

Dr. Craig Keener, Romans, Lecture 14, Romans 14:1-15:12

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Romans. This is session 14, Romans 14:1-15:12.

Romans has been talking about love of neighbor.

There are some people from some traditions that really love the first half of Romans for theological reasons, and then there are some people who love the later parts of Romans for reasons of how to treat one another. But Paul wrote the whole letter. It's all important to us.

So, after he lays the theological groundwork, he calls us to love one another, including to reach out to one another, and respect one another's customs. I mean, these are not customs like violations of the moral principles he's talked about. So, you know, chapter 13, not like those who are of the night, who are going out and having drunken parties and sleeping around and things like that.

He's not talking about that. But respecting one another's customs. We talked about, the introduction to Romans 14, about how different people have different customs, how Pythagoreans, for example, seem to have thought of human beings.

Sorry, that was a joke. But also, especially Romans 14 is addressing Jewish food customs. And here we see this is not as serious as what you have in 1 Corinthians chapter 8, food offered to idols.

That's really treated more seriously, but Paul uses some of the same arguments in both. He's actually writing this letter from Corinth. So maybe those issues were still on his mind as he was dealing with the Corinthian Christians if they didn't get everything straight after he wrote to them.

But we'll see. But he urges in verses 3 and 10, abstainers shouldn't disdain eaters. If you abstain from certain kinds of foods, don't despise those who eat them.

And eaters shouldn't judge abstainers. He uses that language here. So, he's talking about the ones who have, they feel more free to eat more things.

They shouldn't be judging the others. So, his warning about judging comes up in 14:3, 4, 10, and 13. This language, *Krino* and its cognates, it comes up a lot in *Kato Krino*, and comes up often earlier in Paul's letter.

And it comes up in chapter 2 verses 1 and 3 for Jews judging Gentiles. Well, here it's for people who don't keep kosher judging those who do keep kosher. And verse 4, he says, don't judge God's own servants.

I mean, it was worse than rude. If somebody had a servant, you had no business reproving their servant or judging their servant. Well, if God has servants, we are God's servants.

God has fellow servants. The reason I'm using the term servant here is it's not the term *doulos*, slave. It's something like a *ketes*.

It's like a household servant. But in any case, God has servants, including you, but don't judge the other ones because that's God's role. The day of judgment, God will judge.

Leave it with him. In 1 Corinthians 9 verses 19 to 23, we see Paul living out this principle in a similar way where he becomes all things to all people. He's a Greek to the Greeks, is a Jew to the Jews, is under the law to those who are under the law, is not under the law to those who aren't, even though in God's sight, he's still following God's law, the spirit of the law.

So, for the sake of the gospel, he contextualizes, he reaches people where they're at. And for the sake of the gospel, we don't want to cause people to stumble away from the faith. Central matters of the gospel and ethics remain, but many details, even in the New Testament, you read through the New Testament, you've got these central issues it keeps coming back to about Jesus and about how we should live and love one another.

But even in the New Testament, many of the details are contextualization for specific cultures, head coverings, holy kisses, or Greek rhetorical devices, such as we've seen. Paul's also going to give a digression with regard to Holy Days. So, the principle doesn't just apply to foods, it's a more widespread principle, but it's going to give a digression for Holy Days.

Now, this may have something to do with food, we'll see later, but it may not. People in Rome may think of Roman festivals, but you wouldn't eat the food there anyway, because the free meat had been sacrificed to idols. Also, they had market days every eight to nine days in Rome, and Romans thought of inauspicious days.

But you've also got Jewish festivals, and that would fit this context more specifically. There were many debates about the appropriate observance of Jewish festivals among Jews themselves. In Judea, you had major debates between those who kept the solar calendar, like the Essenes, and those who kept the lunar calendar, like the Pharisees.

They actually would break fellowship over things like this, and if you think that that is specific to one region, later on, you had Christians breaking fellowship, not over the date of Passover, but the date of Easter. And actually, the church in Ireland, before they came under Roman leadership, actually they were keeping some things with different dates than the church in Rome was, too. Paul, it didn't impress him if you just had, you know, you were keeping Gentile festivals, well, now you keep Jewish festivals.

Paul speaks about that in Galatians 4:9, and 10. He's not impressed with that. So, the issue here may be Jewish festivals.

Now, here's another question. Maybe it has to do with the Sabbath as well. The Sabbath was widely known among Roman Gentiles, and there were some sympathizers who honored the Jewish Sabbath.

A lot of people in Rome who weren't Jewish, and who weren't necessarily attending Jewish synagogues. They weren't God-fearers in that sense, although that's just one of the terms that could be used for them. They weren't proselytes, certainly.

They didn't attend synagogues, but they were interested, and they learned some things, and they would honor the Jewish Sabbath. They put out lamps, just like Jewish people had Sabbath lamps, as a way of showing their interest or sympathy. Now, here's the problem with it being Sabbaths.

The Old Testament expected a Sabbath. Exodus 31:35, Jeremiah 17, Ezekiel 20. There's a lot about the Sabbath in the Old Testament.

I mean, it's one of the Ten Commandments, and all the rest of the Ten Commandments, we seem to believe that all those apply to us today. The Sabbath seems to be the only one we treat differently. And in the Old Testament, violating it was actually a capital offense.

