The Church is known more for what it is AGAINST, rather than what it is FOR!
Anonymous

ROMANS FOURTEEN
Prayer Study #454
First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

Romans 14 Amplified Bible (AMP)

14 *As for the man who is a weak believer, welcome him [into your fellowship], but not to criticize his opinions or pass judgment on his scruples or perplex him with discussions.*

Paul is dealing with a local problem in the Roman church. Apparently, there were those (maybe the Essenes who were celibate, ascetic, vegetarians, and Sabbathanians) who believed the Christian believers should adhere to the dietary laws of the Old Testament, should not eat meat, and should strictly observe the Sabbath. Paul taught that these were not necessary doctrines of the Christian believer. In fact, he adamantly opposed these rules. He calls such people *weak in faith* because they were legalists who had not accepted the freedom there is in Christ and people who still believed in doing works to gain God's favor. Nevertheless, he is telling those who opposed these beliefs to welcome these orthodox believers and not criticize them. The believers were not to have disputes with this sect.

2 *One [man's faith permits him to] believe he may eat anything, while a weaker one [limits his] eating to vegetables.*
3 *Let not him who eats look down on or despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains criticize and pass judgment on him who eats; for God has accepted and welcomed him.*
4 *Who are you to pass judgment on and censure another's household servant? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he shall stand and be upheld, for the Master (the Lord) is mighty to support him and make him stand.*

All believers, whether meat eaters or not, whether weak or strong, belong to God. All are accountable to Him. It is not our place to judge.

5 *One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike [sacred]. Let everyone be fully convinced (satisfied) in his own mind.*
6 *He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.*

Paul answers these concerns about the Sabbath again in two of his letters. In Colossians 2:16-17, he says, *"Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ."* In Galatians 4:10-11, he says, *"You are observing special days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted."* Paul's position was that it is not a day that we should worship but the One who is Lord of all days.

7 *None of us lives to himself [but to the Lord], and none of us dies to himself [but to the Lord, for]*
8 *If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or we die, we belong to the Lord.*
9 *For Christ died and lived again for this very purpose, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.*

No one lives in isolation. His life or death will affect someone. In life and in death we are accountable to the Lord. Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord who is Lord over the living and the dead.

10 *Why do you criticize and pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you look down upon or despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.*
11 *For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God [acknowledge Him to His honor and to His praise].*
12 *And so each of us shall give an account of himself [give an answer in reference to judgment] to God.*

All will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (of God), but not all will stand before the great white throne of judgment, which is for the ungodly (Revelation 20:11-15). This judgment determines a believer's rewards, position and place in the kingdom to come, as well as the measure of glory of the resurrection (1st Corinthians 15:40-42). Every knee shall bow, and every tongue will confess, according to Philippians 2:9-11: *"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that very tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* We shall give an account of our own actions and not other people's actions.

13 *Then let us no more criticize and blame and pass judgment on one another, but rather decide and endeavor never to put a stumbling block or an obstacle or a hindrance in the*

way of a brother.
14 *I know and am convinced (persuaded) as one in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is [forbidden as] essentially unclean (defiled and unholy in itself). But [none the less] it is unclean (defiled and unholy) to anyone who thinks it is unclean.*
15 *But if your brother is being pained or his feelings hurt or if he is being injured by what you eat, [then] you are no longer walking in love. [You have ceased to be living and conducting yourself by the standard of love toward him.] Do not let what you eat hurt or cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died!*
16 *Do not therefore let what seems good to you be considered an evil thing [by someone else]. [In other words, do not give occasion for others to criticize that which is justifiable for you.]*

By harshly criticizing and judging unkindly another, we put a stumbling block in their way, causing them to stumble. Knowing that we will all be judged individually for our deeds at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we should not judge others anymore, especially for nonessential things like days and diets. Paul argues that there is nothing ceremonially unclean in and of itself, but sin alone makes something unclean. Nevertheless, don't do something or eat something that causes your brother to be hurt. Abstain because of your love for him.

17 *[After all] the kingdom of God is not a matter of [getting the] food and drink [one likes], but instead it is righteousness (that state which makes a person acceptable to God) and [heart] peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*
18 *He who serves Christ in this way is acceptable and pleasing to God and is approved by men.*
19 *So let us then definitely aim for and eagerly pursue what makes for harmony and for mutual up-building (edification and development) of one another.*
20 *You must not, for the sake of food, undo and break down and destroy the work of God! Everything is indeed [ceremonially] clean and pure, but it is wrong for anyone to hurt the conscience of others or to make them fall by what he eats.*

The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. We are to pray that the Kingdom come to earth and are to begin to live in Kingdom principles until Jesus comes and brings the fullness of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is not about what we eat or drink. It is about the condition of our hearts. Our walking in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit pleases the Lord.

21 *The right thing is to eat no meat or drink no wine [at all], or [do anything else] if it makes your brother stumble or hurts his conscience or offends or weakens him.*
22 *Your personal convictions [on such matters]—exercise [them] as in God's presence,*

keeping them to yourself [striving only to know the truth and obey His will]. Blessed (happy, to be envied) is he who has no reason to judge himself for what he approves [who does not convict himself by what he chooses to do].
23 *But the man who has doubts (misgivings, an uneasy conscience) about eating, and then eats [perhaps because of you], stands condemned [before God], because he is not true to his convictions and he does not act from faith. For whatever does not originate and proceed from faith is sin [whatever is done without a conviction of its approval by God is sinful].*

The more mature believer should be willing to not eat meat, drink wine, or do anything that would cause a brother to stumble. If a believer does not have misgivings, or a bad conscience, or guilt over these issues, he can follow his own convictions about such matters, but he should keep these convictions to himself and consider his brother and not cause him to stumble.

Kevin Connor summarizes these verses:

- In essentials, unity
- In non-essentials, liberty
- In all things, charity (love)

Word from Caianan Butler
October 25, 2014

Give Me your brokenness.
Give Me your shredded dreams.
Give Me your wretched clothes.
Give Me your empty souls.
Give Me your flooded minds.

I'll give you things of mine.
I'll give you a brand new dream.
I'll give you all new clothes.
I'll fill up your empty souls.
I'll give your mind a new direction.
I will fix your hands and eyes on heaven.