

**Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church**  
**2080 West Grand Blvd.**  
**Detroit, MI 48208**  
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**“Cease Judging One Another”**

Date: December 2005

**OPENING PRAYER:**

**LESSON SCRIPTURE:** “Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” Rom. 14:13 (King James Versions).

“Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in your brother’s way.” (New King James Version)

“Therefore, let us no longer criticize one another, but instead decide not to put a stumbling block or pitfall in your brother’s way.” (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

“We must stop judging others. We must also make up our minds not to upset anyone’s faith.” (Contemporary English Version).

“Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way. (New American Standard Bible).

“So don’t condemn each other anymore. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not put an obstacle in another Christian’s path.” (New Living Translation).

Then let us no more criticize and blame and pass judgment on one another, but rather decide and endeavor never to put a stumbling block or an obstacle or a hindrance in the way of a brother.” (Amplified Bible)

**GOAL:** To understand the spiritual impact of judging one another.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Realize that it was only God’s grace and mercy that removed the judgment and penalty of our sinful state.
2. Remember that our fellowship with each other is based on the Lordship of Christ not on our evaluation or judgment of correct Christian conduct.
3. Recognize and understand what God expects our response towards each other to be as we grow together in faith.

### **ESSENTIAL INSIGHT/QUESTIONS:**

What is the spiritual impact of our judging each other? How should Christians respond to each other when they are confronted by differing personal convictions? What is our responsibility to each other as members of the body of Christ?

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

**Time:** About 56-57 A.D. **Place:** Corinth

The book of Romans has been noted as probably one of the greatest books in the New Testament. Some theologians called it the Constitution of Christianity. Paul receives doctrine as a direct revelation from GOD empowered through the Holy Spirit. His purpose in writing this epistle was to reveal the great truths of the gospel of faith and grace. He wanted to encourage believers with sound doctrinal instructions. The church at Rome was not as corrupt as other churches, but Paul wanted to introduce himself personally and get acquainted with the Christians in Rome.

The scripture Romans 14:13 relates to the principle of Christian liberty. Christ mandates us not to judge one another but use our judgment to help fellow believers. Our liberty should not be used as a hindrance or offense but as a way to strengthen and edify the body of Christ.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Judging defined:** To pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong. (I.e. *summoned to trial that one's case may be examined and judgment passed on it, to pronounce judgment, to subject to censure. (i.e. passing judgment on the words and deeds of others); to preside over with the power of giving judicial decisions, because it was the prerogative of kings and rulers to pass judgment.*<sup>1</sup>

**2919 Krino** (kree'no); Verb: to separate, put asunder, to pick out, select, choose (1), to approve, esteem, to prefer (2), to be of opinion, deem, think (3), to determine, resolve, decree (4) to rule, govern (6), to contend together, of warriors and combatants (7).

### **Rather defined:**

**3123 Mallon** (mal'-lon); adverb; more to a greater degree, rather (1); much, by far, rather, sooner, more willingly, more readily.<sup>2</sup>

**Stumbling Block defined:** an obstacle in the way which if one strikes his foot against he stumbles or falls; that over which a soul stumble, i.e. by which is caused to sin.<sup>3</sup>

**4348 Proskomma** (pros'-kom-mah); Noun;

**Fall defined:** the movable stick or trigger of a trap, a trap stick; snare (1), any impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble or fall, i.e. a rock which is a

cause of stumbling; any person or thing by which one is (entrapped) drawn into error or sin.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary

<sup>2</sup>Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary

<sup>3</sup>Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary

<sup>4</sup>Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary

## **LESSON INTRODUCTION:**

In Romans 14, the apostle Paul is dealing with matters of Christian conscience and personal convictions, especially as they relate to the relationship of strong and weak believers.<sup>5</sup> We can all probably relate a personal experience of being judged by a fellow believer because of some personal conviction. Growing to be more and more like Christ is the life-long task of every Christian. All believers are at a different level in their personal relationship with Christ. Some have come into the liberty that comes with maturing in Christ, while others struggle to let go of personal convictions and behaviors that hinder greater freedom in Christ.

<sup>5</sup>Bob Deffinbaugh, Th.M., "*The Strong and the Weak*" (Romans 14) in Reasoning through Romans  
Source: Bible.org @ www.bible.org

## **LESSON CONTENT (Input and Modeling):**

### **OUTLINE:**

#### **I. Accountable to God, the Only Righteous Judge**

Scriptures: Eph. 2:8-13; Rom. 14: 1-12

As we read Romans 14, we find that there were two cultures judging one another, the Jews and the Gentiles. It was difficult for the Jews to rid themselves of old habits and behaviors dictated by Jewish tradition and law. They began to condemn the Gentile converts for not observing special days and for eating meat. On the other hand, the Gentile believers had abandoned their pagan beliefs and idolatrous behaviors. Believing they had experienced a greater liberty through Christ, they considered themselves stronger than the Jewish sect. Both had assumed a judgmental stance towards one another.

