



Chapter Fourteen

INTRODUCTION

NOTE: This chapter rounds out Paul's teaching on power and authority ... and how it applies within the Body of Christ. Jesus, our Lord, is the only one able to judge the conscience of one of his servants.

He expects us to act upon our consciences. We are not condemned for mistakes, but we are expected to act upon our consciences: our faith. Our intention must be to do what we believe our Lord wants.

Finally, Paul addressed these admonitions only to brethren within the ecclesia ... not to outsiders and strangers.

As you read Paul's words remember these points and they will be more understandable to you.

AS WE start chapter 14 let us set the stage. Chapter 13 explained how to identify real authorities. THERE ARE NO TRUE AUTHORITIES EXCEPT UNDER GOD! This means that elected politicians and government bureaucrats cannot be TRUE AUTHORITIES ... because they are authorized by the Beast Government, not by God. If this concept is not clear to you, please re-read Romans 13 parts one and two.

For instance, in Titus we see an example of the creation of true authority:

1. *Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ regarding the faith of God's elect in accordance with the truth which is after godliness;*

2. *In hope of eonian life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before eonian times.*

Titus 1:1-2

“Eonian life,” in verse 2, refers to the new life in Christ that was manifest itself through the New Covenant. “Before eonian times” meant “before the New Covenant.”

3. *But has in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed to me according to the commandment of our Savior who is of God.*

4. *To Titus, my own child after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.*

Titus 1:3-4

Titus was a product (child) of Paul's ministry ... thus Paul called Titus “my own child after the common faith.” Titus was “born” into the ecclesia through the ministry of Paul.

Jesus called Paul. Then Paul called Titus. That's the way authority works; it flows down the chain of authority ... in this case, from Yahweh down to Jesus, down to Paul, then down to Titus. Authority flows down, not up as falsely claimed by proponents of Democracy. Titus became an authority by selection down the chain of authority.

5. *For this cause I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had selected you:*

Titus 1:5

Paul delegated authority to Titus, and Titus was instructed to do the same. The authority delegated to Titus qualified him to delegate authorities under him. These were not officers in churches. Far from it! Paul and Titus ordained elders in cities, or communities ... not in churches.

Now as we continue, Paul addresses the ecclesia about some specific problems they were experiencing among themselves. In this chapter he talks about the need to put Christ and brethren before self, and not fall into the self-centric mindset as the heathen always seem to do.

PONDER THIS: Presidents, congressmen, governors, mayors and government bureaucrats are “authorized,” not by the power of God, but by the power of the State. This in itself tells us that they are outside Christ’s Reign. In fact, politicians go to great lengths to keep God out of government. Some politicians, like G.W. Bush, make pretense of believing in Jesus, but openly deny Him in their actions.

ROMANS 14:1-4 DON’T JUDGE ANOTHER MAN’S SERVANT

The one who is weak in the faith receive to yourselves, but not to doubtful scrutiny.

One truly believes that he may eat all: but the one who is weak eats plants.

Let not him that eats look down upon him that doesn’t eat; and let not him that doesn’t eat judge him that eats: for God has received him.

Who are you to judge another’s ser-

vant? To his own master he will stand or fall. Yea, he will stand, for the Lord is powerful to make him stand.

HERE is Paul’s teaching on how to handle misunderstandings between brethren. His point is that you are not your brother’s master, and cannot judge him. Your brother is Christ’s servant, not yours ... and **YOU SHOULD NOT JUDGE ANOTHER MAN’S SERVANT.**

Only the Lord of a servant knows whether or not that servant is pleasing him and is doing what he is expected to do. If we judge a brother we are usurping the jurisdiction of Christ (who is Lord of us all).

What does Paul say about this?

1. *We then who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of the weak, and not please ourselves.*

Romans 15:1

2. *Bear you one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

Galatians 6:2

In Rm. 14:1, Paul tells us not to subject weak brethren to “doubtful scrutiny.” By that he means we should be ready to help, rather than judge, a weak brother. Furthermore, those who are weak in the faith should not be pushed into hard controversies. It’s not fair to test them in things they do not understand.

A child cannot be expected to perform on the level of an adult. Those who are “weak in the faith” are like young children who are not yet ready for full-fledged battles. They still need support.

Paul refers to the weaker brother, in verse 2, as one who only “eats plants.”

