

Romans 14:1-13—Accept The Weaker Brother As He Is, Without Judgement

Memory Verse

Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Revision: If there are four motivations not to sin, then why do we still sin?

In Romans 13, Paul describes the four different motivations that cause people to obey: fear, conscience, love for others, and love for God. However, we all choose not to obey God at various times. What this means is that every time we sin, we are going against every sense of logic and reason—we are choosing to not love God, we are choosing to not love others, we are choosing to not listen to our conscience, and we are choosing to ignore the fear of the practical consequences of our sinful thoughts, words, and actions. Sin is blind and illogical—it *always* hurts us (eventually), it *always* hurts others (eventually), and it *always* hurts God (immediately). We only sin when we ignore God's warning:

Genesis 4:7 NLT

“You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.”

Remember that the only motive for obedience, that we will be eternally rewarded for, is that of love for God. This means that we are most concerned about, “What will God think of this? Will He be pleased? Is this what God wants me to do?”

The other motivations (fear, conscience, love for others), will protect us and benefit us in the here and now, and we will enjoy this life on earth to a much greater extent. However, they all fall short of the greatest love—the greatest and most noble motivation—which is love and respect for God. Maturing as a Christian means that our love for God becomes our primary motivation for everything we do, say, and think. Each of us should be praying that God would transform us into His image, so that we would follow the example of Jesus who always did what pleased the Father. *This is the only way for the believer to habitually live in fellowship with God* (see 1 John 1:1-7). We need to *wake up* (Jesus is coming), *dress up* (remove evil deeds, put on Christ), and *buckle up* (make no provision for the flesh).

Romans 14:1-13—Accept the weaker brother as he is, without judgement

Outline:

1. Receive the weaker brother without arguing with them or trying to change them (v1)
2. Who is weak?—How legalism is actually a sign of immaturity (vs 1-2)
3. The command to not judge (condemn) fellow believers (vs 3–4)
4. Do not violate your conscience (vs 5-6)
5. As a believer, what is my sole purpose for living?—For the Lord! (vs 7-9)
6. We must not condemn others because we will be held accountable by Jesus—the believers' Bema Seat Judgement of rewards (10-12)
7. Don't cause others to stumble or fall (v 13)

Romans 14:1-23 NKJV

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. ² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. ³ Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. ⁴ Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

⁵ One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. ¹⁰ But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 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 shall give account of himself to God. ¹³ 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.

¹⁴ I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ¹⁵ Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

¹⁹ Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. ²⁰ Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. ²¹ It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. ²² Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. ²³ But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

1. Receive the weaker brother without arguing with them or trying to change them

Romans 14:1 NKJV

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

v 1 **But not to disputes over doubtful things** means “without passing judgment on disputable material.” In other words, Paul's injunction is to receive those who are weak in the faith. Embrace and enjoy them without passing judgment on the areas in which you don't see eye to eye.” (Jon Courson)

v 1 **Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things:** This is a case of keeping the main thing the main thing, or, majoring on the majors and minoring on the minors. Too many times, believers are willing to compromise on fundamental truths of the gospel of grace (the major issues), but be unyielding when it comes to side issues (minor issues that don't directly relate to the gospel of grace).

"In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity." (St Augustine)

Think about a football team. The more experienced players could easily criticise a beginner player because they lack the skills that the more experienced players have developed over the years—they wouldn't understand the tactics used in the game, and wouldn't be able to actually do some of the complex plays. Just imagine what would happen if they they did criticise and put down a new player, the new player would quickly become discouraged and quit. Instead, the more experienced players remember how they had to learn, and so are patient with the inexperienced player—instead of criticism, there is encouragement and teaching. However, at the same time, they would insist on following the main rules of the game, e.g. no you can't throw the football (you *must* handball or kick it), and you *must* play as a team. If the inexperienced player refused to comply with the basic rules of the game, then they would have to leave the team.

The same is true with believers. There will always be a mixture of mature (experienced) believers, and immature (inexperienced) believers. The new, immature, or baby believer will have some strange ideas. They will not have an accurate understanding of many of the doctrines or teachings of the Bible. Thus, what they say and believe will appear strange and even wrong to those who have spent much time studying the Bible and so have come much closer to the correct understanding.

