***The Christian Lifestyle
RO177-02***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1977)**

We are studying Romans 14:13-23. Out subject is "Christian Consideration." This is segment number three.

The apostle Paul has exhorted strong Christians in Romans 14 to be more concerned about not doing spiritual harm to a weak Christian than in criticizing and condemning his foolish legalisms. He has used food as an example, and he has pointed out that no food is religiously unclean during the church age, and that a Christian may eat anything that he chooses to eat. However, if eating some food causes emotional distress, and in fact spiritual harm, to an immature Christian, then that should not be done in his presence. This is the response, Paul says, "agape" love – love, which God the Holy Spirit creates in a believer that causes him to be considerate for the spiritual well-being of another Christian.

The question that Paul presents is why would you want to ruin a believer spiritually for whom Christ has done so much as to die on the cross to save him from the lake of fire? This, in effect, would rob this believer. To ruin him spiritually would in fact rob this believer of his eternal rewards because it would knock him out of Christian service. The liberty which a strong Christian enjoys from God in the church age then should not be used to discredit and condemn freedom itself. The Christian life in Jesus Christ is not expressed in eating and drinking rituals in order to please God. With many religions, that's how you approach God: by something you eat; by something you drink; or, by some ritualistic procedure. That is not the case for the Christian today.

**Righteousness, Peace, and Joy**

The Christian life instead, Paul has pointed out, consists of three basic things: righteousness; peace; and, joy in the Holy Spirit. Regarding righteousness, he refers to absolute righteousness, which is credited by God to the believer at the point of salvation, and then is expressed in that individual believer's personal integrity in dealing with people. Peace refers to peace with God, resulting from spiritual reconciliation with God, and this is expressed in peace with one's neighbors. The joy of the Holy Spirit is that inner happiness, which is experienced by the spiritual Christian who is in temporal fellowship, and which he expresses in cheerfulness toward others.

**Old Testament Rituals and Legalisms**

So, righteousness, peace, and joy are what characterize the Christian life, and they are the products of the indwelling Holy Spirit guiding the believer into the Christian way of life through doctrine. Christianity has not inherited all the Old Testament external rituals and legalisms for worshiping God. We are called instead to express internal virtues from the Holy Spirit.

So, today, we now come to Romans 14:18 which deals with the subject of being a servant of Christ. He talks about serving Jesus Christ: "For he that in these things serves Christ. The word "for" indicates that he is going to present a conclusion on the basis of what he said in verse 17 constitutes the Christian life in the form of righteousness, peace and joy. "He that" refers to the Christian in these things – these three internal virtues which characterize the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God does not consist of any external rituals.

**The Will of Jesus Christ**

So, he says here, "In this way:" "For he that in this way serves Christ." The word "serves" looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's the Greek word "douleuo." This Greek word "douleuo" actually means "to be a slave of someone." Here it refers to the Christian who basically is to be a slave of Jesus Christ. That image is used because it is trying to convey to us that once you are a Christian, there is a will that overpowers and takes greater priority than your will. And that is the will of the Son of God. A slave does not operate on his own will. He operates on the will of his lord and master.

**Christian Living**

So, the Christian here is to live by the will of Jesus Christ rather than his own. This is to be his constant, deliberately selected lifestyle. And serving Jesus Christ involves acting with righteousness, peace, and joy in dealing with other Christians. In other words, the apostle Paul says that if you live in a way that really is Christian living, that consists of these three virtues of righteousness, peace, and joy, your very act of living that way, and treating Christians in that way, will cause you to be serving Jesus Christ.

So, in other words, here's the way you earn rewards in heaven, in service to Jesus Christ by functioning on the qualities of righteousness, peace and joy. This is indeed, Paul says a proper use of Christian liberty to live in this way. These are essential for an acceptable lifestyle in the family of God. And when you do them, you serve Christ. And when you don't do them, you serve Satan. When these three virtues are practiced in the local congregation, then all these differences between Christians, on nonessentials, will not cause a ripple of disturbance. When there is conflict in a local congregation over procedural matters and differences that people have over preferences of how they live, it is because you have people who are not acting toward one another in righteousness; in peace; and, in joy.

