

THREE PROHIBITIONS FOR JUDGING OTHERS (part-two of a four-part study)

Our focus in this segment will be upon the first prohibition which we listed in last week's introductory study; where we are told from God's Word that we are not allowed to judge a fellow believer if we differ on *issues of personal conscience*. In Romans 14, the apostle Paul devotes the entire chapter to those differences which can and do exist, when it comes to an individual's conscience in those grey areas of the Christian life. The primary concern of that day involved the eating of food and the drinking of wine, as revealed in Romans 14:21 –

“It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.”

It is obvious from that statement that some believers in the church at Rome had a problem with eating meat and drinking wine, while others did not. Paul, at the outset of this chapter, in v3, prohibits a negative attitude from developing in one individual toward another, regardless of their personal perspective:

“The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.”

His positive encouragement to fellow Christians on both sides in a particular issue of personal conscience is provided in Romans 14:5b, in that all of us, when it comes to those grey areas of Christian living: **“must be fully convinced in his own mind.”** However, the underlying, all-important premise for the entire chapter is found in v17, where he reminds us that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who will interact with and guide every believer in these questionable and debatable matters, without the need for being in subjection to another believer's conscience. Or, as Paul so succinctly puts it in 1 Corinthians 10:28-29 –

“But if anyone says to you, ‘This meat is sacrificed to idols,’ do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake; I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?”

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Don't forget! Our next post in this study will be on October 15.