

Romans – Gospel of God Exalted

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

Zoom Meeting ID:

 **828 7580 6094** ►

Thursday October 23, 2025

Women of Excellence

Bible Study 7pm

Memory Verse

Romans 14:22 (NASB95)

You may believe there's nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God. Blessed are those who don't feel guilty for doing something they have decided is right.

The Unity of Strong and Weak Christians—part 2 (cont.) Build Up One Another Without Offending

Romans 14:16–23 (NLT)

¹⁶ Then you will not be criticized for doing something you believe is good. ¹⁷ For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too. ¹⁹ So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up. ²⁰ Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, all foods are acceptable, but it is wrong to eat something if it makes another person stumble. ²¹ It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble. ²² You may believe there's nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God. Blessed are those who don't feel guilty for doing something they have decided is right. ²³ But if you have doubts about whether or not you should eat something, you are sinning if you go ahead

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and do it. For you are not following your convictions. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.

Romans 14:16–23 (NASB95)

- 16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;
17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
18 For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.
19 So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.
20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.
21 It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or *to do anything* by which your brother stumbles.
22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.
23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *his eating is* not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

POINT 5 - DON'T FORFEIT YOUR WITNESS

Therefore, do not let what is for you a good thing 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 in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. (14:16–19)

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A fourth purpose for building up rather than injuring weaker believers is to avoid forfeiting our witness before the rest of the world.

It is possible to so abuse our liberty in Christ in regard to fellow believers that we create conflicts within the church that give the world cause to criticize and condemn those who claim to hold brotherly love in such high esteem. **Therefore**, Paul says, **do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil.**

Although it brings much blessing and enjoyment to those who understand and exercise it properly, Christian liberty is not simply for our own benefit and certainly not for our selfish abuse. It is a gracious gift from God and a wonderfully **good thing**. But like every other divine blessing, it can be misused in ways that are outside of, and often contrary to, God's purposes. This **good thing** of liberty is to be used carefully, with loving concern for our weaker brethren and with concern for its witness to the unbelieving world. It should not cause those brothers to stumble, be grieved, or harmed in any way; and it should never give the watching world an excuse for it to **be spoken of as evil.**

As reported in Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council strongly denounced the Judaizers' insistence that "It is necessary to circumcise [Gentile believers], and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses" (v. 5). But it also was decided that care should be taken not to offend the consciences either of Jewish or Gentile believers who were weak. Consequently, the group sent a letter to the churches advising "that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well" (**Acts 15:29**). Fornication apparently was a moral problem in many of the churches and was forbidden because it is outright sin. But the other three prohibitions had to do with religious law and ceremony, both Jewish and pagan.

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The situation was this: A strong and a weak Christian sometimes would go to dinner at the house of an unbelieving Gentile. When the host served the meal, he might mention that the meat had been used in a pagan sacrifice. The weak believer would be immediately disturbed and tell the other believer that he could not in good conscience eat such meat. Out of love for his weaker brother, the strong Christian would join in refusing to eat the meat, understanding that it is better to offend an unbeliever than a fellow believer. Although that unusual and selfless act of love might temporarily offend the unbelieving host, it might also be used of the Spirit to show the depth of Christian love and draw him to the gospel.

Paul's dual message was, in effect, "Don't apologize for or renounce your freedom in Christ, and don't let your own conscience be bothered. Take advantage of your liberty with joy and gratitude, because it is a precious gift from God. But, on the other hand, be willing at any time to forfeit the exercise of your freedom if it might cause spiritual harm to a believer or become an unnecessary offense to an unbeliever. Before the church and before the world, it is much more important to demonstrate our love than our freedom." He told the Corinthian church, **"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more" (1 Cor. 9:19).**

Many Jewish Christians, because of the Mosaic restrictions under which they had been raised, could not bring themselves to eat meat that still contained blood nor could they eat meat from an animal that had been killed by strangulation. When a weak Jewish believer found himself at a meal where such meat was being served, any stronger believer who was present should, out of love for his brother, also refuse to eat it.

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Such careful exercise of Christian liberty is vital to the unity of the church and to the church's witness before and to the unbelieving world. Forsaking a freedom is a small concession to make for the sake of both believers and potential believers, **for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**

When those three attributes characterize individual Christians and the local church in which they worship and through which they serve, the work of Christ is advanced and blessed **in the Holy Spirit.**

Righteousness in our daily living should always be more precious to us than the exercise of our liberties. Even though those liberties are God-given, we should seek continually to be “filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:11) and to always be wearing “the breastplate of righteousness” (Eph. 6:14).

Peace in the church—the loving, tranquil relationship of believers who are more interested in serving others than in pleasing themselves—is also more important than individual liberties and is a powerful witness to the unbelieving world. It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). God's people are called to “be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality” (Rom. 12:10–13; cf. James 3:17). Those are marks of genuine **peace.**

Like **peace**, the **joy** of believers is a product of **righteousness.** It is both a mystery and a strong attraction to the world and is often used by the Holy Spirit to draw

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men and women to Christ. Also, like **peace, joy** is a fruit of the Spirit. Even in the midst of hardship and persecution, we are able to have, and should always seek, “the joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:6).