You want to remember that a slave is not entitled to judge the other slaves of his master. And you, as a slave of Jesus Christ, are not entitled to be passing judgment upon what the other slaves of Jesus Christ do with their lives. Your concern is to be with your own life.

So, the apostle Paul says, in Romans 14:18, "For he that in this way serves Christ with these three virtues is acceptable." The word "acceptable" looks like this. It is the Greek word "euarestos." This means "well-pleasing," and specifically, it makes you well-pleasing to God. In the Greek Bible, it says, "*the* God, meaning God the Father, A Christian servant who is well-pleasing to the Heavenly Father, then, is one who gives priority to righteousness, peace, and joy in his conduct toward other Christians. The spiritual Christian indeed is very much concerned about being well-pleasing to his Heavenly Father.

**Be Well-Pleasing to God**

In this, he certainly emulates the Lord Jesus, and Matthew 3:17 makes it very clear to us that God the Father is very much conscious whether we are pleasing Him or not. At the baptism of His Son Jesus Christ, in Matthew 3:17, we read, "And lo, a voice from heaven (from God the Father) saying, 'This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well-pleased.'" This, of course, is obvious to all of us as a very natural expectation. Earthly fathers would like to be pleased with what their sons do. They do not look forward to being displeased. And a son who is devoted to his father will want to do that which pleases the father. He will be very sensitive about that.

So, this is a very proper thing for Christians to be concerned about pleasing the Heavenly Father. The apostle Paul expressed this in 2 Corinthians 5:9 in this way, when he said, "Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him." What Paul means here is that whether he is alive here on earth, or whether he is dead and in the Lord's presence, in either case, he wants to be in a condition where God is well-pleased with him.

So, the apostle points to points out to us very specifically that pleasing God should be a big priority in the life of a Christian. As God the Father, in fact, becomes more of a reality to the believer, so that He's more than just a doctrine that you know is true, then the higher priority you will give to acting God's way.

A great deal of the problems we have among Christians, young and old alike, is that they don't act with the conscious presence of God. It's a very easy thing to know God, and to know His attributes. You can pop off the ten qualities that characterize God. But even after you've said that, you don't think about him as a person like you look at your wife, or your husband, or your brother, or your sister. You do not walk around with the consciousness that this person is standing right here next to you. The omnipresent God is there whatever you do; whatever you say; and, wherever you go. Now that puts a whole new dimension, and it is not an easy thing for you to do in your life. It is something that you must train yourself to do – to be conscious of the fact that He's there.

The world has no consideration for this. They don't think that He is there. But a Christian should know that He's there. Now that not only gives us guidance for proper conduct so that we please Him, but it also gives us great comfort, so that when we need Him, we know where to turn to. When we have a need, we don't go running off to someone, and asking that human individual to help us out financially, or emotionally, or whatever. We go to God and we say, "Please help us." And you deal with Him just as you would do with any other person face-to-face.

So, the apostle Paul here is stressing this basic quality that is so lacking among Christians – that he, that treats God as a person who really is there, is one who is going to live in a way that makes him acceptable to God. You're going to just stop breaking the rules.

This is the craziest thing in the world that Christians do. You can't you can't go breaking rules that God has established unless you first establish in your mind that He's not there paying attention. It is a great insult to break a moral rule. It is a great insult to break God's order of relationships. Why? Because you're pretending that He's too dumb to know. You're pretending that He is holding up a standard that is irrelevant and unrealistic, and you shouldn't pay attention to it. When you are aware of who God really is, and you know that He's there, it's not going to be so easy for you to act in a way that violates everything that He has said, "Don't do;" or, to violate when He he's told you to do something a certain way, and you don't do it. The implications are very tragic.

So, the Christian slave whose conduct is acceptable to the Father will be someone who can stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ ultimately and not be ashamed. This concerned the apostle Paul a great deal. He did not want to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and be ashamed of himself when the report was brought in on the value of his life.

