A hand is shown placing a dark, smooth stone on top of a stack of other stones. The stack consists of several stones of various sizes and colors (grey, blue, white) balanced on a large, flat, light-colored stone. The background is dark and moody.

let us aim for
harmony in the
church and try to

*build each
other up*

A tall, thin cross stands in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. The background is a soft, hazy sky.

Romans 14:1-13a

Romans

14:1-15:7



Introduction

In Romans 14–15, Paul deals with practical issues that were causing serious problems among the house-churches at Rome. These matters involved dietary practices and worship days observed by Jewish and Gentile Christians. Paul’s wisdom and insights provide practical guidelines for embattled congregations even today. In this section, Paul spells out very specific implications of the Gospel to his Roman audience. Initially, he takes aim mainly at Jewish believers, as well as some Gentile proselytes, who judge those who do not observe OT regulations about foods and festivals (14:1-13a). Then Paul cautions Gentiles, together with Jewish Christians (like himself!), to live out their freedom regarding diet and days in a manner which will build up the “weak,” rather than tear down and destroy them (14:13b-22; 15:1-4).

Romans

14:1-15:7



Paul will conclude this section by, first, affirming that Christ became a servant to the “circumcision” in order to confirm God’s promises to the patriarchs (15:8). He then turns to show how the OT repeatedly expresses God’s intention to reach out to include Gentiles (15:9-12). In many ways, these verses serve as the theological culmination of Paul’s entire argument, which he wraps up with a concluding word of blessing (15:13).

The following chart is a concise summary of 14:1 – 15:13:

Introduction

Romans

14:1-15:7



Introduction

Texts	Summation
14:1-13a	Both “strong” and “weak” Christians need to stop condemning each other since it is the Lord who has the right to assess the believer’s status and conduct.
14:13b-23	The “strong” Christians must be careful not to cause “weak” Christians to suffer spiritual harm by their insistence on exercising their liberty on disputed matters. Such insistence violates the essence of the Kingdom of God, which is to manifest love and concern for one another.
15:1-6	The “strong” Christians should willingly tolerate the tender consciences of the “weak” Christians, seeking thereby to foster unified praise of God in the community. Christians should exhibit such concern for others because the example set for them by their Lord Jesus.
15:7-13	Both “strong” and “weak” Christians should receive each other as full and respected members of the congregation, since God has shown, in fulfillment of Scripture, that He accepts both Jews and Gentiles as His people!

Romans

14:1-13a



Introduction

Do Not Judge Those Who Also Belong to the Lord Based on Your Convictions

The Greek conjunction that begins this chapter **dev** “*as for*” in v.1 does not signal a totally new line of thought by Paul. Actually, **dev** marks the transition to a section within the broader main division of Romans 12:1 – 15:13. At the other end of this section, 14:13a, operates as another “hinge” verse that forms a bridge between the two halves of Chapter 14.

Within this section, 14:1-13a, the main divisions are: 14:1-3; 4-9; and 10-13a. Paul marks each division with a rhetorical question (14:4 & 14:10). Both bear a striking, and deliberate, resemblance to comparable challenges to “*you, every person who judges,*” in 2:1-3; while the middle section (4-9) provides Paul’s quite profound, Gospel-based, theological foundation.

Romans

14:1-3



**Acceptance,
not
Judgment**

¹As for the one who is weak in the faith, receive [him] to yourselves, not for judgments over convictions. ²On the one hand, [there is one] who believes [he has the freedom] to eat all things, but, on the other hand, the one who is weak is eating vegetables. ³The one who eats, let him not despise the one who does not eat; but the one who is not eating, let him not judge the one who is eating, for God received him to Himself.

Romans

14:1



Conflict Over Convictions

¹As for the one who is weak in the faith, receive [him] to yourselves, not for judgments over convictions.

St. Paul directs his opening salvo toward those whom he will later categorize as “*strong*.” In doing so, Paul implies that the “*strong*” were the dominate group in the Roman church. Paul is directing the “*strong*” to “*receive [him] to yourselves*” (proslambavnesqe). This Greek verb is in the middle voice and is an imperative, which is important for you, since it points out that it doesn’t merely mean to “*welcome*,” rather, it directs the active and complete integration of the weak into the congregation and that they are also to be included in all other formal or informal aspects of fellowship!

