

# The Weak and the Strong

- **Context**

- The original recipients of the letter were predominantly Gentile believers who had been converted out of Paganism.
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- The minority were Jewish Christians who were converted out of Judaism.
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# Chapter 14 NIV version

- <sup>1</sup> Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. <sup>2</sup> One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.
- <sup>3</sup> The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them.
- <sup>4</sup> Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.
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# The Visible Problem

- Difficulty in finding cosier meat, according to the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, so they ate only vegetables
- The Jewish Christians were being rejected by the larger Gentile group in the church because the Jewish believers still felt constrained to observe dietary laws and sacred days (14:2-6).
- The disputes were not about sin but about eating meat or only vegetables (v. 2), of observing certain holy days (v. 5), and of drinking wine (v. 21).

# Reasons for Laws

- Findings at Ugarit [an ancient city whose ruins are located on the Syrian coast] have shown that it was the custom there to boil a kid in its mother's milk as a lucky charm.
1. To keep national identity
  2. Emphasise the necessity of cleansing to enter the presence of God

# What has changed?

- Hebrews 9
- 13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! 15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

# What has changed in relation to food?

- Romans 14:14 As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.  
15 If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.
- Mark 7 : 18 "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'?"
- 19 For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")

# The Invisible Problem

- despise / look down
- Judge /condemn
- Being negatively critical enables the forming of cliques
- Philippians- 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

# Implications for us

- Racial and cultural differences exist and have to be dealt with
- Race and culture have a big impact on how we view things
- We can have blind spots! The Jews in Romans and the Gentiles in Corinth. (1Corinthians 8)
- Each of us only see in part as in 1 Corinthians 13:12
- “ Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

# Embracing difference

- Tom felt the loss of Larry Dimond's insight into walking with the Spirit.
- Brother Yun author of "The Heavenly Man" could look objectively at Christianity in the U. S. and how much can be achieved without the Holy Spirit.
- Paul makes a negative assessment when he uses the word "weak" to describe the Jewish believers in Romans
- When someone makes a negative assessment of us to highlight our blind spots do we take offence or do we test it according to scripture?
- Is making a negative assessment different to Judging?

# Attitude

- Make (negative) evaluations without looking down with a superior attitude.
- Tim Keller says “if you are intolerant of intolerant people then you are intolerant. If you are judgemental against judgemental people you are judgemental.”
- Roman 14:19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification
- Adjust your life so that you can have relationship with someone?

## NIV page 2

- <sup>5</sup> One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. <sup>6</sup> Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord.
- Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.
- <sup>7</sup> For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. <sup>8</sup> If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.
- <sup>9</sup> For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

# Jesus's Attitude

- He made a negative evaluation of me by calling me a sinner
- On the cross He was sacrificing so that I could be with Him. He made a major adjustment so to have a relationship with me and I with Him.

# Accept

- “Proslambano” (Strong’s Concordance)
- to take to, take in addition, to take to one's self
- to take as one's companion
- to take by the hand in order to lead aside
- to take or receive into one's home, with the collateral idea of kindness
- to receive, i.e. grant one access to one's heart
- to take into friendship and intercourse
- to take to one's self, to take: i.e. food

# Who do we accept?

- Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarrelling over disputable matters. Romans 14:1
- they simply felt it was wrong for the Christian to eat meat, just as it is wrong to lie or steal.
- Paul pleads for understanding and love when it comes to immaturity in the matter of Christian liberties.
- Romans 14:13 “Forget about deciding what's right for each other. Here's what you need to be concerned about: that you don't get in the way of someone else, making life more difficult than it already is.” (The Message)

# Who do we avoid?

- Romans 16:17
- I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. 18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.
- Those who demand we change to suit their agenda.
- Romans 14:13
- 13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

# Examples of those to avoid

- “And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved’” (Acts 15:1).
- “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.”
- (Ephesians 2:8)

# The Jerusalem Council

- Acts 15
- 28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: 29 You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.

# Who are the strong and the weak?

- Bob Deffinbaugh says
- I had always been taught that the strong Christian was the one who knew he couldn't. He couldn't smoke, drink, dance or go to movies. And she couldn't wear lipstick or make-up. The strong Christian is "... someone who lives in mortal terror that someone, somewhere, is enjoying himself." The weak Christian was the one who spoke of liberty.
- Religion is about human effort, therefore religion is against my faith. (Paul and Nuala O'Higgins paraphrased)

# The Weak

- Those who have come to the Lord but do not yet fully understand the implications of the Gospel for their every day lives.
- Criticising them could make them defensive and might make them feel unwelcome.
- It can be very discouraging when one is doing their best and then their efforts are demeaned.
- Is it not better that they would stay and “be transformed by the renewing of their minds.”? Romans 12:2
- John 8:31 “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’.”

# Paul's advice to the weak

- Romans 14:14 “But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.”
- Romans 14:22 “So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God.”
- Romans 14: 23 “But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin”.

# The Strong

- Paul makes most of his demands to the strong.
- “If in order to exercise “Knowledge” if a person cannot exercise love, then “Knowledge” must give way.” (NIV Life in the Spirit Study Bible on 1Corinthians 8:1)
- Romans 15:1 “Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status.” (The Message)
- It is too easy just to associate with people who agree with us or are like us.

# What have I learned?

- It's a two way street
- Is it better to win an argument and lose a brother or sister?
- Blocking Behaviour? Insisting on one way.
- We are secure enough not to always have our own way but to chose to put others first
- Can I see the person behind the difference? Get the log out.
- You can disagree without demeaning the person with whom you disagree
- 1 Corinthians 8: 1&2
- Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. 2 The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know.

# Please! Please!

- Romans 14:13 “ Forget about deciding what's right for each other. Here's what you need to be concerned about: that you don't get in the way of someone else, making life more difficult than it already is.” ( The Message)

## NIV page 3

- <sup>10</sup> You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister<sup>[a]</sup>? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.
- <sup>11</sup> It is written:
  - “‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.’”<sup>[b]</sup>
- <sup>12</sup> So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.
- <sup>13</sup> Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.

## NIV page 4

- <sup>14</sup> I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean.
- <sup>15</sup> If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died.
- <sup>16</sup> Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil.
- <sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, <sup>18</sup> because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.

## NIV page 5

- <sup>19</sup> Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. <sup>20</sup> Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.
- <sup>21</sup> It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.
- <sup>22</sup> So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves.
- <sup>23</sup> But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin. [\[c\]](#)
- <sup>1</sup> We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.

# The End

# King James 1

- 1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations.
- 2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eightieth herbs.
- 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.
- 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.

# King james 2

- 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.

# King james 3

- 9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.
- 10 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.
- 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.
- 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.

# King james 4

- 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.

# King james 5

- 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.

# King james 6

- <sup>1</sup> We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.
- <sup>2</sup> Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification.