

# Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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## The Spirit of Romans 14

By

Jackie M. Stearsman

### Introduction

The student of the Bible must not read more into a passage than what God intended; neither should he refuse to abide by all that has been authorized or implied by a given passage. People will misuse a passage to justify a false position, but we must be willing to prove all things and hold fast that which is good (I Thess. 5:21). In this article I want to consider our freedom in Christ as presented in Romans 14, and then show some misapplications of the passage. I want to assume that the reader of this article will carefully study Romans 14 on his own, in order that I might use the space in this article to call attention to truths that are implicit in it.

### The Freedom Of Romans 14

The freedom under consideration in Romans 14 is over matters of scruples—matters in themselves indifferent. Two examples are cited by Paul: (1) refraining from meats (14:2), and (2) observing certain days which had not been bound by the Lord (Rom. 14:5-6). Such acts were neither right nor wrong; they were matters of scruples, or indifference (Rom. 14:14). Such items could become wrong to the individual

who would be weak enough to violate his conscience. We must carefully consider the following:

1. We are not free where Christ has bound us, for we are still under law to Christ (I Cor. 9:21). We are not free to add a regular meal to the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:20-22, 34). We are not free to live immoral lives (I Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:19-25).

2. We are not free to teach that refraining from meats, and observing of days, which God has not regulated, are laws of Christ which are binding upon others (Rom. 14:2-3). Such private convictions may be held but cannot be bound upon others (Rom. 14:22).

3. We are not free to create a sect over our own private opinions. By implication Paul condemns the creating of a "meat-eating" sect or a "day-keeping" sect. We are to receive one another, giving liberty to the private opinions of one another.

4. We are not free to disregard our conscience. All things are clean but that which is clean (lawful) may become evil if we act so as to violate our conscience (Rom. 14:14, 20).

5. We are not free from the absence of concern. The strong

must understand and take into consideration the weak. The weak must understand and take into consideration the strong (Rom. 14:3-12).

6. We are not free from the law of love (Rom. 14:13-23). We must not disregard the impact of our actions upon others. We do not live to ourselves nor die to ourselves, but each stands accountable before God, and God says to give due love and consideration to the other person. It becomes a sin to put a stumbling block or occasion to violate the conscience before others. We are to follow that which makes for peace (Rom. 14:13-23).<sup>1</sup>

### Misapplications Of Romans 14

#### 1. Abuse of Expediency

There are some brethren who read this passage and come to the term "offend" and feel that if anyone has any objection to that which is being done, then in the spirit of Romans 14 the practice must be discontinued lest we "offend" the "weak brother." By "offend a weak brother," Paul had reference to more than displeasing his feelings. He was concerned with

<sup>1</sup>I am indebted to brother James Bales, Romans: The Living Way Series, for much of the above.

causing the brother to sin by violating his conscience. Paul speaks of meat sacrificed to Idols, of causing the weak brother to perish (I Cor. 8:9,11, 13). We must not lead him to do that which he believes to be wrong (Rom. 14:15, 20, 21-23).

Paul also shows that the brother who may not understand the eating of meat or the keeping of a day must not make his convictions mandatory upon others. We cannot force him to go against his convictions; neither can he ask us to forego our convictions in that which is good and right.

Brother Bales makes the following observations which expresses the truth of the matter: "As long. . . as an individual does not bind me, as long as he is not constantly bringing reproach on the cause of Christ, and as long as he is not repudiating what the Lord has taught, as long as he is not building a faction, we need to bear with one another" (Bales, 84).

## 2. Abuse of Doctrine

It is the case that some have taught error in a doctrinal nature and have appealed to this passage for justification. For example, the commentary written by J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans, Standard Publishing Foundation, pages 525-526, uses Romans 14 to justify instruments of music in worship, and missionary societies. Such is a perversion of the passage.

God has bound upon us the kind of music (singing), thus specifying this act<sup>2</sup>, and to place this

<sup>2</sup> Had God specified singing in Colossians 3:16 and playing a mechanical instrument in Ephesians 5:19 both actions would be authorized. But, since the Bible does not authorize another kind of music, those who

in the realm of scruples is to do away with positive law from Him on this or any other subject. He has also designated the institution to spread the gospel and that is the church, and any society set above it, regulating and delegating authority to the local congregations, is in violation of the Scriptures.

Others have sought to make the role of women in worship a matter of scruples. Such is to deny the total teaching of the Bible regarding the role of women. God has decreed from creation that woman is to maintain a submissive role (I Tim. 2:8-15), and to teach otherwise is to violate the clear and positive teaching of the Scriptures. One could just as forcefully and "scripturally" teach that the man is to be in submission to the woman, with her doing the teaching and praying, as he can that she is not to be submissive.

The principle of interpretation that can take matters of doctrine and make them matters of scruples is a principle that is destined not to be bound by the authority of Scriptures. Proof of such is the Christian Churches and the Disciples of Christ Denominations.

## Conclusion

The spirit of Romans 14 can apply only to those matters which are indifferent within themselves. In matters where God has bound (II John 9-11; Matt. 16:19) we must remain bound. By a study of Romans 14 we are made aware of the fact that we have more freedom than some would allow, and that we are not to use our freedom to bind upon others our own scruples.

