

Romans 14 • The heart of relationships

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · October 11, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Let's start with prayer, shall we? Father, as we get into the Word, it's our constant prayer that we would hear from You. And so, Lord, we come before You and we humble ourselves and recognize our need of Your Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts, to literally unstop our ears, and to give us spiritual vision, Lord, that we might see what is being given to us this evening. We come, Father, with a heart that desires to receive. And we pray that You would fill us.

We thank You, God, for Your faithfulness, for Your goodness and Your mercy. We thank You, Father, that Your Word nourishes our souls and builds up our spirit. And we ask You, Father, to do that tonight. As we get into this Word, we pray that You would help us to apply Your Scriptures and to walk them out in our day-to-day life. Give us the strength and the courage to live the life that You've called us to live.

And we thank You for this time and ask for Your grace to guide us. In Jesus' precious name, amen. Amen. Amen. All right.

As we begin Romans chapter 14, we're going to run right away into a term that we need to define. So you'll notice that Paul begins in verse 1 by saying, "...as for the one who is weak in faith." And this is the term that we need to understand properly. When the Apostle Paul refers to those who are weak in faith, he's referring most often to a believer who has not yet matured to the point of releasing, shall we say, previously held beliefs. You got to understand that most, if not all, of the people that Paul is writing to, who are now Christians, came up through a background of paganism. And if you know anything about paganism, it is rife with superstition and all kinds of beliefs that people, you know, hang on to.

And even though they are new believers, it is difficult for some people to shed the things that they've held very closely to for their, you know, before coming to the Lord. And sometimes these believers, these weak, weak brothers and sisters, can be very vocal about their beliefs. And that is exactly why Paul goes on in verse 1 to say, "...welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions." And this is an important word. First of all, you'll notice that Paul says, don't quarrel over opinions. These are not doctrinal issues, all right?

These are opinions. But even so, people can be very passionate about their opinions and their beliefs. And instead of opinions, the NIV uses the phrase, disputable matters. And the New King James uses the word, doubtful things. And that simply means these are kind of gray issues.

These are gray areas. And these are things that, you know, people are just kind of hanging on to. And one such belief that came up repeatedly in the early church was the issue of eating meat. And I know you're probably tired of hearing about it because it's not really an issue we deal with today. But it's one that was very, very strugglesome in the early church.

And that's why Paul goes on in verse 2 to say, "...one person believes he may eat anything while the weak person eats only vegetables." Now, he's not talking about someone who's a vegetarian just because they maybe don't want to eat animals or because, you know, or even health reasons. That's not what he's referring to. He's talking about someone who abstains from eating meat for spiritual reasons. And that's because, you know, paganism was so prevalent in the societies where the gospel came in that most of the meat, when you went into the public market to buy a cut of meat, almost all of it had been dedicated to a pagan god at one time or another. And the reason that's the meat you found in the meat market is because those were the good cuts of meat.

Because nobody wants to offer an animal to your god that isn't a good animal. You know, that would be offensive, right? So you offer the best to your god. And so if somebody put a sign out in the market, this meat had been sacrificed to an idol, it was kind of like you and I seeing a sign today that would say, grade A lean beef or something like that, you know. This is top of the line, you know, sirloin or whatever the case might be.

But the thing is, is that those who still had a weak faith, and again, that means they were holding on to those old beliefs and ideas, they literally believed that if they ate that meat, they would become defiled. They literally believed that if they consumed a piece of meat that had been devoted to a pagan idol, that they would take something of that idol into them, inside of them. And it became a huge issue, and people argued. And that's why Paul says, with the weak brother among you, welcome him in, but don't argue with him, right? So this was the issue.

Now here's the question. First of all, what was Paul's position on this particular issue? Well, he actually talks about it in 1 Corinthians, chapter 8, let me show you on the screen. It says, therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that an idol has no real existence, and that there is no God but one. However, not all possess this knowledge, but some, look at this, through former association with idols, they eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

But he goes on to say, here's the deal. Food will not commend us to God. We're no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. It's just a hunk of meat. Well, so as far as Paul was concerned, for him, eating a piece of meat that had been devoted to a pagan idol was a non-issue, all right?

