

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR MAN FROM START TO FINISH

Part VI: God's Righteousness Applied To Practical Living, Romans 12:1-15:13

G. God's Righteousness Applied To Not Causing Others To Sin By Exercising Our Liberties (Romans 14:13-23)

I. Introduction

- A. True righteousness is seen in acts of love that above all does no wrong to one's neighbor, Romans 13:10.
- B. In a sense, then, not causing spiritually weak believers to sin by refusing to exercise one's liberties in the Lord is perhaps the highest kind of righteousness, what Paul promotes in Romans 14:13-23.
- C. We view this passage for insight and application (as follows):

II. God's Righteousness Applied To Not Causing Others To Sin By Exercising Our Liberties.

- A. Moving beyond the principle taught in Romans 14:1-13a of not judging another believer over matters of conscience, in Romans 14:13b ESV, Paul introduced the directive of not putting a stumbling block or spiritual hindrance in the way of a weaker brother in Christ.
- B. To explain, Paul stated that he was persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing was unclean of itself, but that it was unclean to one who thought it was unclean since it violated his conscience, Romans 14:14.
- C. Accordingly, if a brother in Christ is grieved by what another believer eats in perfect liberty before the Lord, the believer at liberty no longer walks in love, and thus he violates the very heart of God's righteousness taught back in Romans 13:10. (Romans 14:15a)
- D. Thus, we should not spiritually harm the fellow brother for whom Christ gave His life on the cross by exercising our perfect liberty before the Lord to eat what we know God allows us to eat if doing so wounds that brother's conscience, Romans 14:15b. Similarly, we should not let what we regard as good, which indeed is actually good before the Lord in itself, be evil spoken of by onlookers who are spiritually weak to the detriment of not only our testimony, but that of the discipling advances of weaker believers, Romans 14:16.
- E. After all, the kingdom of God transcends the external issues of eating and drinking to deal with what is real righteousness, real peace and real joy in the Holy Spirit, Romans 14:17. Whoever thus serves Christ by limiting the exercise of his true liberties in the Lord so as not to harm but to help other believers who are weak in conscience is acceptable before God as well as approved by men with weak consciences, Romans 14:18.
- F. Accordingly, God wants us to pursue what makes for peace and mutual edification in the body of Christ versus just exercising our liberties in the Lord to the destruction of the discipleship of the weak, Rom. 14:19.
- G. Paul then gave practical guidance in applying these truths in Romans 14:20-23:
 - 1. We who are strong in the faith who know of our great liberties in the Lord should nevertheless not destroy the discipling work of God in the lives of other believers who are weak in conscience all for the sake of exercising our liberties in the Lord to eat what we are at liberty to eat, Romans 14:20a.
 - 2. Thus, though all foods are acceptable for us who understand our liberties in Christ, since some foods are unacceptable to weak brethren, causing them to stumble in sinning against their conscience if we eat such foods, it is actually good for us to limit the exercise of our individual liberties by not eating meat or drinking or doing anything else that causes our weaker brother in Christ to be offended, Rom. 14:20b-21.
 - 3. On the other hand, the believer who knows he has perfect liberty to eat all foods should keep that liberty between himself and the Lord, Romans 14:22a. Indeed, one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves as to diet opposite the dietary restrictions of weak believers is blessed of God in his private liberty, Romans 14:22b.
 - 4. However, the weak believer who has doubts about liberty to eat such questionable foods is condemned if he eats, for he is not eating from the exercise of faith in God, Romans 14:23a. Whatever is in violation of faith in God is sin, so we must guard against violating one's walk of faith before God, Romans 14:23b.

Lesson: *Though the believer actually has liberty before God to involve himself in a multitude of practices that Scripture does not condemn for the Church era, not all believers are persuaded that we have such liberty in some or several matters. Accordingly, those who have such liberties must not condemn themselves for having such liberties, or feel guilty about them, but inhibit themselves from exercising those liberties before the weak in order to protect the consciences of the weak for their discipleship.*

Application: *May we recall that we are not to live for ourselves, but for the Lord in true righteousness, love, joy and peace, what includes living in consideration of the weak by limiting the exercise of our liberties for their sake.*