

**ROMANS: CHARTER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**  
**"Part XXI: Relating With Biblically Unclear Belief Differences"**  
**(Romans 14:1-23)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . . )

Though we Christians know we should all heed the revealed truths in God's Word, **some** matters the Bible does *not CLEARLY* address! That can make for big debates and relationship challenges:

(1) Last Prayer Meeting, during our question-and-answer time following the lesson, Marge Kacir asked me a question I really couldn't answer with conviction! We had been teaching out of Leviticus 20 on capital punishment, and learned how God wanted us to honor all human life. So, Marge asked, "What about that recent Siamese twin case where the doctor's felt that unless the children were surgically separated, both of them would die? Is it better to say it is God's choice that both die and thus not perform the surgery, or for us to choose to take the life of the least-equipped child to save the other?"

Marge stumped me! I said my own choice would be to perform the surgery to save at least one life, but that I could not fault a parent who refused to perform the surgery out of fear of committing murder!

(2) Christians who do not come to our Church have asked me what **Bible** to use! I have learned that they refer to what **version** we *recommend*! Those asking are almost always "King James Only" advocates who view our pew Bible, the New International Version as corrupt along with every other version besides the King James Version.

I often feel like sharing my little sermon about (a) how the KJV is an **Episcopalian** Bible, that King James, the **Episcopalian** king of England authorized its formation much to the *dismay* of our **Puritan Pilgrim forefathers**! (b) I feel like asking them to explain what Job 36:33 in the KJV means, something that no English-speaking person can do as the verse does not make sense. Then I want to ask them how I can use the KJV exclusively since I can't preach the whole counsel of the Word of God out of it for not understanding what it says at Job 36:33. However, this is all too much for them to take, for, I myself being a Baptist in background, fully understand their ignorance on the issues. So, instead of preaching this little sermon, I stay quiet!

Well, no Scripture verse explains what to do with Siamese twin cases or even what English translation we are to use! How should we deal with such doubtful issues?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . . )

***Need:** "Like debating the politics in our national election, some theological issues amongst even CHRISTIANS seem to DEFY easy solutions! In such DEBATABLE things, what's the answer?"*

- I. **Paul's teaching in Romans 14 does NOT call for believer to tolerate differences of opinion over what Scripture CLEARLY reveals: Both Paul and Peter called Christians with speaking gifts to speak only in accord with Scripture teaching, Rom. 12:6b; 1 Pet. 4:10-11.**
- II. **Yet, Scripture is NOT CLEAR on ALL issues, and differences of persuasion on these UNCLEAR issues had to be addressed by Paul:**
  - A. Romans 14:1 does **not** picture a party who fails to hold to the Bible's clearly taught truths: the opening phrase does not mean "weak in the (Christian's doctrinal) faith" as we sometimes use the word "faith."
  - B. Rather, it means one who **personally** "falters or hesitates about matters of conduct," McGee, Thru the Bible, v. 4, p. 740; Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 492.
  - C. Hence, Paul here addresses Biblically **unclear** issues that can lead to understandable differences of opinion among Christians. Two issues in the chapter that illustrate this are given in Rom. 14:2, 5 as follows:
    1. Some apparently thought they should **abstain** from eating **meat altogether not** out of allegiance to the **Mosaic Law** (which would have been errant legalism, cf. Col. 2:12-17), but to avoid even the hint of **idolatry**: so much meat sold in Rome's markets was offered to idols that some Roman Christians felt one should avoid **all** meat to avoid the sin of **idolatry**, Rom. 14:2 with 1 Cor. 8; Ibid., p. 492.
    2. Also, other Roman Christians esteemed one day above another **not** out of allegiance to **Moses' Law** (which again would have been errant legalism, cf. Col. 2:12-17), but for another proposed reason:
      - a. Revelation 1:10 refers to "the Lord's day" which might have been Sunday, the day Jesus arose from the dead, Ibid., p. 930.
      - b. Some Christians might have kept this day **only** as a **testimony against** special days honoring and worshipping **Rome's Caesar**.
      - c. Hence, a difference of opinion might have come as to whether Sunday should be observed as a **testimony against paganism!**
    3. Thus, Paul addressed how to deal with such **debatable** issues that Scripture had **not** mentioned in no uncertain terms!

