

Lesson 30 – Romans 14 – Part I

In the final chapters of Romans Paul moves from information to instruction. The first 11 chapters of Romans there is a lot of doctrinal content on salvation whereas the last five are spent giving basic expectations for Christian conduct. Chapter 13 covered the issues of submission to government, the need for loving as God's people, and the need for living as Christians. Now Paul launches into a topic that plagued a large number of early churches, judging others.

Who are you to judge? – Dietary issues – vs. 1-4

To be weak in faith is to be immature in the Lord. In literal terms, there isn't a significant enough trust in God. We relate to those whose faith is weak by helping them build strength, not in challenging them in their immaturity.

The issue of concern for the Roman Christians was that of eating meat. Those who abstained from meat often did so as a sign of extreme devotion. This then became a source of great religious pride. The divide was natural, the mature believers knew that consuming meat was a non-moral issue whereas the immature held that it was a sign of compromise and religious liberalism.

Modern day issues might be translation preferences, worship styles, wine as a beverage, political correctness, Sunday dress, dietary restrictions, Sabbath worship, etc. etc. etc.

Who are you to judge? – Lifestyle issues – vs. 5-9

Things haven't changed a lot since the days of the early church. They too debated the right day of worship and the right food to eat. The key to discerning how we live is found in our devotion to God. Our lives are His. "For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." – verse 8.

Who are you to judge? – Authority issue – vs. 10-12

When Paul asks *why*, he is intent on getting to your motives in judging. When we see others' activity as inferior, we naturally assume the perceived higher ground. However, what we are actually doing is putting ourselves in the highest ground, which isn't ours to occupy. That ground is God's. Paul's quote in verse 11 is blunt and to the point. "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

The conclusion? Not only will the person you are judging answer to God for himself, but so will you. The question of this passage not asked: how are you planning on answering God when He holds your attempt to take His position against you?

We judge each other on lifestyle choices that are not clearly taught in God's Word. Those areas that are clearly taught in God's Word need no judgment, for God has spoken. For those areas that are undiscernible, we must be careful in our conduct.