

“Judge Not”

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Romans 14:1-19

There were issues in the Roman Church, namely obeying OT restrictions – eating restrictions, sabbath observance, etc.

On one side – Traditionalists/Conservatives who liked to old ways.

On the other side - the Liberals. They believed in Freedom in Christ, Old Covenant fulfilled in Christ, no longer under the Old Testament laws

These two sides - conservative & liberal - existed in the same church! Imagine that!

Paul then reminds them that the church is big enough for conservatives and liberals, and what matters most in this type of situation is - stop judging those who disagree with you! Let's take a look:

Romans 14:1-19

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God. We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. 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. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So then, each of us will be accountable to God. Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another. 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. If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

Someone told me about an episode of "The Simpson's," not a show I've ever watched, but I'm told it's pretty funny. In this one particular episode, Homer Simpson was going off to "Christian Camp." He tells this to someone and then adds, "We're going to learn how to be judgmental." Ouch.

"Judge not, lest you to be judged," are some of the most famous words Jesus ever said. (recorded in Matt 7 & Luke 6) But like a lot of his words, they are not always lived out, even among Christ-followers like us.

- "Did you hear what so & so did?"
- "Do you know what Those People are doing?"
- "How can people be so stupid, so immoral?"

Judging is an issue we sometimes wrestle with on our mission trips. The kids & adults will say things like, "These people have a bigger TV than we do! And they must have had 500 DVDs! If they'd sell their video collection they could hire a painter to do this work!" We have good discussions when this happens. We remind ourselves that we all make poor spending choices and most importantly, we're there to serve, not judge.

Having a judgmental spirit is a huge spiritual issue. And it's contrary to a Christ-like spirit. Here are several reasons why:

1. Judging Others put us in the place of God the Creator.

God is the Holy One, the Just one, the One who alone has the right to pass judgment on human beings.

Vs. 4 *"Who are you to pass judgment on one another? . . . for before their own lord they stand or fall?"*

Vs. 10: *"Who are you to pass judgment on your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God." For it is written, 'As I live says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.' So then each of us will be accountable to God."*

2. Judging others puts us in the place of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit's job to grow and shape people, not ours.

3. Judging Others takes us away from a humble perspective regarding our own sinfulness.

"Amazing Grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like You!"

- Oh, wait a minute. That's not the song, is it?

Matthew 7 – *"Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye', while the log is in your own eye?"*

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye."

4. Judging Others destroys Christian Unity.

That's Paul's concern in Romans 14.

"God has welcomed all of you – so welcome one another, even when you disagree.

"Who are you to pass judgment on servants of one another."

"We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves."

Judging destroys Christian Unity. I've seen this a lot through the years with church disagreements. There's a big difference between - "I disagree with their perspective" vs. "You can't trust them. They're incompetent. They don't know what they're doing." One way of speaking keeps the issue focused on the issues - the other on the people's character. One way of speaking judges the issues, the other ways judges people - "Thou shalt not!"

Vs. 19 - *"Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding."*

5. Judging Others cuts us off from loving them.

Vs. 10. *"Who are you to pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or why do you despise your brother or sister?"*

Notice in his mind - Judging & despising go together.

Have you ever noticed when you listen to MSNBC how much they despise Conservatives? And have you ever noticed how much the people on Fox News despise the Liberals? It's no wonder Washington can't get anything done!

A woman was getting help from a member of AA, Alcoholics Anonymous. The Woman had made a lot of mistakes in her life and was really struggling with addiction. The AA member invited the woman had already taken her to AA meetings. But wanting to expand her support network she said, "Why don't you come to church with me tomorrow. You'll like it." But she replied, "Why would I want to do that? I already feel bad enough about myself."

But churches should be places of amazing grace! That's why I like the slogan of our denomination: *"No matter who you are, no matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you're welcome here!"*

Amen. So may it be.