

The assembly brings into one body many seeming opposites: the Jew and the Greek, the slave and the free, male and female (Gal. 3:28). All are reconciled in Christ.

This chapter and 1 Cor. 8 speak of another reconciliation, that between the *strong* and the *weak*. It has nothing to do, of course, with physical strength. Rather, it recognizes that some people just have more self-assurance in matters of faith and life in general. Others are more timid and indecisive. Usually when the two types come together in an organization, the strong dominate and the weak give in (perhaps resentfully) and contribute little. They struggle to understand each other.

But the Lord Jesus Christ does not desire that for His body. *“But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another”* (1 Cor. 12:24-25).

Let’s look at some verses aimed at the strong.

*“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves”* (Rom. 15:1).

*“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak”* (1 Cor. 9:22). I can lower myself as Christ did to save the lost.

*“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you ... not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples”* (1 Peter 5:2-3).

*“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”* (Gal. 6:2).

The strong are not to take over but to help the weak, just as a strong singer in the assembly should not try to drown out the rest but lead them so all sing better.

But not all responsibility rests on their shoulders, however strong they may be. The passage in Galatians, above, goes on to say *“Each will have to bear his own load.”* Those who feel themselves weak should not be needy or complacent but seek to grow.

*“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil”* (Heb. 5:12-14).

*“God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control”* (2 Tim. 1:7).

But we should not look within ourselves for that strength. *“I can do all things through him who strengthens me”* (Phil. 4:13).

### Questions:

1. What is meant here by “weak in faith”? What does it have to do with diet?
2. How should we treat those who have a conscience about a matter that we do not share?
3. In verse 5 what does it mean to be convinced in one’s own mind?

4. Verse 6 mentions those who keep special days. What might this mean today?
5. Galatians 4:10 rebukes the readers for keeping special days. How is their situation different from those addressed here?
6. Where in this passage does it talk of accountability? To whom are we accountable?
7. Verses 15 and 20 use strong language: Destroying one's brother and destroying the work of God. What could this mean?
8. What are some matters where exercising our liberty might put a stumbling block before someone?
9. See verse 23. Explain how whatever is not of faith is actually sin.