

VERSE 1 - GREEN

Paul begins by giving a general instruction to **"receive him that is weak in the faith."** The term "receive" should be understood as showing hospitality towards those who are "weak in the faith."

In this context, it is most likely that Paul is referring to Jewish friends, family, and neighbors who have accepted Jesus as the Messiah and coming Lord. However, there is a challenge for those who are transitioning from the solid foundations of Judaism to the new dispensation of grace, especially when the Kingdom is still being offered to the Jews. This transition period can bring about anxiety for those who are new to the faith.

The *weaker brothers* were likely dealing with a bit of emotional and mental stress caused by their new belief system. The new converts may have experienced what is now called cognitive dissonance because they have to hold onto two seemingly conflicting sets of beliefs: the foundational aspects of Judaism that have shaped their religious identity thus far, and the new dispensation of grace in Christ that contradicts or challenges some of these pre-existing beliefs or practices. This is exacerbated by the fact that there was also an overlapping period in which they were trying to live as a member of their national chosen family, yet also knowing they were individuals who were complete in Christ. Imagine the internal struggle of what to do with the law, what to do with the Kingdom, and how to reconcile their competing ideas.

Paul demonstrates a gracious attitude towards those who are grappling with these ideas in their minds, and he urges the Roman Jews to do the same. While the examples in verses 2-9 are specifically directed towards the Roman Jews of the first century, the same sense of unease arises in anyone who embraces a new belief system that challenges their existing beliefs, such as the interpretive approach of **right division**. Often, both those who are currently facing these struggles and those who have already overcome them tend to adopt an approach of avoidance or fleeing from the problem. Paul's patient attitude displays a spirit of grace.

The reception, however, should not go to "doubtful disputations." The literal translation could be "thoroughly discussed decisions." At some point, a group of people has to determine not to revisit every debate they've had over issues. Settle it and move on. Determine your position, build a robust case, and explain your case as many times as necessary, but do not go back and reopen the case.

VERSES 2-3 - GREEN

The Christian life in this dispensation has no dietary rules whatsoever. However, the Jews did come from a system rich with dietary tradition, some of these traditions come directly from the Torah, while others are derived from rabbinic traditions. In essence, Paul says, "do what you want when you eat, but don't judge the one who does differently."

How can Paul take a nonchalant position on dietary matters? Why didn't he allow Peter the opportunity to waver back and forth in Galatians 2? These questions highlight that the verses have a specific context and should not be considered the definitive Christian position on all dietary matters. That's why we have marked them in green instead of blue in our color-coding system. Blue text would imply a passage where a doctrine must be established, rather than a contextual comment that can be applied with wisdom.

VERSE 4 - GREEN

Paul asks a penetrating question: **is it really your position to be the judge?**

This is one of four "do not judge" passages, and each are arguably to Jewish audiences in Jewish contexts (Matt. 7:1-2, 1 Cor. 4:5, and James 4:12). If judgment was forbidden under the Torah, where judgment was largely self-evaluated and based on the clarity of the text, how much more so under grace.

Notice the parallelism between verse 3, "**for God hath received him**" and verse 4, "**for God is able to make him stand.**" This kind of balance in wording is common in Biblical writing and is considered a mark of authenticity. Some texts from outside the Biblical area (Alexandrian type) change "God" (theos) to "Lord" (kurios). Although there is no discernible doctrinal issue, it raises the question of whether it disrupts the poetic structure of the writing.

For example, consider these examples:

- God hath received him...God will make him stand (Rom. 14:3-4).
- The wages of sin...the gift of God (Rom. 6:23).
- In Adam all die...in Christ all shall be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22).
- Old things are gone...all things are new (2 Cor. 5:17)

VERSE 5 - GREEN

Paul moves from one specific (dietary practices) to another (observance of holy days), but within the same topic. Paul clearly is not concerned about which position his followers would take. What he is concerned about is that they be "**fully persuaded.**" This displays a dispensational change in itself. Could such a thing have been said under the strict Torah regulations? Paul would have been considered heretical for saying such a thing. But now, at the opening of Israel's period of blindness, he can begin to move into the grace message even for the Jew.

For example, consider if Paul had proffered the counsel found in verse 5 during the wilderness wanderings. How would that advice square with the severe judgment in Numbers 15:32-36, where a man is stoned for gathering wood on the Sabbath? Or what of Exodus 31:14, which declares, "**Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death**"? Would not Paul's statement appear to directly contravene God's command in Deuteronomy 12:32: "**What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it**"? And how would his leniency on observing days sit in the face of Jesus' affirmation of the Law in Matthew 5:17-20, particularly the statement, "**For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled**"? It seems clear that Paul's words would have been highly discordant, if not heretical, under the strict regime of the Torah.

