

## Paul's Letter to the Romans

### Lesson 10

The majority of Paul's letter to the Romans is directed at Jewish believers who are still struggling with traditions and rituals found in Judaism. These Jewish believers have tried to incorporate the old ways into the church by pressuring Gentiles to follow Jewish customs. In the first eleven chapters, Paul instructs the Jewish believers to stop relying on the old ways and live in the freedom and liberty of their new lives in Christ. No longer are they Jewish, they are now Christian; in Christ, there is no Jew or Gentile.

With the completion of his argument and instruction, Paul presents a list of rules to live by in chapter 12.

1. Keep our bodies pure.
2. Focus on godly things, not the things of this world.
3. Do not be arrogant.
4. Use the gift God has given us.
5. Love each other sincerely.
6. Abhor evil.
7. Focus on good things.
8. Work at being kind to one another.
9. Treat each other with honor.
10. Help others quickly.
11. Let God show in our appearances.
12. Serve the Lord.
13. Rejoice in the promises of God.
14. Keep trying in difficult times.
15. Pray at all times.
16. Help other struggling churches.
17. Help people we do not know.
18. Respond with kind words to those who mistreat us.
19. Celebrate with those who are rejoicing and cry with those who are in sorrow.
20. Treat everyone with respect.
21. Never respond to evil with evil.
22. Be honest in dealings with others.
23. As far as possible, live peaceably with all men.
24. Let God handle those who have mistreated us.
25. Care for our enemies in need.
26. Do not be defeated by evil.

Paul continues with this list in chapter 13.

**Romans 13:1** Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.  
**2** Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

**Mercies of God** – We must understand clearly that Paul is not advocating the divine right of a president, or king, or some special form of government; rather, Paul is advocating governmental order. Some governments need to

be changed for the good of the people they serve; however, he does oppose all forms of lawlessness and disorder within Godly governments. Governments established in deceit and deception are far from the ordinance of God. Such governments must be opposed. However, governments that have been rightly established within the ordinance of God are to be obeyed by Christians. The Lord will bring judgment upon the individuals who do not obey and support God's established governments.

<sup>3</sup>For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; <sup>4</sup>for it is a **minister of God** to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil. <sup>5</sup>Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

**Mercies of God /Minster of God** - Governments that are established under the design of God's plan are actually ministers of God for the Christian. Godly governments should never be feared by Christians and Christians should follow their leadership. But when a Christian strays from the Godly leadership of the government, he should be afraid of the government because God will use that government to correct the Christian.

<sup>6</sup>For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are **servants of God**, devoting themselves to this very thing. <sup>7</sup>Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

**Mercies of God /Servants of God** - It is within God's plan that governments are funded by the administration of taxes. Taxes should be paid by all people. Christians must be diligent to pay their taxes in order to provide their rulers with funds to serve the people. Furthermore, Christians should willingly pay what is due; in doing so, the Christian earns a place of respect in the eyes of the government.

<sup>8</sup>Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the law*.

**Mercies of God** – Owing nothing to anyone includes taxes, customs, debts, payments, and things bought on credit. Christian should never buy anything on a payment plan. They should pay their utility bills, taxes and tariffs on time, never late. They should never borrow anything and fail to return it promptly and in working condition. The true law of God is completed and fulfilled in a Christian's love for his neighbor; the only thing a Christian owes anyone. This kind of love is the only solution to social and national problems in every generation.

<sup>9</sup>For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of *the law*.

**Mercies of God** – Paul uses the four commandments found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 that deal with social relationships which cause problems within a governmental society, be it a family structure or a national structure. These four commandments have to do with relationships between human beings which can be fulfilled if a Christian loves his neighbor with a godly love.

<sup>11</sup>And this *do*, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

**Mercies of God** – Paul's words in this passage might be better translated as follows: it is already the hour for you to awaken from your stupor; for at this time salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. Even in Paul's day, Christians in Rome had become complacent in their Christian walk. They needed to get out of their stupor and be vibrant in their sharing of the gospel because the completion of their salvation was nearer to them than it ever was before. With each passing day the time of our departure from this life brings us closer to our arrival in glory with the Lord. We must not live as if that day is far away. We must not live as if we will have plenty of time to talk to those with whom we need to share the gospel. We should not think they have plenty of time to wait for their invitation to the Savior. Neither should we be slothful in getting around to God's business when we decide the moment is right. We must awake now from our stupor and get into the service of the Lord.

<sup>12</sup>The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup>Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.

**Mercies of God** – Moving from the idea of stupor or sleep, Paul contrasts night and day. Paul uses the darkness of the night to emphasize the importance of a Christian avoiding the deeds of darkness – carousing – drunkenness – sexual promiscuity – sexual sensuality – strife – jealousy. All of these things are lustful provisions that satisfy only the flesh, moving a Christian far from the will of God. Paul uses the idea of the day to highlight a Christian's life in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the mercies of God, the day brings light to the world just as the Lord brings the armor of light to each Christian's life.

