



Portion:

Title:

SCRIPTURES

- Romans 14:1-23
- I Timothy 4:1-5
- Matthew 22:29
- Colossians 3:23-24
- I Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33

IDENTITY POLITICS: BE FULLY CONVINCED

- One Lord
- One Love
- Bonus: Serving Leader or Selfish Lord

SEED:

“Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.” Romans 14:4 NKJV

“For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For **if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord.** Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.” Romans 14:7-8 NKJV

“So then **each of us shall give account of himself to God.** Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather **resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.**” Romans 14:12-13 NKJV

FRUIT:

“...Let each **be fully convinced** in his own mind.” Romans 14:5 NKJV

“Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. **Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.**” Romans 14:22 NKJV

NARRATIVE FOR TODAY’S SCRIPTURES: ROMANS

The Church leadership that emerged because of Roman **syncretism** with the Christian faith in the fourth century was staunchly antisemitic. Subsequently, the theology that formed from this Roman **inculturation** with Christianity, and its **inculcation** of Roman religious beliefs, has since dominated Church doctrine. It has caused this particular passage in Romans to be used as an apologetic to prove that it is wrong or legalistic to use Old Testament Scriptures (God’s Laws) to regulate the consumption of foods (to define what is fit to eat or kosher), and to mandate the celebration Biblical Feasts as God’s holidays. This new Roman version of Christianity teaches that these have been nullified in Christ. You’ve likely learned that those who still do so, or think they should, are those to whom Paul is referring as “weak in the faith.”

Syncretism is the practice of combining different beliefs and various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merging or

assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths.

Inculturation: the gradual acquisition of the characteristics and norms of a culture or group by a person, another culture, etc.; the adaptation of Christian liturgy to a non-Christian cultural background.

Inculcation: the instilling of knowledge or values in someone, usually by repetition or persistent instruction. To inculcate is to instill or impress an attitude, idea, or habit on someone.

The early Church was filled with converts from pagan belief systems. They came into Christianity knowing nothing about its roots in the Hebrew faith, and consequently nothing about the Scriptures. This was not so with the Jews. They had a distinct advantage having been raised with the “oracles of God.” (Romans 3:1-2). And yet, as you also probably experienced in your own personal conversion, when you are impacted by an encounter with the Holy Spirit, you are imparted a desire to love and please the Lord. This desire, however, does not come with any actual knowledge base of what that should look like. There in Rome, where there were many believers who were once Gentiles, there was much confusion about what they were permitted to eat and

what days were holy. Much of that confusion was clearly around which meats were clean or unclean according to God's word. Again, they had no background in this stuff. So, to be safe, those who were weak in the faith, or without previous knowledge, chose to limit themselves to eating only vegetables. For you, if you too were once a Gentile and you also have no knowledge of such things, let this be known: there is no commandment in the entirety of the Torah (Law) limiting your food choices to vegetables only. There are commanded limits to the meats you can eat, but you'd need to be knowledgeable before you'd feel comfortable believing you can eat all things permitted by God, otherwise your options would remain in doubt.

Y'shua was sure to address the dangers of not knowing the Word of God. And conversely, if you are skilled in the Scriptures you have a distinct advantage. But even with such skills, you are not to condemn a brother in the faith who lacks such knowledge. Remember, love demands we prefer others! Paul is not saying that those "weak in the faith" are the ones who are still trying to eat clean according to the Old Testament; he is saying that those who are weak in the faith (immature, ignorant) are the ones who don't know what is permitted (fit or kosher) according to the Old Testament.

In order to love God the best they can, these newbies prefer to eat no meat at all, so they do not make a mistake—and that is honorable. And Paul is saying, “Don’t look down on them.” Ultimately, they are God’s servants and He is the one who knows the intentions of their hearts. Also, you who are weak in the faith, don’t you judge the one who exercises their liberty to eat (meat) because they do know what is clean and what is unclean. Knowing the difference is a strength (maturity) in the faith, not a weakness.

This was a huge issue in the early Church, so much so that they needed to convene a council to figure out what to do with the massive influx of Gentiles who were turning to Yahweh through Y’shua. It is so important for you to fully understand what Paul is teaching in Romans 14 that included here is the entire ruling from the Jerusalem Council:

Notice that the ruling for the Gentiles, who are new to the faith, includes regulations that require immediate adherence:

1. Leave your idolatry behind!
2. End all sexual immorality!
3. Refrain from eating animals that have been killed by strangulation and/or still have blood in them! These are two indicators for eating food that is kosher. Kosher is the modern term used to describe food that is fit to eat according to the Scriptures.

Much like we discussed in Romans when we explored Y'shua's interaction with the scribe who asked Him about the greatest commandment, this ruling is an encapsulation of commandments. To the scribe, Y'shua gives two categories of commands to obey (not just two commandments). One set encompasses all those that demonstrate our love for the Father, and the other set, all those that demonstrate love for one another. In similar form, the Council in Jerusalem is prompted by the Holy Spirit to lay out specific "legal guidelines" for the Gentiles with three categories of commands to obey. One command speaks to idolatry, one to sexual purity, and the other to eating according to the Scriptures.

One more note about the Jerusalem Council ruling: the new converts were not given a permanent free ride to stay immature or "weak in the faith." In addition to the final instructions for the Gentiles, as James is handing down the ruling, he reminds everyone that Moses is preached in the synagogues every Sabbath. Immediately after the three starting categories of rules (with roots back to the days of Noah), James reminds us that God's people attend synagogue weekly on the Sabbath to study "Moses". Apparently, the Gentiles are now expected to attend, so they can learn more about how to live out this born-again life.

In other words, even Gentile converts are expected to eventually learn and abide by the Laws of God in the Old Testament. Yes, if you explore the Word of God, you will find that in both cases the answers entail obedience to a long list of Yahweh's instructions for practical living couched under overarching headings: Love God; Love your Neighbor; No Idolatry, No Sexual Immorality, No Unclean Foods.

As you can see, knowledge of and a desire to obey God's commands is not what makes one weak in the faith, but it is a lack of such that makes one vulnerable. If you were a new convert (weak in the faith), and you were not completely confident you understood what was permitted, it would be much easier to simply not eat meat at all and only eat vegetables for now, until you gained confidence in such knowledge—removing all doubt. They are weak in the faith, but their hearts are in the right place, so do not despise them. And conversely, you who are weak, don't despise others who exercise their liberty. Paul gives even greater clarification in his first letter to the Corinthians in which he describes the liberties one has with proper knowledge, and how not to use that liberty to hurt a fellow believer who has no such freedom—one weak in the faith.

This is going to sound ultra-repetitive, but it is necessary to repeat the basics until you are actually adhering to the basics. Before we get granular on the topic of how we ought to treat one

another in regards to a few specific topics, keep in mind the overarching command: Love and prefer one another; and do not hurt one another. This is the ultimate expression of God's law. And you fulfill it by not standing by as you witness your brother sin; that would be a form of hate—a type of punishment or display of ill-will. Rather, love others by gently correcting their errors and leading them into repentance. Love can actually conquer sin; it can reverse the course of someone who has strayed from the truth. To cover the sins of another—what a powerful concept! And what a Christlike demonstration of stewarding God's grace!

Now, we can address the context of this passage and how precisely those who know better must treat those who have less knowledge and experience and thus would feel guilt and embarrassment over certain decisions they might make, simply because they are not versed enough in the scriptures to understand what foods are permitted to eat or which of their previous cultural traditions are still acceptable. A great place to start is to back up a few chapters from what we've just reviewed in I Corinthians. We will learn how Paul wants those who are more knowledgeable and mature to act around those who are weak in the faith and would thus have concern over eating meat that was "offered to idols."

Those who have knowledge know that an idol is nothing and therefore eating meat offered to idol is nothing. However not

everyone shares that understanding, as some are still weak in the faith. If those who are weak see others consume such meat and ignorantly participate, and then feel defiled over their actions, they may experience unnecessary guilt. Remember, in God's eyes neither the person with proper knowledge, nor the person who is still immature is superior. What God cares about most is how we treat one another. Therefore, if you are the one who has the liberty to eat because you have proper understanding, you are better off not exercising that liberty in the presence of those who might otherwise develop a guilty conscience because they joined you. God considers that a stumbling block to those who are weak, and you are not to be the source of anything that might cause your brother stumble. That includes your choice of foods. In fact, you are better off never again eating meats that would be otherwise permitted by the Scriptures, if your liberty to do so harms your brother.

You might be thinking, "How on earth could my liberty possibly hurt my brother?" And that is where loving and preferring others becomes fully demonstrable. Your strength is, in this case, demonstrated by your knowledge that an idol is nothing and therefore creates no restriction and thus no concern for eating meat that would otherwise be permitted by law, even if previously sacrificed to an idol. However, the one who is weak, he who has no

such knowledge, if he follows your example and eats the meat sacrificed to an idol and subsequently suffers guilt, you who are strong are held accountable for hurting your brother. How was he injured? He believes... "I will perish as a result of my bad decision and my resultant death is a certainty." You know that is not true, but he does not and thus is harmed by your actions. Remember your one debt as a Christian; "You shall love your neighbor as yourself and love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." This is also corroborated by the latter half of this very chapter of Romans, as we will soon learn.

Now, before we address which previous cultural traditions are still acceptable after you come to the faith, keep this in mind. Your understanding of the Holy Scriptures may be superior to your brother's and thus gives you an advantage, however he is still a child of God and equal to you in God's eyes. Remember, as Christians we are all on the same team; we all serve the same God. He is the final arbiter and judge, so when you exercise a type of leadership that is demeaning and humiliating to others, you sit yourself in the judgment seat and assume you are the final authority, and that is mortifying to God. A weak and immature brother in the faith will stand before one judge, the God who saves, as will you. And that God is ultimately responsible to make him stand in victory, as He will you. Knowing this should inspire you to

be a source of helpful instruction, not degrading lordship. That is Godly leadership, whereas the latter is precisely how Gentiles rule over their subjects, and that is not who you are anymore!

Let's first establish that this passage is not addressing Biblical Holy Days, or what are known in the Bible as the Feasts of the Lord, including the Sabbath. Here is the issue being clarified; if you observe a day that is special to you or your cultural tradition, providing it is not in opposition to any of Yahweh's commands, then go ahead and celebrate it, but always do so with your focus on the Lord. In fact, you are to do all things unto the Lord.

In the modern American culture, for instance, we might consider days like anniversaries, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, or the Forth of July. Are they in opposition to Yahweh's commands? Of course not. If you desire to commentate them, go ahead and do so, just honor Yahweh as you celebrate. However, it is critical you recognize that Paul is NOT teaching that if you don't feel like keeping the commanded Biblical Holidays as detailed in Leviticus, you can exercise your freedom to ignore them. He is also not giving any permission to celebrate manmade holidays that are in direct opposition to God, like Halloween or other holidays which maintain their roots in pagan worship. Unfortunately, pagan-inspired holidays include Christmas and Easter. That may seem appalling to some, but a bit of basic research will easily reveal the

true history behind these holidays. And recall where we began this chapter when you were introduced to three new definitions: syncretism, inculturation and inculcation. To understand their meanings is a great place to begin your shocking journey of discovery. Ultimately, we are all called to obey God's commands, and that is one of the most important reasons you are empowered by grace. And along this journey, it is up to the Church to judge itself righteously. A deep dive into Colossians and you quickly learn this: when it comes to the things of God, no one should judge the Body of Christ, except the Body of Christ. In other words, it is not proper to expect, nor allow, pagans to hold Christians responsible; Christians are responsible for holding Christians responsible.

It should be clearly established now, to what Paul refers when in this passage he writes of days and dietary choices. Keep true to the context and you will not easily stray off topic to create some new doctrine that would be completely foreign to any first-century Jew, especially a Torah scholar like Paul. There is no chance he has used this occasion to introduce some strange new religion that allows its devotees to invent their own laws and standards, to follow only the instructions that make them comfortable and content—rules that satisfy their personal desires. “Sure, make up your own holidays, even if they transgress God's word, as long as you feel good about yourself. And eat whatever you want, as long

as your belly is satisfied. God does not care about His archaic outdated laws; He is only concerned for your happiness.” No, that’s not it at all! Those who chase their own desires and those who teach that doctrine to others are never satisfied. That’s the message that whispers sweet nothings into the ears of the unsuspecting hearts of baby Christians, who in their simple minds are easily tricked—swayed to follow “another Jesus.” Y’shua would say, “If you remain ignorant you will readily accept a different spirit, or a different gospel. You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.” But, Y’shua was clear about His message and Paul was a perfect reflection of that. “Not one thing has changed in My law; that is not why I came. I came, instead, so you would be empowered to live out My Father’s commands to the fullest extent!” It’s not those who acknowledge what the Scriptures teach who God wants to represent Him; it’s those who do what the Scriptures teach for whom God is looking. And that is why His grace has empowered you. If you claim you are a follower of Jesus, you ought also walk just as He walked. Paul makes the explanation super simple. “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” Anything apart from that is a doctrine of demons, none of which can fool those who believe and know the truth.

This is the true message of this passage. With all your decisions, filter them before the Lord and be thankful that He is

your God. Don't be anxious at all; inquire of the Lord before every choice you make and then follow the way of peace! The Holy Spirit will never lead you astray and will never contradict God's Word. And then, as we've said before... whatever you do, do it with a whole heart for God, not for men; whatever you do, do everything to the glory of God, and you can never go wrong. He is your judge and He is the arbiter of both your rewards and consequences.

In this short passage it would be efficacious to begin with the end, "To this end..." The conclusion of the matter is this: the reason Christ was murdered on a cross, and the reason He was raised from the dead was to declare He is Lord of all. That includes every one of God's faithful, who had previously died, who was living at that moment in history, and every human who would come to faith who would be born subsequent to His departure, and before His return. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord—and that includes even those who don't believe. Peter offered it so beautifully; "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct, and godliness, knowing that the day of judgment is coming?"

The verdict is clear; you no longer belong to yourself. The price that was paid for your life and for what you will receive in death is beyond the human capacity to calculate. And every

thought and action will be measured against that standard from this day forward, and when you stand in that final day, the life you lived for the Lord, or not, will be revealed as everything not of value for God's Kingdom will be burned into ash, and all that remains will be that which was done unto the Lord.

Elsewhere Paul explained it as such: "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." And, "In comparison to the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, I count everything else as immeasurably inferior." Now, what Paul wrote earlier in this letter takes on even greater meaning. When Christ died, you died with Him. When Christ was buried, you were buried with Him. When Christ resurrected, you were resurrected with Him. And because you were crucified when He was crucified, you are no longer animated by your own spirit, but His. And the life you must live from this day forward is a life of faith empowered by God's grace. "To this end Christ died and rose and lived again." And no one else could do that for you. John the Baptist summarized this idea so well; "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven through Christ. Therefore it is my joy to declare that He must increase, but I must decrease."

It is simply amazing how much content there is in just a few words from Paul. But again, I think as students of God's Word, true

disciples, not just people with an “I-got-saved-date”, we have the responsibility to go deeper, to search for the secret things of God, because it has been assigned to you to discover the mysteries of the Kingdom.

Let's begin here with this whole idea of judging your brothers. Should we not judge our brothers at all? Or, is Paul instructing you to avoid judging with a specific darkness in your heart, almost as if you are hoping your brother fails—like Jonah did with the Ninevites? Of course Jonah did not see them as family, but it was clear that God did. It would seem, contextually, that Paul is telling us that we need to understand people's weaknesses and discern accordingly. It appears elsewhere in Paul's writings that we are to judge one another as fellow believers. Don't judge unbelievers, but do judge believers and remove yourself from evil people. And under no circumstance are you permitted to condemn a brother! We already discussed earlier in this chapter that the Body of Christ is indeed called to judge Christians, but Christians are not to be judged by outsiders, as we learned in Colossians. We just now read how God's people are not to judge unbelievers, but even that is not a permanent mandate. Eventually, you will punish all disobedience, but not until your obedience is complete!

