

"NEED TO KNOW" INTRO ROMANS 14-15 ...

■ Romans 14:1 marks the beginning of a section in which Paul speaks to the Church emphasizing ...

- faith and acceptance, unity and harmony, building each other up, hope in God, and the encouragement of the Scriptures.

■ Paul speaks mainly to two groups of believers concerning the potential for conflict.

- The two groups are those who are **weak** in faith and those who are **strong** in faith.
- The differences between these two groups are matters of conscience, not matters of doctrine or morals.
- These difference become flashpoints for disunity if we do not follow Paul's careful instruction.

■ Paul instructs them not to quarrel over matters of conscience.

- Paul speaks to the temptation of outwardly accepting the other person but with the real intent of changing his or her mind concerning matters of conscience.

■ Pride: Paul speaks to the potential source of their quarrels with two questions.

- **Question #1:** Who do you think you are to pass judgment (14:4)?
- **Question #2:** Why do you pass judgment (14:10)?

■ Paul addresses the tendencies of each group.

▶ The tendencies for one who feels that "he may eat anything" (strong) ...

- Tendency to become a spiritual snob.
- Tendency to despise the one who eats only vegetables.
- Tendency to let go of everything, a loose biblical connection.
- Tendency for "anything goes in the name of freedom in Christ."

▶ The tendencies of the one who "eats only vegetables" (weak) ...

- Tendency to judge the one who eats everything.
- Tendency to hang on to everything, cling to the past and previous beliefs.
- Tendency to make his mandate to be God's mandate.
- Tendency to make wrong connections to prove his point.
- Tendency to supersede New Testament teaching with Old Testament scriptures that seemingly support his views.

■ Paul speaks to God's overall directive as to how we handle matters of conscience.

- Live **NOW** knowing that one day each of us will bow before God and give an account of **OUR** lives to God.
- Right down to every careless word (Matthew 12:36).

The Indifferent "Believer"!

Profiling the Indifferent "Believer":

- This person is the picture of apathy. He simply doesn't care. He will go with what he likes the best, what provides the least resistance to his lifestyle and what makes the least demand on his time, energy and resources.
- He doesn't want to make waves.
- This is the person that Jesus speaks of in Revelation 3:16 who makes him want to throw up.
- Jesus may also have had this person in mind in Matthew 7 when he spoke of those who called out to him but he never knew as they had only heard God's words but not obeyed them.



I know you inside and out, and find little to my liking. You're not cold, you're not hot—far better to be either cold or hot! You're stale. You're stagnant. You make me want to vomit (Revelation 3:15-16 Msg).

Polar Opposite of "the Judge"!

- We may speculate that **"the Judge" is the polar opposite of the indifferent believer.**
- Why? Because at least "the Judge" cares!
- **The redeeming quality of "the Judge" is that he or she cares.** Maybe sometimes harsh and misdirected, even to the point of sinfulness, but at least he or she cares.
- Give me a "judge" any day over the lukewarm Christian or the glib, spiritual snob.

WHAT DOES THE PERSON STRONG IN FAITH BELIEVE? WHERE DOES HE GET HIS INFORMATION?

- First, this person believes the New Testament teaching supersedes everything else, including any past religious experience or training, including the dietary restrictions in the Old Testament law.
- The main texts concerning matters of conscience by Paul would be: Today's text—Romans 14:1-12, Romans 14:13-23 (next week), 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and 1 Corinthians 10:23-33.
- God communicated this to Peter in a vision when he lowered a sheet from heaven and ordered Peter to eat what was previously unclean to him. The account of this is in Acts 10:9-11:12.
- **IMPORTANT POINT: God and God alone determines what is holy!** Peter took the word of God over the people who were clinging to their religious traditions.
- (Acts 11:9 NASB95) But a voice from heaven answered a second time, **"What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."**
- See also Matthew 9:11, 15:2 and Mark 7:5 concerning the controversy over eating.