

Traditional Interpretation of Romans 14

- Weak in Faith: Jewish believers who believe law still must be observed
- Strong in Faith: Christians who know law is cancelled
- One who eats anything: A Christian who knows the dietary laws are cancelled (strong in faith)
- One who eats only vegetables: A person who practices the Bible's dietary laws (week in faith)
- One who esteems one day as better: A sabbatarian (week in faith)
- One who observes the day: A Sabbatarian (week in faith)
- One who esteems all days alike: A Christian (strong one) who knows the sabbath is cancelled.

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. (Romans 14:14)

Koinos: Common. When used in reference to Jewish dietary law, it refers to otherwise permitted food rendered unfit for consumption by contact with idolatry, non-Jews, or some other source of defilement.

Akathartos: Unclean. When used in reference to Jewish dietary law, it refers either to foods which have become ritually unclean or to the meat of unclean animals.

Acts 10

“God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean” (Acts 10:28)

“The Spirit told me to go with them [and eat with them], making no distinction” (Acts 11:12).

Cf. Galatians 2:11-13

For a period of three days before idolatrous festivals, it is forbidden to engage in business transactions with Gentiles, to ask them for something or to be asked for something by them, to lend or to borrow from them ... Rabbi Yishma'el says, “It is forbidden for three days before the festivals and three days after the festivals.” The Sages say, “It is forbidden before the festivals, but it is permitted after the festivals.” According to Rabbi Meir, these are the primary days of idolatrous festivals: Kalendis, Saturnalia, Kratesis, the emperor's day of accession, the emperor's birthday, and

the emperor's day of death. (m.*Avodah Zarah* 1:1–3)

When an idolatrous festival is celebrated within a city, it is permissible to transact business outside the city. If it takes place outside the city, it is permitted to conduct business inside the city. What is the rule in regard to going to a city in which an idolatrous festival is taking place? If the road leads solely to that place, it is forbidden, but if the road leads also to other destinations, it is permitted. (m.*Avodah Zarah* 1:3)

Weak and Strong

Romans 14:1 As for the one who is weak in faith [regarding the validity of the Gentile inclusion], welcome him [into your fellowship], but not to quarrel over opinions [about Gentile status in the Jewish community].

Potentially Defiled Food

² One person believes he may eat anything [regardless of whether or not it has been prepared by a gentile and potentially defiled], while the weak person eats only vegetables [if food is potentially defiled] (Cf. Daniel 1:12-16).

³ Let not the one who eats [food potentially defiled] despise the one who abstains [from food potentially defiled], and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Idolatrous Days

⁵ One person esteems [judges] one day as better than [above] another, while another esteems [judges] all days alike [regardless of their idolatrous associations]. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

⁶ The one who observes [regards] the day [as idolatrous and prohibited to conduct business], observes [regards] it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats [food potentially defiled], eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains [from food potentially defiled], abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

God's Servants

⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.

⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Passing Judgment on the "Weak"

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;

¹¹ for it is written [in Isaiah 45:23], "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Stumbling Blocks

¹³ Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.
(Lev 19:14)

Nothing Unclean

¹⁴ I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is [common] in itself, but it is [common] for anyone who thinks it [common].

Walking in Love

¹⁵ For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.

¹⁶ So do not let what you regard as good [our faith and the Gentile inclusion] be spoken of as evil [on account of your dietary standards].

¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The Servant of Messiah

¹⁸ Whoever thus serves Christ [setting aside their personal convictions for the sake of not causing an offense] is acceptable to God and approved by men.

For the Sake of Food

¹⁹ So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

²⁰ Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean [regardless of whether or not

it is potentially defiled], but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.

²¹ It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

Personal Convictions

²² The faith [in personal convictions] that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who ~~has no reason to pass judgment on~~ [is not judging] himself for what he approves.

²³ But whoever has doubts [about whether or not he is permitted to eat something potentially defiled] is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith [i.e. based on his convictions]. For whatever does not proceed from [a solid conviction of] faith is sin.