Yet, the bigger picture here is the moment we stand before the throne of Christ. On this subject Paul again defers to his favorite

Prophet. The distinction in Isaiah is that Yahweh will eternally judge both the believer and unbeliever, whereas we have nothing to do with the eternal judgment of those outside the faith. Isaiah reveals that every knee and every tongue will need to present their cases before the one and only God, and by Him they will be eternally judged. And elsewhere, Paul teaches us that this is where God completes His ultimate separation of mankind into three permanent destinies: those in heaven—rulers; those on earth—citizens; and those under the earth—rebels. Y'shua was equal with God and yet He lowered Himself to become a man—humbled Himself and died on a cross for you! This too is why you must do nothing with your own selfish ambitions and interests as preeminent priorities, but like He did, love and consider others first. Sound familiar?

First you must be honest with yourself. That's what matters because you can't fool God. What is it that concerns you about your brother? Are you worried they will be blessed when they don't deserve it? Are you troubled because you believe they will escape without punishment unless you execute judgment? First make a clear distinction between rebuking a brother for his transgressions because you love him, because love can literally conquer sin, and secretly hoping he gets demolished because of his sin, so much so that you wish you were the executioner, like Jonah. Jonah was actually disappointed that a city full of pagans repented. That's dark!

Conversely, Jeremiah's heart was broken over the sins of the people. He was their prophet; he was not participating in the sins of the people, but he saw himself as one of them. Through it all he painted this picture of hope: "Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old."

Now that the heart of the matter is clear, stop worrying; there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed. No one can hide from God; He sees it all and will hold everyone accountable. As each person stands before the judgement seat, every deed of his life will be examined and adjudicated. The fire of God will test every moment of his life and only what was valuable for His kingdom will remain. Any work built on the foundation of grace-empowered-faith-based-obedience will be rewarded. Everything else will be reduced to ash.

So, this question remains: what is your role in the process? Paul taught Timothy to become absorbed in God's word so he would be thoroughly equipped to teach, rebuke, correct, and instruct God's people in the way of righteousness. Y'shua taught His disciples to be very careful for how they judge others; you are safe if you are being godly, but if you have the wrong attitude and approach, that same measure will come against you. And maybe the most important piece of preparation is to always first examine your own life. Before you are of any value in helping others, you

must have your life in order. You can't correct in others what you won't correct in yourself. And if we include your approach to those outside the Church, skip the judgment for now altogether and deliver to them only one sentiment... "Christ crucified!"

We close out this section where we began. Cease and desist from condemning a brother simply because they lack maturity and knowledge. A child in the faith is deserving of many accommodations and his poor choices and even his slow growth does not grant you permission to slam him into alignment with God. Be gracious and altruistic to those who are immature, and for God's sake recall your own development process. I promise you, it was slower than you remember!

God's heart on the matter is this: when in the presence of someone who is weak in the faith, what Y'shua might gently call "a little one," don't let your approach to discipleship become a bolder in their path to maturity. And might it bear repeating precisely... if you cause even one little child of God to stumble, which opens the door to sin, it would be better for you if you had a 1,500 pound stone attached to a noose around your neck, and you were tossed into the ocean and dragged to the bottom. And if the one-and-a-half-ton millstone yanking you by the neck to the bottom of the ocean is not graphic enough to describe the consequences of leading God's people astray, consider more closely the depth of the

Mediterranean. Sink to the lowest point and there will be 7,500 pounds of pressure per square inch crushing your skull.

The first thought on interpreting this passage correctly is to rearrange its punctuation, which of course was added by translators, who unknowingly or in a biased fashion (you decide), can change the meaning of a passage entirely, by avoiding a few commas. And if you change even one word, which in Greek means any of a number of words (in, at, on, by, etc.), you can completely change the meaning. And if we are to be intellectually honest, to keep this in context and to be consistent with the rest of the God's word, it seems that the translational bias is purposefully antisemitic (against things Jewish) and antinomic (against the law).

Context (Romans 14): Paul is not teaching that all of a sudden everything is clean. If that was his intent, then why would he refer to the prophet Isaiah in his second letter to the Corinthians? "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean." The subject matter here is in regards to those who are weak in the faith, who are concerned that the meats (or other things) they might choose are not permitted by God—what Paul understands as unclean. And if it is clean according to the Lord, but they feel it is unclean; then to them it is unclean even though it is actually clean, and you must not do anything to cause them to stumble. Even if what you are eating is clean according to God's

Word, abstain in the presence of those who are weak in the faith for the sake of their conscience, not your own. If you love your brother you will be willing to sacrifice your liberty for the sake of his conscience. Again, for more clarity on this, Paul writes brilliantly in I Corinthians.

Context (The Whole Bible): Do you really believe that Paul's intention with a few verses is to negate all of God's laws that distinguish clean from unclean things? To do so, you must conclude that Paul's intent was to pen thirty words that would render obsolete the mass of doctrine in the Old Testament on the topic. That would include every abominable behavior that God calls unclean—including every command on sexual immorality. That is utterly absurd. Can you honestly come to that conclusion from this passage? Of course not!

Maybe you are hoping that Paul is establishing a different set of rules for God's people, depending on their background and heritage. If you were a Jew when you came to the faith, then God's laws apply, but if you were once a Gentile, then you can pick and choose which laws make you comfortable and you can ignore those that are too difficult to follow. The problems with that theology are manifold. It was clearly established after the Exodus that there was one law provided to govern Israel and the Gentiles who joined Israel. And Paul also makes it clear that once you join the Christian

faith, you are actually no longer a Gentile—so there remains only one law for all believers.

Watch this: And now we know how this has been egregiously translated and interpreted in just one common English translation, the New King James Version (NKJV); pick and choose your own rules! “I know and am convinced *by the Lord Jesus* that there is nothing unclean of itself; *but to him who considers* anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” Here it seems to say that Jesus teaches us that there is no longer any such thing as unclean. His new standard is that you get to decide!

But for consistency sake, we will use a slightly different arrangement of the same passage. And maybe you should first recognize what Jesus thought about changing His Father’s doctrine—in His own words. “*My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.*” He emphatically claimed that He did not come to alter it in any way! In this slightly new arrangement of the same Romans’ verse, you will see that the meaning is changed entirely, but is now consistent with the doctrine of the Father. The word ‘by’ is changed to ‘in’ (the same Greek word means in, at, on, by, etc.), and two commas are added, which actually keep the passage in perfect context with the rest of Romans 14 and the entire Bible. How

refreshing! “I know and am convinced, *in the Lord Jesus*, there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”

Interpreted simply: what is being represented by the Lord Jesus is that there is nothing unclean that has been previously declared clean according to the teachings of the doctrine of His Father from the Old Testament Scriptures. And is that not exactly what Paul wrote to Timothy about foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth? And even so, let’s reiterate, if what is clean is believed to be unclean by someone uneducated, let him treat it as unclean for the sake of his own conscience—even though it is not really unclean.

And if you are in a mood to laugh, try this one on for size. These two additional verses have been often used to bolster the narcissistic self-centered translation and interpretation of Romans 14:14. There is no longer anything definitive that unclean; it’s all up to you to determine for yourself what is clean and unclean. If you say it’s unclean it is; if you don’t, it isn’t! In other words, anything goes; if you determine something is permitted and lawful to you, then have at it! Just don’t violate your own conscience and you’re good to go. What brand of Christianity is that? Reading it here might make you nauseous, but that is precisely how Paul’s letters to the Corinthians are used to support this narcissistic theology.

Furthermore, with the strong foundation laid for correct interpretation to this point in the chapter, the rest will be a breeze. Each step of the way is just another practical display of God's love.

Paul turned his entire attention in this letter to the practical display of love when he pivoted his message to urge Christians to sacrifice everything for God, to do whatever it takes to be holy and Christlike. And then he made the shocking argument that to do so would be completely reasonable, the acceptable standard, nothing to brag about. It's what God expects of you! As such, how difficult is it to ask that you don't let your mature understanding of food ruin the faith of a less mature, less informed brother, who simply does not yet understand?

It is so clear; your maturity in the faith and knowledge is a strength. Deep understanding is a good thing, but it will quickly turn bad if you are not careful. Knowledge can cause pride and hubris, excessive self-confidence and arrogance. Love does no such thing; it always edifies others.

The kingdom of God is not defined by a set of acceptable earthly activities, nor your ability to adhere to a list of restrictions. The kingdom is on full display when the fullness of God is manifesting in your mortal body, His power emanating from you! That is precisely what John the Baptist saw in Christ, and what Christ said of Himself; "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at

hand!" It was the key objective of Y'shua's model prayer to the Father; "Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven." And it was what He assigned us to teach; "As you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

Just as He was the living example, the incarnation of God in man, so too are we called to bring the kingdom to earth. The kingdom of God manifests by our transformation into the full stature and image of Christ. Yes, knowledge can cause pride and hubris, excessive self-confidence and arrogance. Love does no such thing. When every Christian does his part, the Body of Christ grows into maturity and edifies itself in love. This is the true testimony of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Peace and joy can be elaborated a bit in the following verse, but what of this righteousness? There is for certain a gift of righteousness, that which was imparted to you for free at the moment your life was redeemed from eternal death. But there is another side of the coin. Just as faith is a gift that you then must practice, so too is righteousness, and you simply can't be pleasing to the Lord without practice. That goes for both faith and righteousness. He who practices righteousness is righteous. In other words, anyone who is truly born again will practice righteousness, and that means whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God. Can it be more clear?

As Paul previously described... What is good is what is acceptable to God; how it looks is a life completely sacrificed to God; and how God values that sacrifice—it is a reasonable choice. And praise the Lord... live like that and not only is God pleased, but you will be in total alignment with God's leadership requirements as God's minister for good, as Paul also previously described.

The true testimony of the kingdom is not just righteousness, but also peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Pursue the things which make for peace... how do you do that? There is only one source. He gives us peace and it is a peace that the world cannot offer. It's a peace that surpasses understanding. So, when you have peace that is not related to external circumstances, at moments when you know it would otherwise be impossible to feel tranquil and at ease, that serenity you feel is God's peace.

And whereas Paul uses joy in the previous verse as a character trait of the kingdom, what better way to manifest that Christlikeness than to edify one another—the truest form of joy there is. We experience the complete joy of the Lord by seeing others the way He does, by preferring others as He does. There can be no greater joy than to walk in that truth.

As Paul begins to wind down the granularity of this lesson, a few specific applications of what it looks like to love and prefer

your brother, he solidifies the Christlike approach to demonstrating the liberties you possess because of your advanced knowledge. Your better understanding should be an advantage, but you should not exercise even one freedom if it might wound a fellow believer. Of course, everything God permits in His law is clean and unadulterated, but it becomes vial if it offends your brother or causes him to feel guilty. The topic here is your liberty to freely eat, drink and engage in other legal lifestyle choices, but also how it is mandatory that you refrain from any food, drink, and activity if it might weaken your brother's faith. It's a simple rule with profound implications; if what I am about to do might offend someone, even if perfectly acceptable according to God's law, then don't do it! Said differently, if what I do hurts another it violates the prime objective of God's law; love God and love your neighbors, and never do anything to harm them.

Paul would even say that if you consider God's laws in their black and white format, without understanding the godly application of said laws, it is not freedom at all, but bondage. Instead, take your liberties, run them through this filter, and you will never make an error! Your freedoms must align with God's truth and God would never place your liberties above your neighbor's wellbeing. Your moral principles and ideals must be established with God's priorities in mind. God is the arbiter of justice, so if you

find yourself motivated to make an example of someone, you are way off. Your motivations and intentions must be pure—set apart to always glorify God and point others toward Him as their destination. That is because God's truth is beautiful. So, if what you represent as God is ugly, again you are way off. Remember, the message is good news, not dreadful news; that is why we call it the gospel of peace, not the gospel of fear. Your primary filter, your principle question at every moment must be this: what does God think, or what is God's heart on the matter? When your liberties align with these priorities, they are worthy of all praise.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with your strong faith; it should make you content in your private relationship with God. But, if you shipwreck the faith of others because of your liberties, even by participating in perfectly acceptable practices in their presence, when those practices cause them to feel inferior, confused or guilty, you literally become the source of their sin.

And notice what Paul emphasizes at the end of his teaching. Whatever is not of faith is sin! That is because without faith you cannot please God, and whatever is not pleasing to God is considered iniquity. With that in mind, if you promote any such thing, and again the context here is clear, even if what you represent is otherwise legal according to the Scriptures, if you promote such and it harms a brother, you are not looked upon

favorably by God. The message is specific. If you cause doubt, or fear, or confusion, or guilt, or shame, or self-condemnation in others, you are wrecking their faith and causing them to sin, because whatever is not of faith is sin! Don't condemn yourself by the liberty you enjoy. Your maturity must not create uncertainty in others, especially if it inspires them to violate their conscience. That is no way to live in Christ. Everything we do must be rooted in grace-empowered faith-based-obedience. All else falls short of the glory of Yahweh.

And finally, remember we are all on the same team; we are one new man in Christ. Therefore, walk worthy of that gift, always making love the priority. There is only one faith and anyone who identifies as a Christian has the same Spirit and shares the same faith, regardless of how smart or mature they are. Don't let your knowledge cause Christian gloating; because God sees that as Christian bloating, and when that balloon explodes it gets very messy.

"Think in Bible." DJH

INTRODUCTION TO TODAY'S MESSAGE:

"To serve or to self?" that is the question. With more clarity, might your position be best described as serving leadership or selfish lordship? Serving leadership is godly leadership; selfish

lordship is anything but godly. It is a shaming, guiltning and degrading brand of lording over another. The pagans are good at that; don't you be! It's one thing to be handed the keys to the kingdom and to go out as His ambassadors to the world to represent Christ as if your words are His words. It's altogether different and downright wrong to become so enamored with your position that you begin to build your own kingdom occupied by your own words. The former glorifies the One and only Master of the universe; the latter smacks of self-glorification. If you travel down that road for even a moment, you risk developing the belief that you are judge, jury, and executioner—a position God has abdicated to no man.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!” The quintessential truth: there is one God, and there is no other but He. There is one Lord; He is Father of all; He is above all, He permeates everything and is the reason you exist. Yes, there is One God, and it's not you! Certainly you are empowered to be the voice of Christ in the earth, and His hands and feet. Go preach; go baptize; go teach; go minister; go serve; go provide; go be an example to the flock in word and deed. Imitate Christ for sure, but don't hold yourself out to be God. Satan did that; Pharaoh did that; and King Herod did that. And it did not turn out well for any of them.

Instead of usurping God's authority, your role as His ambassador is to be a loving example, not a source of prideful condemnation. Remember, receiving condemnation is not an option for God's children. Nevertheless, the identity politics here is a double-edged sword. On one razor-sharp edge sit Christians in leadership. If you identify with a leadership position, how you represent God is crucial. Who are you as a leader; what is your role, and how will you exercise your God-given authority? The other edge is equally as sharp, and Christians who sit atop its blade are following those Christian leaders, and they too must be crystal clear on their identity. In other words, it is critical in the Church that both Christian leaders and those who follow them have a solid identity doctrine. In plain language, good identity theology is this: whether you are a shepherd or a sheep, you must be fully convinced in your own mind who you are and what you believe!

Nevertheless, it's safe to say that shepherds have a greater responsibility than sheep and will be judged more harshly by God. Again, leaders must be an example to the flock in word and deed. Shepherd the flock of God, serving as supervisors, not driven by greedy impulses because there is something to gain by lording over others whom God entrusted to you. And worse yet is when your selfish desires are fueled by inauthentic motives. Instead, be willing and eager to be a Christlike example to the flock. What does that

look like exactly? If you desire to lead, you must put yourself below those you intend to serve. That's precisely what Y'shua did; He came to serve, not to be served. Think about it... He was the Teacher of teachers; He was the Master of the universe, and yet He knelt before His disciples just hours before His horrific torture and crucifixion, and He washed their filthy odorous feet. He taught us why; "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." That is serving leadership!