Like with the football team example, the mature believers are to uncompromisingly insist on the main truths of the gospel of grace, but at the same time, be willing to be patient with other faulty beliefs. These faulty beliefs commonly include things like; spiritual gifts, eschatology (the study of end times), diet, keeping the Sabbath etc. If we don't show grace on these side issues, then we will end up in endless arguments. However, healthy discussions are how people learn and grow. These conversations could be started by the question, "What does the Bible say about this?", and done with the attitude that sincerely wants to help the person, and not just try to change them.

v 1 **Receive the one who is weak in the faith:** As any parent will tell you, babies are hard work, but most definitely worth it. The same is true in the church. New believers require a lot of input, but again, they are definitely worth the effort. Remember that we all started out as immature or baby believers, and one or more mature and godly believers loved us enough to take the time to invest in us, discipling us, so that we too can grow up into a mature believer. This is also Jesus' example with the disciples in the gospels.

v 1 **Weak in the faith:** There are four main reasons why a believer may be weak or immature:

- They are a new believer
- Their growth has been stunted by the disease of legalism
- They are malnourished because they have not received good Bible teaching
- They are lazy and need to be exhorted to get moving in their Christian walk

Application: Weak vs rebellious, what's the difference?

v 1 Weak in the faith: A weak believer is very different to someone who is rebellious; the difference is in their attitude—one is teachable (they are humble), the other is not teachable (they are proud). We are not to receive someone who is rebellious. Someone who is rebellious is not a team player; they are only there to take and not give, and will surely end up hurting at least some people. These rebellious people will destroy the fellowship between other believers. They must be avoided at all costs. We are *not* to receive just anybody. There are many warnings in the Bible:

Titus 3:10-11 NKJV

Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

Romans 16:17-18 NKJV

And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them. ¹⁸ Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people.

1 Corinthians 5:9-11 NKJV

When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. ¹⁰ But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that. ¹¹ I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don't even eat with such people.

2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14 NKJV

⁶ But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

¹⁴ And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵ Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

2 John 9-11 NKJV

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; ¹¹ for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

Matthew 18:15-17 NKJV

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

2. Who is weak?—How legalism is actually a sign of immaturity

Romans 14:1-2 NKJV

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. ² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

“The weak brother, as we are going to see as the chapter unfolds, is the one who seems to be the most morally upright, the one who is most rigid in discipline, the one who appears to have the highest standards of conduct.

In Paul’s day, the controversy in the church at Rome centred on meat. Those who didn’t eat meat were uptight and upset with those who did because the meat had been sacrificed to idols before being sold in open-air markets at a discount.

“How can you eat meat that has been offered to idols?” asked the vegetarian believers.

“It’s a bargain,” answered the carnivores.

Perhaps the controversy arose because Jewish legalists were trying to burden Gentile believers with Jewish dietary laws. Whatever the reason, the vegetarians looked down their noses on the meat-eaters. But in reality, the vegetarians were the weaker brothers.

Amazing. *The more legalistic and uptight a man is, the weaker he is.* It’s not those who walk around as though they’ve been baptised in lemon juice, looking down their noses and reciting a list of do’s and don’ts that are the stronger Christians. Quite the opposite. “Receive the weaker brother,” Paul says. “Receive the one who is religious, the one who’s uptight, the one who’s always looking down on others. Don’t engage in controversy with him—just understand he’s a weaker brother.” (Jon Courson)

“He who is weak eats only vegetables: In Paul’s mind, the **weak** brother is the stricter one. It wasn’t that they were weaker in their Christian life because of what they ate or didn’t eat, but they were weaker because of their legalistic attitudes and lack of love towards others.