And even though it's addressed to Jewish people, especially when it's a capital offense. But Gentiles, who were faithful to God's values, like in Isaiah 56, verses 3 through 8, when it talks about how these foreigners and eunuchs will have a better place in my house than some of my own people. He says, because they act virtuously in these various ways, and one of the ways he lists is, they keep my Sabbaths.

Also, in terms of Jewish tradition. Now, in a later period, you have something called Shabbat Goyim, Sabbath Gentiles. You know, well, I can't turn on this light, but I have a Gentile neighbor who comes in and turns on the light for me.

Very, very conservative circles. However, you didn't have that in this period. The Mishnah, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Gentiles were supposed to keep the Sabbath anyway.

I mean, it's illustrated in creation, Genesis chapter 2, verses 2 and 3, Exodus chapter 20 and verse 11, that God set this up, apparently in creation. He gives a model of it, an example of it in creation. The Israelites were just supposed to not just rest themselves, they were supposed to give rest to their animals.

And periodically, like once every seven years, rest to the land. Today, we use crop rotation for the same principle, but the principle is, you know, apparently in creation, the way things are built, a lot of things need rest. Living things need rest so they can keep going.

Jesus did challenge a wrong approach to the Sabbath. For example, in chapter 11 and verse 28 of Matthew, he says, come to me, I'll give you rest. And then he goes on in chapter 12, he's got a conflict with the Pharisees over the meaning of rest.

Jesus' idea of Shabbat didn't mean that he couldn't heal the sick on the Sabbath. Jesus' idea of the Sabbath didn't mean that his disciples couldn't take heads of grain, which was gleaning, that was legal. But on the Sabbath, in terms of taking the grains out and peeling the husks off the grain, or grinding it in your hands, there were people who considered that work.

And so, the Pharisees wanted to condemn them for that. And Jesus said, look, the Sabbath is a day for celebration, it's not a day to go hungry. And he approaches the Sabbath in a very different way than some of his interlocutors did.

But even in John chapter 5, where it says that Jesus loosed the Sabbath, it could mean he destroyed the Sabbath. But the way it's worded, it's like, it seems to be his interlocutors who think that he's undermining the law. And Jesus responds by basically making a biblical argument.

And in most cases, he responds by making a biblical argument, saying, this isn't really undermining the law itself. In chapter 5 of John, he's the Son of God, he's imitating, he's doing what God does, and he has the authority to do that. And some of the other Gospels, the Son of Man has authority.

He's Lord of the Sabbath, he has authority over the Sabbath. So, does he really do away with the Sabbath? It's not actually clear, I think, in the Gospels. Further, the book of Acts continues to use the term Sabbath for the seventh day, with the Sabbath day's journey in Acts chapter 1 and verse 12.

The other cases, normally it's the Sabbath when the synagogue meets. So, it's not completely clear. The subsequent church is different.

Now, what we have in the New Testament doesn't seem to be clear. Some people cite Acts chapter 20, where you've got a meeting, apparently on Sunday. Having worked through that in some detail, I concluded that it's probably a Sunday evening meeting that goes all night.

But it starts on what would be considered Sunday evening to us. 1 Corinthians 16 talks about setting aside funds on the first day of the week. But it's talking about saving.

It's not necessarily that's the day that the church met. Personally, I think that the church in the first century already did start meeting on the first day, although the evidence for that is not as strong as some people would like, in honor of the Lord's resurrection on the first day of the week. And I personally think that Revelation 1.10, when it talks about the Lord's Day, is probably talking about Sunday.

But in none of these cases does it say that the Lord's Day is the Sabbath. Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 9, talks about Sabbath rest in an eschatological way. That's the context about entering into his rest.

But it's in the second century when we start having some other ideas. Well, Barnabas 15 focuses on an eschatological Sabbath. But Ignatius, an early second-century church father, in his Letter to the Magnesians 9.1, contrasts the Sabbath and the Lord's Day.

This is the Jewish practice. This is our practice. You can think of the Didache earlier than that, that talks about, well, this is the way the Jewish people fast.

This is the way we Christians should fast, making a contrast between them, because there was a lot of conflict and polemic going on at that point. But the Sabbath was different from the Lord's Day. Eventually, Sunday became viewed as a Christian Sabbath in church tradition in the Roman Empire.

And it was ultimately established, you know, after Constantine, Sunday has to be... Constantine, it was a political coup. I mean, this is the day of the sun for the sun worshipers. And it's also the day on which Jesus rose from the dead, so he can keep lots of people happy.

But there was... Well, this was established throughout the Roman Empire. In early Ethiopian church history, they still kept the Sabbath from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown. And as far as Sunday, eventually, there was a period in Ethiopian church history where they kept both, Saturday and Sunday.

And most of us wouldn't mind that. In fact, some people would be very happy if every day of the But I don't think that's the point. The point is that we do need to rest.

And church tradition, if you come from a church tradition that values the development of theology in the later church as authoritative, then it's going to be Sunday for you. If you come from a church tradition that says, we just get it straight from the Bible, and we don't agree with later church tradition, if it contradicts the Bible, you may be doing it on Saturday. Or you may say, well, the principle of it is just we need a rest.

