

LESSON 29: ROMANS 14
APRIL 21, 2021

OVERVIEW

- . The way Christians accept or fail to accept other Christians – Romans 14:1-8
- . Answerable to God – responsible Christians – Romans 14:9-16
- . The nature of God's kingdom – Romans 14:17
- . Approved by God and man – Romans 14:18-23

THE WAY CHRISTIANS ACCEPT OR FAIL TO ACCEPT OTHER CHRISTIANS
ROMANS 14:1-8

- . In chapter 14 Paul narrows his focus to those who heard and believed the Gospel
 - . These verses are directed to the members of the church – the body of Christ
 - . All who know Christ, as Savior must stand with each other for Christ's kingdom
 - . Those who think of themselves as strong in faith must not exclude those who may wrestle with "disputable matters"
- . The first example – what we eat – Romans 14:1-4
 - . The first question was whether it was right for Christians to eat meat or whether they had to be vegetarians
 - . There was nothing in the Old Testament law that required Jews to be vegetarians
 - . However, Jews did have dietary restrictions
 - . Careful distinctions were to be made between "clean" animals, which could be eaten and "unclean" animals that couldn't be eaten
 - . The people were told not to eat blood
 - . Nothing in chapter 14 indicates that this is what Paul had in mind
 - . The striking thing about Paul's handling of this and similar issues in Romans 14 is that he does not attempt to resolve them here as he does in other places
 - . He is more concerned with the attitude that either looks down on or condemns the other Christians
 - . Stop fighting over it and stop letting it determine with whom you will associate in Christ's service
 - . We must not look down on others if they approach Jesus' service differently than we do
 - . God has accepted all Christians as he or she is
 - . A Christian is one who stands before God not on the basis of his or her own righteousness, but by the work of Jesus Christ
 - . Other Christians stand by the grace of God just as we do

- . The second example – special days – Romans 14:5-6
 - . Paul's second example has to do with Christians who were observing certain days as special, holy days and were looking down on those who treated all days alike
 - . The people Paul is thinking about in Romans 14 were not observing diet or days as a way to get to heaven but only because they thought these were necessary to obey to please God
 - . Their problem was their attitude to other Christians
- . Each must be convinced in his or her own mind – Romans 14:5
 - . “Everyone needs to do what he or she feels is right
 - . Paul is willing to treat each believer as a responsible, thinking person, not merely one to be led about docilely by some self-styled “stronger” believer
- . It is possible to serve the Lord either way – Romans 14:6-8
 - . The critical question is “are you really serving God by what you do, whichever way you tend”

ANSWERABLE TO GOD – RESPONSIBLE CHRISTIANITY – ROMANS 14:9-16

- . One day all will stand before the judgment seat of God
 - . On that day there will be no blaming another person for our faults or taking another persons credit for our own
 - . “For we shall all stand before God’s judgment seat and each will give an account of himself to God”
 - . If nothing else gets us thinking about our own behavior rather than someone’s else’s, this awesome and inescapable moment of personal accountability ought to do it
 - . When Paul comes to the end of an argument, he usually brings in a quotation from the Old Testament
 - . The quotation in Romans 14:11 is taken somewhat loosely from Isaiah 45:23
 - . It is a solemn reminder that God has said that every person who has ever lived will appear before Him for judgment
- . For what will we have to give an accounting
 - . Words – “I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned”
Matthew 12:36-37
 - . Resources – We are accountable for the resources God has given us
 - . “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with the few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your masters happiness” – Matthew 25:23, 26

- . Money – we are accountable for how we use our money
 - . “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also . . . no one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You can not serve both God and Money” – Matthew 6:19-21, 24
- . Responsible Christianity – Romans 14:13-16
 - . These verses begin a second section of practical counsel in which Paul discusses the way Christians are to relate to others with whom they disagree on some matters
 - . We are free as Christians to exercise our own opinions, but we must use our freedom in a way that supports, helps, or builds up others, not in a way that harms or tears them down
 - . We must stop passing judgment on one another – Romans 14:13
 - . We need to start judging ourselves
 - . Paul begins to speak exclusively to those who judged themselves to be strong
 - . The stronger believer has more latitude and can accommodate the weaker brother
 - . The strong Christian has it within his power to accommodate the other person
 - . The strong have a responsibility – Romans 14:15-16
 - . Strong believers ought not to hurt weaker Christians in matters that are more or less inconsequential
 - . The strong should sometimes forego their privileges
 - . First, if we love other Christians, as we should, the demands of love should override our personal desires in these matters
 - . Should we not willingly bear, if necessary, a little less pleasure here for the sake of that which is eternal, and that others might be saved

THE NATURE OF GOD'S KINGDOM – ROMANS 14:17

- . What is God's kingdom
 - . The realm in which God rules everything
 - . Although we currently live in the earthly realm, where we are subjected to many rulers, we can experience God's kingdom, through the power of the Holy Spirit
 - . Through the Holy Spirit we begin to see the joy of life when we allow God to reign in everything
 - . For the time being, sin continues to live in us and wants us back in its grasp
 - . When we choose God and God's will for our life we experience the joy of being a part of God's kingdom
 - . It's at times like this that we get a glimpse into what God's eternal kingdom will look like

APPROVED BY GOD AND MAN – ROMANS 14:18-23

- . “In this way” – Romans 14:18
 - . Paul’s use of these words indicate that he is not introducing a new subject
 - . He is emphasizing once again that God is looking for a living, vital faith, not legalism
 - . Legalism contributes to the pride of the flesh
 - . God is served when we know that we are accepted by God through the work of Jesus Christ alone
- . Building up or tearing down – Romans 14:19-23
 - . We need to stop fighting over things that are not important
 - . We need to stop judging other Christians over these trivial things
 - . Although a Christian who is strong in faith may understand that certain activities are acceptable in the eyes of God, it is better to abstain from something that may cause another Christian to stumble
 - . “Let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification”
 - . Are we relating to other Christians in a way that is helping to build them up or actually tearing them down
 - . We are God’s laborers together with Jesus Christ
 - . We have a responsibility to do our part in the building up of the Body of Christ

NEXT LESSON – WEDNESDAY, MAY 5, 2021 – ROMANS 15:1-13