

Dr. Craig Keener, Romans, Session 13

Romans 12:14-14:1

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Keener, Romans, Session 13, Romans 12:14-14:1, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. Craig Keener's series on Romans focuses on chapters 12:14-14:1, emphasizing **love for both believers and outsiders**, including enemies. Keener illustrates this concept using personal anecdotes and scriptural references, highlighting the importance of **non-retaliation and forgiveness**. He further **discusses the implications of this principle in relation to submission to governing authorities** and the diverse practices within the early Roman Christian community, specifically concerning food customs and cultural differences. The lecture emphasizes the **centrality of love as the core of Christian ethics**, drawing parallels between this teaching and similar concepts in Jewish tradition. Finally, Keener stresses the need for **unity and mutual respect** within the church despite varying beliefs and practices.

2. 36 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Romans, Session 13 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → Romans).

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on Romans 12:14-14:1:

Briefing Document: Dr. Craig Keener on Romans 12:14-14:1

Introduction

This briefing document summarizes Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on Romans 12:14-14:1, focusing on key themes related to loving enemies, submitting to authority, the importance of love, and handling disagreements within the Christian community. Keener's lecture emphasizes practical application and historical context of Paul's writings.

I. Loving Enemies (Romans 12:14-21)

- **Beyond Non-Retaliation:** Paul urges believers to go beyond simply not retaliating against their enemies; instead, they should actively bless and pray for those who persecute them. Keener states: "You're not simply not cursing those who curse you. You're not simply not persecuting those who persecute you. You are blessing them, praying for blessing on them, because you know that God is the one who has your back." This idea is rooted in the belief that God will protect and vindicate believers.
- **Focus on God:** By blessing enemies, Christians shift their focus from the curses or actions of others to God's faithfulness. Keener shares a personal anecdote about encountering malevolent curses and emphasizes the power of praying for God's blessing on those who curse. "It takes a lot of pressure off when we say, okay, whatever they say, I mean, they may be invoking spirits against us, we pray for God to bless them."
- **Cultural Considerations:** Keener notes the importance of considering what is generally regarded as good within a culture for the sake of public witness, even if those things may not seem important to the believer personally. "You know, there's some things in terms of your public witness, there's some things everybody agrees on."
- **Strength in Non-Retaliation:** While some might see non-retaliation as weakness, Keener points out that there is strength in being able to choose not to repay evil. This contrasts with the Stoic view of non-resistance, which is based on the idea that you can only control yourself.

- **The Struggle to Love Enemies:** Keener candidly shares his personal struggle to love certain enemies, specifically jihadists, acknowledging that working for justice and peace does not negate the call to love enemies, and cites a personal experience where he had to confront his lack of love for perceived enemies and pray for them before he could teach on the topic of peace and reconciliation.
- **Leaving Place for God's Wrath:** Paul urges believers not to seek personal revenge but to leave room for God's judgment. Keener states "Don't avenge yourself. Leave a place for God's wrath." This is tied to the idea that God will ultimately take care of injustice, quoting Deuteronomy 32:35.
- **The Goal of Transforming Enemies:** Keener interprets Paul's command to "heap coals of fire on their heads" not as a desire for punishment, but as an action intended to win enemies over, to change their hearts, and to restore relationships. "...the point is really, ideally we want to win them to become friends. We want to do away with the enmity." He uses the example of his wife helping a man who had been seen as an enemy and that act of love began to transform their relationship.
- **Key Quotes:** "Bless those who persecute you, don't curse them." (Romans 12:14)
- "Don't repay evil for evil...take into account what everyone regards as good." (Romans 12:17)
- "Don't avenge yourself. Leave a place for God's wrath." (Romans 12:19)
- "If your enemy's hungry, feed them; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." (Romans 12:20)
- "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:21)

II. Submitting to the State (Romans 13:1-7)

- **Context of Submission:** Paul's call to submit to governing authorities was a common topic of discussion in the ancient world, particularly for minority groups like the Jewish community. Keener points out, "Submission to the state was a common topic in antiquity."
- **General Principle, Not Absolute Loyalty:** Submission to the state is presented as a general principle, not a recommendation of blind obedience. It is not intended to condone or support evil actions by the government (ex. Nazi Germany, Uganda under Idi Amin).