Romans

14:1



Conflict Over Convictions

¹As for the one who is weak in the faith, receive [him] to yourselves, not for judgments over convictions.

Paul defines those who are to be received in the singular ***“the one who is weak in the faith,”*** that is, in respect to the faith. This need not mean that the person is weak in regard to faith in Jesus...the faith that receives the righteousness of God (cf. 1:17; 3:22). Therefore, ***“weak”*** does not imply that the person is about to fall from faith! In fact, the description of being ***“weak”*** calls to mind how Paul elsewhere regards human or physical weakness as the very locus of Divine power (cf. 2 Cor 4:7-11; 11:30; 12:5, 9-10; 13:4-9)!

Romans

14:1



Conflict Over Convictions

¹As for the one who is weak in the faith, receive [him] to yourselves, not for judgments over convictions.

Paul has also already given an example of such faith in Ch 4...Abraham! Although Abraham was credited with righteousness through faith (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3), he continued to entertain thoughts of doubt and the manner of the fulfillment of the promises that God had made in regard to his heir, possession of the land, and becoming the father of many nations (Gen 15:2, 8; 16:1-16; 17:17-18). Despite Abraham's difficult circumstances, i.e., the "*deadness*" of Sarah's womb (cf. Rom 4:19); the power of God's Word prevailed, so Abraham was not weakened in faith, but was empowered in the faith (Romans 4:19-20).

Romans

14:1



Conflict Over Convictions

¹As for the one who is *weak in the faith*, receive [him] to yourselves, not for *judgments over convictions*.

Therefore, the “*weak in the faith*” believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Seed of Abraham, who has fulfilled the OT promises made to Abraham, yet they struggle with the manner in which that fulfillment can or should change the daily habits and customs they inherited from the OT.

Finally, you must know that the use of “*judgments over convictions*” is usually mistranslated. It may be “*quarrels*” or “*disputes*” that are far too weak, and the use of “*opinions*” doesn’t communicate well in our day and age. Rather than mere introspection or personal preference, Paul is dealing with “*convictions*” of the Roman believers and how they have arrived at them in regard to issues which have significant Biblical and theological precedents.

Romans

14:2



**What's the
Matter with
Food?**

²On the one hand, [there is one] who believes [he has the freedom] to eat all things, but, on the other hand, the one who is weak is eating vegetables.

Paul will now engage one specific matter concerning contrary convictions: Food! There are two competing convictions:

1. The first conviction was that NT believers now have the freedom to eat anything! Since Christ Jesus has fulfilled the OT and has rendered the dietary laws null and void, so He has declared all foods as *“clean.”* St. Mark interprets the words of our Lord in 7:19 as (kaqarivzwn pavnta ta; brwvmata) *“cleansing all the foods.”* Acts 10-11 confirms this and the abolition of the OT dietary laws goes hand and hand with the full acceptance of Gentiles into the Church!

Romans

14:2



**What's the
Matter with
Food?**

²On the one hand, [there is one] who believes [he has the freedom] to eat all things, but, on the other hand, the one who is *weak* is eating vegetables.

2. The second conviction wherein the “*weak*” Christians are only eating vegetables might seem to indicate that they refrained from eating meat.

Vegetarianism isn't a new invention, since it was widely practiced in the ancient world due to religious or philosophical reasons. Thus, the overall context seems to reside in the different convictions regarding food laws of the OT.

Romans

14:2



**What's the
Matter with
Food?**

²On the one hand, [there is one] who believes [he has the freedom] to eat all things, but, on the other hand, the one who is weak is eating vegetables.

So the one who eats only vegetables probably decided to avoid meat out of concern to maintain OT laws of purity in a pagan context and this is a theological practice that we have studied (cf. Dan 1:3-16). Paul's general language, therefore, encompasses one's convictions in the observation of food laws. The issue at hand concerns whether Christian freedom allows those in the NT era to eat what was formerly forbidden by Yahweh!

Romans

14:3



**Problematic
Actions on
Both Sides**

³The one who eats, let him not despise the one who does not eat; but the one who is not eating, let him not judge the one who is eating, for God received him to Himself.

