

14:19 Pursue Peace and Mutual Upbuilding

Pursue Peace.

Chrysostom: This applies to both sides equally. The one must become peaceable and the other must not destroy his brother. Without peace it is impossible to edify anyone. Homilies on Romans 26.3

14:20 Do Not Destroy the Work of God

Everything Is Created Unblemished.

Origen: Cleanliness and uncleanness inhere not in the things themselves but rather in the minds and thoughts of those who use them. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.5

The True Banquet of the Word.

Clement of Alexandria: It is the mark of a silly mind to be amazed and stupefied at what is presented at vulgar banquets after having enjoyed the rich fare which is in the Word of God. Christ the Educator 2.1.6

The Work of God Destroyed Because of Food, Not up built.

Chrysostom: Here “the work of God” means the salvation of a brother. For these people were so far away from building others up that they were prepared to destroy what God had made, and not for any great matter but for something very trivial.

It is not the eating which is unclean but the intention behind it. If you have not put that right but forced him to eat anyway, you have done it to no purpose and have made everything worse. Thinking that something is unclean is not as bad as tasting it when you think it is unclean. In that case you are committing two errors: first, by increasing his opposition by your quarrelsome attitude, and second, by getting him to taste what to him is unclean. As long as you have not persuaded him, do not try to force him. Homilies on Romans 26.8

The Work of God.

Oecumenius: God did his work on the cross, but now you are destroying it. Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.10

14:21 Do Not Make a Brother Stumble

Assessing Abstinence from Meat and Wine.

Origen: Eating meat and drinking wine are matters of indifference in themselves. Even wicked people may abstain from these things, and some idol worshipers in fact do so, for reasons which are actually evil. Likewise quite a few heretics enjoy similar practices. The only reason abstinence of this kind is good is that it may help to avoid offending a brother. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.¹¹

Do Nothing That Makes Another Stumble.

Chrysostom: If you force him he will be immediately destroyed and will condemn you, strengthening himself all the more by refusing to eat. But if you yield to him, then he will love you and will not suspect you as a teacher, and afterward you will discover that you have gained the power of sowing in him the right views. But once he starts hating you, you have closed the door to reason. Do not compel him therefore, but refrain for his sake, not because the thing is unclean but because he is offended, and then he will love you all the more. Homilies on Romans 26.¹³

14:22 Keeping One's Faith to Oneself

Happy Is One Who Perseveres in Doing Good.

Origen: This person should keep his faith to himself and not try to impose it on others.... It is reward enough to have God's approval.

There are many people who start off with good intentions, e.g., they decide they are going to live a celibate life, but in the course of time, either by negligence or desire, what they originally decided to do gets spoiled and corrupted. He is an unhappy person, therefore, who pronounces himself defeated in what he has tried to do, for he judges and condemns himself. A happy person is one who perseveres and thus has no reason to judge or to reprove himself for what he does. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.¹⁵

Resist Vanity.

Chrysostom: It seems to me that here Paul is gently warning the stronger ones against the temptation of vanity. He does not want them to go around boasting of their superiority but to be happy with having a clear conscience. Homilies on Romans 26.¹⁷

By Offending the Weak We Condemn Ourselves.

Augustine: This should be read in connection with [verse 16] above.... Let us make good use of what we have, lest we sin against our brothers by creating a stumbling block for the weaker ones. For when we offend the weak we condemn ourselves by the very good by which we approve ourselves when this faith pleases us. Augustine on Romans 81.18

14:23 *What is Not of Faith is Sin*

All That Is Not of Faith Is Sin.

Basil: If "all that is not of faith is sin, and faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," then everything outside holy Scripture, not being of faith, is sin. The Morals 80.22.21

Either/Or.

Gregory of Nyssa Every word or deed or thought which does not look to Christ looks completely to the adversary of Christ. For it is not possible for what is outside of light or life not to be completely in darkness or death.... The person outside of Christ rejects him by what he thinks, does or says. On Perfection.22

Respect Conscience.