As far as the simple act of eating it and being concerned about it. But what was an issue was how believers treat one another over this issue. And really, this isn't really about eating meat sacrificed to idols. That was just their issue. We've got our issues today.

But that was theirs, and what was really going on, or what was really of paramount importance, was how do you treat people who have belief systems or hang on to ideas that you know are like, that's not an issue at all. But to them, it is. To them, it's a serious thing, you know. And how do you deal with those people? How are you going to respond to those people?

Well, Paul goes on to say in verse 3, look with me in your Bible, he says, 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. And he asks the question, 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. Now, I want you to stop there for a moment, because what Paul has outlined here in these verses is exactly how it goes.

The person who understands their freedom in Christ, and they know that a hunk of meat is a hunk of meat, and it doesn't matter what little incantation somebody said over it, it doesn't mean anything. That person is more likely to despise the one who doesn't have that same understanding. They have a tendency to look down on people that aren't stronger in their faith and in their conscience concerning such matters. And those who abstain, who say, no way, I'm eating that piece of meat, that's been dedicated to an idol, and I don't want to defile myself with anything. Well, those people often become judgmental, and they point the finger, and they basically, you know, say, hey, nobody should eat meat that's been devoted to an idol.

Nobody. And if you're doing it, you're wrong, and they're very judgmental about it. And that's why Paul says here in verse 3, let not the one who eats or is free to eat despise the person who abstains. Let not the one who abstains pass judgment. And you know, this is still going on in the church today, not over meat sacrifice to idols, but over other issues.

And Paul says they're both wrong. Both people. The mature believer is wrong for having a condescending attitude of those who don't have the knowledge that he has, and the immature believer is

wrong for being judgmental and assuming that everybody has to do it just like they do it. In fact, that's why Paul asks the question in verse 4, who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?

And he's basically saying that each and every Christian serves Jesus as Lord, right? And he's saying, you're not their Lord. Jesus is their Lord. And since he is the Lord of that person, who are you to jump in and usurp that role? Guys, do you understand that when we look at somebody who's doing things that we don't like, and we address it, or even if we don't address it, but we just kind of have an attitude about that person, do you understand what we're doing?

We're jumping in where we have not been authorized to jump in. If that person is a born-again Christian, even though they've carried some ideas into their walk with Jesus that you know are nothing at all, they're ridiculous. For you to have an attitude or to say something about that brother or sister, or say something to them is wrong unless they come and ask you, is my thinking weird here? And sometimes that'll happen. Sometimes people will come up to you if you're a more mature believer, and they'll say, hey, you know, I've been staying away from such and such, or I don't do this.

And what do you think about that? Am I being too, like, legalistic? And, you know, maybe they're starting to come along in their maturity, and now they're starting to wonder about these things. And that's fine. If somebody comes to you, great.

It's okay to say, you know, I'm glad you asked, because here's the deal. And then you can pray with them and talk with them and encourage them to grow in their faith through Jesus Christ. But if we're going to go to somebody who just is flat out convinced that something is wrong, even though you know better, you're not going to make a friend, and you're probably not going to convince them of what they're doing as wrong. And that's why Paul says, who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? They are servants of Jesus Christ.

He is their Lord, and it is his responsibility, and he will bring them along in his time. But you just don't worry about it, right? And then Paul goes on to speak of another disputable matter in verse 5, and this is one that has lasted till today. He says, One person esteems one day better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Look what his response is.

Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind concerning special days and that sort of thing. This is still going on. Sue and I had a question come in just this last week. In fact, we covered it, I think, in our Q&A, and a lady wrote in and said, Is it okay to work on Sunday? And I responded to her.

I said, Well, okay. Well, first of all, you've got to understand that the Sabbath is Saturday, and it always has been Saturday. Sometimes people will ask, When did the Sabbath get changed from Saturday to Sunday? And I go, Never. It never got changed.

And the second thing that people who are struggling with this need to know is that the Sabbath regulation was created between God and Israel. Between God and Israel, and God says that to Israel. This is a sign between me and you, the nation of Israel. When you come to the New Testament, we don't have that same Sabbath regulation that they did in the Old Testament. And that is why Paul says, One person esteems one day above another, and another person, all the days are the same.

