

ROMANS 14...

ESTEEMING ONE DAY ABOVE ANOTHER IN WORSHIP?

Paul is credited as providing a basis for the change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Not only are his writings relied upon to uphold Sunday as the New Testament day of worship, but some go so far as to say his writings did away with Yahweh's law. We are no longer under obedience to the Ten Commandments we are told. Generally it is the fourth Commandment dealing with the Sabbath which is under attack. Carnal mankind just does not want to obey or keep the seventh day Sabbath, and frequently appeal is made to Romans 14 as proof the keeping of the Saturday Sabbath has been set aside.

The book of Romans is considered one of the most profound books in the New Testament, and is felt by many to be Paul's masterpiece. Tyndale introduces Paul's writings as an introduction not to the New Testament, but to the Old. Tyndale feels that Romans gives insight and understanding into the Old Testament which viewed from the new enhances our appreciation of past events.

The fourteenth chapter of Romans is often singled out as a prime example of Paul's doing away with the law. This pericope is erroneously chosen to negate the obligation of Yahweh's people to observe the Seventh Day Sabbath which is Saturday. This in spite of the fact numerous denominations as well the Roman Catholic church says there is not one shred of evidence that the seventh day of worship was changed to Sunday. Sunday worship came from man's imagination. (See our mini-study "Sunday Worship?")

EXAMINING PAUL'S LETTER

Paul begins Romans 14 by encouraging his readers to be patient and understanding with those who have not yet developed a deep abiding faith in Yahshua and the Scriptures. We are to accept those who are unsure of their understanding, and not argue or contend with them over the subtle opinions or differences one may have. This is his theme throughout the entire chapter, getting along with brethren!

We must point out this 14th chapter does not mention the Sabbath even one time. The entire chapter is devoid of any mention of the Sabbath or a day of worship. Nowhere do we find this chapter even mentions the weekly Sabbath or any other holy day! Romans 14 is a chapter dealing with eating food and fasting. Nothing about a day of worship! Let us clear our mind of any foregone conclusions and see Paul's purpose in writing this chapter:

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.(Rom.14:1-2)

Scholars differ why one who is weak in the faith would eat only vegetables. Some postulate that probably some flesh sold in the market was not killed or processed properly, and was not drained of blood, which is proscribed in Leviticus 17:12. Often animals were dedicated to pagan deities and then taken to market. Eating only vegetables and fruit would avoid any possibility of inadvertently consuming common or unclean flesh. Paul does not clarify exactly his reason for discussing food as an indication of a weak faith, but does encourage one to be strong in the faith.

EATING OR NOT EATING—FASTING?

Tolerating differences in food preference and days selected for fasting in particular were the issues. We are not to criticize or judge a believer on whether he is a vegetarian or eats or does

not eat—that is he fasts or does not fast. There are subtle and varied differences among the body of believers; differences which in no way offend Yahweh. We are not to judge or condemn one, knowing he has been called by Yahweh even as we also are called.

Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for Yahweh hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for Yahweh is able to make him stand.(Rom.14:3-4)

A number of scholars indicate verse five refers to the custom of fasting. Monday and Thursday were regular fast days. Some believers perhaps fasted on one or perhaps both of these days. Others may have chosen to fast on Tuesday or Wednesday. There is no ordinance in Scripture that tells us to fast on a certain day of the week, except for Atonement, which is on the tenth day of the seventh scriptural month. All believers are expected to fast on this day of Atonement each year.

However, Yahshua obviously expects us to fast. He told John's disciples that His followers would indeed fast when He was removed from the earth. Since the Savior has been taken to the heavenly realm, we as His followers are expected to fast. No special day of the week is mentioned, as we are given the opportunity to select a time to fast.

Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Yahshua said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. (Matthew 9:14-15 AV)

PERSONAL CHOICE

However, each believer has the option of choosing which day to fast. When one chooses a day to fast, he becomes acutely aware that he misses the food he has denied himself. He reminds himself that it is through Yahweh, we are given life. Not only has Yahweh given him life but He is also his Provider, and gives him food in due season. No matter which day one feels is proper to fast, in denying himself food one is brought up short in being reminded that everything we have, including life itself, is from Yahweh.

Those who elect to eat on these days others have chosen to fast remind themselves of the goodness of Yahweh Who supplies all our needs. There is nothing here in any of these verses about any day being a Sabbath or a worship day. The Sabbath is not an issue.

It should be noted that fasting on the Sabbath should be avoided, as fasting is looked upon as “afflicting one's soul,” or going without food and water. The Sabbath is to be a delight, a special day to rejoice in Yahweh's word, to focus on Him, not to deprive one of the goodness of Yahweh's bounty.

