

# ROMANS

## Chapter 14

*Do not Pass Judgment on One Another*

**As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. 2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3 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. 4 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. 5 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. 6 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. 7 For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. 8 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. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. 10 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; 11 for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." 12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.**

**Ch 14** Luth: "In chapter 14 [Paul] teaches that consciences weak in faith are to be led gently, spared, so that we do not use our Christian freedom for doing harm, but for the assistance of the weak. For where that is not done, the result is discord and contempt for the gospel; and the gospel is the all-important thing. Thus it is better to yield a little to the weak in faith, until they grow stronger, than to have the teaching of the gospel come to nothing. And this work is a peculiar work of love, for which there is great need even now, when with the eating of meat and other liberties, men are rudely and roughly—and needlessly—shaking weak consciences, before they know the truth" (AE 35:379). (TLSB)

**14:1–15:7** Deals with debates over matters of freedom within the Christian community. The "weak" in faith are unsure of the extent of their freedom. (TLSB)

**14:1** *who is weak in faith.* Probably Jewish Christians at Rome who were unwilling to give up the observance of certain requirements of the law, such as dietary restrictions and the keeping of the Sabbath and other special days. Their concern was not quite the same as that of the Judaizers of Galatia. The Judaizers thought they could put God in their debt by works of righteousness and were trying to force this heretical teaching on the Galatian churches, but the "weak" Roman Christians did neither. They were not yet clear as to the status of OT regulations under the new covenant inaugurated by the coming of Christ. (CSB)

*welcome him.* Receive the "weak" because God and Christ have welcomed both of you (v 3; 15:7). (TLSB)

*not to quarrel over opinions.*† Fellowship among Christians is not to be based on everyone's agreement on disputable questions. Christians do not, nor do they need to, agree on all matters

pertaining to the Christian life—what are called adiaphora (matters which Scripture neither commands nor forbids). (CSB)

First-century Jews and Gentiles in Rome were likely divided over the applicability of OT dietary laws and festivals. (TLSB)

**14:2** *One person believes.* In contrast, Paul now describes the “strong” Christian. Here faith is used in the sense of assurance or confidence. The strong Christian’s understanding of the gospel allows him to recognize that one’s diet has no spiritual significance. (CSB)

*eat anything.* Jesus declared all foods clean (cf Lv 11; 17:10–16; Mk 7:18–19; Ac 10:9–15). Believers are free from the restrictions of OT food laws. NT believers are also free to continue abiding by those laws and so to refuse unclean foods. Eating meat offered to pagan idols may also be involved (as in 1Co 8–10). (TLSB)

*weak person eats only vegetables* – Paul does not urge a weak and watery toleration of the heretic, the violator of the truth of the Gospel. The strong in faith can eat all things; no line of demarcation between clean and unclean food exists for him. The fact that the meat which he buys in the market has been part of an offering made to a pagan idol does not, for him, erase from it the Creator’s mark of ownership; he eats it with a will and thanks the Lord for it. (Franzmann)

**14:3** *God has welcomed him.* Within the Christian community, God has accepted each one of us to Himself in Christ (15:7). (TLSB)

**14:4** The issues here are not of right and wrong, but opinions on matters now debatable (v 1). Our common Lord and Master Jesus Christ has freed us in regard to these issues; we are not free to judge His servants concerning them. (TLSB)

*servant of another.* God’s. A Christian must not reject a fellow Christian, who is also a servant of God. (CSB)

*To his own master he stands or falls.* The “weak” Christian is not the master of his “strong” brother, nor is the “strong” the master of the “weak.” God is Master, and to him alone all believers are responsible. (CSB)

**14:5** *esteems one day as better.* Some feel that this refers primarily to the Sabbath, but it is probably a reference to all the special days of the OT ceremonial law. (CSB)

The Sabbath, Passover, and other OT festivals had been “holier” days (cf Lv 23). But Christ has freed us from the requirement to observe them. (TLSB)

*esteems all days alike.* All days are to be dedicated to God through holy living and godly service. (CSB)

*fully convinced in his own mind.*† The importance of personal conviction and of a correct conscience in disputable matters of conduct runs through this passage (see vv. 14, 16, 22–23). (CSB)

**14:6** The motivation behind the actions of both the strong and the weak is to be the same: Both should want to serve the Lord and give thanks for his provision. (CSB)

One may continue to observe the Sabbath and other OT festivals as a matter of freedom and a way to honor the Lord Jesus. (TLSB)

*gives thanks to God* – As the eating so also the non-eating is done to the service and glory of the Lord.

