Scruples of Conscience – Food & (Holi)Days

Eugene P. Vedder · Romans 14:5-6,10 · October 29, 2025



Beginning in Romans 14, the apostle Paul takes up difficulties arising from the cultural and spiritual backgrounds of the believers at Rome. They had different convictions in terms of food and (holi)days. What does this passage teach us?

Food

Beginning in Romans 14, the apostle Paul takes up difficulties arising from the cultural and spiritual backgrounds of the believers at Rome. Many new believers there were Jewish. The Law God had given His earthly people had told them which foods were clean and could be eaten and which were unclean and thus were not to be eaten. Gentile believers had never been under the Law, and so enjoyed eating many things a JewB would regard as repulsive. The Jewish believers were no longer under the Law, but many no doubt still would feel defiled if they ate things God had called unclean.

Such believers probably regarded themselves as more spiritual than Gentile believers who felt free to eat any kind of meat and so would thank God for it and then eat it with pleasure. “How can they thank God for that unclean meat and enjoy eating it?” they might think. They would feel they were strong Christians.

But God refers to them as weak. **The strong believer enjoys the liberty we have in Christ.** He knows that “*every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer*” (1 Tim. 4:4–5). But he is told to bear with the scruples of the weak brother for his good, for “*to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean*” (Rom. 14:14). The weak brother is never told to force his convictions on others—by calling their will “my conscience” and wanting to make others respect it.

(Holi)Days

God had told His earthly people, Israel, to observe special feast days, telling them how, when, and with what sacrifices they were to be celebrated. While some Jewish Christians continued celebrating these feasts, and still do to this day, **God no longer commands them to do so.** The Holy Spirit also made very clear at the meetings at Jerusalem in Acts 15 that circumcision and the Law were absolutely not to be imposed on Gentile believers.

Gentiles of many nations, each with its own god or gods, also had held feasts to their many idols. God’s Word tells us, “*The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons*” (1 Cor. 10:20). Idolatrous Gentile feasts clearly were not equivalent to the feasts that God had commanded His earthly people Israel to celebrate to Him. The only feast the Lord has requested His own to celebrate to Him is the breaking of bread.

The early Christians observed the Lord’s death and resurrection, not His birth, the date of which was unknown. Christianity was legalized in the Roman Empire in 313 ad. Celebrating Christ’s birth on December 25 was made official by Pope Julius I around 350 ad. It replaced the heathen festival of Saturnalia formerly kept around that time. **However, we must not judge our brethren who act according to their**

convictions before the Lord, even when our convictions are different. Let us pursue things that make for peace and edify!

Conclusion

If we are strong in the grace which was in our Lord Jesus, let us bear with the scruples we know our brethren have, and not insist on our liberty in a way hurtful to them.

Source https://thebiblestudy.site/article/scruples-of-conscience-food-holidays/