

A top-down view of various fresh ingredients including vegetables, seafood, and wooden utensils arranged on a rustic wooden surface. The items include green onions, dill, a whole head of garlic, a dark eggplant, a corn cob, a cucumber, a whole avocado, a coconut, a red crayfish, yellow cherry tomatoes, wooden spoons and a fork, green bell peppers, red tomatoes, parsley, and several large prawns. The text "ROMANS 14" is prominently displayed in the center, with the subtitle "To eat or not to eat" below it.

ROMANS 14

To eat or not to eat

In **Romans 14** we see that “...*one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.*” and “*One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike....*” - **Romans 14:2, 5**

This was the controversy taking place in the Roman church. Some believed eating certain foods were wrong and others felt that there was nothing wrong with those foods. Some regarded certain days as important and others thought these days were not that important.

Now the problem we face today with these texts is that people tend to use them out of context to support their own opinions.

Regarding the food, people use this to claim that man is now, after the cross, allowed to eat **ANYTHING** his heart desires. Regarding the “*days*”, many feel that God’s Sabbath day was made null and void and that man is now free not to keep it holy. They feel that man may basically keep **ANY** day he so chooses holy.

It should be noted, that Paul says regarding those that eat not, “...*God hath received him.*” and then he continues and says, “*He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*”
- **Romans 14:3, 6**

Pay attention to the fact that neither the one way nor the other is sinful and wrong. Although the issue for the Romans was mainly about the food and the days, to Paul it was about the infighting amongst the brethren regarding these foods and days as we can read in **verses 3-4, 10** *“Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth:”* *“Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.”* *“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?...”*

The brethren were despising and judging one another, each believing themselves to be in the right and the other in the wrong. For Paul, the foods and days were an unnecessary object of contention.

He was more concerned lest these things put a, *“stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.”* - **Romans 14:13**

The Romans were holding the foods and days as something that would bring them in favour with God; they were looking to their works as a means of salvation and that is why Paul said, *“the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”* - **Romans 14:17**

Nothing we eat or drink can get us into heaven, as Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians in **Ephesians 2:8-9**, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

“For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure;” - **Romans 14:20**

Food in and of itself is unable to destroy the work of God. Paul here tells us the food in question is *“Pure”* or clean and *“...that there is nothing unclean of itself:”* - **Romans 14:14**

The fact that Paul says the food is clean and that food cannot become unclean of itself indicates that food can in fact be unclean. The Bible when talking about animals divides them up into two groups, those animals that are clean and those that are unclean, this can be found in **Leviticus 11.**

Some argue that the concept of clean and unclean animals originated with the Jews. This is a false notion since we are able to trace this concept or understanding as far back as Noah, before the flood, and long before the Jewish or Hebrew people even existed. God commanded Noah to allow 7 pairs of clean animals into the ark and only one pair of unclean animals. (**Genesis 7**)

Even if we look at the lives of the apostles of Jesus who lived with Jesus for 3½ years, they believed, even after the cross, that there was still a distinction to be made between clean and unclean animals. This can be seen in the dream that Peter had in **Acts 10**.

In this dream a great sheet filled with all kinds of unclean animals came down out of heaven and Peter was commanded to, *“kill, and eat.”* Peter responded with, *“...Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.”* - **Acts 10:13, 14**

Clearly after all the years with Jesus and even after the death and resurrection of Christ Peter still believed, as a Christian, that there still exists a distinction between clean and unclean animals and that as a Christian he was not to eat that which is unclean.

People for some reason try to use this dream to argue that God now wants man to eat that which He for almost 4000 years denied man to eat. They seem to not read everything concerning this dream, as later in the chapter, after Peter denied eating unclean animals three times, God reveals His true intentions regarding giving the dream.

It was not to declare all animals clean, but instead, it was to show Peter that the Gentiles were not unclean and should not be regarded thus by the Jewish Christians. For God saw no difference between a Jewish Christian and a Non-Jewish Christian. We read this in **Acts 10:28** *“And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.”*

So when we read in **Romans 14:2**, *“...one believeth that he may eat all things”* it does not include the unclean foods. In fact, **1 Corinthians 8** gives us more information regarding the food issue.

