

# Romans 14

## Verse by Verse



Previously in Romans

# Previously in Romans

- In **Romans 1 – 11**, Paul described **right belief**.
- This was a crash course in Christian theology.
- The **key verse** in this section – and to all of **Romans** – was **Romans 1:16**.

## Previously in Romans

- **Romans 1:16** (ESV)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

## Previously in Romans

- Then, in **Romans 12 – 16**, Paul describes **right conduct**.
- Right belief needs to lead to right behavior.
- The opening verses of **Romans 12** are key to the rest of the letter.

# Previously in Romans

- **Romans 12:1-2** (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

# Romans 14 Introduction

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- This later part of **Romans** is meant to teach Christians to **think and act like Christians**.
- One of Paul's primary goals is to ensure **unity among believers** from various backgrounds.
- Today's chapter deals with this point.

# Romans 14 Introduction

- First a story:
- Training for a missions task.
- The lesson learned:
- Unity impacts everything in ministry.

## Romans 14 Introduction

- One way that unity takes center stage in our Christian life is **when the Bible is not clear** on a topic.
- It turns out that when the Bible doesn't give us clear teaching, it still gives us clear teaching.
- We need to deal **respectfully** with those who differ.

# Romans 14 Introduction

- Big fancy word alert: *Adiaphoron* (pl. *Adiaphora*)
- From *Merriam-Webster*:
  1. In *Stoic philosophy*: a matter having no moral merit or demerit.
  2. In *Christianity*: a ceremonial or ritual observance that is held to be an affair of the individual conscience because it is neither forbidden nor enjoined by the Scriptures.

# Romans 14    Key Verse

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- Romans 14:19 (ESV)

So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

# Romans 14 Outline

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1. Do Not Pass Judgment 14:1-12
2. Do Not Cause to Stumble 14:13-23

# 1. Do Not Pass Judgment 14:1-12

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- The **weak** were probably **Jewish believers** who were accustomed to keeping specific rules and days.
- **Gentile believers** had no such traditions, so were less likely to bring them into the church.

# 1. Do Not Pass Judgment 14:1-12

- In **Daniel**, the Jewish young men refused to eat the food of the king that was offered to them.
- In **Galatians**, Paul corrects Gentiles who adopt Jewish customs, but not Jewish believers who keep them.

# 1. Do Not Pass Judgment 14:1-12

- People in our churches today **still fit these categories.**
- One group might be those who have gone to churches with many rules or traditions.
- **They find it hard to change** their more rigid practices.
- The other group has less exposure to rules.
- **They feel more freedom** in their Christianity.

# 1. Do Not Pass Judgment 14:1-12

- Some classic examples might be:
  - How one dresses for church.
  - Whether or not a Christian can drink alcohol.
  - What kind of movies a Christian can watch.
- The Bible is not perfectly clear on these things leaving room for personal convictions.

# 1. Do Not Pass Judgment 14:1-12

- More recent examples would be:
  - Whether or not to wear a mask in public places.
  - Whether or not to get a covid vaccine.
- It's fine to have differing opinions in these areas.

# 1. Do Not Pass Judgment 14:1-12

*It's fine to have personal convictions, but if the Bible hasn't condemned a thing, we should give space to believers whose convictions differ on matters that Scripture does not address plainly.*

*– Tony Evans,  
Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship*



# 1. Do Not Pass Judgment 14:1-12

- When the Bible is not clear we should do **two things**.

**1.** We should each be convinced of our convictions.

- **Romans 14:5b** (ESV)

**Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.**

- Think the matter through so that **you know why** you do what you do.

# 1. Do Not Pass Judgment 14:1-12

- When the Bible is not clear we should do **two things**.
- 2. We should treat those who think differently from us with the respect they deserve as God's people.

- **Romans 14:3** (ESV)

Let not the one who eats [or whatever] despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

# 1. Do Not Pass Judgment 14:1-12

- We need to make moral assessments when they arise.
- At the same time, we need to leave room for *adiaphora* – the non-essentials of the faith.
- Ultimately God will judge us all.
- This should be a sobering, corrective thought.

## 2. Do Not Cause to Stumble 14:13-23

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- The first passage was more directed at **the weak**.
- They would be more likely to be judgmental against those who were not as careful in their behavior.

## 2. Do Not Cause to Stumble 14:13-23

- This passage is more directed toward **the strong**.
- Their temptation would be to act in inconsiderate ways around the weaker believers.

## 2. Do Not Cause to Stumble 14:13-23

*We think of others all the time, but our first question is not, “What faults can I find in their lives?” Instead, it is, “How will my actions affect them?” Yes, you are free to enjoy what God gives you the freedom to enjoy. But don’t use that freedom to hurt others. Don’t flaunt it.*

*– Tony Evans,  
Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship*



## 2. Do Not Cause to Stumble 14:13-23

- 14:15, 20 Paul goes so far as to use the word “destroy” in this context.
- Right theology, when held with a wrong attitude, can be a powerful force for division in the church.
- Right beliefs are essential, but they are not enough.

