

The Epistle to the Romans

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Guidelines for Christian Relationships

Reading assignment: Romans 14

Introduction

The renowned Magna Carta, called “the keystone of English liberty,” was a charter granted in 1215 by King John to the Barons of England. It established just guidelines for conduct, rights, and judgment of the British Barons.

We could possibly call Romans 14, the Magna Carta of Christian Behavior. Nowhere in the Bible can you find a more extensive delineation of the guidelines by which our lives as Christians are to be conducted.

Here we have God’s righteousness applied to the Christian’s responsibility to a weaker brother, to those who disagree with us in minor matters and to the liberty we may exercise in the grace of God.

Importance of this Lesson

- The major importance of this lesson is that it is a rebuke to the bigotry, separation and isolationism of some professedly Christian groups who literally shun other Christian groups because of minor differences in doctrine.
- It is important that the Holy Spirit through Paul has provided us with guidelines and regulations as to what the attitude of those who are more grounded in the truth should be toward those less enlightened. All around us are those who have trusted Christ and are saved but whose lives are bound by tradition or who have been inadequately instructed in the Word of God and thus are “weak in the faith.”

THE LESSON

I. ROMANS 14:1-3 – INSTRUCTION REGARDING THOSE WHO ARE “WEAK IN THE FAITH”

A. *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye...*

1. The weakness is not in faith, but in the faith. *The faith* refers to the entire scope of Christian doctrine. In 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul said “I have kept the faith.” Jude 3 says we are to “earnestly contend for the faith.”
2. In verse 1 Paul had in mind many who have received Christ and are saved, but for a variety of reasons are not matured and grounded in the WORD. Perhaps due to erroneous or inadequate teaching they are still bound by legalistic practices and religious traditions.
3. *...Receive ye...* – This does not mean a mere handshake or the official reception of someone into the membership of a church. In such a case, a weaker brother could still be shunned, ignored, or isolated. *Receive* here means to sincerely and wholeheartedly recognize such a brother as being a truly born-again child of God and welcoming him into one’s personal fellowship.

B. *...but not to doubtful disputations*

1. In other words, accept him without passing judgment upon him.
2. Don’t get involved in disputes over dubious and minor matters. Perhaps no one is ever led into the deeper things of God through argumentation.

C. *For one believeth that he may eat all things: another who is weak, eateth herbs*

1. Jewish Christians had difficulty. Jewish distinctions, traditions and regulations made many things *unclean* to the devout Israelite. Read Acts 10:9-15 and note Peter’s refusal to eat “any thing that is common or unclean.” Other Christians, from a variety of backgrounds, might well have similar problems.
2. A Christian, instructed fully in the grace of God and grounded in *the faith* may feel free to eat whatever is set before him. Read Mark 7:15 and Acts 10:15.

- D. *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.*
1. This matter of judging one another is a two-way street. The strong are not to despise or be judgmental toward the weak and the weak are not to sit in judgment on the strong. WHY?
 2. *For God hath received him* – If the weak and the strong will realize that God has *received* both, why should they not gladly *receive* each other? Amen!

II. ROMANS 14:4 – INSTRUCTION REGARDING ANOTHER MAN’S SERVANT

- A. *Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant?* The word *servant* here means household servant.
- B. Who are you to come into a man’s home by invitation and condemn or criticize that man’s servant? That servant would not be accountable to you but to his master only. He stands or falls by the will of his master and no one else.
- C. So it is with the weaker brother. All believers, weak and strong, are the servants of God! He alone holds us up! He alone is able to make the weak brother strong.
- D. There is a strong tendency on the part of preachers and other Christians who may be grounded in *the faith* to censure other preachers or other servants of Christ who have differing opinions and convictions and seem to march to a different drumbeat. Just remember, *...to his own master he standeth or falleth.*”

