

Dr. Craig Keener, Romans, Lecture 13

Romans 12:14-14:1 Introduction

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Romans. This is session 13 on Romans 12:14-14:1, Introduction.

Paul has been talking about loving and serving your brothers and sisters and how the renewed mind gets us to think about how we can do that.

Paul now talks about loving outsiders and loving not just any outsiders, but even loving our enemies, 12, 14, and then verses 17 through 21. He says, bless those who persecute you, don't curse them. Now there were some other thinkers in antiquity who urged non-retaliation, and yet Jesus and Paul go beyond simply non-retaliation.

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.

God is the one who takes care of you. And so, you don't need to defend yourself. He's echoing Jesus here, Luke 6.28, where you bless those who persecute you.

There are some societies that actually practice curses in, well, there were some people in that society who did too, but you practice curses in a malevolent sense, like not just, you know, you're an idiot, but like they invoke spirits to curse you. And we have had experience, my wife and me, with some of those places. But one thing we did experience was that 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.

We pray for God to reveal his love to them. And then God takes care of us because we don't have our eyes fixed on the curses. We have our eyes fixed on God who is faithful.

Don't repay evil for evil, Paul says in 12:17, but take into account what everyone regards as good. So, you know, there's some things in terms of your public witness, there's some things everybody agrees on. You know, we all agree that certain behavior is nice, certain behavior is good.

Make sure you do those things. Some of those things actually are things that may be in the culture that we may not think are that important, but the culture values them. They're not wrong.

We can do those for the sake of God's honor as well. But especially with this idea of not repaying evil, people will often look at that and appreciate that. Some people will think you're just weak because you don't repay evil, but there's strength in being able to not repay evil.

Stoics said don't resist. The reason for not resisting was because the only thing you actually can control is yourself anyway. You can't control your fate, you can't control what people do to you, so don't resist.

That was the Stoic view. Jewish sages sometimes urged non-resistance. Obviously, these are not the zealots, but they sometimes urged non-resistance.

And you have that in the Old Testament, Leviticus 19:18, with the loving your neighbor, also don't repay evil, Leviticus 24:29. We wait on God for vindication, Proverbs 20:22. This one was sometimes difficult for me, the idea of loving your enemies and blessing your enemies. Even blessing them was sometimes easier than loving them. But it depends on which enemies.

After I wrote a book on miracles, there were some atheists on the internet. Now it's not all atheists. Some atheists, it's just, that's what they think.

But there were some atheists who on the internet are very unfriendly. There are some Christians on the internet who are also very unfriendly, who aren't observing what Paul says here. But anyway, these atheists were making it look like Keener is so stupid he actually believes in these things.

Well, the book was to show that I had good reason for believing in those things if you read the argumentation. But in any case, I loved them. I had been an atheist.

I understood, and I wasn't angry with them. But there was a group that I really didn't love, and that was because of some things I had seen in northern Nigeria. This was before anybody talked about Boko Haram.

This was back in the late 90s, when some jihadists had been killing Christians, as well as moderate Muslims. Later on, some of the younger Christians started retaliating. That's what the jihadists wanted, was to get people fighting each other.

But I had some friends who had been in a church under siege for three days with a corpse and no water. Things like that made me, you know, I love my brothers and sisters there. I'd spent three summers ministering there.

I really had trouble loving jihadists. That's not to say, I mean, we still have to work for justice. We still have to work for peace.

We have to work for, you know, police efforts or sometimes military efforts to bring peace. At least that's my opinion. I don't want to, well, I shouldn't get into pacifism and just war now.

But in any case, let me not get into that. But this issue of loving your enemies, my wife and I were going to teach pastors in Cote d'Ivoire after the war about peace and reconciliation. And there the issue was not jihadists.

It was an ethnic conflict, a regional conflict. But I was halfway over the Atlantic on this flight. My wife was asleep and I was struggling in myself.

I didn't feel it. I didn't feel like I could teach this right and love your enemies. And the Lord was convicting me.

It's because I didn't love my enemies. I didn't love these people. I wasn't praying for them.

I just, it was like I was mad at them. And that had to be dealt with first because if I'm to call other people in very difficult situations to love their enemies, then I had to love people that I counted as my enemies also. And otherwise, I would be a hypocrite and I wouldn't experience the same blessing of God as I was teaching the message.

Now, by contrast with that, some years before that, during a time when some people had been protesting in Kaduna, wanting Sharia law, and then some Christians came from Kuf and Bashan, from southern Kaduna state, and they were having a peaceful protest saying, no, we don't want Sharia law that covers the whole state. And they began to be gunned down by people who had semi-automatic weapons and so on. And I and one of my students who was from Kaduna State heard about this.