And he says, Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. Listen, if the Sabbath regulations were still binding, this would be a very reckless thing for the Apostle Paul to say. If Sabbath regulations were still required, he wouldn't be saying this. He would say, One person esteems one day is better than another, and that's good because we're under Sabbath regulations, and we should have one special day that is above all the others. And that's the day of rest that God made.

He doesn't say that. In fact, he says nothing about keeping the Sabbath. Elsewhere, and in other letters, he even says, I'm starting to worry about you guys because you're keeping special days. And elsewhere, he says, Let no one judge you by what you eat or drink or a Sabbath day. And so you can see from these multiple references in the New Testament that this is not an issue for New Testament believers from the standpoint of it being a command.

And one of the reasons is because Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath. Because what was the Sabbath about? You know, it's really interesting. The Jews made the Sabbath this big thing. This big thing.

All God said concerning the Sabbath was, Take this day, the seventh day, and do no regular work. That's it. He didn't even tell them to go to a synagogue on that day. And you got some Christians today saying, Well, the Sabbath is the only day that we should go to church. Where's that in the Bible?

He didn't even tell the Jews that, let alone Christians. And so Saturday, Sunday, again, it's a non-issue. So Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath in the sense that he is our Sabbath rest. Because that's what God was teaching Israel, is to rest. And it was a fairly simple command.

Again, the Jews made it this big thing. But it was a very simple thing. I want you just to rest. And the reason Jesus is our Sabbath rest, and this is explained in the book of Hebrews, is because now, instead of working for our salvation, we're resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. He did the work on the cross.

We rest in that work, right? We don't labor to be saved. We don't work to be saved. We rest. And literally, we are at peace under the work that Jesus did.

We're resting. And that's what God was teaching Israel. And that is what Jesus fulfilled for us. So if somebody ever asks you, do you keep the Sabbath, just say, every day. Every day.

Because my faith is in Jesus, and I'm resting in him. So anyway, Paul acknowledges here that, you know, some believers believe that it is appropriate to set aside a special day, and some consider every day special. And he says in verse 6, this is important, the one who observes the day observes it in honor of the Lord. See, this is the thing. People who keep a Sabbath day or take the Sabbath, or even if it's not that day, it's a different day, they're doing it as unto the Lord.

And you can't blame them for that. They're doing it unto the Lord. They're doing it to honor God. Okay, fine. So if somebody says to me, well, you know, we keep the Sabbath, you know, am I going to go, that's wrong?

No, I'm not going to say that. I'm not going to say anything. I'm just going to go, okay, cool. Because they're doing it as unto the Lord. And that's what Paul's saying here in verse 6.

The one who keeps a special day does it to honor the Lord, right? But what do you do? And this is where, this is the rub. What do you do if that same believer turns to you and says, since you don't keep the Sabbath, you're being disobedient, and you're going to come under judgment? Well, now the playing field has kind of changed a little bit.

I was willing to just, you know, hear them say, I keep the Sabbath, and not say anything about it. Because you're doing it as unto the Lord. But they came, they turned to me, and they said, do you keep the Sabbath? And I said, well, not like you do. I keep the Sabbath every day of the week.

No, that's not what you do. It's the seventh-day Sabbath, and that's what you got to do. And if you don't, you're going to come under judgment. You're going to be judged by God, because it's a command. You Christians just taking some of the Ten Commandments, deciding which ones you want to keep and which ones you don't.

I've had people say that to me. So what are you going to do? Is that where we start arguing? I think Paul would say, just let it go. You know, he said, don't argue, don't quarrel.

If there's somebody who thinks differently than you, don't quarrel about it. You know, they've chosen to become judgmental over the issue, about the fact that you're not doing it like they're doing it. But you

know what? That's between them and the Lord. That judgmental attitude that they're conveying to you, that's between them and Jesus, and that's an okay place to leave it, you know?

It's a completely different matter if somebody comes to me and we just start talking about the Sabbath, and maybe they were a Sabbatarian, they were a Sabbath-keeping individual, but now they're starting to kind of wonder about it. So they're like, okay, what do you think about this? Now that's a different—see how the playing field has changed? again. Now there's an invitation, well let's talk about it.

