

LESSON 15: ROMANS 14:1-15:13 BALANCE BETWEEN FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

I. Introduction

Romans 14 explores the tension between Christian liberty and responsibility. Paul urges believers not to pass judgment on others regarding disputable matters, such as food and special days (Romans 14:3-5). Instead, they should recognize that each person's actions are accountable to God (Romans 14:12). The focus is on honoring God and living with a clear conscience. The Roman church was a diverse body of Jews and Gentiles therefore disputes over kosher food and Sabbath observance were common. Meat sold in Roman markets was often sacrificed to idols, creating dilemmas for Jewish believers. Paul's instructions sought to build unity in a polarized community. The Jewish Christians held onto dietary laws and sacred days (see Leviticus 11, Exodus 20:8-11), while Gentile believers felt no such obligations. Paul's call to mutual acceptance (Romans 14:1) mirrors Christ's inclusive mission (Romans 15:7). The principle of not causing others to stumble (Romans 14:13) echoes Jesus' teaching in the gospel.

In chapter 15: 1-13 Paul continues the discussion on living selflessly for the good of others and calls for believers to bear with the failings of the weak by following Christ's example of selflessness. (Romans 15:1-2). Paul references Christ's servanthood (Romans 15:3, Psalm 69:9) to exemplify selflessness. The Jewish Christians often viewed Gentiles as outsiders to God's covenant. Paul's emphasis on unity and shared worship (Romans 15:6) was revolutionary, urging both groups to embrace God's redemptive plan for all nations. He emphasizes unity, hope, and glorifying God together. Paul shares his mission to preach the gospel to Gentiles and his plans for future ministry, asking for prayer and support. The benediction in Romans 15:13 ties hope, joy, and peace to the work of the Holy Spirit.

II. Study the Scriptures: Read the Passage ROMANS 14:1-15:13

Note your thoughts as you read:

Write down any questions that come to mind as you read:

III. Think Through the Following Questions:

1. How do we distinguish between essential and non-essential matters in the faith?
2. How can Christians handle disagreements over non-essential issues?
3. What does it mean to “not cause your brother or sister to stumble”?
4. How can we maintain unity while respecting individual convictions?
5. What are some practical ways to build each other up instead of tearing each other down?
6. How can the principle of acting with love guide us in culturally or politically divisive issues?
7. How does Christ’s example encourage us to prioritize others over ourselves?
8. What role does unity play in the church’s mission? How can we join with one voice in a church community?
9. How does bearing with the weaknesses of others help build a stronger Christian community?

IV. Lessons Learned: Are there any new things you learned from this passage today?

V. Application: How Do You think this will impact your thinking and/or actions going forward?