

Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?

Here is an eye-opening answer to a very
controversial question!

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PART VIII

ABOUT THREE years ago an elderly man approached me one day and said, "I have been puzzled and confused all my life. I used to believe that the apostle Paul taught the church in Galatia not to observe any holidays. But recently I read a verse in which Paul apparently told the Christians at Rome that it didn't matter which days they observed if they kept them to God.

"Now my question is this: *How can I know* what is the real Bible teaching? It seems to me that Paul contradicts himself."

Yes, just HOW CAN WE KNOW?

Millions have worried about this question but have never heard the real answer. There is a rapidly growing sect which teaches that Christians don't have to observe any days whatsoever. But there are many others who believe just as firmly that we should observe religious holidays, only it doesn't matter which we observe if we keep them as best *we* understand by our own human reasoning.

But the question still remains: How can we *know* what the Bible says?

Esteeming One Day Above Another

Let's notice what the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 14:5, 6.

"One *man* esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be *fully persuaded* in his own mind." Romans 14:5, 6.

By taking these verses out of their setting, people make Paul say something altogether different from what he intended. Does he say to observe Christmas, Easter, Lent, Good Friday, Sunday, or the Festival of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven?

Does he say here that Jesus by his death did away with the very days He kept during his whole life?

Does Paul say "God esteemeth one day above another" and "God esteemeth every day alike?" It doesn't say "God," but "one MAN esteemeth one day above another." This tells us what certain MEN thought, not what God says!

We are not to be *judged* by what *men* think, but by the word of God! John 12:48 reads: "The word that I

have spoken, *the same* shall judge him in the last day." Jesus is not going to judge you by what any *man* believes, but by the words *He* spoke!

Next, notice that these saints at Rome, having differing opinions, were forbidden to *judge one another* as unworthy of Christ. "Who are you that judges another man's servant? to his own master he stands or falls. Yes, he shall be helped up: for *God is able to make him stand.*" (Rom. 14:4)

Paul is *not* sanctioning nor condemning any particular days, but warning the saints not to *judge* one another and cause strife for having differing opinions about things *they did not yet understand clearly.*

The Lord was the Judge of their deeds. "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it *unto the Lord.*" The last part of this sentence—"and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it"—is not in the inspired original Greek.

How to Know

"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Does this give license to believe whatever you want? God commands: "Lean not unto thine own understanding." (Prov. 3:5) How are you going to be fully assured in your own mind UNTIL YOU KNOW WHAT GOD SAYS IN HIS WORD? "The holy scriptures . . . are able to make you wise to salvation" Paul wrote Timothy. (2 Tim. 3:15) By studying the word of God to prove all things, and by holding fast that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21), YOU BECOME FULLY PERSUADED IN YOUR OWN MINDS concerning what *God* says.

"Able to Stand Before Him"

God is able, said Paul, to make those saints stand before Him in the judgment, *by reading to them the knowledge by which they will be judged.* It was for this very reason that Paul wrote those saints at Rome, some of whom were weak in the faith, not having acquired perfect knowledge. He says: "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to the end that you *may be*

established (Ro. 1:11)."

It is so plain. Here were converts at Rome, still weak in the faith, who were divided in their regard of days. Paul told them not to sit in judgment of one another, but to follow peace, because *God* would judge them, after setting them aright through more perfect knowledge which Paul was going to preach to them. In the meantime they were to act in accordance with the best they knew from *God's* word, not *man's* word.

This did not give them liberty to do as they pleased. They were to obey God or else perish if they disobeyed after the knowledge of the truth had come. For to him that *knows* to do good and doesn't do it, it is sin. (James 4:17)

What Were These Days?

But what days was Paul referring to?

By reading these verses in their setting, rather than taking them out of their context, let's determine the answer. Paul is writing to the saints at Rome, both Jew and Gentile. He admonished them to receive those who are weak in the faith (Ro. 14:1), not to dispute with them over unimportant matters and sit in judgment on them. Some of these recently converted Gentiles, being weak in the faith, refused to eat meats, subsisting on vegetables mainly.

The reason for this is explained in 1 Corinthians 8. Most meat that could be bought had been offered to idols. Therefore some, with conscience of the idol "ate it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being *weak* is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse (1 Cor. 8:7, 8)."

So here were saints who had not yet learned that there was no harm in eating meat offered to idols previously by others provided it was done to God with a clear conscience. These Gentiles at Rome had been converted and *had given up idolatry*, but still held superstitious beliefs in their minds, thinking that the idol was something *real.*

But why should Paul have broken into his dissertation about eating meat or re-

fraining from eating it?

Because in connection with the old pagan idolatry, *were numerous days observed as idolatrous festivals*. These days were consecrated to deities of the state religious cults and were "*unlucky*" because of the influence of the gods! These civil and religious days were "regarded as unsuitable for many purposes, both public and private: for battles, levies, sacred rites, journeys and marriages. We are told that they owed their unlucky quality to the pronouncement of the Senate and pontiffs." (From *Rest Days* by Webster, p. 171.)

As many as *one third of the days* of the old Roman calendar were marked as "unlawful for judicial and political business . . . and . . . on which the state expected the citizens to abstain, as far as possible, from their private business and labour."

No wonder Paul spoke of "every day!"

Here at Rome were recently converted Gentiles who had given up idolatry, but who still believed idols were real beings, and hence would not eat meat offered to them. They also continued to regard superstitious beliefs that certain days were better than others, or that all days were alike—unlucky. These Christians *no longer observed these days*—that would have been sin. But they still regarded or judged some days to be above others, as though the day had natural qualities of good or bad about it. It was a common superstition of the time, hard for new Christians to root out.

And how many "worldly" as well as religious people still have similar beliefs today! Such as "unlucky" *Friday the thirteenth!*

Paul was going to Rome to enlighten their honest minds so they would give up this foolish regard of heathen days. It is merely a plea to tolerate honest beliefs held in ignorance.

So These Weren't God's Days After All!

There is nothing here referring to the Sabbath or the holydays of God which Paul commanded to be observed by the Gentiles. In I Cor. 5:8, Paul says, "Let us *keep* the feast."

Here and in I Cor. 11:20-34, Paul is instructing the Corinthians how to keep the passover and the festival of unleavened bread.

The Holy Spirit inspired Luke to write in Acts 20:6 that the days of unleavened bread occurred in far off Philippi! The disciples sailed away "after the days of unleavened bread."

In I Corinthians 16:8, Paul told the Gentiles he was intending to be at Ephesus, a Gentile city, the day of Pentecost. But there is nothing in Romans 14 which says we are to observe the pagan holidays—Christmas, Easter, Lent, Sunday—which crept into the apostate churches after the death of the apostles.