

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning

Week 8 (February 15-21, 2015)

We do not have to see eye to eye to walk arm in arm! Jesus is able to hold up new believers while they learn what is right for them on all matters (Romans 14:4). Let's continue to examine a Biblical response to those issues that can divide us.

Sunday, February 15 (read Romans 14:19-21)

It is better not to eat meat or to drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. (Romans 14:21)

God's goal for all humanity is for them to come to know Him in His fullness (2 Peter 3:9). We interfere with that plan when we focus on food and drink. He warns us in today's text to avoid making those things too important in our presentation of the gospel. He wants our listeners to experience **peace** and **mutual edification** (v. 19). As you present Christ to an unbeliever or to a new believer, be sure that you do not lead with your views on food and beverage. Refrain from conversations or actions that will turn that person away from a meaningful relationship with the Lord (v. 20). Any action on your part that causes a brother or sister to fall is wrong, no matter how much you may try to justify it (v. 21).

Monday, February 16 (read Romans 14:22-23)

So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. (Romans 14:22a)

You may think I am violating today's printed passage above by discussing the issues of food and drink; however, what I am attempting to do is to show all sides of the issue as taught by the Word of God. I never want to approve of an unbiblical lifestyle, but I do want to make salvation reachable to anyone. My job is to lead them to Jesus; it is His job to convict them of activities that do not bring glory to Him. The bottom line on this subject concludes the 14th chapter of Romans: "and everything that does not come from faith is sin" (v. 23b). Are you living by faith? Are you overly critical of those who do not see things as you do? God has something to say to you today.

Tuesday, February 17 (read Romans 15:1-7).

Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. (Romans 15:2)

God uses Paul's pen to teach the real meaning of **Christian unity**. The ecumenical movement may have had noble goals to unite all Christians, but, in actuality, those pushing this cause have accepted people of all faiths and rejected those who believe that Jesus is the only way to salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Since true Christian unity is very important to our Lord (see John 17:11, 20-21), we should not allow our personal agendas to discourage those who are turning to Christ; instead, we ought to build up and encourage those new believers (v. 1-2). As always, Jesus is our example in living for the benefit of others (v. 3). The Scriptures are our daily bread! They will teach us to have hope (assurance) as we grow in our knowledge of Him (v. 4).

Wednesday, February 18 (reread Romans 15:1-7)

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Romans 15:7)

Don't miss the fact that God does not separate Himself from the Scriptures. He and His Word are responsible to give us endurance and encouragement in order that we will all have a "spirit of unity" as we follow Christ. As I said in the opening to this week's devotions, "We do not have to see eye to eye to walk arm in arm." In spite of our differences, we can glorify God with **one heart** and **one mouth** (v. 5-6). How can we achieve this Christian unity? God answers that question in the printed verse above: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (v. 7). How did Christ accept you? Do the words "mercy" and "grace," describe your experience? Read the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and then, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37b).

Thursday, February 19 (read Mark 7:1-8)

You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men. (Mark 7:8)

So far, my devotions on the subject of food and drink have featured the writings of the Apostle Paul. To emphasize the fact that "all scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16a), today we will turn to the teachings of our Lord on the same subject. The legalistic Pharisees are always criticizing Jesus because He doesn't live according to their interpretation of the Jewish law. In this text, they question Him on the matter of ceremonial hand washing (v. 1-5). The Lord never spares their feelings, because their legalism is keeping folks from coming to Him (v. 6-7). Be sure that you "Do not go beyond what is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6) by requiring others to follow your manmade rules! Hold onto the commands of God! Release the traditions of men and allow the Gospel to be reachable to all who are seeking.

Friday, February 20 (read Mark 7:9-19)

"Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'" (Mark 7:13)

After illustrating how the Pharisees dishonor their parents because of their traditions (v. 9-13), Jesus uses this interruption to teach His listeners (v. 14). He reminds them that, "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). Therefore, no food or drink can make a person unclean because it goes "into his stomach, and then out of the body" (v. 19). Of course, if the things that enter our bodies cause us to behave in ways listed in v. 21-22, then, we have a spiritual problem. That will be the subject of tomorrow's devotions.

Saturday, February 21 (read Mark 7:20-23)

"All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'" (Mark 7:23)

If you have been taught that Jesus never listed categories of sins, you need to be re-taught by today's text. While this is not meant to be a complete list of sins, it is certainly thorough enough to cause all of us to thank God for His grace! Many people will tell you that Jesus never mentions the subject of homosexuality, but the phrase "sexual immorality" ("fornication" in KJV) includes **all** sexual sins, including those committed by same sex couples. Don't be guilty of coming down hard on that subject, however, until you closely examine your own life to be sure that it is free of "greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly" (v. 22). "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). And let us be careful how we judge our fellow believers without taking a closer look in our own mirror.