- III. In such **BIBLICALLY UNCLEAR** issues, Paul taught we should show **TOLERANT KINDNESS** until every believer fully matured:
- A. On the **one** hand, Paul revealed that every believer is **really free** before the Lord **both** to eat meat offered to idols (cf. 1 Cor. 8:4-7a) **and** to treat every day of the calendar the same, Romans 14:14a.
  - B. **However, some believers lacked the insight of this liberty, so their CONSCIENCES would be wounded were they to eat of meat offered to idols or not keep the Lord's Day (as a possible testimony against Roman paganism),** Romans 14:5b, 14b.
  - C. Hence, **every** "strong", informed and mature believer **owed LOVE** [as he did to unbelievers in the previous context of Romans 13:8a], but that to **fellow believers** by **not condemning or arguing such issues with believers with such weak consciences**, 14:1, 20-23.
  - D. Paul added other **reasons** for this position on brotherly relationships:
    1. God had **received** the less-informed believer with a weak faith, so the strong in faith were to receive him with honor as well, 14:3b.
    2. God was able to **bless** the less-informed believer with a weak faith, so the strong should honor him as well, Romans 14:4b.
    3. **All** believers lived not for themselves, but for **God's interests**: hence, out of respect for God who had received the weak in faith, the strong were to honor the weak in faith as well, Romans 14:6-9.
    4. **All** believers will answer **only** to the **Lord** -- **not to one another** for their lives, Romans 14:10-12. Hence, the "strong" have no **right** to stand in **judgment** of the "weak" over debatable issues!
    5. God's kingdom is not a matter of do's and don'ts so much as that of righteous, peaceful, joyful **relationships** in the Lord. Hence, on debatable issues, we must put a priority on relationships over such debatable issues themselves, Romans 14:17-19.

***Application:*** To relate well to others in the Church on Biblically **UNCLEAR** issues, (1) we must **FIRST** become true believers by trusting Christ as Savior from sin, Jn. 3:16. (2) Then, we commit ourselves to growing in the knowledge of God and His Word while showing great honor to all other believers **REGARDLESS** of our differences of belief on Biblically **UNCLEAR** issues! (3) We do so out of **VALUING** relationships with God and one another that tolerates **ROOM** for people to **MATURE** in Christ!

***Lesson:*** On issues the Bible does not **EXPRESSLY** speak, we must allow **TIME** for **ALL** in the body to grow to the level of maturity where we hold the same convictions. Hence, God calls us to show tolerance and honor to all fellow believers at all levels of growth, and to do so out of love!

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . . )

About a month ago, a lady my senior who attends a Gospel-preaching, Bible-believing Church in our area called me for advice. There were some problems in her congregation that she did not feel comfortable talking to anybody about in her church, and her church was without a pastor. She had questions that needed pastoral help, and had turned to me in spiritual desperation for advice.

After having encouraged her in the Word, and urging her to use the Word of God for her own personal guidance, she expressed deep appreciation. In fact, she claimed my advice had been very Biblical, and said she might consider attending Nepaug Church.

I replied that our goal at Nepaug was not to try to take people away from other Bible-believing Churches, but to see godly churches established all over Connecticut. Nevertheless, we would accept all whom **God** sent our way, whether it be her or other people.

Later, she called me back again to ask a question a family member wanted answered before following her to attend a service at our church: she asked me what Bible I used!

I knew what was coming next! I knew that when I mentioned I preached out of the King James Bible, but that I recommended the NIV and NASB along with the KJV for study, that she would probably not attend our church! However, I told her my position as kindly and simply as was possible, and she politely thanked me for my honesty.

Sure enough, she hasn't contacted me again. In spite of the fact that I helped her get into God's Word, and though she even expressed appreciation for the Biblical nature of the counsel itself, she will probably stay away because of the version I don't exclusively promote! It seems inconsistent to me for her to do that, but, I can live with it. I understand! I will see her in heaven as we are both part of the body of Christ, and I know that her being hung up on the King James Version as the only right translation comes from her lack of knowledge.

But, meanwhile, God tells me in Romans 14 to respect this lady and her church fellowship. That's fine with me -- I do respect them!