

Biblical Text: Romans 14	Commentary
<p><b>Do Not Pass Judgment on One Another</b></p> <p><b>14</b> As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. <sup>2</sup> One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. <sup>4</sup> Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.</p> <p><sup>5</sup> One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup> The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. <sup>7</sup> For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. <sup>8</sup> For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. <sup>9</sup> For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.</p> <p><sup>10</sup> Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; <sup>11</sup> for it is written,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”</p> <p><sup>12</sup> So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.</p>	<p>In chapters 12-14, St. Paul discusses Christian freedom for those declared righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. We go from Chap 13 on our relationship with the civic authorities to our relationship towards the weak in faith.</p> <p><sup>1</sup> “Weak in faith”...who are these? Read 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 6:12-13, 8:4, and 9:4-5. Those who put man-made restrictions upon themselves to qualify their faith, these are the weak in faith. The strong in faith have freedom in the use of the things in the world, but choose freely to live with a caveat. // The occasion to quarrel in a congregation consisting of Jews and Gentiles probably found occasion in respect to food. Contemporary examples: 1) Alcohol; 2) Various diets; 3) Other conduct.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> Jesus declared all foods to be clean (Mark 7:18-19). See Psalm 24:1a. Israel had national distinctions, but still sinful. But some consciences will restrict freedom.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> All people are tempted to judge the other. The weak are tempted to judge the strong; and the strong are tempted to judge the weak. Though here, the emphasis is on the weak judging the strong. This goes the other way at verse 13.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Having been purchased by the blood of Christ, we are no longer condemned (Rom. 8:1). No one can judge us except God.</p> <p><sup>5-6</sup> Whether we observe or not, eat or not, what matters is being true to one's conscience and conviction. What we do reflects our faith.</p> <p><sup>7-8</sup> Regardless of what we do or abstain from doing, all of it should be “in honor of the Lord.” We are never autonomous. No matter what, we belong to the Lord. This is the litmus test to all that we do or do not do. Am I honoring God?</p> <p><sup>9</sup> Christ is Lord of all (Php 2:11). God is not the God of the dead, but the living (Mk 12:27).</p> <p><sup>10</sup> We are brothers and sisters in the family of God, there is no room for passing judgment on each other.</p> <p><sup>11</sup> At the judgment, there will be no distinctions among people. No one is better and no one is worse. Being in Christ is all that matters.</p> <p><sup>12</sup> Each person will be judged by God. Will we all be judged? Yes, every one of us. What is the Christian's comfort? That they were better than</p>

### **Do Not Cause Another to Stumble**

<sup>13</sup> Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. <sup>14</sup> I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. <sup>15</sup> For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup> So do not let what you regard as 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 and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup> Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. <sup>19</sup> So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

<sup>20</sup> Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. <sup>21</sup> It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. <sup>22</sup> The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. <sup>23</sup> But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

other people? No! We are not! Only, that they are covered by Christ who bore their sin. In Him and in Him alone do we come out of the universal judgment not condemned.

<sup>13</sup> Remember verse 3? Now, St. Paul is focused on the possibility of the strong judging the weak. If they do, they might be willing to put a “stumbling block” before the weaker brother. Contemporary examples include: drinking, gambling, and the arts.

<sup>14</sup> Objectively all food is clean (see verse 2), *but* if one’s conscience does not recognize this, then it is possible to sin against conscience which is tantamount to sinning against God. In other words, if you believe that you would be sinning against God if you do “X,” but you do “X” anyway, then you are sinning against God.

<sup>15</sup> We sin against Christ if we do not take our neighbor’s conscience into consideration. Even if we know that something is permissible, if we do it in front of another Christian who believes that it is not, then we tempt that Christian to violate their own conscience and as a result, harm their faith or (as the verse says) even destroy it.

<sup>16</sup> If the weaker one is destroyed by what they were not ready for because of your behavior, then what you considered good has become evil by the brother who stumbled over it.

<sup>17</sup> Our focus is not on the things of this world, but on faith and love: kingdom priorities.

<sup>18</sup> Faith in Christ leads to good service to men.

<sup>19</sup> This is the duty of the strong in Christ. The “Prince of Peace” (Is 9:6) wants “peacemakers” (Matt. 5:9).

<sup>20</sup> Thus, we are willing to sacrifice our desires.

<sup>21</sup> Love for neighbor is better than what we have the “right” to do or “permission” to do.

<sup>22</sup> Do not flaunt your God-given freedom; rather, let your faith influence your public conduct (TLSB, 1938).

<sup>23</sup> Our conduct should be determined by our faith. Love for neighbor properly flows from faith in Jesus Christ. When it comes to our neighbor, our faith in Christ leads us to love them and serve them. We must be clear that what we do, we do in love toward the neighbor.