

Series: Romans
Title: Precepts to Strong and Weak
Text: Rom 14: 1-15: 4
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Have you noticed, throughout the scripture, God commands his saints to love one another. God command his saints to be longsuffering to one another. He exhorts us to be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake, has forgiven us. God commands us to bear one another's burdens including sins, faults, errors and infirmities. Our Master teaches us to restore a fallen brother in the spirit of meekness. God says his saints are to be merciful and gracious to one another. But not one time, does God command us to accuse, pass sentence or separate ourselves from a brother in Christ. Our text is no exception.

Proposition: God commands believers to be gracious and merciful to each other as we trust each other to God our Savior, Christ Jesus the Lord.

RECEIVE BRETHREN

Romans 14: 1: Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations.

This is a true brother who is "weak in the faith." This is not someone who believes a false gospel. Notice, he is weak but he is "*weak in the faith.*" There is only one faith—the faith God gives "*the faith of God's elect*" (Ti 2: 1); "*the faith of the saints*" (Rev 13: 10); "*the common faith*" (Ti 1:4). This one is "weak" but he is "in the faith."

He does not worship the will and works of man; this brother, like all God's sanctified and regenerated children, believes God that all men died in Adam and come forth totally depraved. This weak brother does not believe God chose his people because of what he foresaw in us; he believes God chose his people by his free and sovereign electing grace, not based on anything in us. This is not one who believes Christ died for all sinners; he believes the truth that Christ accomplished redemption for his particular people alone so that they must be given life and faith in him. The weak brother believes a dead sinner can only be born again by the Holy Spirit's irresistible grace and made willing in the day of Christ's power. He believes in God's preserving grace by which the believer perseveres in faith unto the end—"he which hath begun a good work in you shall perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." So this is a true child of God—a true brother in Christ.

His problem is that he is "*weak in the faith.*" Since he is a brother I am to receive him even though he be weak in the faith. What does weak in the faith mean?

WEAK AND STRONG IN THE FAITH

Romans 14: 2: For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs

This is God's description of those *strong in the faith* and those *weak in the faith*. Be sure to get that: this is God's word.

First, God says *strong faith* knows and is persuaded by Christ Jesus that Christ fulfilled the law so that we are not under the law but under grace; we have liberty to eat and drink all things. Christ told us clearly that it is not that which goes in the mouth that defiles a man but what comes from his heart. We have liberty to even eat meat that was used in the worship of idols. The apostle Paul had this liberty for he was one strong in the faith.

1 Corinthians 8: 4: As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* none other God but one. 5: For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) 6: But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him. 7: Howbeit *there is* not in every man that knowledge:...

Secondly, God says *weak faith* believes he may only eat herbs/vegetables. Perhaps, this brother was taught all his life that eating meat is sinful so he has never eaten meat; he only eats vegetables. Now, God has brought him out, given him true faith and he truly believes on the Lord Jesus in spirit and in truth. But he still has these grave clothes: he believes he should only eat vegetables.

God says the weak brother is in error that is why he is called weak in the faith. Our Lord says the brother who eats all things is right to enjoy his liberty that is why God calls him strong in the faith. But how does God say they should treat each other?

DO NOT DESPISE OR JUDGE

Romans 14: 3: Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

These brethren are to receive each other.

God commands the strong in faith not to accuse or criticize his weak brother. The strong brother is not to pressure or force his weak brother to change. The strong brother is not to doubt the weak brother's faith. He is not to esteem his weak brother as a legalist or an unbeliever. The Spirit of God says the strong brother is to receive his weak brother because God hath received him. It means God has taken my brother unto himself as his own!

Likewise, God says to the weak in faith, "do not judge him that eateth." Do not point out that he eats all things and pass sentence saying he is a sinner for doing so. The weak brother is not to call the strong brother's liberty licentiousness. Again God commands the weak brother to receive his strong brother for God hath received him.

Brethren, no believer knows anything as we ought. Before God, compared to Christ, we all have weak faith. Christ said to his apostles, "*Oh, ye of little faith.*" Besides, God's saints do not see ourselves strong in the faith. We see our unbelief and pray, "*Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*" "*Lord, increase our faith.*" Yet, God hath received us.

Since God has received my brother, I am to remember God is his Father the same as mine. God hath received your brother, therefore, you receive him.

Romans 8: 33: Who shall anything to the charge of God's elect, it is God that justifieth! Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

MY BROTHER'S MASTER

Romans 14: 4: Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

What is the quickest way to upset us fathers and mothers? It is when someone passes judgment on one of *our* children. Likewise, God says, "*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?*" My brother is not my servant, he is Christ's servant. So if I criticize him, I criticize his Master! Do I believe I could do a better job? Do I not believe God is able to make him stand?