*abstains*. Probably abstaining from unclean foods. One is able to voluntarily do so in honoring the Lord. (TLSB)

No man can impose his own convictions on his neighbor, no more than he can live by his neighbor's convictions. (Franzmann)

**14:7–8** Life and death itself cannot separate us from Christ (8:38–39); therefore a “quarrel over opinions” (v 1) ought not separate us. (TLSB)

**14:7** *none of us lives to himself*. The reference is to “us” Christians. We do not live to please ourselves but the Lord. (CSB)

In Christ's Body, we are joined one to another (12:5); we are never alone and ought not live to ourselves. (TLSB)

*none of us dies to himself*. Even in death the important thing is one's relationship to the Lord. Paul repeats the truths of this verse in v. 8. (CSB)

**14:8** *we are the Lord's* – Now, at death, and for all eternity, we are with Jesus (1Th 4:14; cf Php 1:23). (TLSB)

**14:9** *Lord*. Christ's Lordship over both the dead and the living arises out of his death and resurrection. (CSB)

Jesus is Lord of all (Php 2:11); to God all are alive (Lk 20:38). (TLSB)

**14:10** *why do you pass judgment on your brother?* Addressed to weak Christians. (CSB)

*why do you despise your brother?* Addressed to strong Christians. (CSB)

*we will all*. Refers to every Christian. (CSB)

*God's judgment seat*. † All Christians will be judged, and the judgment will be based on works (see 2Co 5:10; cf. 1Co 3:10–15), as evidence of their faith (see Gal 5:22–26). (CSB)

God will hold accountable those who pass judgment on others where He has not done so. (TLSB)

**14:11** In Is 45:22, the Lord refutes the existence of other gods. In Php 2:11, Jesus is declared to be the Lord with the same words. (TLSB)

**14:12** *each one us will give account* – Those entering heaven by grace will still be called to give an account of their earthly lives (cf Mt 25:14–30). (TLSB)

**14:1–12** OT food and festival laws had been significant religious issues, but Christ freed us to observe or not to observe them. Christians may judge the conduct of others only on the basis of

God's Word (see FC Ep and SD X). We should not go beyond it and pronounce judgment in matters of Christian freedom. Those who do so wound other believers and will have to account for such behavior before God Himself. In Baptism, we were joined with Christ and one another. Not even death can sever that bond. • In life and in death, O Lord, You promise to abide with me. Thank You for the assurance that I am Yours both now and for eternity. Teach us to speak according to Your Word, but to remain silent where Your Word grants freedom. Amen. (TLSB)

*Do Not Cause Another to Stumble*

**13 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. 14 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. 15 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. 16 So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. 20 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. 21 It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. 22 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. 23 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.**

**14:13–23** Paul now gives counsel on how mature Christians use their freedom. (TLSB)

**14:13** *rather*. The words that immediately follow are addressed to strong Christians. (CSB)

*stumbling block or hindrance*. Something that causes one to fall into sin. (CSB)

The conduct of mature Christians should not cause others to stumble in their faith. “Special care should be taken to exercise patience toward the weak in faith” (FC Ep X 5). (TLSB)

**14:14** *I know and am persuaded*. Now that Paul was a Christian, the old food taboos no longer applied (see Mt 15:10–11, 16–20; Mk 7:14–23). (CSB)

*nothing is unclean in itself*. For Paul's teaching elsewhere on this subject see 1Ti 4:4; Tit 1:15. (CSB)

Christ, who is the end of the Law (10:4), “declared all foods clean” (Mk 7:19); Paul here places himself among the strong. (TLSB)

*if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean*. Not to be generalized to mean that sin is only a matter of subjective opinion or conscience. Paul is not discussing conduct that in the light of Scripture is clearly sinful, but conduct concerning which Christians may legitimately differ (in this case, food regulations). With regard to such matters, decisions should be guided by conscience. (CSB)

If one believes it is outside of God's will to engage in certain conduct, then it is wrong for that person to do so. (TLSB)

**14:15** *love*. The key to proper settlement of disputes. – (God Grant It, Walther p. 549) (CSB)

Love places concern for others before self (12:9). (TLSB)

*destroy*. Certain actions may be permissible, but if they offend others to the point of ruining their faith in Christ, they must be avoided (cf 1Co 8:13). (TLSB)

