

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

BY GRACE NOT BY WORKS

Romans 14:1-3 "Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them."

Christians do not always agree with one another. Here in Romans 14:1-3 St. Paul acknowledges this to be true. He further says that it is permissible to have differing opinions, especially when it is in regard to adiaphora. Adiaphora are behavioral issues where there is more than one opinion or understanding of what is moral or proper. Today's three verses address the reality that one's scruples, their belief that a behavior may be wrong for them to do as a Christian can be different from that of their fellow believers.

God has left you with many choices. Paul here uses the choice of whether it is permissible to eat everything or must one be a vegetarian. His answer is, "the one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does because God has accepted them." What they choose to eat has nothing to do with their salvation, even though some religious individuals believe that their dietary habits are part of their faith relationship with Jesus Christ. (fasting, not eating meat on Fridays, eating or not eating pork, etc.) What you eat or do not eat does not make you a true believer in Jesus.

Christians can become overzealous in their piety, their striving to live a very devout and religious life. In most all cases this leads to legalistic living, that is, living a life following rules and regulations, instead of one of Gospel freedom. It is not what you eat or the rules you follow that determines your relationship with God.

Whether you eat meat or not, dress in shirt and tie or your best clothing to attend the worship service, make the sign of the cross, kneel or stand to pray, has no bearing upon receiving God's forgiveness of your sins nor His gift of eternal life. Forgiveness of your sins and eternal life are God's gift to you through His Son. Your salvation comes to you by God's grace through His gift of faith in His Son Jesus. (See Ephesians 2:8-9)

Prayer: Lord, guide me that I am tolerant of the piety and issues of adiaphora of my fellow believers. Cause me and all my fellow believers to treasure Your grace which we share in common for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Church of God, elect and glorious, Holy nations, chosen race;
Called as God's own special people, Royal priests and heirs of grace:
Know the purpose of your calling, Show to all His mighty deeds;
Tell of love that knows no limits, Grace that meets all human needs.

God has called you out of darkness Into His most marv'lous light;
Brought His truth to life within you, Turned your blindness into sight.
Let your light so shine around you That God's name is glorified
And all find fresh hope and purpose In Christ Jesus crucified.

Once you were an alien people, Strangers to God's heart of love;
But He brought you home in mercy, Citizens of heav'n above,
Let His love flow out to others, Let them feel a Father's care;
That they too may know His welcome And His countless blessings share.

Church of God, elect and holy, Be the people He intends;
Strong in faith and swift to answer Each command your Master sends;
Royal priests, fulfill your calling Through your sacrifice and prayer;
Give your lives in joyful service— Sing His praise, His love declare.
(LSB 646)