The loving and selfless Christian **who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.** **Approved** refers to acceptance after careful examination, as when a jeweler carefully inspects a gem under a magnifying glass to determine its genuineness and value. When we serve Christ selflessly, we prove ourselves “to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

So then, Paul continues, **let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.** Humility, selfless love, and compassion for the needs of others are among **the things which make for peace.** In the closing remarks of his second letter to Corinth, Paul said, “Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live-in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (2 Cor. 13:11). An indispensable part of faithful witnessing is “being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Those virtues, along with the willingness to forsake our liberties for the sake of fellow believers, also assure **the building up of one another** in Christian fellowship.

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Discussion Questions

1. How could something that you believe is good become spoken of as evil? V16
2. What is not very important and what is very important in our Christian lives? How can you apply this to your life and practices? V17
3. How can you serve Christ so as to be acceptable to God and approved by men?
4. What should we be pursuing in our relationships with other Christians? V19

POINT 6- DON'T PULL DOWN THE WORK OF GOD

Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. (14:20–21)

A fifth reason for building up rather than injuring weaker believers is **not to tear down the work of God for the sake of food.**

Do not tear down suggest that Paul was commanding certain believers in Rome to discontinue something they were already doing.

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As we have seen, in the days of the early church many offenses against the consciences of weak brothers involved **food**. For Jews it related to eating **food** that was declared ceremonial unclean under the Mosaic law. For Gentiles, it related to eating food, most commonly meat, that had been used in a pagan sacrifice. But in the broader context of Romans 14 and 15, Paul's warnings about food and drink relate to *anything* not sinful in itself that might be said or done that would cause a weaker Christian to be offended and spiritually harmed.

Also in this context, **the work of God** clearly refers to believers, all of whom “are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus” (**Eph. 2:10**). It is therefore not only a serious offense against a weaker brother to cause him to stumble but a serious offense against the purposes of God.

We would consider it an appalling crime for someone to deface a Rembrandt painting, or to shatter a sculpture by Michelangelo, How infinitely worse it is to **tear down a work of God**, a man “for whom Christ died” (**Rom. 14:15**). “By sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ,” Paul wrote as he chastised the immature and self-indulgent believers at Corinth. “Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble,” he said of himself, “I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble” (**1 Cor. 8:12–13**).

The apostle reminds us again that he is not speaking about sinful and unholy things, but about good gifts from God. **All such things indeed are clean** and good in themselves. The danger is that, when they are exercised selfishly and carelessly by strong Christians, those very blessings can become **evil for the man who eats and gives offense**.

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Therefore, **it is good not to eat meat or to drink wine**, which are in themselves good, or **to do anything** else that is good in itself, **by which your brother stumbles**, because such stumbling hinders the work of God in and through that believer. God is endeavoring to build that believer up (Eph. 4:11–15) while we are tearing him down. That is unthinkable!

As noted previously, Paul is not prohibiting all drinking of alcoholic beverages, which neither the Old nor New Testament forbids. It should also be noted that the common wine drunk by Jews of that day was highly diluted with water and had a low alcohol content. But, if Paul considered the drinking of **wine** to be sinful in itself, it would not make sense to use it as an illustration of discretionary, non-sinful practices.

The issue concerns doing **anything** at all **by which your brother stumbles**. The pleasure of eating offensive food or drink, or the pleasure of doing anything else our liberty allows us to do, is absolutely trivial compared to the spiritual welfare of a brother or sister in Christ. It is worse than trivial. It becomes actually sinful if we have reason to believe it might cause one of the little ones for whom Christ died to stumble.

POINT 7 - DON'T DENOUNCE OR FLAUNT YOUR LIBERTY

The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin. (14:22–23)

The sixth and final reason for exercising our liberty with great care is that we can harm even ourselves when we do not view our liberty from God's perspective. We

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lose that divine perspective when we denounce or belittle good things, He has given us or when, at the other extreme, we lovelessly flaunt our liberty without caring about how we affect others.

Verse 22 is directed to the strong Christian, the one who understands and appreciates his freedom. Paul's counsel to him is simple and direct: **The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.** When by sincere **faith** and a correct understanding of Scripture we have a **conviction before God** that a custom, a practice, or an activity is worthwhile and good, we dare not denounce it as sinful. Nor should we allow our conscience to **condemn** us for exercising it—with Paul's repeated stipulation that we gladly relinquish that freedom for the sake of a brother or sister in Christ.

Verse 23 is directed to the weak Christian, the one whose conscience is still offended by certain religious carryovers from his former life. And the apostle's counsel to him is just as simple and direct: **He who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.** The corresponding stipulation is that, just as the strong believer commits sin by causing a weak brother to go against his own conscience, the weak brother sins, **is condemned**, when, contrary to the convictions of his own faith, he succumbs to that which his conscience condemns.

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Discussion Questions

1. How is it possible to tear down God's work with good (clean) things?
V20.
2. What is it good not to do? Why?
3. How is Paul using the word "faith" in verses 14:22-23? What are the two practical applications? How is it possible to be sin for one person and not sin for another person?
4. What stood out to you the most in this lesson that you can apply to your life?

Closing Prayer