

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
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“Cease Judging One Another”- Part One

LESSON SCRIPTURE: *“Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: 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 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)

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 to be towards each other as we grow together in faith.

ESSENTIAL INSIGHT/QUESTIONS:

All of us in some way have felt the impact of someone’s piercing critical looks, thoughts or condemning words or actions directed towards us. One’s attitudes and actions towards others could affect them personally either in a positive or negative way and thus influence the quality of their relationship with one another. Contrary to the world, we have divine spiritual mandates by which we are called to live. As Christians, 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 Christian Magna Carta or the Christian’s constitution. Paul receives doctrine as a direct revelation from GOD empowered through the Holy Spirit. His purposes in writing this epistle were to reveal the great truths of the gospel of faith and grace, affirm the authenticity of their faith, commend them for their obedience, and

challenge them to evangelize.¹ The church at Rome was not founded by Paul. Paul wanted to introduce himself personally. He wanted to encourage believers with sound doctrinal instructions.

The scripture, Romans 14:13, relates to the principle of Christian liberty. In this section Paul warned against causing other Christians to stumble (hindering their spiritual growth) by asserting that one is free to live in accord with convictions not shared by other believers.² Our liberty should not be used as a hindrance or offense but as a way to strengthen and edify the body of Christ. Christ mandates us not to judge one another but instead use our judgment to help fellow believers.

DEFINITIONS:

Judging defined:

Judgement – *Krino*, 56.30: to judge a person to be guilty and liable to punishment—‘to judge as guilty, to condemn, condemnation.’³ (Louw & Nida)

Stumbling Block defined: *Proskomma* (pros’-kom-mah); Figuratively, a cause of falling, an occasion of sinning⁴ (The Complete Word Study Dictionary)

Fall defined: *skandalon*, 4625. The trigger of a trap on which the bait is placed, and which, when touched by the animal, springs and causes it to close causing entrapment.⁵ (Strong’s Greek)

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.⁵ 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 and their ability to live according to the Word in all aspects of daily living.

In chapter fourteen of Romans, Paul deals with questions of eating, drinking, and observance of holy days. It boiled down to the conservative versus the progressive. He addressed both the “weak in faith”, whose excessive caution might cause them to be fearful and legalistic, and

¹ Swindoll, Charles R. *Living Insights_ New Testament Commentary, Romans*. Tyndale House Publishers: Illinois, 2015. Pgs. 8-10.

² Witmer, J. A. (1985). *Romans*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 493). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 555). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁴ Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

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the “strong”, whose love of liberty might make them callous and careless.” Paul exhorted them to cease judging or despising one another as worthless based on how they conducted themselves in matters of their conscience.⁶

LESSON CONTENT:

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 rather than in bondage to worldly ways or the unsavory beliefs of the unsaved. Nevertheless, Christ died for all believers—the mature ones as well as those who are babes in Christ.

Paul is saying to the church in verse thirteen; *Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.* (NKJV) New Christians look to mature Christians to determine what is appropriate for believers and what is not. Our freedom in Christ, anything we do even though Scripture permits it, should not cause another brother or sister in Christ to fall into inappropriate behavior or sin. We are not to be the cause of new Christians or less mature or weaker Christians falling.

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 of each believer’s conscience to be examined before God. (Bob Deffinbaugh, *Reasoning through Romans* – Chapter 14) All of us are servants of the Lord. Therefore, who are we to judge God’s servant? (Rom 14:4) 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 are a part of

⁶ Swindoll, Charles R. *Living Insights_ New Testament Commentary, Romans*. Tyndale House Publishers: Illinois, 2015, pg. 328.

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!

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

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 or condemning them. Judging as used in this passage is negative and cruel. Judging others has a negative spiritual impact on the church. Judging fellow Christians freezes them in the line of conduct being judged. By living according to the Word of God, exercising love, patience and forbearance, their conduct might change for the better. Nothing is more detrimental to Christian fellowship than an attitude of condemnation within the family of the redeemed.

Secondly, all Christians have a great 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. Bible study classes and Sunday School and Church Services builds up individuals and increases understanding in a supportive way. 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). Our response should be love, prayer, and patience rather than condemnation. More importantly, we are to be living Christ-like examples for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are yet growing and maturing in the faith and their convictions. Remember that our fellowship with each other is based on the Lordship of Christ not on our evaluation or judgment of correct Christian conduct. It was only God's grace and mercy that removed the judgment and penalty of our sinful state. We cannot redeem. When God confronts sin, He always offers a means for redemption. The Holy Spirit convicts and then He transforms. Our condemnation offers nothing but rejection. (Swindoll, Romans)