VERSE 6 - GREEN

Once again, modern versions that rely on early manuscripts like Codex Sinaiticus diverge from the received texts represented by the Textus Receptus. While these manuscripts are claimed to be older, the claims are not without controversy. Further, they are not universally accepted as more accurate, particularly among those who favor the Textus Receptus.

In this case, the textual variant omits portions of this verse concerning the negative of observance of days and the positive of partaking in food. The shortened version, therefore, loses not only the poetic balance but also the comprehensive range of grace offered in the Christian life.

Pauline writings often employ symmetry and rhetorical balance for emphasis and memorability, as noted in our commentary on verse 4. The longer reading in the Textus Receptus offers this kind of balance by presenting both sides of liberty: whether one observes days or does not, and whether one eats or abstains. This adds a layer of richness to the text, underscoring that it's not the specific action that is pivotal, but one's conscientious orientation toward the Lord.

The omission in the shorter reading does not merely disrupt the verse's rhetorical symmetry; it also restricts its theological depth. The longer version encapsulates more fully the doctrine of Christian liberty under grace, reinforcing Paul's broader message in Romans 14. In this dispensation of grace, whether one is abstaining or partaking, the key principle remains one's commitment to serving the Lord.

There is much focus on liberty and grace in my comments above, but we should note that I have still color-coded this green because Paul is speaking about specifics to Roman Jews, some of whom will continue with Jewish Law and traditions and some who will not.

VERSES 7-8 - GREEN

In verse 7, Paul underscores that an individual's existence—both life and death—are not solely "unto himself," highlighting our inherent relationship with our Creator. This recognition diverges significantly from the older dispensation, which placed emphasis on collective, national identity and obedience. In verse 8, the focus is sharply personal; men and women live "unto the Lord," accountable to Him directly. Here, individuals stand in their own right before God, devoid of the collective rises and falls often associated with the nation of Israel. Remarkably, there is a conspicuous absence of the Law in this discussion, which in itself signifies a transition. In this new framework, life is lived "unto the Lord" exclusively, contrasting sharply with the earlier dispensation where righteous living was stringently tied to Law observance rather than the freedom found in Christ.

This passage further democratizes spiritual standing, presenting all believers as equals before the Lord. It demolishes the hierarchies or class systems tied to national or group identities, asserting the primacy of individual accountability to God.

Moreover, the text introduces a remarkable latitude in terms of personal liberty, allowing believers the freedom to adhere or not adhere to specific norms, such as dietary laws or the observance of specific days. This degree of liberty, anchored in personal responsibility to the Lord, was virtually inconceivable under prior dispensations, affirming the transformative nature of grace in the current dispensational context.

VERSE 9 - BLUE

This verse has been color-coded blue to signify its universal applicability, transcending even the dispensation of grace. It succinctly encapsulates the overarching purpose of Christ's death and resurrection, making it one of the most compelling statements about Christ's work found in the entire biblical canon. Jesus died and rose again for the express purpose of establishing His Lordship over both the living and the dead. This fulfills a cosmic plan, going beyond merely addressing personal sins. His conquest over death not only establishes His sovereignty in a personal dimension but also paves the way for the eventual subjugation of all enemies.

The universal scope of this verse extends to what the Apostle Paul later refers to as the "dispensation of the fullness of times" (Eph. 1:10). This phrase implies the ultimate goal of all divine actions and providences, suggesting that Christ's death and resurrection are integral parts of a grand, cosmic plan, not merely events with limited human-centered significance.

Furthermore, this verse disrupts certain theological constructs, such as Calvinistic Limited Atonement. Calvinism argues that Christ's death and resurrection had a very specific aim: the salvation of a predetermined group of people. This line of reasoning presupposes that failure on Christ's part is impossible, and an Unlimited Atonement would cause Him failure, since not all people will be saved. However, Romans 14:9 expands the purview of Christ's redemptive work beyond specific atonement models. It positions His reign as the central accomplishment, thus dispelling the constraints of Calvinistic interpretations that might limit the efficacy or scope of Christ's work to human redemption alone.

This expansive perspective challenges us to view Christ's redemptive act not just as a transaction dealing with individual sins, but as a pivotal event affecting the entire cosmic order.