What does he mean by this? The weak is contrasted with the strong. The one who believes he must eat only plants is weak, and the one who believes he may eat all (all that is edible) is strong.

Let’s let Paul interpret this further in I Corinthians chapter 8.

1. *Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love*

edifies.

2. *And if any man thinks that he knows anything, he does not yet know as he ought to know.*

3. *But if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.*

4. *Concerning therefore the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.*

5. *For though there are those that are called gods, whether in heaven or on land, (as there are gods many, and lords many,)*

6. *But to us there is but one God, the Father, out of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him.*

1 Corinthians 8:1-6

Thus, there is only one true God, the Father. However, there are many imagined “gods” and idols being worshipped by others.

7. *But not everyone has that knowledge: for some, being accustomed to the idol, even now are eating things as if they were sacrificed to the idol; and their weak conscience is being defiled.*

1 Corinthians 8:7

So, can an idol actually defile a man? Or can it only defile a man’s conscience? Is the power of idols real or imagined? Are idols real or imagined? Can an imaginary “god” actually do anything?

“That knowledge,” in verse 7, is the realization of what he states in verse 4: that **idols and false gods are nothing**. But Paul says that not every man has this knowledge. Not every man’s conscience is free in this sense. If a man believed that an idol or a god represented something real, and then ate food sacrificed to that idol, his conscience – guided by his false beliefs – would condemn him ... even though the idol was, in truth, only an illusion. This tells us that a man’s conscience must be considered ... even if it is in error.

An idol representing a god that did not exist was a farce, and it could

do nothing. It certainly could not change the physical composition of meat. It could, however, affect a superstitious mind.

The physical makeup of the meat was unchanged. If the meat was clean before, it was clean afterwards. If it was unclean before, it was unclean afterwards.

The act of sacrificing it to an idol could not defile the meat; however the act could affect a man's conscience ... if he believed the idol was real and viable.

This was not about clean or unclean animals as they are declared in God's law (Lev. 11). The law was not changed, and this was not about that law. This was about a contemporary belief in **ritual defilement**: something else altogether.

Paul said that ritual defilement was **nothing** ... except to those who actually believed in the viability of the idol. Belief in the idol cause it to become something ... only in their minds (imagination). This affected their consciences.

That was the issue.

8. But that which we eat will not commend us to God: neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we don't eat are we the worse.

9. But take heed that this freedom of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to them that are weak.

10. For if anyone should see you as one with knowledge, reclining (eating) in the idol's temple, will not the conscience of him which is weak be encouraged to eat those things which are offered to idols?

1 Corinthians 8:8-10

In other words, if a weaker brother saw you eating food that had been sacrificed to an idol, what would that do to your brother's conscience? Wouldn't he assumed that you were paying homage to the idol?

11. And through your knowledge the weak brother, for whom Christ died, is being destroyed.

12. But sinning thus against the brethren, and wounding their conscience which is weak, you are sinning against Christ.

13. Wherefore, if that which I eat makes my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh in the age, so I will not cause my brother to stumble.

1 Corinthians 8:11-13

The sin was not in the eating of defiled food. The sin was in the undermining of a weaker brother's conscience. Paul was focusing on conscience, not food. The conscience, not the meat, is capable of being defiled

15. There is nothing from outside a man that enters into him that is able to make him common (defile him): but the things which come out of the man, those are the things that make the man common (defiled).

18. And he said to them, Are you also without understanding? Are you not aware that nothing from outside that enters into the man is able to defile him;

19. Since it does not enter into the heart, but into the belly, and goes out into the sewer, purging all food?

20. And he said, That which comes out of the man, that makes the man common (defiles him).

21. For from inside, out of the heart of men, proceed bad thoughts, fornications, thieveries, murders,

22. Adulteries, covetings, wickedness, deceit, incontinence, a blind eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23. All these difficulties come from within, and makes the man common (defiled).

Mk. 7:15, 18-23

Man defiles himself, not by that which goes into his belly, but by that which comes out of his heart. Personal knowledge is important, but it is not as important as your brother's conscience. You must value your brother more than food; more than your own lust or ego.

Verse 4 of Romans 14 says, "To his own master he stands or falls." Here is the crux of the matter. Who is the master? False authorities pass judgment upon people and pretend to be their masters. Of course, we're again talking about false authority versus real authority.