Some have asserted the propriety of eating all things; and others contend that the OT food laws remain normative and prohibit the eating of certain foods. Paul pleads that this issue not become the cause for judgments against the weak; so he addresses those on both sides of the issue! The ones, who eat everything, must not look down with disdain on those who do not. They must not disparage their fellow Christians thinking that they are inferior or lesser or in need of reproof. Essentially, Paul prohibits anything akin to the all-too-common condescending modern attitude that *'I am a better and more mature Christian than you are!'*

Romans

14:3



Problematic Actions on Both Sides

³The one who eats, let him not despise the one who does not eat; but the one who is not eating, let him not judge the one who is eating, for God received him to Himself.

Paul then counters that the weak likewise must “not judge” those who do eat (meat). Thus, Paul countermands a situation in which the weak condemn the strong for violating a stricture of God’s OT Law; a restriction, by the way, that Jesus has now set aside (St. Mark 7:19; Acts 10-11). An early Church father, John Chrysostom, addresses this situation:

“The stronger ones should not look down on the weak or be contemptuous of them. Likewise, those who abstain are not to pass judgment on those who eat. For just as the strong mocked the weak, ... so the others thought that the strong ones were lawbreakers.”¹

¹ Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, 25 (Bray, *Romans*, ACCS NT 6:339).

Romans

14:3



**Problematic
Actions on
Both Sides**

³The one who eats, let him not despise the one who does not eat; but the one who is not eating, let him not judge the one who is eating, for God received him to Himself.

Why, then, is contempt for and judging of your fellow Christian unwarranted and invalid? Paul is clear: “...*for God received him to Himself.*” With the use of the pronoun “*him,*” Paul specifies the object of the action. This is Paul’s theological bottom line concerning the issue at hand; the grace and mercy of the Lord who does not charge sin to our account (4:7-8) or condemn those in Christ Jesus (8:1), but, instead, receives “ungodly” people to Himself in Christ (4:5).

Romans

14:4



**More
Improper
Judging: Of
the Lord's
Servant!**

4You, who are you, the one judging the household servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls, and he will be established, for the Lord is able to establish him.

Paul continues to focus his attention on the judgmental attitude of the *“weak”* toward those that he will later call the *“strong”* (15:1). This language sound very reminiscent of Romans 2:1-5, where Paul admonishes against being judgmental by the use of the second person singular: *“you, every person who judges”* (2:1). However, in chapter 2, Paul’s argument was based on the Law, whereas here his reasoning fully resides within the Gospel that he has just expressed at the end of verse 3.

Romans

14:4



**More
Improper
Judging: Of
the Lord's
Servant!**

4To his own master he stands or falls, and he will be established, for the Lord is able to establish him.

Then Paul uses a clever segue by repeating the noun ***“kuvrioV,”*** which can be translated as ***“master”*** or ***“Lord.”*** The first use ***“master”*** refers to the slave's relationship to his master. So it is as, Paul says, for a servant of the ***“Lord”*** (the second use of ***kuvrioV***). The referent of the second use is Divine. Yet, which Person of the Holy Trinity is Paul addressing? You will see that ***kuvrioV***, used throughout this passage, is not easy to determine. Paul uses this Divine title nine times interchanging it with ***God (QeovV)*** and ***Christ (CristovV)***. The ease in which Paul uses the title ***kuvrioV*** suggest that: (1) he may not have intended to distinguish clearly to which Person he is referring, and (2) ***the degree to which he thought of Christ, Lord, and God are of equal terms.***

Romans

14:4



**More
Improper
Judging: Of
the Lord's
Servant!**

⁴To his own master *he stands or falls, and he will be established, for the Lord is able to establish him.*

The theological depth that Paul utilizes with “...*he stands or falls, and he will be established,*” is breathtaking! The verb form that Paul uses emphasizes the believer’s relationship with the Lord, which the Lord has established! The two forms of **i{sthmi** clearly magnify the Gospel promise that each believer (each of you) are credited with the righteousness of faith in Christ Jesus already and you will indeed “*stand*” acquitted by being declared **NOT GUILTY** by the Divine Judge, Jesus, on the Great Day of Judgment!