And from what he had heard, he thought that his wife his brothers, and his cousin had been part of this protest. And his cousin was killed. And he didn't know if his brothers and his wife were still alive.

And we were praying together. And I was praying for God to defend the honor of his name. And I thought I prayed really well.

But then Sunday Agung, my student, who didn't know if his wife and his brothers were alive, he prayed, God, please forgive these people who did this and show them your love because they don't have hope without you. And I was ashamed of myself and knew that I was in the presence of a man of God. And Sunday went on to do his Ph.D. at Fuller.

He's now working for ethnic reconciliation and peace there in the middle belt of Nigeria. Well, 12:18, be at peace with all, Paul says. He's been talking about peace.

This is relational peace. But be at peace with all so far as it depends on you. 12:19, don't avenge yourself.

Leave a place for God's wrath. Well, so far as it depends on you, sometimes we can't help it. People want to fight us.

But often we can make, we can do what we can do. I had a conflict with a fellow professor at a school years ago where some of the professors would come into some of the classes and say things like, there is no God. Even though they didn't believe it, they just wanted to play devil's advocate.

But they, you know, the devil has enough advocates. They left it in the devil's court and they never, you know, they never tried to clear it up. And some of them said, well, I had one who actually didn't believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

This was a seminary. He didn't believe Jesus rose from the dead. He didn't believe that we would be raised from the dead ever.

I think he didn't believe in life after death, as I recall. He actually was a pastor of a thousand-member church. But, you know, he didn't say these things in the church.

He and I actually were good friends. But there was another professor where we were kind of at odds where the things he was saying to his students and students would come and say, yeah, he, in his class on a completely different subject, he said, don't believe anything Craig Keener says in his classes. He doesn't know what he's talking about, even though I was teaching in my discipline, not in his discipline.

But anyway. And so, I needed to stand firm because the students were depending on me to give them, you know, the other side at least. But at the same time, I also began to pray about the proverb that says that the Lord can make even your enemies to be at peace with you.

And we actually got to be friends. But I also had to observe what the proverb says about a righteous person who gives way before the wicked is like a polluted well. So, I probably wouldn't have appreciated that comparison.

But in any case, we eventually became friends. And the students actually also turned out all right, which was part of my prayer. But don't, don't avenge yourself.

I'm not saying it always works that way, but don't avenge yourself. Leave a place for God's wrath, verse 19. In other words, if you don't avenge yourself, God will take care of it.

If you do avenge yourself, it's like, it's like it says in Matthew chapter six. Well, if you know, you, you, you pray for others to see you, you give your charity for others to see you, you know, you do it as if God isn't watching. You already have your reward.

And Proverbs talks about, well, you know, don't, don't rejoice when your enemy stumbles, lest the Lord see it and, you know, say, well, let me help this person up. Leave a place for God's wrath. He quotes Deuteronomy 32, verse 35.

Well, he really likes Deuteronomy 32. He's going to come back to it in chapter 10 and verse 19 and in chapter 15, verse 10. So, he's going to be quoting it a few times in the following chapters or the previous chapter, he already quoted it 10:10, 19 earlier and 15:10 later.

Don't avenge yourself, leave a place for God's wrath. I think he's going to come back to that point in the following verses. Now that's not to say that we should want them to get God's wrath, but anyway, the way he words it, 12:20 to 21, he's quoting from Proverbs 25:21 to 22.

If your enemy's hungry, feed them. If your enemy's thirsty, give them a drink. In so doing, you heap coals of fire on their head, on their heads.

Well, people have interpreted that in various ways and sometimes in ways that sound nicer, like you're not really trying to get them in more trouble. But it looks to me like the point is really, ideally we want to win them to become friends. We want to do away with the enmity.

However, if they don't change, if they remain evil, if they remain hostile, it's heaping coals of fire on them, namely that they're going to get a worse judgment for it. But the goal in verse 21 is to turn your enemy into a friend. It's to win them to the right way.

Actually, I know of people who've done this for people who were their enemies, and who reached out to them. In fact, when my wife was a refugee during war, there was someone who was captured and was assumed to be a spy in a different country. Looking back on the evidence, I think he probably wasn't really a spy, but he was said to be a spy.

She met him because she was forced to translate for the resistance because she knew more than one language. He was English-speaking. This was a French-speaking country she was a part of.

She was bilingual, well, actually, quintilingual. So she had to translate what he was saying. Well, after they got no information from him because he didn't have any, but they still thought he was a spy, they beat him up, and then they let him go.

