

The University Heights Messenger

May 1, 2011

Romans 14--1

Romans 14 is a chapter of Scripture that has been misused many times by brethren. It has been said that Romans 14 gives brethren the right to differ in matters of the faith. Verse 22a of the chapter is often used as proof. "The faith that you have, keep between yourselves and God." The obvious question is what is the faith that Paul is speaking of in this verse? Does he speak of "the faith," that body of objective truth that must be believed, accepted, and practiced by all Christians? Is it "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" spoken of in Jude 3? Or is he speaking of a subjective faith, my own personal opinions about matters of indifference to God? Let me suggest to you that the only way Romans 14 can harmonize with the remainder of the New Testament is if we understand it to speak of a subjective faith. Romans 14 is speaking of one's personal opinions in matters of indifference to God. To understand it otherwise leads to a world of problems.

Some within the Lord's church use this chapter to teach that contradictory teachings and practices of moral and doctrinal questions are to be tolerated. I cannot see how that could be true. If it were the bounds of fellowship would necessarily extend far beyond what God intended. To take the reasoning to its logical conclusion a person would be very hard pressed to say that there is any definitive standard of what is right and wrong in Christianity.

Romans 14 is in some ways a difficult passage and in others an easy one. When considered with the remainder of the New Testament it is not difficult to understand, but it has proven exceedingly difficult to properly apply. Over the next few bulletins we will discuss this chapter. Our understanding of it will reflect in the way we view the subject of faith, opinion, and authority.

Romans 14:1-6 says, "*As for the one who is weak in the faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat*

anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God."

There were two groups of people who comprised the early church--Jews and Gentiles. Under the Law of Moses eating certain types of meat had been forbidden. These were legal restrictions and were not due to the nature of the animal itself, by this is meant that there was nothing inherently wrong with the animal. Also, in the predominately Gentile city of Rome, meat was being sold in the marketplace that had been sacrificed to any number of idols. Some of the Jewish converts to Christ were not able to immediately and fully break away from the restrictions of the Mosaic Law. They would not eat meat sacrificed to idols and some of them apparently looked down upon those who did. On the other hand there were those who understood that the meats meant nothing one way or another and some of them apparently looked down upon those who had yet to achieve that understanding.

Under Judaism certain days had been declared "holy" and were set apart for the Jews. They are not part of the New Covenant. Christians come together today upon the first day of the week because we have apostolic examples. But what about the personal observance of days? Some of them were giving special significance to days and judging those who did not. Others gave no special significance to days and judged those who did. It

seems like there was a whole lot of judging going on, doesn't it?

This point must be made and understood. It did not make any difference whether they ate or not. The meat was a matter of indifference to God. The days didn't matter--they too were matters of indifference to God. When I say "indifference" I mean that God did not care one way or the other about it. Consider the example of Galatians 5:6. "*For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*" Under the Law of Moses physical circumcision meant a great deal. Under the New Covenant it doesn't mean anything at all. God simply does not care if we have our sons circumcised or not, unless we are trusting in circumcision for justification or are trying to bind it upon others. Romans 14 is *strictly* about brethren who differed on matters of indifference and how they were to treat one another. I believe that Romans 14 is foundationally a chapter about love. It is a shame that a chapter with such a wonderful theme has become the source of so much controversy.

We will continue our discussion of Romans 14 in the next chapter. I welcome any thoughts or comments that you have.

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IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

Glenn Davis is in Saint Joseph hospital for observation. The doctors are trying to determine if the seizures are the result of his benign tumor or something else.

Rita Pagan has been struggling with migraines. Tests have yet to reveal anything though further tests will be run.

Nancy Turner, a member of the Expressway congregation in Louisville, is in serious condition due to complications.

Our members: **Jeff Howerton, Jackie Litmer, Glenn Davis, Glenn Kimberlin.**

Others: **Edith Tirey, Tom Curtis, Linda Hill, Robin Miller, Vina Krassow, Tom Curtis, Courtney and Aubree Reeves, Tabetha Lynn, Tom Curtis, John Bennett, Dennis Brennan, Robert and Sarah Brundige, Donald Dawson, Jean Gartland, Wes Kidd, Gail Stein, Shannon Gilbert**

UPCOMING EVENTS:

There will be a congregational meeting today at 5. This is a meeting for appointing elders so please make special effort to attend.

BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sun: Deut 4, Ps 83, Acts 6
Mon: Deut 5-6, Ps 84, Acts 7
Tue: Deut 7-8, Ps 85, Acts 8
Wed: Deut 9-10, Ps 86, Acts 9
Thu: Deut 11-12, Ps 87, Acts 10
Fri: Deut 13-14, Ps 88, Acts 11
Sat: Deut 15-17, Ps 89:1-29, Acts 12

SERMON TOPICS:

Sunday AM. The central message of the Bible 2
(Ephesians 1:3-4; 3:11)

Sunday PM. The Apostle Thomas
(John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24-25)