- **Respect for Authority:** Keener emphasizes that believers should respect those in authority in whatever country they live, recognizing that God is sovereign over rulers, even when they do not agree with how government functions. "...we need to respect those who are in authority and show appropriate respect to the state, whatever the state is."
- **Benefits of Organized Society:** Roman rule, despite its injustices, provided stability, trade, communication, and a wider venue for ministry. However, it is also acknowledged that this rule included injustice.
- **Paying Taxes:** Christians are called to pay taxes, even if they don't agree with how the money is used. "Paul doesn't say you can withhold that amount from your taxes." There are extreme circumstances when civil disobedience may be appropriate, but not for the early Christian movement.
- **Render to Caesar...Render to God:** Keener highlights that Paul's teaching echoes Jesus's principle of giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. Coins with Caesar's image should be given to him, while we, as those bearing God's image, should give ourselves to God.
- **Pray for Leaders:** Christians should pray for their leaders, even those they didn't vote for, and work for the good of the place where they live, similar to the exile community in Jeremiah, as well as praying for the welfare of the nation.
- **Key Quotes:** "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities." (Romans 13:1)
- "Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor." (Romans 13:7)

III. The Heart of Ethics: Love (Romans 13:8-10)

- **Love as the Fulfillment of the Law:** The heart of ethics is love, which is the culmination of all the teachings thus far. Keener explains that loving our neighbor encapsulates all previous commands on how to treat each other and how to treat those in authority.
- **Love as a Central Teaching:** In the ancient world, many valued love, but Christianity made it the central teaching.
- **New Commandment:** Loving one another wasn't a new command, but loving one another as Christ loved, even laying down their lives for one another, was a new

kind of love. Keener explains that the command in Leviticus 19:18 is given new meaning through Jesus's example.

- **Love as Summary of the Law:** Paul sees loving our neighbor as a summary of the entire law. He is joined in this view by Jesus as well as Jewish teachers such as Rabbi Akiba. Keener notes that many Jewish teachers thought honoring one's parents was the highest command.
- **The Example of Hillel:** The teaching is also reminiscent of Hillel's teaching of not doing unto others what you don't want them to do to you as a summary of the Torah.
- **Key Quotes:** "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law." (Romans 13:8)
- "Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." (Romans 13:10)

IV. Awakening from Sleep (Romans 13:11-14)

- **Figurative Sleep:** Paul uses the image of sleep figuratively to refer to a lack of vigilance and readiness for the Lord's return, not literal physical sleep. Keener emphasizes the need for spiritual alertness.
- **Salvation is Nearer:** The idea that salvation is nearer than when they first believed emphasizes the need to be ready for the Lord's return. Paul often speaks of salvation as a present, past, or future reality.
- **Armor of Light:** Believers are called to put on the "armor of light," which represents the virtues and righteousness needed to live as people of the day. This is also described as putting on Christ himself. Keener says: "...we put on Christ himself, and in that way, we put on the armor of light."
- **End-Time Battle:** Jewish people were expecting an end-time battle and philosophers also used the idea of battling passions and false ideologies figuratively. The armor imagery also includes imagery from Isaiah and is expanded upon later in Ephesians.
- **Live as People of the Day:** Believers should not engage in secret acts and drunken parties that are often associated with the night. As people of the day, they are to live righteously, in anticipation of Christ's return.

- **Key Quotes:** "The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed." (Romans 13:11)
- "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light." (Romans 13:12)
- "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." (Romans 13:14)

V. Respecting Differences (Romans 14:1-23)

- **Respect for Secondary Issues:** Paul addresses the need for Christians to respect each other's differences over secondary issues, particularly regarding food customs and holy days. The primary issue is the gospel itself. Keener states: "...we need to respect one another's differences over secondary issues."
- **Acceptance and Welcome:** The core of this section is about welcoming and accepting one another. Keener highlights the Greek word "proslambano," which is used three times to emphasize the need to accept one another, even amidst disagreements.
- **Food Customs:** The main example provided is about food customs, which included Jewish kosher laws and other cultural differences. The discussion is mostly, if not entirely about Jewish food laws.
- **Avoiding Offense:** Believers should not look down on or cause others to stumble over these secondary matters. "Don't cause somebody to fall away from the faith."
- **Strong and Weak:** Paul speaks of "strong" and "weak" believers, which probably was a title used by the strong who were disregarding the concerns of the weak. The main point is to be concerned for the weak, not to act in a way that causes them to stumble, which is causing them to fall away from the faith.
- **Stumbling Block:** Stumbling is not just about personal taste, but about causing someone to fall away from the faith. The language is conspicuously Jewish.
- **Key Quotes:** "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters." (Romans 14:1)
- "Why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat." (Romans 14:10)

Conclusion

Dr. Keener's lecture highlights the practical outworking of faith through love, service, and submission in daily life, and it also demonstrates how these principles address not only general life but also particular issues that the first century church faced, which may be applicable in the church today. Key takeaways include the need to actively love our enemies, submit to governing authorities while remaining true to our convictions, and to focus on loving one another as the most important aspect of Christian ethics. He also addresses the importance of not causing other believers to stumble over secondary matters. Ultimately, these are a call to live as followers of Jesus, loving God and neighbor as the fulfillment of the law.