We don't know exactly what the Lord expects of each of his servants. We have guidelines of obedience based upon the Bible. We know what the law says. We know the simple and overt things. But we don't know each man's conscience. Only the Lord does.

I may find myself fighting certain battles that you may never face. And you may find yourself fighting certain adversaries that I may never face. What's more, you may fight your battles differently than I fight mine.

The Lord may send different trials to different people who are all at different levels of knowledge. Only He knows each man's capacity. Only He is the Master of men. And He is the only one who can say whether or not a man is doing his will. If we attempt to judge the conscience of our brethren we are stepping into a jurisdiction where we don't belong.

In matters of overt and obvious sin, like robbery, theft, rape, and other clear things regarding the Law, it is easy for us to judge. These are obvious. But Paul was talking about matters of conscience, matters of faith and loyalty ... not overt and obvious sin.

I can't judge your loyalty to your own master. Only He can do that, because only He knows what He has demanded of you.

That is the criteria. Only our Master knows our conscience ... therefore, only He can judge us personally.

A clean conscience is essential. God demands a good conscience ... even over good works. He judges us based upon our spirit (our desire to obey). If our spirit is right before Him, He grants us grace to cover our weaknesses and our ignorance. That's where grace comes in.

Motive and sincerity are of utmost importance, and this can be judged only by the One who knows our consciences.

QUESTION: Are you saying that the practice of “shunning” or “excommunication” should not be practiced? Shouldn’t heretics be made examples to educate and warn others, and thereby save them from losing the faith?

ROMANS 14:5-8 WE BELONG TO THE LORD

Who indeed regards one day above another? And who regards every day? Let each one be fully persuaded in his own mind.

He that is persuaded of the day, he is persuaded of the Lord. And he that eats, he eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he that eats not, to the Lord he eats not, and he gives thanks to God.

For no one lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.

For if we are living, we are living to the Lord; and if we are dying, we are dying to the Lord: therefore whether we are living or dying we are the Lord’s.

PAUL was focusing attention upon a precise point ... and that point is this: **WHAT** we do is important, but not as important as **WHY** we do it. Brethren can have differences of opinion, but we should not judge one another’s conscience. All brethren must strive for a clear conscience regarding their intent to do Christ’s will. If a man’s conscience is right there is no condemnation. Therefore, “Let each one be fully persuaded in his own mind.”

God expects us to be true to our conscience ... even when our conscience is ill informed. The Beast System strives to program people by misdirecting their consciences. Church and state insist on dictating the public conscience; they demand control of the public conscience to control our thought process ... as the “thought police” in Orwell’s book: **1984**.

For instance, people today are programmed to assume that modern society is advanced in its thinking processes. They look at Bible passages as if they were written for primitive and ancient societies and therefore cannot apply to today’s world. They wonder why Paul spent so much time talking about things that have no bearing on us now. They view Bible principles as just so much idle talk, or ideas intended for some future un-worldly realm. Thus, they render the Bible useless to themselves.

Verse six tells us that whether we value one day over another, or whether we value every day, in either case we must follow our conscience. If we believe it, we must do it. That’s faith and sincerity. Disagreements are allowed. But insincerity and faithlessness are not allowed.

Paul says that the Lord does not condemn his servants if they are sincerely trying to please Him. And only He knows their sincerity.

Our lives are not our own. We are the Lord’s. We live and have our being in Him. He purchased us with his own life. We have no life of our own.

Humanists disagree. They think their lives are their own, and they don’t want any co-pilots. But Christians must know that we are not our own. The great scenario that is playing out through history is NOT about us! It is about Jesus, and we must extract ourselves from the center of our worlds.

Our lives are in God’s hands. Christ purchased us for Him, and we belong to Him. However, in today’s state-worshipping society this line of thinking is unacceptable.

QUESTION: You say our lives are not our own, and we have no claim to them. Doesn’t that mentality lead to helplessness? Aren’t we supposed to be independent and think for ourselves?

ROMANS 14:9, 10 AVOID SELF-CENTRIC VIEW

For this purpose Christ died, and lived, that he might be Lord of the dead and the living.

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you belittle your brother? We all shall stand before the throne of God.