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of Yahweh, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: (Isaiah 58:13 AV)

DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

The thrust of this entire 14th chapter is how to tolerate those who elevate some relatively unimportant matter as a requirement of salvation. We are not to have excessive concern over matters such as vegetarianism as a required form of moral discipline. Or if a specific day of the week is preferable to another for fasting. The strong believer is one who sees what is important, morally and spiritually, and what is not. He ignores the irrelevant things which do not really

matter such as fasting on a Tuesday or Thursday or on a Wednesday, the middle of the week upon which another believes the Savior died.

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. {fully persuaded: or, fully assured} He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto Yahweh; and he that regardeth not the day, to Yahweh he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to Yahweh, for he giveth Elohim thanks; and he that eateth not, to Yahweh he eateth not, and giveth Elohim thanks. (Rom. 14:6)

Those who eat on these days which others have chosen as their fast days can easily remind themselves to thank Yahweh to bless the food they are consuming, and thank Him for the good things in life. While others might be fasting, those who are eating know that it is the Heavenly Father from whom all things flow.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto Yahweh; and whether we die, we die unto Yahweh: whether we live therefore, or die, we are Yahweh's. (Rom. 14 7-8 AV)

FAITHFULNESS IN FASTING

The rich young ruler apparently felt tithing and fasting were important when he asked the Savior what he must do to be saved, for he gave these as his credentials:

Luke 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

The man stated that he fasted twice each week and gave tithes regularly. This was his opinion of being a follower of Yahweh. The Savior did not dispute that giving tithes along with fasting was indeed showing faithfulness on his part, for both of these are disciplines we assume voluntarily. The problem with the rich young ruler was that he was not generous and cared little for his fellow man. This is the same problem that Paul is addressing here! The Ten Commandments are to be kept, but the young ruler had a problem with the last five which deals with our attitudes and relationships with our fellow human. That was what the miserly young man should concentrate on, and not be so concerned with his worldly goods.

That Yahshua expected us to fast is shown by His caution that we should not let it be known that we are fasting. Fasting is an exercise we take upon ourselves in denying food and water for an extended period. It is between Yahweh and ourselves, and is not something we publicize to get attention from others. We should appear as normal as possible without making our fast a sensation of sorts:

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; (Matthew 6:16-17 AV)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The weak believer is preoccupied with matters which are actually indifferent, but magnifies them till they assume proportions of really important religious issues. This must be treated with love and patience. Too many spend time and energy on things of little importance, instead of seeking an answer to questions where our salvation is involved.

Living a clean life on this polluted planet is expected and demanded of us, that we should be holy for He is holy. We are to think clean, live clean, eat clean, and be a clean people. Eating food which Yahweh has proscribed places one in jeopardy. Paul nowhere teaches one can now eat any creature, or that swine and shellfish are now acceptable fare. The clean food laws still apply.

For example, Paul's letter to Timothy (written about 65 C.E., some 30 years after the Savior's resurrection) in which he stated:

For every creature of Yahweh is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For [provided = Goodspeed] it is sanctified by the word of Yahweh and prayer. (1 Timothy 4:4-5 AV)

In writing to Timothy, Paul explains that creatures to be eaten are wholesome and good and not to be refused if one thanks Yahweh for them because they are set apart (sanctified) by Yahweh's clean food listed in Deuteronomy 14 and Leviticus 11. There we find a list of animals and birds which are proper food for believers. (Some of the ancient names need clarification.) Note the unclean animals and birds mentioned in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are carnivorous (meat-eating). Some are "garbage collectors" such as jackals, swine, buzzards and vultures, etc. Grain and grass eaters are acceptable.

PETER'S VISION

Strange as it may seem to many, Yahweh continues to uphold the selection of eating clean and unclean in the New Testament. This can be seen from Acts 10 where the vision of clean and unclean is shown to Peter. He states he has never eaten that which is common or unclean, (which includes the ten years since the Savior ascended). The message of clean and unclean was to show vividly to Peter that Yahweh is not a respecter of persons, (Acts 10:34-35) because He seeks those who are obedient to Him.

