

Right in God's Sight

Studies from the Book of Romans

Lesson 18

Romans 14:1–23

Romans 14:1–12 Faith and Personal Liberty

Christians think and operate from different levels of spiritual maturity. They are also influenced by background experiences that affect their attitudes and habits. In chapter 14, Paul lays out the principle that in order to live harmoniously with other Christians, we must learn to stop judging them.

Read Romans 14:1–23, focusing your attention on verses 1–13.

There was a growing problem in the church at Rome: conflicts arose between the Jewish and Gentile believers over practices regarding food and the observance of holy days. In order for the church to become unified in body and purpose, Paul makes a plea for tolerance.

1. The focus on these verses is on the one who is *weak in the faith*. How does Paul command believers to treat such an individual? v. 1

Paul qualifies his command to accept the weaker brother or sister *without passing judgment on disputable matters*—meaning, scruples. Since believers in the body will have differing opinions and scruples, we must learn to accept others unconditionally, without quarrelling with them over those differences.

2. What is the first area of conflict that Paul addresses? vv. 2–3

The probable reason that some believers chose to eat only vegetables is because they wanted to refrain from eating meat that was offered to idols. Their reason is not Paul's concern, rather the quarrelling over the difference of opinion.

- a. Why should neither believer judge the other?
3. Who is every believer ultimately accountable to; and what should this knowledge keep them from doing? v. 4

4. What should be the rule of thumb about giving one day preference over another?
v. 5

5. When it comes to all *matters of conscience*, to whom should each believer look?
Why? Please explain this in your own words. v. 6

- a. What does Paul say regarding personal responsibility toward others? v. 7

- b. Whether we live or die, to whom are we accountable for all things? v. 8

6. What did Christ come to do that made Him rightfully Lord over all? vv. 9–12

One Christian is not above another and, therefore, has no right to sit in judgment; all are accountable to Christ, the Judge. He has been given the authority to judge all the earth. There will come the day in the future when Christ will return and everyone's life and works will be evaluated. Though the believer's standing for eternity is secure, each will answer for how they have handled what has been entrusted to them: their gifts, talents, responsibilities and opportunities to share His love.

Selah . . .

- ❖ Since all believers will give an account of him/herself to God, why then is it risky business to sit in judgment of someone else? See Matthew 7:1–2.

- ❖ If your frequency to judge others was measured today on a scale from 1–10 (1 being *never* judging others; and 10 being *more often than not*), where would you rate yourself? Please explain your answer.

Memory Verse:

"Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." Romans 14:19

Word Wealth:

Using the resources you have on hand (i.e., additional Bible translations, dictionary, Bible dictionary, concordance, etc.), write a definition for the words below.

receive (14:1) _____

despise (14:3) _____

offended (14:21) _____

Romans 14:13–23

Let Love Set the Limits

Paul has identified a problem that has the potential to be divisive in the church: "weak" Christians who wanted to retain the observance of certain food laws and holy days, and "strong" believers who felt they did not need to observe any limitations on their food and practices unless it is strictly forbidden in Scripture. As we will see, most of Paul's instructions in verses 13–23 have to do with urging the "strong" not to insist on exercising their personal liberty at the expense of the weaker brother or sister in Christ.

Read Romans 14:1–23 for review, focusing on verses 13–23.

Verse 13 is the bridge between how to deal with Christians without judging them and how to live with your personal convictions without hindering the spiritual growth of others.

1. What standard should govern a believer's choices at all times? v. 13

Think about it: a *stumbling block* is something that a person trips over; an *obstacle* is a *trap* or *snare*, anything that encourages or leads a person to sin.

In verses 14–17, Paul addresses the harm that our personal convictions can bring to others.

2. What was Paul's own conviction about food? v. 14
 - a. What about the person who believes that something is *unclean*?
 - b. How should a Christian whose convictions allow him to eat anything respond to someone whose convictions constrain him from eating certain foods?
 - c. If a believer persists to the point of *grieving* another believer, what can be said of him? What damage might he cause to the other person? See also v. 20a
3. Paul states in the above verses that eating and drinking are not the issue. What are the essentials of Christian fellowship and unity? v. 17
 - a. When a Christian holds these values above his/her own convictions, what is the result? v. 18 Can *you* relate to this?
 - b. Rather than majoring on minor things, what should you keep as your main focus in your relationships with others? v. 19 Give a personal example of how *you* can work to bring this about?

There are times when it's appropriate to relinquish one's Christian liberty for the sake of another. We must not attempt to unduly influence someone else to adopt our way of thinking.

For group discussion:

Paul speaks at length on this subject in 1 Corinthians 8:1–13. Take a moment to read through this passage and then consider your responsibility to *others*. Think about the affect your choices and lifestyle may have on believers around you as you answer the questions below . . .

- ❖ If you at times persist in exercising *your freedom* in Christ at the expense of a Christian who follows you contrary to his scruples, what might the outcome be for you? For the other person? vv. 11–12

- ❖ To what extent was Paul willing to go so as not to lead someone into sin? v. 13
How does this encourage you to take the high road for the sake of someone else?

For personal contemplation:

You've looked at and considered your responsibility to others; now take a moment to consider your responsibility to *yourself*. In 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul states: "*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*"

- ❖ Are you allowing yourself to be brought under the power of anyone or anything that you know is outside God's will for your life? Ask yourself: "*Is this act (practice) lifting me up spiritually—drawing me closer to God?*" "*Is it stumbling me or possibly anyone else?*" If so, confess it today and ask God to cleanse you.

"... Whatever is not from faith is sin." Romans 14:23b

My Romans Road

Listen . . . Learn . . . Live . . . God's Truth!

Take a look back at this week's lesson. Briefly recap what you learned this week and how you intend to live it out.

1. What lesson in your study became real to you this week?

2. How do you intend to apply this lesson to your daily life?

Memory Verse:

Write down what you learned about God from this week's memory verse.

Write out the verse from memory.

Prayer Request:

Write out your most earnest prayer request and lift it to the Lord.

Notes

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines across its entire width, providing a guide for handwriting or typing. The paper itself is a clean, off-white color. There are no margins, text, or other markings present on the page.