But, if you instead choose to otherwise serve yourself in your honored leadership position, to mislead God's sheep at all, this is what the Lord has for you; "Woe to the shepherds who injure My sheep in any way or cause them to feel lost! I will punish you for your evil choices. If you cause even one of My little children to stumble by leading them into sin, it would be better for you if you had a 1,500 pound stone attached to a noose around your neck, and you were tossed into the ocean and dragged to the bottom." Remember, there is One God, and it's not you! And if the one-and-a-half-ton millstone yanking you by the neck to the bottom of the ocean is not graphic enough to describe the consequences of leading God's people astray, consider more closely the depth of the Mediterranean. Sink to the lowest point and there will be 7,500 pounds of pressure per square inch crushing your skull. Yes, shepherds have a greater responsibility than sheep and will be

judged more harshly by God, so I implore you to be a serving leader, not a selfish lord. Or, as Paul so eloquently states, "Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves."

ONE LORD

1. **Serving Leader or Selfish Lord**

A. **Weak in the Faith or Strong in the Faith**

(1) Demeaning Judgment or Helpful Instruction

(a) Loving Example or Prideful Condemnation

1. "Receive one who is **weak in the faith**, but **not to disputes over doubtful things**. For **one believes he may eat all things**, but **he who is weak eats only vegetables.**" Romans 14:1-2 NKJV

2. Relationships First

a) The Church leadership that emerged because of Roman **syncretism** with the Christian faith in the fourth century was staunchly antisemitic. Subsequently, the theology that formed from this Roman **inculturation** with Christianity, and its **inculcation** of Roman religious beliefs, has since dominated Church doctrine. It has caused this particular passage in Romans to be used as an apologetic to prove that it is wrong or legalistic to

use Old Testament Scriptures (God's Laws) to regulate the consumption of foods (to define what is fit to eat or kosher), and to mandate the celebration Biblical Feasts as God's holidays. This new Roman version of Christianity teaches that these have been nullified in Christ. You've likely learned that those who still do so, or think they should, are those to whom Paul is referring as "weak in the faith."

- 1) **Syncretism** is the practice of combining different beliefs and various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merging or assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths.
- 2) **Inculturation:** the gradual acquisition of the characteristics and norms of a culture or group by a person, another culture, etc.; the adaptation of Christian liturgy to a non-Christian cultural background.

- 3) **Inculcation:** the instilling of knowledge or values in someone, usually by repetition or persistent instruction. To inculcate is to instill or impress an attitude, idea, or habit on someone.
3. The early Church was filled with converts from pagan belief systems.
 - a) They came into Christianity knowing nothing about its roots in the Hebrew faith, and consequently nothing about the Scriptures.
 - b) This was not so with the Jews. They had a distinct advantage having been raised with the “oracles of God.”
 - 1) *“What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly **because to them were committed the oracles of God.**”* Romans 3:1-2 NKJV
 - c) And yet, as you also probably experienced in your own personal conversion, when you are impacted by an encounter with the Holy Spirit, you are imparted a desire to love and please the Lord. This desire, however, does not come with any actual knowledge base of what that should look like.

- d) There in Rome, where there were many believers who were once Gentiles, there was much confusion about what they were permitted to eat and what days were holy.
- 1) *“Therefore remember that you, **once Gentiles** in the flesh—who are called *Uncircumcision* by what is called the *Circumcision* made in the flesh by hands— **that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens** from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near** by the blood of Christ.”* Ephesians 2:11-13 NKJV
- e) Much of that confusion was clearly around which meats were clean or unclean according to God’s word (Leviticus 11). Again, they had no background in this stuff.
- f) To be safe, those who were weak in the faith, or without previous knowledge, chose to limit themselves to eating only vegetables.

- g) If you too were once a Gentile and you also have no knowledge of such things, let this be known: there is no commandment in the entirety of the Torah (Law) limiting your food choices to vegetables only.
- h) There are commanded limits to the meats you can eat, but you'd need to be knowledgeable before you'd feel comfortable believing you can eat all things permitted by God, otherwise your options would remain in doubt.
- 1) *“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding **to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.** For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”* I Timothy 4:1-5 NKJV

4. Y'shua was sure to address the dangers of not knowing the Word of God.
- a) You err not knowing the Word!
 - 1) *“Jesus answered and said to them, **“You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures** nor the power of God.”* Matthew 22:29 NKJV
 - 2) *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. **But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**”* Hebrews 5:12-14 NKJV
 - b) And conversely, if you are skilled in the Scriptures you have a distinct advantage. But even with such skills, you are not to condemn a brother in the faith who lacks such knowledge. Remember, love demands we prefer others!

1) *“Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for **the interests of others.**”*
Philippians 2:4 NKJV

2) *“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor **giving preference to one another;**”* Romans 12:10 NKJV

c) Paul is not saying that those “weak in the faith” are the ones who are still trying to eat clean according to the Old Testament; he is saying that those who are weak in the faith (immature, ignorant) are the ones who don’t know what is permitted (fit or kosher) according to the Old Testament.

1) *“**If you love Me,** keep My commandments.”*
John 14:15 NKJV

5. No one should look down on the other!

a) In order to love God the best they can, these newbies prefer to eat no meat at all, so they do not make a mistake—and that is honorable. And Paul is saying, “Don’t look down on them.” **Ultimately, they are God’s servants and He is the one who knows the intentions of their hearts.**

1) *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing*

*even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but **all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.***” Hebrews 4:12-13 NKJV

b) Also, you who are weak in the faith, don't you judge the one who exercises their liberty to eat (meat) because they do know what is clean and what is unclean. Knowing the difference is a strength (maturity) in the faith, not a weakness.

6. The Jerusalem Council

a) This was a huge issue in the early Church, so much so that they needed to convene a council to figure out what to do with the massive influx of Gentiles who were turning to Yahweh through Y'shua. It is so important for you to fully understand what Paul is teaching in Romans 14 that included here is the entire ruling from the Jerusalem Council:

1) *“Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them:*

*“Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why **do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples** which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.” Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: ‘After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of*

*David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.’ “Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to **ABSTAIN FROM THINGS POLLUTED BY IDOLS, FROM SEXUAL IMMORALITY, FROM THINGS STRANGLED, AND FROM BLOOD.** For Moses has had throughout many generations those who **preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.**”” Acts 15:6-21*

NKJV

7. Notice that the ruling for the Gentiles, who are new to the faith, includes regulations that require immediate adherence:
 - a) Leave your idolatry behind!
 - b) End all sexual immorality!
 - c) Refrain from eating animals that have been killed by strangulation and/or still have blood in them!

These are two indicators for eating food that is kosher. Kosher is the modern term used to describe food that is fit to eat according to the Scriptures.

- 1) This ruling is an encapsulation of commandments.
 - 2) Much like we discussed in Romans 10, 12, and 13 when we explored Y'shua's interaction with the scribe who asked Him about the greatest commandment in Mark 12:28-34.
- d) To the scribe, Y'shua gives two categories of commands to obey (not just two commandments).
- 1) One set encompasses all those that demonstrate our love for the Father, and the other set, all those that demonstrate love for one another.
 - 2) In similar form, the Council in Jerusalem is prompted by the Holy Spirit to lay out specific "legal guidelines" for the Gentiles with three categories of commands to obey.
 - 3) One command speaks to idolatry, one to sexual purity, and the other to eating according to the Scriptures.
8. One more note about the Jerusalem Council ruling:

- a) The new converts were not given a permanent free ride to stay immature or “weak in the faith.”
- b) In addition to the final instructions for the Gentiles, as James is handing down the ruling, he reminds everyone that Moses is preached in the synagogues every Sabbath.
 - 1) *“For **Moses** has had throughout many generations those who **preach** him in every city, being read in the synagogues **every Sabbath.**”*
Acts 15:21 NKJV
- c) Immediately after the three starting categories of rules (with roots back to the days of Noah), James reminds us that God’s people attend synagogue weekly on the Sabbath to study “Moses”.
- d) Apparently, the Gentiles are now expected to attend, so they can learn more about how to live out this born-again life.
- e) In other words, even Gentile converts are expected to eventually learn and abide by the Laws of God in the Old Testament.
- f) Yes, if you explore the Word of God, you will find that in both cases the answers entail obedience to a long list of Yahweh’s instructions for practical

living couched under overarching headings: Love God; Love your Neighbor; No Idolatry, No Sexual Immorality, No Unclean Foods.

9. As you can see, knowledge of and a desire to obey God's commands is not what makes one weak in the faith, but it is a lack of such that makes one vulnerable.
 - a) If you were a new convert (weak in the faith), and you were not completely confident you understood what was permitted, it would be much easier to simply not eat meat at all and only eat vegetables for now, until you gained confidence in such knowledge—removing all doubt.
 - b) They are weak in the faith, but their hearts are in the right place, so do not despise them. And conversely, you who are weak, don't despise others who exercise their liberty.
 - c) Paul gives even greater clarification in his **first letter to the Corinthians** in which he describes the liberties one has with proper knowledge, and how not to use that liberty to hurt a fellow believer who has no such freedom—one weak in the faith.

1) *“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being. **Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience’ sake;** for “the earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness.” If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, **eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience’ sake.** But if anyone says to you [an example of one who is weak in the faith], **“This was offered to idols,” do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience’ sake;** for “the earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness.” **“Conscience,” I say, not your own, but that of the other [the one who is weak in the faith].** For **why is my liberty judged by another man’s conscience?** But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks? Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the*

*church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, **but the profit of many**, that they may be saved.” I Corinthians 10:23-33 NKJV*

10. Other notable apologetics on biblical acceptable foods: See [The Food Channel Meet the History Channel](#))

a) See comments on I Timothy 4:1-5 (pages 43-44)

1) *“For **every creature of God is good**, and **nothing is to be refused** if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”*

b) See comments on Mark 7:1-23 (pages 45-49)

1) *“There is **nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him**; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man.”*

2) *“It does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, **thus purifying all foods?**”*

B. One Judge, Jury, and Executioner

(1) Who is the servant and who is the master?

(a) Who are you to judge another’s servant?

1. **“Let not him who eats despise** him who does not eat, and **let not him who does not eat judge** him who eats; for **God has received him**. Who are you to **judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls**. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for **God is able to make him stand.**” Romans 14:3-4 NKJV

2. Back to Basics

a) This is going to sound ultra-repetitive, but it is necessary to repeat the basics until you are actually adhering to the basics. Before we get granular on the topic of how we ought to treat one another in regards to a few specific topics, keep in mind the overarching command: Love and prefer one another; and do not hurt one another. This is the ultimate expression of God’s law.

1) *“Owe no one anything except to **love one another**, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. **Love does no harm** to a neighbor; therefore love is **the fulfillment of the law.**”*

Romans 13:8, 10 NKJV

2) *“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor **giving preference to one another**;”* Romans 12:10 NKJV

- b) And you fulfill it by not standing by as you witness your brother sin; that would be a form of hate—a type of punishment or display of ill-will.
- 1) **“You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”** Leviticus 19:17-18 NKJV
- c) Rather, love others by gently correcting their errors and leading them into repentance. Love can actually conquer sin; it can reverse the course of someone who has strayed from the truth. To cover the sins of another—what a powerful concept! And what a Christlike demonstration of stewarding God’s grace!
- 1) **“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”** Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, **minister it to one another, as good stewards of**

the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:8-10

NKJV

2) *“If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.”* 1 John 5:16 NKJV

3) *“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”* James 5:19-20 NKJV

3. Now, we can address the context of this passage...

a) Precisely how those who know better must treat those who have less knowledge and experience and thus would feel guilt and embarrassment over certain decisions they might make, simply because they are not versed enough in the scriptures to understand what foods are permitted to eat or which of their previous cultural traditions are still acceptable.

b) A great place to start is to back up a few chapters from what we've just reviewed in I Corinthians 10. We will learn how Paul wants those who are more knowledgeable and mature to act around those who are weak in the faith and would thus have concern over eating meat that was "offered to idols."

1) *"Now **concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge.** Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him. **Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing** in the world, and that there is no other God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many Lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live. **However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with***

*consciousness of the idol [the one who is weak in the faith], until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and **their conscience, being weak, is defiled**. But food does not commend us to God; for neither **if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse**. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, ***will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?** And ****because of your knowledge shall the weak brother ***perish**, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and **wound their weak conscience**, you sin against Christ. Therefore, **if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.**" I Corinthians 8:1-13 NKJV*

- 2) *the one who is weak in the faith eats what he does not believe is permitted and thus is wrought with guilt, shame and embarrassment.

- 3) **of course we, who are strong in the faith, know this poor brother will not perish in eternity for lack of proper understanding, but they don't know that because, quite frankly, they are simply weak in the faith. And we, who are strong in the faith, should care about that!
 - 4) ***Destroyed: destroyed to destroy fully, literally or figuratively; Root (Strong's Greek 622) kill, destroy, (b) I lose, I am perishing (the resultant death being viewed as certain).
4. Those who have knowledge know that an idol is nothing and therefore eating meat offered to idol is nothing.
 - a) However not everyone shares that understanding, as some are still weak in the faith.
 - b) If those who are weak see others consume such meat and ignorantly participate, and then feel defiled over their actions, they may experience unnecessary guilt.
 - c) Remember, in God's eyes neither the person with proper knowledge, nor the person who is still immature is superior. What God cares about most is how we treat one another.

- d) Therefore, if you are the one who has the liberty to eat because you have proper understanding, you are better off not exercising that liberty in the presence of those who might otherwise develop a guilty conscience because they joined you.
 - e) God considers that a stumbling block to those who are weak, and you are not too be the source of anything that might cause your brother stumble.
 - f) That includes your choice of foods. In fact, you are better off never again eating meats that would be otherwise permitted by the Scriptures, if your liberty to do so harms your brother.
5. You might be thinking, "How on earth could my liberty possibly hurt my brother?"
- a) And that is where loving and preferring others becomes fully demonstrable.
 - b) Your strength is, in this case, demonstrated by your knowledge that an idol is nothing and therefore creates no restriction and thus no concern for eating meat that would otherwise be permitted by law, even if previously sacrificed to an idol.
 - c) However, the one who is weak, he who has no such knowledge, if he follows your example and

- eats the meat sacrificed to an idol and subsequently suffers guilt, you who are strong are held accountable for hurting your brother.
- d) How was he I injured? He believes... "I will perish as a result of my bad decision and my resultant death is a certainty."
 - e) You know that is not true, but he does not and thus is harmed by your actions.
 - f) Remember your one debt as a Christian from Romans 13:9-10; "You shall love your neighbor as yourself and love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."
 - g) This is also corroborated by the latter half of this very chapter (Romans 14:14-23), as we will soon learn.
6. Now, before we address which previous cultural traditions are still acceptable after you come to the faith, keep this in mind.
- a) Your understanding of the Holy Scriptures may be superior to your brother's and thus gives you an advantage, however he is still a child of God and equal to you in God's eyes.

- b) Remember, as Christians we are all on the same team; we all serve the same God.
- c) He is the final arbiter and judge, so when you exercise a type of leadership that is demeaning and humiliating to others, you sit yourself in the judgment seat and assume you are the final authority, and that is mortifying to God.
- d) A weak and immature brother in the faith will stand before one judge, the God who saves, as will you. And that God is ultimately responsible to make him stand in victory, as He will you.
- e) Knowing this should inspire you to be a source of helpful instruction, not degrading lordship. That is Godly leadership, whereas the latter is precisely how Gentiles rule over their subjects, and that is not who you are anymore!

