

August 31

Scriptures: Read Romans 14

Key Verse: “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” (Romans 14:10)

Overview

Paul begins this chapter with, “Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters” (v.1) He’s face to face here with the cultural, sub-cultural, and religious sensibilities of a rich mosaic of backgrounds in the early church. Some were strictly observant Jews, others were secular Jews, and still others were Gentiles newly won from paganism and emperor-worship. You can be sure there was a clash of traditions on several levels. You can also be sure that the feelings were strong!

The Apostle puts it all in perspective: “we will all stand before God’s judgment seat”. At that moment of major judgment, all our minor, trivial judgments on earth will seem comical if not tragic.

We’re to put tolerance before dogma. We’re to put ourselves into the other guy’s shoes. We’re to understand and be compassionate. This posture sits far better with our heavenly Judge than intolerance and bigotry.

There is another point. As convinced as we may be of some secondary truth (as contrasted to primary truths like the unity of God, or the deity of Christ, etc.), we’re to keep our conviction to ourselves if it will be misunderstood by another believer. Or, at least, limit your freedom to those moments when the “weaker” brother will not be exposed to your “flagrant” behavior.

And don’t be smug or uncritical about your liberty; “Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves” (v.22b). As we mature in Christ, we should always take stock of our standards and submit them to the ultimate standard: the standard of love.

Prayer

Lord, make us more living by Your Spirit and Your Word working within us. Prepare us for the judgment seat of Christ, where we will each give an account of ourselves, by enabling us to judge ourselves here and now. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we pray this. Amen.