Later on, she was preparing some food. They barely had enough food for themselves, but she saw him, and he was hungry, and she fed him. From then on, he would come over, and they would sacrifice some of their food to take care of him as well.

That's the way as Christians we're supposed to be. I mean, it wasn't her war anyway. She didn't want the war, but even in cases where we have strong feelings and strong disagreements, we need to reach out to people and show them love.

We could give many examples of when Christians have done that, and unfortunately, there are also many examples of when Christians have not done that. Sometimes pseudo-Christians, but sometimes people who think that the Lord's name is best defended by human means and forget what we're told here about loving our enemies. Chapter 13, verses 1 through 7. Well, not necessarily that Rome was an enemy to Christians.

Under Nero later on, they did get persecuted, but at this point, Nero wasn't persecuting the Christians. He was still under the influence of Seneca and Burrus when Paul writes this letter. Romans 13, 1 through 7, talks about submitting to the state.

So, it continues the idea of verses 14 through 21 of the previous chapter about relations to outsiders. Submission to the state was a common topic in antiquity. Often, it was treated alongside household or other relationships when philosophers or moralists orators would deal with the topic.

Stoics and others talked a lot about this. And it was also an issue for minority groups in the empire, like Jewish people. Obviously, it was not something that the Zealots and other revolutionaries, who would soon be leading a revolt against Rome, were thinking about.

But certainly, Jewish people in Rome thought about this. Well, we don't want to get a bad reputation here. We don't want to be expelled from the town again.

So, they often talked about, well, how can we function within this larger society? Now, we also need to keep in mind that when people wrote on this topic, it was a general principle that was assuming the benevolence of the state. It was not recommending evil, doing evil at the command of the state. It's not recommending supporting the Nazis if you're in Germany, where they took over a lot of the church.

But there were those who were part of the confessing church, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who said, no, we're going to stand for what's right. We're not going to be a part of this. Or if you were in Uganda and Idi Amin is giving orders to kill people or whatever, it's a general principle.

It's not saying always. And this is something that some theologians like Karl Barth or this Swiss theologian who was dealing with salvation history, Oskar Coleman, and others, after World War II, you had some warning about how not to take this passage. Again, in South Africa, in the time of apartheid, you had people using this passage in the wrong way.

And there were others who were saying, no, this is not absolute loyalty to the state. But on the other hand, this is still a good message for us under normal circumstances where we need to respect those who are in authority and show appropriate respect to the state, whatever the state is. Whether the state is China, whether the state is Russia, whether the state is the United States, whether it's Bolivia or Chile, or whatever state it is, if we are citizens of that nation, we need to be respectful towards our government.

The setting. It was important to avoid scandal. Talk about minorities.

The Jewish community was a minority. The Christians were certainly a minority. Some of their leaders, at least, had been expelled in the year 49.

They were going to face deadly false accusations in the year 64, less than 10 years after Paul wrote this letter. Nero wasn't yet murdering Christians, but staying reputable in as much as it depends on us, having peace with everybody in so far as it depends on us, was a really good idea. And Paul knew that even though he probably didn't know exactly what was going to be coming.

Jewish people in Rome had close ties with Judea, but after the revolt in Judea in the year 66, they would not want to be associated with that. So, this was truly wisdom. And it's not just wisdom for this setting, but this setting certainly invited this kind of discussion.

Paul speaks here of some of the benefits of government, and some of the benefits of organized society. God is sovereign over rulers. We read about that in the Old Testament.

He turns the heart of a king where he wills. Actually, we were using that in prayer when we were trying to get our daughter able to be able to immigrate to be with us. The cross itself indicated Roman injustice.

I mean, just thinking about the cross, well, you know that was an act of injustice. So, at the heart of the Christian faith is an acknowledgment that there was injustice in the Roman Empire. We know the courts favored the rich.

In fact, soon after this, in the second century, probably, it was written into Roman law, just as it was often written in the ancient or Eastern legal collections. Your punishment depended on your social class. But the courts normally favored the rich.

Rich people could sue poor people if they needed to and get their way. Poor people, you couldn't drag a rich person to court. It wouldn't work.

The judges were all from the richer class and so on. So, there was injustice. But in a general way, Roman rule did provide stability.

It provided more justice than anarchy or worse governments would. It actually protected Paul in Corinth, where Paul is writing this from. It protected him in Corinth earlier.

It's going to protect him later after this letter as well. Roman rule gave a wide venue for trade and communication in the empire. So, there were benefits of this organized society.