**Accepted and Approved**

Paul says, "For he, that in this way, with righteousness, peace, and joy, serves Christ is acceptable to God." And furthermore, it causes a reaction among human beings. He is "dokimos." He is accepted and approved. "Dokimos" is a word in the Greek language that means that you have tested something, and you found it to be genuine. Somebody gives you a piece of gold and says, "Here is this valuable, valuable gold token that I give you." And you wonder, "Is it really gold or isn't it?" The captain on the Soviet vessel down at Galveston sent me a gold pin with Lenin's head on it. And on it is printed "Lenin Lenin Lenin," a fitting trinity for this one who is their God? I suspect that the Russians have not given me a piece of gold. I have not wanted to bite into this to test it, because I don't want to ruin it. I want to wear this around to upset people on certain appropriate occasions. But for me to find out whether this is gold or not, I'd have to give it the "dokimos" test. I'd have to put it to a certain test, and prove whether it is genuine or not.

**The Christian Lifestyle**

This is what God is talking about here. It means that people look at Christians, and they're always testing Christians – Christians who are always talking about what they think about God, and about Christian living, and the things of the Lord, and what they feel, and how they'd like to do things, and their ambitions. And then the world looks at them, and they say, "What are you doing as a Christian? How do you live? How do you treat your children? What kind of a home situation do you live on? Are you anything different than the world? What are your objectives? What are your values? What is your lifestyle?" That's what we're talking about here – lifestyle. And the world looks at that, and Paul says, "When you act within the context of what constitutes genuine Christianity; personal integrity (righteousness); and, personal peacefulness in dealing with people. You're not a yeller and a shouter. You're a peaceable person in the midst of crises. And you have personal inner happiness, no matter what the circumstances are around you, and other people look at that, and they say, "That's good. That's a stable person. That's the kind of a person I'd like to be. That person indeed is reflecting everything that Christianity should do for a person." And what they have done is they have tested you; found you to be genuine; and, they have then declared that they approve of you.

This word means that you come under strong scrutiny, and you come under strong scrutiny by "men." That's the Greek word "anthropos," which is the generic word for humanity – people in general. The Christian, of course, is constantly under the scrutiny of unbelievers, and they are looking for any excuse they can to demonstrate that you talk one way, but you live another way. And that's what Christians do. Christians talk one way in church, and they express beliefs one way in church, and then they go out in the world, and they live just under all the humanism, and all the procedures, and all the ambitions, and all the goals that the world has. There's not one iota of difference between the person who's in church and the one who never enters church. But those who do act with consistency of the Word of God in whatever their role and place in life, and they don't try to buck it and fight it, the world says, "I don't want to follow what you do, but boy, do I ever respect you." I have a certain internal great respect for you.

People admire, and people esteem, a Christian who is more concerned about his own moral conduct, and about the spirit of harmony that he creates, and about the happy attitude that he has, than they do in a Christian who wants to rearrange the lifestyles of other people. Paul is saying, "Handle your own life." Unsaved people are conscious themselves of being benefited by this kind of a Christian in their midst, even though they do not share that Christian's faith in Jesus Christ. They want the Christian that will act with integrity toward them. They want the peaceable Christian around that. They want that Christian who is a happy person. They don't want a grouchy drag around them. They esteem that kind of a Christian, and they welcome him.

**An Approved Christian**

So, an approved Christian (a Christian who has experienced the dokimos test) is one who has been approved, and stands the test of human scrutiny.

**Peace**

Romans 14:19-21 talk about the Christian life. In verse 19, Paul turns to the pursuit of peace and edification: "Therefore, to be acceptable to God and approved of men, we should do something. We should follow a certain path." The word "follow" is the Greek word "dioko." This means "to pursue." It connotes making every effort to arrive at some objective. It is in the subjunctive mood, which means that it is an exhortation. It's present tense in the Greek language, which means you should constantly be doing this. You should constantly be making a deliberate effort to pursue something, and that is "peace." That is the Greek word "eirene." This Greek word "eirene" refers to a condition of harmony and contentment between Christians – here, specifically, in the local congregation of the church. Peace with God, of course, is a prerequisite to lasting peace between people. The Christian himself is repeatedly told in the Word of God that he is to follow after the things that make for peace. He is to move through life, producing harmony, and not producing conflict.

