

## **ROMANS: RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH FROM START TO FINISH**

### **X. Righteousness Applied To Life And Service, Romans 12:1-15:13**

#### **F. Righteousness Applied In Not Judging Weaker Believers**

**(Romans 14:1-12)**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. The theme of the epistle to the Romans is that God's righteousness is available to man by faith from start to finish (Romans 1:16-17; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 441).
- B. This belief is often not accepted in Christendom: Some claim that one must have faith plus works to be justified, and others say that though we are justified by faith, we cannot righteously live a godly life by faith.
- C. In Romans 14:1-12, Paul addressed the issue of relating to other believers who by way of background or ignorance coupled with spiritual immaturity differ from us on some matters of belief or conduct.
- D. We thus study this passage for our insight and application (as follows):

#### **II. Righteousness Applied In Not Judging Weaker Believers, Romans 14:1-12.**

- A. On the one hand, we believers in Christ are to judge what is clearly Biblically stated to be right or wrong, for Jesus in Matthew 7:5 ESV in the context told us that we were first to cast out the log that is in our own eye before seeing clearly to make the judgment of casting out the speck that is in our brother's eye.
- B. However, due to differing backgrounds and ignorance coupled with spiritual immaturity, some believers are unable to discern that what we do in some realm is right, being "weaker" in the faith, making relating to them difficult. In that case, Paul called us to welcome them, but not to quarrel over differing opinions, Rom. 14:1.
- C. To illustrate, Paul noted that one believer might think that he could eat all things where another believer who was weak in the faith might eat only vegetables, Romans 14:2 NIV, ESV. Biblically, we can eat all things [that are not poisonous, of course!] according to 1 Timothy 4:4-5 (with Acts 10:9-16), but some new converts fresh out of pagan idolatry might shy away from eating meat offered to idols that was later sold in the town marketplace (1 Cor. 8; 10:23-30; *Ibid.*, p. 492). Thus, to be sure to avoid idolatry, these new converts might refuse to eat *any* meat! Accordingly, Paul directed that one who ate meat should not "reject with contempt" (*exoutheneito*) the weaker brother in Christ who did not eat meat nor should the believer who refrained from eating meat "condemn" (*krineto*) the strong believer who ate it, for God had accepted them both, Rom. 14:3.
- D. Also, each believer is a servant of the Lord, and no man can pass judgment on another master's servant since each servant is accountable to his own master, not to another man, Rom. 14:4a. Indeed, Christ as the Master of each believer is able to make His servant a believer withstand the judgment of other believers, Rom. 14:4b.
- E. Paul gave another illustration – the case of whether to esteem one day over another or to view each day the same, Romans 14:5a. Whether a believer esteemed a day or viewed each day the same was insignificant to the apostle, but he was concerned that each believer might either observe a day above other days or every day the same in accord with his conscience, Romans 14:5b. Paul desired to preserve each believer's devotion to the Lord in what he observed or did not observe on the issues of days or diet, for no believer lived or died to himself, but he lived or died for the Lord, Romans 14:6-8.
- F. Indeed, Christ died and rose that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living, so it is wrong for us to pass judgment on a brother in Christ due to differences of opinion on extrabiblical issues, Romans 14:9-10a.
- G. Furthermore, each believer must stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be evaluated by Him for his beliefs and conduct (2 Corinthians 5:10), not be judged in eternity by other believers. Thus, for us to pass judgment on fellow believers for such issues as day observances or diet is wrong, Romans 14:10b-12.

***Lesson:*** *On matters that Scripture does not clearly state as right or wrong, but which due to personal backgrounds, ignorance or spiritual immaturity block one's discernment, we who are "strong" in being more spiritually mature should not pass judgment on the "weak," and the "weak" are not to condemn the "strong," for we all live for the Lord and we will all give an account to the Lord at the end of this earthly life for our faith and conduct. Rather, we are called of God to live with a clear conscience regarding our beliefs and conduct before the Lord.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we who are "strong" not pass judgment on the "weak," and may the "weak" not pass judgment on the "strong." (2) However, spiritually "weak" believers by way of their immaturity often keep on passing judgment on the "strong" though the immature lack the Biblical basis for making such a judgment, and that creates a trial for the "strong" who must face continual errant criticism from such "weak" brothers! Yet, God STILL calls the "strong" to bear with the infirmities of the "weak" and not to please themselves (Romans 15:1).*