*your brother for whom Christ died*. Christ so valued the weak brother as to die for him. Surely the strong Christian ought to be willing to make adjustments in his own behavior for the sake of such brothers. (CSB)

**14:16** Behavior in which Christians are free to engage can be blasphemous if by it one (knowingly, it would seem) destroys another for whom Christ has also died (1Co 8:11–12). (TLSB)

*what you regard as good*. From your own understanding of Christian liberty. (CSB)

*to be spoken of as evil*. To exercise freedom without responsibility can lead to evil results. (CSB)

**14:17** *is not a matter of eating and drinking*. To be concerned with such trivial matters is to miss completely the essence of Christian living. (CSB)

*righteousness*. Righteous living. Paul’s concern for the moral and ethical dimension of the Christian life stands out in all his letters. *peace*. (CSB)

Key blessings of the Gospel. See pp 1903–4. “The Gospel should stand out as the most prominent teaching in the Church, in order that Christ’s merit may be well known and faith, which believes that sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, be exalted far above works. Therefore, Paul also lays the greatest stress on this article, putting aside the Law and human traditions, in order to show that Christian righteousness is something other than such works” (AC XXVI 4–5). “The bishops have no right to enact traditions in addition to the Gospel, so that people must merit the forgiveness of sins, or that they think are services that God approves as righteousness” (Ap XXVIII 8). (TLSB)

*joy in the Holy Spirit*. Joy given by the Holy Spirit. (CSB)

Christ’s kingdom is not merely something outward but is bestowed on us now and eternally by the Spirit (cf 2:25–29). (TLSB)

**14:18** Those devoted to Christ use their freedom responsibly and with concern for others. (TLSB)

**14:19** Paul calls us to avoid divisive judgmentalism wherever possible; it is the opposite of peace (cf 12:18). Believers strive to build up others in the faith. (TLSB)

*mutual upbuilding*. The spiritual building up of individual Christians and of the church (see 1:11–12). (CSB)

**14:20** *work of God*. The weak Christian brother who as a redeemed person is God’s work and in whom God continues to work (cf. Eph 2:10). (CSB)

The faith He has given a fellow Christian (cf 1Co 8:11). (TLSB)

*make another stumble.* Paul recognizes a strong Christian's right to certain freedoms, but qualifies it with the principle of regard for a weak brother's scruples.(CSB)

**14:21** *it is good not...drink wine.* Mature believers willingly give up activities they are free to engage in if doing so would be harmful to the faith of others (e.g., consumption of alcohol). (TLSB)

**14:22** *keep between yourself and God.* The strong Christian is not required to go against his convictions or change his standards. Yet he is not to flaunt his Christian freedom but keep it a private matter. (CSB)

Do not flaunt your God-given freedom; rather, let your faith influence your public conduct. (TLSB)

*judgment on himself.* For harming the faith of others (v 15). (TLSB)

*what he approves.* Probably a reference to the eating of certain foods. (CSB)

**14:23** Cf v 14; if one's conscience is not clear before God regarding certain behaviors, one dare not engage in them. (TLSB)

*not from faith.* Believers are called to live according to their faith and are called not to sin by acting contrary to faith. Paul also teaches that, apart from justifying faith, we are all in bondage to sin (cf 3:9; Gal 3:22). "People truly sin, even when—without the Holy Spirit—they do virtuous works. This is because they act with a wicked heart" (Ap IV 35). (TLSB)

*whatever.* The matters discussed above, namely, conduct about which there can be legitimate differences of opinion between Christians. (CSB)

**14:13–23** Paul continues to deal specifically with first-century controversial issues among Jewish and Gentile Christians (foods and holy days). Paul knows all foods are clean, but flaunting his freedoms will give offense in the presence of Jewish Christians who still observe OT food laws. In a similar manner, we should not engage in behaviors that would cause other believers to stumble in their faith. When we commit actions against our own Spirit-informed Christian conscience, we sin. Freedom in Christ is not simply freedom from the Law, but freedom given for a purpose, to serve others in love (Gal 5:13). God's kingdom (14:17) has been given to us through Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit. • Father, thank You for the freedom You give me in the kingdom of Your Son, Jesus. May I enjoy my freedom by using it to serve others. Show me when I ought to limit my freedom for the benefit of my brothers and sisters in the faith. Amen. (TLSB)