

Romans 9:1-15:26

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Rom 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit

Rom 9:2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart [because Israel remains defiant].

Rom 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my [Jewish] brothers, those of my own race,

Rom 9:4,5 the people of Israel. [Look at the blessings which God promised to them if they would love Him and obey Him. God chose the descendants of Abraham to be a kingdom of priests, the trustees of His gospel. He gave them many special blessings, such as:] Theirs is the adoption as sons [through Abraham]; theirs the [possession of] divine glory [in the temple], the covenants [given to Abraham and Moses], the receiving of the law [the Ten Commandments written by God's own hand], the temple worship and the promises [of becoming a kingdom of priests and kings]. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Rom 9:6 It is not as though God's word had failed [even though Israel has failed]. For not all who are descended from [the loins of Jacob] Israel are [part of] Israel.

Rom 9:7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, [Abraham fathered Ishmael, but God said] "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

Rom 9:8 In other words, [God makes this perfectly clear,] it is not the natural children [biological children] who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise [those who live by faith as did Abraham] who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. ["If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did." John 8:39]

Rom 9:9,10 For this was how the promise was stated [to Abraham]: "At the appointed time I will return [to you], and Sarah will have a son." Not only that [promise], but [all of] Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac [though whom God renewed the covenant which had been given to Abraham].

Rom 9:11,12 Yet, before the twins [Jacob and Esau] were born or had done anything good or bad – in order that God's purpose in election might stand [God informed Rebekah that His plans would be carried out even though her firstborn son would grow up to despise his spiritual

responsibilities. God told her of these matters to increase her faith because He is able to achieve His goals without violating the free-will of any person. This is why the Scripture says:] not by [human] works but by [faith in] him who calls [us– so] she [Rebekah] was told [in advance], "The older will serve the younger."

Rom 9:13 Just as it is written: "Jacob [‘s actions] I loved, but Esau [‘s actions] I hated."

[**Note:** This statement does not mean that God loved Isaac and hated Ishmael as individuals. God is no respecter of persons. (Acts 10:34) God loves every person equally. Paul quotes from a passage well known to the Jews (Malachi 1:2,3) to underscore a profound truth which he is unfolding: From God’s point of view, it is not the natural children who are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (Jacob). Even though Abraham had two sons, God would bless Ishmael, but He would only pass His covenant through Isaac. Then, Isaac and Rebekah had twins. God did bless Esau, but He would only pass His covenant through Jacob. Why? Even though Esau was the firstborn and first in line to be an heir of the promise, God could not accept Esau because of His defiance. God only accepted Jacob as an heir of the promise when Jacob became sorry for his deception, the day he became a fugitive from Esau’s wrath.]

Rom 9:14-16 What then shall we say? Is God unjust [because He *only* works with submissive people to accomplish His plan of salvation]? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. [In other words, God declares, “I know what I am doing, and what needs to be done and I know who will cooperate with me.”]" It [that is, one’s acceptance or rejection for God’s purposes] does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy [choosing].

Rom 9:17 [We find in Scripture that God also works with defiant people to accomplish His purposes:] For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I [the Lord] raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you [through your obstinate rebellion] and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth ."

Rom 9:18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy [at times He chooses submissive people to accomplish His objectives], and he hardens whom he wants to harden [He also chooses defiant people to accomplish His objectives. This does not indicate that God creates people with hard hearts or submissive hearts. Each person has a choice. When the carnal nature is confronted with God’s authority, people will either respond by hardening their hearts or surrendering to the Holy Spirit. We discussed this in the previous chapter. (Romans 8:1-6) Therefore, when God confronted Pharaoh with a divine demand, the demand caused Pharaoh’s arrogant, pompous and selfish heart to become totally defiant. Pharaoh was arrogant and rebellious toward God’s higher authority long before God gave the earthly ruler an ultimatum. God did not create Pharaoh so that He might destroy Him, instead God’s demand aroused Pharaoh’s selfish nature and his defiant response and subsequent destruction became legendary].

Rom 9:19 One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us [for being rebellious]? For who resists his will?" [In other words, one of you might say to me: Man has no choice. God made us what we are. Whether we are defiant like Pharaoh or submissive like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it makes no difference. God controls everything and everyone.]

