

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS
Lesson 55-March 23, 2025

If you're in the resident congregation, turn off your electronic devices and put them away. Let this be a place where you aren't distracted by the world.

Welcome To
BARAH MINISTRIES

Rory Clark
Pastor-Teacher

Good Morning!

Welcome to Barah Ministries...an intimate, local Christian Church with a worldwide impact. My name is Pastor Rory Clark. Thanks for listening to this Bible lesson!

TODAY'S BIBLE LESSON
How You Use Your Freedom Matters to the Lord

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Galatians, Chapter 5, Verse 1 says...

GALATIANS 5:1

It was for freedom that Christ set us believers in Christ free...therefore, keep on standing firm in the freedom and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery.

As Christians, we have freedom...some call it liberty...because we have been liberated from slavery to many things, including sin, by the Lord Jesus Christ. So now that we are free, should we use our freedom to hurt each other? In today's lesson, you'll get God's viewpoint on this matter as we complete our study of Romans, Chapter 14.

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray...

We're grateful, Heavenly Father, for the privilege of studying Your absolute truth...the Word of God...

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Father, thank you for caring enough about us to teach us how to treat each other...thank you for having us in mind personally every minute of the day...thank you for your logistical grace...your promise to care for ALL of our needs...thank you for Your Word as the cure for worry, fear, and anxiety...better than any medicine...

...as You teach us today, let the lessons sink deeply within our souls through the guidance of God the Holy Spirit...who leads us into all the truth...and let us remember to have confidence in Your Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...through whom we can do all things...help us to use His power in everything we do...

...we ask this through the power of God the Holy Spirit...in Christ's name...Amen.

TODAY'S BIBLE LESSON

How You Use Your Freedom Matters to the Lord

LESSON PART ONE

We continue our study of Romans Chapter 14. Since the first and second passages of this chapter are intimately connected...let me remind you of the first passage that we studied last week. How does God want Christians to treat each other? Romans Chapter 14, Verses 1 to 12...

ROMANS 14:1

Now ACCEPT the one who is weak in faith...but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his viewpoint concerning things.

ROMANS 14:2

One person has faith that he may eat anything (the strong) ... but the one who is weak eats vegetables only.

ROMANS 14:3

The one who eats (the strong) is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat (the weak) ... [contempt is the Greek word krino] ... and the one who does not eat (the weak) is not to judge the one who eats (the strong) ... for God has accepted both of them.

ROMANS 14:4

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Who are you to keep on judging the servant of another? To his own master a servant stands or falls...and the servant will be made to stand by God...for the Lord is able to make him stand.

ROMANS 14:5

One person regards one day above another...another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind that he is doing what God would want him to do.

ROMANS 14:6

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, it is for the Lord he does not eat...and he gives thanks to God.

ROMANS 14:7

For not one of us lives for himself...and not one of us dies for himself...

ROMANS 14:8

...for if we believers in Christ live...and we do...we live for the Lord...or if we die...and we do...we die for the Lord...therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's possession.

ROMANS 14:9

For to this end Christ died and lived again (He was resurrected from the dead)...that He might be the Lord both of the dead and of the living.

ROMANS 14:10

Why do you judge (krino) your brother? Why do you regard your brother with contempt (krino)? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

ROMANS 14:11

For it is written, "As I live," says the Lord, "Every knee shall bow to Me...and every tongue shall give praise to God the Father."

ROMANS 14:12

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

Let's continue our study of Romans, Chapter 14 by looking at the second passage...Romans, Chapter 14, Verses 13 to 23...

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ROMANS 14:13

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

ROMANS 14:14

I (Paul) know and I am convinced in union with the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself...but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

ROMANS 14:15

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

ROMANS 14:16

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

ROMANS 14:17

...for the kingdom of God is not just eating and drinking...the kingdom of God is about righteousness and peace and joy in God the Holy Spirit.

ROMANS 14:18

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

ROMANS 14:19

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

ROMANS 14:20

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.

ROMANS 14:21

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

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ROMANS 14:22

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

ROMANS 14:23

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

In Romans 14, Verses 1 to 12, we learned a few things about what was going on in first-century Rome.

There was a mixed bag of people coming to Christianity. Some were rich. Some were poor. Some came from cults. Some came from being embroiled in idolatry. Some were former pagans (people who engage in various “spiritualities.” Some had been polytheistic. Some were monotheistic. Some were criminals. Some were prostitutes. Some were stoics. Some were tax collectors. People from all of these groups now were new believers in Christ, and the apostle Paul was writing to them.

In the first passage of Romans 14, Paul describes people as strong and weak. Unfortunately, each group was looking down on (krino) the other. (KRINO is a Greek word that means to separate...to regard with contempt...to devalue). God is not interested in us treating each other this way.