**Conflict**

There are some people that you hate to see coming, because you know that, as soon as they arrive, they're going to say something that's going to create disharmony. There are people who are always eating worms, and they want to let you know that they're very unhappy, and they spread that all over everyone else. And that causes conflict. The Word of God says that the Christian is to live, because of who he is and what he is in Christ, in such a way that he produces peace.

Psalm 34:14 says, "Depart from evil and do good. Seek peace, and pursue it." And that's exactly what Paul is saying in the New Testament. Pursue the objective.

Hebrews 12:14 says this: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." Follow peace. Follow integrity.

1 Peter 3:11 puts it this way: "Let him eschew evil (the Christian) and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it." Here again you see this deliberate urgency. It's not just: "Be a peaceful, quiet kind of person. Don't be a troublemaker. Be a peaceful person. Be a peacemaker." It is more than that. It's pursuing it with a vengeance.

1 Thessalonians 5:13 adds this: "And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and be at peace among yourselves." This particular verse has to do with those who are in the position of pastor-teacher instructors, as you will see by verse 12. They're teaching you. They're admonishing you. They're telling you all those things you don't want to hear, and the things that you consider meddling in your life, and the things that you consider are deliberately said from the pulpit, and he has you in mind. You just know that he's talking about you.

That is just like the man who is so neurotic that he can't attend a baseball game without knowing that, if the catcher goes up to talk to the pitcher, they're talking about him down there on the mound. Some of you are very much like that. And you don't like hearing things that come awfully close to your own life. You just know that he's talking about you. And if you were smart, you'd know that the Holy Spirit is Who is talking about you. And you'd thank God for that.

Now verse 13 says, "Esteem that kind of an instructor in the Word of God because of the work which he's doing for your sake, and be at peace among yourselves, both in what you hear, and how you apply it. The strong Christian, however, should not use his liberty in Christ in any way in the presence of a weak Christian if it causes conflict, and it causes broken fellowship. Peace is never to be sought, however, at the price of condoning false doctrine or evil conduct. And we do have to qualify our pursuit of peace in the same way that Jesus Christ did, because our pursuit of peace is never at the expense of the truth of the Word of God. In Luke 12:51, the Lord Jesus put it this way: "Suppose," He says, "that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you no, but rather division." How often do you hear about Jesus Christ as coming to earth to bring peace? Jesus said, "No, I didn't come to earth to bring peace – at least not at this time. I'm going to do that in a millennium. What I came to earth to bring is division: "For from henceforth, there shall be five in one house, divided three against two; and, two against three. The father shall be divided against the son; the son against the father; the mother against the daughter; the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law; and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

What is He saying? He is saying that He has come to bring God's true truth. And when He proclaims that kind of truth, what does it do among people? Those who believe it are on one side, and those who don't believe it on the other side, and it causes conflict between them. Jesus said, "I came to bring you the truth, and the truth brings conflict." Now we do not seek to create conflict, but our integrity demands loyalty to the truth of the Word of God, and that will cause a disruption of peace.

In 2 Timothy 2:22, the apostle Paul says this: "Flee youthful lusts, but follow righteousness. Faith, love, and peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." That's an interesting qualification, isn't it? "Peace within that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." You cannot be at peace, really, with those who are calling upon the Lord, and who are pursuing what is improper, and what is a violation of the Word of God. But it is our objective as Christians to pursue peace.