I do know that there was a time in my life when I was so busy, that I didn't take time to take a day of rest. And what I actually discovered was that there was a problem with this because I saw, actually, there was an article that I read about a case for quiet Saturdays, that was arguing, look, if we can't, people don't want the blue laws anymore, they don't want Sunday. So, you know, let's join forces with people who want Saturday.

But just the point was, you need to have a day of rest. And some of the things that I just mentioned, I saw them in the Bible, and I said, I think God does want us to have a day of rest. And so, I started taking one.

I was just a doctoral student back then, lots of time on my hands. I thought I was very busy, but not nearly as busy as I am now. But I had lots of work to do, but I'd set it aside for 24 hours, which I kept legalistically because if I didn't, I wouldn't do it.

So, I just took that time of rest. And what I found was, okay, before this, I had the stress of one week spilling over into the stress of the next week, but it functioned like a circuit breaker, that the stress of one week carried on to the end and then I'd still be a little bit stressed when I'd stop working, like, oh, I can't afford to stop this work. And then after 24 hours, you know, I'd get the stress of a new week, but I didn't carry the stress of the old week into it.

It was a kind of a circuit breaker, so I didn't overload. And it's really helped me. Studies have been done showing that it seems to extend people's longevity.

So, you get some of the time back at the end, apparently, on average. Well, here's some other possibilities in terms of how we should understand this in terms of the Sabbath. Maybe it's just pragmatic.

Paul recognizes the Gentile slaves and workers who worked for others were unable to keep the Sabbath. Or maybe he was saying we don't need to be particular about which day it is. One thing he does say is, one person honors one day above another, and another honors every day alike.

The point isn't so we can say, well, one person honors one day and I'm not going to honor any day. The point is one person honors one day and I want all of my life to honor the Lord. Obviously, that's the ideal, that everything should honor the Lord.

And so, well, it's not that I become less religious or less honoring God. I just become more religious, more honoring God. Or maybe it's not talking about the Sabbath at all.

Maybe Gentiles are exempt from festivals about Jewish deliverances like Passover and Purim. Those were specifically Jewish deliverances. So, maybe Gentiles won't identify with that history.

Although, if we're children of Abraham, if we're heirs of other parts of the scriptures, maybe, well, whatever. These are things that are debated, but most Christians don't keep Passover. Actually, the vast majority don't keep Passover.

And Christians differ on which day to keep the Sabbath. Most keep it on Sunday. My wife and I actually keep it on different days, but we do both get a day of rest.

And some Christians don't even keep a day of rest, although I think it would be healthier for them if they did. But anyway, these are things that are debated. Paul probably did keep those things, and probably still observed some of these festivals because he was Jewish, but at least he and his churches knew about these festivals.

And that's the most we can say for sure from these texts. 1 Corinthians 5.7, he alludes to the Passover, and expects the Corinthians to understand what he means. Acts 20 verse 6 and verse 16, he wants to get to Jerusalem in time for Pentecost.

He spends certain days of unleavened bread in Philippi or Troas, and maybe Troas, no, maybe Philippi. Anyway, he seems to be observing these festivals, but maybe part of it was for outreach to the Jewish community, certainly in chapter 20 and verse 16 for Pentecost, that's the ideal. He wants to get there to show his solidarity.

He'd originally been trying to do it in time for Passover. In any case, maybe it refers to fast days. Now, this suggestion actually fits the context of food, so he's not digressing.

Digressions were common in ancient literature, but maybe he's referring to fast days. Pharisees, this is besides Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, Pharisees kept two days of fasting per week, at least Professor Abrahams in the early 20th century suggested. They probably did that only during the dry season, but they dry fasted, which isn't really good for your kidneys, but they dry fasted two days a week.

You can read about this in, I think, the Tractate Anit. Luke also mentioned something like this in Luke chapter 18 and verse 12, where you have this Pharisee in the temple saying, I pay tithes of everything I get, I fast two days a week. Well, the Didache in chapter eight and verse one, is probably the end of the first century or early second century.

The hypocrites, referring to non-believing Jewish people, the Jewish people who don't believe in Jesus, fast on Mondays and Thursdays. Don't be like the hypocrites, the Lord says, so you fast on Wednesdays and Fridays instead. So maybe it's talking about fast days.

We have different values in terms of whether we need to fast. The person who eats does it to the Lord, Paul says, and the person who doesn't eat, doesn't eat for the Lord. In any case, you don't need to divide over this, Paul says.

Whatever we do, verses six through nine, we do it for the Lord. Verse six, whether we observe the day or don't observe the day, we do it for the Lord. And by the Lord, he means Christ because he identifies Christ as the Lord in verse nine.

We do it for the Lord and give thanks to God. And of course, you give thanks to God for your food. That was a standard practice in Judaism and Christians also continued that.

The Jewish blessing over the food that became conventional and standard was, blessed are you, O Lord, our God, who created the bread of the earth and over the wine, the two constituent components that you give the blessing over the meal. Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who has created the fruit of the vine. The other one should have been brought forth, bred from the earth.

Well, 14:7, as believers, we don't live or die for ourselves, but rather we live for the Lord to whom we belong. So, everything we do should be for the Lord. And we may have different ideas about the way we should serve the Lord.