I. ROMANS 14:5-6 – INSTRUCTION AS TO OBSERVANCE OF DAYS

- A. *One man esteemeth one day above another...*
1. The Jews celebrated a great many days – holy days, feast days and sabbath days. Undoubtedly many saved Israelites still felt attached to these days and felt the need to honor and celebrate them.
 2. Then, there was the sabbath day. Saturday was the Jewish sabbath. Christians celebrated the resurrection and worshipped on the first day or Sunday (1 Corinthians 16:2; Acts 20:7). The controversy has never really ended but most Christians observe Sunday, the Lord’s Day (Revelation 1:10) as a special day to honor, worship and serve Christ.
 3. However, it must be admitted that while this is so, the Lord’s day was observed on a voluntary basis. There is no New Testament command that we must observe Sunday nor are there any particular instructions as to how we are to observe it. Most of what we do is handed down to us by tradition, not command.
 4. Colossians 2:16 clearly says, “Let no man therefore judge you in...respect of ... the sabbath days.”
- B. *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*
Here is one of the “keys” to honorable and honest Christian living. Each man must be fully persuaded in his mind that his decision is of the Lord. Regarding *days* each man should be allowed this freedom without judging or being judged.
- C. In verse 6, we have the matter of what days a man regards and what food he eats.
1. The key phrase and thought here is *unto the Lord*.
 2. Whether a man regards a day or does not regard a day, his decision must be *as unto the Lord*. If a man eats certain foods and another rejects this food, he eats or does not eat *as unto the Lord*.
 3. What all this means is that our only concern about any decision is whether or not it pleases the Lord. Read Colossians 3:17,23.

II. ROMANS 14:7-9 – REMEMBER, WE ARE NOT OUR OWN – Read all three verses.

- A. The key phrase in this passage is the latter part of verse 8 – *we are the Lord’s*.
- B. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says “...ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price...”
- C. All Christians have but one Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. Under no circumstances are we to be another’s lord. Nor is anyone else to lord it over you. We are all accountable to Christ alone.
- D. Since we are the Lord’s, we neither live nor die to ourselves but unto Him who purchased us with His blood (Acts 20:28).
- E. Since Christ “revived” and rose again, He is Lord of both the living and of those who have died.

III. ROMANS 14:10-12 – WE ARE ALL HEADED FOR JUDGMENT

- ◆ *The searching question here is “why are you sitting in judgment on your brother in the Lord when you yourself will be judged one day when you will be made to give an account for your own behavior and no one else’s?”*
- A. We must always keep in mind that all authority to execute judgment on the saved and unsaved has been delegated to the Son by God the Father (John 5:22,27).
- B. That Christ, our Lord, will exercise that authority is clear from verse 10. Also, read and study 2 Corinthians 5:10; Acts 17:31; and Philippians 2:10,11.
- C. Remember also that Paul here was not writing of a judgment that condemns and assigns to hell. John 5:24 clearly states that believers “shall not come into condemnation (judgment),” and Romans 8:1 declares *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...* What blessed assurance!
- D. The thought here, as in verse 12, is on the word *himself*, no one else. Why should I sit in judgment on a Christian brother? I have to face the Lord myself and he has to face the Lord by himself. Let the Lord be the judge – for indeed He is and will be.

IV. ROMANS 14:13-21 – FURTHER ADMONITIONS (for a responsible, loving and correct attitude toward Christians who may differ with us in minor things)

- A. Verse 13 – Stop judging your brother and don’t be responsible for his stumbling or falling. Naturally, this does not mean that by your narrow, critical and prideful attitude you would cause a fellow Christian to lose his salvation. It does mean, however, that your judgmental attitude could greatly discourage him and cause him to fall from his devoted service to Christ.
- B. Verse 14 – Paul here recalled what the Lord said to Peter in Acts 10:15. What God calls clean we are not to call unclean. However, if some Christian, because of traditional or inadequate instruction in the grace of God, considers something to be unclean, to him it is unclean and would be accounted to him as a sin.
- C. Verse 15 – If you grieve or deliberately offend your brother whom you may consider weak *in the faith*, you are failing to walk or act in love toward him. Note 1 John 3:14; 4:7,8. Don’t be guilty of *destroying* someone for whom Christ died. Again, it is the brother’s zeal, steadfastness and joy that you *destroy*.
- D. Verse 16 – Many professedly fundamental Christians are despised because of their narrow, bigoted, pharisaical and judgmental attitude. Their *good* (their faith in and love for Christ and His Word, etc.) are *evil spoken of* because of the extremes to which their convictions have carried them.
- E. Verse 17 – The kingdom of God is not an earthly matter concerning what a man eats or drinks. It is a wonderful kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy wrought in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Read Romans 8:4 and Galatians 5:21.
- F. Verse 18 – Righteousness, peace and joy. Whoever serves Christ in these areas is accepted and approved of by both God and man. It is difficult to fault a man whose life constantly reflects the goodness, peace, and joy of the Lord.
- G. Verse 19 – The phrase *follow after* is a strong phrase meaning to pursue diligently as a hunter would his prey. Read and note 1 Thessalonians 5:15; Hebrews 12:14; Psalm 34:14. While not sacrificing his personal and biblical convictions, a Christian should so live that he promotes peace in the family of God and edifies (builds up) other, perhaps weaker, Christians. Note Romans 15:2; 1 Corinthians 8:1.
- H. Verse 20 – In 1 Timothy 4:1-4, Paul labels those who forbid meats or food to be eaten as actually false teachers who give heed to seducing spirits. In verse 4, the apostle writes “For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.” Nevertheless, it is wrong for someone to exercise his liberty in the grace of God and “eat with offense,” that is, deliberately offend someone who does not understand or share his liberty and thus destroys the work of God. Many churches have been destroyed by such displays of a lack of love, compassion, and understanding.