Chrysostom: Once again, Paul shows what great harm people do if they force people to do things which go against their conscience. When a person does not feel sure or believe that something is clean, how can he do other than commit sin? Homilies on Romans 26.25

15:1 *Bearing with the Weak*

Winning the Weak.

Origen: Paul appears from this to be calling himself strong, just as he says in 1 Corinthians: "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak." 1 Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.2

Let the Weak Test Your Strength.

Chrysostom: What Paul says is this: If you are strong, then let the weak test your strength. Homilies on Romans 27.3

15:2 Edifying Our Neighbor

To Edify.

Origen: We ought to please God first, then our neighbor. But perhaps someone will say that Paul is contradicting himself here, because elsewhere he says: "If I please men, then I am not a servant of Christ." 7 ... In answer to this it must be said that it is one thing to try to please others in order to get their praise and quite another to please them in order that one's own life might be blameless, so that those who meet us may be edified by what they see and hear. We are not called to please others by doing things which are against faith, honor and piety.... Note that Paul himself says this, when he adds that in pleasing our neighbor the purpose is to edify him. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.8

Care for the Poor.

Chrysostom: If you are rich and powerful, do not please yourself but look after the poor and needy, because that way you will enjoy true glory and be doing much service besides. Homilies on Romans 27.9

15:3 Christ Pleased God, Not Himself

Christ Did Not Please Himself.

Origen: Christ did not please himself nor did he think it was robbery to be equal with God, 12 but wanting to please men, that is, to save them, he suffered the reproaches of those who reproached God, as it is written. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.13

Christ's Pleasure in Doing the Will of the One Who Sent Him.

Chrysostom: Paul always points to Christ's self-sacrifice when he asks us to make sacrifices. 17 Homilies on Romans 27.18

15:4 *The Scriptures Encourage Hope*

For Our Instruction.

Origen: This is similar to what Paul says elsewhere: “these things were written down for our instruction.”²² ... “Encouragement of the Scriptures” is given not to those who neither believe nor understand them but only to those who do. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.²³

The Scriptures Enable Hope and Patience.

Chrysostom: These things were written so that we might not fall away, for we have many battles to fight, both inward and outward. But being comforted by the Scriptures we can exhibit patience, so that by living in patience we might dwell in hope. For these things produce one another—hope brings forth patience, and patience, hope. Homilies on Romans 27.²⁴

15:5 *Living in Harmony*

Live in Harmony.

Origen: Here Paul is blessing the Romans in the manner of the patriarchs and prophets.... It is a great blessing that they should all understand and think alike. If you want to know just how great it is, look at what the Savior said in the Gospel: “If two or three of you agree, whatever they ask will be done for them by God.”²⁶ ...

This unanimity must be “in accord with Christ Jesus,” for of course it is possible to conspire together for evil. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.²⁷

In Accord with Christ.

Chrysostom: Love wants us to think of one another as we think of Christ. And to show that it is not mere love that he requires Paul adds, as always: “in accord with Christ Jesus.” Homilies on Romans 27.³⁰

15:6 *Glorifying God with One Voice*

The Whole Body United.

Chrysostom: He wants us to do this not just with one mouth but with one mind also. The whole body is united into one, and Paul concludes his address with another doxology, in which he gives the utmost encouragement to unanimity and concord. Homilies on Romans 27.³⁴

15:7 *Welcoming One Another*

Bind Yourselves to One Another.

Chrysostom: Let us obey this command and bind ourselves closely to one another. For it is no longer just the weak that he is encouraging, but everyone. If someone wants to break relations with you, do not do the same with him.... Rather, display even more love toward him, that you may draw him to you. For he is a member of the body, and when a member is cut off we must do everything we can to unite it again and then pay more attention to it. Homilies on Romans 27.³⁶

United in Love.

Cyril of Alexandria: We are all one body and members one of another. 40 Christ obliges us to be united with one another in the bonds of charity. Explanation of the Letter to the Romans.⁴¹