We learned there are explicit things in the Bible that leave no room for interpretation. You shall not steal...you shall not cheat on your tax return...you shall not have pre-marital sex are among these explicit commands from God.

We learned there are implicit things in the Bible that leave room for private interpretation. Is it okay to celebrate Halloween? Is it okay to go to R-Rated movies? Is it okay to eat meat in front of a vegan? Is it okay to eat pork in front an Orthodox Jew? In implicit matters God counts on us to use wisdom and discernment to make our decisions.

An interesting implicit idea from the Bible asks, “Are babies who die shortly after childbirth saved?” There is an implicit (rather than dogmatic) indication this is true in Second Samuel, Chapter 12, Verse 23 where King David says...

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SECOND SAMUEL 12:23

“Now that my child (with Bathsheba) has died, why should I continue to fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him (in heaven)...but he will not return to me (from heaven).”

If we understand the Lord, and we know that He is always fair...that He is perfectly just...it is implicit that He would not allow those who are unable to make a decision for or against Christ to go to the Lake of Fire.

When we return from the break, we'll take the offering, and then we'll study the second and final passage of Romans, Chapter 14 verse-by-verse.

FIVE-MINUTE BREAK

NOBODY

Casting Crowns

TODAY'S BIBLE LESSON

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OFFERING INTRODUCTION

Giving is the Lord's specialty.

God the Father GAVE His only Son to save us...the Lord GIVES all His creatures the opportunity for salvation by dying on a Cross and being resurrected from the dead...God the Holy Spirit GIVES us direction in the spiritual life by leading us into all the truth.

The Bible clearly states throughout its pages that Christians are called to give generously. Proverbs, Chapter 3, Verses 9 and 10...

PROVERBS 3:9-10

Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.

It is wise to imitate the Lord and to make giving your specialty as well, especially to your favorite church (that's Barah Ministries)...especially because you know that God gives back to you much more than you give to us.

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Let's welcome up Deacon Denny Goodall with one of his always inspiring offering messages.

THE OFFERING

Deacon Denny Goodall

OFFERING VERSE

HEBREWS 12:14

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

OFFERING SONG

THERE IS NONE LIKE YOU

Instrumental Version

TODAY'S BIBLE LESSON

How You Use Your Freedom Matters to the Lord

LESSON PART TWO

Let's study the second passage of Romans, Chapter 14, verse-by-verse, beginning at Verse 13...

ROMANS 14:13

Therefore...let us not keep on judging and condemning one another...rather, let's determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block (something another trips over) in a brother's way.

God wants us to treat others well. When we differ with a fellow Christian, He wants us to act in love...and not just with Christians...with everyone! For example, we don't drink in front of an alcoholic. If an alcoholic orders Perrier for \$10 during a night out at dinner, we understand. When someone is being what legalists call "worldly" instead of godly, we suspend judgment. We don't force our personal opinions on others, whether they are strong or weak.

Also, we remember that how things look matters. Our conduct based on your position matters. <A PASTOR IN PUBLIC>

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Romans, Chapter 14, Verse 14...

ROMANS 14:14

I (Paul) know (as one who is of The Strong in faith) ... and I am convinced in union with the Lord Jesus...that no food (nor any other thing) is unclean in itself...but to him who thinks anything to be unclean (as the weak in faith ones do) ... to him it IS unclean.

We respect the viewpoint of others.

What is the stronger one's judgment of the weak? "You're making a mountain out of a molehill you big baby!"

What is the weaker one's judgment of the strong? "How can you call yourself a Christian? You're breaking all the rules...you're wrong for doing that...you're a sinner...repent." This isn't how God wants us to treat each other. It's certainly not the way God treats us.

Romans, Chapter 14, Verse 15...

ROMANS 14:15

For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to a lifestyle of unconditional love. Do not destroy the one for whom Christ died (either believer or unbeliever) with your food preferences.

God wants us to use our liberty for love. In Acts, Chapter 10, Verses 9 to 16, the Lord clarified something to Peter about food...

ACTS 10:9

On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

ACTS 10:10

But he became hungry and was desiring to eat...and while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance...

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ACTS 10:11

...and he saw the sky open up, and he saw an object like a great sheet coming down from the sky, lowered by four corners to the ground...

ACTS 10:12

...and in it there were all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air.

ACTS 10:13

A voice came to him and said, "Get up, Peter...kill and eat!"

ACTS 10:14

But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean."

ACTS 10:15

Again a voice came to Peter a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."

ACTS 10:16

This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken back up into the sky.

<PORK...oh I don't eat...>

Romans, Chapter 14, Verse 16...

ROMANS 14:16

Therefore do not let what is a good thing for you (strong in faith ones) ... to be spoken of as evil (by the weak in faith)...

