

# ***Sabbath School Today*** **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

## ***The Book of Romans*** **Lesson 13. Christian Living**

The Books of Daniel and Revelation sparked the 1844 Second Advent Movement. The prophecies pointed to a “remnant” with the “third angel’s message” preparing the way of the Lord’s return. The Lord promised to send this people the “latter rain” and “loud cry,” “a teacher of righteousness” (Joel 2:23; the words “former rain moderately” in Hebrew are “the teacher of righteousness”), with a message indited by the Holy Spirit that would join with the third angel (Rev. 18:1-3). [1]

The books of Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians on righteousness by faith are for the maturation of God’s people. God fulfilled His promise of giving the latter rain in 1888 without His people pleading for it. Though the message of the cross, justification, and sanctuary in harmony with the law of God were “spurned” then, the “good news” is that it is recoverable by the gift of repentance which Jesus promises to Laodicea (Rev. 3:19).

The pure truth of the gospel changes lives. The acid test of correct doctrine is that it changes minds and hearts and behavior toward each other. Justification by faith applied to some of the most difficult “in-house” issues facing the church brings unity of belief and practice. This is Paul’s theme in Romans 14-16.

The church is a mix of cultures, socio-economic classes, and races. Paul’s “church plants” are startups made of brand new converts from the eastern Roman Empire and ethnic Jews. Some Christians are “strong,” others are “weak” concerning ethical matters (Rom. 15:1). However, they have all been united together because of Christ. They have entered the course, “101 Cross-centered Life” in the “University of the Body of Christ.” They will now learn what it means to live the cross daily with Jesus. It will require them to eat lots of “humble pie.”

Health reform was given to God’s people as righteousness by faith. It is the appropriate fast, which God has appointed for all those who believe they are living in the Day of Atonement. The self-denial that is built-in to eating a simple diet is necessary for a people who are anticipating their High Priest’s exit from the Most Holy Place.

Eating foods was problematic for many early Christians because most of it had been offered to idols before going to the farmer’s market (Rom. 14:2-4, 20-23; Acts 15:20; 1 Cor. 8:4). So many tender consciences turned to a vegetarian diet to avoid eating meat offered to idols.

Someone who believes they can eat any and all things God has created for food may have a spirit of ridicule toward those whose conscience will not allow them to consume all things. Religious liberty in the matter of eating is to be extended to all. Unfortunately for a good cause, many who embrace a vegan diet condemn those that eat a broader-based regime, and thus separate themselves from the Spirit of Christ. Any work of reform that has lost the spirit of love for others is an unprofitable parade of human vanity.

Man's "esteem" of a day (Rom. 14:5) does not make it God's day of rest. God's seventh-day Sabbath clearly has the *seal* of God upon it (Gen. 2:3; Ex. 20:11; Eze. 20:12, 20). So Paul is not addressing the issue of the seventh-day Sabbath observance (Rom. 14:5, 6). The Roman church had a contingency of Jewish Christians who still clung to the annual sabbath days of observance which could fall on any day of the week. The Gentile Christians would not have such loyalties to observe these days.

The fact that Paul connects the "esteem" or "regarding" of days with "eating" is a further linkage to the annual festival days of Jewish observance (Rom. 14:6). Eating played a vital role in the rites of keeping the ceremonial sabbaths (Lev. 23).

This text does not really solve the issue of whether the Jewish holy days are viable sabbaths for Christians to observe today. Elsewhere Paul declares them "shadows" of "the body of Christ" (Col. 2:16, 17). It would be blasphemy to continue animal sacrifices when Christ's body has already been crucified for us. Why establish "shadow" observances when we already have the reality of Christ to whom they pointed? No amount of ritual observances is going to establish Christ in the heart. They certainly didn't accomplish that for the Jewish nation as a whole in Christ's day. They ended up missing their Messiah and crucifying Him.

The level of intra-church judging which the apostle is addressing is equal to the life or death decisions which Christ makes in the final judgment. We have no business trespassing in His courtroom (Rom. 14:10). God the Father has transferred all judgment to the Son (John 5:22, 27). Jesus says, "I came not to judge the world" (12:47; 3:17). Jesus has proclaimed the "word" which is the law and the gospel. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (12:48). Thus "the judgment seat of Christ" is the law and the cross.

In that awesome day of final accounting following the final resurrection of the wicked at the close of the millennium, the law on tables of stone and the cross will be presented to them. [2] Then the unconscious record of one's life from within will clearly be brought to view for each to see. There will be an unprecedented acclamation of unity on the lips of every one that God has done everything possible to give salvation to all, but the lost refused their gift (Rom. 14:11).

The purpose of "the judgment seat of Christ" is ultimately to hold everyone accountable to God (vs. 12). Christ's purpose in the judgment is to vindicate whoever will permit Him to seal them with His *agape*.

Many are sealing their final judgment daily (John 3:18). Through the gospel “we” proclaim, souls will make their decision for life or death (Rom. 14:13). If our gospel is “bad news” about what we must *do* in order to be saved, people will conclude that they weren’t cut out for salvation. If our gospel is “good news” of Christ’s gift of salvation to all regardless of pre-existing qualifications, then it is a savor of life to those who do not hinder it.

The dynamic of the Spirit is the means by which Paul achieved all that he did in every area: his speech, his actions, and his signs and wonders. When Paul “fully preached the gospel of Christ” the cross was a present reality for those who heard. They forgot about all present distractions and were transfixed upon “the Saviour of the world.” It was such preaching that the Holy Spirit confirmed with “signs and wonders” (Rom. 15:19). Miracles attested to the truth of the gospel proclaimed.

Similarly, in the final glorification of God through the proclamation of the cross, “Servants of God, with their faces lighted up, ... will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, ... Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers.” [3]

What is “the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Rom. 16:25)? “The mystery” is the revelation of Jesus Christ Himself, as He was revealed *in* Paul’s preaching, and as He is revealed *in* you and me as we proclaim the gospel.

The gospel was made known to men from Adam down, and they had a measure of the knowledge of the gospel. But when Christ Himself came, and revealed God in Himself, to the children of men—it was never revealed and understood before as it was revealed and understood at that time. When the apostles were sent forth to preach it as it then was revealed, they preached it in a fullness and a clearness in which it was never preached before (vs. 26).

Now Christ proclaims the mystery as our High Priest from the heavenly sanctuary. It is the gospel which is clearly consistent with the work of cleansing our lives from sin that He seeks to accomplish there. This involves a work of judgment which is the vindication of Laodicea. He gives her the gift of *agape* that she might grow up in the full stature of a Bride worthy to stand by the side of the Lamb in the wedding.

The Gospel plan originated in the mind of God in eternity 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 (vs. 27). What a magnificent conclusion! It reaches from eternity to eternity. The Gospel of God is the wisdom of the ages!

—Paul E. Penno

**Endnotes:**

[1] See also, Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p 19.

[2] See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 666.

[3] Ibid, p. 612.

**Notes:**

Pastor Paul Penno's video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/jFY2ieoCork>

Pastor Penno has prepared a verse-by-verse study on Romans chapters 14, 15, and 16. If you would like a PDF file, please e-mail [sabbathschooltoday@1888message.org](mailto:sabbathschooltoday@1888message.org) and ask for "Romans 14-16."

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