And one of the duties was you would pay taxes, not just the taxes you liked, but you would pay taxes. The empire's property tax was about one percent. And also, there was a head tax, which naturally, proportionately, was much harder on the poor than it was on the rich.

You also had lots of local taxes. That's where the heaviest taxes would come from and customs dues. But then you had the grain that was being shipped from Egypt and certain places got taxed in ways that were heavier.

The use of tax revenues, were used for a skeletal provincial administration, a very small level of provincial administration. They were used for Roman roads, and built for armies, but everybody profited for them. But they were also used for armies that could be used to repress people, and conquer people, and had been used that way in the past and would be used that way in the Judean revolt, from the Judean perspective.

They were used to build imperial temples. Paul didn't say you Christians just pay taxes for the part of it that you agree with. You know, there may be ways that there are taxes that the government uses the money in ways that we don't agree with.

Paul doesn't say you can withhold that amount from your taxes. Not to say that there's not a place for civil disobedience. Again, we talked about that a few moments ago in extreme cases, but it wasn't appropriate for this minority Christian movement.

They don't really have a say in the government to do that. Shortly before Paul wrote, some taxes in Rome had stirred significant controversy. Also non-citizens, like the

Jewish believers who had been expelled from Rome and who had just recently returned, also had taxes that Roman citizens didn't have to pay.

Tribute. That's why he says in verse six, you pay tribute. Well, Paul didn't have to pay it.

He was a Roman citizen. I think in all this, I mean, this was a common theme, but I think the language of it, probably he's echoing especially what Jesus taught. Give the Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

Well, what was Caesar's? Well, for instance, this coin has Caesar's image and superscription on it. Give to God what is God's. Well, what bears God's image? Give God yourself.

In verse seven, he also says, give honor to whom honor is due. There were, most nations gave sacrifices and offered incense to the image of the emperor. Judea was exempted from that.

They were simply required to pray for the health of the emperor and offer sacrifices on behalf of the emperor. When the revolutionaries took over the temple, I mean, they could have been forgiven for a lot of things, but when they cut off the sacrifices on behalf of the emperor, that was a declaration of war against Rome. So it was expected to do that.

In synagogues, you could pray for the state and that's also recommended in first Timothy chapter two. We pray for our leaders and this should probably be said for those of us who live in democracies. It doesn't just say to pray for those we voted for, but whoever's in authority, we need to be praying for them, praying and praying for the welfare of the nation of which we're part.

Pray for the welfare, Jeremiah says, of the place where you've been exiled to. And first Peter portrays us as exiles in a foreign land. We belong to the world to come, but we live in this world, and as resident aliens, we also should work for the good of the world in which we live.

So, the heart of ethics, he comes to in verses eight through 10, the heart of ethics is love. This climaxes 12:9 through 13:7. Keep in mind, we've seen it throughout the letter to the Romans. Roman Christians are divided over the law.

Paul says the heart of the law is to love one another. So, all the things that he said so far about honoring one another above ourselves, honoring those who are in authority, taking care of our neighbors, even those who are enemies, and loving them. All of those things are summed up in loving our neighbor.

Now, sometimes some of those things come into conflict with each other in matters of detail, but the heart, the principle of it, of love, is what can guide us in how we should always try to serve others and love others and sometimes try to work through how to figure out some of the things on the larger scale that we don't know exactly how to make them fit together. This was the highest command. Some Jewish teachers in this period, and actually years earlier than this, in the time of Jesus, we read about this in Jewish sources as well as, well, the Gospels are Jewish sources, but in other Jewish sources as well as in the Gospels, non-Christian Jewish sources as well as Jewish Christian sources, that this was a big debate among the Pharisees in this period.

What is the greatest command? Many thought that honoring your father and your mother was the greatest command. About a generation or two after this, Rabbi Akiba says that loving your neighbor as yourself is the highest command. Well, Jesus said in Mark chapter 12 that loving God with everything in you, is first, and then after that, the second is loving your neighbor, and he could connect those two by means of the Jewish hermeneutical principle of Gezer HaShavah, connecting the two texts.

They start the same way. Vaya havta, you shall love. Well, there were a lot of people in antiquity who valued love, who thought it was a good thing, but this is the one movement in antiquity where that was the central teaching, like 1 Corinthians 13 style.

You have it, Jesus says it in John 13 in a different way, talking about with one another, a new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you. This is how everybody will know that you're my disciples if you love one another as I've loved you. Now, Leviticus 19.18 already said love your neighbor as yourself.