Undoubtedly these **weak** ones did not see themselves as weaker. It’s likely they thought they were the strong ones, and the meat-eaters were the weak ones. Legalism has a way of making us think that we are strong and those who don’t keep the rules the way we do are weak.” (David Guzik)

“In every church there are weak and strong believers. The strong understand spiritual truth and practice it, but the weak have not yet grown into that level of maturity and liberty. The weak must not condemn the strong and call them unspiritual. The strong must not despise the weak and call them immature. God has received both the weak and the strong; therefore, they should receive one another.” (Warren W. Wiersbe)

v 2 **Eats only vegetables:** As has been pointed out, in the culture of the day, whether or not to eat meat was a big issue that was dividing many people. Notice that it has nothing to do with the gospel of grace. In 1 Corinthians chapter 8, Paul explains why there is nothing wrong with a believer eating an animal that was slaughtered while being a sacrifice to an idol. It’s the weak believer who has the “overactive” or “weak” conscience, and so adds unnecessary rules to their life.

1 Corinthians 8:4, 7 NLT

So, what about eating meat that has been offered to idols? Well, we all know that an idol is not really a god and that there is only one God.

⁷ **However, not all believers know this.** Some are accustomed to thinking of idols as being real, so when they eat food that has been offered to idols, they think of it as the worship of real gods, and their **weak consciences** are violated.

3. The command to not judge (condemn) fellow believers

Romans 14:3-4 NKJV

Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. ⁴Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

v 3 **Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat:** You can just imagine how tempting it would be for the mature Christian to look down at the legalistic vegetarian because of their ignorance or misunderstanding of Biblical truth. But God says that mature Christians are to watch out for this attitude and be patient with them instead.

v 3 **Let not him who does not eat judge him who eats:** Similarly, the legalistic vegetarian would be sorely tempted to judge the mature believer as violating the word of God because they ate meat. But God says that he should learn to be flexible when it comes to these kinds of controversial issues.

v 3 **For God has received him:** As it says in Philippians 1:6, God is faithful to finish the work of sanctification, the work of changing us into the image of Christ, that He begun. Since God has received or accepted all believers, then all believers should receive or accept each other (providing that they are not divisive and rebellious). If a certain attribute, weakness, or wrongly informed belief doesn't keep God from accepting us, then it shouldn't keep us from accepting each other. God doesn't want us thinking, "They'll never make it, nothing good will ever come from them, they only cause problems, so let's give up on them." Instead, every believer should be encouraging other believers to be growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be growing in their understanding of the riches of God's love, grace, and mercy. These are the things that really matter—not trying to persuade people to accept a certain viewpoint because we think it is right (other examples would include: only read the KJV, or only listen to and sing hymns, or should women wear a head covering).

"Do you realize God doesn't care about a lot of things we get upset about, fight over, and debate? The Father's agenda is a whole lot different from ours. Sad to say, the things that shock us most are insignificant when compared to the bigger issues of eternity. We become so engaged in minuscule rules and regulations, political discussions and theological hairsplitting that we miss the big picture entirely. I'm convinced God doesn't care about most of the things we discuss endlessly. He's concerned about people being saved, brought into the kingdom, walking in the Spirit, and growing in grace." (Jon Courson)

v 4 **Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand:** Believers must be careful to not put down or discourage other believers. Why? Because God is holding them up—**God is able to make him stand.** We don't want to find ourselves fighting against God.

"There is a lot of useless, harmful division among Christians over silly, bigoted things. Paul isn't telling these Christians to *erase* their differences; he tells them to rise *above* them as Christian brothers and sisters." (David Guzik)

Again, remember the difference between condemning others like a judge sentences a criminal, and, that of being fruit inspectors—discerning or judging according to the word of God what is right and wrong, so we not be deceived or negatively influenced by people who are either in sin or false converts. Jesus tells us that we need to be discerning, and that we are supposed to recognise faults in others and help them to change. In the end, whether we are *helpful* or *harmful*, all comes down to our attitude or motivation; is it done out of love?, or, because we think we are better than the other believer and so need to “fix them” so that they can become more like us?

John 7:23-24 AMP

If, to avoid breaking the Law of Moses, a person undergoes circumcision on the Sabbath day, have you any cause to be angry with (indignant with, bitter against) Me for making a man's whole body well on the Sabbath?

24 Be honest in your judgment and do not decide at a glance (superficially and by appearances); but judge fairly and righteously.

Matthew 7:1-6 NLT

“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. ² For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

³ “And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own?

