

The University Heights Messenger

May 15, 2011

Romans 14--3

As we move to verse 14 we read, **“I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks its unclean.”**

In the context of this chapter Paul’s words would refer to the distinction between clean and unclean meats under the Mosaic Law. However, if a man thought that the Lord prohibited the eating of certain meats, he must not eat until he has been convinced otherwise. This would be true of any matter of indifference. Even if a matter is not right or wrong in itself, if a person thinks that it is wrong, it is wrong for him to do it.

Let us move on now to verses 15-18. **“For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by man.”**

As was mentioned in an earlier article, this is really a chapter about love for our brethren. Just as I am not to violate my conscience in matters of indifference, neither am I to cause a brother or sister in Christ to violate theirs. I must never cause or entice my brethren to do what they believe is wrong, even if I correctly understand that the issue under consideration really does not matter to God one way or the other.

Let me give you an example. I believe that it is perfectly acceptable for a Christian to celebrate Christmas as a purely secular holiday, a social time when family and friends gather and enjoy one another’s company. I believe that Christians can decorate their house with non-religious items and give gifts should they so desire. However, I recognize and appreciate the fact that some brethren disagree and hold an opposite view. Thus, when my family has festivities at this time and we are inviting

friends to join us, I will not ask those brethren to violate their conscience by inviting them to take part. If they desire I will continue to discuss the matter with them, not feeling that it should separate us in any way, but I will certainly not try to force them to go against what they believe. My feelings on a matter of indifference to God are not so important that I should wound a brother’s conscience just to make him agree with me.

Let me give you one more example that I believe is appropriate, even though it would deal with someone who is not a Christian. If I were to invite an Orthodox Jew to my house, and if he decided to come, I would not serve him ham. I know that it doesn’t make any difference to God, but I will not force anyone to violate their conscience in such matters of indifference. One would have to question my character otherwise.

Understand, in matters of *the faith*, matters concerning morals and doctrines where God has clearly spoken--that’s it. Everything is settled and fixed and a person’s conscience does not in any way effect my responsibility to obey God. In matters of indifference, we *must* have love and be willing to forego our personal liberties.

We want to spend a few more articles to note how the chapter is occasionally misused and even abused. It is all to the end of better understanding a very important chapter in God’s Word.

Some are claiming that the point emphasized in Romans 14 is the individual nature of the things discussed as opposed to things that would involve the whole church. There is truth in that. The problem is that some have taken it too far and claim that the admonitions of Romans 14 would include things that are inherently wrong (sinful) but would not include the whole church in the practice.

Romans 14 does not include sinful matters. Romans 14:3 says, **“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.”** Some translations say that God has “received” him. Does God “receive” or “welcome” the one engaged in sinful

activity who refuses to repent? Taking all that we know of Scripture the answer is “no.” Consider what Peter told Simon, a Christian, after Simon had sinned in Acts 8:20-23. **“But Peter said to him, may your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”** Clearly God was not receiving Simon at this time and his sin was greed, a decidedly moral issue. Another passage to consider is Isaiah 59:1-2. **“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.”** These verses mean what they say. Thus, the admonitions of Romans 14 do not and can not include matters that are sinful.

We will consider this further in the next article.

IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

Let’s keep **Jenilee Daniels** and **Jackie Litmer** in our thoughts and prayers as they progress throughout their pregnancies. Let’s also keep those unborn little one’s in our prayers as well!

Nancy Turner passed from this life to the next last week. Let us remember the Turner family in our prayers.

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

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

NOTE

The elders have requested that the congregation be here at 4:30 for a congregational meeting. Let’s show our love and support for them, as well as our interest in the furtherance of the work in this location, by attending with some ideas for congregational evangelism.

BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sun: Deut 33-34, Ps 96, Acts 20
Mon: Josh 1, Ps 97, Acts 21
Tue: Josh 2-4, Ps 98, Acts 22
Wed: Josh 5-7, Ps 99, Acts 23
Thu: Josh 8-9, Ps 100, Acts 24-25
Fri: Josh 10-11, Ps 101, Acts 26
Sat: Josh 12-13, Ps 102, Acts 27

SERMON TOPICS:

Sunday AM. The central message of the Bible 4
(Leviticus 17:11; 16:30)

Sunday PM. Jamie Powell preaching

Elders: David Collins, Garry Banks, John Thompson