- I. Verse 21 – In this verse Paul is simply cautioning well-established Christians concerning random or careless exercise of their liberty in the grace of God in the presence of weaker Christians.
1. Notice Paul said, “It is good” not to do this or that. It is not a command or an exhortation. It is simply a statement of what is good, right and proper conduct of strong Christians in the presence of those who are “weak in the faith.”
 2. Paul had already written concerning being a stumbling block, verse 13, or causing offence, verse 20. Here he added the phrase “or is made weak.” In the presence of weak Christians, those who are strong should be willing to exercise restraint and forego their liberty in the grace of God lest a weak brother is led to do something contrary to his conscience and thus is made weaker.
- J. Verses 22-23 – If a matter is not absolutely right, it is absolutely wrong.
- A man asked his wife, “Honey, is this shirt dirty?” She asked, “Does it look dirty?” He said, “Yes.” She answered, “If it is doubtful, it is dirty.” That’s the principle of the Christian life Paul was dealing with in these two verses. If, for you, a matter is not absolutely right, it is absolutely wrong.
1. *Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God* – The faith here is not “the faith” as in verse 1. This faith is personal assurance or conviction. In other words, there are numerous minor things concerning which you might have absolute confidence or faith that they are perfectly all right for you to do because of the liberty you feel in the grace of God. However, there may be many fine Christians who do not share your convictions. It is best not to flaunt or preach your personal convictions about minor matters. Have such faith ...*to thyself before God*.
 2. *Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth* – Here is one of the “keys” to Christian happiness. Don’t ever permit yourself to do something contrary to your conscience or convictions. If you do you simply condemn yourself with a feeling of guilt.
 3. *...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin* (Read 1 Corinthians 10:24-33.) Again, for a Christian, if a thing is not absolutely right, it is absolutely wrong. Never be guilty of engaging in anything that is doubtful in your own mind as to its rightness. If you can’t do it with full assurance of faith, don’t do it.

V. THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

(Know these principles and references for your exam.)

- A. Am I doing this in the name of the Lord as unto the Lord (Romans 14:6-8)? Note also Colossians 3:17,23 and 1 Corinthians 10:31.
- B. Will what I am doing cause anyone to stumble, be offended or made weak (Romans 14:13,16,20,21; 1 Corinthians 8:11-13)?
- C. Can I do this thing with perfect faith or is it doubtful and does it condemn my conscience (Romans 14:22,23)?
- D. Is this thing edifying or destructive to others or to me (Romans 14:19; 15:2)?
- E. Am I doing this thing to please myself or to please the Lord and others (Romans 15:2,3)?
- F. Is this thing a matter of world conformity (Romans 12:2)?
- G. Do I have confidence that this thing is God’s will for my life (Romans 12:2)?

