

## Sabbath School Lesson #13 – Christian Living – 23-29 December 2017

**C**hrist would have us wait to sit with Him to judge the world than now judge our brethren. Thus Paul says, “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). We now come to the end of our study of Romans, covering chapters 14-16 of Romans in this week.

Sunday: Weak in Faith – All are in the school of Christ. The church of Christ is not composed of perfect men, but of those who are seeking perfection. He is the perfect One, and He sends out the invitation: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Matthew 11:28-29). Having called all to come to Him, He says, “him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). As one has said, ‘God reaches for the hand of faith in man to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that man may attain to perfection of character.’ The faith may be very weak, but God does not reject him on that account. Paul thanked God that the faith of the Thessalonian brethren grew exceedingly (2 Thessalonians 1:3), which shows that they did not have perfect faith at first. True that God is so good that every person ought to trust Him fully; but just because He is so good, He is very patient and forbearing with those who are not well acquainted with Him, and he does not turn away from them because they are doubtful. It is this very goodness and forbearance of God that develops perfect faith.

Monday: Before the Judgment Seat – “God Is the Judge.” “He putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psalms 75:7). “For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us” (Isaiah 33:22). “There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy; who art thou that judgest another?” (James 4:12). The power to save and to destroy determines the right to judge. To condemn when one has not the power to carry the judgment into effect, is but a farce.

One reason why we should not judge, is that God is the judge. Another is, that “He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained” (Acts 17:31). The Father Himself judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son. But even the Son does not sit in judgment now; for He says, “If any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (John 12:47). Therefore, he who presumes to sit in judgment now, not only usurps the place of God, but gets ahead of Him. There will be a time when judgment will be committed to the saints of the Most High, but it will be only when the saints possess the kingdom (Daniel 7:22). And those to whom judgment is committed will all be *saints*. (1 Corinthians 6:2). None are to judge, except those who are without sin. The man who judges, therefore, declares himself to be without sin. But God is the only one whose testimony in this respect is of any worth; “For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth” (2 Corinthians 10:18). “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come” (1 Corinthians 4:5). Although Christ does not yet judge, He speaks the word by which men are to be judged, and that is the word of God. “He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:48-49). Yes, Christ did not condemn anybody while bodily on earth, yet the word He spoke often caused those who heard it to be convicted in their own hearts, and self-condemned. “For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:17-19).

Tuesday: No Offense – The apostle says, “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” If we consider well the subject under consideration, we shall not wrest this scripture from its connection. The thing presented from the beginning of the chapter is the case of a man with so little real knowledge of Christ that he thinks righteousness is to be obtained by the eating of certain kinds of food, or by not eating certain things. The idea clearly conveyed by the entire chapter is that it is by faith, and not by eating and drinking, that we are saved. A little consideration of the question of clean and unclean food will help us much. There is a strange idea prevalent, to the effect that things that were at one time unfit for food are perfectly wholesome now. Many people seem to think that even unclean beasts are made clean by the Gospel. They forget that Christ purifies men, not beasts and reptiles. There were plants that were poisonous in the days of Moses, and those same plants are poisonous now. The very professed Christians who seem to think that the Gospel makes everything fit to eat, would be as much disgusted at the thought of eating cats,

dogs, caterpillars, spiders, flies, etc, as any Jew would have been in the days of Moses. Instead of finding that a knowledge of Christ reconciles one to such a diet, we find, on the contrary, that it is only the most degraded savages who make use of them for food, and such a diet is both a sign and cause of degradation. Enlightenment brings carefulness in the selection of what food we eat.

Now there is no one who can imagine the apostle Paul or any other person of good sense and refinement eating everything that he could possibly find on earth. Although most people think themselves wiser than God in the matter of eating and drinking, there are, as there always have been, certain things universally held to be unfit for food. Therefore when the apostle says that nothing is unclean of itself, he evidently confines his remark to those things which God has provided for man's eating. There are people whose conscience is so poorly instructed that they fear to eat even of things which God has given to be eaten; just as there are some who forbid the eating of "food which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving" (1 Timothy 4:3). When Paul says, "One believeth that he may eat all things," evidently the "all things" does not include filth. The idea evidently is that one believes that he may eat everything that is fit to be eaten. But another, having for instance the thought that some of those things may have been devoted to an idol, fears to eat of them lest he should thereby become an idolater. The eighth chapter of 1 Corinthians makes this whole subject plain, as it runs parallel with the fourteenth of Romans.

Wednesday: Observance of Days – Some one will of course interpose that the apostle says "every day," and that therefore he must necessarily include the Sabbath among things indifferent. In Exodus sixteen we read that the people were told that they were to go out and gather a certain portion of manna "every day;" and yet in the same chapter we are told that they should find none at all on the seventh day. We are not to try to catch the Lord in His own words. When He says that a certain work is to be done every day, we are to know that He excepts, as a matter of course, those days on which He Himself has said that work may not be done. When a man says that his children go to school every day, he means of course that they go very school day, and not that they go when there is no school. So when the apostle Paul, writing by inspiration of God, seems to imply that there are certain days which may be regarded or not, as one may choose, we must know that he does not by any means design to convey the idea that the holy Sabbath of the Lord, which was commanded to all men by His own voice, is among those indifferent days. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." So far as this statement is concerned, it makes no difference if it is applied to the Sabbath of the Lord. God desires willing, intelligent service. The man who professes to keep the Sabbath of the Lord, and yet is not sure that it is the Sabbath, is not keeping it at all. The law of God is not to be regarded simply as a thing to dodge behind in order to escape the wrath of God. The man who is not sure about the law, but who thinks that he will keep it so as to be on the safe side in the judgment, if it should chance to be the standard in that judgment, is not serving the Lord, but himself. Let a man be fully persuaded in his own mind that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good," and then let him keep it unto the Lord. If he does not keep it because he knows it to be right, his apparent service is but mockery and sin.

Thursday: Final Words – In conclusion, "Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith; to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen." What a magnificent conclusion! It reaches from eternity to eternity. The Gospel of God is the thing of the ages. It was kept secret in the mind of God from times eternal. Christ "was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:19-20). But now the mystery is "made manifest." Not simply is it made manifest by the preaching of the apostles, but "according to the commandment of the everlasting God," "by the scriptures of the prophets" it is "made known to all nations, for the obedience of faith." The Gospel plan originated in the mind of God in the eternity of the past. Patriarchs, prophets and apostles have worked in unison in making it manifest; and "in the ages to come" it will be both the science and the song of the redeemed "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," who shall gather with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and will say, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" We have finished our study of the book of Romans. It has not been exhaustive. It is impossible to have an exhaustive study of the Bible; yet, we may be sure that as far as we have gone we have only the truth. This assurance arises not from any wisdom that we have, but solely from adhering closely to the word of God, and not allowing the alloy of human ideas to mingle with its pure gold.