

"The Faith Which Thou Hast ..."

"... have to thyself before God. Happy is he that judgeth not himself in that which he approveth. But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:22f).

In Romans fourteen "*faith*" refers not to the faith (Eph., 4:4f); nor to the conviction which is produced by that faith (Rom. 1:16f; 10:17). In this chapter "*faith*" stands synonymously for one's conscience. The word "*faith*" appears five times in the chapter. First, "*Him that is weak in faith receive ye ...*" (14:1). Then, "*one man hath faith to eat all things*" (Rom. 14:2). Then, three times in verses 22-23 (cited above) the word also is found. In all five instances the word "*faith*" describes either what a man could do with the assent of his conscience or else what he could not do with the approval of his conscience.

The chapter (as was shown in an earlier article) deals with things of indifference. The material at hand deals with the "*decision of scruples*" (vs 1). It deals with eating of meats. Perhaps the meats here were things unclean as revealed by Moses' Law. They could also have been the eating of meats sacrificed to idols, which subject Paul dealt with in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10. In either instance, it could be said, "*Nothing is unclean of itself*" and "*all things indeed are clean*" (vs. 13, 20). But, to one who was "*weak in faith*" who had scruples about the meats in question, to eat would be to damn himself for "*to him that accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean*" (Rom. 14:14). "*And it is evil for that man who eateth with offense*" (14:20).

A burden is placed upon those who have faith to "*eat all things.*" First, he must not set at naught him who does not have faith to eat (vs 3). He must not place a stumbling block in his brother's way, nor an occasion of stumbling (14:13). He is to remember that through his exercising his liberty to eat, he may grieve his brother and not walk in love (14:15). He may, with his meat, destroy him for whom Christ died (14:11). He must not "*overthrow for meat's sake, the work of God*" (14:2). The apostle adds, "*Happy is he that judgeth not himself in that which he approveth*" (14:22). Through his arrogantly flaunting of his liberty, he destroys the brother for whom Christ died. God forbid!

While the greater responsibility admittedly rests with him who is strong (in faith); this does not mean that the weak brother has no responsibility in the matter. He is not to judge his brother whose conscience allows him to do something his own conscience does not permit (14:3, 4, 10). Thus it is evident that from this instructions, the "weak brother" may know, intellectually,

that there is no wrong in the eating of meats but his conscience simply will not permit him to do that which he intellectually may know. And, the "weak brother" must never eat that which he cannot eat in good conscience (he doubts). In this passage, *"whatsoever is not of faith is sin,"* does not refer to going beyond the revelation of Christ; it means that one who does something he has a doubt about, sins; no matter that the thing he does is altogether right. In recent years, Romans 14 has been a battleground, used by some to justify fellowship with those who teach false doctrines. Those who postulate Romans fourteen to such a position do a great disservice to the cause of Christ for they only add further things for brethren to disagree about. Second John 9-11 is as much revelation as in Romans 14 and that passage reads, *"Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any man cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh of his evil works."*

Paul's exhortations in Romans 14:19 are especially appropriate today. *"So then, let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another."* We call not for "peace at any price" but for lower voices and loving spirits. Disagreement with another does not mean we are enemies and we should not act as though we are. We should follow after things by which we may edify one another. An earnest desire to do and be what the scriptures teach should be the motto of all. Surely God's word can be understood. Surely we can lay aside our prejudices and preconceived ideas and approach the scriptures determined to both believe and accept what they teach. When two parties, who differ, so approach the scriptures, will we not both come to the proper understanding that will allow us to walk together?

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