

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 212 – July 31st – Romans 14:1-23

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Romans

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 Moo, Douglas, J *Romans: The NIV Application Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000.
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Chapter 14

Paul seems to be aware of disputes among the Christians at Rome. It is difficult to be certain about the situation that Paul is addressing (Moo lists six different views concerning the identity of the 'strong' and the 'weak') but most scholars think that the disputes related to observance of the Jewish law. Moo concludes, "The weak were those – mainly Jewish Christians – who could not bring themselves to abandon the requirements of the law they had observed all their lives. They could not, as Christians, simply ignore the food laws, Sabbath observance and so on. The strong, by contrast, felt no need to observe these laws. Most of them were undoubtedly Gentile Christians, although a few, like Paul himself (see the 'we' in 15:1), were Jewish Christians. The weak condemned the strong for cavalierly dismissing God's laws, while the strong poo-hooped the weak, looking down on them for clinging to the old ways when the new had come. Paul sides with the strong on the basic issues involved, but his main concern is to get each group to stop criticising the other and to accept each other in a spirit of love and unity."

Verse 1

Τὸν δὲ ἀσθενοῦντα τῇ πίστει
 προσλαμβάνεσθε, μὴ εἰς διακρίσεις
 διαλογισμῶν.

ἀσθενεω be sick, be ill, be weak
 πίστει Noun, dat s πιστις, εως f faith

"Paul does not imply that those who are 'weak in the faith' have any less grasp on the basic content of the faith (Jesus' resurrection and lordship) than the others; only that, like those who have a weak conscience in 1 Corinthians 8, they have not thought through and worked out the full implications of that faith." Wright.

προσλαμβάνομαι welcome, accept, receive

"While Paul wants both groups in the church to accept each other, he is clearly most concerned about the attitude of the strong. This probably reflects the fact that the strong, mainly Gentile Christians, are the dominant group in the church." Moo.

διακρίσεις, εως f arguing, dispute
 διαλογισμος, ου m opinion, reasoning,
 dispute, doubt

διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν disputes engendered by opinions or doubts. The NIV translation is good, 'without passing judgement on disputable matters.' Murray translates it, 'not for the purpose of subjecting the convictions and thoughts of one another to censorious scrutiny.' "They should not allow differences over 'disputable matters' to interfere with full fellowship in the body of Christ." Moo.

Verse 2

ὃς μὲν πιστεύει φαγεῖν πάντα, ὁ δὲ ἀσθενῶν
 λάχανα ἐσθίει.

πιστεω believe (in), have faith (in)

Some Christians had come to the settled conviction – a conviction rooted in faith – that there are no food taboos in the kingdom of God.

φαγεῖν Verb, aor act infin ἐσθίω and ἐσθω
 eat

λαχανον, ου n garden plant, vegetable

"If most Christians in Rome seemed happy to eat non-kosher food, or to eat meat bought in the market when it had almost certainly been originally offered in sacrifice to an idol, there were bound to be some for whom this was unthinkable." Wright.

Verse 3

ὁ ἐσθίων τὸν μὴ ἐσθίοντα μὴ ἐξουθενείτω, ὁ δὲ μὴ ἐσθίων τὸν ἐσθίοντα μὴ κρινέτω, ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτὸν προσελάβετο.

ἐξουθενεω despise, treat with contempt

κρινω judge, pass judgement on,
condemn

I.e. calling upon their understanding of the OT law to pass condemnation on the eater.

προσελάβετο Verb, aor midd indic, 3 s
προσλαμβανομαι v.1

When we reject those whom God has accepted we make ourselves holier than God.

Verse 4

σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνων ἀλλότριον οἰκέτην; τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ στήκει ἢ πίπτει· σταθήσεται δέ, δυνατεῖ γὰρ ὁ κύριος στήσαι αὐτόν.

Paul elaborates the principle stated at the end of the previous verse.

σὺ τις probably addressed primarily to the 'weak' who are passing judgment on the 'strong.' The question is, 'Who do you think you are?' "For one slave to look into the next room and pass judgment on another is simply inappropriate; it shows a failure to recognise who's who." Wright.