In other words, don't give Christianity a bad name with insensitive behavior! Sometimes, we have to forgo our Christian liberty. Christian freedom without unconditional love puts a stumbling block and an obstacle in the path of others.

Romans, Chapter 14, Verse 17...

ROMANS 14:17

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...for the kingdom of God is not merely about eating and drinking...but the kingdom of God is about righteousness (in your walk with God) and it's about peace (in your relationship with others) and it's about joy (in yourself)...you who are in union with God the Holy Spirit.

Am I going to hell if...

I have a tattoo?

I have body piercing?

I eat a burger with cheese?

I celebrate a non-standard holiday (like Kwanzaa)?

I don't dress properly for church?

I swim in a co-ed swimming pool?

I listen to rock music or rap?

I wear jeans and sneakers?

Who knows? Maybe jeans and sneakers is all people can afford.

<People want to know the dress code before they come to church>

By the way, what is Kwanzaa?

KWANZAA

First celebrated in 1966, it's an annual celebration in the African-American culture from December 26 to January 1, culminating in a communal feast called Karamu. Twenty-first-century estimates place the number of Americans who celebrate Kwanzaa at nearly 2,000,000.

Christianity is more than a list of rules about what we can eat, and what we can drink, and what holidays we can celebrate.

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Christianity is more than “I can do this” and “I can’t do that.” To be sure, there ARE do’s and don’ts in Christianity...real ones...like sexual immorality and greed and coveting and slandering and lying and gossiping. Unbelievers don’t always see Christianity in this perspective because of religious people who engage in legalism and KRINO, shoving the rules down people’s throats. They see Christianity as a straight jacket, and many want no part of it because of Christians.

Romans, Chapter 14, Verse 18...

ROMANS 14:18

For he who keeps on serving Christ in this way (displaying righteousness, peace and joy) is acceptable to God the Father and is approved by men.

The Christian Way of Life is about salvation...getting right with God. It’s the new birth...we become a new creation.

The Christian Way of Living is about sanctification...living right with God...being comfortable in your own skin and treating others well.

Romans, Chapter 14, Verse 19...

ROMANS 14:19

So then as believers in Christ we are to keep on pursuing (literally to keep on “hunting down”) the things which make for peace and the things that lead to the building up of one another (mutual edification).

God wants us to bend over backward for others.

Romans, Chapter 14, Verse 20...

ROMANS 14:20

Do not tear down the work of God the Father for the sake of food (and days). All things indeed are clean (for the strong in faith) ... but they are evil for the man who eats and takes offense (the weak in faith) ...

The instruction is this...don’t ruin what God is trying to accomplish in the church for the sake of your personal preferences...don’t cause others to stumble.

<WHAT KIND OF PASTOR SWEARS?>

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When people are neurotic, you have to accommodate it. We need to stop “bagging on” Mega Churches and Pastors we don’t like.

Romans, Chapter 14, Verse 21...

ROMANS 14:21

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

ROMANS 14:22

The faith which you (who are The Strong in Faith) have...have it as your own conviction before God...because happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

ROMANS 14:23

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats...because his eating is not from faith...and whatever is not from faith in God is sin.

God wants us to listen to our conscience. If it bothers you, don’t do it.

So what are the conclusions of the entire chapter?

1

In matters that aren’t explicit in the Bible...implicit things...make up your own mind using the truth God has placed in your soul as wisdom and discernment.

2

Live and let live...keep your personal opinions between you and God.

3

Stop the *krino*...don’t look down your nose with contempt for other people.

(*KRINO* is a Greek word that means to separate...to look down on...to regard with contempt...to devalue).

4

Don’t impose your freedom on others...maintain the peace...act with unconditional love toward others!

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5

Don't ask, "Why must I curtail my freedom for others?" Freedom isn't as important as love. Ask, "How does my behavior impact another Christian?" It is either helpful or it is a hindrance. Don't cause others to stumble.

CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray...

Almighty God and Father...

Thank you for this valuable lesson on using our freedom. If we are to use our freedom for anything, encourage us to use it to spread the gospel message to unbelievers and welcome believers in Christ to a place where the Word of God is being taught...

...we ask this through the power of God the Holy Spirit...in Christ's name...Amen.

THE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please make it a habit to listen to the announcements. They are posted separately. Keep current on the things going on and coming up in Barah Ministries.

DISCUSSING THE LESSON AND PRAYER CIRCLE

Cancelled for today...will resume next week

GOT BIBLICAL QUESTIONS?

Ask the Pastor
pastor@barahministries.com

WANT US TO PRAY FOR SOMEONE?

Send your request to pastor@barahministries.com

KEEP ON STUDYING THE WORD OF GOD DAILY!

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Thanks for coming!
Thanks for watching!
Thanks for listening!

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