Certainly, we have different giftings. We have different personalities. It's all right.

Part of what it means to be the body of Christ is looking at those differences and just loving one another with all of our differences. 14.9, Christ both died and rose to be Lord of both the dead and the living. He died, he's Lord of the dead.

He rose, he's Lord of the living. And this idea of being a judge of the living and the dead, you have it in Acts 10.42, 2 Timothy 4.1, 1 Peter 4.5. Christ is the Lord of all of us. And therefore, everything we do should be for his honor and glory.

I've talked about that earlier, but you find it elsewhere in Paul's writings. 1 Corinthians 10:31, in the context of Paul doing whatever he needs to do so that some people may be saved. He says, whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do for God's glory.

Don't cause people to stumble with it. Colossians 3:17 talks about the way we live when our lives are filled with God's message, God's word in verse 16. Whatever you do, do it in Jesus' name.

And he gives a specific example of that in verse 23 for servants, but all of us, whatever you do, do it in Jesus' name. Now in practice, was this the way all Christians were living even in his day? In Philippians 2, verses 20 and 21, thereabouts, Paul says of Timothy, I have nobody like him who will care, not for his personal things, but only for the things of the Lord. So not everybody lived that way, completely for the Lord.

But that was the ideal. That's what we want. That's what we pray that we will become as the church, living completely for the Lord.

That's what Paul was calling people to. And some people were living it out. Now I should say that there's probably an element of hyperbole when Paul says there's nobody like him.

Cicero in his letters of recommendation would often say, I have nobody like this person. He's the best. Well, Cicero was very good in his book 13 of his letters, I think to Atticus, no, maybe his letters to friends.

He has all these different letters of recommendation. He varies them very well. But he couldn't help once in a while, more than once, he said, this one's the best.

So, it may, Paul may not actually mean nobody like, or cared only for the things of the Lord. But it certainly, even at best, even if it did mean more than Timothy, it was very rare. Even though Jesus, when he rebukes Peter, says, get behind me, Satan, you care for the things that people care about, rather than the things that God cares about, which in context has to do with serving God's purposes, spreading his message, even if you have to die for it.

And caring about what people care about, we don't want to suffer. So, the message here, though, is everything's for the Lord. And that includes what we eat and what we drink.

If we have to give up something to keep somebody else from falling away, usually it's not a matter of food for most of us, but there may be other things. God's judgment seat, chapter 14 and verse 10. This is the Greek word bema.

This would be the rostrum in Rome's forum. Paul actually, had been at such a place in Corinth, where the Corinthian forum was modeled after the forum of Rome because it was a Roman colony. And so, Luke tells us about that in Acts 18, and Paul also mentions it in one of his letters to the Corinthians.

In 2 Corinthians 5:10, he uses the word bema. As he says here, all of us must appear before the bema of God. There he says, all of us must appear before the bema of Christ.

Christ being divine, he's speaking of the same thing. The point in Romans 14:10 is that it's not our place to judge. It's not our place.

It's God's role to judge. And we need to leave that role to him. You have something like that in James as well.

He says it's not our place to judge our brothers and sisters in Christ. And using that language also, he's earlier said of Philadelphia, brotherly love, brotherly and sisterly love. Because in Greek, when it says, when you have a plural like brothers, normally they would use the masculine if everybody in it were male.

But also, if there were even one male and the others were all female, they would use the masculine. So, when it says brothers in Greek, in certain contexts, it means the way we would say in English today, brothers and sisters, all of our fellow believers. But you know, there actually were lawsuits talking about judging.

Brothers sometimes did take brothers to court, especially over inheritances. Jesus didn't approve of that. When he says in Luke chapter 12, who made me an arbiter of this? And he warns against greed.

And also in Paul, when he speaks in 1 Corinthians 6 about your spiritual brothers and sisters, brother goes to law against brother. This is something that even the broader society regarded as tragic and shameful when it happened, although it did happen fairly often if you read their ancient court speeches. And here, it's not our place to do that with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

It's God's place. Leave it with God. You don't have to.

It's not your role. And he cites scripture in support of that, that God is going to judge. Isaiah 45:23 quotes it in Romans 14:11. Every knee will bow to me and every tongue will, and in the Greek translation that Paul follows here, will praise, will give praise to God.

The context in Isaiah 45, God is the only salvation, not only for Israel, but even for the Gentiles. He's the only salvation available. Paul applies this text here to God.

He applies this text to Jesus in Philippians 2:11, clearly a divine text applied to Jesus. And so, Paul goes on to say, don't judge one another. Chapter 14:13. And his source for this idea, as well as James's source for this idea, is probably Jesus when Jesus said, don't judge.

When gospel scholars, the majority of gospel scholars think that Matthew and Luke used a common source rather than each other. Again, that's a debated issue, but assuming that that's true, Matthew 7:1 and Luke 6:37, this is that common source. So, it was a source that was probably already in circulation.

Well, the time Paul's writing may have already been in circulation at the time that Paul was writing Romans. The date of that source is debated too, but some have argued for it being in the 40s. Gareth Tyson, for example, the passion narrative and that material as well.

You have something similar to this in John 7:24, where Jesus says, don't judge according to outward appearances. So, this is multiply attested. This is something that even more skeptical scholars would normally agree goes back to Jesus.