ἀλλοτριος, α, ον belonging to another
οικετης, ου f house servant, servant

ἰδιος, α, ον one's own
στηκω stand, stand firm

ἢ or

πιπτω fall, fall down

σταθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s ἰστημι
and ἰστανω pass stand, stand firm

The unusual verb δυνατεω is replaced in some MSS by the more common adjective – δυνατος γαρ ἐστιν

στήσαι Verb, 1 aor act infin ἰστημι and
ἰστανω set, establish, fix

The unusual vocabulary used here by Paul may deliberately call to mind the resurrection (cf. Rom 1:4; 1 Cor 6:14). "His main point is that the Lord, the master of all the household, is able to vindicate servants who eat meat and servants who do not; but the echoes, as he says this, are of the greater vindication that is promised at the last." Wright.

Verse 5

Ὅς μὲν κρίνει ἡμέραν παρ' ἡμέραν, ὃς δὲ κρίνει πᾶσαν ἡμέραν· ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ νοῦ πληροφροεῖσθω·

κρίνει ἡμεραν παρ ἡμεραν 'consider one day different from another'

The "reference is probably to Jewish holy days, including various festivals and the Sabbath." Moo. Murray includes an Appendix to his commentary in which he argues that the reference is to the various ceremonial holy days of the Levitical institution *but excludes* the weekly Sabbath. His argument is exegetically unconvincing, particularly in the light of Col 2:16.

ἕκαστος, η, ον each, every

ἰδιος, α, ον one's own

νοῦ Noun, dat s νους, νοος m mind,
understanding

πληροφροεῖσθω Verb, pres pass imperat, 3 s
πληροφροεω convince fully, assure fully

Verse 6

ὁ φρονῶν τὴν ἡμέραν κυρίῳ φρονεῖ. καὶ ὁ ἐσθίων κυρίῳ ἐσθίει, εὐχαριστεῖ γὰρ τῷ θεῷ· καὶ ὁ μὴ ἐσθίων κυρίῳ οὐκ ἐσθίει, καὶ εὐχαριστεῖ τῷ θεῷ.

φρονεω think, consider, think highly of
ἐσθιω and ἐσθω eat, consume
εὐχαριστεω thank, give thanks

These principles clearly apply only to matters in themselves indifferent – neither good nor bad. Yet even in such matters, the believer's conduct is not outside the scope of their discipleship, cf. 1 Cor 10:31.

Verse 7

Οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἑαυτῷ ζῆ, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἑαυτῷ ἀποθνήσκει·

οὐδεὶς, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing
ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself
ζῆ Verb, pres act indic, 3s ζω live, be
alive

Cf. 2 Cor 5:15; Gal 2:19-20.

ἀποθνησκω die, face death, be mortal

Is the reference here to literal death or to dying to self – self-denial for the sake of Christ?

Verse 8

ἐάν τε γὰρ ζῶμεν, τῷ κυρίῳ ζῶμεν, ἐάν τε ἀποθνήσκωμεν, τῷ κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκομεν. ἐάν τε οὖν ζῶμεν ἐάν τε ἀποθνήσκωμεν, τοῦ κυρίου ἐσμέν.

ἐάν τε γαρ ... ἐάν τε ... 'for if it should be that ... but if ...'

Verse 9

εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἔζησεν ἵνα καὶ νεκρῶν καὶ ζώντων κυριεύσῃ.

εἰς τουτο for this purpose

ἀπέθανεν Verb, aor act indic, 3s ἀποθνησκω

Some MSS read ἀνεστη rather than ἔζησεν.

νεκρός, α, ον dead
κυριεύω have power over, rule over

Through his death and resurrection, Christ has become Lord both of the dead and the living. He reigns over the death and life that mark the daily experience of the believer; he reigns over death, that last enemy, and over the resurrection life which lies beyond its reach. "This 'ruling as Lord,' clearly explains the 'belonging to the Lord' in v. 8: it is the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah that means we now belong to him, and that constitutes him indeed as the Lord of the whole world (1:3-5; 15:12). This proves more than Paul needs to prove for the immediate argument, but it points, as we shall see, to the larger issue that stands behind the entire section. The gospel announcement that Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah, is the Lord of the whole world is thus appealed to as the reason for unity across barriers of custom and taboo." Wright.

