

Dealing with Questionable Matters **Romans 14:1-4 (NKJV)**

1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

After Paul has finished the great doctrinal section of the book in chapter 11 and gives us some great practical teaching in chapters 12 and 13 now he comes to one final thing.

It concerns how we deal with those that don't see things the way that we do.

This is not about anything that the Bible plainly teaches but rather those things that are affected by the liberty that we have in Christ Jesus in our daily living.

Everyone has reasons for their deeply held convictions. Sometimes they are Biblical reasons and sometimes they are not.

What do we do about those areas in which the Bible is silent, areas where we are left to our own consciences?

Paul's purpose here is not to settle those issues, but rather to tell us how we are to treat one with whom we do not see eye to eye.

- I. Receive one who is weak in **the** faith
 - A. Receive, what does that mean?
 - 1. Acts 28:2 (NKJV) 2 And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and **made us all welcome**, (received) because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold.
 - 2. Romans 15:7 (NKJV) 7 Therefore **receive** one another, just as Christ also **received** us, to the glory of God.
 - B. What is the meaning of the word **the faith**?
 - 1. Faith is not talking about saving faith but faith as the standard of Christian belief and practice.
 - 2. Jude 1: 3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.
- II. But not to disputes over doubtful things.
 - A. The subject, doubtful things.

1. Phillips paraphrases, “Welcome a man whose faith is weak, but not with the idea of arguing over his scruples.” *James Montgomery Boice, Romans: The New Humanity, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 1724.*
2. Questionable things.
 - a. This does not include things that are strictly forbidden in the Bible.
 - b. Immorality, lying, deception, etc.
 - c. These things are wrong and are to be pointed out to a believer by his fellow believers.
 - d. The idea that Christians are to live and let live is totally foreign to the Bible.
 - e. Galatians 1:8 (NKJV) 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.
 - f. Matthew 18:6-7 (NKJV) 6 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!
 - g. Matthew 18:15-17 (NKJV) 15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.
 - h. 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 (NKJV) 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
3. The idea is things that are **not** laid out in the Bible.
 - a. There are almost numberless items that fill this description.
 - b. And I really do not want to give those today for the very list would

cause controversy.

(1) some would say where there is no question about that.

(2) and others would want to add or subtract from the list.

c. Some churches do not use musical instruments.

d. Others do not use hymn books.

e. Others sing only the psalms.

f. So sing only hymns and others only choruses.

g. Some kneel for prayer and others stand.

h. There are a thousand issues.

i. Christians are often criticized for being overly strict in areas where the Bible has nothing to say.

j. It is in these areas that we are to have liberty.

B. Don't argue over these things.

1. Some people love to argue.

2. But we should never receive a weaker brother in the faith for the purpose of straightening him out.

C. Rather respect the other's view.

1. Even to the point of maybe surrendering our some of our liberty.

2. Romans 14:21 (NKJV) 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.

3. 1 Corinthians 8:9, 11-12 (NKJV) 9 But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. 11 And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12 But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

III. Explanation

A. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

1. Remember the case of Daniel who chose to eat only vegetables to avoid eating meat that had been offered in sacrifice to idols.

2. So many Jews would not eat meat sold in the market because they could not be sure it had not been offered to idols or had not had the blood drained properly.

3. Peter a case in point.
 - a. Acts 10:15-16 (NKJV) 15 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."
16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

B. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat,

1. The idea "is a strong term that carries the idea of looking on someone as totally worthless, as being nothing or less than nothing." . . . it takes only one extremist to damage an entire congregation. Throughout the ages, churches have been plagued by those who proudly consider themselves to be spiritually superior. *MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Romans 9-16, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 278.*

C. And let not him who does not eat judge him who eats;

1. In this verse, regard with contempt and judge are essentially synonymous. In both cases, one type of person disdains the other, and both are wrong. The strong member contemptibly considers the weak member to be legalistic and self-righteous, and the weak member judges the strong member to be irresponsible at best and profligate at worst. *John MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Romans 9-16, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 278.*

IV. The basis of Paul argument

A. For God has received him.

1. In these questionable matters we are to allow God to take care of the person.

B. Who are you to judge another's servant?

C. To his own master he stands or falls.

1. 1 Corinthians 4:3-5 (NKJV) 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

D. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.