

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2017: *Salvation by Faith Alone: The Book of Romans*
Lesson 13 “Christian Living”

Read for this week’s study

Romans 14-16.

Memory Text

“Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Weak in Faith
- III. Before the Judgment Seat
- IV. No Offense
- V. Observance of Days
- VI. Final Words
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “We are now in the last part of our study of Romans, [. . .] In this, the last section, Paul touches on other topics, perhaps not as central to his main theme, yet important enough to be included in the letter. Thus, for us, they are sacred Scripture, as well. How did Paul end this letter, what did he write, and what truths are there for us, the heirs not just of Paul but, indeed, of our Protestant forefathers? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. The lesson deals with chapter 14, then seven verses of chapter 15 (out of 33) and three verses of chapter 16 (out of 27). On what basis does one make the choice, if these “topics are important enough” and “sacred Scripture”?
3. There are two issues to consider in 14:1-4: 1) what is the issue Paul discusses in his historical context? 2) What are the implications of how Paul deals with the issue for us today?
4. What is the significance of the fact that Paul does not say, “Many Jewish Christians don’t eat meat, while many Gentile Christians do”? Why does he say, “Some of us do it this way, some of us do it that way”?

5. "It's important, too, to realize that in Romans 14:3 Paul does not speak negatively of the one 'weak in the faith' (Romans 14:1). Nor does he give this person advice as to how to become strong. So far as God is concerned, the overscrupulous Christian (judged overscrupulous, apparently, not by God but by his or her fellow Christians) is accepted. [God hath received him. [. . . Thus] to 'receive' one weak in the faith meant to accord him or her full membership and social status. The person was not to be argued with but given the right to his or her opinion." (Sunday's lesson)
6. Why is it so important that the early Christians (and we in our times as well) learn to live together without looking at one another with disdain or implying for a moment that God is more pleased with one style of behavior than with another?
7. What are the possible parallels in our day? On what kinds of issues in today's church are we in danger of judging one another because of things that Paul [and God] would declare to be less significant? Where are we prone to build walls of division on cultural or ethnic lines where Paul [and God] would gently but firmly insist that we are all serving the same Master?
8. In 14:7-14 Paul speaks about a natural reaction to condemn other people who did not arrive at the same conclusion we did. The easiest assumption is that they did not process the matter properly, and therefore they do not have a good grasp of the Christian faith. This may be true, but it may be completely wrong. There is also another truth, which needs to be grasped even more firmly and lived out even more energetically: there is one Lord and before him and him alone we all live and die, stand or fall.
9. Paul shows that the Messiah has been appointed by God to be Judge of both the living and the dead and one day His judgment will review the entire life of everyone. A vital aspect of the doctrine of justification by faith is a mutual respect for one another. Christians are encouraged to respect one another and find ways of living that out in practice.
10. In 14:15-23 Paul asks Christians to recognize that there are occasions when they need to hold back from their freedom for the sake of those whose Christian faith would be irreparably damaged by their own behavior. But, he adds, do not insist that other Christians conform at once to the freedom which you celebrate.
11. Romans 16:25-27 is the final conclusion of this famous letter. Paul summarizes and honors the gift of joy, wisdom, love, grace, power and glory of eternal God as it is revealed in Jesus the Messiah.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Recommended Listening: The entire series by Graham Maxwell on the book of Romans is available at <http://pkp.cc/MMROMANS66>

I wonder how the folk in Rome reacted to this. Was this evidence that the one who used to persecute the saints had really been changed? “As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions.”

Can you imagine saying any such thing? Now does that sound like Paul? “As for the man who disagrees with you, welcome him, but not for arguments about opinions,” and so on. Then he gives an illustration.

“One man believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables.”

When we get to 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, that subject is dealt with at length. So we can save some of this for next time. The main thing here is that there is important difference of opinion on eating this food. Lest some of you are not able to come back next time, this has nothing to do with one’s diet, with the menu. It’s just that flesh and wine were offered to the idols. Apparently no idol ever cared for vegetables. Remember in the days of Daniel? The reason why he ate the vegetables was really not for health reasons. That was incidental. It was primarily to reject the worship of the heathen gods, because the flesh and the wine would be offered to the gods.

Now Paul is saying we have a disagreement in our church. One believes he may eat this food that’s been offered to idols, because idols don’t affect the food, anyway. And that’s enlarged on in Corinthians. While the man who’s weak in faith is very conscientious about this, and he’s afraid to eat the food offered to idols, and so he eats only vegetables to be safe. “Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans*, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

One of the best examples of treating people who were doing things that were not very helpful and causing a lot of argument and ill will in the church, an example of treating them with dignity and respect almost seeming to agree with them while pointing to a much better way, is found, I think, in Paul’s handling of speaking in tongues in the Corinthian church. In 1 Corinthians 14 you remember how he handled that manner of speaking in a tongue that evidently was nothing like Pentecost. Did they need any interpreters at Pentecost? Sometimes people say the gift of tongues in Corinth must be the same as the gift of tongues in at Pentecost. But there are many differences pointed out. They couldn’t understand them in Corinth, but at Pentecost everyone said, “We all hear and understand without interpreters, every man in his own tongue.”