Romans

14:5-6



Debating Days

⁵Indeed, on the one hand, [there is one] who judges a day in preference to a day, but, on the other hand, [there is another] who judges every day [alike]. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶For the one who sets his mind on a day sets [it] to the Lord. And the one who eats is eating to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and the one who does not eat is not eating to the Lord, and he gives thanks to God.

Now Paul addresses a different issue, but with much of the same phraseology. There was in Rome not only disputes about food, but also about convictions and judgments concerning festivals, the Sabbath, and possibly the changes that were being made by early Christians in regard to worship practices, principally, worship on Sunday or the Day of Resurrection!

Romans

14:5-6



Debating Days

⁵Indeed, on the one hand, [there is one] who judges *a day* in preference to *a day*, but, on the other hand, [there is another] who judges every day [alike]. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶For the one who sets his mind on a day sets [it] to the Lord. And the one who eats is eating to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and the one who does not eat is not eating to the Lord, and he gives thanks to God.

Why would such distinctions be an issue?

Surprisingly, Paul does not elaborate on what the exact controversy was concerning “*a day*.” He’ll give more helpful instructions concerning foods in 14:14-15, 17, and 20-23. The reason why Paul doesn’t go into great depth is probably because his readers in Rome would have understood his meaning. This also gives us a glimpse into the overall situation in the congregations in Rome and no doubt also to the main theme of his letter; that being, disagreements between Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians. So what Paul is saying is that the criteria for judging between foods and days reside solely in God’s Word!

Romans

14:5-6



Debating Days

⁵Indeed, on the one hand, [there is one] who judges *a day* in preference to *a day*, but, on the other hand, [there is another] who judges every day [alike]. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶For the one who sets his mind on *a day* sets [it] to the Lord. And the one who eats is eating to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and the one who does not eat is not eating to the Lord, and he gives thanks to God.

What about the Sabbath? The Sabbath, as a day of rest and remembrance, stems from Creation (Gen 2:2-3). It also resides notably in the Decalogue, receiving explanations in: Ex 20:8-11 that bases the Sabbath on creation; while Dt 5:12-15 bases it on Israel's salvation. The Sabbath was also a point of dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees (cf. St. Mark 7:1-23). In addition to the Sabbath, there was the entire annual festival calendar. So there were different convictions in the Roman congregations involved the propriety of observing the other holy days, e.g., Passover and the other Festivals as commanded by God in Lev 23.

Romans

14:5-6



Debating
Days

⁵Indeed, on the one hand, [there is one] who judges *a day* in preference to *a day*, but, on the other hand, [there is another] who judges every day [alike]. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶For the one who sets his mind on *a day* sets [it] to the Lord. And the one who eats is eating to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and the one who does not eat is not eating to the Lord, and he gives thanks to God.

This issue remains a factor concerning the treatment of the weak and strong through 15:7. However, it is most interesting that from here on Paul makes specific references only to food, as stated previously. So it is most likely that the major points of conviction and judgment in Rome were most fiercely argued concerning foods.

Romans

14:5b-6



**Both
Practices Can
Be God
Pleasing!**

^{5b}Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶For the one who sets his mind on *a day* sets [it] to the Lord. And the one who eats is eating to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and the one who does not eat is not eating to the Lord, and he gives *thanks to God*.

One's own observance, or not, of OT regulations concerning foods and festivals should be rooted in one's faith relationship with the Lord, rather than in judgmental comparisons with or criticisms of others.

Paul clearly covers both sides in regard to eating of or abstinence from foods in the second half of verse 6. The key evidence of being firmly convinced regarding either conviction does not involve human observance toward God (especially now that Christ Jesus has declared all foods clean (again, St. Mark 7:19), but resides in *"thanks to God."*

Romans

14:5b-6



**Both
Practices Can
Be God
Pleasing!**

^{5b}Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶For the one who sets his mind on a day sets [it] to the Lord. And the one who eats is eating to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and the one who does not eat is not eating to the Lord, and he gives *thanks to God*.

Both the eating of previously forbidden foods and restricting one's diet to certain foods declared "*clean*" by our Lord Jesus should certainly include receiving in *thanks to God*.