Paul echoes the same ideal, don't judge one another. And then in the same verse, he plays on different senses of the term krino. Instead of judging one another, he says, let everyone judge this.

It's often translated differently because in English we use different words to communicate these different ideas. But in Greek, instead of judging one another, let everyone judge this, not to scandalize, not to cause stumbling for a brother or sister. In verse 17, he's been talking about foods, unclean foods, things that cause people to stumble.

And he says that's not what the kingdom of God is really about. It's not about these foods. What really does matter is this, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

That's what the kingdom is about. Righteousness is something he's been talking about from chapter 1, verse 17 forward. It's a major theme in Romans.

And it's something that Paul has already said we are empowered by the Spirit. So, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit. Chapter 8, 1 through 17, especially verses 2 through 4, he just emphasizes this comes from the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5, verses 18 through 23. It's not by trying to submit outwardly to the law. It's by walking by the Spirit that we live out these righteous characteristics of God's character.

Peace. Well, righteousness, peace, and joy, we know by peace he means not just tranquility, certainly not just making your nervous system quiet, but peace in terms of relational peace, 14, 19, just a couple of verses later. That really relates to the division in the Roman Church.

You've got this division between Jew and Gentile, or at least some people over the law, something related to Jew and Gentile. You've got a division. Paul comes back to that at the end in his conclusion in 16:17 and 18.

He's talking about beware of those who cause division. So, peace. The Holy Spirit brings us to work for peace.

Insofar, as Paul says in chapter 12, as it depends on us, we bring peace with one another, peacemakers. Righteousness, peace, and joy. Joy we can celebrate because we trust in God.

We tend to make distinctions between ethics and emotion, but some of the fruit of the Spirit actually has an emotive dimension as a result of our trust in God. The Psalms very often speak of joy. Sometimes they even speak of expressing it and dancing before God and shouting before God.

So, you see that associated with the Holy Spirit in Acts Chapter 13 and verse 52. As they're filled with the Spirit, they're also filled with joy. And in Galatians 5.22, he mentions love first when he's mentioning the fruit of the Spirit, because that's what he's talking about in the context back in verse 14 and so on.

And love is what encompasses all of it. But the second fruit that he mentions is joy. And then the third is peace.

So, these were pretty high up on Paul's list. This is the same Paul who says, I have continual sorrow in my heart, back in Chapter 9. So this doesn't mean that there are never times to mourn, that there are never things that we're sad about, never thoughts that make us sad. But it does mean that we also have this joy.

And it comes from beyond us. It's God's grace. It's God's Spirit working within us.

He says The kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking, but the kingdom of God is about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. God's kingdom is expressed in us through the Holy Spirit. I'm quoting here from my Romans commentary, again, because it's saved me some time.

But also, because, yeah, well, I do it because it saves me some time. But whenever I quote from something, I need to tell you what I'm quoting from, because I don't

want to get sued. And even my own commentary is usually the publisher owns the copyright.

So, I have to be nice. Anyway, just as the spirit of the law will never contradict a life genuinely following God's Spirit, Galatians 5.18 and 23, it is by spirit-filled character, Romans 14.17, rather than debates about foods, that one serves Christ most appropriately, 14.18. You see something similar to that in Hebrews 13.9. Jesus preached about the kingdom. It was central in his teaching.

You find it all over the place in the Gospels. You find it in summary statements of Jesus' teaching, like in Matthew 4.17 or Mark 1.14-15. The kingdom is the reign of God. The Greek word *basileia* and also the Hebrew word *makut*, refer to especially reign.

I mean, sometimes can be a people or a place, which is what it usually means, kingdom usually means in English. But these terms that are translated that way actually in Hebrew and in Greek more often have to do with reign, rule, and authority. So how is God's kingdom expressed in us now that Christ has risen and now that the Spirit of God has been made available to God's people? Well, the kingdom of God, God's reign is expressed in us by the Holy Spirit, as he says here.

You see it also in Galatians 5, where Paul says, This I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will in no wise at all fulfill the lust of the flesh. God's reign is being actualized in us. Verses 22 and 23 of Galatians 5, whereas a virtue list, which is in contrast to the preceding vice list, says that the fruit of the Spirit is this.

The fruit, it's not something we, it's contrasted with the works of the law in the immediate preceding context, the works of the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit, a tree bears good fruit if it's a good tree like Jesus said. And so, we bear this fruit because it comes from the very nature of us being a new creation.

It comes from the nature of the Spirit living inside of us, or as John 15, Jesus says, I'm the vine, you're the branches, abide in me and you'll bear much fruit. Because of the life of Jesus in us, Galatians 2.20, the life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God. And he says, it's Christ who lives in me.

So, in verses 22 and 23 of Galatians 5, he talks about the fruit of the Spirit. And these things just grew out of us because God lives in us. And against these, there is no law.

He talks about in verse 18, also those who are led by the Spirit and are under the law. So that there was a widespread understanding in antiquity that the law was made for people who needed to be controlled. But philosophers said we live such lives of virtue that we don't need a law to control us.