**Romans 14:1** Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but not for the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions.

**Mercies of God** – The church consists of members who are in different stages of their journey for the Lord. Some are mature in the Lord, having hammered out their theology and understanding of the mysteries of God in great detail. Others are mere babes in Christ, newly born into the family of God, weak in their faith and understanding. These weak members need not be condemned when they believe something incorrectly about the mysteries of God; rather, they are to be led into the light of truth, edified and encouraged.

<sup>2</sup>One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*. <sup>3</sup>Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. <sup>4</sup>Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

**Mercies of God** – In Paul's day, meat was offered to idols in the temple worship of false gods. The meat was then taken to the market and sold for profit. Some of the weaker Christians believed God would curse them if they ate this meat. The majority of the churches were filled with fairly new Christians in that day because Christianity was so new. The Apostles had the huge job of educating the people in the ways of the Lord, bringing them quickly to maturity. The letters and ministries of the Apostles were an effort to educate all church members in the freedom and liberty found in Christ, the true God and Savior. Some weak Christians would not purchase or eat meat offered to idols. Others were buying the meat and serving it at their tables, causing a problem within the church between the weak and the mature Christians. It is the responsibility of the mature Christian not to offend the weak Christian, accepting him in his lack of understanding and bringing him along in his understanding.

<sup>5</sup>One man regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>For to this end Christ died and lived *again*, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

**Mercies of God** – In his desire to serve the Lord faithfully, the weak Christian often misses the mark in his belief, holding firmly to his misunderstanding because of his love for the Lord. God made people with the ability to have different perspectives and different opinions. People even look at the events of a day in different ways. The mature Christian must understand that different things are important to different people, yet both are striving to please the same Lord. Everything we do should be for the Lord.

<sup>10</sup>But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the **judgment seat of God**. <sup>11</sup>For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." <sup>12</sup> So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

**Judgment Seat of God** – The judgment seat of God is a totally different place from the Great White Throne Judgment spoken of in the Revelation. From before Isaiah's day until the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 AD, the judgment seat was known and understood by all people as a place of reward.

Here is an example of how the judgment seat will work. The Romans loved their athletic games. The winner of an athletic event would go to the raised judgment seat in front of the ruler. There he would swear his allegiance to the ruler and, in turn, the ruler would reward him with a crown, ribbon, or gift for his victory and allegiance. No one was ever punished at this judgment seat; it was a place of rewards only. Punishment occurred on the event field when the ruler gave his thumbs up or down concerning the life of the loser. All Christians should understand that everyone will be judged by the Lord one day; therefore, they should not pronounce judgment on others who are trying their best to live for God. Even in their immaturity in the Lord, they should be encouraged and helped along in their understanding. Both the mature and the immature will stand one day at the judgment seat of God to pledge their allegiance to the Lord and receive their crowns and rewards because of their belief and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul quotes from Isaiah to support his statements.

**Isaiah 45:23** "I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*.

<sup>13</sup>Therefore 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. <sup>14</sup>I 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. <sup>15</sup>For 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. <sup>16</sup>Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; <sup>17</sup>for the **kingdom of God** is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup>For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

**Kingdom of God** – Keeping with the example of food and the weaker immature Christian, Paul explains that no food is unclean; however, some people have a problem with eating certain foods. When an immature Christian sees a mature Christian eating something that he thinks is unclean, it becomes a stumbling block to the immature Christian. The mature Christian should never ignore the thoughts and feelings of the weaker Christian; he should respect his opinion and refrain from offending him. However, in that process, the mature Christian should also take the opportunity to educate the weaker Christian, not allowing him to speak evil of the act, which, in this case, is the eating of foods thought to be forbidden. As Paul concludes, the kingdom of God is to be a place of righteousness, peace, and joy, rather than a place of concern about what one eats or drinks.

<sup>19</sup>So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. <sup>20</sup>Do 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. <sup>21</sup>It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or *to do anything* by which your brother stumbles. <sup>22</sup>The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. <sup>23</sup>But he who

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

**Work of God** – The kingdom of God is still in the future for every Christian; nevertheless, we are to strive to live this life in the same way we will live in the kingdom. Peace is to be our goal in this life. The work of God involves the sharing of the gospel of God which leads to salvation. We should never do a single thing that destroys the work of God. In this context, the issue of food and drink is paramount in Paul's mind. If there is a food or drink that is thought to be evil in some uneducated believer, it should not be eaten in front of that believer, knowing that it will offend him. If we knowingly offend a weaker Christian, it is a sin because the weaker Christian has stumbled in his faith because of our actions.