

Christian Liberty and Limits

(Romans 14:1-15:7)

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Background

Around AD 49 Jews had been forced out of Rome by Emperor Claudius who died in AD 54 (Acts 18:1-2). His edict was lifted and Jews began to return to Rome, including saved Jews who wanted to join biblical churches in Rome. The key question to the perfected Jews was “how much Judaism can I retain as a Christian?” Peter kept the Kosher diet (Acts 10:14) and Paul observed the holy days (I Cor. 16:8).

I. The Problem (v. 1)

- A. The Audience: churches in Rome and returning Jews.
- B. The Attitude: “*receive*” into membership without doubtful disputations (cf. vv. 3; 15:7).

II. The Perspective (vv. 2-6)

- A. Diets (vv. 2-4).
 - 1. Among Jews, the issue of meat within the Jewish Kosher diet (Lev. 11:1 ff.).
 - 2. Among Gentiles, the issue of meat offered to idols (I Cor. 10:14 ff.).
- B. Days (vv. 5-6).
 - 1. Among Jews, the issue of Sabbaths, new moons, holy days (feast of Tabernacles, etc.).
 - 2. Among Gentiles, the issue of pagan holydays such as Herod’s Ishtar day (Easter).
- C. Application: don’t judge another man’s liberty to eat Kosher or not to eat Kosher. (Don’t judge hypocritically but do judge fruit [Mt. 7:1 ff.; vv. 15-20]; Do judge righteous judgments [where Scripture condemns {Jn. 7:24}]).

III. The Persons (vv. 7-13)

- A. Self (v. 7)—we impact others (we are not isolationists but separatists).
- B. Society (v. 7).
 - 1. Relationship with world (peaceably [Rom. 12:13]).
 - 2. Relationship with family (lovingly [Mt. 10:36]).
 - 3. Relationship with Christians (encouragingly [Phil. 1:15-18]).
 - 4. Relationship with Body of Christ (unity [Eph. 4:3-13]).
- C. Saviour (vv. 8-13).
 - 1. He is Lord (v. 8).
 - 2. He is Saviour (v. 9).
 - 3. He is Judge (vv. 10-13).
 - a. Don’t usurp judgment seat.
 - b. Judge self instead! (**Limits for Liberty**: Bible, Civil Government, No Stumbling Block, No Enslavement [I Cor. 6:12], and Pro-Edification).

IV. The Principles (vv. 14-23)

A. Personal Love (vv. 14-18).

1. Biblical knowledge (v. 14).
2. Biblical love (don't disdain those who have weak conscience).
3. Biblical perspective (the KOG is spiritual not physical).

B. Positive Edification (vv. 19-21).

1. Peacefully Edify.
2. Recognize Purity in animal flesh (I Tim. 4:1-3).
3. Appreciate Nazarite Vow (Num. 6:1-5).

C. Private Conviction (vv. 22-23).

1. Keep preferences to self (v. 22).
2. Practice preference privately (v. 23).
3. Application to Women's garb (**righteous judgment conviction** that women should dress with distinction and modesty; **personal preference** about Western dress). Pastor of BBC has conviction that women should dress with distinction (gender) and modesty (long and loose clothing) and has preference that women should wear dresses and skirts for church services.

V. The Pattern (15:1-7)

A. Pleasure of Christian (vv. 1-2).

1. Strong should help weak to grow in a trained conscience (v. 1).
2. Strong should please weak and not self (v. 2).

B. Pleasure of Christ (vv. 3-5).

1. His Practice (v. 3).
2. His Passage (v. 4).
3. His Patience (v. 5).

C. Pleasure of Church (vv. 6-7).

1. Glorify God (v. 6).
2. Receive the weak into church membership without doubtful disputations (v. 7).