

ROMANS - #14

ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS

LESSON TOPIC

TROUBLE WITH EATING AND HOLY-DAYS

MEMORY VERSE: ROM. 14:17. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink: but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

INTRODUCTION

To begin this introduction to chapter 14, let me note the connection to previous chapters in this manner: “13:14, But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof – and also remember – 14:1, Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. My point is simply that Paul is still giving exhortations to practical Christian living in this chapter just as he was in previous chapters.

Now he turns to something that today you and I might consider very trivial and not worthy of a place in the sacred scriptures. And, indeed, it may be trivial to us, but not so to them. Paul was writing to a church made up of Jew and Gentile and the Jewish portion would have been attached still to some of the eating restrictions and holy – days of the law. Nor should we think that the pagan Gentiles did not have special days and special festivities; they probably had more than the Jews. When you mix both of them together in the church, without some very strong teaching and leadership and some very humble followers, you wind up with “TROUBLE WITH EATING AND HOLY-DAYS. That is what Paul is dealing with now as he tries to instruct them that the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Ghost. O how big a little, insignificant matter becomes when people are so attached to the lusts of their own flesh and the traditions of yesterday.

Before we point our fingers at their trivia, maybe we should look at the beams in our own eyes first. “Beams” like whether to wear a wedding ring or not, or where the piano should be placed, or whether you can drink a soft drink or not, or who shall determine the spending of church money, or what color carpet to choose, or what S.S. literature to use, or why the preacher is too long-winded, or there are some light bulbs out in the bathroom. I am sure that you get the point. But to be absolutely certain that we do, maybe we should just study this chapter real close to see just what Paul’s advice is. We may find out that he is talking about those “who didn’t speak to me in the grocery store”, etc.

As we study Romans chapter 14, let us be sure to look within us (not around us) to see just how much trivia baggage we are carrying.

MONDAY. ROM. 14:1-4. DON’T ALLOW TRIVIA TO RULE YOUR VIEW OF OTHERS.

SCRIPTURES.

V1. Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. 2. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. 3. 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. 4. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

COMMENTS.

We are not talking about “unbelievers” but weak believers. And we are dealing with how the strong believer relates to and handles the weaknesses of an immature believer. In a family there are mature adults and children, maybe 2, 5 and 8. How should adults deal with the immaturity of the children? That is the picture of these verses.

- Receive the weak (believer), but not with disputations and criticisms. The strong (Roman, Jewish) Christian says he can eat all foods, while the weak Jewish Christian, just coming from under the teachings of the law, eats only herbs. The strong one who knows that it is okay to eat all foods, should not put a stumbling block before the one who eats only herbs by way of judging his immature eating. *(Churches are historically prone to quickly judge someone who comes in their midst that is not just like them. Without condoning anything against the truth, we should always use patience, love and forbearance with weak Christians and even those who make no profession or believe some wrong doctrine. Jesus ate with the publicans and sinners without doing what they do or being like them, but at the same time showing them love and patience. And when the woman taken in adultery was brought before him by judgmental religionists, he showed love and forgiveness. There is nothing more despicable than a condescending, hypocritical, holier-than-thou religious zealot).*
- The objective in these verses is that a spirit of grace and love permeate the fellowship of believers; the weak and the strong.
- It does not have anything to do with taking all views and doctrines and trying to make them fit together in harmony. It is all about how to treat a weak brother (or sister).
- Who are you to judge another man's servant, suggests that the weak brother is the servant of Christ just the same as the strong brother is. In a family there are strong and weak members.

TUESDAY. ROM. 14:5-9. ALIVE OR DEAD, WE ARE THE LORD'S.

SCRIPTURES.

V5. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 6. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. 7. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. 8. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die we are the Lord's. 9.

For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

COMMENTS.

One of the important things to remember in this dialogue about a weak brother and what is eaten and what days are observed is this: foods which were prohibited under the law and days that were sacred under the law, no longer carry those proscriptions and therefore have no redeeming quality or any scriptural compulsion to observe. From that position Paul makes the point that the regarding of certain days or the eating or not eating of certain foods are not the things that endear a person to God.

The overriding point of all of this conversation about food and days is not who keeps what, but how we treat a brother under these circumstances. If one eats pork because he believes that whatever is eaten with thanksgiving (divine approval and gratitude) they should not act or speak in a way that would cause a Christian not fully indoctrinated in all areas of faith on such matters to stumble. Don't have disputations over such doubtful opinions but rather show kindness and patience to the intent that they can grow in faith to the point of deliverance from an unnecessary or unwarranted opinion.

We should also remember that Paul is addressing a given circumstance and is not giving license for anyone to choose their own little pet ideas, no matter what they are. He is talking about abstaining from certain foods proscribed under the law or observing certain days required under the law. There are so many other such things which "Christians" have attached a meaning to that did not exist or was unnecessary. For example many "Christians" put an emphasis on Easter or Christmas day that the Bible does not. It certainly is alright to observe these days, but such observance has no spiritual value. It is the objective of these days, the birth and resurrection of Christ which is important, not a rambling Easter day or a 25th of December, which is very likely not the day of Christ's birth or the day of the resurrection at any rate. And we all know that these "days" are hallowed unto many; much more than the events they are supposed to represent. If you say that some rambling day in the spring was the day of the crucifixion, I would challenge that opinion. I would not challenge the idea of remembering the resurrection. My attitude towards you for putting undue emphasis on the "day" rather than the "event" should be one of patience and forbearance, until and unless you dogmatically made it to be a required item of Christian truth. A Christian that is weak in the faith, though genuine in their commitment, should be loved to further truth rather than hurt over something that has little or no value.