It was very different and it won many people to faith and conversion at that time, whereas in Corinth this was causing nothing but trouble. And I personally believe that it was a very different manifestation, more like some of the Charismatic excesses that we see here and there today. Did Paul insult the beginners in Corinth? Or did he say I thank God I speak in tongues more than you all, and he didn't explain at the moment what he meant. Now we could understand what he meant in other ways. We know Paul didn't believe in babbling in ecstasy because he says in that same chapter, "You know, I'd rather speak five words with my mind than ten thousand words in a tongue where an interpreter is needed." And then still speaking very respectfully of them he simply suggested that there was a better way. He said it would be much better to preach, to prophesy than to speak in a tongue. But if you must do it, be sure there's an interpreter and just one or two at a time, let everything be done decently and in order. And if they had followed his advice they wouldn't have felt insulted for a moment, but it would have been the end of what they were doing. They would have moved on to something better. I think 1 Corinthians 14 is a wonderful example of correcting people without insulting them and making their religious practices seem unworthy of respect. In many cases you can see Paul treating people like this and it's very God-like.

So he says we should be willing to meet people where they are, to condescend as Christ did, and think how low he stooped to meet us. Think how generous and gracious Christ was to the weak, not just in the gospels, but how about in the Old Testament? For according to 1 Corinthians 10:4, who dealt with Israel as their leader in the wilderness days? Who said to an angel, go down there and give Gideon a wet fleece? These are hard times in Israel. Normally a person shouldn't really need a sign to strengthen his faith. But you remember the circumstances surrounding Gideon's life? He never did get rid of his concubines or his idols did he? Think of God meeting him, making him a spokesman. And Gideon said, "I feel so unsure, Lord, in these troublous times, could you give me a wet fleece on the dry ground?" And when he got up the next morning he realized that maybe it was a natural coincidence that the fleece still held the moisture, so he asked the second night, "God, could you reverse that please? How about a wet fleece, or rather, a dry fleece on the wet ground, that couldn't be an accident."

And our gracious Lord gave him what he needed, which is not an encouragement to us to expect signs. Those were difficult times and when people need it, as now, if we need a wet fleece and a dry one, or if we need the thundering on Sinai, God will give us what he knows we need. So the graciousness of Christ is not just revealed in the gospels, but throughout all of scripture. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapters 15 & 16, recorded February, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/29MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/30MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Christian love is slow to censure, quick to discern penitence, ready to forgive, to encourage, to set the wanderer in the path of holiness, and to stay his feet therein. {DA 462.4}

All whose hearts are in sympathy with the heart of Infinite Love will seek to reclaim, and not to condemn. Christ dwelling in the soul is a spring that never runs dry. Where He abides, there will be an overflowing of beneficence.—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 39. (1896)
{Ev 174.3}

Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man. {8T 286.4}

The love of God alone can open and expand the heart, and give to love and sympathy a breadth and height that is without measure. Those who love Jesus will love all the children of God. The sense of personal infirmities and imperfections will lead the human agent to look away from self to Christ; and the Saviour's love will break down every cold, Pharisaical barrier, it will banish all harshness and selfishness, and there will be a blending of soul with soul, even with those who are opposite in temperament. {OHC 183.3}

God is the source of life and light and joy to the universe. Like rays of light from the sun, like the streams of water bursting from a living spring, blessings flow out from Him to all His creatures. And wherever the life of God is in the hearts of men, it will flow out to others in love and blessing. {SC 77.1}

He spoke a word of sympathy here and a word there as He saw men weary and compelled to bear heavy burdens. He shared their burdens and repeated to them the lessons He had learned from nature, of the love, the kindness, the goodness of God. He sought to inspire with hope the most rough and unpromising, setting before them the assurance that they might become blameless and harmless, attaining such a character as would make them manifest as children of God. . . . Jesus sat an honored guest at the table of the publicans, by His sympathy and social kindness showing that He recognized the dignity of humanity; and men longed to become worthy of His confidence. Upon their thirsty souls His words fell with blessed, life-giving power. New impulses were awakened, and the possibility of a new life opened to these outcasts of society. {HP 181.3}

To take people right where they are, whatever their position, whatever their condition, and help them in every way possible—this is gospel ministry. . . . Those who are sick in body are nearly always sick in soul, and when the soul is sick, the body is made sick.—MS. 62, 1900.
{MM 238.1}