4. Romans Study Guide: Session 13, Romans 12:14-14:1

Romans 12:14-14:1 Study Guide

Quiz

1. According to Paul, how should Christians respond to persecution? Christians should not retaliate or curse those who persecute them, but instead bless them and pray for God to reveal his love to them. This is because Christians trust in God's protection and vindication rather than defending themselves.
2. What is the Stoic view on resisting evil? Stoics believe that resisting evil is futile because the only thing a person can control is themselves. They argue that you cannot control fate or the actions of others, therefore, resistance is pointless.
3. What does it mean to "heap burning coals" on someone's head, according to Keener? Keener suggests this refers to either winning over an enemy through kindness, thereby ending the conflict, or, if the enemy remains hostile, they will face a more severe judgment for their actions. Ultimately, the goal is to transform enemies into friends.
4. What is the general principle regarding submission to the state, and what are some limitations? The general principle is that Christians should respect and submit to the authorities of the state, but this principle is limited and does not require supporting immoral actions by the state. It is not a call for absolute obedience, especially in cases of extreme injustice, such as the Nazi regime.
5. Why was it important for the early Christians in Rome to avoid scandal? As a minority group, early Christians needed to avoid scandal to maintain a good reputation. This was important considering they had already faced expulsion from Rome and were soon to face deadly false accusations.
6. How does Paul use the concept of "debt" in relation to love? Paul says that love is a debt that Christians owe to one another because God has loved them first. Christians should repay this debt by loving God and their neighbors, which embodies the heart of Christian ethics.
7. What does Paul mean by "awakening from sleep" in Romans 13? Paul's "awakening from sleep" is a figurative call to spiritual vigilance, urging believers to be alert and ready for the Lord's return, not just literal physical awakening. This call also highlights being prepared for judgment.

8. What is the central message of Romans 14 regarding differences within the church? The central message of Romans 14 is to respect and accept one another's differences over secondary issues, such as food and holy days, and not let those differences cause division in the church. The primary focus should remain loving and welcoming one another.
9. What is the significance of "kashrut" in the context of Romans 14? "Kashrut," the Jewish kosher laws, were very important to diaspora Jews. This marked a distinct difference between them and other people in the region, and it was mocked by non-Jews. However, these customs are the secondary issues that the early church was divided about.
10. What does it mean to cause another to "stumble" as used in Romans 14? To cause someone to "stumble" means to do something that leads another believer to fall away from the faith, not merely a matter of personal preference. This concept emphasizes the responsibility of believers to be mindful of the impact of their actions on others, particularly those considered "weak" in their faith.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the tension between non-retaliation and the pursuit of justice in the context of Romans 12:14-21, drawing on examples provided in Keener's lecture. How can Christians balance these seemingly opposing principles?
2. Analyze the significance of Paul's teaching on submission to the state (Romans 13:1-7), considering both the historical context of the Roman Empire and its implications for contemporary Christian living. How might this passage be misapplied, and how can a proper balance be struck?
3. Examine the concept of love as the fulfillment of the law in Romans 13:8-10 and its connection to the broader theme of reconciliation in the letter. How does this concept apply to the different challenges and conflicts that early Christians were experiencing?
4. Explore the significance of the "awakening from sleep" imagery in Romans 13:11-14. How does this imagery relate to the idea of Christian life as a journey of faith and preparation for the return of Christ?

5. Assess the complexities surrounding food and other secondary issues discussed in Romans 14. How can modern Christians learn from this chapter about navigating differences within the church, and what are the most important principles to consider?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Non-retaliation:** The act of not seeking revenge or returning evil for evil, but instead responding with blessing and kindness.
- **Stoicism:** A school of Hellenistic philosophy that emphasized self-control, virtue, and acceptance of fate, often advocating for non-resistance.
- **Vindication:** The act of being cleared of blame or wrongdoing.
- **Jihadists:** Individuals who engage in religious warfare, often associated with extreme interpretations of Islam.
- **Sharia Law:** The moral and religious code of Islam derived from the Quran and the teachings of Muhammad.
- **Pacifism:** The belief that war and violence are unjustifiable, and that conflicts should be resolved through peaceful means.
- **Just War Theory:** A doctrine in Christian ethics that outlines the conditions under which war may be considered morally permissible.
- **Confessing Church:** A movement of German Protestant Christians who resisted the Nazi regime.
- **Apartheid:** A system of racial segregation and discrimination enforced in South Africa from 1948 to 1994.
- **Sovereignty (of God):** The belief that God has supreme power and authority over all creation and all rulers on earth.
- **Tribute:** A payment made by one party to another as a sign of submission or respect.
- **Gezerah Shavah:** A Jewish hermeneutical principle that connects two texts by means of shared words or concepts.
- **Kashrut:** The body of Jewish dietary laws that define what is kosher (fit for consumption) and what is not.

