

“Him That Is Weak In Faith ...”

“... receive ye, yet not for decisions of scruples” (Rom. 14:1). No chapter of the scriptures has likely been discussed and examined more in the past two or three decades than this one. The question of fellowship of those who teach “false doctrines” has been justified from Paul’s instructions in this passage. It is likely that nothing new will be added through this article to things already written, but perhaps a reaffirmation of what the passage does teach will help us make proper applications in our dealings with other brethren and to avoid pressing the passage to teach something it does not.

First, it must be noted that neither the person who was “*weak in faith*” nor him who had “*faith*” violated a law of God by what the “*weak in faith*” may have failed to do nor what he who “*had faith*” did. That speaks volumes! This immediately removes issues in which brethren disagree in matters of moral concerns. It cannot be said that neither the one who marries a mate put away from his/her former mate in the absence of fornication nor one who did not marry a mate put away from a former mate in the absence of fornication sins. According to Matthew 19:6, he who marries a mate who had been put away from a former mate in which no fornication was involved does indeed sin.

The items of Romans 14 are matters where neither the actual abstinence of the “*weak*” nor the indulgence of the “*strong*” results in sin. Obviously the chapter deals with matters of indifference, items neither forbidden nor commanded by God. Of course it is possible that sin could be involved, not in the act itself, but in the attitude of either the strong or the weak. This point will be elaborated on later.

That the chapter deals with matters of indifference is clear from several points. First, the Lord receives both the willful abstainer and willful indulger of the disputed item. The stronger brother must not set at naught the weaker; the weaker must not judge (condemn) the strong (14:3). To eat, or not to eat, is a matter which each man determines in his own mind (14:5). In items of faith, right or wrong is determined by God, not man, and we must not forget that “*there is a way which seemeth right unto a man but the ends thereof are the ways of death*” (Pro. 16:25). Again, the writer assures us that “*nothing is unclean of itself: save that to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean*” (14:14) Similar to verse 14 is verse 20: “*All things indeed are clean; howbeit it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.*” These items under study in consideration of one who might be weak and another strong were things neither right nor wrong within themselves.

And yet, these matters of indifference can become sin either for the strong or the weak. They can become sin to the weak if he did something he believed to be wrong. *"But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin"* (14:23). And, if the weak is contentious; if he binds that which God has not bound, if he judges; condemning those who either eats something he regards unclean or fails to esteem holy something he esteems holy; he sins. He is cautioned against doing either of these things.

The strong brother likewise may sin in indifferent things. He may *"set at naught"* the weak one. However *"foolish"* the scruples of the weak may seem to him, the strong one must respect the weak one, not ridiculing nor mocking him. He must not make a matter of indifference a stumbling block to the weak one. He may know the matter is clean but the weak one may not be fully assured of that fact. He can eat the indifferent thing, doing so in faith. The weak one cannot. And if the strong persists and through his pressure the weak one is led to do that he has scruples against, the strong brother succeeds in destroying his weak brother. Paul urged, *"Destroy not with the meat him for whom Christ died"* (14:15). To be continued in the next article.

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