And Paul says, if you live your life by the Spirit, if you walk by the Spirit, then you'll walk in God's commands, you'll walk in his ways, you'll walk according to the virtues that are inculcated in the principles of the law. And you'll go even beyond that. Like in the Sermon on the Mount, you'll go beyond that because this is just the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

You just want to bless people. You want to help people. You want them to know about the God whom we were all created to serve.

The kingdom of God, God's reign is actualized in us by the Holy Spirit. And then in verses 18 through 23, verse 19 talks about building up in contrast with tearing down in verse 20. Let's make sure we build one another up and we don't tear one another down.

Well, that language of building up appears often in Paul. You know, he doesn't want to build another's foundation, 15:20. First Corinthians 3:9, he's talking about building up.

Paul uses that language often, edifying one another. First Corinthians 14, same word. This echoes Old Testament language that was often used for the people of God.

It's used in Jeremiah chapter 1. It's used in Jeremiah 24 and elsewhere where God would build up his people and not tear them down. He would plant and not uproot. But then at other times when they were under judgment, he would uproot and he would tear them down.

And sometimes he called his prophets to do one or the other. But the language is used earlier. I think it's used in Ruth for God building up Israel through descendants and so on.

Well, just as God wanted to build up his people, so today Paul uses the language for today, for his day and our day, that we should build up one another. We should seek the good of God's people. He says in verse 20, and there's something similar to this in Titus chapter 1. He says in verse 20, that everything is clean, but not if it causes somebody else to stumble, not if it causes somebody else's apostasy.

He says in verse 21 that he would abstain even from meat and wine. Well, that's an extreme example because as we mentioned before, they're kosher butchers in Rome and wine was okay if it wasn't offered in a pagan libation where they would pour something. Paul uses the imagery of libations.

It's in the Old Testament to God in Philippians chapter 2, 2 Timothy chapter 4, it also appears. So, in any case, as long as it wasn't poured to a pagan deity, the wine would be okay too. But Paul is giving an extreme example.

If it comes to this, I would even be a vegetarian. I would even not drink any wine so that my brother or sister wouldn't stumble. By the way, I may say something here about wine because this became a big issue, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries in the United States and some other places that were influenced by that.

Because at the time in the late 19th century, after they learned how to distill wine, they found ways to make it more potent than it would have been naturally. And the wine, even the beer, people could get drunk very easily, very quickly. And you had a lot of men who were spending everything that they got on this.

Their families were impoverished. They were going home beating their spouses, beating their children. And women and children were literally dying from this and men were dying in the streets from this.

And so, you had the Salvation Army in England at the time. You had certainly in the U.S., you had people working with this with street missions and so on. I helped work at a street mission, although our purpose mainly was feeding people and sharing Christ with them, those who would listen.

But also, there was a movement that grew that said, these were mostly post-millennial. They said, okay, we worked for the abolition of slavery. Slavery is abolished.

The next thing we need to take care of, we need to take care of the damage that drunkenness is doing to our society and alcoholism is doing to our society. Today in the U.S., we might think of what drugs do to many people. So, they were trying to make it illegal.

Eventually, they did make it illegal and people just started making them illegally and you had organized crime dealing with it and so on. But many Christians said we're going to totally abstain. And some of them thought that that meant that, you know, when Jesus turned water into wine, he turned water into grape juice.

And winos can mean grape juice, but the fact that the person who was in charge of the banquet thought that it meant, you know, thought that this was the best wine that had been saved for last after everybody else's senses had been dulled, you know, that's when you serve the worst wine, but this is the best wine, probably suggests that it had something else to it besides just unfermented grape juice. Okay, that's debated. It didn't really have time to ferment.

It would have to be created in fermented form. But people back then, didn't have a way to increase the fermentation beyond a certain natural level. If it got beyond a certain natural level, it turned to vinegar.

But they also didn't have a way to keep it from fermenting at all. You could bury it in the ground somewhere really cold and maybe you could keep it for a while, but normally they didn't do that. But keep in mind also that normally, you know, it couldn't go beyond a certain level of fermentation naturally.

And normally also at the table when they were drinking, you know, regular meals, you'd water it down various amounts. The average most common was probably two parts water to every part wine. So before you could ever get drunk, I mean, if you drank that much, you'd have to be going to the bathroom a whole lot before you could do that.

The bathroom is the American way of saying it. You'd have to be going to the toilet before you could get drunk. So, at times when people wanted to get drunk, they would specifically not water it down as much.

They'd serve it either in full measure, which was a bit more expensive, or they would put different hallucinogenic narcotics into it sometimes at Greek banquets where they wanted to get drunk. Also, it could be useful for helping your digestion to not drink it just as straight water given especially what was in a lot of the water. So, you know, 1 Timothy chapter 4, drink a little wine for your stomach's sake and your often infirmities.

I usually use Tums, but if you don't want the excess calcium buildup, hey. So, all that to say I don't drink wine. The reason I don't is because there are still some people who would consider that a cause of stumbling, or at least it could offend them very deeply.

So, I don't do it for that reason, not because I'm against it myself. But whatever we do, we should do to honor the Lord. Now, if I'm in a setting where it's going to offend people when I don't, or what happens if you go into a setting where you're in a cross-cultural environment and it's going to offend people if you don't eat these cooked eyeballs of some animal, which some friends have told me about that was set before them.