C. Be Fully Convinced

(1) Confidence in What You Believe

(a) Know WHO You Are and WHAT You Believe

1. “One person **esteems one day** above another; **another esteems every day alike**. Let each be **fully convinced** in his own mind.” Romans 14:5 NKJV

2. Let's first establish that this passage is not addressing Biblical Holy Days, or what are known in the Bible as the Feasts of the Lord, including the Sabbath.
 - a) Here is the issue being clarified; if you observe a day that is special to you or your cultural tradition, providing it is not in opposition to any of Yahweh's commands, then go ahead and celebrate it, but always do so with your focus on the Lord. In fact, you are to do all things unto the Lord.
 - 1) *"And **whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men**, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."*
Colossians 3:23-24 NKJV
 - 2) *"Therefore, **whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**"* 1
Corinthians 10:31 NKJV
3. In the modern American culture, for instance, we might consider days like anniversaries, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, or the Forth of July.
 - a) Are they in opposition to Yahweh's commands? Of course not. If you desire to commentate them, go

ahead and do so, just honor Yahweh as you celebrate.

b) However, it is critical you recognize that Paul is NOT teaching that if you don't feel like keeping the commanded Biblical Holidays as detailed in Leviticus 23, you can exercise your freedom to ignore them. (See Leviticus 23:1-44)

1) *“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘**The feasts of the Lord**, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, **these are My feasts.**”*

Leviticus 23:1-2 NKJV

2) *“So **Moses declared** to the children of Israel **the feasts of the Lord.**”* Leviticus 23:44 NKJV

3) Leviticus 23:3 (the Sabbath)

4) Leviticus 23:4-8 (the Passover and Unleavened Bread)

5) Leviticus 23:9-14 (the Feast of First Fruits)

6) Leviticus 23:15-22 (the Feast of Weeks)

7) Leviticus 23:23-25 (the Feast of Trumpets)

8) Leviticus 23:26-32 (the Day of Atonement)

9) Leviticus 23:33-44 (the Feast of Tabernacles)

- c) He is also not giving any permission to celebrate manmade holidays that are in direct opposition to God, like Halloween or other holidays which maintain their roots in pagan worship. Unfortunately, pagan-inspired holidays include Christmas and Easter.
 - d) That may seem appalling to some, but a bit of basic research will easily reveal the true history behind these holidays.
 - e) And recall where we began this chapter when you were introduced to three new definitions: syncretism, inculturation and inculcation.
 - f) To understand their meanings is a great place to begin your shocking journey of discovery. Ultimately, we are all called to obey God's commands, and that is one of the most important reasons you are empowered by grace.
4. And along this journey, it is up to the Church to judge itself righteously.
- a) A deep dive into Colossians 2:16-17 and you quickly learn this: when it comes to the things of God, no one should judge the Body of Christ, except the Body of Christ.

- 1) *“So **let no one judge you** in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, **but the *substance **is of Christ.**”* Colossians 2:16-17 NKJV
 - 2) *Simply translate ‘substance’ into it’s more common use: Body
 - 3) ** Remove ‘is’ which is not part of the original manuscript.
 - 4) And this is what remains: **“Let no one judge you... but the Body of Christ.”**
- b) In other words, it is not proper to expect, nor allow, pagans to hold Christians accountable; Christians are responsible for holding Christians accountable.
- c) You can learn the complete explanation in [Let No One Judge You?](#) but here is a slightly expanded version.
- 1) We should not be fooled “through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the basic principles of the world (Colossians 2:8).” Nor should we subject ourselves to the regulations of “false religions or

the commandments and doctrines of men
(Colossians 2:22-23)."

- 2) But let's be clear here, these falsities are NOT to be equated with the Law in the Old Testament. God's laws are never considered as such: "empty deceit; man's traditions, commandments, and doctrines; nor basic principles of the world."
- 3) So, now when you read Colossians 2 and you know Paul is not disparaging God's Laws, what does he mean by: *"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, BUT THE SUBSTANCE IS OF CHRIST."* (Colossians 2:16-17)?
- 4) The key to correct understanding is actually found just underneath the surface by exploring the original language. Let no one judge you... period; or let no one judge you, but...; *but the SUBSTANCE IS of Christ?* The original says "but the body of Christ." Substance (sóma in Greek) is the word for body and we are all familiar with the phrase "the Body of Christ."

- 5) And the word “is” does not appear in Greek. It was added in English for clarity and appears in italics (in many translations) to indicate such in the more literal translations.
- 6) What clarity does it add? It only adds clarity if you want the verse to mean NO ONE should judge you at all.
- 7) If you believe Paul’s intention was that no one should judge you because it’s all about Jesus, then you would prefer to use “substance” and add “is”.
- 8) Some versions go even further, replacing “body” with “reality”, the reality is of Christ, pushing that doctrinal bias even harder.
- 9) Instead, if you understand that no one outside the faith should judge you, but insiders should (which is consistent with Paul’s other writings), then use “body” and take out the “is” that doesn’t exist in the first place. And you are left with: **“Let no one judge you, but the body of Christ!”** which is consistent with I Corinthians 5:12, *“DO YOU NOT JUDGE THOSE WHO ARE INSIDE?”*

D. Days and Food

(1) To One Lord...

(a) We Celebrate and Eat

1. “He who **observes the day**, observes it to the Lord; and **he who does not observe the day**, to the Lord he does not observe it. **He who eats**, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and **he who does not eat**, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.” Romans 14:6 NKJV
2. It should be clearly established now, to what Paul refers when in this passage he writes of days and dietary choices.
 - a) Keep true to the context and you will not easily stray off topic to create some new doctrine that would be completely foreign to any first-century Jew, especially a Torah scholar like Paul.
 - b) There is no chance he has used this occasion to introduce some strange new religion that allows its devotees to invent their own laws and standards, to follow only the instructions that make them comfortable and content—**rules that satisfy their personal desires.**

- 1) *“The **righteous eats to the satisfying** of his soul,
But **the stomach of the wicked shall be in want.**”* Proverbs 13:25 NKJV
- c) “Sure, make up your own holidays, even if they transgress God’s word, as long as you feel good about yourself. And eat whatever you want, as long as your belly is satisfied. God does not care about His archaic outdated laws; He is only concerned for your happiness.”
- d) No, that’s not it at all! Those who **chase their own desires** and those who teach that doctrine to others are never satisfied.
 - 1) *“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, **contrary to the doctrine** which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such **do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly**, and by smooth words and flattering speech **deceive the hearts of the simple.**”* Romans 16:17-18 NKJV
- e) That’s the message that whispers sweet nothings into the ears of the unsuspecting hearts of baby Christians, who in their simple minds are easily tricked—swayed to follow “another Jesus.” Y’shua

would say, “If you remain ignorant you will readily accept a different spirit, or a different gospel. You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”

- 1) *“For the time will come when **they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**”* II Timothy 4:3-4 NKJV
- 2) *“For if he who comes preaches **another Jesus** whom we have not preached, or if you receive **a different spirit** which you have not received, or **a different gospel** which you have not accepted —**you may well put up with it!**”* II Corinthians 11:4 NKJV
- 3) *“Jesus answered and said to them, **“You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures** nor the power of God.”* Matthew 22:29 NKJV
- f) But, Y’shua was clear about His message and Paul was a perfect reflection of that. “Not one thing has changed in My law; that is not why I came. I came,

instead, so you would be empowered to live out My Father's commands to the fullest extent!"

- 1) *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. **I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.** For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, **one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.**"*

Matthew 5:17-18 NKJV

- g) It's not those who acknowledge what the Scriptures teach who God wants to represent Him; it's those who do what the Scriptures teach for whom God is looking.

- 1) *"(for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but **the doers of the law will be justified;**"* Romans 2:13 NKJV

- h) And that is why His grace has empowered you. If you claim you are a follower of Jesus, you ought also walk just as He walked. Paul makes the explanation super simple. "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."

- 1) *"Therefore, having been **justified by faith,** we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through **whom also we have access by***

faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Romans 5:1-2 NKJV

2) *“**Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.**” I Corinthians 11:1 NKJV*

3) *“He who says he abides in Him **ought himself also to walk just as He walked.**” I John 2:6 NKJV*

i) Anything apart for that is a **doctrine of demons**, none of which can fool those who believe and know the truth.

1) *“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding **to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.** For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is **received with thanksgiving**; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” I Timothy 4:1-5 NKJV*

3. This is the true message of this passage.

- a) With all your decisions, filter them before the Lord and be thankful that He is your God.
- 1) *“**in everything give thanks**; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”* I Thessalonians 5:18 NKJV
- b) Don't be anxious at all; inquire of the Lord before every choice you make and then follow the way of peace!
- 1) *“**Be anxious for nothing**, but in everything by prayer and supplication, **with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God**; and the **peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV
- c) The Holy Spirit will never lead you astray and will never contradict God's Word.
- 1) *“**I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.**”* John 16:12-13 NKJV

d) And then, as we've said before... whatever you do, do it with a whole heart for God, not for men; whatever you do, do everything to the glory of God, and you can never go wrong. He is your judge and He is the arbiter of both your rewards and consequences.

1) *"And **whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men**, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."*

Colossians 3:23-24 NKJV

2) *"Therefore, **whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**"* 1

Corinthians 10:31 NKJV

E. Life and Death

(1) For/To One Lord We Live and Die

(a) **You** no longer belong to **you!**

1. "For **none of us lives to himself**, and **no one dies to himself**. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, **whether we live or die, we are the Lord's**. For **to this end Christ died and rose and lived again**, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living." Romans 14:7-9 NKJV

2. In this short passage it would be efficacious to begin with the end, “To this end...”
 - a) The conclusion of the matter is this: the reason Christ was murdered on a cross, and the reason He was raised from the dead was to declare He is Lord of all.
 - b) That includes every one of God’s faithful, who had previously died, who was living at that moment in history, and every human who would come to faith who would be born subsequent to His departure, and before His return. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord—and that includes even those who don’t believe.
 - c) Peter offered it so beautifully; “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct, and godliness, knowing that the day of judgment is coming?”
 - 1) *“Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” But Simon Peter answered Him, “**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.**”* John 6:67-68 NKJV

2) *“Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?**”* II Peter 3:11-12 NKJV

3. The verdict is clear; you no longer belong to yourself.

a) The price that was paid for your life and for what you will receive in death is beyond the human capacity to calculate. And every thought and action will be measured against that standard from this day forward, and when you stand in that final day, the life you lived for the Lord, or not, will be revealed as everything not of value for God’s Kingdom will be burned into ash, and all that remains will be that which was done unto the Lord.

1) *“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and **you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore***

***glorify God in your body and in your spirit,
which are God's.***” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NKJV

2) *“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; **for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.** If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the*

temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” I

Corinthians 3:9-17 NKJV

4. Elsewhere Paul explained it as such: “Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

a) For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

1) *“For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so **now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**”*

Philippians 1:19-21 NKJV

b) And, “In comparison to the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, I count everything else as immeasurably inferior.”

1) *“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed **I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be***

*found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, **but that which is through faith in Christ**, the righteousness which is from God by faith;"*
Philippians 3:7-9 NKJV

c) Now, what Paul wrote earlier in this letter takes on even greater meaning. When Christ died, you died with Him. When Christ was buried, you were buried with Him. When Christ resurrected, you were resurrected with Him.

1) *"Or do you not know that as many of us as **were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?** Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that **just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.** For if we have been **united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection**, knowing this, that **our old man was crucified with Him**, that the body of **sin might be done away with**, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."* Romans 6:3-6 NKJV

d) And because you were crucified when He was crucified, you are no longer animated by your own spirit, but His. And the life you must live from this day forward is a life of faith empowered by God's grace.

1) *"I have been **crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside **the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.**"***" Galatians 2:20-21 NKJV

e) "To this end Christ died and rose and lived again." And no one else could do that for you.

1) *"Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? **Was Paul crucified for you?** Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"* I Corinthians 1:12-13 NKJV

f) John the Baptist summarized this idea so well; "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven through Christ. Therefore it is

my joy to declare that He must increase, but I must decrease.”

- 1) *“John answered and said, **“A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.** You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. **He must increase, but I must decrease.**”* John 3:27-30 NKJV

F. One Judge One Justification

(1) All Equal at the foot of the cross

(a) Naked before God

1. **“But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.** For it is written: **“As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.”**”
Romans 14:10-11 NKJV
2. It is simply amazing how much content there is in just a few words from Paul.

a) But again, I think as students of God's Word, true disciples, not just people with an "I-got-saved-date", we have the responsibility to go deeper, to search for the secret things of God, because it has been assigned to you **to discover the mysteries of the Kingdom.**

1) *"It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is **to search out a matter.**"*

Proverbs 25:2 NKJV

2) *"He answered and said to them, "Because **it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.**"* Matthew 13:11 NKJV

3. Let's begin here with this whole idea of judging your brothers.

a) Should we not judge our brothers at all? Or, is Paul instructing you to avoid judging with a specific darkness in your heart, almost as if you are hoping your brother fails—like Jonah did with the Ninevites?

1) *"Then **God saw their works, that they turned from their evil** way; and **God relented** from the*

disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.” Jonah 3:10 NKJV

2) *“But **it displeased Jonah exceedingly**, and he became angry.” Jonah 4:1 NKJV*

b) Of course Jonah did not see them as family, but it was clear that God did. It would seem, contextually, that Paul is telling us that we need to understand people’s weaknesses and discern accordingly.

c) It appears elsewhere in Paul’s writings that we are to judge one another as fellow believers. Don’t judge unbelievers, but do judge believers and remove yourself from evil people.

1) *“For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? **Do you not judge those who are inside?** But those who are outside God judges. Therefore **“put away from yourselves the evil person.”**” I Corinthians 5:12-13 NKJV*

d) And under no circumstance are you permitted to condemn a brother!

1) *“There is therefore now **no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus**, who do not walk*

according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” Romans 8:1 NKJV

- e) We already discussed earlier in this chapter that the Body of Christ is indeed called to judge Christians, but Christians are not to be judged by outsiders, as we learned in Colossians 2:16-17.
 - 1) *“Let no one judge you, but the Body of Christ.”*
- f) We just now read how God’s people are not to judge unbelievers, but even that is not a permanent mandate. Eventually, you will punish all disobedience, but not until your obedience is complete!
 - 1) *“Do you not know that **the saints will judge the world?** And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” I Corinthians 6:2 NKJV*
 - 2) *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being **ready to punish***

all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.” II Corinthians 10:4-6 NKJV

4. Yet, the bigger picture here is the moment we stand before the throne of Christ.
 - a) On this subject Paul again defers to his favorite Prophet. The distinction in Isaiah is that Yahweh will eternally judge both the believer and unbeliever, whereas we have nothing to do with the eternal judgment of those outside the faith. (Again refer to I Corinthians 5:12-13).
 - b) Isaiah reveals that every knee and every tongue will need to present their cases before the one and only God, and by Him they will be eternally judged.
 - 1) ***““Assemble yourselves and come; Draw near together, You who have escaped from the nations. They have no knowledge, Who carry the wood of their carved image, And pray to a god that cannot save. Tell and bring forth your case; Yes, let them take counsel together. Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, A just God***

and a Savior; There is none besides Me. **“Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. {23} I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, And shall not return, That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath.”** He shall say, ‘Surely **in the Lord I have righteousness** and strength. To Him men shall come, And **all shall be ashamed Who are incensed against Him.** In the Lord all the descendants of Israel Shall be justified, and shall glory.’ ”” Isaiah 45:20-25 NKJV

- c) Y’shua was equal with God and yet He lowered Himself to become a man—humbled Himself and died on a cross for you! This too is why you must do nothing with your own selfish ambitions and interests as preeminent priorities, but like He did, love and consider others first. Sound familiar?
- 1) **“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing**

*be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind **let each esteem others better than himself.** Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but **also for the interests of others.**"* Philippians 2:1-4 NKJV

2) *"**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,** who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, **but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant,** and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He **humbled Himself** and became obedient to the point of death, even the **death of the cross.** Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,"* Philippians 2:5-9 NKJV

3) *"**that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,** of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that **every tongue should confess** that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:10-11 NKJV*

- d) And elsewhere, Paul teaches us that this is where God completes His ultimate separation of mankind into three permanent destinies: those in heaven—rulers; those on earth—citizens; and those under the earth—rebels. (See: [The Unveiling](#) for greater details on three permanent destinies.)