WE ARE brothers and friends in the Body of Christ. Our lives are mutually purposed through Him. The problem Paul was addressing was man’s tendency to think that all things revolve around **man**: that **man** is the focus of all things. When man has a self-centric perspective – like most Americans today – the society is given to greed, avarice, quarreling, competing, and rivalry. This arises when men stop looking to Christ as the center of their

world. They forget that the Reign of Christ is about Christ ... not about them.

The context of this must be kept clear. This teaching applied to brethren, not to foreigners or outsiders. The instructions applied to the Body of Christ only. Paul was not redefining relationships between Christians and non-Christians. He was not addressing people outside the Body of Christ. He was addressing brethren only.

Paul is showing us how to handle controversies among ourselves – among brethren. He is teaching basic courtesy and respect for one another – that which fellow Christians deserve. In dealing with a brother we should assume, until proven otherwise, that he is of good faith.

Christian brethren can have disagreements. Disagreements do not necessarily lead to rivalry and condemnation. Disagreement can create enmity, or it can create discussion and learning. We must learn to live with grace ... not contempt for one another. We should not be competing among ourselves for superiority. We are brethren, not competitors.

Here are some scriptures that clarify this. Paul addressed the Corinthian brethren who were competing with one another.

17. Now in this which I declare to you I praise you not, because it is not for the better, but for the worse that you are meeting together.

18. For first of all, when you come together in the ecclesia I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it.

19. For you insist on separations among you, so that they which are preferred can be made manifest among you.

20. Therefore, your coming together into one place is not to eat a lord's supper.

I Corinthians 11:17-20

“A lord’s supper” was not the ritual practiced in churches. Rather Paul was talking about the motives of those who came together. They were given to competition and rivalry ... like “lords” instead of brothers. When they

met together, each one was taking his own supper, as gluttonous “lords” ... instead of coming together as brethren for the mutual benefit of the Body of Christ.

Paul scolded the Corinthians, and told them that they were coming together for the wrong reasons ... namely, to indulge themselves and compete with one another ... like we’ve seen in the churches.

They were acting like lords over one another instead of brethren.

He then adds:

27. Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord inappropriately shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

I Corinthians 11:27

To “eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord” meant to claim membership in the Body of Christ. Those who pretended to be part of the Body of Christ, but loved themselves and indulged themselves at the expense of the rest of the Body, were guilty of undermining the work of the Lord (i.e., “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord”).

28. But let him prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

29. For he that eats and drinks, not discerning the body, is eating and drinking judgment to himself.

I Corinthians 11:28-29

These Corinthians were competing with one another rather than strengthening one another. Their motives for coming together were apparently self-centric rather than Christ-centric.

ROMANS 14: 10-12 COMPORIMENT WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST

But why do you judge your brother? Also, why do you belittle your brother? For all of us shall stand be-

fore the seat of God.

For it is written, I live, says the Lord, so that each knee will bow to me and each tongue will confess to God.

So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

HERE Paul is talking about behavior within the Body of Christ. We, as brethren (sons of God), inherit grace, and we share in it equally. We should acknowledge this between us, and we should edify one another in so doing. We are “brethren” or “brothers.” A brother in Christ is a member of the spiritual family called “the ecclesia,” and “the Body of Christ.” Thus, Paul is talking about family matters and dealings between brethren.

To accuse a brother of being in error is serious enough. However, to accuse a brother of not being sincere is a very serious spiritual matter. Only God can know for sure whether a man is sincere. We cannot always be sure of it.

So, as we continue in this study, let’s realize: 1. brethren can have differences, and 2. minor differences should not separate brethren. We should handle our affairs as brothers, not as rivals. Too often brothers (both genetic and spiritual) find themselves competing with one another, trying to best each other, in life-long rivalry. This should not be!

We should strive to serve Christ, not to compete with one another. Each of us stands or falls before God ... not in competition with each other.

To “stand” means to “be strong.” Therefore, when it says “stand” in verse 10, it’s saying that we each are made strong as we stand before God. “We,” in this passage, refers to brethren in Christ.

Verse 11 says each of us will bow the knee. Again, that refers to brethren in Christ, not all people on the Earth. Each one who comes to Christ will personally bow the knee and confess to God. YOU, as a child of God, are responsible for your personal commitment to Christ. Jesus deals with us

personally. On matters of conscience, He judges us individually and personally.