Now, it doesn't always cause people to stumble just because you don't eat. In most places I go, people ask me what I would like to eat. My wife is from Congo in Central Africa.

She was invited to eat at a place in France and they prepared this food for her. The food included raw oysters. And what you would do with these raw oysters, they were still alive, you would put them down with lemon and the lemon would kill the oysters.

But she said people could feel them wiggling as they went down. I've never had that experience, but that's what she said could happen. And she said I can't eat this.

I'm like, Nadine, you're telling me that you offended your hosts by refusing when they prepared all this food for you. She said they prepared other food too and they were all right with it. But in any case, it's not just a matter of somebody, like we had this debate a generation ago in the United States where you had a lot of people who were saying, well, if the music has a beat to it, it's demonic.

That's an exaggeration. They didn't quite put it that way. But contemporary Christian music was considered to be evil.

And I had somebody tell me they were burning records, contemporary Christian records, and he saw the demons come out. And I said I think the smoke was making me hallucinate. But anyway, at the same time, there were others of us who were saying, look, this is relevant to our generation.

This is relevant for helping us to reach people and disciple people and so on. So, there was a conflict over that, but it's not just a question of what may offend a person, what they may not like. This is a matter of what may offend them so deeply that it may hurt their faith because they say, well, they're doing it.

I guess it's all right. But in their conscience, it's not all right with them. And so, what they're saying is not really that it's all right, but that it's all right for me to sin because they're doing it.

And that's what we don't want to happen. It may not bother you, verse 22, but it may bother your brother or sister, verse 23. And we need to take them into account and not just ourselves.

14:23, whatever is not from faith is a sin. I'm a teacher. And I teach people from a wide variety of different denominations, a wide variety of parts of the church.

Let's see from A to Z, from Adventist, Assemblies of God to what begins with Z. Zoroastrians aren't Christians. We're definitely not recommending zealots. Anyway, but just a wide variety of people who love Jesus.

And so, I want to deal with different issues. We have to deal with different issues because they're going to come up as we're speaking with one another from a variety of parts of the body of Christ. So, because of that, we have to bring up some things that are uncomfortable for some people, but those have to be brought up so we can recognize, okay, we have brothers and sisters who are that way.

We need to stretch people some. At the same time, that's easier in certain kinds of pedagogical contexts than it is in others. We don't want anybody to fall away from the faith like we just illustrated.

Only what you can do knowing that you're doing it serving God, that you're not doing something wrong is what you should be doing. So, he returns to an emphasis on faith here in 14:23. Whatever is not from faith is a sin.

That's not so we can get more and more concerned about the details in a way that we become obsessive over them, but rather so we can have more faith, but make sure that what we're doing is what will honor the one who really is our Lord and will not cause others to stumble. So, he returns to this emphasis on faith. Whatever is not from faith, it's a matter of relationship with God.

It's not a matter of mere regulations. Well, there's no real chapter break in the original, and in 15:1 and 2, he talks about helping the weak and pleasing our neighbor rather than ourselves. The language of neighbor appears only one other place in Romans, and that's in Romans 13 verses 9 and 10, where it talks about loving your neighbor as yourself.

So that's still the summary of the whole thing, loving your neighbor as yourself, and this is part of the outworking of that, doing what's good for our neighbor, not just for ourselves. 15:1 and 2 provide a climactic summary or exhortation for what proceeds. It was common to have climactic summaries or exhortations in ancient literature.

I've mentioned that before. Well, here he's going to do that for Romans 14. He's summarizing the point of what's come before.

If you consider these people weak, it's all right. Help the weak. If you have to give up something to do that, it's all right.

Please your neighbor rather than yourself because we love our neighbors as ourselves. Then he appeals to an example of doing this in chapter 15 and verse 3, how Jesus didn't please himself, but instead, as Jesus put it himself in Mark 10:45, he came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many, for us. Well, if he's done that for us, now he calls on us to love one another as he has loved us.

Jesus was mocked. Mark 14:58 and 64 and 65, mocked him as a false prophet, even while his prophecy about Peter denying him was coming to pass. Jesus was mocked.

In describing that ridicule, Paul uses Psalm 69 and verse 9. It's not surprising that he would use Psalm 69, as we mentioned earlier. That's a psalm of the righteous sufferer. And so, it can apply in a general way to other righteous sufferers.

It can apply to us if we have to suffer, but ultimately it applies to Jesus. That psalm is applied to Jesus in Matthew 27:34 and in John 2:17, where Jesus and God's providence fulfills even some of the particulars of the psalm. The hermeneutic that Paul lays out for us by doing that, he makes it explicit in verse 4. He says, what was written was written to instruct us, to teach us about God's ways.

He does something similar to this in 1 Corinthians 10, which we've also mentioned, where he talks about God punishing the Israelites for murmuring and complaining, speaking against God's servants and for food offered to idols, and for sexual immorality. He says God judged them. And he says, these things, 1 Corinthians 10.11, these things that happened to them, literally they truly happened.

It's not allegorizing. They happened to them, but they were written for us as examples. People who, ancient historians, when they wrote their histories, ancient biographers, one of the explicit purposes they often mentioned, and you can see it in other ancient histories and biographies.

You can see it in the gospels. You can see it in Acts. These things were written as examples, good examples, examples of what to not do, and so forth.

