

# **NOTES ON ROMANS 14**

*by Donald Townsley*

**This chapter is discussing INDIVIDUAL action, NOT CHURCH action.**

1. There is a weak brother, the opposite of a strong brother -- Rom. 14:1; 15:1
2. This controversy centered in eating meats -- v. 15; 2 - 3
3. Their difference is about eating "all things" or eating only "herbs" or vegetables -- v. 1 - 2
4. The second point of difference included esteeming of special days -- v. 5
  - (1) This is individual action, NOT church action.
  - (2) The church or kingdom cannot observe special days -- Gal. 4: 10 -11
  - (3) The church observes only the first day of the week -- Acts 20:7

## I. THERE ARE CLEAR OBJECTIVES IN ROMANS 14

1. The major point of the chapter is to promote peace, harmony, kindness and love among Christians --v.19
2. This peace should be paramount because the kingdom of God is more important than personal opinions -- Rom. 14:17
  - (1) Food and drink are not characteristics of the Kingdom -- Rom. 14:17 --"*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink*"
  - (2) Food and drink are things that pertain to one's physical welfare as an individual in the personal liberties of everyday life -- I Cor. 8:8
  - (3) They are not a part of those spiritual principles which make up the kingdom of God. The kingdom is "*righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" -- Rom. 14:17
  - (4) Things that have to do with the work of the kingdom, the worship of the kingdom and the personal righteousness of the saints cannot be classed with Romans 14.
3. There is a difference drawn between matters of faith (doctrine) and opinion.
  - (1) The things that are classed in this chapter are determined by one's personal conscience.
    1. "*Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*"--Rom. 14:5
    2. Rom. 14:14
    3. Rom. 14:23
  - (2) Matters of the Kingdom are NOT settled by one's own conscience. They are settled by the Word of God -- Matt. 7:21; II John 9 - 11; Jude 3
4. Christians must maintain respect for honest scruples of others -- Rom. 14:1; 15:1
  - (1) Fellowship of the Saints is not to be broken for unessential matters -- matters of indifference.
  - (2) Those who practice the things mentioned in this text are not condemned by God -- the man who eats all things and the man who eats herbs are both received by God -- Rom. 14:3; 14:14; 14:1; 15:7

## II. THIS CONTEXT CLEARLY DOES NOT COVER SOME THINGS:

1. The context does NOT concern unacceptable practices.

- (1) Paul said the individual who esteems a day or eats meats is acceptable and the man who does not is acceptable -- Rom. 14: 3 - 6
- (2) Paul clearly argues that the different practices he was considering were both acceptable to God -- Rom. 14: 3 - 6
- (3) Before a thing can come under this chapter it must be acceptable to God.
  1. Marriage and divorce for any cause is NOT acceptable to God -- Matt. 19:9
  2. Instrumental music in worship is NOT acceptable to God -- Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; I Cor. 4:6
  3. Immodesty and mixed swimming is NOT acceptable to God -- I Tim. 2:9; Matt. 5:28
  4. Institutionalism is NOT acceptable to God -- Acts 14:23
  5. These things are matters of doctrine; they pertain to the righteousness of the kingdom -- one who practices these things is NOT to be received -- II John 9 -11

2. The context does NOT concern matters other than personal choice.

- (1) All things mentioned here refer to desirable choices in one's individual daily life.
- (2) In this area God has left many of the choices up to the common sense of knowledgeable Christians.
- (3) These are indifferent matters to God in everyday life.
- (4) In the realm of opinion God has NOT spoken, but has left man free in keeping with the principles of righteousness to make his own decisions.
- (5) The things allowed are such a nature that they are not wrong in themselves, nor do they conflict with any Bible teaching.
- (6) The principles this chapter calls for the conscience to be the guide in the matters under consideration-- Rom. 14:5; 14:23
  1. QUESTION: Is man's conscience to be his guide in all matters?
  2. ANSWER: NO -- Jer. 10:23
  3. So, there must be limitations on the principle of the conscience being our guide in Rom. 14.
    - (1) One cannot engage in a practice just because his conscience would allow it.
    - (2) There are limitations in this chapter that must be respected.

3. The context does NOT concern congregational matters.

- (1) These are things NOT of the Kingdom -- Rom. 14:17
- (2) Nothing is said in this context about congregational work or worship.
- (3) It all has to do with individual personal matters of indifference.
- (4) For someone to include matters of church activities or worship in this context is to be untrue to rightly dividing the word of truth -- II Tim. 2:15

4. Differences discussed here are NOT matters which make up the Kingdom.

- (1) Paul pointed out clearly that these matters were not as important as those which make up the Kingdom of God -- Rom. 14: 16 - 17
- (2) These are matters of INDIFFERENCE.

5. These liberties of differing opinions must not cause disruption among brethren.

- (1) One must not by his example "*put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way*"--Rom. 14:13
- (2) A man should never insist on exercising his rights or liberties if harm comes to a brother by his doing so -- Rom. 14:15 - 16
- (3) One must "*follow after those things which make for peace, and things wherewith on may edify another*" -- Rom. 14:19

6. These different practices cannot violate any other instruction of the Lord.

- (1) These different practices were both right -- Rom. 14:3
- (2) This chapter is NOT discussing doctrinal differences.

### III. THESE DIFFERENCES ARE OUTSIDE MATTERS OF FAITH

1. Whether or not one eats only vegetables is a matter of personal choice and opinion.

- (1) God does NOT require this.
- (2) God does NOT require that we eat meat.
- (3) This is up to each individual.

2. Whether one esteems or observes a day special to one's self is also a matter of choice -- Rom. 14:6

- (1) The day is observed by an individual -- Rom. 14:5
- (2) He cannot bind this day on other Christians -- Rom. 14:3, 10, 13, 22
- (3) This day cannot be a substitute for the Lord's Day -- Acts 20:7

### IV. CLEAR PRINCIPLES TO BE SEEN:

1. Individual Christians can disagree over matters of lifestyle and diets and foods without being sinful -- vs. 1 - 4
2. An individual is at liberty to bind additional things on his/her conscience, such as days or diets -- vs. 5 - 6
3. One can plead one's cause in such opinions with all fervor as long as it is kept within the realm of personal choice.
  - (1) He must NOT bind it on others.
4. One cannot, must not, intrude into God's domain of authority and bind opinions upon others -- vs. 10
  - (1) Only the truth as revealed by God can be the STANDARD in matters of doctrine and faith -- Rom. 10:17
5. One cannot press opinions to the hurt and judgment of others -- vs. 4, 10 - 12
6. One cannot exercise these personal liberties to the hurt of others -- vs. 15 - 21
  - (1) I Cor. 8:13
7. One cannot cause divisions in the body of Christ over such personal choices -- Rom. 15:7

### CONCLUSION

1. It is not uncommon to see men stress opinions, trivialities to the hurt of churches.