Every believer enters the church with different beliefs, life experiences, understandings, and traditions. These things are embedded in who we are and manifest themselves in personal convictions and behaviors. Even though we have been united in Christ, each one of us is on a personal journey to grow more Christ-like. Our Christian journey is an individual one, and we grow into maturity as we submit to the Lord in obedience. Within the church, we have both the mature Christian and those who are babes in Christ. Obedience to God's Word gives us the liberty to recognize that God alone has the power to save. Our salvation cannot be secured by the rituals and laws of man. Therefore, the mature Christian is free to live a life that is subject to the authority of Christ Jesus. The

babe in Christ needs time to grow into this freedom. Nevertheless, Christ died for all believers—the mature ones as well as those who are babes in Christ.

Paul affirms that all believers are subject to the Lordship of Christ. Each one of us is accountable to God and God alone! (Rom. 14: 11-12). Personal convictions are the private property<sup>6</sup> of each believer's conscience to be examined before God. (Rom 14:4) All of us are servants of the Lord. Therefore, who are we to judge God's servant? (v.4) God's love removed the penalty of death from us through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus Christ. Because of God's love and grace we stand in the body of Christ! (Eph.2: 8-9). If God has placed both the weak and the strong into the body of Christ, we cannot judge, reject or hold in contempt any believer because their conduct does not conform to our personal beliefs. Everyone must give an account of his own actions to God. He alone is the Holy and Righteous Judge!

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<sup>6</sup>Bob Deffinbaugh, Th.M., "*The Strong and the Weak*" (Romans 14) in Reasoning through Romans  
Source: Bible.org @ www.bible.org

## **II. The Christian's Response and Responsibility towards One Another** **Scriptures: Matt. 7:1; James 4:11-12; I Peter. 4:8; Eph. 2: 11-22**

How should we respond to fellow believers who are demonstrating conduct or behaviors with which we disagree? Our first response is to stop judging them. Judging others has a negative spiritual impact on the church. Judging fellow Christians freezes them in the line of conduct being judged. By exercising love, patience and forbearance, their conduct might change.<sup>7</sup> Nothing is more detrimental to Christian fellowship than an attitude of condemnation within the family of the redeemed.

Secondly, all Christians have a greater responsibility towards one another. We must receive and accept each other in love. The spiritually mature Christian understands that the conduct and behavior of another believer may indicate a lack of understanding. However, Christ through his death opened the way for everyone who believes to become a child of God. We all have the responsibility to "be patient, bearing in love the weakness of each other." By doing so, the unity of the church is maintained. (Eph. 4: 2b-3.)

The church should not be a place of division, strife, condemnation, and bitter judgments against one another. God's intention is that "we will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. Under Christ's direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." (Eph. 4:15-16) (New Living Translation).

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<sup>7</sup>Coffman's New Testament Commentary.

### **III. God's Love Empowers Us to Edify rather Than Judge Each Other**

Scriptures: 1 Peter 4:8; I Corinthians 8:13, Romans 14:13-20, Romans 5:8, Romans 3:23

*“Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way”*

**Romans 14:13 (NASB)**

The Scriptures tells us that God commended His love towards us while we were still sinners. (Rom. 5:8). God was *intentional* in His plan to provide salvation to man. In this scripture, the Greek word for rather is “*mallon*” (mal’-lon). It is an adverb that means: more to a greater degree; more willingly, more readily<sup>8</sup>. So we must make up our minds that we will never let our freedom in Christ become a stumbling block to a fellow believer. To judge another’s person’s convictions, beliefs, and conduct is to assume a self-righteous posture. God has allowed all of us with our faults, beliefs, and conduct to become members of the household of faith. So what is our responsibility? We have a responsibility to refrain from using the freedom we have been given in Christ to cause our brother to stumble in their faith. Each person has his or her own convictions and understanding about correct conduct. We must receive them in love, not try to convince them that their conduct is wrong.

“What’s important in all this is that if you keep a holy day, keep it for God’s sake; if you eat meat, eat it to the glory of God and thank God for [it]; if you’re a vegetarian, eat vegetables to the glory of God and thank God for [it]. None of us is permitted to insist on our own way in these matters. It is God we are answerable to—all the way from life to death and everything in between—not to each other. That’s why Jesus lived and died and then lived again: so that He could be our Master across the entire range of life and death, and free us from the petty tyrannies of each other. (Rom. 14: 6-9).<sup>9</sup> Each one of us exercises his faith towards God.

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<sup>8</sup> Strong’s Concordance

<sup>9</sup> Patterson, Eugene *The Message* (Rom. 14: 6-9)

### **SUMMARY/REVIEW/CLOSURE:**

We all have a habit of forming our opinions based on our personal standards. Most of us hold ourselves at a higher standard and have a tendency to look at others who may be different as being inferior. The Scripture tell us "there is no respect of persons with God." (Romans 2:11) The ground is level at the foot of the cross. We are all the same in the eyes of God. How can we judge fellow believers, when we must all stand before the judgement seat of Christ? Satan effectively uses this human trait to stifle and destroy evangelism and discipleship—the mechanisms for the Great Commission and spiritual growth within the church.

