ROMANS 14

The Weak, the Strong, and the Lord

Welcoming the Brother Who Differs, and Loving the One Who Could Fall

> *"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."*
> ROMANS 14:17

A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where Paul has brought us

1. Romans 12 began the “therefore” of the letter: in view of the mercies of God, present your bodies a living sacrifice (12:1).

2. The background is the church Paul had not yet visited.

3. That distinction governs the whole chapter.

DISPUTABLE MATTERS Romans 14 applies — “opinions” (v. 1)	WHAT GOD HAS NAMED SIN Romans 14 does not apply — obey
• Meat from the idol market, or vegetables only (v. 2) • Keeping one day above another (v. 5) • Wine for a man who is free to drink it and stay sober (v. 21) • Today: diet, holidays, music styles, entertainment the Bible doesn’t name	• Drunkenness — “do not get drunk with wine” (Eph 5:18; Rom 13:13) • Sexual immorality, idolatry, strife, envying (Gal 5:19–21) • Anything God’s Word plainly forbids • Conscience is never “an excuse for obviously sinful behavior” (Guzik)

FOR THE MAN IN RECOVERY

The first drink is not a “liberty” question for him — “I will not be mastered by anything” (1 Cor 6:12).

The strong brother at his table puts the glass down: “It is good not to … drink wine” (v. 21).

And the sober man doesn’t judge the brother who can drink: “God has accepted him” (v. 3).

Receive the One Who Is Weak

Two kinds of believers, two temptations — and one God who has accepted them both

ROMANS 14:3

The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

DAVID GUZIK

The weak brother is the stricter one; don't make maturity a condition of fellowship.

R.C. SPROUL

Adiaphora: legalism binds where God left us free; the free must not despise.

C.H. SPURGEON

Both sides were wrong, for they were judging one another.

MATTHEW HENRY

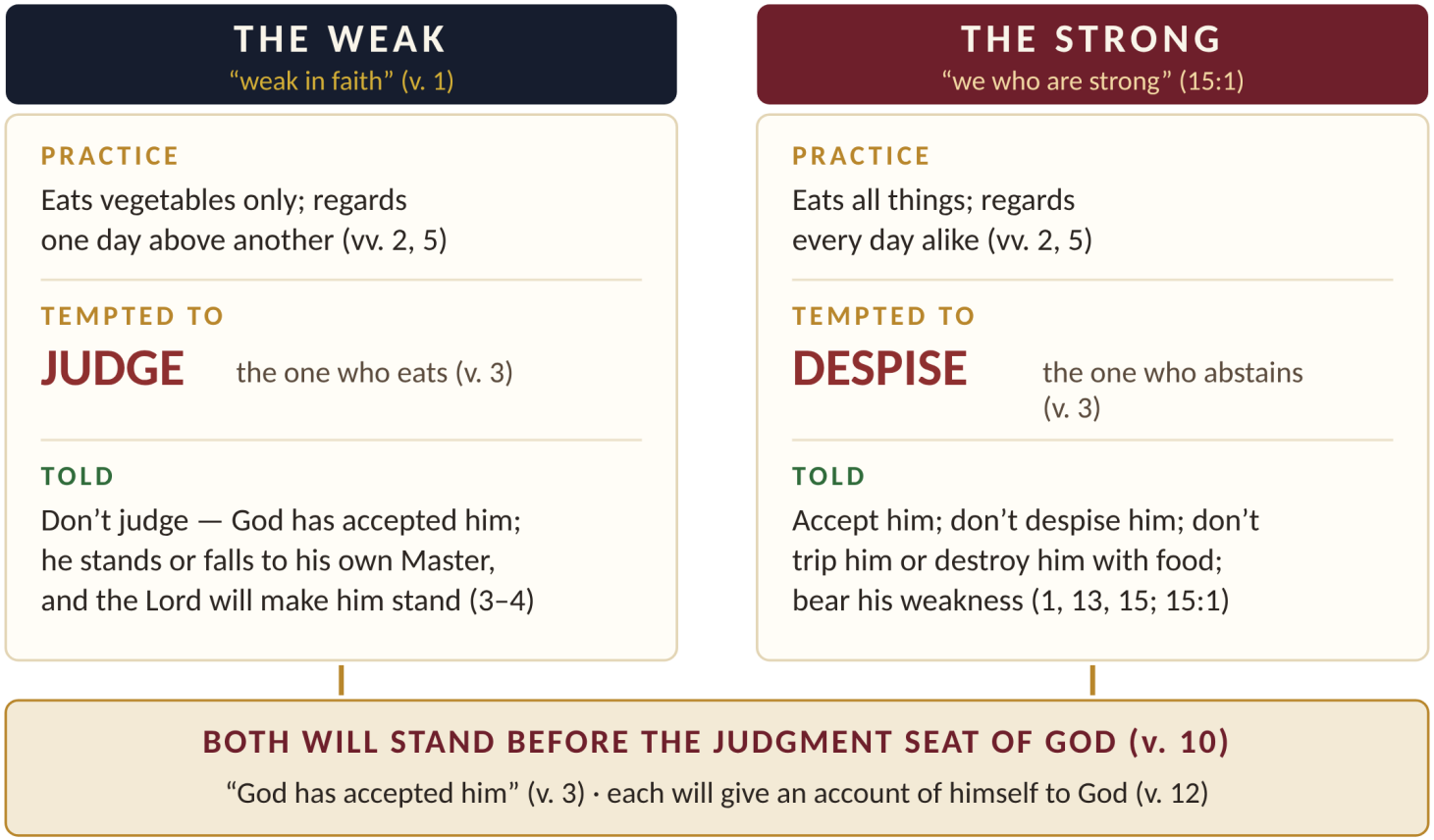
Not the difference but the mismanagement of the difference did the mischief.

