

Just A Minute! *With Scripture*

The King James Bible is used for all references. Verses may be made bold or numbered for emphasis.

Newsletter Theme: Application of Romans 14

Refining Our Approach With Weaker Brethren

When we discuss Scripture, do we adjust our approach as we talk with a mature saint, an argumentative believer (*Titus 3:10*), or an immature babe who is unlearned and deceived by false teachings? Obviously there's a great difference in their needs. Yet, do we carefully discern these distinctions when we hold forth the Truth?

Clearly, God desires that we are bold with teaching His Word: "*And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*" (*Phil. 1:14*) Being fervent to hold forth the Truth against all adversity is commendable, but does it please God when we are insensitive to other's needs and cause harm, rather than helping?

Holding forth the Truth in love and grace enables others to see the glorious gospel of Christ. However, when others are regularly storming away, frustrated, or hurt, we may need to examine ourselves. Do we need to adjust our approach so they can hear what is being said? Some of us, I include myself, may need to mature in our love-grace approach. "*To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*" (*I Cor. 9:22*) Love considers the best for others and fulfills the law (*Rom.13:10*). Of course, some will always be contentious, but when approached in love, my experience is most will at least listen, which may make them think.

Simply speak the Truth, tempered with godly love (*Eph. 4:15*). This attitude toward the weak brother or sister will take into consideration where he is in spiritual maturity. If he is a young believer, he can be very easily injured, derailed, discouraged, or tossed to and fro. As we prefer others, realizing that a babe can only digest the milk of the Word, we will not push meat onto them, nor give them too much at one time. Digestion of even milk can be challenging for a baby. The teaching process requires patience and wisdom to know what, how much, and when. As we gain a renewed mind, we can help point other saints to the Word to be led by the Spirit, enabling them to grow and learn to trust God.

How to Avoid 'Doubtful Disputations'

Romans 14:1 says, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to **doubtful disputations.**" The term 'doubtful' refers to being uncertain or contrary. 'Disputations' refer to debates and arguments. So, this first verse is instructing us not to destabilize or cause uncertainty by debating or arguing with immature, unlearned saints.

Verse 2 provides a specific example to examine: One believes he can freely eat all things and the weak saint only herbs. Verse 3 is the instruction: "**Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.**"

Notice the opening grace term used: 'let not,' which indicates we have a choice to avoid being judgmental, as *Rom.14:10* states: "*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*" Another grace word is 'received.' As God accepts us just as we are, so also we can receive others in grace.

Now also note the 'law terms' in this verse, our natural tendency in the flesh: 'despise,' and 'judge.' These occur as we put others under our expectations (law), exalting ourselves: "*For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*" (*Rom. 12:3*)

God's Way: The Holy Spirit, with the Word working in a saint, can help the weak to grow individually and at their own pace. "*And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.*" (*II Tim. 2:24*) The stronger saint can yield to God and encourage others in their maturing process. How? "*Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*" (*Vs 19*) **In grace, this can take a while, requiring patience.**



Search it out!

Choose Something to Study in This Section

Romans 14: Asking Questions Can Help in Understanding

Examine verses!



Asking yourself good questions can aid in comprehending verses, but also in applying the Word in your life. Many such study tools are found in "Exploring the Bible Using Study Tools." It can be purchased on Amazon.

1. Questions are beneficial to acquire the most out of passages. Some questions can help us examine the verses, words, or phrases used. Read Romans 14, asking yourself questions, like: "To what does the opening word 'for' in Verse 2 refer?" "Why does God give this instruction?" and "What do the phrases, 'doubtful disputations,' 'let not,' and 'fully persuaded' mean?"

**Newer students: Focus on 'reading' Scripture rather than on using many new study insights.*

2. Questions can also look at how the teaching pertains or applies to you and your life. Reread Romans 14 and ask yourself two or three of these questions: "How does this relate to me?" and "Can I apply this in my life and how?" "What would this look like in the details of my life?" "Does the passage teach me how to live out this instruction?" "Can this impact my thinking today?" or "What are ways this can change my view of dealing with a weaker brother or sister?"

3. Begin to use this study tool as you read and study: The next time you do regular reading of the Word, take time to ask yourself these type of questions to gain more out of the passages.

Is Sin What We Really Think it is?

Many view sin primarily as wicked behavior that clearly manifests evil. While this is sin, it can also be more subtle. When Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount he amplified the law, showing how even a thought to do evil was sin. For example, in *Matthew 5:28*: "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

The book of Romans may help us see sin in a different light. Let us look at just a few of many verses:

- Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (The flesh of men always fall short.)
- Romans 6:12: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."
- Romans 6:14: "For sin shall not have dominion over you..." (Sin has dominion over the natural man, and saints too if we do not yield unto God.)
- Romans 7:9: "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence..."
- Romans 7:20: "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." (Sin dwells within our flesh, producing ungodly thoughts and deeds.)
- Romans 14:23: "...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Walking contrary to our convictions in the Word is sin)

Sin dwells in our flesh, which is why man can never measure up to God's glory and righteousness. Example of sin qualities: it reigns in our body, contains lusts we serve and obey, has dominion over us, and causes powerful physical desires. A most interesting issue is found in *Romans 14*, which speaks about the walk of a believer: whatever is not done in faith is sin. This means that we are each to live by our beliefs, based on sound doctrine in the Word, even though sometimes we may not have all understanding. If we live against our convictions, contrary to this Truth (not of faith), this is sin to us.

