

# Romans 14:1-4

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rom/rom-14/romans-141-4/>

*God is our master and king. We should not look to judge one another for differences in religious practices or impose our habits on each other. God is the judge, not us.*

The entire book of Romans is about living righteously (correctly, harmoniously) by faith. Throughout Romans, Paul deals with slander from competing Jewish “authorities” in Rome who were pushing believers back to the Law (Romans 3:8). At this point in his letter, Paul has refuted their slander and has defended his message of living by faith. In chapter 14, Paul continues to explain what righteous living by faith looks like. Here, he draws a distinction between a believer who is strong in faith and one who is weak in faith. Again, he does not want believers, even by faith, to assert power over each other based on rules we might have. The believer with strong faith should bear and *accept the one who is weak in faith*, instead of pushing the weak believer into violating his conscience, *but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions*.

Rather than dispute the weak believer’s weakness by *passing judgment on his opinions*, the strong believer should encourage and lift up this person in their walk with God. The example Paul uses is specific to 1st century Rome: *One person has faith that he may eat all things* (through freedom in Christ, Acts 10:15), *but he who is weak eats vegetables only* (perhaps because they’re afraid the local meat has been blessed by pagan priests, 1 Corinthians 8:7). Instead of coercing the weak believer to eat meat or *regard[ing] with contempt the one who does not eat*, we should be sensitive to their lack of understanding and not consume meat with them present. Imposing our freedom onto someone else’s conscience is divisive and pointless, and it wounds the weak believer’s faith.

It is important to note that the one with weak faith is the one whose conscience will be violated if he eats the meat. Strong faith allows freedom to say, “Hey, food is food, that pagan priest doesn’t mean anything to me.” But perhaps the brother with the weak faith has just come out of paganism, and for him it would trigger all sorts of habit patterns he is trying to break away from to eat the meat. So someone that has strong faith should be sensitive to not create a stumbling block or temptation for someone with weak faith. On the other hand, *the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him*.

To attempt to bring this to modern times, one brother might enjoy playing the game of pool, but forgo the sport when with a brother who is an alcoholic and associates playing pool with drinking alcohol. To take that brother to a pool hall would put him in harm’s way to relapse into alcoholism, so for the best interest of the brother, pool can wait until another day. This passage specifically applies to “opinions” (verse 1). That would necessarily mean we are talking about things the Bible doesn’t directly address. However, that is most of life. The Bible says little about what we spend most of our time doing, eating, dressing, working, traveling, etc. The Bible gives us principles to apply to all those areas. Each person will apply those principles based on their conscience, experience and level of faith. The stronger in faith someone is, the more on the lookout they should be regarding how to bless others of weaker faith.

It's important to reiterate what faith is. Hebrews 11:1 gives the Biblical definition of faith, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." If you hope for something, you don't have it. If you already have it, you can't hope for it. Faith deals fundamentally with things we don't have and can't see. Someone who is strong in faith acts on the belief (faith) that those things which are not seen are true and tangible.

So, when we receive someone who's weak in the faith, it means that person has trouble making things he can't see tangible and has difficulty treating things he doesn't have as though he does. Those are hard things to do. All of us are going to have weak faith or have had weak faith at some point in time, because faith isn't always easy. So, we should encourage one another, rather than judge each other. Paul concludes his reasoning by pointing out that it is God who judges: *Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

### **Biblical Text**

**1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but not for the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions. 2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*. 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. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.**