⁴ How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can't see past the log in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; **then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.**

⁶ “Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don't throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

4. Do not violate your conscience

Romans 14:5-6 NKJV

One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

v 5 **One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike:** Paul brings up another example of one of these “side issues”. This time it is, “What day should I worship?” Paul is describing a principle in Romans chapter 14 which has many more applications than just whether or not to eat meat.

v 5 **Let each be fully convinced in his own mind:** It's best to err on the side of caution. Something may not be wrong, but if we think it is, if we think that it's wrong to do something, then we must not do it. To do so is to sin against our conscience, and that only weakens us. With further Bible study and time, our understanding of what is right and wrong will change, but until then, only do what you understand to be right according to your current understanding of Scripture.

v 6 **He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks:** Notice the motivation that Paul wants all believers to have—to do what pleases God—to the Lord... to the Lord... to the Lord... to the Lord... for he gives God thanks... and gives God thanks. We all may be a little off with our understanding of what is right and wrong, but if we are focused on only doing what God wants us to do, He will soon change our thinking to align with His.

v 5 **Let each be fully convinced in his own mind... observes it to the Lord:** “What is it that makes a dish of food “holy” or a day “holy”? It is the fact that we relate it to the Lord. The person who treats a special day as “holy” does so “unto the Lord.” The person who treats every day as sacred, does so “unto the Lord.” The Christian who eats meat gives thanks to the Lord, and the Christian who abstains from meat abstains “unto the Lord.” To be “fully persuaded—or assured—in his own mind” (Rom. 14:5) means: Let every man see to it that he is really doing what he does for the Lord’s sake, and not merely on the basis of some prejudice or whim.” (Warren W. Wiersbe)

A word of caution: Don’t think that just because you may not think that something is wrong, that that is a licence to sin. A person may be so used to getting drunk on the weekends, or speeding, or illegally downloading music from the internet etc, that it seems normal to him, but that doesn’t make it right.

“In such issues, Paul is willing to leave it up to the conscience of the individual. But whatever we do, we must be able to do it **to the Lord**, not using “conscience” as an excuse for obviously sinful behaviour.” (David Guzik)

5. As a believer, what is my sole [only] purpose for living?—For the Lord!

Romans 14:7-9 NKJV

For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

The truth that our lives are to be fully dedicated to our Lord Jesus Christ is so simple and so beautiful. I only have one purpose for living—to walk in fellowship with God and enjoy His presence in my life—to be fully dedicated to God and offer up my life to Him as a living sacrifice. There is no greater pleasure possible than to simply fulfil the purpose for which God created me for—to experience a love relationship with Him.

Psalm 16:11 NKJV

You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

So often we think that our decisions should follow our feelings, but the opposite is actually true—our feelings will follow our decisions. We must guide our hearts, and not let our hearts lead us astray. Remember that our hearts are desperately wicked and only God knows them.

Jeremiah 17:9-10 NLT

“The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? ¹⁰ But I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve.”

Only obedience motivated by a genuine love for God will lead to lasting joy because we are in fellowship with God. We need to act, not according to how we feel *now*, but rather how the Bible promises we will feel *later*. Being ruled by a desire for instant gratification will only lead to despair, sadness, and frustration. Being motivated by a love for God that transcends everything and everyone else will lead to overflowing joy, a joy that is not dependent on our earthly circumstances.

John 15:9-11 NLT

I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!

So what happens when we don't let Jesus be Lord and try to do things our own way? We end up walking according to our own human wisdom, and substitute rules and traditions for genuine love.

"Some standards and practices in our local churches are traditional but not necessarily scriptural. Some of us can remember when dedicated Christians opposed Christian radio "because Satan was the prince of the power of the air!" Some people even make Bible translations a test of orthodoxy. The church is divided and weakened because Christians will not allow Jesus Christ to be Lord." (Warren W. Wiersbe)

6. We must not condemn others because we will be held accountable by Jesus—the believers' Bema Seat Judgement of rewards

Romans 14:10-12 NKJV

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment [Bema] seat of Christ. 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 shall give account of himself to God.

v 10 **Why do you judge your brother?** This refers back to the weak, or legalistic, believer who lives by rules and regulations, instead of living by the principle of only doing those things that please God. The legalistic believer will always be judgemental and critical towards others.

v 10 **Why do you show contempt for your brother?** This refers back to the mature believer who is tempted to look down on the weaker and immature believer, thinking of them as being foolish and ignorant. However, God, in His infinite wisdom never thinks about us foolish mortals like that. Instead, as our loving Heavenly Father, He shows compassion, kindness, and a desire to help, heal, and strengthen us (see Psalm 103).

