

Scruples

Romans 15:1-3

Introduction: It's not a soft drink. Rather it is principles that people hold to be true whether the principle is correct or not. For example, a person might believe that wearing red to church is wrong because red represents the blood of Christ. That same person tells you that he cannot attend here because he is bothered by the number of brethren who wear red to church. (You know who your are! ☺) So what do we do? Should we blow him off knowing he'll never again attend church and thereby lose his soul? Do we make a rule for his sake that no one is allowed to wear red to church ever again? Do we make the best effort to teach him but if he won't relent then blow him off?

I might add that this subject is one of the most difficult for brethren to both absorb and understand.

I. Webster says scruples are “an ethical consideration or principle that inhibits action.” It means “to be reluctant on grounds of conscience.”

A. We all have scruples. As a Christian, our scruples are based on God's word. We are reluctant to act certain ways because of a good conscience toward God. Our scruples prevent us from participation in sinful activities.

B. Yet, we live in a world where opinions carry the same weight as God's instructions. Ethics are often what the individual wants them to be. In other words, most people do not know right from wrong but think their scruples are always right even when they are wrong.

II. The Lord has specific instructions how we are to handle people with scruples that differ from our own (Rom. 14:1-15:3; 1 Cor. 8).

A. Don't get into arguments over irrelevant scruples (Rom. 14:1).

1. Vegetarians (Rom. 14:2-4).

2. Observing holidays (Rom. 14:5-9).

B. Making an issue over irrelevant scruples is wrong (Rom. 14:10-13).

1. We all must give account for **our own** actions!

2. Christ will judge all relevant matters!

3. Rather than argue over an issue that makes no difference we better consider whether we are causing another brother to sin just because we have to right.

C. If someone believes something is wrong, to him it is wrong (Rom. 14:14-21).

1. Weak members might have scruples about eating certain foods. God no longer restricts the eating of any food. But if we have a member who believes we can't eat pork; for example, and we make no bones about our eating pork, we grieve our brother and fail to act toward him in love.

2. Our inconsiderate behavior while doing something that is perfectly acceptable to God could cause him to leave the faith. He might even speak evil of our behavior to others who believe like him.

3. To God, that person is just as acceptable to Him despite his self imposed restriction to certain foods. So why would we drive him away from the Lord just because we know we are allowed to eat the things he personally restricts. Just because we are right does not mean we will not cause another to stumble due to his scruples.

D. It is dangerous to persuade a weak brother that his scruples are wrong. If he violates his conscience because he doubts we cause him to sin (Rom. 14:22-23).

E. Therefore, we cater to our weak brother's scruples (Rom. 15:1-3). We forego our interests for his sake (Phil. 2:1-4).

F. Paul gives another example using food offered to an idol (1 Cor. 8).

1. Again, it is all right with God to eat whatever we wish except if it offends a brother's weak scruples.

2. If a brother refuses to eat food offered to an idol it won't jeopardize his soul. But if we make an issue of it, we jeopardize our own soul.

III. The problem we have is making the applications to our lives. We don't like having to cater to all the weak scruples among our members.

A. What should we do when we have a member who believes celebrating Christmas is wrong?

B. How about a member who believes all mixed swimming is wrong?

C. I know members that believe wearing shorts are wrong.

D. In the past, members use to believe women wearing slacks to church was wrong.

E. I know members who believe men wearing ear rings and tattoos are wrong.

F. Just about every Christian I know believes smoking is wrong. Even **if** a person could make a case that smoking is acceptable to God, what should he do knowing the scruples of most everyone else?

Conclusion: So if we have a member that believes wearing red to church services is wrong, what should we do? For the sake of our brother's soul and for the sake of our own soul, we will forego wearing red to church. We might not like it but which would we rather do? Cater to the weak brother's soul or lose our own soul?