Rom 9:20,21 But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? [God has a plan that is higher and larger than man can understand and His plans are carefully, thoughtfully and deliberately designed in love to achieve the maximum amount of good.]

Rom 9:22 [Consider this reasoning for a moment:] What if God, choosing to show his wrath [toward rebellious angels] and [at the same time to] make his [awesome] power known [to the universe], [He] bore with great patience [their rebellion in Heaven because He had larger matters to resolve first – even though they became] the objects of his wrath – prepared for destruction? [In other words, what if God bore with great patience the rebellion of our own forefathers even though later they became objects of His wrath and were ultimately destroyed in the wilderness?]

Rom 9:23,24 What if he did this [for the rebellious angels and our forefathers alike] to make the riches of his glory known to [submissive people, that is, believers in Christ] the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance [that is, He foreknew us from the beginning] for glory -- even us [the despised of Earth], whom he also called [out], not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

Rom 9:25,26 [Do you remember the prophecies given to us in the Old Testament:] As He says in Hosea [2:23]: "I will call them 'my people' [the Gentiles] who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' [the Gentiles] who is not my loved one," and, [when God's kingdom is finally set up] "It will happen [this prediction will be fulfilled] that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'" [and these will be the descendants of Abraham, which will be more numerous than the stars in the sky or the dust of the ground!]

Rom 9:27-29 Isaiah [10:22] cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, *only the remnant will be saved*. For the Lord will carry out his sentence [against rebellion] on earth with speed and finality." It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we [Israel] would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah. [No one would be saved.]"

Rom 9:30,31 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it [after hearing the gospel], [they have obtained] a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued [righteousness through obedience to] a law of righteousness, has not attained it.

Rom 9:32,33 [Yes, that is what I am saying and] Why not? Because they [Israel] pursued it [righteousness] not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over [the truth, spoken by Jesus] the "stumbling stone." As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him [the Rock] will never be put to shame."

Rom 10:1,2 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on [valid] knowledge.

Rom 10:3 Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness [and this is the crux of the human problem. Abraham and Sarah did not submit to God's righteousness. Jacob and his mother did not submit to God's righteousness. No, they each set out to achieve righteousness through works and sinned against God.]

Rom 10:4 Christ is the end of the law [Christ did not sin. Jesus fulfilled all that the law demands. Jesus produced the righteousness which the law declares. The Father sent His Son to achieve this] so that there may be righteousness [from God] for everyone who believes [in Him].

Rom 10:5 [Do not be confused. There are two types of righteousness.] Moses describes [an earthly righteousness, a man-made righteousness] in this way – the righteousness that [comes through obedience to the law] is by [a righteousness defined by] the law: "The man who does these things will live by them. [and this obedience and righteousness is essential for social conduct and order and the happiness of all. If everyone made a sincere effort to exalt the moral code given in the Ten Commandments, life on Earth would be better for everyone!]"

Rom 10:6 But the righteousness that [I speak of is different. This righteousness is necessary for salvation and it comes only through submission to God's Spirit. This righteousness] is by faith [and using the words of Moses (Deu 30:11-15) , this righteousness] says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' [to obtain the truth about God's will on these matters]" (that is, [Jesus has already come to Earth to reveal the will of God, so there is no need] to bring Christ down [again])

Rom 10:7 "or [there is no need to ask] 'Who will descend into the deep?' " (that is, [there is no need] to bring Christ up from the dead [to determine the will of God, for He has spoken open on these matters and He is now risen and sits at the right hand of the Father]).

Rom 10:8 But what does it [The Scripture] say, "The word [of God] is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming [is confirmed by the living Spirit of God. So, given the present persecution of the saints in Rome and the death penalty for serving Christ, you well know]:

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be [condemned to death for saying this, but you also know that you will be] saved [because of your faith in Christ].

Rom 10:10,11 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess [that Jesus is your king] and [and when confronted with death for saying these things, your faith in Christ will not save you from death, but it will save you from the second death. Therefore, as an heir of the righteousness produced by Christ, you] are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him [Jesus] will never be put to shame." [So, don't be cowards. Confess to Caesar that "Jesus is Lord." Put your faith in Jesus and leave the consequences with Him.]

