

# ROMANS

## Lesson 14

## Romans Chapter 14

With this lesson, we begin our study of Romans Chapters 14 and 15. Following Paul's instructions regarding our transformation into citizens of heaven and how we are to act in this world as God's ambassadors, he turns our attention to how we are to treat other Christians. Our next two lessons will focus on our behavior as Christians—as followers of Christ—toward other believers.

Read Romans Chapter 14 from the Contemporary English Version (CEV) below, or from your favorite version.

### Romans 14

#### Don't Criticize Others

<sup>1</sup>Welcome all the Lord's followers, even those whose faith is weak. Don't criticize them for having beliefs that are different from yours. <sup>2</sup>Some think it is all right to eat anything, while those whose faith is weak will eat only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>But you should not criticize others for eating or for not eating. After all, God welcomes everyone. <sup>4</sup>What right do you have to criticize someone else's servants? Only their Lord can decide if they are doing right, and the Lord will make sure that they do right.

<sup>5</sup>Some of the Lord's followers think one day is more important than another. Others think all days are the same. But each of you should make up your own mind. <sup>6</sup>Any followers who count one day more important than another day do it to honor their Lord. And any followers who eat meat give thanks to God, just like the ones who don't eat meat.

<sup>7</sup>Whether we live or die, it must be for God, rather than for ourselves. <sup>8</sup>Whether we live or die, it must be for the Lord. Alive or dead, we still belong to the Lord. <sup>9</sup>This is because Christ died and rose to life, so that he would be the Lord of the dead and of the living. <sup>10</sup>Why do you criticize other followers of the Lord? Why do you look down on them? The day is coming when God will judge all of us. <sup>11</sup>In the Scriptures God says,

"I swear by my very life  
that everyone will kneel down  
and praise my name!"

<sup>12</sup>And so, each of us must give an account to God for what we do.

#### Don't Cause Problems for Others

<sup>13</sup>We must stop judging others. We must also make up our minds not to upset anyone's faith. <sup>14</sup>The Lord Jesus has made it clear to me that God considers all foods fit to eat. But if you think some foods are unfit to eat, then for you they are not fit.

<sup>15</sup>If you are hurting others by the foods you eat, you are not guided by love. Don't let your appetite destroy someone Christ died for. <sup>16</sup>Don't let your right to eat bring shame to Christ. <sup>17</sup>God's kingdom isn't about eating and drinking. It is about pleasing God, about living in peace, and about true happiness. All this comes from the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup>If you serve Christ in this way, you will please God and be respected by people. <sup>19</sup>We should try to live at peace and help each other have a strong faith.

<sup>20</sup>Don't let your appetite destroy what God has done. All foods are fit to eat, but it is wrong to cause problems for others by what you eat. <sup>21</sup>It is best not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else that causes problems for other followers of the Lord. <sup>22</sup>What you believe about these things should be kept between you and God. You are fortunate, if your actions don't make you have doubts. <sup>23</sup>But if you do have doubts about what you eat, you are going against your beliefs. And you know that is wrong, because anything you do against your beliefs is sin.

In this lesson's study, let's examine the two "don'ts" that Paul addresses in Chapter 14 relative to our behavior towards other followers of Christ. Specifically, these are: (1) don't criticize others, and (2) don't cause problems for others—both of them referring to followers of Christ. He addresses the first problem, i.e., Christians criticizing other Christians, in Romans 14:1-12. He addresses the second problem, i.e., causing problems or hindering other followers, in Romans 14:13-23.

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*Consider the following questions.*

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1. Read Romans 14:1-4. Why does this passage admonish us against criticizing each other? Specifically, are we to criticize someone for how weak or how strong their faith is, or for what they eat or don't eat?
2. In Romans 14:5-8, Paul talks about some followers holding up certain days as special while other followers holding up different days as special—or not recognizing the special days of another. Christ told the disciples that it wasn't important what people ate or drank; rather, what was important came from their heart. What do the following verses tell us about the special days foods Paul is writing about?
  - a. 1 Corinthians 10:25-27
  - b. 1 Timothy 4:3-5
3. Paul goes on to tell us not to judge one another in Romans 14:9-12. Read the following verses and note what they tell us about judgment and the believer.
  - a. John 5:22-30
  - b. 2 Corinthians 5:10
  - c. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15
4. Paul now moves to discuss another important lesson for believer, i.e., that we are not to hinder, nor we are not to cause problems for fellow believers. In Romans 14:13, Paul addresses the problem of judging one another. He is addressing believers, and he is telling us to stop judging other believers. The situation that he was addressing then is as relevant as it is today, i.e., fellow believers judging other believers by all of the wrong standards. What standard does the Bible tell us that we are to judge fellow believers? Read Matthew Chapter 7:15-20. How are we to judge one another?
5. Paul goes on to tell us that when we judge people by the wrong standards, we cause them to stumble in their walk with Christ. Read Romans 14:15-19. What does Paul tell us that God's Kingdom is really all about?
6. In Romans 14:20-21, how does Paul instruct us to live as true followers of Christ?
7. In Paul's concluding remarks in Romans 14:22-23 what is Paul telling us that we must do in order to live a life pleasing to God?

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Paul pulls no punches as he lays out for us how we are to act—and how we are not to act—toward fellow believers. It is a trap that we can easily fall into, i.e., judging other believers, being critical of them, and putting ourselves in a pious position over others. None of these behaviors reflects a true Christian's heart. In our quiet time during the days ahead, let us focus on Galatians 5:22-26 and living so that the "fruit" that comes from our spirit-filled walk with Christ is evident to everyone.

May God bless you as you continue to study His Holy Word with us.

In Christ,

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