G. One Accounting Method

- (1) There is ONE God ...and it's NOT You!
 - (a) First you must be honest with yourself.
 - 1. “So then **each of us shall give account** of himself to God.” Romans 14:12 NKJV
 - 2. That’s what matters because you can’t fool God.
 - a) What is it that concerns you about your brother?
 - b) Are you worried they will be blessed when they don’t deserve it?
 - c) Are you troubled because you believe they will escape without punishment unless you execute judgment?
 - d) First make a clear distinction between rebuking a brother for his transgressions because you love him, because love can literally conquer sin, and secretly hoping he gets demolished because of his

sin, so much so that you wish you were the executioner, like Jonah.

e) Jonah was actually disappointed that a city full of pagans repented. That's dark!

f) Conversely, Jeremiah's heart was broken over the sins of the people. He was their prophet; he was not participating in the sins of the people, but he saw himself as one of them. Through it all he painted this picture of hope:

1) ***“Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old,”***

Lamentations 5:21 NKJV

3. Now that the heart of the matter is clear, stop worrying:

a) There is nothing hidden which will not be revealed. No one can hide from God;

1) ***“For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.”*** Mark 4:22 NKJV

b) He sees it all and will hold everyone accountable.

1) ***“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of***

*joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And **there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.***” Hebrews 4:12-13 NKJV

c) As each person stands before the judgement seat, every deed of his life will be examined and adjudicated.

1) ***“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.”*** II Corinthians 5:10-11 NKJV

d) The fire of God will test every moment of his life and only what was valuable for His kingdom will remain. Any work built on the foundation of grace-empowered-faith-based-obedience will be rewarded. Everything else will be reduced to ash.

1) *“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. **But let each one take heed how he builds on it.** For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; **for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.** If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”* 1 Corinthians 3:9-17 NKJV

4. So, this question remains: what is your role in the process?
- a) Paul taught Timothy to become absorbed in God's word so he would be thoroughly equipped to teach, rebuke, correct, and instruct God's people in the way of righteousness.
 - 1) *"**All Scripture** is given by inspiration of God, and is **profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* II Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV
 - b) Y'shua taught His disciples to be very careful for how they judge others; you are safe if you are being godly, but if you have the wrong attitude and approach, that same measure will come against you.
 - 1) *"**Judge not, and you shall not be judged.** Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. **For with the***

*same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” And He spoke a parable to them: “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? A disciple is not above his teacher, but **everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.** And **why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! **First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother’s eye.**” Luke 6:37-42 NKJV***

c) And maybe the most important piece of preparation is to always first examine your own life. Before you are of any value in helping others, you must have your life in order.

1) *“and being **ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.**” II Corinthians 10:6 NKJV*

d) You can't correct in others what you won't correct in yourself. And if we include your approach to those outside the Church, skip the judgment for now altogether and deliver to them only one sentiment... "Christ crucified!"

1) *"For I determined **not to know anything among you** except Jesus **Christ and Him crucified.**"* 1

Corinthians 2:2 NKJV

H. One Reason to Fail

(1) Godly Leadership or Degrading Lordship

(a) Cease and desist from condemning a brother simply because they lack maturity and knowledge.

1. "Therefore **let us not judge one another anymore**, but rather **resolve** this, not to put a **stumbling block** or a **cause to fall** in our brother's way." Romans 14:13
NKJV

2. A child in the faith is deserving of many accommodations and his poor choices and even his slow growth does not grant you permission to slam him into alignment with God.

a) Be gracious and altruistic to those who are immature, and for God's sake recall your own

development process. I promise you, it was slower than you remember!

3. God's heart on the matter is this:

a) When in the presence of someone who is weak in the faith, what Y'shua might gently call "a little one," don't let your approach to discipleship become a bolder in their path to maturity.

1) *"But **whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble**, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea."*

Mark 9:42 NKJV

b) And might it bear repeating precisely... if you cause even one little child of God to stumble, which opens the door to sin, it would be better for you if you had a 1,500 pound stone attached to a noose around your neck, and you were tossed into the ocean and dragged to the bottom. And if the one-and-a-half-ton millstone yanking you by the neck to the bottom of the ocean is not graphic enough to describe the consequences of leading God's people astray, consider more closely the depth of the Mediterranean. Sink to the lowest

point and there will be 7,500 pounds of pressure per square inch crushing your skull.

ONE LOVE

2. Love and Legalism

A. One Law

(1) Really, nothing is unclean?

(a) Really, decide for yourself?

1. "I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is **nothing unclean of itself**; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." Romans 14:14 NKJV
2. The first thought on interpreting this passage correctly...
 - a) Rearrange its punctuation, which of course was added by translators, who unknowingly or in a biased fashion (you decide), can change the meaning of a passage entirely, by avoiding a few commas.
 - b) If you change even one word, which in Greek means any of a number of words (in, at, on, by, etc.), you can completely change the meaning.

- c) And if we are to be intellectually honest, to keep this in context and to be consistent with the rest of the God's word, it seems that the translational bias is purposefully antisemitic (against things Jewish) and antinomic (against the law). Please review the previous comments on Romans 14:5.
- d) **Context (Romans 14):** Paul is not teaching that all of a sudden everything is clean. If that was his intent, then why would he refer to the prophet Isaiah in his second letter to the Corinthians?
"Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean."
- 1) ***"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from***

among them And be separate, says the Lord.

Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.”” II Corinthians 6:14-17 NKJV

2) From Isaiah: ***“The Lord has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations; And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God. Depart! Depart! Go out from there, Touch no unclean thing; Go out from the midst of her, Be clean, You who bear the vessels of the Lord.”*** Isaiah 52:10-11 NKJV

e) The subject matter here is in regards to those who are weak in the faith, who are concerned that the meats (or other things) they might choose are not permitted by God—what Paul understands as unclean.

1) And if it is clean according to the Lord, but they feel it is unclean; then to them it is unclean even though it is actually clean, and you must not do anything to cause them to stumble.

2) Even if what you are eating is clean according to God’s Word, abstain in the presence of those who are weak in the faith for the sake of their conscience, not your own.

- 3) If you love your brother you will be willing to sacrifice your liberty for the sake of his conscience.
 - 4) Again, for more clarity on this subject, Paul writes brilliantly in I Corinthians 10:23-33. Read it again above in section one of these notes.
- f) **Context (The Whole Bible):** Do you really believe that Paul's intention with a few verses is to negate all of God's laws that distinguish clean from unclean things?
- 1) To do so, you must conclude that Paul's intent was to pen thirty words that would render obsolete the mass of doctrine in the Old Testament on the topic.
 - 2) That would include every abominable behavior that God calls unclean—including every command on sexual immorality. That is utterly absurd.
 - 3) Can you honestly come to that conclusion from this passage? Of course not!
3. Maybe you are hoping that Paul is establishing a different set of rules for God's people, depending on their background and heritage.

- a) If you were a Jew when you came to the faith, then God's laws apply, but if you were once a Gentile, then you can pick and choose which laws make you comfortable and you can ignore those that are too difficult to follow.
- b) The problems with that theology are manifold.
- c) It was clearly established after the Exodus that there was one law provided to govern Israel and the Gentiles who joined Israel.
 - 1) *“**One ordinance shall be for you** of the assembly **and for the stranger** who dwells with you, **an ordinance forever** throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. **One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you.**”* Numbers 15:15-16 NKJV
- d) And Paul also makes it clear that once you join the Christian faith, you are actually no longer a Gentile—so there remains only one law for all believers.
 - 1) *“Therefore remember that you, **once Gentiles in the flesh**—who are called *Uncircumcision* by what is called the *Circumcision* made in the*

*flesh by hands— **that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.***” Ephesians 2:11-18 NKJV

4. Watch this: And now we know how this has been egregiously translated and interpreted in just one

common English translation, the New King James Version (NKJV):

- a) Pick and choose your own rules! “I know and am convinced *by the Lord Jesus* that there is nothing unclean of itself; *but to him who considers* anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”
 - 1) Here it seems to say that Jesus teaches us that there is no longer any such thing as unclean. His new standard is that you get to decide!
- b) But for consistency sake, we will use a slightly different arrangement of the same passage. And maybe you should first recognize what Jesus thought about changing His Father’s doctrine—in His own words. He emphatically claimed that He did not come to alter it in any way!
 - 1) “*Jesus answered them and said, “**My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.** If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, **whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. Did not***

Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" John 7:16-19 NKJV

- 2) *““Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, **one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.** Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, **shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven;** but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”*
Matthew 5:17-19 NKJV

- c) In this slightly new arrangement of the same Romans' verse, you will see that the meaning is changed entirely, but is now consistent with the doctrine of the Father.
- d) The word 'by' is changed to 'in' (the same Greek word means in, at, on, by, etc.), and two commas are added, which actually keep the passage in perfect context with the rest of Romans 14 and the entire Bible. How refreshing!

- 1) "I know and am convinced, *in the Lord Jesus*, there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean."
 - 2) Interpreted simply: what is being represented by the Lord Jesus is that there is nothing unclean that has been previously declared clean according to the teachings of the doctrine of His Father from the Old Testament Scriptures.
- e) And is that not exactly what Paul wrote to Timothy about foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth?
- 1) *"forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from **foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.** For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;"* I Timothy 4:3-4 NKJV
- f) And even so, let's reiterate, if what is clean is believed to be unclean by someone uneducated,

let him treat it as unclean for the sake of his own conscience—even though it is not really unclean.

5. And if you are in a mood to laugh, try this one on for size.

a) These two additional verses have been often used to bolster the narcissistic self-centered translation and interpretation of Romans 14:14.

1) *“**All things are lawful for me**, but not all things are helpful; **all things are lawful for me**, but not all things edify.”* 1 Corinthians 10:23 NKJV

2) *“**All things are lawful for me**, but all things are not helpful. **All things are lawful for me**, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”* 1 Corinthians 6:12 NKJV

6. Conclusion? There is no longer anything definitive that unclean; it's all up to you to determine for yourself what is clean and unclean.

1) If you say it's unclean it is; if you don't, it isn't!

2) In other words, anything goes; if you determine something is permitted and lawful to you, then have at it! Just don't violate your own conscience and you're good to go.

- b) What brand of Christianity is that? Reading it here might make you nauseous, but that is precisely how Paul's letters to the Corinthians are used to support this narcissistic theology.
- c) Furthermore, with the strong foundation laid for correct interpretation to this point in the chapter, the rest will be a breeze. Each step of the way is just another practical display of God's love.
 - 1) See [Religionship or Relationship](#)

B. One Sign

- (1) Serving Leadership or Shaming Lordship?
 - (a) Do whatever it takes to be Christlike
 - 1. **“Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.”**
Romans 14:15 NKJV
 - 2. Paul turned his entire attention in this letter to the practical display of love when he pivoted his message to urge Christians to sacrifice everything for God, to do whatever it takes to be holy and Christlike.
 - a) And then he made the shocking argument that to do so would be completely reasonable, the

acceptable standard, nothing to brag about. It's what God expects of you!

1) *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**"* Romans 12:1 NKJV

b) As such, how difficult is it to ask that you don't let your mature understanding of food ruin the faith of a less mature, less informed brother, who simply does not yet understand?

C. One Kingdom

(1) Godly Leadership or Guilt-inducing Lordship?

(a) Reminder: you are a minister of God for good!

1. "Therefore do not let **your good** be spoken of as **evil**; for **the kingdom of God** is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**. For he who serves Christ in **these things** is acceptable to God and approved by men." Romans 14:16-18 NKJV

2. It is so clear; your maturity in the faith and knowledge is a strength.

a) Deep understanding is a good thing, but it will quickly turn bad if you are not careful. Knowledge

can cause pride and hubris, excessive self-confidence and arrogance. Love does no such thing; it always edifies others.

1) *“Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. **Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.**”* I Corinthians 8:1 NKJV

b) The kingdom of God is not defined by a set of acceptable earthly activities, nor your ability to adhere to a list of restrictions.

c) The kingdom is on full display when the fullness of God is manifesting in your mortal body, His power emanating from you!

1) *“nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, **the kingdom of God is within you.**”*
Luke 17:21 NKJV

2) *“For **the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.**”* I Corinthians 4:20 NKJV

d) That is precisely what John the Baptist saw in Christ, **and** what Christ said of Himself; “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

1) *“In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, **“Repent,***

for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

Matthew 3:1-2 NKJV

2) *“From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”**”* Matthew 4:17 NKJV

e) It was the key objective of Y’shua’s model prayer to the Father; “Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.”

1) *“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. **Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.**”* Matthew 6:9-10 NKJV

f) And it was what He assigned us to teach; “As you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

1) *“And as you go, preach, saying, **‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’**”* Matthew 10:7 NKJV

3. Just as He was the living example, the incarnation of God in man, so too are we called to bring the kingdom to earth.

a) The kingdom of God manifests by our transformation into the full stature and image of Christ. Yes, knowledge can cause pride and hubris,

excessive self-confidence and arrogance. Love does no such thing.

b) When every Christian does his part, the Body of Christ grows into maturity and edifies itself in love. This is the true testimony of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

1) *“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;** that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, **speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—** from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which **every part does its share, causes growth***

of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

Ephesians 4:11-16 NKJV

- c) Peace and joy can be elaborated a bit in the following verse, but what of this righteousness?
- 4. There is for certain a gift of righteousness, that which was imparted to you for free at the moment your life was redeemed from eternal death. But there is another side of the coin.
 - a) Just as faith is a gift that you then must practice...
 - 1) *"Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, **To those who have obtained** like precious **faith** with us **by the righteousness** of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:"* II Peter 1:1 NKJV
 - 2) *"For by grace you have been **saved through faith**, and that not of yourselves; **it is the gift of God,**"* Ephesians 2:8 NKJV
 - 3) *"Therefore, having been **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have **access by faith** into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."* Romans 5:1-2 NKJV

- 4) *“But **without faith it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that **He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**”* Hebrews 11:6 NKJV
- b) ...so too is righteousness, and you simply can't be pleasing to the Lord without practice. That goes for both faith and righteousness.
- 1) *“Little children, let no one deceive you. **He who practices righteousness is righteous**, just as He is righteous.”* I John 3:7 NKJV
- 2) *“If you know that **He is righteous**, you know that **everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.**”* I John 2:29 NKJV
- 3) *“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: **Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God**, nor is he who does not love his brother.”* I John 3:10 NKJV
- c) He who practices righteousness is righteous. In other words, anyone who is truly born again will practice righteousness, and that means whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God. Can it be more clear?