**Conform to the Image of Jesus Christ**

The apostle Paul says, "You, as a strong Christian, have the obligation in dealing with other believers, and particularly weak Christians. It is your responsibility to pursue with a vengeance that which produces peace among them. And furthermore, you are to produce something else – something that edifies them. The word "edify" is the Greek word "oikodome." This word means "the act of building up." "Oikodome" is building something – the act of building up. Here it refers to promoting spiritual growth to the point of spiritual maturity in the life of another Christian. It secures God's purpose in this way of conforming every believer to the image of Jesus Christ. That's what you should be doing with yourself, every day, every moment.

You should not only be conscious of the fact that God is standing right there: listening; watching; observing; and, evaluating, just like your husband or like your wife. But you should also be concerned that you are transforming yourself in His presence into the very image of His Son, Jesus Christ. And you should be concerned that you are doing that for other people. You should be concerned that, when you are in the presence of other people, they're are not degraded into something other than the image of Jesus Christ. Just don't say things that degrade people. Don't act in ways that degrade people. Don't do things that degrade people. Treat people as those who are destined, because of their new birth through Christ, to be transformed the image of Jesus Christ. So, don't do anything that brings the person down to an animal dog-like level. Transform him into the image of Christ.

This is why we battle in Christian education. We are battling the humanistic system that is turning children into animals without the capacity to be aware of the presence of that God Who has made them to Whom they will account. Building up.

In Romans 8:29, Jesus says, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." It is God the Father's purpose to make all of us like Jesus Christ. The job will never be completed until we are in His presence. But I can assure you that someday that's the way we're going to be. And when we're in His presence, we're going to look back on our lives, and we're going to say, "Boy, I can't believe that I ever acted like that. Can you believe I ever did that? I, who was destined to be, and what I now am as the perfect reproduction of Jesus Christ in every way."

We cannot comfort ourselves that we were sinful creatures, because we have an awful lot of information. We have the guidelines of Scripture. And in a congregation that is taught the Word of God, you have great opportunity to know better.

**Edification**

In Galatians 5:13-16, we read, "For brethren, you have been called unto liberty. Only do not use liberty for an occasion to the flesh (to the sin nature), but by love, serve one another." You don't go beating other people with your sin nature desires, and say, "Hey, I love you." Love does not abuse a person with the desires of your sin nature. That's what we're talking about here. That is edifying a person – building him up so that he's like Jesus Christ: "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this: 'You shall love your neighbor ('agape' mental attitude love) as yourself.' If you bite and devour one another, taking heed that you be not consumed of one another. This I say then: walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

**Control the Sin Nature**

If you want to have the sin nature under control, then you must walk as one who is controlled by the Holy Spirit. You will either be controlled by God the Holy Spirit, or you're going to be controlled by the sin nature. And the results will be very distinctive in each category.

So, the strong Christian is not only to avoid doing spiritual injury to a brother in Christ, but furthermore, he is to see to it that what he does is building up that Christian. So, don't take people the things that destroy them spiritually. Don't invite people to participate in things that destroy them spiritually. Don't do things that cause people to be degraded from the image of Jesus Christ. And don't do that to yourself. It's not worth it in the long haul.

This is to be a mutual concern, for Paul says that we are to do these things which edify one another – Christians building each other up in spiritual maturity. Now, of course, we cannot go into the system for developing spiritual edification. We have done that before. But you understand that the basic procedure for developing spiritual maturity is to be instructed in doctrine, and a positive evolution response to what you have been told.

1 Thessalonians 5:11: "Wherefore, comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also you do." When we have the Lord's Supper meeting, we come to edify one another by sharing the application of doctrine in our lives and in our experience. It is our objective to help each other toward the image of Jesus Christ. God's purpose is for one believer to help edify another believer, and that is a great and serious duty and responsibility.

**Edification**

What is the purpose of edification? Why do we think that it is very serious? When we look in this congregation, we see Christians who are the roller-coaster type. They're up, and they're down. They're in, and they're out. Eventually, that type gets knocked out. They're here in service, and they're not here in service. You never know whether they're going to be here. They're here one Sunday. They wouldn't think of coming out to two services. They have better things to do to prepare their lives for those great things they're going to do. They're not about to show up Sunday evening as well as Sunday morning. After all, one edification is enough on Sunday.