I had an opportunity to do this with a brother who was a Seventh-day Adventist, but it started with just an open, what do you think about this? Let's talk about this, you know, and it wasn't a judgmental argumentation going on, it was just a conversation that was open and so forth, and obviously, you know, it took years, it took years, but he wrote me a letter a number of years ago, and he thanked me for our conversation, and he said, I want you to know that I'm no longer a Seventh-day Adventist, and I've come to realize that Jesus has fulfilled the Sabbath, and he is my rest, and that's how we keep the Sabbath today, is through faith in Jesus Christ. As Paul says earlier in Romans, we literally uphold the law by faith, and it was kind of an exciting thing for me to read, although it took years for this guy, years to just work through and think about it, and talk about it, and so forth, and so on. That's where it can be positive. Arguments are never going to get anywhere, they're only going to usually just cause problems, and people are going to become even more stubborn.

So, in the middle of verse 6, here is where we are, he goes on to say, 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. In other words, they're both seeking to honor the Lord, so leave us alone, you know, whether you're doing this or you're not doing that, just leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone, because I know why you're doing it. You're doing it because you want, you believe that you're honoring the Lord, and I don't want to mess with that. We're just gonna let that go, right? And that's why Paul says in verse 7, for none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself, and it's kind of Paul's way of saying, no man is an island unto himself, you know?

What we do in the way we live affects other people, so it's okay just to, you know, live and let live, I guess, according to, you know, and so he says, as he goes on in verse 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, for to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. So this is, again, Paul's way of saying, whatever you do or don't do, do it or don't do it unto the Lord. Do it unto him. Don't

do it because, you know, something I said or something, do it unto the Lord. And then Paul asks, why do you pass judgment on your brother?

Or you, why do you despise your brother? Remember, these are these two attitudes. He says, 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 confess to God. And that's a quote from Isaiah 45, in case you're interested. And then he says in verse 12, so then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

And I know that I haven't finished that verse, but I want you to stop there with me for just a moment because the essence of this passage is a reminder that whenever we act as a judge over a fellow believer, we are usurping a role that is not ours. When he says that we're all going to stand before God, he's like, let God handle it. That's not your job. It's not your job to go around judging people. It's not their job to judge you in the sense that, you know.

And so he says, we're all going to stand before the Lord and each one of us is going to have to give an account to himself. And he reminds us, God is the judge, right? But we need to take a moment to talk about this statement because it often causes confusion for believers where he says, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. And also the statement, each of us will give an account of himself to God. These statements, I've had people kind of throw those back at me when I tell people, listen, you will not be judged for your sin when you stand before God.

I tell that to people all the time. You will not stand before God for your sin. And they say, well, what about this passage that says we'll all stand before the judgment seat of God? What about that? What about the passage that says each of us will have to give an account of ourselves?

What about that? And those statements have convinced people, many people, many Christians, that we will all stand before God and answer for our sins. And here's the deal. Although believers will experience a form of judgment, it's going to be very different from the judgment that will be spoken over unbelievers, which is the great white throne judgment as it is described in the book of Revelation. You, as a born-again Christian, are going to be judged according to what you did with what God gave you.

In other words, how you used it for his glory and for the kingdom of God. That's the judgment. But it is not a judgment unto condemnation. Why? Because there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, right?

We've got to remember that. So there is this judgment that you and I are going to have before the Lord. It's not a condemning judgment. It is a testing judgment. And the reason that none of your sins are going to be brought up when you stand before God is really very simple.

It's because Jesus already stood in for you and bore the penalty of your sins on the cross. And when he was finished bearing that penalty, he said these words, the three most powerful words, I think, in the Bible. It is finished. And that means it's done. It's complete.

It has been paid in full. And there's nothing more to pay. When something's been paid in full, you don't go back to the store and give them more money. It's done. You paid it.

And when Jesus said, it is finished, he was telling you and me there's nothing left to pay. I paid it. Okay? So here's the deal. If somebody believes that they're going to stand before God and give an account for their sins, then what Jesus said on the cross when he said it is finished was not true.

It wasn't finished. It won't be finished until you stand before God. No, that's not right. I believe what Jesus said. I take him at his word.

It is finished. And there's nothing more to pay. So how is this judgment going to take place? Well, I'm going to show you here in a moment. There's a passage in 1 Corinthians where I believe Paul describes how believers are going to be judged.