προσλαμβάνεσθε

PROSLAMBANESTHE · "ACCEPT, RECEIVE"

Not "tolerate" but "take to yourself" — the word for welcoming someone into your home and your company.

Weak and Strong



Read across: each side has its own practice, its own temptation (judge or despise, v. 3) and its own instruction — and both end up before the same judgment seat.

Fully Convinced, and for the Lord

Days, food and thanksgiving — every believer's life belongs to the Lord who died and lived again

ROMANS 14:5

One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

DAVID GUZIK

Principles, not just menus; conscience is never an excuse for obvious sin.

R.C. SPROUL

Jewish holy days, not the Sabbath; act to the Lord, fully convinced.

C.H. SPURGEON

The Lord of the dead and living is the Judge — Jesus is God.

MATTHEW HENRY

Be persuaded before you act; Christ is the centre where life and death meet.

πληροφορείσθω

PLĒROPHOREISTHŌ · "BE FULLY CONVINCED"

A present passive imperative: "let him be fully assured," filled up to the brim with conviction.

Before the Judgment Seat of God

Why do you judge? Why do you despise? Every knee will bow, and each will answer for himself

ROMANS 14:10

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

DAVID GUZIK

Stop worrying about your brother; the bema weighs rewards, not salvation.

R.C. SPROUL

We all answer to Christ, so we stop sitting in judgment now.

C.H. SPURGEON

Judging is unnatural, premature, intrusive and unprofitable — break or bow.

MATTHEW HENRY

Each gives account of himself; examine yourself, not your brother.

τῷ βήματι τοῦ θεοῦ

TŌ BĒMATI TOU THEOU · "THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD"

The bēma was the raised platform where a magistrate sat to give verdicts — Pilate sat on one (John 19:13), and so did Gallio at Corinth (Acts 18:12).

The Kingdom Is Not Eating and Drinking

Judge this instead — not to trip a brother for whom Christ died

ROMANS 14:15

For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

DAVID GUZIK

If Jesus died for that brother, I can give up my steak dinner.