QUESTION: Are you saying that people who believe differently and have differing doctrines are all equal?

ROMANS 14:13 CAUSING BRETHREN TO STUMBLE

Therefore let us judge one another no more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall before a brother.

THE Bible is an ancient document. It is so ancient that it is difficult to translate into understandable modern English. The actual book we read, commonly called “The Bible,” is not actually “the Bible.” It is only A VERSION of the Bible. It’s neither the actual document itself, nor a copy of it. It is only a “version.” The actual Bible is a collection of documents that are so old that the words are hard for people today to translate and understand. People today write, think, and talk, very differently from the writers of the Bible. The writers had different customs, idioms, and thoughts.

Conveying those words and thoughts accurately from the original writings is not an easy task. If you have studied a foreign language you can better appreciate this.

The King James Version is no exception. The KJV translators produced a confused version. And the churches have added to the confusion.

So when we have difficulty understanding Paul’s writings, remember it may not be his fault. And we shouldn’t accept typical church accusations about him. For instance, Paul is usually accused by the churches of being anti-law. And yet, we have seen from our studies that Paul DID NOT teach against law! He taught FOR law. He taught that God’s law was just and holy and good. Nonetheless, church doctrine teaches that Paul taught against law.

Even Peter had to defend Paul’s writings:

15. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given to him has written to you;

16. As also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable twist, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction.

II Peter 3:15-16

Paul is one of the greatest teachers in the Bible ... but as Peter says, people without understanding tend to misinterpret him.

QUESTION: I’ve never heard this explanation of Paul’s teaching. How can you be sure it is accurate? Why haven’t well-known Bible scholars discovered this, and why aren’t they teaching it? If it is the truth, more people should know about it.

ROMANS 14:14 COMMON VS. UNCLEAN

I know, and am convinced in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is common of itself: except to the man who reckons a thing to be common, to him it is common.

PAUL was expanding on the importance of a good conscience. In this passage, the King James translators wrongly used the word “unclean.” The correct word is “common.” There is a big difference between “common” and “unclean.” A thing can be “unclean” for several reasons. For instance, God created some things to be unclean. If we are talking about food, there are certain meats that are unclean by virtue of the way they are created. For instance, hog meat is unclean (unfit) by virtue of its natural composition. Hogs, and many other animals, were created for purposes other than to be food for people. They were created unclean (inappropriate for food). The fact that it is unclean has nothing to do with how it may be prepared or cooked. Like the buzzard, mouse, skunk, etc., hogs are naturally unclean and unfit for human consumption.

Likewise, clean animals are naturally clean (fit for consumption) provided they are prepared and cooked correctly.

A “common” animal, however, was different. An animal or a food that was “common” had at one time been “clean,” but BECAME contaminated (defiled) by association with something unclean. It was once clean, but it BECAME “common” and thus considered “unclean.”

This law against cross-contamination took on a more confusing facet when Babylonian tradition came into play. God’s simple law of cleanliness was adopted and perverted by Babylonian culture (the Pharisees) which taught that food (and people) could be defiled by mere proximity to something unclean.

This belief – this tradition – was precisely the subject of Paul’s teaching. Some of the brethren still believed it.

To illustrate this, consider the “shambles” (meat markets) of Paul’s day. There you could find ordinary meat on

display. Also, for the religious people there was meat for sale that had been offered to, and blessed by, particular religious idols. The “blessed” meat probably cost more ... like “kosher” meat found in some markets today.

Now, if the storekeeper had a display of clean meat in his store along with a display of meat that had been sacrificed to an idol, some brethren assumed that the clean meat had become “common” or “defiled.” The fact that the ordinary meat and the temple meat were both in the same store made some of the brethren (who still feared idols) worry that the clean meat had become common and unfit. It’s like cross contamination ... only in this sense it was belief in ritual contamination rather than physical contamination.

It made no difference whether the two meats had come into actual physical contact. Just being in the same store as “sacrificed” meat was enough.

Thus, Paul’s explanation had to do with the concept of ritual defilement, where meat is “perceived” to have been contaminated by having been in “common” with unclean meat, or with defiled temple meat.

That same principle of ritual defilement had bled over to their thoughts about men as well. As you recall, the main theme of Peter’s vision, in Acts 10, centered on the question of whether or not a man could be defiled (contaminated) by existing in “common” with other men who were considered “uncircumcised” or “unclean.” So, you see, Paul was addressing the belief in ritual cross-contamination of food, and ritual cross-contamination of men. Was it a reality, or just a religious illusion?

The fact is, Paul wanted the Corinthians to think about conscience ... rather than about religious tradition and idols. Paul said the conscience is the thing that can be defiled. He said that for those who have understanding, they know that “ritual defilement” could not cause clean meat to become unclean. The composition of the meat was not physically affected by ritual. Of course, if clean meat actually touched unclean meat then the physical disease factors

from the unclean meat could be physically transferred. As a matter of fact, modern butcher shops and markets are required by U.S. law to keep hog carcasses separate from beef carcasses so that they do not physically touch. There is a danger of physical cross contamination. But that was not what Paul is talking about. He was talking about ritual defilement (ritual cross contamination). Jewish (Babylonian) tradition taught it could happen by merely being in proximity (near) or in the same market with unclean or “defiled” meat.

Paul told them that the most important consideration was the state of a brother’s conscience. If a brother believed the meat was ritually defiled, then he should not be encouraged to go against his conscience and eat the meat.

The Babylonian tradition of ritual defilement extended to people as well. Like food, people were also perceived as “defiled” if they happened to live in nations with uncircumcised or “unclean” people.

Paul was saying that ritual defilement was not a real thing... but if a man believed it was real, then in his conscience it was real. If he perceived a thing to be “defiled,” then to him it was “defiled.”

The issue was a man’s conscience ... not the composition of meat.

Paul tells us that an idol is nothing (I. Cor. 8:4). Idols have no real power over food or people. Idols only affect people who believe in them.

QUESTION: If Peter’s vision in Acts 10 was talking about unclean animals that God had pronounced clean, then why can’t you just take what the Bible says at face value, i.e. that animals that were once unclean are now made clean by God? The whole idea is that men have been made clean, so in order for the metaphor of animals to fit the situation, then the unclean animals would have had to have been made clean for the logic to work. Why else would Peter even use this example?

ROMANS 14:15 DO NO HARM

For if your brother is grieved because of your food you are not walking according to love. Do not, for the sake of food, destroy him for whom Christ died.

PAUL is pointing out that brethren should be more concerned for each other’s spiritual welfare, and less concerned about proving a petty point about their own knowledge of law. Don’t destroy a brother because of a petty lust for food or personal accommodation. The greater question is not whether I am free to eat some particular food, but rather how it will affect the conscience of my weaker brother. In reality the

food may be clean to eat – but a weaker brother who doesn’t understand this fact may assume, from my example, that I am eating food that is “defiled” ... and therefore that I am condoning participation in the pagan ritual (as in I Cor. 8).

Paul was pointing out that your brother’s conscience is more important than your personal freedom to eat some particular meat.

ROMANS 14:16-23 THE KINGDOM IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN FOOD

Therefore, let not that which is good be blasphemed because of you:

For the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in holy spirit.

For he that serves Christ in this is acceptable to God and approved of men.

Let us therefore seek the things of peace, and the things which edify one another.

Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Each indeed is clean, but it is bad to the man who stumbles in eating it.

It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, or do anything in which your brother is stumbling.

The faith which you have, have it to yourself in the sight of God. Happy is he who does not judge himself in what he approves.

For he that is undecided is guilty if he eats, because it is not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

THE GOOD, in verse 16, is the goodness that is associated with the Kingdom of God. Therefore, as a citizen of the Kingdom, do not misuse your freedoms in such a way as to confuse a brother or cause him to stumble.

The good message of the Kingdom of God was not merely license to eat and drink. Rather, it was the announcement of a new life. Eating and drinking has to do with flesh, and that was not the issue. The issue was on a higher plane: namely, the born-again life of righteousness, peace and joy through faith and a good conscience. The Kingdom of God is spiritual, not food and drink.

So, the question is: are we seeking food and drink, or are we seeking to spiritually strengthen our brothers and uphold Christ in their consciences?

In verse 20, Paul says “each” food designated edible is indeed clean. In other words, pagan ritual could not defile food. Nonetheless, for the brother whose conscience still believed it – to him it was real because his conscience condemned him. God expects us to always act on faith. We must follow our conscience ... to do what we perceive God wants us to do. If we don’t, it is sin.

A brother should be treated with love, not contempt. We must respect him, not because he agrees with us, but because he follows the Lord ... as do we.

Therefore, we should be quick to help, and slow to judge. Don’t rush to judgement with your brother. Don’t impute motives to him. Each must follow his own conscience. And if he is wrong, God will reveal it to him ... and cleanse his conscience.

The last statement in verse 23 gives us a further definition of sin: “for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” We already knew that sin is defined as “transgression of the law.” Also, sin means “to miss the mark.” That’s a literal interpretation of the word. We know that those two things go together because, when you transgress the law, you are missing the mark. But here is another facet of sin: sin is acting outside of faith. In other words, acting in bad conscience is a sin.

END OF ROMANS CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ROMANS CHAPTER 14

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. Paul is addressing the ecclesia in Rome, and therefore his comments apply only to members of the Body of Christ. These teachings do not apply to people outside the Body of Christ.
2. Throughout this chapter Paul scolds the Romans for “judging” their brethren. But he is not condemning judgment in a general sense. Rather, he is scolding them for a specific kind of judging or condemning: namely, the judging of a brother’s conscience.
3. It is one thing to judge an overt act. However, it is quite another thing to attempt to judge someone’s conscience. Paul says that no one, other than the Master (Jesus), can judge his servant’s conscience.
4. We are judged based on how much we know, and how well we follow our conscience. To know a truth is to be bound by it. To deny or ignor a truth is sin (“*for whatsoever is not of faith is sin*” - Rm. 14:23).
5. There is a distinct difference between the terms “*common*” and “*unclean*.” “Common” means to have once been “clean,” but then to have become “common” through cross-contamination. In terms of Paul’s example of common meat, he was referring to a contemporary belief in ritual contamination ... not physical contamination.
6. Paul wanted people to know that conscience was most important. If a brother believed a meat was “common” due to ritual contamination, then he was bound by his conscience to not eat that meat ... even though ritual contamination is not real.
7. If you openly eat something that your brother believes to be “common,” then you are tempting your brother to eat also, and thus defile his own conscience.
8. We are not our own. We belong to

the Lord. Therefore, our motives should be Christ-centric: to build our lives around Him – rather than self-centric: building our lives around ourselves.

9. The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking (Rm. 14:17). The realm of Christ’s Reign is our hearts first, not our bellies.

ANSWERS:

pg. 4a

The Biblical practice of “cutting off” (“casting out”) is intended only in cases of blatant and unrepentant sin ... not in matters of conscience.

pg. 4b

It always amuses me that the most “independent minded” people who want to “think for themselves” are only choosing one leader over another; one fad or tradition over another. Original thoughts are so rare a to be virtually non-existent. Everyone follows someone, some group, or some god. It is merely a matter of choosing who you will follow. We, as a people, should choose to follow Jesus.

Most people follow their bellies or their pocketbooks.

pg. 6a

No, Paul was saying that men of good conscience were brethren and accepted by God. Neither Paul nor I have said that people of different faiths should integrate. No sensible man would suggest that. We are to fellowship with “brethren” – not with strangers.

However, that subject is beside the point. Paul was not addressing that. Rather he was saying that neither meat, nor men, can be defiled by merely being in proximity to pagan

rituals. However, since we are judged by our faith, we must all act according to our faith ... even when it is incorrect.

He also taught that we should not attempt to “judge another’s servant.” We should identify our brethren – The Body of Christ – and treat them with respect.

pg. 6b

Nearly all published “Bible scholars” received their “scholarship” from a church institution. That alone impunes their so-called scholarship ... since churches are anti-Christ by nature.

The accuracy, or inaccuracy, of my work is born out by the Bible text itself, and by the holy spirit ... not by popular acceptance by the public or churches.

pg. 7

No unclean animals were made clean in Peter’s vision. There were “*all manner*” of animals on the sheet ... including clean ones. Peter was not told to “kill and eat” an unclean animal. He was told to “kill and eat” ... presuming that he could choose to kill one of the clean animals.

Peter’s concern was that the clean animals might have been defiled by being in physical proximity to the unclean animals. God told Peter that this vision referred to men (Israelites living in the nations), and that He had cleansed the men’s consciences, and so Peter should not think of them as “common or unclean.”