It is better for one to abide within a balanced diet of both flesh and vegetables which have been created as food for humans. The Old Testament warns that eating swine's flesh will restrict one from being in the kingdom:

They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith Yahweh. (Isaiah 66:17)

If vegetarianism is the only lifestyle for salvation, then Yahweh wasted two chapters in His book (Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14) pointing out the clean and unclean flesh. Remember also, the family household in ancient Israel was commanded to partake of the Passover Lamb once a year. Paul's message is that we are given freedom to choose what foods we are to eat, but the choice falls within the parameters of Yahweh's word on proper food as mentioned in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Remember that we will have to answer to Yahshua Who will be the judge of those in the first resurrection:

For to this end Messiah both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Master both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Messiah. [1Cor.5:10] For it is written, As I live, saith Yahweh, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to Elohim. (Romans 14:9-11)

BEYOND FOOD

Paul now leaves behind the earthly, mundane arguments dealing with food and vegetarianism. He has made his point that one can fast on the day he chooses, and whether we fast or eat, we are to give Yahweh thanks for life itself. We are not to condemn anyone who fasts on a specific day. Those strong in the faith tolerate matters which may appear to some to be important but are insignificant to others, having little effect on our salvation.

He calls to our attention that we are but human, and eventually all flesh will pass away in death. We will be called upon to give an account of the opportunities we have had through the knowledge we have been given. What have we done in this physical life to promote Yahweh's Kingdom? Have we truly helped those seeking the righteousness of Yahweh, or have we squandered what has been given us Human nature and pride may have given way to arrogance and pride, culminating with insincerity. We may have become a stumbling block to some by treating their caution and temerity in handling Yahweh's Word as childish?

We should respect their feelings and reassure them their concerns are guideposts to true obedience. Our actions should show that we comprehend their concern is for good, and not criticize their attitude in the spirit of condemnation:

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to Elohim. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Sovereign Yahshua, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. {unclean: Gr. common} But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Messiah died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: (Romans 14:12-16).

OFFEND NOT

We are not to make eating and drinking a special goal of pursuit; not make it a topic of deep concern. We are not to major in the minor aspects of life! Paul wants us to look at ourselves and not be critical of the foods of others or their dietary practices. We should seek those things whereby the body of believers is edified and their faith in Yahweh and Yahshua deepened. Our goal should be to help those who are doing the work of reaching out to others with the truth. Guiding others in the truth is at times difficult, as Satan is out there showing the world that one can enjoy the sinful pleasures of the world as he denigrates the Bible and destroys the faith of man.

There are those who are critical of the foods of others and checking their cupboard for questionable ingredients is their work of evangelism. Such activity does not edify their walk with the Savior. Often those who check the ingredients of soaps and cleaners feel this is their ministry. Getting others to have a clean cupboard and pantry is as a step to righteousness.

For the kingdom of Yahweh is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that in these things serveth Messiah is acceptable to Yahweh, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of Yahweh. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. (Romans 14:17:21)

TEST OF FAITH

Paul encourages all believers to help strengthen the faith of brethren. Apparently in Rome there were some newly converted who were concerned about eating foods that may have been offered to idols. In this instance Paul encourages them to be strong in the faith, knowing that serving Yahweh with a full heart is what we should be striving for. We are to be an example to those around us, showing our deep faith and belief in Yahweh's goodness and correct way of

living. Apparently the issue of permissible food had become a big point of discussion and concern to those in Rome as a test of faith.

Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before Yahweh. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. {doubteth: or, discerneth and putteth a difference between meats} {damned: or, condemned, or liable to punishment} (Romans 14:22-23 AV)

Paul is encouraging us to have faith and belief in Yahweh's word; to those in Corinth, he made the point that there really are no deities except Yahweh. Anything offered to them was nothing, for they do not exist except in the figment of man's imagination:

*As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other Yahweh but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one **Elohim**, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Master, **Yahshua** Messiah, by whom are all things, and we by him. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. (1 Corinthians 8:4-7 AV)*

Paul again points out that the weak in faith would be seriously affected by eating any food sacrificed to pagan deities. Neither should we degrade anyone who is apprehensive about eating anything which may have been dedicated to idols. Though we ourselves may have no qualms about eating such, our actions may be upsetting to others.

But meat commendeth us not to Elohim: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; (1 Corinthians 8:8-10 AV)

Though one may eat food which has been sacrificed to pagan idols, we should not take this liberty before those weak in the faith. They would not understand there are no such deities but in the mind of carnal man and Satan. It would not be a good picture of following Yahweh when the weaker brethren do not yet understand there are not other Mighty Ones other than Yahweh Himself. Pagan deities are but the figment the imagination. Only Yahweh has the creative power and all food such as grain and flesh are from Him

Our eating habits and general behavior should be disciplined out of love for Yahweh. Above all we should not become a stumbling block to the unwary and the weak. We are to be examples of righteous behavior to all we come in contact with and be examples of Yahweh's word in action. This is best done by being an encouragement to the brethren day by day both in eating or not eating, and all that we do.

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