- **Diaspora Jews:** Jews living outside of the land of Israel after the Babylonian exile.
- **Hyperbole:** Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally.
- **Libation:** A drink poured out as an offering to a deity.
- **Stumble:** To cause someone to fall away from their faith; to cause a spiritual setback.
- **Royal Law:** The most important law, which is the law of love.

5. FAQs on Keener, Romans, Session 13, Romans 12:14-14:1, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How does Paul instruct believers to treat their enemies, and why?**
2. Paul urges believers to bless those who persecute them, rather than cursing or retaliating. This goes beyond mere non-retaliation; it involves actively praying for their well-being and seeking to show them God's love. The motivation is rooted in the belief that God is ultimately the one who defends and takes care of believers, making self-defense unnecessary and allowing them to focus on God's faithfulness instead of the curses of others. This echoes the teachings of Jesus in Luke 6:28.
3. **What is the difference between the Stoic and Christian views of non-resistance?**
4. Both Stoics and some Jewish sages advocated non-resistance but for different reasons. The Stoics believed that the only thing one can truly control is oneself, and thus resisting external forces is futile. The Christian view, however, goes beyond simply not resisting. It urges believers to actively love and bless their enemies, trusting in God's justice and vindication, instead of relying on self-defense. This active love and blessing is a key distinction from Stoicism and other philosophies of the time.
5. **How should believers respond to government authority according to Romans 13:1-7?**
6. Paul instructs believers to submit to governing authorities, acknowledging that God has established them. This includes paying taxes and showing respect. However, this is a general principle that assumes the benevolence of the state and is not an absolute endorsement of every action by every government. The passage does not encourage blind obedience to evil or unjust commands. There is a recognized need for resistance in extreme cases where the government commands something wrong or immoral.

7. What should be the believers motivation for respecting government authority?

8. Respecting government authority is rooted in the belief that God is ultimately sovereign over all rulers, and that even though injustice exists within systems, organized governance often provides more stability and justice than anarchy. Respecting the government also means that believers are mindful of avoiding scandal or the appearance of rebellion or sedition, particularly for minority groups such as early Christians. This approach is also beneficial to maintaining peace and good standing in the wider society.

9. What is the central ethical principle that guides believers, according to the sources?

10. The central ethical principle that should guide believers is love. This principle encompasses loving one another, honoring others above ourselves, taking care of our neighbors, and even loving our enemies. It is seen as the summation of the law and should guide believers in their interactions and behavior, especially in the case of secondary issues or disagreements. Love should be the motivating factor, even when making difficult decisions.

11. How does Paul use the metaphor of "putting on armor" in Romans 13:12-14, and what does it signify?

12. Paul uses the metaphor of "putting on the armor of light" as an image of spiritual preparedness for the Lord's return. This metaphor ties into the idea of being awake, vigilant, and ready. It's a call to not live in the darkness of the night (associated with sinful behavior) but as children of the day, who are aware of the coming judgment and are actively living out their faith. This includes "putting on Christ" and the virtues that come with this.

13. What are some of the key issues Paul addresses in Romans 14 and how should those be approached?

14. Paul addresses the issue of differing customs in the church, particularly relating to food. The issue specifically refers to Jewish kosher laws and dietary practices. Paul urges believers to respect one another's differences over secondary issues, to avoid judging each other, and to welcome one another, understanding that the heart of the Gospel is more important than specific customs. The overarching principle is not to cause a fellow believer to stumble, or fall away from the faith.

15. What does Paul mean by "the strong" and "the weak" in the context of Romans 14?

16. In Romans 14, "the strong" refers to those who feel free in Christ to eat all foods and observe no special dietary practices, while "the weak" likely refers to Jewish Christians who maintain kosher laws and may see others breaking those laws. Paul cautions the "strong" against causing "the weak" to stumble by flaunting their freedom, while urging all to focus on mutual acceptance and love. It is not a matter of being superior or inferior, but of showing concern for one another's faith and spiritual growth.