Rom 10:12,13 For [Since the death of Jesus on the cross] there is no difference [in God's sight] between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all [mankind] and [He] richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone [Jew and Gentile] who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Rom 10:14,15 How, then, can they [the uninformed] call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, [Isaiah 52:7] "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Rom 10:16 [Don't be discouraged that only a few in Rome have accepted Christ.] But not all the Israelites [have] accepted the good news [either]. For Isaiah says [of rebellious Israel], "Lord, who has believed our message?"

Rom 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through [preaching and teaching] the word[s] of Christ.

Rom 10:18 But I ask: Did they [Israel] not hear? Of course they did: [David says in Psalm 19:4 of the creative works of God] "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

Rom 10:19 Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? [Israel was given every chance to understand. But, because of defiant rebellion, Israel could not understand.] First, Moses says, "I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding." [This prediction should have caused every priest and religious teacher in Israel to question his own understanding. Though Moses, the Lord promised to exalt those who are not a nation above the nation of Israel! Also, the Lord promised to exalt a people who have no understanding of God's salvation! How can this be possible and if it is possible, what would cause the Lord to do such a thing? There is only one answer. God promised Israel that if it became rebellious, God would select others as trustees of His gospel. God can rescue sinners

without Israel's involvement. Such is the love of God for the people of this Earth and this warning should have been carefully studied by Israel's teachers. They should have known better than to become arrogant and self righteous, exalting themselves because of Abraham, the patriarchs, the covenants, and all of the other gifts given to Israel by God.]

Rom 10:20 And Isaiah [65:1] boldly says [speaking about Messiah], "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me." But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

Rom 11:1 [Given Israel's long history of apostasy and rebellion,] I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! [He has been exceedingly patient with Israel.] I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. [And I am a beneficiary of God's great mercy on Israel – but Israel has not corporately responded to God in a humble way. In fact, Israel has corporately rejected God.]

Rom 11:2,3 God did not reject his people, [the remnant within Israel] whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah – how he appealed to God against Israel: "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"?

Rom 11:4-6 And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand [a remnant] who have not bowed the knee to Baal." So too, at the present time there is a remnant [a small group of believers in Christ] chosen by grace [called like Abraham and through faith they are anxious to carry out God's plans.]. And if [they are chosen] by grace, then it is no longer by works [that they seek salvation]; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Rom 11:7 What then? What [the nation of] Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the [small group within, the] elect did. [We the elect see how the pieces fit together. We see clearly that Jesus was the Son of God. We understand the righteousness that comes through faith in Him.] The others [in Israel] were hardened [like Pharaoh, by the very presence of the Way, the Truth and the Life],

Rom 11:8-10 as it is written: [Isaiah 44:18] "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day." [In other words, God actions have produced the same result in Israel as in Egypt. The rebellious become defiant, but those who know the Spirit of God choose submission.] And David says [in Psalm 69:22,23 of his own stubborn people]: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."

Rom 11:11 Again I ask: Did they [the nation of Israel] stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, [there is a silver lining in this] because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious [just like Isaiah said].

Rom 11:12-14 But if their [Israel's] transgression means riches [in grace] for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness [their repentance] bring! I am talking to you Gentiles [for a moment]. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much [I speak in glowing terms] of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.

Rom 11:15 For if their rejection [of God's Truth and His Son, the Messiah] is the reconciliation of the world [Jews and Gentiles], what will their acceptance [of Christ] be but life from the dead?

Rom 11:16-18 [We Jews well know that] If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. If some of the branches have been broken off [because of rebellion], and you [Gentiles], though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches [who have been broken off]. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.

Rom 11:19.20 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you [were grafted in through faith and you can remain as long as you] stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid [because].

Rom 11:21,22 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell [our forefathers who fell from God's favor because of rebellion], but kindness to you [undeserving Gentiles, because you have hearts like Jacob after he repented of his sin, and this kindness from God is endless if you allow Christ to live within you], provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.

Rom 11:23 And if [individuals in Israel] they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

Rom 11:24 After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! [Because the Jews have a great deal of potential understanding due to their history of the covenants, the law, the patriarchs, etc. They are closer to understanding the many wonderful things of God than Gentiles who know nothing and have heard nothing, therefore, the Jews could quickly be grafted back into the olive tree if only their hearts were softened and their eyes and ears were opened!]

