timothy 4:4, 1-6
- 6) Romans 14:5-13
- 7) Matthew 18:6
- 8) James 3:1-2
- 9) Matthew 18:7-11
- 10) Romans 14:13-17
- 11) Psalm 16:8-11
- 12) Psalm 5:11-12
- 13) Romans 14:18-20
- 14) Proverbs 6:16-19
- 15) Romans 14:20-23
- 16) Hebrews 3:19
- 17) Hebrews 11:6
- 18) Hebrews 10:38-39
- 19) Hebrews 11:1
- 20) Romans 15:1-4
- 21) Psalm 69:7-36
- 22) Galatians 6:1-2
- 23) Romans 15:5-6
- 24) 2 Corinthians 1:1-7
- 25) Philippians 2:1-6
- 26) John 1:1-3
- 27) Philippians 2:7-8

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Galatians 5:6
- Romans 5
- John 17:17
- Psalm 119:142
- Leviticus 11
- Deuteronomy 14
- Isaiah 53
- Psalm 89:50; 39:9; 74:18

- Romans 4

Also referenced:

Sermon Series:

- *Judge Righteous Judgment (booklet included)*
- *Why God Hates Religion*
- *Who is Jesus?*

Sermon: *Teacher, Teacher, Who's Got a Teacher?*

Book: *Guinness Book of World Records*

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