So, loving one another was not a new command. What made it a new commandment was loving one another as I have loved you, to the extent of even laying down your lives for one another. Mark chapter 12, Matthew 22, Luke chapter 20, Jesus talks about this, about loving your neighbor, but in James chapter 2, the royal law is loving your neighbor as yourself.

Galatians chapter 5, Paul revisits this issue again when he talks about in Galatians 5:14, that this is what summarizes everything. This is loving your neighbor as yourself and he goes on to talk about walking by the spirit and so on. Well, it's also here, it functions as a summary of the law, which fits what we see.

Jesus also said in Matthew chapter 22, verses 39 and 40, loving your neighbor as yourself. If you do these two commands that he's just mentioned, loving God, and loving your neighbor, this is the whole of the law. There was another Jewish teacher who said something similar to that, at least this is, he's reputed to have said something like this.

I think it's in the Talmud in Tractate Shabbat, where Hillel was a very respected sage. This is assuming the tradition was all preserved correctly about what he said here, but Hillel was asked if he could teach the whole of the Torah while standing on one foot. And his response was, don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you.

That's the whole of the Torah. And Jesus said something like that back in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 12. But here he also uses it for loving God and loving your neighbor.

That's the summary of the law. And that's the heart of the law. Micah, Deuteronomy, and other texts sometimes would give you summaries, of the heart of the law.

And Jesus' followers, the Christian movement from Paul to James, widely understood that love was the heart of the Christian ethic. And that was what Jesus demonstrated for us when, as Paul said a few chapters before this, he gave his life for us. God demonstrated his love for us by Jesus' death.

13:8, no debt except loving one another. Debts were a serious issue in antiquity. The Roman private loans were usually about 12% interest, although as I mentioned, there was one person in a very exceptional case who charged an entire city 50% interest because he knew they were desperate.

Debts were a big issue in antiquity. And we mentioned that before. And it's discouraged in the Old Testament too, if you don't need to do it, Proverbs 22:7, the borrower becomes the lender's servant.

But there is one debt that we all owe to each other because God has loved us. The way we're to repay that is by loving God, but also loving one another. We owe one another that.

And then Paul gives examples of how love fulfills the law. And of the five commandments in the law, the five commandments of the 10 commandments that specifically regard neighbor in Exodus 20, 13 through 17, you've got an additional one that could go both God's word and human word, depending on how you look at it. But he cites four of the 10 commandments to just give examples of what he means.

Well, then he comes to something I mentioned was coming, 13:11 through 14, where he summons his hearers to awaken from sleep. Ancient writers often used sleep figuratively. They used it literally, of course, too, but often they used it figuratively.

One way that they used it figuratively was to refer to death, but that's not how he uses it here. Also, it's sometimes used figuratively for not paying attention or not standing guard, and not being vigilant. And vigilance was considered very important, not just in the wider culture and not just night guards that were used in a lot of places.

But Jesus uses that to talk about being ready for his return. Mark 13:36, he uses that. Paul uses it again in 1 Thessalonians 5, verses two through eight.

And I'm going to compare some with that on the next slide, where he talks about being awake and sober. Others may be drunk or asleep at night, but the Lord's day is coming like a thief in the night. So be awake, be vigilant, be ready.

It's not counseling literal physical insomnia, but just being vigilant. Ephesians 5:14, addresses the people of light, it says. It says, arise sleeper, arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.

And it's evoking Isaiah 52:1, awake, awake, clothe yourself in strength, Zion, which we'll see alluded to very soon. And Isaiah 60.1, arise, shine for your light has come and the Lord's glory has risen upon you. Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians a lot earlier than he wrote Romans 13.

And so, we're going to look at this, even though the Romans couldn't flip over, we are going to look at this just to make sure we understand Paul's exhortations. Paul speaks of being awake. He speaks of being alert.

In 1 Thessalonians, the night is nearly gone. He speaks of the day of the Lord coming like a thief in the night. Night deeds, including reveling, drunkenness, sexual excesses.

There he speaks of night activities, sleep, which isn't a problem, and drunkenness. The day is near. The day will surprise those in darkness.

Putting on light, well, in 1 Thessalonians, the children of light and of day. Putting on the armor of light in Romans 13, 1 Thessalonians 5, the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of salvation. Salvation is near, 13:11, and God destined us for salvation, not for wrath in 1 Thessalonians 5:9. Well, you put this together and it's clear, if it wasn't clear already, that what he's talking about being awake for is we're supposed to be looking for the Lord's return.

Salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. I mean, that's kind of obvious that time is later now than it was before, but he's using that to exhort them to be ready for the Lord's return. And when he's talking about salvation, Paul often uses

that in terms of the present or the past, you know, what God has done for us, but he also uses it sometimes for the future, as he's talking about here.

Salvation is coming near. Chapter 5 and verse 9, we shall be saved from wrath through him. That's also in 1 Thessalonians 5, we'll be saved from wrath through him.

Wrath referring to the same thing he talked about back in Romans 2, verse 5, the day of wrath, the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, the day of judgment. All of us as believers, all through history are saved from that by what Christ has done for us. Romans 5.9, we'll be saved from wrath through him.

5:10, we shall be saved by his life. We have the future passive again in chapter 10, verses 9 and 13, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Same future idea, 1 Corinthians 3:15, we'll be saved.

1 Corinthians 5:5, where he talks about delivering this person over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh so that his spirit will be saved in the day of judgment and so forth. The idea is ultimately saved. So, he says, put on the armor of light, 13.12. Well, the image actually kind of fits when he talks about waking up, because after you wake up, you tend to put on your clothes, although most Judean peasants actually would sleep, most Judean poor farmers would sleep in their clothes, their inner garments for sure, and then you'd put on the outer garment when you would, well, you actually, if it was chilly at all, you'd sleep in your outer garment, you'd use it as a blanket.

But in any case, awake, put on your clothes, and you have this image also back in Isaiah 52.1. Awake, Zion, clothe yourself. Now, this image of being clothed with virtues or being clothed with something positive, you have it elsewhere in ancient literature, and you have it included in the Old Testament. Now, not all of the following do you have in English translation, you do have them in the Greek translation, but Judges 6:34, where the spirit clothed Gideon to lead, 1 Chronicles 12.18, the spirit clothed Amasai to follow in a sense, to proclaim loyalty to David publicly.

2 Chronicles 24:20, the spirit clothed Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, to prophesy. In some other Jewish texts, Pseudo-Philo 27:9-10, the spirit clothed Kinas for battle, Pseudo-Philo's biblical antiquities. The point is very similar to being filled with the Spirit, empowered by the Spirit.

Well, in verse 14, he's going to talk about putting on Christ himself. He's going to put on the whole armor of God, like Ephesians 6 talks about, using some imagery from God's armor back in Isaiah 15:9, I think it is. But here, we put on Christ himself, and in that way, we put on the armor of light.

Well, the image of armor. Jewish people were expecting an end-time battle, and he is talking about the end-time, but perhaps more relevant here for the precise imagery, philosophers often spoke figuratively of battles, battles against the passions, and battles against false ideologies. If you want to get more detail on Paul's thinking about the armor, 1 Thessalonians 5:8, and then in a more developed way at a later point in Ephesians 6:10-18. I'm including a little bit extra there.

You could narrow it down to 13-17, but in any case, we could talk more about that. But he doesn't use the image always the same way. I mean, in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, it's the breastplate of faith, whereas in Ephesians 6, it's the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of the evil one.

Roman armies were often considered invincible so long as they didn't break ranks, and they marched forward because they would have these rectangular shields in front of them, and if they used a tortoise formation, the second row behind them would put up the rectangular shield covering their own head and the person in front of them, and so the arrows would just thud into the shields, and if there were flaming arrows, the Romans would have their shields ready so that the arrows would just go out. But Paul doesn't develop the image much here. He's just mentioning it briefly.

He also speaks of night. It's a time for drunken parties. It's a time for secretive acts when people did things that they didn't want other people to know about.

But we shouldn't live as people of the night. We should live as people of the day because we recognize that the Lord is coming. It didn't come as quickly, undoubtedly, as Paul expected.

Then again, the fullness of the Gentiles hadn't come in yet either, and the turning of the Jewish people, the things that he probably expected to happen very soon, and if we really are eager for the Lord to come back, well, God is sovereign, and God in his sovereign plan has given us a role to play in that, and God may be sovereignly touching you to awaken your heart to realize that we need to make sure that the fullness of Gentiles does come in, that the peoples of the world hear the good news, and that's part of what it means to be awake, to have God's vision, to have God's eternal perspective on what really matters in light of eternity. Well, part of relationships goes beyond these often general statements that Paul has been giving. It comes down to some things that actually were more of the issues that people were fighting about in the church and realm.

You know, when we say, be nice to everybody, people in our congregations will say, yeah, that's a nice thing to say, and you say, so you, stop gossiping against this person. Well, then we're getting a little bit too close to home, right? You don't really have to call somebody out when you do that, but Paul doesn't specify who's doing

what, but he gets down to the issues that are really a problem among the believers in Rome. Romans 14, verses 1 through 23.

