



Lesson 19

Accept One Another

Romans 14-15.13

“Therefore, **accept** one another, just as Christ also **accepted** us to the glory of God.”

Romans 15.7

Jew-Gentile tensions have been a constant theme in Paul’s letter to the Romans. Paul’s presentation and defense of the gospel was due to the Jewish notion that the Law maintained significance in marking out God’s covenant people, thus excluding the Gentiles unless they also observed the Law. But, as Paul ably pointed out, salvation could only be attained through faith in Christ Jesus. The Jew-Gentile tension was also prevalent in chapter 9-11 where Paul lamented Israel’s loss, all the while showing how the Jews could be brought in and warning the Gentiles against any arrogance on their part (see 11.18). So, we are not surprised to see that at the end of this section Paul exhorts the saints to “accept on another,” (15.7) because Christ came to serve both the circumcision (15.8) and the Gentiles (15.9). The relationship between Jew and Gentile in the church was very much on Paul’s mind!

Two issues are singled out that Jewish and Gentile Christians would have disagreed on:

1. The eating of meats (vs. 2).
2. The observance of days (vs. 5).

Both Jews and Gentiles had issues with meat. For the Jews, they had long lived under a Law that forbade them from eating certain “unclean” meats (Leviticus 11). They were now free to eat these meats, but many would have a hard time doing so with a clear conscience. Likewise, Gentile Christians might associate meats with idolatrous worship (see 1Cor. 8.1-8). While it would be possible to eat meat not offered to idols, some had a hard time doing so unless they were absolutely sure the meat had not been offered to an idol. So, to some the eating of any meat would have been a conscience issue. Regarding the observance of days, it is unlikely that Paul was referencing any civic days since most of those would have been in honor of a Roman deity. He probably has in mind the Jewish observance of the Sabbath and Jewish Feast Days. While such days were no longer binding (Col. 2.14-17), some of the Gentiles may have viewed any observance of them as living under the Law.

In addressing the matter Paul defines the opposing groups as the “weak” and the “strong”. The “weak” were likely Jewish Christians who’s conscience would not allow them to eat certain meats (14.1-2). The “strong” were Christians who was able to eat “all things” in faith (14.2; 15.1). Paul’s aim in this discussion was not to have both sides agree on the matter or to conform to a uniformity of practice. His aim was that they “accept” each other in spite of their differences on the matter (14.1; 15.7).

Refrain From Judging (14.1-12)

Romans 14:1–12 (NASB95)

1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

5 One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself;

8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

11 For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD."

12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

1. Paul begins by stating "accept the one who is weak in faith," while not defining what he means by "faith". It is clear from the context that Paul is NOT speaking of someone being weak in their conviction that Jesus is the Lord, or in their trust in God. Rather, the already mentioned issues of meats and holy days posed a problem for some (i.e. weak members) and not for others (vss. 2,22-23). The last thing on Paul's mind was belittling someone because of their conviction.
2. The theme of this section is on judging others. Three times in this section Paul warns against judging: "not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions" (vs. 1), "Who are you to judge the servant of another?" (vs. 2), "But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt?" (vs. 10). If God had not legislated regarding the necessity of eating meat, why should they judge a brother if he refused to do so? If God had not forbidden someone a Jew from observing the Sabbath, why should Gentile Christians condemn them if they did?
3. Three points are stressed:

- Do not judge a person that God has accepted.
- Whatever your practice (in matters of liberty) be fully convinced in your own mind
- Both the “weak” and the “strong” were living to the Lord and would ultimately be judged by Him.

Be Sensitive To Conscience (14.13-23)

Romans 14:13–23 (NASB95)

13Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.

14I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

15For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

16Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;

17for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

20Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.

21It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.

22The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

23But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

1. While addressing the “strong” in this passage, Paul reveals the beauty of a heart longing to serve God. Paul understood that the “weak” were not partaking of meats and observing certain days because it was what their conscience demanded. And conscience issues are sin issues!
2. Three times in this section Paul states the severity of violating one’s conscience: “to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean,” (vs. 14) and “he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin,” (vs. 23). The “strong” (probably Gentiles) were no doubt ready for the “weak” (probably Jews) to grow up, to realize that there was nothing unclean about meat. They wanted them to eat with them! Paul issues a strong warning: “if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died,” (vs. 15). Again, these were not matters of doctrine, no commands of Christ

were being violated. These issues called for patience, understanding and love. But Paul feared that bad attitudes would lead to pressure, pressure would lead to a violated conscience, and a violated conscience would be sin (sin for the person who violated his own conscience, sin for the person who through lack of love encouraged his brother to violate his conscience).

3. In this we see a picture of what a Christian's heart should be toward his brethren: "So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another" (vs. 19) and "It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles." (vs. 20). Christians may be at liberty to eat meat and observe certain days, but they are not at liberty to cause others to stumble. Only when we view the needs of others as more important can we truly say that we are pursuing peace.

Imitate Christ (15.1-13)

Romans 15:1–13 (NASB95)

1Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.

2Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.

3For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME."

4For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

5Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

6so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

8For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers,

9and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME."

10Again he says, "REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE."

11And again, "PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES, AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM."

12Again Isaiah says, "THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE."

13Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Perhaps Paul had already said enough, but now he bases his argument with the life and mission of the Master, Christ.
2. The reason why we are to serve others and not please ourselves is that Christ came to serve others (vss. 1-6).
3. We should accept each other because Christ came to serve both “the circumcision” (Jews) and the Gentiles (vss. 7-13).
4. When we have the same attitude toward each other that Christ has towards us, we can confidently expect the blessing found in vs. 13: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Keys for applying this text:

1. The strong were practicing something God had given them liberty to do (14.14). If this were a matter that God forbade, they would be sinning.
2. The weak were not refusing to practice something God required. If this were a matter God required, they would be sinning.
3. Even though both parties would have felt strongly about their practice, if either party compelled the other party, they would be sinning (as when circumcision was compelled in Acts 15).