What is the purpose of all this? What are they going to lose if they don't do that? It is very, very simple.

1. **Come to Christian Maturity**

What both experience and Scripture demonstrate is that that kind of a Christian will never be able to move toward the maturity of the super grace life, where he has all the five facets of the spiritual maturity structure fully developed. Most of those Christians and even all with the five facets are. They don't understand what James means when he promises, "I'll give you super grace in your life." Will you ever be riding high; excited; thrilled; blessed; joyful; and, in command of life in a significant way.

1. **Become a Stable Christian**

The second thing is that you'll become a stable Christian under the pressures of life. You're not going to crack up. You're not going to break down. You're not going to become ugly in a moment of tension: when you are irritated; when you've been crossed; or, indeed when you've been mistreated.

1. **Reflect the Glory of God to the World**

The third point of edification is to reflect the glory of God to the world about you – to be what the world likes to call "a beautiful person." But I do not consider the movie stars and the television heroes as beautiful people, though they like to portray themselves like that. They're the ugliest hound dogs around, and a lot of hot dogs, I find, are a lot more beautiful than they are, as a matter of fact. We are to reflect the glory of God in terms of His beauty. Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. That's the purpose – one of the purposes of spiritual edification.

1. **Produce a Clear Testimony to the World**

The fourth one is to produce a clear and compelling testimony to Satan's world. The mature Christian is the Christian that the world has to look at. They can't just brush you off with the back of their hand. What you have to say is compelling. They have to give it some serious thought.

**Self-Denial**

In Romans 14:20-21, the apostle Paul now closes in on us by calling for self-denial. In verse 20, he says, "Don't tear down another Christian." Here, specifically, he now returns to his example. He says, "Don't tear down another Christian on account of what you eat." The word for "eat" is "broma" (food). If a weak Christian has some scruples about eating certain foods, then take it easy about doing that in his presence. Here in this context, it was eating food that had been offered to an idol in worship, or eating meat that was forbidden as unclean in the Old Testament, but which doesn't apply today. In any case, the apostle Paul says, "Don't eat that kind of stuff, and thereby destroy your brother." The word for "destroy" is "kataluo." "Kataluo" means to tear down. In Matthew 24:2, it's referred to in tearing down a building.

In 2 Corinthians 5:1, it's talking about the physical body being dissolved by death. The whole idea of "kataluo" is to tear something down. So, the Bible says, "Don't do whatever causes spiritual ruin to another Christian by something that you eat that offends his sense of righteousness." And this happens to be a command. This is in the imperative mood in the Greek Bible, which tells you that this is God's command. It warns you against undoing something that God has done: "For food, don't tear down the work of God." What is the work of God? Well, the work of God the Father is that which he has produced in this believer by leading him into salvation, and what he has done in moving him on toward Christian spiritual maturity.

Please remember that every believer comes into the Christian life by God's specific divine choice. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are His workmanship" – we believers (we born-again people): "We are the workmanship of God, and we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works." He made us a new creation, spiritually born-again alive for a very specific purpose – so we could perform certain good works that no one else can do: "And these works He has ordained that we should walk in them." He has ordained them in eternity past.

So, here we are. We're dealing with a Christian. God brings him into salvation. God is bringing him into maturity. God has blessed with certain spiritual abilities. God is trying to encourage him into transformation of the image of Christ so that he will function on his spiritual gifts, and not just be another humanistic animal who lives, and breathes, and eats, and works, and exists, and indulges. And nobody cares whether he lives or dies next week. He wouldn't be missed too much, because his impact upon the real values of life are not there. Here, the apostle Paul says, "Don't tear down this wonderful work that God is doing in another believer.

In 1 Corinthians 3:9, the Christian is compared to a field that God is cultivating, and to a building that He is erecting. "It's unthinkable then," Paul says, "to make an issue of your personal freedom in Christ in order to flaunt that freedom in the face of a Christian who is offended because you eat something that he considers improper food, for religious or other reasons, and you should spiritually be willing to tear down this brother in Christ that God has been building up."

