

# BIBLE & BAGEL

## Romans – Our Common Faith

28 March 2016

*The form of Christianity we have today, places much emphasis of personal freedom, people often say “I am free so I can do what I want and no one can judge me”. Whilst we have been set free in Christ, we have not been set free to indulge our self and live simply to satisfy our desires. Yeshua said that if we want to follow him we have to crucify take up the cross daily, the cross is a place of commitment, once nailed to we cannot get off as and when we like. Apostle Paul had spoken of being a living sacrifice, that is what the cross is about living as a sacrifice, so in today’s portion of Romans we see what it means to be a living sacrifice ....*

### Romans 14:14-18

14 I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. 15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. 16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

Paul declares here that nothing is unclean by itself; neither pigs nor shell fish nor anything else. That does not mean that all things are clean but it is God who has declared certain things unclean and to those who believe certain foods to be unclean they are such. If we grieve a brother because we feel we have the freedom to eat anything and exercise this freedom without caring for our brother’s sensitivities then we are destroying the faith of one for whom Messiah died. Our intentions may be good, but if another stumbles then it becomes evil. The kingdom of God Apostle Paul says is not about the food we eat nor the things we drink but it is about righteousness (doing that which is right), peace (keeping peace among the brethren) and joy (joyfully serving the Lord together). If we serve Messiah then this is the way we do it.

The common understanding among non-Jewish believers is that we can eat whatever we like since it says here that the Kingdom of God is not about food or drink so we feel that in this are we can do as we like. To some extent this may be right but the Bible calls us to restrain ourselves for the sake of those among us who would be troubled by the things we eat and drink. In the context of the congregations in Rome, the meat and wine sold in the market places often had been offered to idols and eating and the Jews in the congregation would not eat or drink such things. Also of course there were the dietary requirements given in the book of Leviticus which the Jews strictly adhered to.

Christians sometimes ask about Jewish believers who still keep the dietary laws, “when will they be free to eat such foods?” The question really is when will we allow them the freedom not to eat such foods. In the past the church in forcing Jews to convert forced them to eat pork, shell fish etc. and if they did not they were considered heretics and killed.

Apostle Paul calls us, non-Jews, to be sensitive to those who are restricted. When he says that the kingdom of God is not about food and drink, he was not saying that food and drink is irrelevant to the kingdom, rather it is not about us eating and drinking



whatever we want but to eat and drink in a way that is sensitive to those who are “weaker” and not cause them to stumble.

### Romans 14:19-23

19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. 21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. 22 Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin. NKJV

Now he tells us to pursue or chase after, strive for things that bring peace within the congregation or body and do the things necessary to build each other up. We are not to cause others to stumble because we want to please ourselves by eating or drinking certain things. If your faith allows you to eat and drink certain things do it between yourself and God, in other words do not boast about it and make it public, which most likely some of the non-Jewish believers were doing. Those who may have some doubts about certain food and drink may fall away from the faith because of we choose to practice our freedom.

Someone said “with great power comes great responsibility”, likewise with freedom comes responsibility for others. If the practice of our freedom cause someone else to question their faith or do something that causes them to feel guilty, then we are to restrict ourselves. I studied in a Bible School at a time when Pentecostal Christians believed that going to a cinema was sinful or at least bad, this was in another country and I came from a culture where it was normal for Christians to go to the movies, being among them I had to restrain myself for their sakes and for the sake of peace in the kingdom. We have been set free by Messiah but we are called to restrain ourselves for the sake of others. That’s what kingdom living is about.