Paul cites that in 1 Corinthians 10. Well, here he says, these things were written to instruct us. Sometimes as biblical scholars, we can approach the text in a very dry way, just saying it has, it had this meaning for them in this situation, but it was also given to us as scripture so we could learn from it for ourselves.

There are some passages, some entire sections of scripture, some historical sections where people say, that is just to teach us about salvation history, about what happened. But actually the purpose of people writing history in antiquity was also to give you models of, you know, so you'd learn lessons from history. Same as, you know, your parents might tell you, well, when I was your age, I did this.

It didn't work out well, just giving you a lesson from my life. In the same way, Paul says here, these things were written to instruct us, to teach us. And he says to bring us comfort or encouragement.

Language that you have referring to scripture, like in Psalm 119, at least four times it talks about that bringing comfort. Or 2 Maccabees 15:9, comfort, encouragement, exhortation, paraklesis. Paul implies this encouragement from scripture to what? To a call for unity in the next verse, verse five.

That's how he's applying it. Unity doesn't mean that we don't have differences among us. He's just talked about that in chapter 14.

Unity means that even though we do have differences, we're brothers and sisters in Christ. Call for unity. Now, some differences are really serious and they have to be corrected.

Differences can eventually if it's a theological error, it eventually can mushroom and get bigger and bigger. But love is still the appropriate way to talk with one another and to try to deal with those things. We also do have some texts that warn us about really, really serious errors where you give the person an admonition, you give them a warning a couple of times, they still won't listen, don't even bother anymore.

But those are really, really serious errors. We need to be able to make distinctions. What's central is the message of Christ and basic biblical ethics.

But this call for unity in verses five and six climaxes the message of Romans so far. Jewish-Gentile division, we need to transcend that. We need to transcend our ethnic division.

We need to transcend our cultural division. Unity was a common topic. Paul is not by any means the only person talking about this.

Greek and Roman orators talked about it all the time. They had entire essays on this. Philosophers liked to talk about this.

Some of the language they used is some of the language Paul uses because he's writing in Greek, of course, although you have this in the Septuagint translating similar ideas in the Old Testament. Being of one mind, being of one voice, Exodus 24, with one voice. He says this unity is expressed in love and in worship together.

With one voice, we glorify God. Unity is not unanimity. It doesn't mean we agree on every point, but we can worship God together.

And we may have different ways of worship as well. That's all right. We still glorify the same God.

Accept one another as Jesus accepted us, chapter 15 and verse 7. Well, this revisits the theme, as we said before, of chapter 14 verses one and three. And it appeals again to the ultimate example, just like he did a few verses earlier, the ultimate example of Jesus.

You have similar language later on in Ephesians, a letter that I do take to be Pauline, Ephesians 4:32 to 5:2. Forgive one another as Christ did. And he says, be imitators of God. And he says, love one another as Christ did.

So, he's giving Jesus as an example of accepting and welcoming one another. Christ served the circumcision, he says. That was a term for the Jewish people, and it's kind of appropriate to use that in the context of Romans, where he's talked about circumcision before.

But Christ serves, he served the circumcision. He did it for the sake of the ancestors. In verse seven, just like he says back in chapter 11 and verse 28, they're beloved on account of the ancestors, the patriarchs.

He says Christ served the circumcision for the sake of the ancestors. And in verse eight, Christ also served the Gentiles. So, following his example, you serve both.

You serve across ethnic lines, across cultural lines, you serve everybody. And then he's going to give biblical support for this in verses nine through 12. Well, we've seen before where Paul links together different biblical texts, and here he does it.

But the link among these texts, the common feature among these texts is they talk about Gentiles. And he gives examples from the whole canon. He could have given other examples, additional examples as well, but he gives examples from the writings, from the law, and from the prophets.

In chapter 15 and verse nine, he cites Psalm 18, verse 49. Well, that was a Psalm that was attributed to David. Actually, from 2 Samuel 22, we see this one certainly was from David.

And it was signifying ultimately the wide reign of David with nations submitting. And ultimately, the son of David would rule the nations. So, 15 and verse nine, he cites from the Psalms.

15 and verse 10, he cites from Deuteronomy 32, just like we've seen him do before in 10:19 and 12:19. And I'm quoting here from the cultural background study of Bible again, the context of this verse in Deuteronomy invites nations to join with God's people since God will punish those who oppose him. In chapter 15 and verse 11, he goes back to the Psalms, Psalm 117 and verse 1. I've been quoting a lot from Psalm 118, but Psalm 117 is also from the Hallel.

You may know this as the shortest of the Psalms as opposed to Psalm 119, which is the longest of the Psalms. He quotes from this, let the Gentiles praise him, Gentiles glorifying God. And chapter 15 and verse 12.

Well, this one certainly very clearly has a messianic context and it says the Gentiles will hope in him. It's from Isaiah 11:10. So, he gives biblical support to show that yes, Christ was a servant for his own people, but he was a servant also for all the rest of us, serving for all peoples. And he's the one who's given us our example here.

We are called to do the same thing, to serve one another, to love one another, to love our neighbor as ourselves and to welcome and accept one another despite the cultural differences.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Romans. This is session 14, Romans 14:1-15:12.