Verse 10

Σὺ δὲ τί κρίνεις τὸν ἀδελφόν σου; ἢ καὶ σὺ τί ἐξουθενεῖς τὸν ἀδελφόν σου; πάντες γὰρ παραστησόμεθα τῷ βήματι τοῦ θεοῦ,

The first question presumably addressed to the 'weak' who pass judgment on the 'strong' for not observing the Mosaic law.

ἢ οἱ
ἐξουθενεῖω despise, treat with contempt

The second question addressed to the 'strong' for despising the 'weak.'

πάντες Adjective, m nom pl πας
παραστησόμεθα Verb, fut midd dep indic, 1
pl παριστημι stand before
βημα, τος n judicial bench, place of
judgement

Many MSS read του Χριστου rather than του θεου, probably influenced by 2 Cor 5:10.

"Paul may be warning these Christians that their judgmental attitudes will bring judgment on themselves when they appear before God at the end of history. In the light of verses 7-9, however, it is more likely that he is teaching that every believer is ultimately answerable to God, not to other believers, for their conduct in this life." Moo.

Verse 11

γέγραπται γάρ: Ζῶ ἐγώ, λέγει κύριος, ὅτι ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν γόνου, καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται τῷ θεῷ.

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω

Cf. Isa 45:23. The opening phrase 'As I live' is added to the quotation. "This picks up the 'lived' of v.9; in other words, the 'living again' of Jesus is the reason why he is thus installed as judge, which in turn is the reason why it would be wrong to collapse κύριος (*kurios*) here into a general reference to God, rather than retaining it, however paradoxically, as a reference to Jesus as the risen Messiah and, therefore, the judge." Wright. Cf. Phil 2:10.

ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγώ
κάμψει Verb, fut act indic, 3 s κάμπτω trans
& intrans bend, bow (of the knee)

γόνου, γονατος n knee
γλωσσα, ης f tongue, voice
ἐξομολογεῖω midd confess, acknowledge

Paul's thought moves easily from the headship of Christ in life and death to the fact that every knee must bow before the judgement seat of God. This could not be so without the implicit assumption that Jesus is Divine.

Verse 12

ἄρα ἕκαστος ἡμῶν περὶ ἑαυτοῦ λόγον δώσει.

ἕκαστος, η, ον v.5

ἑαυτος see v.7

λογος is here used in the sense of an account (of oneself). "There is no tension in Paul's mind between this and 8:1, where there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. He has already indicated in 2:1-16 that there will be a coming day when all will be judged; the fact that the Christian believer is assured of a favourable verdict on that day does not make it any less serious, as 1 Cor 3:10-17 indicates well enough. Part of his point is that in the light of the coming judgment we have no business judging one another ahead of the time. There may also be a hint that to condemn a fellow Christian is itself an offence for which one should be rebuked." Wright.

Wright continues by suggesting that the repeated references in this section to Jesus as Lord are intended as a declaration that Caesar is *not* lord. "The unity of Christians across traditional barriers is a sign to the principalities and powers that a greater rule than theirs has now begun (see, e.g., Gal 4:1-11; Eph 3:10). Maintaining that unity, then, is not just a matter of preventing squabbles and bad feeling in the church. It is part of the essential Christian witness to the one Lord. If the church divides along lines related to ethnic or tribal loyalty, it is still living in the world of Caesar."

Verses 13-23

In verses 13-23 Paul addresses the strong. His key concern is that 'strong' believers should avoid being a 'stumbling block' to the weak. Rather, they should ensure that all is done to build others up.

Verse 13

Μηκέτι οὖν ἀλλήλους κρίνωμεν· ἀλλὰ τοῦτο κρίνατε μᾶλλον, τὸ μὴ τιθέναι πρόσκομμα τῷ ἀδελφῷ ἢ σκάνδαλον.

μηκετι no longer

ἀλλήλων, οἰς, οὗς one another

Paul plays on the verb κρίνω. The first occurrence means 'judge' while the second means 'determine.'

μαλλον adv rather, instead, more than that
τιθέναι Verb, pres act infin τιθημι place, set

προσκομμα, ατος n that which causes stumbling or offence

The imagery comes from the Old Testament (see esp. Isa 8:14 quoted in Rom 9:32).