How was my brother made Christ's servant? Same as you. God the Father chose him in Christ before the foundation of the world by his grace. Christ Jesus laid down his life for that brother making him the righteousness of God in him. He is Christ's purchased possession!

How does a spiritually dead sinner have spiritual life?

Ephesians 1: 22: [Christ is] head over all things to the church, 23: which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. 2: 1: And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

How does a child of God have faith?-

Ephesians 2: 8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9: Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10: For we are his workmanship,...

Does Christ give each believer the same degree of faith?

Ephesians 4: 7: But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Christ, my Master, gave my brother the measure of faith that he has. So if I doubt and dispute with a brother then I am being critical of Christ his Master! Only Christ can increase his faith? Not me! So I have forgotten what we all must remember.

1 Corinthians 4:7: who maketh thee to differ *from another*? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it*?

Remember, weak faith saves the same as strong faith. It is not the degree of our faith that saves, but the object, the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether weak in the faith or strong in the faith both are justified and made righteous in Christ. So we are to receive one another, trusting each other to Christ.

HEART MATTERS

Romans 15: 5: One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 6: He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. 7: For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. 8: For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. 9: For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord [over all his people] both of the dead and living. 10: But why dost thou judge thy [strong] brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy [weak] brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11: For it is written, *As I live, saith the*

Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12: So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Remember, we cannot see a brother's heart, only Christ can.

He says the brother *weak faith* believes he should observe a day. He observes Sunday as the sabbath day. The sabbath was Saturday but today some believe it was changed to Sunday. Brethren, if the Sabbath is now Sunday, and if it as important as some make it out to be, then would not the Bible clearly say it? This text would be a great place to say it. Yet there is not a hint anywhere. On the other hand, in multiple places we are told that the sabbath was fulfilled by Christ and we are told not to observe any day above another.

Colossians 2: 14: [Christ] Blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; 15: *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. 16: Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: 17: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

Still, the weak brother believes on Sunday he should go hear the gospel preached. The rest of the day he reads scripture, prays, listens to sermons and goes back to hear an evening message. He believes he should spend all day devoted to the Lord. A weak brother believes he should not regard Christmas day because it is a pagan holiday: he does nothing to acknowledge the Christmas season. The weak brother does not like Halloween because to him it is sinful to dress in costumes and hand out candy to children.

On the other hand, God says the brother who is *strong faith* regards every day the same. To him all days are the Lord's day and he worships Christ every day alike. On Sunday, the strong brother goes to hear the gospel. On his way home, he stops a restaurant to eat like other days. Then he goes home and watches a ballgame. If they have evening service he goes back for the evening message. The strong brother puts no religious significance on Christmas day but he puts up a Christmas tree, lights and exchanges gifts. On Halloween he passes out candy to the children.

What are these brethren to do with each other? Do not intrude upon another brother's conscience but "*Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*" You are not to live by my conscience nor attempt to make me live by yours, "*let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*" concerning what God would him to do.

Every believer—born and taught of our Lord Jesus Christ—walks in the light God has given him living unto the Lord—"*He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*" Christ died, and rose and revived that he might be Lord in the hearts of all his people from youngest to the oldest. So when God gives his child life and faith in Christ, though one may be a newborn baby in the faith, he lives unto the Lord as truly as an aged believer for 50 years.

There is newly born infant in our congregation. That baby was not born full grown like his dad. A believer is not full grown when he is born. But who would blame that baby for crawling, for eating baby food and slobbering? God's children are born babies. As a baby in Christ he may believe he can only eat certain meats, observe certain days. He may even take his radio out of his car. But in his heart he is fully persuaded and does all unto the Lord. So those strong in the faith are not to blame him for acting like a baby in Christ when his heart is to the Lord.

If I judge my brother then I play the legalist because I am saying it is necessary to walk the way I walk. I put myself in Christ's place. But I am not my brother's judge, Christ is "*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*"

Brethren, it is not the judgement of men that matters. It is the judgment of our Master. And Christ shall present us in his righteousness—holy, unblameable, unprovable in his sight. So then let us judge this, that we do nothing before weak brethren that will trip them up. Next time, we will look at these verses. For now, let's read them.

Romans 14: 13: Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. 14: I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. 15: But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. 16: Let not then your good be evil spoken of: 17: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. 18: For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. 19: Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. 20: For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. 21: It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. 22: Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. 23: And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. 15: 1: We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of

the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2: Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification. 3: For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. 4: For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

Amen!