## Let It not be forgotten

respect the text of the Bible will be bound by what is authorized and reject what is not authorized.

**that any matter being discussed under the regulations of Romans 14 must first be shown to be a matter of indifference.** This is not true for the acts of worship nor the ones designated to lead in worship, for this God has clearly specified.

## Sympathy

Our sympathy is expressed to two families who have lost loved ones in recent weeks. Both of these who have died were long time supporters of the Florida School of Preaching.

Brother and sister Aubrey Vann were faithful in their attendance for years at our Annual Lectureship. They were always in attendance at the Booster Banquet each year and faithfully supported the school financially. As long as their health permitted, they were residents of Lakeland and members of South Florida Avenue.

What has been said of the Vanns can also be said of brother and sister W. A. "Bill" Clayton, Sr. However, brother and sister Clayton were members of Jackson Avenue church of Christ in Bartow. Brother Clayton served as an elder there for many years.

We extend our sympathy to the families and shall miss their encouragement in training preachers.

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## “Do You Understand Leadership?”

26th Annual Lectureship — January 15-18, 2001

Jackie M. Stearsman, Director



Jimmy Clark

### Monday

9:00 Male Responsibilities  
9:40 Abraham  
10:20 BREAK  
10:50 Youth Directors  
11:30 LUNCH



B.J. Clarke

### Potential Difficulties: No Eldership

1:30 Evangelistic Oversight  
2:00 Committee/Trustee Rules, Reaffirmation  
2:30 Men's Business Meetings  
3:00 BREAK  
3:30 Forum: Leadership Problems with No Elders  
4:30 DINNER  
6:30 Singing  
7:00 Paul: A Reformed Leader  
7:45 Essentials of Leadership



Freddie Clayton

### Tuesday

9:00 Joshua: A Key to Successful Leadership  
9:40 Eli  
10:20 BREAK  
10:50 Jeroboam: Consequences of Disobedient Leaders  
11:30 LUNCH



Bruce Daugherty

### Potential Difficulties: The Role of Women

1:30 Unauthorized Role  
2:00 Unbiblical Restrictions  
2:30 Commanding Women  
3:00 BREAK  
3:30 Forum: The Role of Women  
4:30 DINNER  
6:30 Singing  
7:00 King Saul: A Leader Like the Nations  
7:45 Faithful Women Leading



Derrel Davis

### Wednesday

9:00 Caring for the Bereaved  
9:40 Samuel  
10:20 BREAK  
10:50 Young Preachers Need Elders  
11:30 LUNCH

### Potential Difficulties: False Teachers

1:30 Preacher-Elders Harmony  
2:00 Identifying False Teaching  
2:30 Stopping False Teaching  
3:00 BREAK  
3:30 Forum: False Teaching  
4:30 DINNER  
6:30 Singing  
7:00 Teaching Privately  
7:45 Manipulating Leaders

### Thursday

9:00 Joseph: Training for Leadership  
9:40 Nehemiah: A Model Leader  
10:20 BREAK  
10:50 What Elders Should Expect  
11:30 LUNCH

### Potential Difficulties: Encouraging Leaders

1:30 How Do We Honor Leaders?  
2:00 Do Elders Have Authority Only In Example?  
2:30 Are All Elders Worthy of Honor?  
3:00 BREAK  
3:30 Forum: Encouraging Leaders  
4:30 DINNER  
6:30 Singing  
7:00 Following a Leader  
7:45 Leadership and the Future



Ben Radford



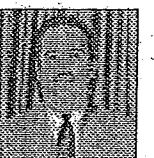
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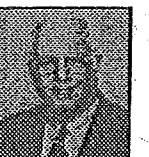
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### In Memory of David O. Spurlock

David O. Spurlock, a beloved elder of the Kissimmee church of Christ and Board member of the Florida School of Preaching, passed away November 21, 2000. David was born in Gainesboro, Tennessee, July 15, 1927.

Brother Spurlock and I were members of the Van Dyke church of Christ in Warren, Michigan in the early 1970's. I considered him a close friend then and always respected his serious, sincere and humble manner. He was strong in his convictions and an encouragement to those who loved and wanted the truth. When he saw those who knew the will of the Lord not following it, it disturbed him. We loved and appreciated him. He will be missed by all that knew him, especially those of us on the Board of the School.

We extend to his family our sincere sympathy. Editor.

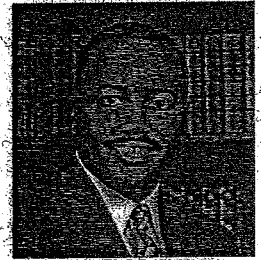


David O. Spurlock

### Student Highlight

This month's student is Teral D. Walker. Teral is a member of the Laura Street congregation in Plant City, Florida. He has been a Christian since August 1980. Both his father and father-in-law are gospel preachers. His wife's name is Danielle, and he has one daughter, Breigha M. Walker.

In addition to his preaching preparation, he is five classes from graduation in secular college with a Liberal Arts Major. He has served in the Army Reserve, 1986-1994, and is currently in the Navy Reserve. Teral is available for part time preaching. He can be contacted at the school.



Teral D. Walker

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