σκανδαλον, ου n that which causes sin/offence

Cf. 1 Cor 8:9.

Verse 14

οἶδα καὶ πέπεισμαι ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ ὅτι οὐδὲν κοινὸν δι' ἑαυτοῦ· εἰ μὴ τῷ λογιζομένῳ τι κοινὸν εἶναι, ἐκεῖνῳ κοινόν.

οἶδα know, understand

πέπεισμαι Verb, perf pass indic, 1 s πειθο persuade; perf act & pass have confidence, be confident

οὐδεις, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing

κοινος, α, ον common, unclean

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

"In a deft rhetorical move, Paul tries to get the strong to listen to him by conceding that they are right on the basic issue: 'No food is unclean in itself' (v.14). 'Unclean' translates κοινος (lit., common), which Jews used to describe things that, by virtue of their contact with the ordinary, secular world, were considered to be defiled." Moo.

Cf. Mark 7:18-19; Acts 10:9-23,28.

λογίζομαι reckon, count, suppose

ἐκεινος, η, ο that (one), he, she, it

All things are clean in themselves (cf. 1 Tim 4:4), but to the one who eats with an accusing conscience and without thanksgiving, such eating is sin (cf. v.23).

Verse 15

εἰ γὰρ διὰ βρῶμα ὁ ἀδελφός σου λυπεῖται, οὐκέτι κατὰ ἀγάπην περιπατεῖς. μὴ τῷ βρώματί σου ἐκεῖνον ἀπόλλυε ὑπὲρ οὗ Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν.

βρωμα, τος n food, solid food, meat
λυπεω pain, grieve, injure

The latter sense, 'injure' is the meaning here.

οὐκετι adv no longer, no more

περιπατεω walk, walk about, live

ἀπόλλυε Verb, pres act imperat, 2 s

ἀπολλυμι destroy, kill, lose

ἀπέθανεν Verb, aor act indic, 3s ἀποθνησκω die

"If Christ loved the weak believer to the extent of laying down his life for his salvation, how alien to the demands of love is the refusal on the part of the strong to forego the use of a certain article of food when the religious interests of the one for whom Christ died are thereby imperilled." Murray.

Wright comments, "This powerful statement presumably means that one could risk betraying a 'weak' person into what was, for them, some form of idolatry, and that this could jeopardise their allegiance to Christ altogether, putting the 'strong' Christian at loggerheads with the Messiah himself, who has given his life for them."

Verse 16

μὴ βλασφημείσθω οὖν ὑμῶν τὸ ἀγαθόν.

βλασφημεω speak against, speak against
God, blaspheme

Many MSS read ἡμῶν rather than ὑμῶν.

Metzger writes, "Either ὑμῶν or ἡμῶν makes good sense in the context. On the whole, however, the weight of external evidence appears to favour ὑμῶν."

ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting

'This good thing' – probably referring to Christian freedom.

"Something may be 'good' for you, but the weaker Christian may call down a curse upon it – and perhaps, the implication may be, on you as well." Wright.

Verse 17

οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ βρώσις καὶ πόσις, ἀλλὰ δικαιοσύνη καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ χαρὰ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ·

For other instances of Paul's rare use of 'the Kingdom of God' see 1 Cor 4:20; 6:9-10; 15:24, 50; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5; Col 1:13; 4:11; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 4:1. But also note Paul's use of the verb βασιλεύω when speaking of the 'reign of grace' in Rom 5:12-21.

βρωσις, εως f food, eating, a meal
ποσις, εως f drinking, a drink
δικαιοσυνη, ης f righteousness, what is right, what God requires

Used here of 'ethical' righteousness: living rightly; behaviour pleasing to God.

εἰρηνη, ης f peace

"The strong are not wrong to think they have freedom to eat whatever they want. Rather, they are wrong for using that freedom without regard to the effect it may have on their weaker brothers and sisters – people for whom Christ died. The strong need a reordering of priorities, in which kingdom values take precedence over selfish interest and pleasure." Moo.