5. As Paul previously described...
- a) What is good is what is acceptable to God; how it looks is a life completely sacrificed to God; and how God values that sacrifice—it is a reasonable choice.
 - 1) *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**”* Romans 12:1 NKJV
 - b) And praise the Lord... live like that and not only is God pleased, but you will be in total alignment with God’s leadership requirements as God’s minister for good, as Paul also previously described.
 - 1) *“For **he is God’s minister to you for good.** But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; **for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.**”* Romans 13:4 NKJV

D. One Direction

- (1) Peace and Joy
 - (a) The true testimony of the kingdom is not just righteousness, but also peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

1. “Therefore let us **pursue the things which make for peace and the things by** which one may **edify** another.” Romans 14:19 NKJV
2. Pursue the things which make for peace... how do you do that?
 - a) There is only one source. He gives us peace and it is a peace that the world cannot offer. It’s a peace that surpasses understanding. So, when you have peace that is not related to external circumstances, at moments when you know it would otherwise be impossible to feel tranquil and at ease, that serenity you feel is God’s peace.
 - 1) “***Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives*** do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27 NKJV
 - 2) “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; **and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.***” Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV

3. And whereas Paul uses joy in the previous verse as a character trait of the kingdom, what better way to manifest that Christlikeness than to edify one another—the truest form of joy there is.
 - a) We experience the complete joy of the Lord by seeing others the way He does, by preferring others as He does. There can be no greater joy than to walk in that truth.
 - 1) *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, **fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.** Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind **let each esteem others better than himself.** Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for **the interests of others.**”* Philippians 2:1-4 NKJV
 - 2) *“I have **no greater joy** than to hear that my children walk in truth.”* III John 1:4 NKJV

E. One Choice

- (1) Gentiles Lord Over; Servant Leaders Sacrifice
 - (a) Leadership or Lordship

1. **“Do not destroy the work of God** for the sake of food. **All things indeed are pure**, but it is **evil** for the man **who eats with offense**. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine **nor do anything by which your brother stumbles** or is **offended** or is **made weak.**”
Romans 14:20-21 NKJV
2. As Paul begins to wind down the granularity of this lesson, a few specific applications of what it looks like to love and prefer your brother.
 - a) He solidifies the Christlike approach to demonstrating the liberties you possess because of your advanced knowledge.
 - b) Your better understanding should be an advantage, but you should not exercise even one freedom if it might wound a fellow believer.
 - 1) ***“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. {9}...“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” {10} Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*”** Romans 13:8-10 NKJV

- c) Of course, everything God permits in His law is clean and unadulterated, but it becomes vial if it offends your brother or causes him to feel guilty.
 - d) The topic here is your liberty to freely eat, drink and engage in other legal lifestyle choices, but also how it is mandatory that you refrain from any food, drink, and activity if it might weaken your brother's faith.
 - e) It's a simple rule with profound implications; if what I am about to do might offend someone, even if perfectly acceptable according to God's law, then don't do it!
 - f) Said differently, if what I do hurts another it violates the prime objective of God's law; love God and love your neighbors, and never do anything to harm them.
3. Paul would even say that if you consider God's laws in their black and white format, without understanding the godly application of said laws...
- a) ...it is not freedom at all, but bondage.
 - 1) *“Stand fast therefore in **the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be***

entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

Galatians 5:1 NKJV

b) Instead, take your liberties, run them through this filter, and you will never make an error!

1) *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are **true**, whatever things are **noble**, whatever things are **just**, whatever things are **pure**, whatever things are **lovely**, whatever things are of **good report**, if there is any **virtue** and if there is anything **praiseworthy**—meditate on these things.”*

Philippians 4:8 NKJV

2) Your freedoms must align with God’s truth and God would never place your liberties above your neighbor’s wellbeing. Your moral principles and ideals must be established with God’s priorities in mind. God is the arbiter of justice, so if you find yourself motivated to make an example of someone, you are way off. Your motivations and intentions must be pure—set apart to always glorify God and point others toward Him as their destination. That is because God’s truth is beautiful. So, if what you represent as God is ugly, again you are way off.

Remember, the message is good news, not dreadful news; that is why we call it the gospel of peace, not the gospel of fear. Your primary filter, your principle question at every moment must be this: what does God think, or what is God's heart on the matter? When your liberties align with these priorities, they are worthy of all praise.

F. One Faith

(1) Be Fully Convinced!

(a) Of course, there is nothing wrong with your strong faith!

1. **“Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.”** Romans 14:22-23
NKJV

2. It should make you content in your private relationship with God.

a) But, if you shipwreck the faith of others because of your liberties, even by participating in perfectly acceptable practices in their presence, when those

- practices cause them to feel inferior, confused or guilty, you literally become the source of their sin.
3. And notice what Paul emphasizes at the end of his teaching. Whatever is not of faith is sin!
 - a) That is because without faith you cannot please God, and whatever is not pleasing to God is considered iniquity.
 - 1) “*But **without faith it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*” Hebrews 11:6 NKJV
 - b) With that in mind, if you promote any such thing, and again the context here is clear, even if what you represent is otherwise legal according to the Scriptures, if you promote such and it harms a brother, you are not looked upon favorably by God.
 - c) The message is specific. If you cause doubt, or fear, or confusion, or guilt, or shame, or self-condemnation in others, you are wrecking their faith and causing them to sin, because whatever is not of faith is sin!

- d) Don't condemn yourself by the liberty you enjoy. Your maturity must not create uncertainty in others, especially if it inspires them to violate their conscience.
 - e) That is no way to live in Christ. Everything we do must be rooted in grace-empowered faith-based-obedience. All else falls short of the glory of Yahweh.
4. And finally, remember we are all on the same team; we are one new man in Christ.
- a) Therefore, walk worthy of that gift, always making love the priority.
 - 1) *“But now **in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.** For He Himself is our peace, who **has made both one**, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as **to create in Himself one new man from the two**, thus making peace, and **that He might reconcile them both to God in one body***

through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” Ephesians 2:13-16 NKJV

- 2) *“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy of the calling** with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is **one body and one Spirit**, just as you were called in **one hope** of your calling; **one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father** of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”*

Ephesians 4:1-6 NKJV

- b) There is only one faith and anyone who identifies as a Christian has the same Spirit and shares the same faith, regardless of how smart or mature they are. Don't let your knowledge cause Christian gloating; because God sees that as Christian bloating, and when that balloon explodes it gets very messy.

BONUS: SERVING LEADER OR SELFISH LORD

3. WHO You Are and WHAT You Believe

A. Scripture References for Sermon Introduction

(1) Serving Leadership vs. Gentile Leadership

(a) "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!"

The quintessential truth: there is one God, and there is no other but He. There is one Lord; He is Father of all; He is above all, He permeates everything and is the reason you exist. Yes, there is One God, and it's not you! Certainly you are empowered to be the voice of Christ in the earth, and His hands and feet.

1. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; **one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.**"
Ephesians 4:1-6 NKJV

2. "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'" Acts 17:28 NKJV

3. "So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, **for there is one God**, and there is no other but He." Mark 12:32 NKJV
4. ""Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, **the Lord is one!**" Deuteronomy 6:4 NKJV
5. "Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus answered him, "**The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.** And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."" Mark 12:28-31 NKJV
6. "So the scribe said to Him, "**Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He.** And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt

offerings and sacrifices." Now **when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."** But **after that no one dared question Him.**" Mark 12:32-34 NKJV

7. "When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. **And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**" Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ."
Matthew 16:13-20 NKJV

8. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, **we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us:** we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” II Corinthians 5:17-21 NKJV

(b) Go preach; go baptize; go teach; go minister; go serve; go provide; go be an example to the flock in word and deed. Imitate Christ for sure, but don’t hold yourself out to be God. Satan did that; Pharaoh did that; and King Herod did that. And it did not turn out well for any of them.

1. **Satan did that!** ““How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For

you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit." Isaiah 14:12-15 NKJV

2. **Pharaoh did that!** "And Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go."" Exodus 5:2 NKJV

3. **Herod did that!** "So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died." Acts 12:21-23 NKJV

(c) Instead of usurping God's authority, your role as His ambassador is to be a loving example, not a source of prideful condemnation. Remember, receiving condemnation is not an option for God's children.

1. “There is **therefore now no condemnation** to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” Romans 8:1 NKJV

(d) Nevertheless, the identity politics here is a double-edged sword. On one razor-sharp edge sit Christians in leadership. If you identify with a leadership position, how you represent God is crucial. Who are you as a leader; what is your role, and how will you exercise your God-given authority? The other edge is equally as sharp, and Christians who sit atop its blade are following those Christian leaders, and they too must be crystal clear on their identity. In other words, it is critical in the Church that both Christian leaders and those who follow them have a solid identity doctrine. In plain language, good identity theology is this: whether you are a shepherd or a sheep, you must be fully convinced in your own mind who you are and what you believe! Nevertheless, it's safe to say that shepherds have a greater responsibility than sheep and will be judged more harshly by God.

1. "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."
James 3:1 NKJV
2. **Context Tongue:** "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! **And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.** For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My

brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh." James 3:2-12 NKJV

(e) Leaders must be an example to the flock in word and deed. Shepherd the flock of God, serving as supervisors, not driven by greedy impulses because there is something to gain by lording over others whom God entrusted to you. And worse yet is when your selfish desires are fueled by inauthentic motives.

1. "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: **Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being Lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;** and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." I Peter 5:1-4 NKJV

(f) Instead, be willing and eager to be a Christlike example to the flock. What does that look like exactly? If you

desire to lead, you must put yourself below those you intend to serve.

1. “But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles Lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but **whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**”” Matthew 20:25-28 NKJV

(g) That’s precisely what Y’shua did; He came to serve, not to be served. Think about it... He was the Teacher of teachers; He was the Master of the universe, and yet He knelt before His disciples just hours before His horrific torture and crucifixion, and He washed their filthy odorous feet. He taught us why; “I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” That is serving leadership!

1. “So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, **“Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I**

then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." John 13:12-17 NKJV

(h) But, if you instead choose to otherwise serve yourself in your honored leadership position, to mislead God's sheep at all, this is what the Lord has for you; "Woe to the shepherds who injure My sheep in any way or cause them to feel lost! I will punish you for your evil choices.

1. **"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!"** says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel **against the shepherds who feed My people: "You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,"** says the Lord." Jeremiah 23:1-2 NKJV

(i) If you cause even one of My little children to stumble by leading them into sin, it would be better for you if you had a 1,500 pound stone attached to a noose around

your neck, and you were tossed into the ocean and dragged to the bottom.” Remember, there is One God, and it’s not you! And if the one-and-a-half-ton millstone yanking you by the neck to the bottom of the ocean is not graphic enough to describe the consequences of leading God’s people astray, consider more closely the depth of the Mediterranean. Sink to the lowest point and there will be 7,500 pounds of pressure per square inch crushing your skull.

1. “But **whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble**, it would be **better for him** if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.” Mark 9:42 NKJV
2. **Context Children (before v. 42):** “Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, “**Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.**”” Mark 9:36-37 NKJV
3. **Context Sin (after v. 42):** “**If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.** It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell,

into the fire that shall never be quenched— where
'Their worm does not die And the fire is not
quenched.' And **if your foot causes you to sin, cut it
off.** It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than
having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that
shall never be quenched— where 'Their worm does
not die, And the fire is not quenched.' And **if your
eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.** It is better for you
to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather
than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—
where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not
quenched.'"Mark 9:43-48 NKJV

- (j) Yes, shepherds have a greater responsibility than sheep and will be judged more harshly by God, so I implore you to be a serving leader, not a selfish lord. Or, as Paul so eloquently states, "Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves."
- 1. "So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes,

Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "**Follow Me.**" John 21:15-19 NKJV

Summary: ONE LORD

1. Serving Leader or Selfish Lord

A. Weak in the Faith or Strong in the Faith

(1) Demeaning Judgment or Helpful Instruction

(a) Loving Example or Prideful Condemnation

1. Relationships First

a) The Church leadership that emerged because of Roman **syncretism** with the Christian faith in the

forth century was staunchly antisemitic. Subsequently, the theology that formed from this Roman **inculturation** with Christianity, and its **inculcation** of Roman religious beliefs, has since dominated Church doctrine. It has caused this particular passage in Romans to be used as an apologetic to prove that it is wrong or legalistic to use Old Testament Scriptures (God's Laws) to regulate the consumption of foods (to define what is fit to eat or kosher), and to mandate the celebration Biblical Feasts as God's holidays. This new Roman version of Christianity teaches that these have been nullified in Christ. You've likely learned that those who still do so, or think they should, are those to whom Paul is referring as "weak in the faith."

- 1) **Syncretism** is the practice of combining different beliefs and various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merging or assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and

allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths.

- 2) **Inculturation:** the gradual acquisition of the characteristics and norms of a culture or group by a person, another culture, etc.; the adaptation of Christian liturgy to a non-Christian cultural background.
- 3) **Inculcation:** the instilling of knowledge or values in someone, usually by repetition or persistent instruction. To inculcate is to instill or impress an attitude, idea, or habit on someone.

2. The early Church was filled with converts from pagan belief systems.

- a) They came into Christianity knowing nothing about its roots in the Hebrew faith, and consequently nothing about the Scriptures.
- b) This was not so with the Jews. They had a distinct advantage having been raised with the “oracles of God.”
- c) And yet, as you also probably experienced in your own personal conversion, when you are impacted by an encounter with the Holy Spirit, you are imparted a desire to love and please the Lord. This

desire, however, does not come with any actual knowledge base of what that should look like.

- d) There in Rome, where there were many believers who were once Gentiles, there was much confusion about what they were permitted to eat and what days were holy.
- e) Much of that confusion was clearly around which meats were clean or unclean according to God's word (Leviticus 11). Again, they had no background in this stuff.
- f) To be safe, those who were weak in the faith, or without previous knowledge, chose to limit themselves to eating only vegetables.
- g) If you too were once a Gentile and you also have no knowledge of such things, let this be known: there is no commandment in the entirety of the Torah (Law) limiting your food choices to vegetables only.
- h) There are commanded limits to the meats you can eat, but you'd need to be knowledgeable before you'd feel comfortable believing you can eat all things permitted by God, otherwise your options would remain in doubt.

3. Y'shua was sure to address the dangers of not knowing the Word of God.
 - a) And conversely, if you are skilled in the Scriptures you have a distinct advantage. But even with such skills, you are not to condemn a brother in the faith who lacks such knowledge. Remember, love demands we prefer others!
 - b) Paul is not saying that those “weak in the faith” are the ones who are still trying to eat clean according to the Old Testament; he is saying that those who are weak in the faith (immature, ignorant) are the ones who don't know what is permitted (fit or kosher) according to the Old Testament.
4. No one should look down on the other!
 - a) In order to love God the best they can, these newbies prefer to eat no meat at all, so they do not make a mistake—and that is honorable. And Paul is saying, “Don't look down on them.” **Ultimately, they are God's servants and He is the one who knows the intentions of their hearts.** Also, you who are weak in the faith, don't you judge the one who exercises their liberty to eat (meat) because they do know what is clean and what is unclean.

Knowing the difference is a strength (maturity) in the faith, not a weakness.

5. The Jerusalem Council

- a) This was a huge issue in the early Church, so much so that they needed to convene a council to figure out what to do with the massive influx of Gentiles who were turning to Yahweh through Y'shua. It is so important for you to fully understand what Paul is teaching in Romans 14 that included here is the entire ruling from the Jerusalem Council:

6. Notice that the ruling for the Gentiles, who are new to the faith, includes regulations that require immediate adherence:

- a) Leave your idolatry behind!
 - b) End all sexual immorality!
 - c) Refrain from eating animals that have been killed by strangulation and/or still have blood in them! These are two indicators for eating food that is kosher. Kosher is the modern term used to describe food that is fit to eat according to the Scriptures.
- 1) This ruling is an encapsulation of commandments.

- 2) Much like we discussed in Romans 10, 12, and 13 when we explored Y'shua's interaction with the scribe who asked Him about the greatest commandment in Mark 12:28-34.
- d) To the scribe, Y'shua gives two categories of commands to obey (not just two commandments).
 - 1) One set encompasses all those that demonstrate our love for the Father, and the other set, all those that demonstrate love for one another.
 - 2) In similar form, the Council in Jerusalem is prompted by the Holy Spirit to lay out specific "legal guidelines" for the Gentiles with three categories of commands to obey.
 - 3) One command speaks to idolatry, one to sexual purity, and the other to eating according to the Scriptures.
7. One more note about the Jerusalem Council ruling:
 - a) The new converts were not given a permanent free ride to stay immature or "weak in the faith."
 - b) In addition to the final instructions for the Gentiles, as James is handing down the ruling, he reminds everyone that Moses is preached in the synagogues every Sabbath.