Rom 11:25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel [was chosen by God, but she] has experienced a hardening [of the heart] in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in [to the kingdom. The Gentiles will fill up the kingdom of God and it shall come to pass that, 'Israel will be envious of those who are not a nation; and Israel will be angry at a nation that has no understanding.' because God has redefined Israel. Those who believe in Jesus are the heirs of Abraham.]

Rom 11:26,27 [Because we know that not all who are descended from the loins of Israel [Rom 9:6] are part of Israel, nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children [Rom 9:7], therefore it is not the natural children who are God's children [Rom 9:8]. All who are born again are regarded as Abraham's offspring and this is the Israel of God.] And so all Israel will be saved [everyone who is grafted into the cultivated olive tree], as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion [New Jerusalem]; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob [He will take away the carnal nature from His people.] And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

Rom 11:28,29 As far as the gospel is concerned, they [the nation of Israel] are enemies on your account; [given my own suffering at the hands of my people, the hatred of the Jews against Christians is great] but as far as election is concerned, they [the remnant of us who came out of Israel] are loved on account of the patriarchs, [who honored God with lives of faith and we are loved by God for the same reason] for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. [These can't be changed, but our history is clear: Humble obedience and faith determines who will eternally benefit from His gifts and His calling.]

Rom 11:30,31 Just as you [Gentiles] who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you.

Rom 11:32-34 For God has bound all men over to disobedience [we are all prisoners of the carnal heart] so that he may have mercy on them all. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

Rom 11:35,36 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" [We owe God everything, yet He gives us everything. What a God!] For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Rom 12:1 Therefore [in light of what has been said in the previous three chapters], I urge you, brothers [Jews and Gentiles in Christ], in view of God's mercy [His favoritism to all of us], to offer your bodies as living sacrifices [totally dedicated to God's service], holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.

Rom 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world [watch out for idolatry which is seductive and enticing – anything more important than God is an idol], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. [If you feed regularly on movies, TV shows and magazines, the beauty of God's Word will be dimmed. However, if you regularly shut out the world and prayerfully study the Word of God, the Bible will open up. You will discover many wonderful treasures, interesting things about God and His ways.] Then you will be able to test [evaluate] and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Rom 12:3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought [were it not for your faith in Jesus, you would suffer the same penalty for your sins as those who live in rebellion!], but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Rom 12:4,5 Just as each of us has one body with many members [arms, legs, ears and eyes], and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Rom 12:6-8 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. [Every member has a gift from God and he can do something for the Lord in proportion to his faith!]

Rom 12:9-15 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

Rom 12:16-18 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right [respectful] in the eyes of everybody [around you]. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Rom 12:19-21 [When you suffer injustice,] Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil [do not allow evil doers to make you bitter], but overcome evil with good.

Rom 13:1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities [government], for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. [Government was designed by God for the benefit of mankind. Of course, it is true that wicked and ruthless men do come to power and there are times when a government fails to benefit its citizens. However, unless or until there is conflict between the authority of man and the authority of God, submit to the governing authorities.]

Rom 13:2,3 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority [of government] is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment [wrath] on themselves. For rulers [who are fair and reasonable] hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.

Rom 13:4 For he is [accountable to God, his actions will be judged by God, he is] God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. [If, as a steward of God's authority, a governor shows himself unfit to govern, be patient because God will surely deal with him. Make no mistake about this. God will see to it that every man, whether he is a slave or a king, receives his just and due reward for everything done in the body – whether good or bad.]

Rom 13:5-7 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Rom 13:8-10 [Do everything possible to avoid debt and] Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The [second tablet had six] commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, *are summed up* in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' [Also, the first tablet had four commandments, 'Thou shalt have no other Gods before me,' 'Thou shalt not bow down and worship any graven images,' 'Thou shalt not take the Lord's name in vain,' and 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy' are summed up in this one rule: 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind and soul.'] Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Rom 13:11-13 And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

Rom 13:14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not [constantly] think about how to gratify the desires [and passions] of the sinful nature [which have to be crucified every day].