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS
EXAM - LESSON 22

Name _____

Address _____

1. The major importance of this lesson is: (Value 4 points)
 - a. it is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine.
 - b. it gives guidelines on how Christians should behave in the church.
 - c. a rebuke to the isolationism of some bigoted groups over minor differences in doctrine.
2. In Romans 14:1 “the faith” refers to: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b. the entire body of Christian doctrine.
 - c. the faithfulness of the believer to Christ.
3. “Him that is weak in the faith” in Romans 14:1 means: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. a believer who is not faithful to the Lord.
 - b. a believer who has backslidden into sin.
 - c. a believer who has not matured in the faith.
4. By the phrase “receive ye” in Romans 14:1 Paul meant: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. to shake hands upon meeting such a person.
 - b. to sincerely recognize such a person as a brother and have fellowship with him.
 - c. to receive such a person into the membership of the church.
5. The meaning of “not to doubtful disputations” in Romans 14:1 is: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. accept a person without getting involved in disputes of minor matters.
 - b. it is good to get into arguments over things of minor importance.
 - c. do not pass judgment on anyone because that is God’s right.
6. Jewish believers had a problem with those who ate everything because: (Value 4 points)
 - a. the Jewish believers thought everybody should keep the dietary laws of the Old Testament.
 - b. Jewish Christians were used to abstaining from certain foods before they became believers.
 - c. God told Adam not to eat from a certain tree.
7. The word “servant” in Romans 14:4 means: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. a household servant.
 - b. a workman who is hired for pay.
 - c. someone who works for a person in his business.
8. The difference in the celebration of weekly worship days between Jews and Christians was: (Value 4 points)
 - a. they all celebrated the same days – there was no difference.
 - b. Christians of pagan background kept their pagan feast days.
 - c. Jews wanted to celebrate their Sabbath, or seventh day, while Christians who had come from paganism celebrated Sunday, the first day of the week.

9. Paul's advice concerning the observance of days was: (Value 4 points)
 - a. everyone should observe the same holidays.
 - b. every person should be allowed conscientious freedom in his choice of days.
 - c. everyone should observe the Jewish feast days.

10. The believer's ultimate responsibility is to: (Value 4 points)
 - a. the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b. the church of which he is a member.
 - c. the government.

11. The judgment Paul was talking about in Romans 14:10 was: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. the Great White Throne Judgment.
 - b. the judgment that condemns a person to hell.
 - c. the judgment seat of Christ.

12. All authority to execute judgment on the saved and unsaved belongs to: (Value 4 points)
 - a. Jesus Christ.
 - b. God the Father.
 - c. The Holy Spirit.

13. Romans 14:13 states that some Christians cause others to fall by being a "stumbling block." This means: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. every Christian is responsible for his brother's stumbling.
 - b. the critical attitude of one believer can cause another believer to lose his salvation.
 - c. the critical attitude of one believer could discourage another believer and cause him to fall from his love for the Lord.

14. According to Romans 14:15 one believer can destroy another by: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. causing him to lose his salvation.
 - b. deliberately offending a brother who is weak in the faith.
 - c. complaining about him to other believers in the church.

15. In Romans 14:18 Paul said the following is acceptable to God and man:(Open Bible) (Value 4 points))
 - a. to serve Christ.
 - b. to make sure that others live righteous lives.
 - c. to make sure that everyone follows the law of eating the right things.

16. Romans 14:19 states that the believer should "follow after the things which make for peace." This statement means: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. he should never disagree with other sincere believers.
 - b. he should never criticize believers who are weak in the faith.
 - c. he should promote peace among believers.

17. The word "edify" in Romans 14:19 means: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. to teach someone.
 - b. to build up someone.
 - c. to cause someone to become weak in the faith.

18. The phrase eat "with offence" in Romans 14:20 means: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. for a believer to deliberately offend someone who does not share his liberty.
 - b. to eat something that is forbidden in the Law of Moses.
 - c. that it is wrong to eat meat offered to idols.

19. In Romans 14:22, “faith” means: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
- a. the whole body of Christian doctrine.
 - b. a person’s faith in Christ for salvation.
 - c. one’s personal assurance or conviction in a matter.
20. **Matching:** Place the letter in front of the reference on the line in front of the phrase that answers the question about the believer’s behavior. (Open Bible) (Value 24 points)

<u>Phrase</u>	<u>Reference</u>
___ Am I doing this as unto the Lord?	a. Romans 12:2
___ Will any one become weak and stumble because of what I am doing?	b. Romans 14:6-8
___ Can I do this with faith or does it condemn my conscience?	c. Romans 14:19
___ Is this edifying or destructive to myself or others?	d. Romans 15:2-3
___ Am I doing this to please myself or the Lord and others?	e. Romans 14:13
___ Does this cause me to conform to this world?	f. Romans 14:22-23

Decision Time

Before God, I promise today that I will not be a stumbling block to any weak believer instead I will try to help those who are weak in the faith by praying for them, encouraging them and strengthening them in the faith. I will not criticize others for minor differences with me. I promise God to be a loving person who is available to others to help them in any way I am able.

Signed: _____ Date: _____