

The Letter of St. Paul to the ROMANS

XI

OPENING WORSHIP

To begin your Bible study, read together **Revelation 7:9-17**. St. John's apocalyptic glimpse into the heavenly realms reveals the future that is waiting for us, as we are joined with all of God's people to rejoice in his presence and sing his praises forever.

INTRODUCTION

Pretty soon it will all be over. Our earthly pilgrimage will be through. We will rest from our labors, having fought the good fight, having run the straight race, and having kept the faith.

Life is a journey that is over quickly. Our momentary struggles, temporary troubles, daily challenges and earthly woes will soon give way to bliss and glory that will never end.

With this in mind, we want to take each day as a gift from the Lord. It is not an occasion for worry or stress, but an opportunity to give thanks and live a life of love. A believer exists on earth to worship the Lord and to serve his neighbor in love.

GENTLENESS AND LOVE

Read Romans 14:1-12.

Take three minutes to discuss among your table. Identify areas today where we are to be considerate of others' sensitivities, instead of imposing our will upon them:

The term for things which are neither commanded nor forbidden by God is: _____.

There may be many reasons a Christian may be sincerely opposed to a certain practice or behavior. Explain the difference between a *conscientious objection* and a *moral objection*.

When does it become wrong to exercise our Christian freedom?

When Scripture does not forbid something, our first reaction might be, "We can do it, so we will." Explain the weakness of this approach. What is a better way to determine the best path forward? (See **1 Corinthians 10:23,24** for some guidance.)

In Jesus we look forward to the Day of Judgment without fear. How do verses 11 and 12 offer a sobering perspective on that great day? (See **2 Corinthians 5:9,10** for a parallel thought.)

Read Romans 14:13-23. What specific issues did first-century Christians confront when they grappled with the question of Christian freedom?

Reflect personally on Paul's words: "Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way." How can you put these words into practice?

How can you work toward "peace and mutual edification" in these areas . . .

- Your speech

- Your demeanor

- Your behavior

For discussion: We might easily think of ourselves, our own opinions, and our own maturity more highly than we ought. How might times of testing and adversity expose our weakness of faith? What is the most important key to staying strong in Christ?

VERSES TO REMEMBER

Romans 14:13

Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.