However, an attitude of gratitude to the Lord should not just be restricted to mealtime prayers and thanksgivings; it must encompass every aspect of a Christian's life (1 Tim 4:4-5). More importantly, an all-inclusive and ongoing relationship with God in Christ Jesus must permeate the believer's life (cf. 12:1-2).

Romans

14:7-9



**The Heart of
the Matter:
We Are
Never Alone
in the Lord!**

⁷Indeed, no one of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.
⁸For not only if we live are we living *to the Lord*, but also if we die we die *to the Lord*. Therefore only if we live, but also if we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this [end] Christ died and lived [again] so that He might be the Lord of both [the] dead and [the] living ones.

Is it not clear that selfishly living for oneself contradicts God's will! Yet, the fundamental issue that Paul is raising does not involve our own doing, even when directed nobly toward God or others. No! A greater and gracious reality prevails! The matter of ultimate importance, regardless of which position one may advocate regarding foods or festivals, resides first and foremost in "*whose*" we are! We belong to the Lord (v.4). This theological underpinning explains why we live and die "*to the Lord*" (v.8). This is why at funerals all mourners hear Rom 8:38-39. So then, physical death is no big deal! We must never grieve as those without any hope (1 Thess 4:13) because our belonging to the Lord transcends physical death!

Romans

14:10-13a



**Therefore,
NO
Judging!**

¹⁰But you, why are you judging your brother? Or you, why are you also despising your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹Indeed, it stands written: “[As] I live,’ the Lord say, ‘to me every knee will bow, and every tongue will acknowledge itself to God.” ¹²Consequently then, each one of us will give an account concerning himself to God. ^{13a}Therefore let us judge one another no longer.

After providing the proper theological and relational basis for “whose” and “who we are,” Paul returns to rebuke behaviors which would be wholly inconsistent with our gracious, common identity! As throughout much of his letter to the Romans, the lively diatribe cannot be reduced to the notion that Paul addresses some fictional person. On the contrary, Paul continues to utilize diatribe in order to effectively engage actual people in the house-churches in Rome who exhibit the characteristics being portrayed.

Romans

14:10-13a



Therefore,
NO
Judging!

¹⁰But you, why are you *judging* your brother? Or you, why are you also *despising* your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹Indeed, it stands written: “[As] I live,” the Lord say, ‘to me every knee will bow, and every tongue will acknowledge itself to God.’” ¹²Consequently then, each one of us will give an account concerning himself to God. ^{13a}Therefore let us judge one another no longer.

Paul returns to the verbs of verse 3, “*judging*” and “*despising*,” though in reverse order. He directs his challenge to the “*weak*” who are “*judging your brother*” and then to the “*strong*” who are “*also despising your brother?*” In both cases, they are wholly improper attitudes toward “*your brother.*” In this context, the “*judging*” and “*despising*” is within the very body of Christ...and this must not be!

Romans

14:10b-12



All Will
Give an
Account

^{10b}For we will all stand before *the judgment seat* of God.

¹²Consequently then, each one of us will give an account concerning himself to God.

Not only does this behavior by the “*weak*” and the “*strong*” stand contrary to God’s Good News of Christ Jesus’ death and resurrection that is “*for us men and for our salvation,*” but it is also ominously inappropriate for “*brothers*” in Christ in view of what lies ahead. Verses 10b and 12 articulate the same truth! The verb and noun for “*we will all stand before*” (parasthsovmeqa) and “*the judgment seat*” (bhvmati) have forensic, legal connotation.

The universal expressions which permeate Romans resurface prominently here. The “*all*” of v.10 will appear on that Day before the Lord as He sits on His judgment or Bema seat, which, properly, is a platform to which someone walked up to receive *judgment!* Literally, it’s “a tribunal-chair” (throne) where rewards and punishments are meted out!

Romans

14:10b-12



All Will
Give an
Account

^{10b}For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

¹²Consequently then, each one of us will *give an account* concerning himself to God.

As a baptized child of God, you remain responsible to God for how you conduct yourself as His child in this world. Especially inappropriate, even an unchristian attitude, Paul insists, is judging and despising your brothers on matters from which Christ has freed you (and them)! Here's the bottom-line:

Do you really want to answer to your
Divine Judge before His public
Judgment Seat?