Wright sees a link here with the opening verses of Romans 5. He summarises Paul's thought as follows: "You must not cause your fellow Christian to suffer, possibly even to be lost altogether, by what you eat, because Rom 5:1-5 ('justified ... peace ... joy ... Holy Spirit') is the most important thing there is, and food and drink, by comparison, rate nowhere on the same scale."

Verse 18

ὁ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ δουλεύων τῷ Χριστῷ εὐάρεστος τῷ θεῷ καὶ δόκιμος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

Note the γὰρ which links to the previous verses. The point is well picked up in the NIV.

εὐαρεστος, ον acceptable, pleasing
δοκιμος, ον approved, genuine, valued

Verse 19

ἄρα οὖν τὰ τῆς εἰρήνης διώκωμεν καὶ τὰ τῆς οἰκοδομῆς τῆς εἰς ἀλλήλους.

εἰρηνη, ης f peace
διωκω seek after, pursue, follow

Several good witnesses read δικαιομεν (⋈ A B G^{tr} ...) rather than δικαιωμεν. Metzger comments, "Despite the slightly superior uncial support for δικαιομεν, and despite the circumstance that elsewhere in Romans the phrase ἄρα οὖν is always followed by the indicative (5:18; 7:3,25; 8:12; 9:16,18, cf. 14:12), the Committee felt that, on the whole, the context here calls for the hortatory subjunctive (cf. the imperatives in vv 13 and 20)."

οικοδομη, ης f upbuilding, encouragement
ἀλλήλων, ος, ους one another

Cf. 1 Cor 14.

Verse 20

μη̄ ἕνεκεν βρώματος κατάλυε τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ. πάντα μὲν καθαρὰ, ἀλλὰ κακὸν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τῷ διὰ προσκόμματος ἐσθίοντι.

ἐνεκα (ἐνεκεν and εἵνεκεν) prep with gen because of, for the sake of

βρωμα v.15

καταλυω trans destroy, tear down
καθαρος, α, ον pure, clean, innocent
κακος, η, ον evil, wrong, harm
προσκομμα v.13

Does Paul here refer to the weak man who eats because he has been tripped up or to the strong who eats and causes offence – the offence then being the reason why it is evil to him? Moo thinks the reference is to eating by the strong "in such a way that spiritual harm comes to another believer." So also does Wright who says that this fits best with the following verse.

Verse 21

καλὸν τὸ μη̄ φαγεῖν κρέα μηδὲ πιεῖν οἶνον μηδὲ ἐν ᾧ ὁ ἀδελφός σου προσκόπτει ἢ σκανδαλίζεται ἢ ἀσθενεῖ·

καλος, η, ον good, right

φαγεῖν Verb, aor act infin ἐσθιω and ἐσθω

The use of the aorist seems to suggest that a particular occasion is meant rather than vows of continual abstinence.

κρέα Noun, acc pl κρεας, κρεατος n meat
μηδε ... μηδε neither ... nor
πιεῖν Verb, aor act infin πινω drink
οἶνος, ου m wine
προσκοπτω stumble, take offence, be offended

Verse 22

σὺ πίστιν ἣν ἔχεις κατὰ σεαυτὸν ἔχε ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ. μακάριος ὁ μη̄ κρίνων ἑαυτὸν ἐν ᾧ δοκιμάζει·

σεαυτου, ης reflexive pronoun yourself
ἐνώπιον before, in the presence of

They have this conviction in the presence of God and may not surrender it. But they are not to brandish it to the destruction of others.

μακαριος, α, ον blessed, happy

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον v.14

δοκιμαζω test, examine, approve

The thought is that the Christian should not bring themselves into condemnation through things they approve of.

Verse 23

ὁ δὲ διακρινόμενος ἐὰν φάγη κατακέκριται, ὅτι οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως· πᾶν δὲ ὃ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἁμαρτία ἐστίν.

διακρινω midd/pass doubt, hesitate, be in two minds

Cf 4:20-21 which speaks about the faith of Abraham.

φάγη Verb, aor act subj, 3 s ἔσθιω

κατακέκριται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s

κατακρινω condemn, pass judgement

ον

ἁμαρτια, ας f sin

"To doubt is not to sin; but to act on something when one has serious doubts about it is to fall under condemnation, because the action does not flow from faith." Wright.