1 Corinthians 8:13 says, "Wherefore if food makes my brother too offend, I will eat no meat while the world stands, lest I make my brother to offend." The apostle Paul's attitude was: "If it bothers him for me to eat pork chops, I'm not going to do it. I will not do what offends him, even if he's not right in being concerned over that issue:" "For food, don't destroy the work that God has been building in another Christian."

Then Paul says, "Now I do want you to understand that it is true that all things are pure." The word "pure" is "katharos," and that means that "it's morally clean to eat." There is no category in the church-age of unclean foods which you cannot eat for spiritual reasons. There are a lot of foods that are not good to eat for health reasons, but not for spiritual reasons. All foods that God has created are morally clean to eat, no matter what scruples against them the immature Christian may have.

So Paul says, "All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that man who eats with offense." It is an immoral act for that person who eats this food, and brings about bad consequences. He's talking here about the strong Christian who insists on his freedom to eat whatever he may want to eat, even though it offends a weak Christian. So, it connotes the strong Christian riding roughshod over the conscience of the weak brother. And here it causes that weak brother an offense. The Greek word is very illuminating. It's the Greek word "proskomma," and this means "a stumbling." The weak Christian is led astray by the strong Christian eating some offending food. The weak Christian is tempted to ignore his conscience. So, he eats the same food, and he feels guilty about it, and that is sinful. You should not do anything that makes you feel guilty. You need to straighten it out. You may be wrong about the thing, but as long as you feel guilty about doing it, then the principle of the Word of God is: play it safe, and don't do it.

The strong Christian is guilty of sinning against his brother in Christ, even though the food he may eat is morally neutral, but he's caused his brother to follow his example, and to stumble into sin in the process of doing it, because he's violating his conscience. What you have done is robbed this Christian, again, of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ, because you have torn him down spiritually.

So, the apostle Paul, in verse 21, very quickly moves in to summarize all this. He says, "Simply don't insist on your liberty in Christ." He says, "It is good neither to eat meat nor to drink wine." The word "good" is the word "kalos," which means that it is morally right. This word is in the emphatic position in the Greek sentence because it is number one. The first word in the Greek sentence is this word. And when a word comes first in a Greek sentence, that is the way that the Greek language points to that word, and says, "I'm making an emphasis of this point."

What is good? Here is something that is noble; that is beautiful; and, that is right. It has something to do with eating. The Greek word is "esthio." At any time, the purpose is indicated here by this infinitive mood of this word: "You should not eat." And now Paul gets specific. He's been talking about food. Now he gets down to meat. He uses the word "kreas," which means "flesh." It's more specific than just food in general. The weak Christian here had a problem with certain meat for some reason, and seeing the strong Christian eat it causes him to respond in a way that will injure him spiritually.

Also, Paul says it's the same thing when it comes to what you drink. In this case, he uses the example of wine, and he says, "Don't drink ('pino')." Here again, he's referring to a beverage, and it's God's purpose that if a beverage that you drink offends a Christian, then avoid doing it.

If you want to witness to Mormons, they have a big hang-up about people who drink coffee or tea. So, if you want to witness to Mormon, don't take them into a restaurant and order a cup of coffee or a glass of tea. That's what he's talking about. Do that when you're home, but when you're there talking to him, don't throw up these crazy barriers that are going to make it harder, because this guy is going to look at that, and make a conclusion that he should not pay attention to what you have to say.

**Drinking Alcoholic Beverages**

Now, Paul says, "It's not worth getting hung up over drinking something that offends a brother. And the thing that offends him here is "oinos." Now we have touched upon something that is very sensitive. We're just going to get into in this session. Some of you may choose not to come next time when we really get into the business of booze. Next Sunday would be booze Sunday. We haven't had any special Sundays here for a while, so next Sunday is booze day. And we're going to talk about this whole business of alcoholic beverages. There's a lot of uncertainty among Christians: what they can do; what they should do; and, what the Bible talks about in various situations where wine is involved. What was Jesus involved in? Did Jesus ever drink alcoholic beverages? You tell me. Did Jesus ever drink an alcoholic beverage? There are very clear ways by which we may decide that He did or He did not. If He did not, that is a big clue to what we should do.