We need to respect one another, and we need to respect one another's differences over secondary issues. We've talked about this some before, and there's the heart of the gospel, and Paul keeps coming back to the heart of the gospel, and we need to keep coming back to the heart of the gospel. That's what makes us one body in Christ.

There are secondary issues where we have some disagreements, even sometimes in how we behave. We need to let the primary issues, like how to love one another, guide us on the secondary issues. Accepting or welcoming one another is certainly a primary issue.

Excluding Philemon 17, Paul uses in his letters *pros lumbano*, to accept or receive, only three times, and those three times are all in this section. 14:1, he opens the section. 14:3, still toward the beginning of the section, and then in 15:7, at the end of the section, it actually goes beyond where the chapter breaks.

So that frames his discussion of the food customs in the holy days, meaning, okay, these are the issues you're struggling with, but we need the heart of this is, don't judge one another, welcome one another, accept one another. 15:7, so welcome one another, just as Christ also welcomed you for God's glory, and the following verses in 15:8 through 12 are texts about welcoming one another, specifically texts about Jew and Gentiles worshiping God together. So, the point in 14:1 through 15:7, Jews and Gentiles should welcome one another.

Now that was the issue in the church in Rome. Of course, there's salvation historical dimension to that, but there's also a principle there that whatever our divisions, especially ethnic and cultural divisions, we need to welcome one another. We need to be reconciled to one another, or as somebody told me recently, I'm not going to be talking about ethnic reconciliation, I'm going to be talking about ethnic conciliation.

I don't have the re-preface because I don't think we got conciliated to begin with. So, in any case, this chapter deals a lot with food customs. Most of Romans 14 deals with that, and there were a lot of different food customs.

Among Greek philosophic sects, the Pythagoreans were known for avoiding meat because they thought, they believed in reincarnation, and they believed that the meat had souls, and the animals had souls, and also beans. They believed that beans had souls too, as you could tell by the fact that after you ate them, well meat was kind of heavy, hard to digest. So, with beans, you would have gas afterward, and they said that that is the soul of the beans coming out, and they believed this so strongly

that when some people were persecuting some Pythagoreans, as the story goes in any case, that they were fleeing, they were getting away, and they came to a field of beans, and rather than risk trampling the beans, they let themselves be killed to protect the beans.

That's the Pythagorean story about that. So, they had distinctive food customs. Many peoples were known to have distinctive food customs.

The Romans knew that their customs were distinctive. They knew that Britain's customs were distinctive. The Libyans, and the Indians, they knew that there were distinctive customs among many different peoples.

And avoiding pork. Now that was a Jewish custom, Leviticus 11:7, but it also was held among some other people, Egyptian priests, some other ancient sources tell us Phoenicians, maybe Syrians, if they weren't talking about Jewish people, because sometimes Gentile writers viewed them as Syrians. In an earlier period, Hittites viewed pigs as unclean.

So, there were other people who didn't like pork as well. Actually, my wife, when she was a refugee, well, actually, she doesn't like me to tell that story. Let me just say that she experienced some very unclean pigs.

Jewish kashrut. I think that the issue here is Jewish kashrut. We'll talk about that in the next slide.

But Jewish kashrut, the Jewish kosher laws, what was considered clean food and what was considered unclean. Jewish people had suffered a lot for keeping kosher in the time of the Maccabees. And so this was very important to them.

It was a distinctive mark of their identity in the Gentile world. People made fun of them for it, many people. They were widely known and mocked for that.

For instance, a leader, a satirist named Juvenal, mocks them for that. Although there were some people who followed some of their, in Rome, some Gentiles who respected their customs, and Jewish people were so adamant about these customs, they said, well, maybe they're right and they wouldn't eat pork and so on. But they were widely known and mocked.

Most diaspora Jews followed these customs. Philo allegorizes the food laws, just like the letter of Aristeas, an Alexandrian Jewish document done before Philo, allegorizes these customs, but still says you should still keep them literally to fulfill what they point to symbolically. And he said that because there were a few Jewish people in Alexandria who were more liberal than Philo, who didn't even keep them literally.

But the majority of diaspora Jews did follow these literally. Leviticus 11, verses 44 and 45, at the end of the chapter about Kashrut, talks about being holy or consecrated. So, these food customs may have effectively separated Israel from other nations that had different food customs.

But now the mission is to all peoples. So, Paul is not going to want you to necessarily be culturally separated in every respect. I mean, we have enough reasons to be separated culturally from other people by the fact that we don't sleep around or we don't gossip or we don't laugh at sexually oriented jokes, or whatever.

