

# Varieties of Faith

## Part 2: Matter of Conscience Faith

**Faith:** “Now faith is the assurance/substance of things hoped for, the conviction/evidence of things not (yet) seen.” Heb. 11:1

## Matter of Conscience Faith

- **“Faith”** here refers not to our Christian beliefs generally, but to our personal convictions concerning what is being permitted or forbidden by God in your own conscience in matters of religious belief or moral practice where scripture does not provide clear instruction
- *“You should each be fully convinced/(persuaded by evidence) as to what is acceptable in God for you.” Romans 14:5*

# Adiaphora

- Romans 14:1-23-- cultural situation— church divided over *adiaphora*
- Grk. *Adiaphora* – “things indifferent” or “things disputable/debatable”
- – gray areas of belief or practice for the Christian, where the scriptures do not provide unambiguous guidance for what is right and what is wrong --

- “In Romans 14 and 15, Paul addresses a conflict that had arisen within the new Church of Rome. One group in the church has a conviction, indeed a strong religious conviction, about matters of their faith; while another group does not share that conviction. Both parties are convinced they are right and the others are wrong. Both groups are Christians who believe they are right. Paul does not condemn them for wanting to be right or for holding fast to their positions. However, he brings correction to both sides for their sinful attitudes toward each other. The one side—Paul calls “the strong in faith”—despised and wanted to have nothing to do the other side; and the other side --- Paul calls “the weak in faith”—judged and condemned the strong, considering them immoral and possibly not even Christians.”

## A Closer Look at “Faith in Indifferent Things”

- Are matters of indifference to God because they are neither commanded nor prohibited by Him in scripture.
- God’s people are free to choose to embrace or not to embrace them according to the conviction of their conscience.
- For the biblically untaught, these issues are not considered indifferent or debatable at all but *quite essential* to the truth of the Bible and living righteously in Christ. The consequence of not understanding the Bible’s teaching about *adiaphora* is that those who hold opposite opinions in doctrinally moral or neutral things often consider each other immoral or even non-Christian, to be shunned or even destroyed – in the areas of **doctrines or practices not essential to salvation**

## Nasty Sinful Attitudes of the Strong and the Weak

- **The strong in faith** were guilty of **“looking down on”** the weak – better translation—**Grk. *exoutheneo*** – **“to reject with contempt”** – (verb appears in 1 Thess. 5:20—“Do not despise prophetic utterances”) –**to treat with utter contempt or disdain; to reject completely, have nothing to do with...;** instead the strong in faith are to “accept or welcome the weak” – receive them into one’s home or circle of friends

## FAITH

- **The weak in faith** were guilty of “condemning” the strong – Grk-- *krino* in this context is very strong word -- means “**to pronounce punishment or doom on a person, even to deny someone’s right to salvation**”
- **Both the strong in faith and the weak in faith were wrong!** But Paul indicates that the weak’s attitude was especially destructive because they were standing in the place of Christ the Judge---only God has the right to engage in that kind of ultimate “judgment” as to whether someone is saved or not
- Judging produces counter-judging produces division

## Examples of Adiaphora

- **Adiaphora -- Historic examples**
- **Many Contemporary Examples**
- **Our Church: Jesus People**
- **Our Church: To the Present**



# Examples of Adiaphora

- **Historically and Now:  
In The Wider Church**