Let us take a closer look at *Romans 14:23*: "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." A weaker saint departs from walking by faith and sins when he yields unto what another man tells him. Though he is convicted by the Word to only eat herbs (Vs 2), he allows himself to be persuaded by another to eat all things, against his own conscience and convictions. In this case, the stronger brother unknowingly causes the weak brother to sin, trusting the stronger saint's word over what he believes is God's instruction from Scripture. *Romans 14:5* says, "...Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Our convictions are to be our guide to walk by faith. We can trust that God will eventually teach us and renew false beliefs by His Word. (Phil. 3:15-16) We each have a unique journey of faith, convicted differently at various points. God desires for us to be guided by faith in the Word in every situation in our lives, led by the Spirit.

Being a Helper of Another's Joy

The basic spiritual growth process in the Bible seems similar to physical maturation: *"For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."* (Heb. 5:13-14) The process to build, understand, and live sound doctrine takes time. A wise saint will become a nurturer, using the milk of the Word, strategically realizing what a babe needs next to grow. If possible, controversial, emotional topics are avoided. A novice isn't ready to digest them. Otherwise, arguments will ensue, uncertainty bred, and edification will be limited.

A few things we can do? *II Corinthians 1:24* teaches us: *"Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand."* What does this approach look like in action? It is the love and wisdom of a parent with a child: *"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."* (Gal. 4:19) and *"As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children."* (I Thess. 2:11) Though the weaker saint is unlearned, not established in the basic doctrine, unaware, deceived, or blind to a Truth, yet, we are not to judge. God is their Judge and is able to make them stand: *"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."* (Rom. 14:4) We all have areas to grow, so we can then learn to be tolerant, in love.

As we hold forth the Truth, we can be careful not to injure the babe in the process. *I Cor. 8:11* says: *"And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ."* *Romans 14:21* instructs us not to do anything to stumble, offend, or make a brother weak. Encourage each saint to be fully persuaded (Rom. 14:5) by keeping the Word as their authority. What NOT to do: Avoid convincing others to believe 'what you say,' even if it is true. If they believe you, then you become their new authority and their god. That is sobering! So care is needed to encourage them to be led by the Spirit, directly in the Word. Point them to passages, encouraging them to do personal study to develop conviction. Nurture them as a mother does with her daughter, or father with his precious son.

This approach is what Paul teaches and uses. He does not use excellency of speech, nor his own wisdom with enticing words with the Corinthians. Why? *"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."* (I Cor. 2:5) God our Father is to be our sole authority; He is so wise and powerful! *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"* (Rom. 11:33) We can confidently trust His way!

Doing All Things Unto The Lord

In Chapter 14 we see that each believer is to live, not unto himself, but unto God: *"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."* (Rom. 14:7-8) This can have a major impact on how we function in this life.

If we choose to live unto God, what He says in His Word would be a priority in our thinking

and day-to-day living. We would not exalt man, what he says, nor stay focused on worldly things. Instead, we'd learn to be a good soldier, living unto the Lord.

How can we put this into action? Do things to please God, not self," like read, study, and minister to others. *"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."* (II Tim. 2:4)

Doing all things unto the Lord would cause us to think 'why' we are doing something. We would reflect upon our motive and whether it was consistent with this teaching. **Reflect and walk by faith.**

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Stamp

To:

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 3:24)

Follow After Peace and to Edify

There is a key verse in *Romans 14* that reveals a grace attitude to guide us with a weaker brother: *“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”* Notice that it begins with the helping word, ‘therefore.’ This refers the student back to what the chapter has been teaching. As a result of all this instruction, the reader ought to therefore function in the grace attitude. ‘Let us’ is given as a gracious option.

The passage unfolds two spiritual motives to ‘follow after,’ that is, to seek to understand and function accordingly. First, it teaches, *“...follow after the things which make for peace.”* In the context, it is encouraging the believer, especially the strong, to allow certain doctrines to work within them, so harmony and goodwill will be produced. While differences may be encountered, oneness ought to be at the forefront, tempered with preferring each other in godly love.

In the second issue, we’re encouraged to follow after: *“...things wherewith one may edify another.”* This is an instruction to be a helper of another’s joy (*II Cor. 1:24*), especially to the weak so they can become established in sound teaching. To edify is to build a structure of doctrine in their inner man. If someone was unclear about salvation or had questions about eternal security, the focus would be *Romans 1-5*. If a weak saint had challenges with how to live godly, *Romans 6-8* might be helpful. If a saint desired to serve, but didn’t understand godly love, *Romans 12-16* would be beneficial. In the process of assisting others to grow, wisdom would prompt considering where the babe was in his understanding to know how and what to teach.

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