“...concerning therefore *the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols,*” - 1 Corinthians 8:4

The practise of sacrificing food to false gods or idols was a common practise amongst the heathen nations, and as many heathen people became Christians this practise became a matter of contention as some felt there was nothing wrong in eating it and some who were “*weak*” in conscience felt it was better to refrain from eating those foods.

The food in question that was sacrificed as Paul said was “*Pure*” and that “*...there is nothing unclean of itself*”, sacrificing clean food unto idols did not make it unclean.

Those stronger in conscience reasoned as Paul, “...*we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.*” - **1 Corinthians 8:4**

According to them, the food was clean and false gods did not exist, so there would be nothing wrong in eating it. But those who were weak in conscience, especially those Gentile Christians who just came out of heathenism, wanted to abstain from eating anything that was sacrificed to idols.

So neither the one nor the other was wrong, there was nothing wrong with eating clean foods sacrificed to idols while there was also nothing wrong in abstaining from it. It was a matter of conscience.

This is why Paul tried to warn both parties to stop judging one another, “*...for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*” Each one will one day be judged by Christ Himself, “*So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*” - **Romans 14:10, 12**

Since neither the view concerning food nor concerning the days was wrong or sinful, Paul was telling both groups to follow their personal convictions and, realizing that God will judge each individual, they therefore should refrain from judging each other. But Paul also told those who were stronger and were eating from the food sacrificed to idols,

“...take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.” - **1 Corinthians 8:9**

They should be careful in eating from these sacrificed foods that their weaker brethren do not stumble and fall back into heathen practices. This would be regarded as sin. *“But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.”* - **1 Corinthians 8:12**

“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”
- **1 Corinthians 8:13**

Paul felt that if eating from the sacrificed foods will cause a brother to stumble and be lost it would be better to abstain from these foods. Sacrificing your own pleasures for the salvation of your brethren is **LOVE**. Let us place others before ourselves in everything we do. If by giving up something we can prevent someone from falling, then why should we not do it?

Mark 12:29-31 *“And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”*

The days that were an issue amongst the Gentile Christians were by no means pertaining to the seventh day Sabbath.

The Bible defines sin as the breaking of God's Commandments (**1 John 3:4**) and in another place it states that *“All unrighteousness is sin”* - **1 John 5:17**

Righteousness therefore is obedience to God's law and Paul clearly said in **Romans 14:17**, *“For the kingdom of God is... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”*

Righteousness or obedience to God's law is the fruit of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Though we will not be saved by our works, a saved person will have the works of righteousness in his life; the fruit of his faith will be obedience to God's law.

If Paul was referring to the seventh day Sabbath in **Romans 14**, then he would be advocating disobedience to God. No, Paul accepted the Authority of the Ten Commandments (**Exodus 20:8-11**) and his life proved to be one of continual obedience to God and His law. This included obedience to the 4th Commandment, the Keeping of the Sabbath, as one would be able to see in **Acts chapters 13, 16, 17, 18**.

Paul preaching to the same Gentile Christians said in **Romans 3:31** *“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”* Paul clearly illustrated the importance of the law by saying, *“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”* - **Romans 7:7**

Clearly, the law gives us a knowledge of sin. And if the law were abolished there could not be sin either, since the Bible says, “...for where no law is, there is no transgression.” - **Romans 4:15** According to Paul, “...the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” - **Romans 7:12**

One can regard Tuesday as more important than Wednesday and another might reason they are of same importance. But the Sabbath is the Lord’s day and it was created by Jesus for **ALL** men, Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians. This day was made holy by God and man cannot change that. (**Genesis 2:2-3**)

Mark 2:27-28 *“And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.”*



**Whether therefore ye eat, or drink,
or whatsoever ye do,
do all to the glory of God.**

1 Corinthians 10:31

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