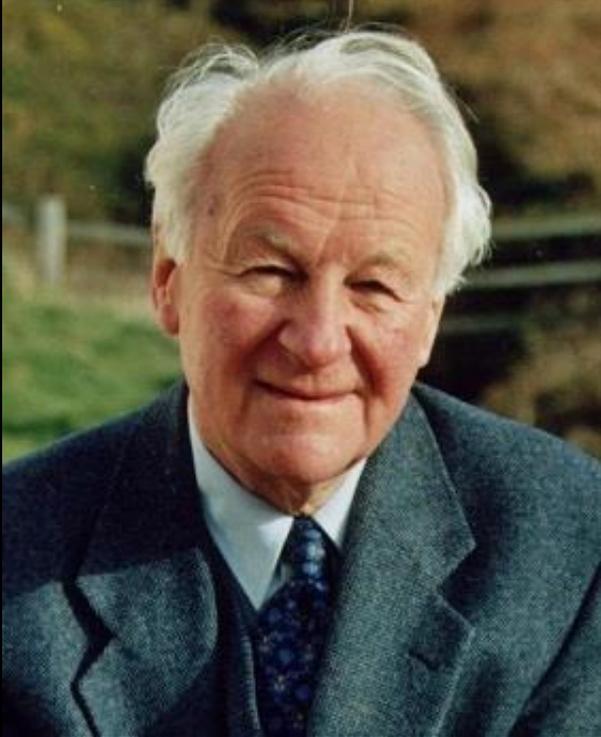
## 2. Do Not Cause to Stumble 14:13-23

- Our key verse provides us with a solution.
- **Romans 14:19** (ESV)

So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

- Again, when the Bible doesn't give us clear teaching, it still gives us clear teaching.
- See the above verse.

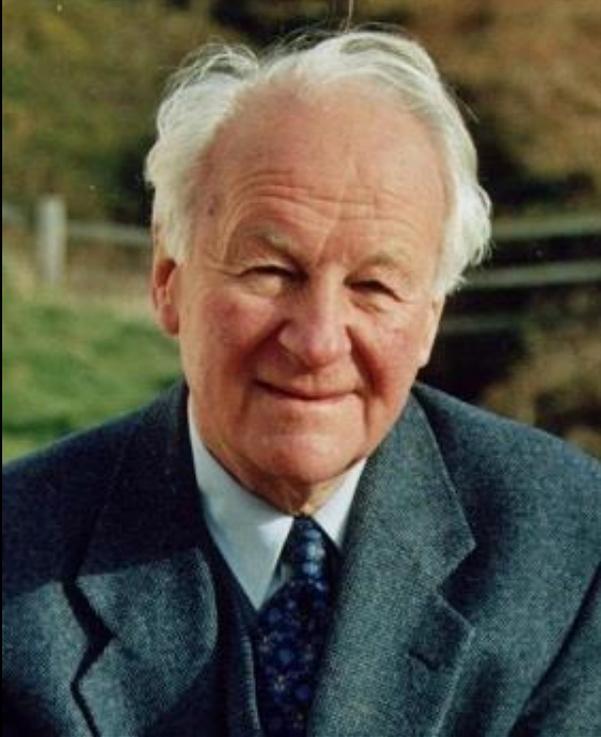
## 2. Do Not Cause to Stumble 14:13-23



*In fundamentals, then, faith is primary, and we may not appeal to love as an excuse to deny essential faith. In non-fundamentals, however, love is primary, and we may not appeal to zeal for the faith as an excuse for failures in love ...*

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),  
All Souls Church, London*

## 2. Do Not Cause to Stumble 14:13-23



*... Faith instructs our own conscience;  
love respects the conscience of others.  
Faith gives liberty; love limits its  
exercise.*

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),  
All Souls Church, London*

## 2. Do Not Cause to Stumble 14:13-23

- When our motivation is right, this can also become one of our guiding verses.
- **Romans 14:21** (ESV)

It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

# Romans 14    What We Just Read

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1. Do Not Pass Judgment      14:1-12
2. Do Not Cause to Stumble    14:13-23

# Romans 14    Key Verse

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- Romans 14:19 (ESV)

So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

# Romans 14    Key Points

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- Our Big Fancy Word: **Adiaphoron** (pl. **Adiaphora**)
- From **Merriam-Webster**:
  1. In ***Stoic philosophy***: a matter having no moral merit or demerit.
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# Romans 14 Key Points

## Some Big Lessons:

1. Not everything related to our faith needs to be a big deal. Remember that, please.
2. These are the *adiaphora* – matters of indifference.
3. Things that are not a big deal can become a big deal if they lead to disunity in the church.

# Romans 14 Key Points

## On Not Passing Judgment:

1. Make sure you are convinced of your own convictions and feel free to live by them.
2. Try to understand the point of view of people who differ from you in their convictions.
3. When the Bible doesn't give us clear teaching, it still gives us clear teaching – strive for unity.

# Romans 14 Key Points

## On Not Causing to Stumble

1. When we deal with believers whose convictions are stricter than ours, deal with them respectfully.
2. Remember that our freedoms, if we are not careful, can damage the faith of the weaker brother.
3. “Faith gives liberty; love limits its exercise.” – Stott

# Romans 14    Key Points

- A final verse from Paul.

## Galatians 5:13 (ESV)

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

# Romans 14    A Prayer

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- Dear Father in heaven,
- We thank you for all the places where the Bible is clear on what we should believe and how we should conduct ourselves – especially among other Christians.
- We thank you also for all the areas in which you give us freedom to do what we want or to develop our own convictions.

# Romans 14    A Prayer

- Help us to see the difference between the things you are clear about and the areas that really are up to us to make our own decisions.
- Give us the love and grace we need to not judge others and, at the same time, not become a stumbling block or hindrance to another person's faith.
- In Christ,
- Amen

# Romans 14      References

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