We are expected to encourage fellow believers who may be babes in Christ in the spirit of love and compassion. Our liberty in Christ should not be used to hinder or cause our

brothers and sisters to falter. Paul is saying we should not criticize or condemn one another but use our wisdom and good judgement to foster growth in the weaker Christian. Our non-verbal expressions and actions can encourage or discourage and cause other believers to fall away. Incorporate a Christ consciousness in all that you do so that you are reflecting the joy of His Love.

### **DISCUSSION/APPLICATION QUESTIONS:**

1. How do you imagine God reacts when we judge/criticize our Christian brothers and sisters? Is he angrily stomping and shouting, disappointed and disapproving or graciously understanding and compassionate?
2. How do you feel about yourself when you are critical and judgmental of others?
3. Discuss what Christians must do to develop an uncritical temper and cease judging one another?

### **PRAYER:**

### **TEACHING MATERIALS:**

*Below you will find “true stories” that illustrate the damage that can be caused by judging each other. We have named them “Stumbling Block Stories. Consider, what might happen because we judged another person. How would you answer God if He showed you the result of your judging another?*

## **TRUE STORIES ABOUT STUMBLING BLOCKS IN THE CHURCH**

### **Story #1**

There was a lady from another town who was abandoned by a friend and left in the city without her purse, money, a telephone, or any belongings. In the midst of her utter distress, she saw the lights of a church marquis flashing at the break of dawn. It read “Come Home to Family”. Having no place to go or no one to turn to, she entered the building hopeful that she could find help.

She shared her story with some of the ministers. Nothing could be done until after church service. Apprehensively, she entered the sanctuary dressed in denim shorts, not having access to clean clothing or sweet smelling hygiene toiletries. Of course, she was able to sense strange looks and disapproving remarks directed towards her, but she quietly pressed her way to her seat.

The sermon that morning was particularly moving. She wept the entire time saying, “He is talking to me.” “This message is for me.” When the invitation to salvation was given,

she went forth to rededicate her life to God. What if she had not moved past the judgmental looks and quiet remarks that took place? Would you have wanted to answer to God for being a stumbling block in her path?

Fortunately, she left that day knowing she had a divine encounter with God to take her off the path that she was on and to restore her to Christian fellowship. What her enemies meant for evil, God meant for her life-changing good. The church provided her safe transportation home. What if someone would have kept her from walking down that aisle? If God draws a person, regardless of their appearance, who are we to deter them? Who are we to put a stumbling block in our brother or sister's path that may be or may not be weaker in the faith? The same Holy Spirit abiding in us is in them too!

## **Story #2**

It was the annual church wide fall retreat. Everyone was excited as they began to board the bus to the retreat site. It had been announced every Sunday that if you wanted to come to the retreat and did not have the money a way would be provided. As everyone prepared for the trip, a woman came into the crowd saying she wanted to go on the retreat. Her clothing was disheveled and dirty, she had a very bad body odor, and her blood shot eyes and stagger revealed that she was intoxicated. Since I was serving as the Retreat Coordinator, many of the church members came frantically to me concerned that "this drunk wanted to go on our retreat". One prayer I had continually prayed as I led the retreat committee in the planning, development, and organization of the retreat was "Lord, whomever you want to go on this retreat, get them there. This prayer began to ring loudly in my mind as I tried to figure out a way for this lady to go.

Well, we did manage to get her packed and ready and she came on the retreat. Because she had no access to any alcoholic drink, she sobered up and began to participate in the activities of the retreat. At the Sunday worship that culminated the retreat, she received Jesus Christ as her personal Savior. God had drawn her. We returned to the church and everyone left to go home. It had been such an amazing experience because God's Holy Spirit had full control. The experience was very rich. On the Tuesday following the retreat, I received a call with some startling news. This very same woman who had come to the bus intoxicated and insisting to go, who had sobered up and participated in the activities, and who had received Christ that weekend had died on Monday night. God had saved her before she drew her last breath. Glory to God! What if we had judged that she was unfit to go on this retreat? If God's intention was to save her...who were we to stand in the way!

## *Judging You Must Cease*

When you woke up and was blessed to see another day, the first thing you should have done was PRAY.

Now as you journey on your way, be mindful to stop being so judgmental today.

Remember, JESUS said let he who is without SIN cast the first STONE, When in reality no one can cast stones, because deep down inside, we all have hidden secrets and sins of our own!

You shouldn't judge me, and I shouldn't judge you, because only GOD knows if our hearts are clean and true.  
For all of us have sinned and come short of the glory, and we must realize GOD is the only One who will judge our life story.

Paul the Apostle said, I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and unwise, therefore no man on earth should criticize!

So as of today, let us therefore not judge one another anymore, or put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way, and if you feel that I am going astray, please talk to me in a GODLY way.

And just remember, GOD is the only One who will judge each man on judgment day, and only GOD will determine if in HELL or HEAVEN that our SOULS will STAY.