**Wine**

What does the word "wine" mean? I'm going to tell you right off the bat that you should understand that the word "wine" is a generic word. It's a category like "hardware." It's all kinds of different things that make up hardware. It's a category like "groceries." Groceries is a generic word. All kinds of different specifics make up groceries. In musical organizations (instrumental organizations), we talk about the "woodwinds." The woodwinds are a generic word for a category of instruments that include a variety of different instruments: the bassoons; the oboes; the flutes; and, the clarinets. All those are woodwinds, and they're a generic category. The word "wine" is generic. The Greek word "oinos" therefore contains two kinds of wine: alcoholic; and, nonalcoholic. You should understand that when you read the word "wine" in the Bible, you should not be tracked to the general line of thinking that says that has alcoholic content. Wrong! It is a generic word, and from the context, you have to decide which category of that genus it belongs to: alcoholic, fermented juice of the grape; or, nonalcoholic, unfermented juice of the grape.

Wee, we have the same thing with the word "baptism" in the Greek. The word "baptism," in the minds of some people, always means something that has to do with dipping a person in water. And yet, as you know, there are seven baptisms in the Bible, and that four of them are dry baptisms, like the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And only three of them are wet baptisms: the baptism of Jesus; the baptism of John; and, the baptism of the Christians. Even the wet baptisms are all three different. They're not the same kind of baptism. So, the word "baptism" is a generic word. And when you read it, you have to ask yourself, at any point in the Bible, which baptism of the seven does is this referring to here? And you just don't automatically assume that it's water baptism.

**The Pharaoh's Cup Bearer**

So, when we come to business of wine, this generic word, we are dealing with both fermented and unfermented wine, and we have to decide which category it falls into. The Bible is clear that there is such a thing as unfermented grape juice, and it is called "wine." For example, we have the situation when Joseph, in prison, in Egypt, was dealing with Pharaoh's chief cup bearer. In Genesis 40:11, when Joseph interpreted the cup bearer's dream, what the cup bearer said was that he saw himself with three vines growing up, and the grapes came and matured, and he took the grapes, and he held the cup, which is what he'd been doing, and he squeezed the grape. And what he gave to the pharaoh was "a cup of wine." Was that fermented alcoholic juice? Obviously not. You can't just squeeze it and have alcohol. It has to decompose first. The thing has to decompose as the result of leaven (as the result of yeast). It's a deteriorating process that converts the sugar to alcohol.

So, right away you have, obviously, a drink, which is from the fruit of the vine, which is unfermented. And we have found (the nutritionists tell us) that some of the most valuable nutritional elements in a juice last only for one or two minutes after the juice has been squeezed. And what this cup bearer was doing– he was a juicer (a squeezer), like you put into a machine. And within a couple of minutes, some of the most valuable elements, in certain juices, will degenerate and be lost.

I found something interesting when we were studying false doctrines from the demonic world through Edgar Cayce. We have this in the Philippians series. You may want to go back and review it. But one of the things that Edgar Cayce would do under his self-hypnosis was provide a diagnosis of illness and a prescription for solving it. Very often he would prescribe the use of juices. And I thought it was very interesting that these demon spirits, because they know so much, told Casey that the person must drink the juice within a minute or two after it has been squeezed. In order to do what? Because of their maximum values that are then lost.

So, I want you to know that there is value in drinking immediately because it is nonalcoholic. It has not degenerated. It has not decomposed as it does when it becomes wine. And indeed, the Bible makes it very clear that there is a bad wine. What the pharaoh had under this condition was good wine. It was nondestructive. There is bad wine, which is destructive to those who drink it. And that destruction, and the whole doctrine of alcohol, we shall look at next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)