"The *strict* Christian found it easy to **judge** his brother, writing him off as an unspiritual meat-eater-compromiser. The *free* Christian found it easy to **show contempt** against his brother, regarding him as a uptight-legalistic-goody-good. Essentially, Paul's answer is "Stop worrying about your brother. You have enough to answer for before Jesus." (David Guzik)

v 10, 12 **For we shall all stand before the judgment [Bema] seat of Christ... So then each of us shall give account of himself to God:** One of the reasons that we are not to condemn others is because we can never be sure of what the motive was. Only God knows that, and we must wait for the day of judgement to know the truth of why believers did what they did.

"This is the *bema* seat, equivalent to the judge's seat in the Olympic Games. After each game, the winners came before the judge's seat to receive crowns for first, second, and third places. Likewise, the Christian's works will be tested by fire, and he'll be rewarded for those which remain ... The judgment seat of Christ is only concerned with a Christian's rewards and position in the kingdom, not with his salvation." (Smith)

v 11 **Every knee will bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God:** This is a quote from Isaiah 45:23. Every believer will have to give an account of himself before God. Therefore it's not our responsibility to change others, rather it's God's.

7. Don't cause others to stumble or fall

Romans 14:13 NKJV

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.

v 13 **Let us not judge one another:** In the light of Jesus' command to treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated, we must be aware that Jesus will use the same kind of judgment on us *later*, that we use on others *now*. By being merciful to others, we are being merciful to ourselves. The principle is simple—think about how you would like Jesus to judge you, and then treat others accordingly.

Matthew 7:1-2 AMP

Do not judge and criticise and condemn others, so that you may not be judged and criticised and condemned yourselves.

² For just as you judge and criticise and condemn others, you will be judged and criticised and condemned, and in accordance with the measure you [use to] deal out to others, it will be dealt out again to you.

Keep in mind that this does not negate the need for, our responsibility to, admonish and rebuke others, as the Scriptures command. The main principle is that we do it in a loving way that builds up the other believer, and not in a harsh and critical way that tears them down.

Romans 15:14 AMP

Personally I am satisfied about you, my brethren, that you yourselves are rich in goodness, amply filled with all [spiritual] knowledge and competent to admonish and counsel and instruct one another also.

2 Timothy 4:2 AMP

Herald and preach the Word! Keep your sense of urgency [stand by, be at hand and ready], whether the opportunity seems to be favourable or unfavourable. [Whether it is convenient or inconvenient, whether it is welcome or unwelcome, you as preacher of the Word are to show people in what way their lives are wrong.] And convince them, rebuking and correcting, warning and urging and encouraging them, being unflagging and inexhaustible in patience and teaching.

“When we admonish or rebuke, we do it over *clear Scriptural principles*, not over *doubtful things*. We may offer *advice* to others about doubtful things, but should never judge them.” (David Guzik)

v 13 **Not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way:** Mature believers can cause immature believers to *stumble* by enticing them to sin through an unwise use of the freedom or liberty which we have in Christ. Immature believers can cause other brothers to *fall* by being legalistic and critical, and so discouraging them. Paul will expand on this in the remainder of Romans chapter 14.

Summary and Conclusion

Walking in fellowship with God, being wholly dedicated to serving and loving Him, means that our attitude towards others will not be critical or uncaring. Rather, we will seek to heal, and strengthen, our brothers and sisters, and not tear them down.

““Whether we live, therefore, or whether we die, we are the Lord's” (Rom. 14:8). Our first responsibility is to the Lord. If Christians would go to the Lord in prayer instead of going to their brother with criticism, there would be stronger fellowship in our churches.” (Warren W. Wiersbe)