R.C. SPROUL

Never act against conscience; the kingdom is not about lipstick — its goal is righteousness.

MATTHEW HENRY

Forms eat out essentials; righteousness toward God, peace toward brethren, joy within.

πρόσκομμα · σκάνδαλον
PROSKOMMA · "OBSTACLE" G4348

Verse 13 plays on one verb.

Not Eating and Drinking

the kingdom of God is

NOT

~~EATING AND DRINKING~~

food, wine, days (vv. 2, 5, 21)

BUT

RIGHTEOUS-NESS	PEACE	JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT
as to God	as to our brethren	as to ourselves

THE KINGDOM OF GOD · ROMANS 14:17

the three "as to" labels: Matthew Henry

v. 18 — he who serves Christ this way is acceptable to God and approved by men

v. 19 — so pursue what makes for peace and the building up of one another

The quarrel was about the menu; Paul points to the three things the kingdom is actually made of, and to what they produce between brothers (vv. 18–19).

Whatever Is Not from Faith

Build up, don't tear down — hold your liberty before God, and never act against your conscience

ROMANS 14:19

So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

DAVID GUZIK

No liberty to stumble a sincere heart — but no catering to legalism.

R.C. SPROUL

Pursue real peace; easier to destroy than to edify; keep liberty before the Lord.

C.H. SPURGEON

Treat men as your sons — the steady man stays off the cliff edge.

MATTHEW HENRY

Lawful but not necessary — deny yourself rather than give offence.

οἰκοδομή · κατάλυε
OIKODOMĒ · "BUILDING UP" G3619

Verses 19–20 are a construction site.

A Decision Grid for Disputable Matters



Start at the gate: only if Scripture leaves a matter open do the four questions of Romans 14 apply — and a single "stop" answer is enough to hold back.

What to carry from this chapter

1

The weak brother is the strict one.

In Romans 14 “weak in faith” describes the believer whose conscience is still bound by rules God has lifted — not the careless one.

2

Two temptations, two sins.

The strong despise (exoutheneō); the weak judge (krinō).

3

Romans 14 is for disputable matters, not clear sin.

“Opinions” (v. 1) are things Scripture leaves open.

4

The text says “of God”; the KJV says “of Christ.”

Verse 10 reads tou theou in SBLGNT and NASB95, tou Christou in the Textus Receptus.

More to carry

5

The teachers read the judgment seat differently.

Guzik, quoting Smith, sees the believers' bema for rewards; Spurgeon preaches one universal, personal, divine judgment of saints and sinners and closes with a gospel…

6

"Judge this rather."

Verse 13 turns the verb around: stop judging your brother and judge your own path — is there a trap in it for him?

7

To act against conscience is neither right nor safe.

Luther's words, in Sproul.

8

The kingdom has three marks.

Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (v. 17) — as Henry put it, righteousness toward God, peace toward our brethren, joy within ourselves.

Talk it through

1. Which comes more naturally to you — despising the brother who is stricter than you, or judging the brother who is freer than you? Where did you last do it?

2. What is one matter you have treated as clear sin that Scripture actually leaves open — and one you have treated as "liberty" that Scripture actually names as sin?

3. "Each one of us will give an account of himself to God." How would it change your next conversation about a brother if you believed that literally?

4. Is there something you are free to do that you should quietly stop doing because of a particular brother at your table?

5. For a man in recovery, is the first drink a "disputable matter"? What does verse 21 ask of the strong brother who sits beside him — and what does verse 3 ask of the recovering man toward the brother who drinks?

CLOSING

The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. It is a crucified and risen Lord who owns the man who eats and the man who doesn't, and who will hear from each of us about himself. So we receive the brother He received, we lay down what might trip him, and we live — fully convinced, giving thanks — for the Lord.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study, reflection journal and film: see the Romans study page.