

ROMANS 12:1-16:27 | LIFE TODAY

Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 46

ROMANS 12:1-15:14 | JEWISH LIFE BEYOND THE TEMPLE

Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 47

ROMANS 14:10-13 | PREPARING FOR JUDGMENT

*Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 49**Verses 14-17 - see session 38*

VERSE 18 - GREEN

This path to being "acceptable to God" is clearly not in line with the dispensation of grace in which such acceptance is "not of works" (Eph. 2:9). However, the audience was "preparing for the kingdom in the age of grace" (as per the title of this segment), and was living at a time of the offer of the kingdom to Israel, unlike today. Therefore, it was incumbent upon them to prepare for the kingdom should the nation repent and receive the offer at hand.

The path was not only for acceptance by God, but to be "approved of men." In Paul's first-century Roman society, the honor of liberty in regard to the religious observance of holy days or foods must have been the societal norm, bringing the approval of men. The Roman society was built on "virtus" (virtue), and placed significant emphasis on social norms, roles, and hierarchies. Living "virtuously" in regard to social norms would bring a healthy approval of men.

I have this verse in green, signifying that a believer in our dispensation **can** apply this to life without doctrinal issues, but that making a doctrine out of such verses would be problematic.

VERSE 19 - GREEN

In regard to the issues of holy days and dietary laws, believing Roman Jews were going to be under tremendous stress. As believers, they were free from the law. As inheritors of the Kingdom promises, they were obligated to their nation. Having already explained that the Kingdom of God was one of peace (v. 17), Paul encourages them to live at peace in these things, not making these issues a matter of fellowship but of personal conviction. Perhaps Paul has the Galatian experience in mind, thinking that had the Judaizers taken this approach, the issues in Galatia would not have risen to the level of crisis.

VERSE 20 - GREEN

Continuing with the topic of dietary considerations, Paul emphasizes that freedom in diet should not be used to undermine or jeopardize the "work of God." However, he does not explicitly specify which specific "work" he is referring to, whether it be God's kingdom work, salvation work, or some other form of work. It appears that this principle can be applied broadly to any work of God. After all, what work could possibly be worth compromising for the sake of dietary freedom?

Even here, however, we can observe a dispensational change taking place. In considering passages like Leviticus 11:2-8, which outlines the dietary laws of the Jews, we may question how Paul could be implying a relaxation of these laws. He would not have done so if it were not for the revelation of the mystery that granted freedom from the law. It is important to note that this freedom should not be used to cause offense, as emphasized in verse 20.

Paul says "All things indeed *are* pure." This is something that could not have been said in the context of the law, in which many things were not pure. Now, under God's revelation, the matter of "kosher" is much more the **manner** than the **meat**. 1 Corinthians 8:9, also given to a Jewish audience and also in regard to dietary matters, similarly instructs the recipients to "**take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.**"

VERSE 21 - GREEN

When it comes to the "work of God" (v. 20), the right course of action is to refrain from being a stumbling block. This theme is prominent in Paul's writings, appearing in passages such as 1 Corinthians 8:9-13, 1 Corinthians 10:23-33, 2 Corinthians 6:3, and Galatians 5:13-15, as well as in numerous other instances where the broader idea of avoiding offense is discussed.

What does it look like to make someone stumble, or be offended, or to be made weak? While not defined in the text, it would certainly be related to being a negative distraction to their faith. The Greek word σκανδαλίζω [scandalizo], from which we get the English *scandal*, can refer to that which triggers a moral or spiritual downfall.

For specifics, Paul speaks of eating meat and "**drinking wine.**" In the context of the first-century Roman world, wine was a staple of daily life and commonly consumed at meals and various social gatherings. However, the issue wasn't necessarily the wine itself but rather the potential for causing a brother to stumble by partaking in something that might be a point of personal or cultural sensitivity for them. The Bible universally condemns drunkenness and excess with wine, but the use of wine is otherwise not typically viewed as a stumbling block. For the Jewish population living in a pagan Gentile culture, this could have been related to wine offered to idols, though this is not explicitly stated. In Rome, *libations* (wine offered to idols) was common, and, while not stated in the text, this could have been the local context which Paul is addressing.

This is a verse which was directly applied to Jewish believers in Rome and had a specific context involving potential offense to a weaker Jewish brother. It is a good principle in a more general way, but pressed too far would go beyond Pauline teaching. For example, in 1 Timothy 4:1-5, Paul warns about those who will forbid marriage and certain foods. He calls these teachings of demons and says that all food is to be received with thanksgiving. Why doesn't Paul instruct Timothy to avoid marriage or the eating of certain meats? Probably because those teaching this doctrine were not weak brothers to be encouraged but strong deceivers to be condemned.

In Christian history, a concept often referred to is 'adiaphora,' a Greek word adopted into English.. The Greek term literally means "not thoroughly carried." In theological circles it is often defined as matters which are amoral, neither good nor bad, and refers to issues that do not require a strong stance and can be seen as "take it or leave it" matters. These are things that are not inherently immoral, and in dealing with them, one should demonstrate grace and exercise caution to avoid hindering the faith of a weaker brother.

VERSE 22 - GREEN

Paul brings the discussion down to this: **your faith is a matter between you and God**, and informed by Scripture. In carrying out your faith, don't make it a matter that causes others to stumble.

VERSE 23 - GREEN

To unravel the complexity of verse 23, one must first consider the word "condemneeth" in verse 22. The original Greek text employs the term κρίνω (krino), signifying the act of passing judgment. In this context, Paul's message is unequivocal: there is a sense of happiness or well-being in not inviting judgment upon oneself through one's own actions.

Shifting to verse 23, Paul introduces the term διακρίνω (diakrino), an extension of "krino" with the prefix "dia." While the term's etymological root suggests a thorough or detailed judgment, its functional meaning in the New Testament more often leans toward doubt or internal division. This transition in meaning is vital to grasp; it highlights that the person who is "doubting" is in a state of internal conflict, always second-guessing their actions.

Subsequently, Paul employs the term κατακρίνω (katakrino), intensifying the root "krino" with the prefix "kata." This term is translated as "damned" in the King James Version, a word that, in its historical context, signifies the ultimate

form of judgment rather than eternal damnation as commonly understood today. The usage of such a severe term underscores the gravity Paul assigns to the issue: if one continually doubts the morality of their actions, they are subject to the harshest form of self-judgment.

Culminating his argument, Paul states that acting "not of faith" is what ultimately constitutes sin. This declaration serves as the climax of his discourse and begs deeper theological reflection. What Paul seems to be advocating is ethical and spiritual integrity. In the complex terrain of moral choices, the linchpin is faith; actions that stem from a lack of faith are fundamentally misaligned with the will of God.