REPENT!

Romans

14:11



As “the
Lord Says”

11Indeed, it stands written: “[As] I live,’ the Lord say, ‘to me every knee will bow, and every tongue will **acknowledge** itself to God.’”

Paul reinforces this reality by using Holy Scripture, citing the Lord’s holy Word spoken through Isaiah 45:11. In the context that Paul is citing God’s Word provides an all-inclusive buttress to Paul’s urgent warning. The Greek compound verb for **“acknowledge”** is *eixomologhvsetai*: *ek*, “*wholly out from*” intensifies *oimologevw*, “*say the same thing about*” – so literally, *to fully agree and acknowledge that agreement openly, publically, and wholehearted; hence to confess openly without reservation!*

Romans

14:11



As “the
Lord Says”

¹¹Indeed, it stands written: “[As] I live,’ the Lord say, ‘to me every knee will bow, and every tongue will *acknowledge* itself to God.”

Acknowledge conveys the truth that every person will give an account for him or herself before the Lord Jesus! The repeated use of “*every*” reinforces the truth that no person’s knee or tongue will be exempt from acknowledging or “*ejxomologhvsetai*” itself to God (cf. Phil 2:10-11; Rev 3:5).

Romans

14:13a



**Conclusion:
No More
Judging!**

13a Therefore let us judge one another no longer.

The first half of this verse is a succinct exhortation of and the proper conclusion to be drawn from Paul's refrain in verses 10c-12. The command that Christians cease judging in matters where God no longer does (see 14:3, 4, 10) comes immediately following a reminder of the harsh consequences for doing so! All of this stands in full concert with an admonition from Jesus: *"Do not judge, so that you might not be judged. For in whatever judgment you judge, you will be judged"* (St. Matthew 7:12).

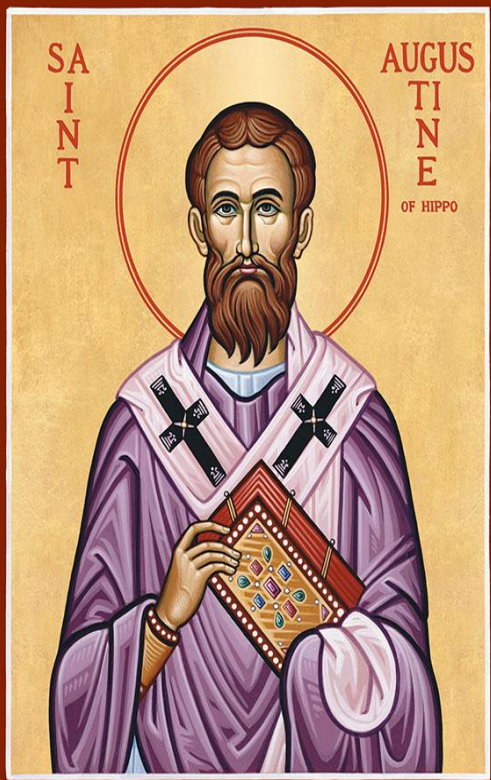
Romans

14:13a



In closing, an important caveat about judging ought to be stated, particularly to this postmodern, egoistical culture. The fundamental point pertains to who judges! Jesus makes it emphatically clear that we human must not judge! However, God has expressed His own judgments regarding numerous actions or non-actions in His holy Word. Thus, while it would be incorrect for believers to make judgments based upon their own standards, it is not wrong to pronounce God's revealed judgments when appropriate. Indeed, you must do so, if you are to remain the salt and light in this world. As Augustine, rightly this time, stated:

**Conclusion:
No More
Judging!**



“In the case of that abominable immorality where a man had taken his stepmother, Paul taught us to judge (1 Cor. 5:1-5). For that man could not possibly claim that he committed such a gross act of indecency with good intentions. So we must pass judgment on things which are obviously wrong.”²

**Conclusion:
No More
Judging!**

² *Augustine, Commentary on Statements in Romans, 79 (Bray, Romans, ACCS NT 6:340).*

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.
ROMANS 14:13

NEXT
SUNDAY

Romans 14:13-23

PEACE
IN CHRIST
JESUS

