

39. Learning Why We Accept Others

In our last topic, we saw that we are to show our physical and spiritual children how to walk in love. We saw that they will learn to walk in love as they learn to walk in the light. That involves taking root in Christ and walking in Him so that they are built up in Christ. Today, we are going to see that one of the ways that we walk in love is learning to accept others. Our children will best learn to accept others as we set the example by the way that we accept them.

Romans 14:1-4 says, “Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.” The word that is translated “receive” is used four times in the first seven verses of this chapter. It means *to accept a person or to hold that person close to your heart*.

Here, we see the way that we are to accept a person that is weak in the faith. We are to accept such a person with kindness. New American Standard says it this way, “Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but* not for *the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions.” Here, we are reminded that immature Christians may have opinions about what they should do or what they should avoid because of their backgrounds before they became Christians. An example is given of two people that had previously worshiped idols. One felt that it was all right to eat the inexpensive meat that had been offered to idols and the other felt it was sin to eat meat offered to idols. At that time, meat could be bought at a cheaper price at a market near a pagan temple because the meat had first been offered to an idol while the meat was more expensive at a regular market.

As more mature Christians, we see that we are to accept both of these Christians and not judge their opinions. We are also to help them learn to accept the opinions of one another. If we do not help them learn to accept one another, the one who eats meat offered to idols may despise the one who does not eat such meat. The word “despise” means to *treat the person as worthless*. In contrast, the person who does not eat meat that has been offered to idols may judge or condemn the other person. Romans 14:19 reminds us, “Therefore let us pursue the things *which make for* peace and the things by which one may edify another.” We want to provide an example for weaker Christians by showing them how to build up one another.

We are reminded that God has accepted both the stronger brother and the weaker brother. The Lord knows that as each one grows and matures, they will grow in love. That is why we are reminded that we are not to judge someone who is a servant of another. Both the stronger Christian and the weaker Christian are the servants of God. Romans 8:33-34 says, “Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Here, we are reminded that Christ is making intercession for all of us whether we are strong or weak and so all Christians will be able to stand before God.

Romans 14:5-9 goes on to give a second area where Christians may have different opinions. Those verses say, “One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes *it* to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe *it*. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.” Here, we see that Christians may also have different opinions about what special days to observe and celebrate.

For example, one Jewish Christian might think he should continue to celebrate the Jewish Sabbath and other Jewish feast days. In contrast, another Jewish Christian might think he should no longer observe those days. A Gentile Christian might feel that he should avoid any special days that were a part of his former religion because they were not related to Christ. Each person has to make his own decision about things that the New Testament does not clearly define for that person. The Holy Spirit renewed our conscience at the moment we became Christians. As we each mature and grow in the Lord as Christians, our conscience will give us peace about the things that we choose to do or to avoid. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” We are to provide an example and teach our physical and spiritual children to listen to their conscience as they seek the glory of God in all things. We also want to help them learn to give thanks to the Lord in all things.

We also see that we are not to live to self. In the same way, we do not die to self. We have already seen that we are to glorify God in everything that we do. However, we are also to think of what will benefit others by what we do. Philippians 2:3 says, “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” This verse points out the fact that true Christian love does nothing with the purpose of self-gain or pride. Instead, true Christian love means that we walk with a humble mind and view others as better than self.

We belong to the Lord and true Christian love means that we will live for Him. The same is true if we die. True Christian love means that we will die in a way that will bring glory to the Lord. Paul showed this attitude when he wrote in Philippians 1:21-24 where we read, “For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.” Paul wanted to do whatever he did to please the Lord.

Christ gave us the greatest example of all. He died to pay the penalty for our sin. Christ rose again on the third day and now lives again. Galatians 2:20 says, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Here, we see that Christ made it

possible for us to live by faith as well. He is our Lord because He is the Lord of both the dead and the living. As our Lord, He has prepared a plan for each of our lives that will give us real meaning and purpose as we yield our lives to Him to carry out that purpose.

As a result, Romans 14:10-12 says, “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. For it is written: ‘As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.” Since every Christian has been purchased by the blood of Christ, each Christian belongs to Christ and not to someone else. As a result, we are asked why we should even think that we have the right to judge our brother. In the same way, we should not even think of showing contempt to our brother. We are to realize that each Christian is our brother or our sister and that we have no right to judge any person. In fact, in verse 4, we saw that God will make them stand before Him at that day when we stand before the Lord to be judged for our rewards.

We will all stand at the judgment seat of Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:14-16 says that our works will be tested by fire in that day. Those verses say, “If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?” Each of us will receive a reward for the works that we have done that have eternal value. In the same way, every other Christian will also receive a reward for the works that they have done that have eternal value.

Isaiah 45:23 says, “I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.” Every person will bow before the Lord and be judged. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” As we saw in the previous paragraph, every Christian will be judged for rewards.

Revelation 20:13 says that every non-Christian will also be judged when that verse says, “The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.” That judgment will be eternal separation from God in the lake of fire and brimstone.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that we will each give an account of our own actions before God. That is one reason why it is so important for us to accept other Christians whether they are strong or weak. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children what it means to accept others.