

Truth and Spirit Ministries

Romans 14

By Denise Bostic

Fact or Fiction? In Romans 14, was the Apostle Paul teaching that it is ok for believers to keep Old Covenant Jewish Festivals and the Levitical Food laws under the New Covenant?

Fiction: The Apostle Paul taught believers that they were under grace, not the law. The Jewish Festivals and Levitical food laws (clean and unclean) were law for Old Covenant Israel but not for the New Covenant Church because the law was fulfilled and ended with the atoning sacrifice of Christ. (*Leviticus 11 & 23, Matthew 5:17-18, Romans 10:4*) Some Jewish converts in the Church still adhered to and taught believers that they must keep the law, which caused confusion in the Body of Christ. (*Acts 15:1, Galatians 1:6, 5:7-14*)

Because the newly formed Church was made up of Jewish and Gentile converts, some new believers did not yet understand the spiritual fulfillment of carnal ordinances that were under the Mosaic Law such as days, food and drink. (*Romans 14*) New believers that were Jewish had been under the Law and had to have time to learn how the law was fulfilled in Christ. New Gentile converts also had physical things important to them and were not raised under the law and therefore were new to all things of God. Paul taught believers in the Church to not judge one another because of what they observed or didn't observe. (*Romans 14:5-10, Colossians 2:16-17*) Because believers are under grace and not the law, God gives people time to learn, grow and make the transition into the body of Christ and the New Covenant. Paul's teaching in *Romans 14* shows that some brethren that are weak in the faith and spiritually immature would put a greater emphasis on physical things such as food, drink and days. (*Romans 14:1*) Paul taught that the Kingdom of God was not about the physical, but the spiritual. (*Romans 14:17-18*) All believers have certain mindsets when they come to Christ that they need to get rid of. In order to do this our minds must be renewed with the word of God and of course, this takes time.

To keep the unity of love in the body of Christ, Paul admonished that the spiritually stronger should not judge weaker brethren whose consciences may be defiled by what they did not yet understand because they needed time to grow in spiritual maturity. Brethren are to accept one another and bear with one another in love until all come into the unity of the faith. (*Ephesians 4:11-16*) Judgments in these cases concerning consciences belonged only to the Lord, who knows the thoughts, intents and motives of the heart. (*1 Corinthians 4:5*) Brethren that are weak in the faith may not understand now, but may come to the knowledge of such truths in time. **The lesson to be learned, however, is just because weaker brethren might be immature and not yet have the knowledge of such things does not mean that they are to remain in that ignorant state.** (*Hebrews 5:11-14, 6:1-3*)

Once we come to the knowledge of Christ's truth, we are not to turn away from it. Paul rebuked the Galatian Church for backsliding into the Law of Moses and again teaches them that the emphasis is not to be on days (*Galatians 4:9-11*) or circumcision (*Galatians 5:2-4*) or any works of the law, but on Christ and His Spirit. Paul taught the Galatians that if they got all wrapped up in observing the Law of Moses that they were in danger of falling away from Christ and His grace. If they turned away from Christ and His grace, He would no longer be able to work effectually in their lives. **Paul also taught that all food is clean and that it was false teaching to teach believers that they were to abstain from certain meats.** (*Romans 14: 14, 1 Timothy 4: 1-6*) For those who had been taught that these things were sin, it would bother their consciences until they would come into the knowledge of the truth. Just because we believe something, doesn't mean that it is truth from God. We are to study the scriptures and let God

teach us what is truth and what is error. (*1 John 2:26-27, 4:6*) We must be willing to change when God shows us when we are in error. The Old Testament Law is no longer in effect, believers are to follow Christ and what He commands us in the New Testament. (*Hebrews 1:1-2, 3:1-7, 8:6-13*)