

Walking Through Romans to Christ

Romans chapter 14 “Having a clear Conscience towards God”

Righteousness by Faith Series

Opening/REVIEW: In chapter 13 we saw what it means to be responsible to God, and to fulfill our Christian duties in respecting the powers that be. In this chapter we’re going to see the kinds of issues people will wrestle with when they want to have “a clear conscience before God.” You have to start asking the question “Is this something that God would approve of?” Then we must choose what we know would please Him!

1. Those who are “weak in the faith” (v.1-4)

- a. (v.1-3) Receive them, but do not dispute over doubtful things with them. “The weak” do not have a strong grasp in spiritual matters yet. Not having their “senses exercised...” well enough to discern clearly between good and evil (**Hebrews 5:13,14**). These still may be more easily “tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine...” (Ephesians 4:14).
- b. “**Doubtful disputations**” (key phrase)—arguing over something that really cannot be contested or disputed one way or another.—It’s a matter of perception/Judgment call. (Judgment in some may be more mature than in others on certain matters though).
- c. (v.2) Daniel ate only vegetables (**Daniel 1:12**) Was he weak?? No.
- d. To understand more fully **the issue Paul is dealing with here** we should read his comments in **1 Corinthians 8:4-13**. Paul is dealing with **matters of conscience** over some who were eating things offered to idols, and thinking it was nothing to be concerned of. Others, who saw them, thought this was surely sinful. Paul says to be careful of the more sensitive, or “weak” conscience. Overall, we are counseled to not eat things offered to idols (1 Corinthians 10:14-33; Revelation 2:20). If we know better, then we shouldn’t do it.
- e. **Don’t be Judging someone so quick on your internal standard** (v.4). Their thoughts on the matter may be different and **they are doing this all in good conscience**. They might be wrong, but they don’t know that—not intentional. (God knows the hearts, considers, and judges his own servants). Don’t think of another person less for their choice in this un-certain matter.

2. Should a man be “persuaded” against sin? (v.5, 6)

- a. “Let each be convinced in his own mind” (v.5). Is Paul saying we shouldn’t persuade people to follow and obey God? “You believe your thing, I’ll believe mine...” Certainly not! (The Bible is full of examples to the contrary!)
 - i. Paul was in the Temple daily “persuading Jews and Greeks” (**Acts 18:4**)
 - ii. “You almost persuade me...” said Festus to Paul (**Acts 26:28**).
 - iii. “Men and brethren , why do ye such wickedness...profane the Sabbath day” (**Nehemiah 13:17**) (some among us today are profaning the Sabbath day and they ought to Repent!)
 - iv. **James 5:19, 20—We are to labor to save a soul from death!**
 - v. “Cry loud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet...” (Isaiah 58:1)
 - vi. But “rather reprove the works of darkness” (Ephesians 5:11)
 - vii. Paul is making reference to “**doubtful disputations**” (not something so clear as the 10 Commandments).
- b. On the other hand we should **not be forcing the Conscience**. Let people be fully persuaded so that they OBEY GOD FROM THE HEART. (everyone will have to answer before God)

- c. (v.5) What days is Paul referring to? And why does he also mention foods? He could be dealing with fasting days which some Christians chose differently than did the Pharisaical Jews (ref. Luke 18:12). Also, the matter of foods offered to idols is central to this chapter. The words of Paul here do not promote some kind of carelessness in worship as if it didn't matter which day God had chosen to be Holy (i.e. the Sabbath). Paul often re-affirmed the Ten Commandments and never treated them so lightly as that (Romans 3:31; 7:7,12). To treat lightly the commandments of God would entirely undermine Christ's teachings (Exodus 20:1, 8-11; Matthew 4:4; 5:17-19).
 - d. **The issue here is a matter of opinion/judgment—We must give some latitude and not force or bend people's thinking.** All must be fully persuaded in their own minds. Paul could also be making a reference to the feast days here (Galatians 4:10), which had food and drink offerings connected with them, but were no longer necessary for the Christians to observe.
- 3. We all must give an "account of ourselves before God" so live in good Conscience before Him (v.7-12)**
- a. "Every knee will bow" (v.10,11) (not in worship, but in solemn awe or sheer terror) (Many will be lost in the end; they will not bow to worship Him—Matthew 7:21, 22)
 - b. **In good conscience.** Paul's example (**Acts 23:1; 24:14-16**)
 - c. "account of everything"---"every idle word" (Matthew 12:36), "every work" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).
- 4. How to act towards your brother (v.13-15)**
- a. Try not to offend their conscience and get them to be bold in violating their conscience (v.15). Again, this compares with 1 Corinthians 8:10-13.
 - b. (v.14) Making reference to idols, not clean or unclean foods. **See Genesis 7:1, 2 and Isaiah 66:15-17** (unclean is unclean). This was the sin of many Priests of old (**Ezekiel 22:26**). God was not pleased! And He is the "same God" always! (Hebrews 13:8; Malachi 3:6).
 - c. **The General Principle Paul is laying down here is the same as the following verses:**
 - i. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Romans 5:13).
 - ii. "To him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin" (**James 4:17**).
 - iii. "Whoever has my commandments, and keeps them is the one..." (John 14:21)
 - iv. "At times of this ignorance..." (Acts 17:30)
 - v. **If you know better, or you think it's wrong, don't do it!**
- 5. Do good that makes a difference—think of the big picture (v.16-20)**
- a. Don't just do it the way you want when you know that you are deliberately offending your brother or sister in Christ. (**be kind and respectful towards their conscience**)
 - b. No "I'm right and I'll prove it" attitude. (not good)
 - c. **Example:** Someone once said, "I won't smoke or drink around you because I know that you don't do those things." That was a non-Christian speaking to me. How much more should a Christian have this kind of attitude? (it makes you feel well considered)
 - d. **Favor with God and man.** "I do always those things that please Him" (**John 8:29**)
- 6. Think of helping your brother and not pleasing yourself (v.21-23) Do all things in good faith, not doubting. Whatever is not from good faith is sin.**

Today's Appeal: Will you strive always to have a clear conscience before God? ____ (and to help others to live the same way?)