WEDNESDAY. ROM. 14:10-13. ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD FOR OUR CONDUCT.

SCRIPTURES.

V10. But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God. 12. So then every one of us shall give account

of himself to God. 13. Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

COMMENTS.

People like to emphasize every verse which exhorts us not to judge, so much so that it makes you feel that they have something they do not want any scrutiny on in their life. On the other hand, about this trouble of eating and feast days, we should withhold our judgmental attitudes and adopt one wherein we try to encourage a weak brother.

Paul borrows from scriptures written in the old testament, Is. 45:23, to explain a matter of sovereign deity. We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give account for all we do. Note that it does not say when this will be or where. I think the judgment seat of Christ is in the church, where his gospel is administered. That is where all of your life is laid out like a book for all to read and it is there that your deeds are declared to be good or evil. In due time, the weak brother, if he remains committed to the Lord, will grow in his faith and God will reveal to him the vanity of his notions about eating or clinging to some special day.

Paul's instructions to the Colossians, Col. 2:16-17, are perfectly applicable to his counsel in Romans 14: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of any holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ".

THURSDAY. ROM. 14:14-18. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT ABOUT MEAT AND DRINK

SCRIPTURES AND COMMENTS.

V14. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Someone who is convinced in his own conscience, whether right or wrong, that something is not acceptable to Christ, it seems very real. For that reason don't make a stumbling block of it.

V15. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitable. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

Having your way about eating your "meat" is not nearly as important as the conscience and life of a weak brother. Don't destroy him because of it.

V16. Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

Don't put yourself in a position of being condemned in something when it is something which is of no consequence to Christian character.

V17. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The Christian life is about living righteously, keeping peace as much as possible and finding joy in the Holy Ghost (spiritual things), and not about daily trivia such as “what color tie you can or cannot wear”.

V18. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

If we pursue righteous living, seek for peace in all things and find our joy in spirituality rather than in needless trivia, this is acceptable both to God and man.

FRIDAY. ROM. 14:19-23. IT IS ALL ABOUT ATTITUDE AND RELATIONSHIPS.

SCRIPTURES AND COMMENTS.

V19. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Since peace (in the Holy Ghost) is acceptable to God, let us follow after that and seek to edify rather than to condemn.

V20. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

Don't use what you eat, even though good, to destroy someone. It may be pure (acceptable) but if you have a wrong attitude or use it wrongly it becomes evil or wrong on your part.

V21. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

If your brother is offended if you eat “pork” (when as a Jew under the law he knew you should not eat pork), then eat filet mignon. Eat pork another time. Pray for the brother that the Lord will lead him further in the (true) faith and don't cause him to stumble in his young walk with Christ. Instead, pursue peace.

V22. Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

If you have grown in faith to where you have learned that it is okay if you eat “pork”, that is good. Just thank God for it and don't bring condemnation upon yourself because you allowed your freedom of faith to cause a brother to stumble.

V23. And he that doubdeth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

On the other hand, the weak brother, whose faith has not been enlarged about this matter, if he does eat when his conscience says otherwise, it will cause condemnation in his heart and mind and this will create turmoil and confusion in him

SUMMARY.

James 3:5, speaking of the detrimental use of the tongue, declares: "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth". This sure is applicable to the lesson of this chapter. Because of ideas about eating and observing special days, it sets up a situation where you must exercise care or you will destroy a weak brother. And if you do, with regard only for your (correct) view, you will likely bring condemnation upon yourself.

All of this does not mean that you must go around keeping silent or inactive about your faith which you know to be true. Instead it means that when you know such a situation exists, then exercise patience and care so as not to create confusion or worse in someone who has not grown much in faith. What this really reminds me of is how absolutely necessary it is that everyone, especially those who are "weak" in faith, that is, have not achieved a measure of maturity in Christian, biblical teachings, that they be taught on a (very) regular basis, what are the principals of the doctrine of Christ. The only process by which the "weak" brother can become strong and aware that it is alright with God for him to eat "pork" is through biblical, patient, caring, teaching of the truth. Alas, it is hard to achieve this continual teaching of truth when they may not be regular in church attendance.

Don't put a stumbling block before your brother or condemn yourself by a careless attitude concerning the Christian experience. The kingdom of God is edified, not by holy days or what you eat, but by righteousness, peace and joy in the Lord. This lesson should bring to our attention how important it is to handle "babes in Christ" with much care and forbearance and not to "throw the baby out with the wash water" just because it is dirty.

QUESTIONS

1. What kind of eating and what special days were likely causing the problem of this chapter?
2. What is good for food in God's sight?
3. What should you do if a brother or sister has not matured to this understanding?
4. What does the Kingdom of God thrive on?
5. If you do something that causes a brother to stumble and fall, who is condemned for it?

NOTE: I used a somewhat different format for the last two "days" of this lesson; a format of verse by verse printing and associated commentary. I hope this commentary draws us closer to the exact teachings of the scriptures rather than a random commentary.