We will be different than at least many of the people around us. But the Kashrut here. Some people say, well, it can't be referring to Jewish food customs in particular because it mentions vegetables in verse 2 and wine in verse 21.

Well, surely there were kosher butchers in Rome. Surely you could get kosher meat in Rome. You didn't have to become a complete vegetarian.

And as far as wine, well, as long as it hadn't been poured as a libation to a pagan deity already, the wine was also considered acceptable. So why abstain from these things? But it may simply be hyperbole that Paul is saying, that if you have to go to that extent to avoid offending somebody and avoid if the only choices before you are pork and vegetables and it's going to offend somebody, if you eat the pork, then just eat the vegetables. If it's going to be a stumbling block to somebody, then do whatever you have to do, even if you just need to become a vegetarian in your setting.

And Jewish people sometimes had to do radical things when they were in settings where they didn't have access to other things. I mean, most people in the ancient world couldn't afford meat on regular occasions anyway. It would be doled out at festivals in Rome and Corinth and places like that after it had been sacrificed to idols at these festivals.

That was off limits already for believers in Jesus, or at least it was highly urged that they not deal with those. It's very strongly condemned in Revelation 2:14 and 20. But Josephus tells us about some Jewish prisoners.

They were taken prisoner for a number of years and they had a very limited choice of food. They subsisted on nuts and figs because that was the only kosher thing that was available to them. So, is it talking about Jewish food customs here? I think that's really clear.

14:14, he uses the language of clean versus unclean. This is very conspicuously Jewish language. Also, the context is about Jews and Gentiles welcoming or accepting each other.

14:1 and 3 and also 15:7 through 12. And then also the whole letter. I mean, you've got the Jewish-Gentile issue and you've got the law.

So that's probably the main background here. But of course, it has implications. I mean, Paul says something similar to this in 1 Corinthians 8, talking about food offered to idols.

Although there, his argument is going to be a bit different because of the food offered to idols, he gives the principle about not causing one another to stumble in Chapter 8. He comes back to that at the end of Chapter 10. That's his social argument. In between, he gives a theological argument.

Well, actually in between, he gives himself as an example of giving up his rights in Chapter 9. But then in Chapter 10, he starts off with a theological argument by talking about, well, you know, these things were written as examples for us. And the people of Israel, when they were in the wilderness, they ate food offered to idols and they committed sexual immorality, just like, he doesn't have to say this, but just like you guys are doing in Corinth. And God killed them, so maybe you want to think about this.

And then he goes on to talk about how you can't partake of the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. 10.20, he speaks of these as demons, the spirits behind the idols, and says that you can't participate in the table of the Lord, in the table of demons. That was familiar language people would speak of, of the table of the Lord's serapis or something you could eat in the idol's temple.

And most banquets, they would pour a libation to a deity before they would eat and drink. So, Paul is saying, you can't have food that's been sacrificed to idols, theologically. So, he gives them a sociological argument, framing a theological argument.

So, it's actually a bit stronger than what you have here, which is just the sociological argument. It's not quite as serious as eating food off of idols. This is just, don't cause somebody to stumble and fall away.

Don't look down on one of those food customs. Don't look down on Jewish people. He already said back in chapter 11 verses 18 through 21, Gentiles don't look down on Jewish people.

Now he's going to address this even more fully in terms of, don't look down on their customs. He speaks of some as strong and some as weak. That's probably a title, the weak was probably a title used by the strong, but you can see here that Paul is really concerned for those whom the strong consider weak.

Don't, when you're eating with Jewish believers, don't eat food that's going to cause them to stumble. Or perhaps with other Jewish people who are your friends and you're hoping that they'll believe. If this is going to cause them to stumble, will you say you believe in our God and our scriptures? But look at this.

Stumble doesn't just mean a matter of personal taste. I don't like that kind of food or I don't like your kind of music. Stumble means cause somebody to fall away from the faith.

The term was already used that way in the book of Sirach. Actually, it's used that way in the Old Testament. Stumble was a serious thing.

And it's equivalent to the term that he uses in 14:4, to their own master, they stand or fall. So, stumbling has to do with falling, like the fallen branches back in chapter 11 and verse 22. Don't cause somebody to fall away from the faith.

And certainly Jesus spoke about that often. Don't cause these little ones to stumble and so forth. We need to respect, we may not agree with their practice, but we need to respect it and not force our ways on them.

We'll talk about this in more detail, the details of Romans 14 in the next session.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Romans. This is session 13 on Romans 12:14-14:1, Introduction.