- c) Immediately after the three starting categories of rules (with roots back to the days of Noah), James reminds us that God's people attend synagogue weekly on the Sabbath to study "Moses".
 - d) Apparently, the Gentiles are now expected to attend, so they can learn more about how to live out this born-again life.
 - e) In other words, even Gentile converts are expected to eventually learn and abide by the Laws of God in the Old Testament.
 - f) Yes, if you explore the Word of God, you will find that in both cases the answers entail obedience to a long list of Yahweh's instructions for practical living couched under overarching headings: Love God; Love your Neighbor; No Idolatry, No Sexual Immorality, No Unclean Foods.
8. As you can see, knowledge of and a desire to obey God's commands is not what makes one weak in the faith, but it is a lack of such that makes one vulnerable.
- a) If you were a new convert (weak in the faith), and you were not completely confident you understood what was permitted, it would be much

easier to simply not eat meat at all and only eat vegetables for now, until you gained confidence in such knowledge—removing all doubt.

- b) They are weak in the faith, but their hearts are in the right place, so do not despise them. And conversely, you who are weak, don't despise others who exercise their liberty.
- c) Paul gives even greater clarification in his **first letter to the Corinthians** in which he describes the liberties one has with proper knowledge, and how not to use that liberty to hurt a fellow believer who has no such freedom—one weak in the faith.

9. Other notable apologetics on biblical acceptable foods: See [The Food Channel Meet the History Channel](#))

- a) See comments on I Timothy 4:1-5 (pages 43-44)
 - 1) “For **every creature of God is good**, and **nothing is to be refused** if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”
- b) See comments on Mark 7:1-23 (pages 45-49)
 - 1) “*There is **nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him**; but the things*

which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man.”

2) *“It does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, **thus purifying all foods?**”*

B. One Judge, Jury, and Executioner

(1) Who is the servant and who is the master?

(a) Who are you to judge another’s servant?

1. Back to Basics

a) This is going to sound ultra-repetitive, but it is necessary to repeat the basics until you are actually adhering to the basics. Before we get granular on the topic of how we ought to treat one another in regards to a few specific topics, keep in mind the overarching command: Love and prefer one another; and do not hurt one another. This is the ultimate expression of God’s law.

b) And you fulfill it by not standing by as you witness your brother sin; that would be a form of hate—a type of punishment or display of ill-will.

c) Rather, love others by gently correcting their errors and leading them into repentance. Love can actually conquer sin; it can reverse the course of someone who has strayed from the truth. To cover

the sins of another—what a powerful concept! And what a Christlike demonstration of stewarding God’s grace!

2. Now, we can address the context of this passage...
 - a) Precisely how those who know better must treat those who have less knowledge and experience and thus would feel guilt and embarrassment over certain decisions they might make, simply because they are not versed enough in the scriptures to understand what foods are permitted to eat or which of their previous cultural traditions are still acceptable.
 - b) A great place to start is to back up a few chapters from what we’ve just reviewed in I Corinthians 10. We will learn how Paul wants those who are more knowledgeable and mature to act around those who are weak in the faith and would thus have concern over eating meat that was “offered to idols.”
 - 1) *the one who is weak in the faith eats what he does not believe is permitted and thus is wrought with guilt, shame and embarrassment.

- 2) **of course we, who are strong in the faith, know this poor brother will not perish in eternity for lack of proper understanding, but they don't know that because, quite frankly, they are simply weak in the faith. And we, who are strong in the faith, should care about that!
 - 3) ***Destroyed: destroyed to destroy fully, literally or figuratively; Root (Strong's Greek 622) kill, destroy, (b) I lose, I am perishing (the resultant death being viewed as certain).
3. Those who have knowledge know that an idol is nothing and therefore eating meat offered to idol is nothing.
 - a) However not everyone shares that understanding, as some are still weak in the faith.
 - b) If those who are weak see others consume such meat and ignorantly participate, and then feel defiled over their actions, they may experience unnecessary guilt.
 - c) Remember, in God's eyes neither the person with proper knowledge, nor the person who is still immature is superior. What God cares about most is how we treat one another.

- d) Therefore, if you are the one who has the liberty to eat because you have proper understanding, you are better off not exercising that liberty in the presence of those who might otherwise develop a guilty conscience because they joined you.
 - e) God considers that a stumbling block to those who are weak, and you are not too be the source of anything that might cause your brother stumble.
 - f) That includes your choice of foods. In fact, you are better off never again eating meats that would be otherwise permitted by the Scriptures, if your liberty to do so harms your brother.
4. You might be thinking, "How on earth could my liberty possibly hurt my brother?"
- a) And that is where loving and preferring others becomes fully demonstrable.
 - b) Your strength is, in this case, demonstrated by your knowledge that an idol is nothing and therefore creates no restriction and thus no concern for eating meat that would otherwise be permitted by law, even if previously sacrificed to an idol.
 - c) However, the one who is weak, he who has no such knowledge, if he follows your example and

eats the meat sacrificed to an idol and subsequently suffers guilt, you who are strong are held accountable for hurting your brother.

- d) How was he I injured? He believes... "I will perish as a result of my bad decision and my resultant death is a certainty."
- e) You know that is not true, but he does not and thus is harmed by your actions.
- f) Remember your one debt as a Christian from Romans 13:9-10; "You shall love your neighbor as yourself and love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."
- g) This is also corroborated by the latter half of this very chapter (Romans 14:14-23), as we will soon learn.

5. Now, before we address which previous cultural traditions are still acceptable after you come to the faith, keep this in mind.

- a) Your understanding of the Holy Scriptures may be superior to your brother's and thus gives you an advantage, however he is still a child of God and equal to you in God's eyes.

- b) Remember, as Christians we are all on the same team; we all serve the same God.
- c) He is the final arbiter and judge, so when you exercise a type of leadership that is demeaning and humiliating to others, you sit yourself in the judgment seat and assume you are the final authority, and that is mortifying to God.
- d) A weak and immature brother in the faith will stand before one judge, the God who saves, as will you. And that God is ultimately responsible to make him stand in victory, as He will you.
- e) Knowing this should inspire you to be a source of helpful instruction, not degrading lordship. That is Godly leadership, whereas the latter is precisely how Gentiles rule over their subjects, and that is not who you are anymore!

C. Be Fully Convinced

(1) Confidence in What You Believe

(a) Know WHO You Are and WHAT You Believe

1. Let's first establish that this passage is not addressing Biblical Holy Days, or what are known in the Bible as the Feasts of the Lord, including the Sabbath.

- a) Here is the issue being clarified; if you observe a day that is special to you or your cultural tradition, providing it is not in opposition to any of Yahweh's commands, then go ahead and celebrate it, but always do so with your focus on the Lord. In fact, you are to do all things unto the Lord.
2. In the modern American culture, for instance, we might consider days like anniversaries, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, or the Forth of July.
 - a) Are they in opposition to Yahweh's commands? Of course not. If you desire to commentate them, go ahead and do so, just honor Yahweh as you celebrate.
 - b) However, it is critical you recognize that Paul is NOT teaching that if you don't feel like keeping the commanded Biblical Holidays as detailed in Leviticus 23, you can exercise your freedom to ignore them. (See Leviticus 23:1-44)
 - 1) Leviticus 23:3 (the Sabbath)
 - 2) Leviticus 23:4-8 (the Passover and Unleavened Bread)
 - 3) Leviticus 23:9-14 (the Feast of First Fruits)
 - 4) Leviticus 23:15-22 (the Feast of Weeks)

- 5) Leviticus 23:23-25 (the Feast of Trumpets)
 - 6) Leviticus 23:26-32 (the Day of Atonement)
 - 7) Leviticus 23:33-44 (the Feast of Tabernacles)
- c) He is also not giving any permission to celebrate manmade holidays that are in direct opposition to God, like Halloween or other holidays which maintain their roots in pagan worship. Unfortunately, pagan-inspired holidays include Christmas and Easter.
- d) That may seem appalling to some, but a bit of basic research will easily reveal the true history behind these holidays.
- e) And recall where we began this chapter when you were introduced to three new definitions: syncretism, inculturation and inculcation.
- f) To understand their meanings is a great place to begin your shocking journey of discovery. Ultimately, we are all called to obey God's commands, and that is one of the most important reasons you are empowered by grace.
3. And along this journey, it is up to the Church to judge itself righteously.

- a) A deep dive into Colossians 2:16-17 and you quickly learn this: when it comes to the things of God, no one should judge the Body of Christ, except the Body of Christ.
 - 1) *Simply translate 'substance' into it's more common use: Body
 - 2) ** Remove 'is' which is not part of the original manuscript.
 - 3) And this is what remains: **“Let no one judge you... but the Body of Christ.”**
- b) In other words, it is not proper to expect, nor allow, pagans to hold Christians accountable; Christians are responsible for holding Christians accountable.
- c) You can learn the complete explanation in [Let No One Judge You?](#) but here is a slightly expanded version.
 - 1) We should not be fooled “through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the basic principles of the world (Colossians 2:8).” Nor should we subject ourselves to the regulations of “false religions or

the commandments and doctrines of men
(Colossians 2:22-23)."

- 2) But let's be clear here, these falsities are NOT to be equated with the Law in the Old Testament. God's laws are never considered as such: "empty deceit; man's traditions, commandments, and doctrines; nor basic principles of the world."
- 3) So, now when you read Colossians 2 and you know Paul is not disparaging God's Laws, what does he mean by: *"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, BUT THE SUBSTANCE IS OF CHRIST."* (Colossians 2:16-17)?
- 4) The key to correct understanding is actually found just underneath the surface by exploring the original language. Let no one judge you... period; or let no one judge you, but...; *but the SUBSTANCE IS of Christ?* The original says "but the body of Christ." Substance (sóma in Greek) is the word for body and we are all familiar with the phrase "the Body of Christ."

- 5) And the word “is” does not appear in Greek. It was added in English for clarity and appears in italics (in many translations) to indicate such in the more literal translations.
- 6) What clarity does it add? It only adds clarity if you want the verse to mean NO ONE should judge you at all.
- 7) If you believe Paul’s intention was that no one should judge you because it’s all about Jesus, then you would prefer to use “substance” and add “is”.
- 8) Some versions go even further, replacing “body” with “reality”, the reality is of Christ, pushing that doctrinal bias even harder.
- 9) Instead, if you understand that no one outside the faith should judge you, but insiders should (which is consistent with Paul’s other writings), then use “body” and take out the “is” that doesn’t exist in the first place. And you are left with: **“Let no one judge you, but the body of Christ!”** which is consistent with I Corinthians 5:12, *“DO YOU NOT JUDGE THOSE WHO ARE INSIDE?”*

D. Days and Food

(1) To One Lord...

(a) We Celebrate and Eat

1. It should be clearly established now, to what Paul refers when in this passage he writes of days and dietary choices.

a) Keep true to the context and you will not easily stray off topic to create some new doctrine that would be completely foreign to any first-century Jew, especially a Torah scholar like Paul.

b) There is no chance he has used this occasion to introduce some strange new religion that allows its devotees to invent their own laws and standards, to follow only the instructions that make them comfortable and content—**rules that satisfy their personal desires.**

c) “Sure, make up your own holidays, even if they transgress God’s word, as long as you feel good about yourself. And eat whatever you want, as long as your belly is satisfied. God does not care about His archaic outdated laws; He is only concerned for your happiness.”

- d) No, that's not it at all! Those who **chase their own desires** and those who teach that doctrine to others are never satisfied.
- e) That's the message that whispers sweet nothings into the ears of the unsuspecting hearts of baby Christians, who in their simple minds are easily tricked—swayed to follow “another Jesus.” Y'shua would say, “If you remain ignorant you will readily accept a different spirit, or a different gospel. You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”
- f) But, Y'shua was clear about His message and Paul was a perfect reflection of that. “Not one thing has changed in My law; that is not why I came. I came, instead, so you would be empowered to live out My Father's commands to the fullest extent!”
- g) It's not those who acknowledge what the Scriptures teach who God wants to represent Him; it's those who do what the Scriptures teach for whom God is looking.
- h) And that is why His grace has empowered you. If you claim you are a follower of Jesus, you ought also walk just as He walked. Paul makes the

explanation super simple. "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."

- i) Anything apart for that is a **doctrine of demons**, none of which can fool those who believe and know the truth.

2. This is the true message of this passage.

- a) With all your decisions, filter them before the Lord and be thankful that He is your God.
- b) Don't be anxious at all; inquire of the Lord before every choice you make and then follow the way of peace!
- c) The Holy Spirit will never lead you astray and will never contradict God's Word.
- d) And then, as we've said before... whatever you do, do it with a whole heart for God, not for men; whatever you do, do everything to the glory of God, and you can never go wrong. He is your judge and He is the arbiter of both your rewards and consequences.

E. Life and Death

(1) For/To One Lord We Live and Die

- (a) **You** no longer belong to **you!**

1. In this short passage it would be efficacious to begin with the end, “To this end...”
 - a) The conclusion of the matter is this: the reason Christ was murdered on a cross, and the reason He was raised from the dead was to declare He is Lord of all.
 - b) That includes every one of God’s faithful, who had previously died, who was living at that moment in history, and every human who would come to faith who would be born subsequent to His departure, and before His return. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord—and that includes even those who don’t believe.
 - c) Peter offered it so beautifully; “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct, and godliness, knowing that the day of judgment is coming?”
2. The verdict is clear; you no longer belong to yourself.
 - a) The price that was paid for your life and for what you will receive in death is beyond the human capacity to calculate. And every thought and action will be measured against that standard from

this day forward, and when you stand in that final day, the life you lived for the Lord, or not, will be revealed as everything not of value for God's Kingdom will be burned into ash, and all that remains will be that which was done unto the Lord.

3. Elsewhere Paul explained it as such: "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.
 - a) For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."
 - b) And, "In comparison to the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, I count everything else as immeasurably inferior."
 - c) Now, what Paul wrote earlier in this letter takes on even greater meaning. When Christ died, you died with Him. When Christ was buried, you were buried with Him. When Christ resurrected, you were resurrected with Him.
 - d) And because you were crucified when He was crucified, you are no longer animated by your own spirit, but His. And the life you must live from this day forward is a life of faith empowered by God's grace.

- e) "To this end Christ died and rose and lived again."
And no one else could do that for you.
- f) John the Baptist summarized this idea so well; "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven through Christ. Therefore it is my joy to declare that He must increase, but I must decrease."

F. One Judge One Justification

- (1) All Equal at the foot of the cross
 - (a) Naked before God
 - 1. It is simply amazing how much content there is in just a few words from Paul.
 - a) But again, I think as students of God's Word, true disciples, not just people with an "I-got-saved-date", we have the responsibility to go deeper, to search for the secret things of God, because it has been assigned to you **to discover the mysteries of the Kingdom.**
 - 2. Let's begin here with this whole idea of judging your brothers.
 - a) Should we not judge our brothers at all? Or, is Paul instructing you to avoid judging with a specific darkness in your heart, almost as if you are

hoping your brother fails—like Jonah did with the Ninevites?

- b) Of course Jonah did not see them as family, but it was clear that God did. It would seem, contextually, that Paul is telling us that we need to understand people's weaknesses and discern accordingly.
- c) It appears elsewhere in Paul's writings that we are to judge one another as fellow believers. Don't judge unbelievers, but do judge believers and remove yourself from evil people.
- d) And under no circumstance are you permitted to condemn a brother!
- e) We already discussed earlier in this chapter that the Body of Christ is indeed called to judge Christians, but Christians are not to be judged by outsiders, as we learned in Colossians 2:16-17.
 - 1) *"Let no one judge you, but the Body of Christ."*
- f) We just now read how God's people are not to judge unbelievers, but even that is not a permanent mandate. Eventually, you will punish all disobedience, but not until your obedience is complete!

