

## **ROMANS PART 24**

### **ROMANS 14 -15:7 "HOW DO WE RESPOND TO INTERNAL DIFFERENCES?"**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

Now we have received life ... what is expected of us?

In Romans 12 onwards Paul teaches us that God's purpose is to build His church ... a faith community designed to change the world.

- A world changing church will be a church committed to the cause of the kingdom.
- Committed to personal life change
- Committed to using our gifts in service
- Committed to genuine love.

In Romans 13 Paul moves on to deal with a Christian response to the world around us:

- The Government of the day.
- To the "not yet Christians".
- To the spiritual realm around us ... spiritual warfare is most effectively carried out via a positive Christian lifestyle ... turning the light on in the darkness. Majoring on "what we are for, rather than what we are against".

Now it is time to deal with some very important internal issues.

A world changing church has to have its family life sorted! Cracks on the inside will destroy our witness on the outside.

#### **Romans 14:1 - 15:7**

### **"HOW DOES THE CHURCH RESPOND TO INTERNAL DIFFERENCES?"**

1. What was the problem here?
2. How does that apply today?

3. What is Paul's solution?

#### **1. What was the problem?**

Jews had been evicted from Rome by Nero.

In the meantime the church had been run by the gentile Christians.

No holy days. Eat what you like. Pork chops for tea!

#### **Now the Jews were back!**

Not only that ... there were gentile believers who struggled with eating meat from the marketplace.

They had come out of paganism ... the old ways still influenced them. Eating meat from the market gave them a problem, so they ate no meat (explain).

3 main groups in this little Roman church:

- The free: Saw all food as OK. No special days except Sunday
- Gentiles struggling with their old life: Some food & behaviours were dangerous to their faith ... so they limited what they ate & where they went.
- The Jews: Still bound by Jewish tradition re food & Holy days.

Each of these were judging one another.

Each of these were causing problems for the faith of the other.

#### **How can these people be united when they are so different?**

#### **2. How does that apply today?**

##### **a. We today have the free ...**

"I can eat what I like ... wear what I like ... go where I like!

Jesus set me free!

As long as I'm not doing obviously sinful things ... immorality, lying, stealing ... then I'm OK!

God is happy with me. I'm happy with me. That's all that matters!"

Key areas of contention today? Alcohol, smoking, clothing, movies we watch, internet usage, postings on social media.

**"I am free to express my Christianity how I like!!!"**

**Yes, says Paul, that is true ... but????**

**b. We also have in our midst those with a more sensitive conscience.**

Background of alcoholism, witchcraft, new age, violence, abuse.

Various behaviours & actions ... even food, drink, songs played all can be a problem.

For their own well-being they limit their exposure to some things.

**c. We also have cultural differences.**

Not so much Jew & Gentile now ... but more likely cultural expectations.

- Clothing worn ... what is culturally appropriate?
- Food & drink
- The way we show respect.
- Direct & indirect communication.

**3. What is Paul's solution?**

**Vs. 14:1 "without passing judgment on disputable matters"**

**a. Identify what things are ESSENTIAL for us all.**

What does God really care about?

- Immorality ... sex is to be inside marriage only.
- Marriage ... is between a man & a woman.
- Honesty ... Christian values
- Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ ... essential doctrinal beliefs

What areas are non-essential (disputable)?

What we eat, where we eat, movies we watch, sport or not, alcohol or not, clothes we wear, hair styles, body piercings, tattoos, even when and how we pray, style of music ...

**b. Stop judging one another over non-essentials.**

**Romans 14:4, 7, 10, 12, 13, Romans 15:7**

**c. Consider others before we do things.**

**Romans 14:13, 15, 19, 20**

Don't allow your freedom to offend or pull another down.

**Romans 14:19-20**

**Romans 15:5-7 Unity is more important than my personal rights!**

**CONCLUSION:**

The Church has a high calling.

We are to be world changers ... bring the good news of life in Christ to a hurting world.

But a message needs to be backed up by a Christlike life.

Does the church LIVE WHAT IT PREACHES?

Does it preach a message of freedom & love, & yet act differently inside its four walls?

Can we overcome our differences to build a united body of Christ?

How we respond in these areas will determine how seriously people take our message?

We need to consider those around us to ensure we are being a clear witness to the love of Christ in our midst!

**Romans 14:19-20**