Rom 14:1 Accept him whose faith is weak [that is, whose understanding is incomplete and his faith in Christ is new and immature], without passing judgment [condemning him] on disputable matters. [Disputable matters are not doctrines. Disputable matters are social and cultural issues. Disputable matters are not to be confused with absolutes declared by God Himself.]

Rom 14:2 [For example, I wish to address two problems confronting the church in Rome. Many Gentile converts to Christ are presently eating foods offered to idols. Remember, it was their custom before knowing Christ to seek the blessings of idols with food offerings. They did this long before they ever heard of Jesus. When a Gentile convert realizes an idol is nothing but a stone, what difference does it make if the food has been offered to an idol? I say this because,] One man's faith [in Christ] allows him to eat everything [including foods offered to idols], but another man, [e.g., a Jewish convert who has spent a lifetime closely guarding his dietary intake per the Levitical law] whose faith [in Christ] is weak [e.g., new and immature], eats only vegetables. [Be generous and patient with each other in this disputable matter. Culture changes slowly. You may recall that the Apostle Peter suddenly discovered when some Jews arrived in Galatia that he could not eat and associate with Gentiles believers and I openly rebuked him for it. Galatians 2]

Rom 14:3 The man who [understands that an idol is nothing but a stone and] eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him [too]. [I well understand the religious and cultural differences between a Gentile and a Jew – the ways and thoughts of each man are vastly different. Yet, believers in Christ must love one another, support one another, and grant each other the privilege of worshiping God according to the dictates of his conscience.]

Rom 14:4 [If you hold contempt in your heart for someone whose religious practice is unlike yours, I ask:] Who are you to judge someone else's servant? [Every believer in Christ is a servant of God.] To his own master he [each servant] stands or falls. And he [whether he is a former Gentile or a former Jew, he] will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Rom 14:5 [We also have a second disputable problem in the church:] One man considers one day more sacred than another; [for example, certain Jewish converts insist on observing Jewish feast days which Israel has celebrated for fourteen hundred years and] another man [the Gentile] considers every day alike. Each person should be fully convinced in his own mind [as to the will of God on this matter].

Rom 14:6,7 He [the Jew] who regards one day [a feast day] as special, does so to the Lord. He [the Gentile] who eats meat [offered to an idol], eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains [from eating meat or he who declares every day alike], does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.

Rom 14:8,9 If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

Rom 14:10 You, then, why do you judge [condemn] your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. [Didn't Jesus say that each of us would be judged with the same measure that we judge others? Matthew 7:2]

Rom 14:11-13 It is written: “ ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’ ” So then, [be mindful of this:] each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Rom 14:14,15 As one who is in the Lord Jesus [for several years], I am fully convinced that no food [offered to idols] is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean [e.g., he has a conviction], then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love [if you continue to distress him]. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.

Rom 14:16 [On the other hand,] Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. [Do not go along without speaking up on what is good. If possible, work out your differences with Scripture. If this is not possible, then mutually agree on an honest impasse. Show respect for all who love the Lord, even though they may have opposing views about foods offered to idols and the observance of feast days.]

Rom 14:17-19 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

Rom 14:20,21 Do not destroy the work of God *for the sake of food*. All food [offered to idols] is clean [if God has first declared it to be clean], but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

Rom 14:22 So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God [do not create open conflict on these disputable matters]. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.

Rom 14:23 But the man who has doubts is [already] condemned if he eats [something that his conscience condemns], because his eating is not from faith [he is violating his own conscience]; and everything that does not come from faith is sin [therefore, obey the conviction which the Holy Spirit brings, He leads us through knowledge and faith into the fullness of Christ.]

Rom 15:1,2 We who are strong ought to bear [patiently] with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. [Yes, you may be in the right, but what good is your position on a disputable matter if it causes your brother to stumble?] Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

Rom 15:3,4 For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Rom 15:5,6 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom 15:7-9 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name."

Rom 15:10-12 Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples." And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him."

Rom 15:13,14 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

Rom 15:15,16 I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God [without regard to our carnal natures], so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Rom 15:17-19 Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done – by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

Rom 15:20-22 It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see [Jesus], and those who have not heard will understand [His salvation]." This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.

Rom 15:23-24 But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there.

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