3. Yet, the bigger picture here is the moment we stand before the throne of Christ.
- a) On this subject Paul again defers to his favorite Prophet. The distinction in Isaiah is that Yahweh will eternally judge both the believer and unbeliever, whereas we have nothing to do with the eternal judgment of those outside the faith. (Again refer to I Corinthians 5:12-13).
 - b) Isaiah reveals that every knee and every tongue will need to present their cases before the one and only God, and by Him they will be eternally judged.
 - c) Y'shua was equal with God and yet He lowered Himself to become a man—humbled Himself and died on a cross for you! This too is why you must do nothing with your own selfish ambitions and interests as preeminent priorities, but like He did, love and consider others first. Sound familiar?
 - d) And elsewhere, Paul teaches us that this is where God completes His ultimate separation of mankind into three permanent destinies: those in heaven—rulers; those on earth—citizens; and those under

the earth—rebels. (See: [The Unveiling](#) for greater details on three permanent destinies.)

G. One Accounting Method

(1) There is ONE God ...and it's NOT You!

(a) First you must be honest with yourself.

1. That's what matters because you can't fool God.

a) What is it that concerns you about your brother?

b) Are you worried they will be blessed when they don't deserve it?

c) Are you troubled because you believe they will escape without punishment unless you execute judgment?

d) First make a clear distinction between rebuking a brother for his transgressions because you love him, because love can literally conquer sin, and secretly hoping he gets demolished because of his sin, so much so that you wish you were the executioner, like Jonah.

e) Jonah was actually disappointed that a city full of pagans repented. That's dark!

f) Conversely, Jeremiah's heart was broken over the sins of the people. He was their prophet; he was not participating in the sins of the people, but he

saw himself as one of them. Through it all he painted this picture of hope:

2. Now that the heart of the matter is clear, stop worrying:
 - a) There is nothing hidden which will not be revealed. No one can hide from God;
 - b) He sees it all and will hold everyone accountable.
 - c) As each person stands before the judgement seat, every deed of his life will be examined and adjudicated.
 - d) The fire of God will test every moment of his life and only what was valuable for His kingdom will remain. Any work built on the foundation of grace-empowered-faith-based-obedience will be rewarded. Everything else will be reduced to ash.
3. So, this question remains: what is your role in the process?
 - a) Paul taught Timothy to become absorbed in God's word so he would be thoroughly equipped to teach, rebuke, correct, and instruct God's people in the way of righteousness.
 - b) Y'shua taught His disciples to be very careful for how they judge others; you are safe if you are

being godly, but if you have the wrong attitude and approach, that same measure will come against you.

- c) And maybe the most important piece of preparation is to always first examine your own life. Before you are of any value in helping others, you must have your life in order.
- d) You can't correct in others what you won't correct in yourself. And if we include your approach to those outside the Church, skip the judgment for now altogether and deliver to them only one sentiment... "Christ crucified!"

H. One Reason to Fail

(1) Godly Leadership or Degrading Lordship

- (a) Cease and desist from condemning a brother simply because they lack maturity and knowledge.

1. A child in the faith is deserving of many accommodations and his poor choices and even his slow growth does not grant you permission to slam him into alignment with God.

- a) Be gracious and altruistic to those who are immature, and for God's sake recall your own

development process. I promise you, it was slower than you remember!

2. God's heart on the matter is this:

- a) When in the presence of someone who is weak in the faith, what Y'shua might gently call "a little one," don't let your approach to discipleship become a bolder in their path to maturity.
- b) And might it bear repeating precisely... if you cause even one little child of God to stumble, which opens the door to sin, it would be better for you if you had a 1,500 pound stone attached to a noose around your neck, and you were tossed into the ocean and dragged to the bottom. And if the one-and-a-half-ton millstone yanking you by the neck to the bottom of the ocean is not graphic enough to describe the consequences of leading God's people astray, consider more closely the depth of the Mediterranean. Sink to the lowest point and there will be 7,500 pounds of pressure per square inch crushing your skull.

Summary: ONE LOVE

2. Love and Legalism

A. One Law

(1) Really, nothing is unclean?

(a) Really, decide for yourself?

1. The first thought on interpreting this passage correctly...

- a) Rearrange its punctuation, which of course was added by translators, who unknowingly or in a biased fashion (you decide), can change the meaning of a passage entirely, by avoiding a few commas.
- b) If you change even one word, which in Greek means any of a number of words (in, at, on, by, etc.), you can completely change the meaning.
- c) And if we are to be intellectually honest, to keep this in context and to be consistent with the rest of the God's word, it seems that the translational bias is purposefully antisemitic (against things Jewish) and antinomic (against the law). Please review the previous comments on Romans 14:5.
- d) **Context (Romans 14):** Paul is not teaching that all of a sudden everything is clean. If that was his

intent, then why would he refer to the prophet Isaiah in his second letter to the Corinthians?

“Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean.”

- e) The subject matter here is in regards to those who are weak in the faith, who are concerned that the meats (or other things) they might choose are not permitted by God—what Paul understands as unclean.
 - 1) And if it is clean according to the Lord, but they feel it is unclean; then to them it is unclean even though it is actually clean, and you must not do anything to cause them to stumble.
 - 2) Even if what you are eating is clean according to God’s Word, abstain in the presence of those who are weak in the faith for the sake of their conscience, not your own.
 - 3) If you love your brother you will be willing to sacrifice your liberty for the sake of his conscience.
 - 4) Again, for more clarity on this subject, Paul writes brilliantly in I Corinthians 10:23-33. Read it again above in section one of these notes.

- f) **Context (The Whole Bible):** Do you really believe that Paul's intention with a few verses is to negate all of God's laws that distinguish clean from unclean things?
- 1) To do so, you must conclude that Paul's intent was to pen thirty words that would render obsolete the mass of doctrine in the Old Testament on the topic.
 - 2) That would include every abominable behavior that God calls unclean—including every command on sexual immorality. That is utterly absurd.
 - 3) Can you honestly come to that conclusion from this passage? Of course not!
2. Maybe you are hoping that Paul is establishing a different set of rules for God's people, depending on their background and heritage.
- a) If you were a Jew when you came to the faith, then God's laws apply, but if you were once a Gentile, then you can pick and choose which laws make you comfortable and you can ignore those that are too difficult to follow.
 - b) The problems with that theology are manifold.

- c) It was clearly established after the Exodus that there was one law provided to govern Israel and the Gentiles who joined Israel.
 - d) And Paul also makes it clear that once you join the Christian faith, you are actually no longer a Gentile—so there remains only one law for all believers.
3. Watch this: And now we know how this has been egregiously translated and interpreted in just one common English translation, the New King James Version (NKJV):
- a) Pick and choose your own rules! “I know and am convinced *by the Lord Jesus* that there is nothing unclean of itself; *but to him who considers* anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”
 - 1) Here it seems to say that Jesus teaches us that there is no longer any such thing as unclean. His new standard is that you get to decide!
 - b) But for consistency sake, we will use a slightly different arrangement of the same passage. And maybe you should first recognize what Jesus thought about changing His Father’s doctrine—in

His own words. He emphatically claimed that He did not come to alter it in any way!

- c) In this slightly new arrangement of the same Romans' verse, you will see that the meaning is changed entirely, but is now consistent with the doctrine of the Father.
- d) The word 'by' is changed to 'in' (the same Greek word means in, at, on, by, etc.), and two commas are added, which actually keep the passage in perfect context with the rest of Romans 14 and the entire Bible. How refreshing!
 - 1) "I know and am convinced, *in the Lord Jesus*, there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean."
 - 2) Interpreted simply: what is being represented by the Lord Jesus is that there is nothing unclean that has been previously declared clean according to the teachings of the doctrine of His Father from the Old Testament Scriptures.
- e) And is that not exactly what Paul wrote to Timothy about foods which God created to be received

with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth?

- f) And even so, let's reiterate, if what is clean is believed to be unclean by someone uneducated, let him treat it as unclean for the sake of his own conscience—even though it is not really unclean.
4. And if you are in a mood to laugh, try this one on for size.
- a) These two additional verses have been often used to bolster the narcissistic self-centered translation and interpretation of Romans 14:14.
5. Conclusion? There is no longer anything definitive that unclean; it's all up to you to determine for yourself what is clean and unclean.
- 1) If you say it's unclean it is; if you don't, it isn't!
 - 2) In other words, anything goes; if you determine something is permitted and lawful to you, then have at it! Just don't violate your own conscience and you're good to go.
- b) What brand of Christianity is that? Reading it here might make you nauseous, but that is precisely how Paul's letters to the Corinthians are used to support this narcissistic theology.

c) Furthermore, with the strong foundation laid for correct interpretation to this point in the chapter, the rest will be a breeze. Each step of the way is just another practical display of God's love.

1) See [Religionship or Relationship](#)

B. One Sign

(1) Serving Leadership or Shaming Lordship?

(a) Do whatever it takes to be Christlike

1. Paul turned his entire attention in this letter to the practical display of love when he pivoted his message to urge Christians to sacrifice everything for God, to do whatever it takes to be holy and Christlike.

a) And then he made the shocking argument that to do so would be completely reasonable, the acceptable standard, nothing to brag about. It's what God expects of you!

b) As such, how difficult is it to ask that you don't let your mature understanding of food ruin the faith of a less mature, less informed brother, who simply does not yet understand?

C. One Kingdom

(1) Godly Leadership or Guilt-inducing Lordship?

(a) Reminder: you are a minister of God for good!

1. It is so clear; your maturity in the faith and knowledge is a strength.
 - a) Deep understanding is a good thing, but it will quickly turn bad if you are not careful. Knowledge can cause pride and hubris, excessive self-confidence and arrogance. Love does no such thing; it always edifies others.
 - b) The kingdom of God is not defined by a set of acceptable earthly activities, nor your ability to adhere to a list of restrictions.
 - c) The kingdom is on full display when the fullness of God is manifesting in your mortal body, His power emanating from you!
 - d) That is precisely what John the Baptist saw in Christ, **and** what Christ said of Himself; “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”
 - e) It was the key objective of Y’shua’s model prayer to the Father; “Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.”
 - f) And it was what He assigned us to teach; “As you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

2. Just as He was the living example, the incarnation of God in man, so too are we called to bring the kingdom to earth.
 - a) The kingdom of God manifests by our transformation into the full stature and image of Christ. Yes, knowledge can cause pride and hubris, excessive self-confidence and arrogance. Love does no such thing.
 - b) When every Christian does his part, the Body of Christ grows into maturity and edifies itself in love. This is the true testimony of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
 - c) Peace and joy can be elaborated a bit in the following verse, but what of this righteousness?
3. There is for certain a gift of righteousness, that which was imparted to you for free at the moment your life was redeemed from eternal death. But there is another side of the coin.
 - a) Just as faith is a gift that you then must practice...
 - b) ...so too is righteousness, and you simply can't be pleasing to the Lord without practice. That goes for both faith and righteousness.

- c) He who practices righteousness is righteous. In other words, anyone who is truly born again will practice righteousness, and that means whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God. Can it be more clear?
4. As Paul previously described...
- a) What is good is what is acceptable to God; how it looks is a life completely sacrificed to God; and how God values that sacrifice—it is a reasonable choice.
 - b) And praise the Lord... live like that and not only is God pleased, but you will be in total alignment with God's leadership requirements as God's minister for good, as Paul also previously described.

D. One Direction

(1) Peace and Joy

- (a) The true testimony of the kingdom is not just righteousness, but also peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

1. Pursue the things which make for peace... how do you do that?

- a) There is only one source. He gives us peace and it is a peace that the world cannot offer. It's a peace

that surpasses understanding. So, when you have peace that is not related to external circumstances, at moments when you know it would otherwise be impossible to feel tranquil and at ease, that serenity you feel is God's peace.

2. And whereas Paul uses joy in the previous verse as a character trait of the kingdom, what better way to manifest that Christlikeness than to edify one another—the truest form of joy there is.
 - a) We experience the complete joy of the Lord by seeing others the way He does, by preferring others as He does. There can be no greater joy than to walk in that truth.

E. One Choice

(1) Gentiles Lord Over; Servant Leaders Sacrifice

(a) Leadership or Lordship

1. As Paul begins to wind down the granularity of this lesson, a few specific applications of what it looks like to love and prefer your brother.

- a) He solidifies the Christlike approach to demonstrating the liberties you possess because of your advanced knowledge.

- b) Your better understanding should be an advantage, but you should not exercise even one freedom if it might wound a fellow believer.
 - c) Of course, everything God permits in His law is clean and unadulterated, but it becomes vial if it offends your brother or causes him to feel guilty.
 - d) The topic here is your liberty to freely eat, drink and engage in other legal lifestyle choices, but also how it is mandatory that you refrain from any food, drink, and activity if it might weaken your brother's faith.
 - e) It's a simple rule with profound implications; if what I am about to do might offend someone, even if perfectly acceptable according to God's law, then don't do it!
 - f) Said differently, if what I do hurts another it violates the prime objective of God's law; love God and love your neighbors, and never do anything to harm them.
2. Paul would even say that if you consider God's laws in their black and white format, without understanding the godly application of said laws...
- a) ...it is not freedom at all, but bondage.

- b) Instead, take your liberties, run them through this filter, and you will never make an error!
- 1) Your freedoms must align with God's truth and God would never place your liberties above your neighbor's wellbeing. Your moral principles and ideals must be established with God's priorities in mind. God is the arbiter of justice, so if you find yourself motivated to make an example of someone, you are way off. Your motivations and intentions must be pure—set apart to always glorify God and point others toward Him as their destination. That is because God's truth is beautiful. So, if what you represent as God is ugly, again you are way off. Remember, the message is good news, not dreadful news; that is why we call it the gospel of peace, not the gospel of fear. Your primary filter, your principle question at every moment must be this: what does God think, or what is God's heart on the matter? When your liberties align with these priorities, they are worthy of all praise.

F. One Faith

(1) Be Fully Convinced!

(a) Of course, there is nothing wrong with your strong faith!

1. It should make you content in your private relationship with God.

a) But, if you shipwreck the faith of others because of your liberties, even by participating in perfectly acceptable practices in their presence, when those practices cause them to feel inferior, confused or guilty, you literally become the source of their sin.

2. And notice what Paul emphasizes at the end of his teaching. Whatever is not of faith is sin!

a) That is because without faith you cannot please God, and whatever is not pleasing to God is considered iniquity.

b) With that in mind, if you promote any such thing, and again the context here is clear, even if what you represent is otherwise legal according to the Scriptures, if you promote such and it harms a brother, you are not looked upon favorably by God.

c) The message is specific. If you cause doubt, or fear, or confusion, or guilt, or shame, or self-condemnation in others, you are wrecking their

faith and causing them to sin, because whatever is not of faith is sin!

- d) Don't condemn yourself by the liberty you enjoy. Your maturity must not create uncertainty in others, especially if it inspires them to violate their conscience.
- e) That is no way to live in Christ. Everything we do must be rooted in grace-empowered faith-based-obedience. All else falls short of the glory of Yahweh.

3. And finally, remember we are all on the same team; we are one new man in Christ.

- a) Therefore, walk worthy of that gift, always making love the priority.
- b) There is only one faith and anyone who identifies as a Christian has the same Spirit and shares the same faith, regardless of how smart or mature they are. Don't let your knowledge cause Christian gloating; because God sees that as Christian bloating, and when that balloon explodes it gets very messy.

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

1. Utilize the sermon notes and sermon video for Romans 14 to craft an apologetics essay to explain the following in context:

- A. "Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables." Romans 14:1-2 NKJV
- B. "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind." Romans 14:5 NKJV
- C. "I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." Romans 14:14 NKJV
- D. "Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Romans 14:16-17 NKJV
- E. "It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak." Romans 14:21 NKJV
- F. Your essay should be between 2000 and 5000 words!