The sanctification of the soul by the working of the Holy Spirit is the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity. Gospel religion is Christ in the life—a living, active principle. It is the grace

of Christ revealed in character and wrought out in good works. The principles of the gospel cannot be disconnected from any department of practical life. Every line of Christian experience and labor is to be a representation of the life of Christ. {COL 384.1}

Those who love God cannot harbor hatred or envy. When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not merely because favors are received of them, but because love is the principle of action and modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and elevates and ennobles the affections. This love is not contracted so as merely to include “me and mine,” but is as broad as the world and as high as heaven, and is in harmony with that of the angel workers. This love cherished in the soul sweetens the entire life and sheds a refining influence on all around. Possessing it, we cannot but be happy, let fortune smile or frown. If we love God with all the heart, we must love His children also. This love is the spirit of God. It is the heavenly adorning that gives true nobility and dignity to the soul and assimilates our lives to that of the Master. No matter how many good qualities we may have, however honorable and refined we may consider ourselves, if the soul is not baptized with the heavenly grace of love to God and one another, we are deficient in true goodness and unfit for heaven, where all is love and unity. {4T 223.2}

Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another—this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found. “We love Him, because He first loved us.” In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around. {AA 551.2}

Many think that they are representing the justice of God while they wholly fail of representing His tenderness and His great love. Often the ones whom they meet with sternness and severity are under the stress of temptation. Satan is wrestling with these souls, and harsh, unsympathetic words discourage them and cause them to fall a prey to the tempter’s power. {MH 163.2}

A kind, courteous Christian is the most powerful argument that can be produced in favor of Christianity. {GW 122.1}

It should be our aim to bring all the pleasantness possible into our lives, and to do all the kindness possible to those around us. Kind words are never lost. Jesus records them as if spoken to Himself. Sow the seeds of kindness, of love, and of tenderness, and they will blossom and bear fruit. {OHC 293.5}

The effort to earn salvation by one’s own works inevitably leads men to pile up human exactions as a barrier against sin. For, seeing that they fail to keep the law, they will devise rules

and regulations of their own to force themselves to obey. All this turns the mind away from God to self. His love dies out of the heart, and with it perishes love for his fellow men. A system of human invention, with its multitudinous exactions, will lead its advocates to judge all who come short of the prescribed human standard. The atmosphere of selfish and narrow criticism stifles the noble and generous emotions, and causes men to become self-centered judges and petty spies. {MB 123.1}

The Pharisees were of this class. They came forth from their religious services, not humbled with a sense of their own weakness, not grateful for the great privileges that God had given them. They came forth filled with spiritual pride, and their theme was, "Myself, my feelings, my knowledge, my ways." Their own attainments became the standard by which they judged others. Putting on the robes of self-dignity, they mounted the judgment seat to criticize and condemn. {MB 123.2}

The people partook largely of the same spirit, intruding upon the province of conscience and judging one another in matters that lay between the soul and God. It was in reference to this spirit and practice that Jesus said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." That is, do not set yourself up as a standard. Do not make your opinions, your views of duty, your interpretations of Scripture, a criterion for others and in your heart condemn them if they do not come up to your ideal. Do not criticize others, conjecturing as to their motives and passing judgment upon them. {MB 123.3}

We cannot read the heart. Ourselves faulty, we are not qualified to sit in judgment upon others. Finite men can judge only from outward appearance. To Him alone who knows the secret springs of action, and who deals tenderly and compassionately, is it given to decide the case of every soul. {MB 124.1}

The teaching of this parable is illustrated in God's own dealing with men and angels. Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not fully discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy Satan. Had He done so, the holy angels would not have perceived the justice and love of God. A doubt of God's goodness would have been as evil seed that would yield the bitter fruit of sin and woe. Therefore the author of evil was spared, fully to develop his character. Through long ages God has borne the anguish of beholding the work of evil, He has given the infinite Gift of Calvary, rather than leave any to be deceived by the misrepresentations of the wicked one; for the tares could not be plucked up without danger of uprooting the precious grain. And shall we not be as forbearing toward our fellow men as the Lord of heaven and earth is toward Satan? {COL 72.2}

Righteous words and deeds have a more powerful influence for good than all the sermons that can be preached.—ML 114. {VSS 52.1}

Christ does not bid His followers strive to shine. He says, Let your light shine. If you have received the grace of God, the light is in you. Remove the obstructions, and the Lord's glory will be revealed. The light will shine forth to penetrate and dispel the darkness. You cannot help shining within the range of your influence. {COL 420.1}

The closer we keep to Christ, and the more meek and lowly and self-distrustful we are, the firmer will be our hold on Christ, and the greater will be our power, through Christ, to convert sinners; for it is not the human agent that moves the soul. Heavenly intelligences co-operate with the human agent and impress the truth upon the heart. Abiding in Christ we are able to exert an influence over others; but it is because of the presence of Him who says: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:20. The power we have to overcome Satan is the result of Christ working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. {6T 399.2}