

Romans 14:1 – 15:13

Accept one another in Christ

Context and Overview

Chapter 14 begins a new section, which focuses on relationships between the ‘weak’ and the ‘strong’ (likely Jewish and Gentile segments of the church in Rome), with a clear call to ‘accept one another in Christ’, even if there are various differences that seem important on the surface. However, the principles are relevant to all, and it’s helpful to appreciate that this section continues to apply the general call to ‘offer ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God’ (12:1).

(1) Read 14:1-12

In this section, Paul addresses the ‘weak’ and the ‘strong’ as two broad categories of people in the church, and urges them to relate to each other in certain ways.

Who are the ‘weak’ and who are the ‘strong’? (v2, 5; see also v23)

What does Paul say about how these groups should view and relate to each other? (v1, 3)

What reasons does he give for this approach?

v4...

v5-12...

Dig Deeper (optional!)

In other places, Paul shows a great concern for the gospel to be kept pure from any idea that we must keep certain ‘rules’, especially Jewish customs or commands from the Law, to be considered a true Christian. He is passionate, for example, that the Galatian Christians not have their freedom in Christ compromised by Jews who are trying to convince them that they need to be circumcised (Gal. 5:1-6). He even rebuked Peter publicly for separating himself from gentile Christians when he ate to keep certain Jewish believers happy, saying that such behaviour was hypocritical and undermining the gospel (Gal. 2:11-14).

What is different about the situation Paul is considering in Rome in these chapters?

Why is he more accommodating of the ‘weak’, who don’t seem to fully grasp the freedom they have in Christ?

Reflect...

What are some examples of such ‘disputable matters’ that Christians might disagree on today, and might be tempted to judge each other over?

Do you think you tend towards the ‘weak’ or ‘strong’ position on these issues? What do you need to keep in mind?

(2) Read 14:13 - 15:4

In contrast to judging each other, what mindset or priority should we have towards each other as we deal with such differences? (v13)

What two principles does Paul express in verse 14?

How can these both be true?

Who is Paul primarily speaking to in this section, the weak or the strong?

How would you summarise Paul's message to them? (*Consider: What danger does he want them to avoid, and what good thing does he want them to pursue?*)

In Galatians 5:13-14, Paul writes: "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

What connections do you see with Romans 14:13-15:4?

Reflect: When are you tempted to prioritise your freedoms or 'rights' as a Christian over the good of others?

(3) Read 15:5 - 13

What behaviour does Paul urge as he wraps up this part of the letter? (v5 & 7)

What reasons or motivations does Paul give for such behaviour? How is it connected with the gospel? (v7-12)

What outcomes is he looking for? (v6, 7-9, 13)

Reflect

- What principles for the Christian life stand out to you from this whole section?
- Can you think of situations in the past when you could have reacted or behaved differently in light of these principles?
- How can you pray for yourself and others in light of this passage?