And here's the deal. First, I need to tell you the context of this passage, because in this context, it's in 1 Corinthians 3, by the way, and we'll see it in just a moment, but Paul is talking about those who come along after him and begin to build upon the foundation that he's been building upon. And he says very clearly, there is only one foundation, and that's Jesus. But he says, how a man builds upon that foundation will one day be tested. Right?

And he talks about how the fire of God's presence is going to just go through what all has been built upon that foundation. Now, the context of the passage is those who are building upon the foundation of Christ for the church. In other words, church leaders, apostles, pastors, teachers, you know, we're all building on the foundation. Right? And Paul says that that work is going to be tested.

But I believe, and I've looked at this very carefully, but I believe that Paul is actually exposing a larger principle of how we will all be judged, and I use that word carefully, tested, when we stand before God one day and the fire of His holiness flows through our lives to show what has been built upon the foundation of Christ in our lives. And even though the context of 1 Corinthians 3 is church leaders, I

believe that it speaks, and there's reason to believe and to accept that it speaks of how all believers will be judged in that sense. So let's go ahead and put it up on the screen so we can read it together. 1 Corinthians 3, 13 through 15 says, each one's work will become manifest, for the day will disclose it because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. I had someone just recently write in and ask, it says here in this passage, they're going to suffer loss, what are they going to lose? What's what's going to be lost? Well, what they've done that what didn't last, that's what's going to be lost. We know that they're not going to you can't lose your salvation in that sense here, because he says at the very end of this, though he himself will be saved.

And this is an interesting statement that gives us some insight about salvation and works. God wants you to live your life for him in such a way that when you stand before him, you're not ashamed. Because what you have done for the Lord remains. He wants you to have that blessing of being rewarded for the things that you've done, the times you prayed, the times you shared Christ, the times you wrote letters to people to encouraging them in the Lord, whatever service you may offer, whatever it is, whatever gifting and ability God has given you, he wants you to have used that in your life in such a way that when you stand before him, you have something to show for it. Okay?

But I want you to see here what he says at the end of this passage that's still up on the screen. He says, if anyone's work is burned up, and that means it's all burned up. That person is going to suffer loss. Yeah, the loss of any reward, though he himself will be saved. Why?

Because we're not saved by our works. We're saved by faith, right? In Jesus Christ. That's how you're saved. You know what Paul is telling us here?

It is possible, at least he's giving us the idea that it is possible for someone to live a life, the kind of life that literally renders no reward at the end of it, but the man will still be saved. And you and I, we tend to, I get this question all the time. What about a Christian who's never shown any good fruit? What about them? And what they want me to say is, oh, yeah, you know, they want me to make a decision.

Oh, that person is either not saved or, you know, and they'll say, well, you know what it says, you'll know them by their fruit. Yeah, that's for false prophets. That was the context of what Jesus said that. People always want us to come to these conclusions. Is he saved or is he not?

You know what? I don't answer that question. I don't know if somebody's saved. Not only God sees the heart. Paul says here that there may be, at least he's giving us the idea that there may be some people who wind up in heaven with nothing to show for their lives and yet they're saved.

Why? Because they put their faith in Jesus Christ. Pastor Paul, if somebody never does anything good for God, but they believe in Jesus, will they be saved? Yes. Salvation is not by works.

We are so works minded that it just creeps into our understanding of salvation from time to time. And we start to think that there's this element that is going to make a difference for our salvation. But here's the point. All believers have the opportunity to build upon the foundation of Jesus using things that are going to last, spiritual realities, and so forth. Things that will not burn up, but things that will remain.

Moving on, verse 13. Therefore, let us not pass judgment again on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another. And you know what? Verse 13 is really a summarizing statement for this whole chapter. If you had to sum up chapter 14 with one single verse, this is it right here.

All right? And so Paul goes on, he says, and he's going to talk more about this whole idea of not putting a stumbling block in somebody's path. He says in verse 14, I know, and he says, I'm persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. And he's talking here about unclean foods predominantly. But look what he goes on to say.

This is so important. But it is unclean for anyone who thinks it's unclean. In other words, if somebody thinks something is wrong, and this is, so he, you see what Paul's doing here? He's introducing to you and me this idea of conscience. And conscience was a very important thing to the Apostle Paul.

He's saying, essentially, that if a brother or sister thinks that a food is unclean, and believe me, there are still Christians who won't eat pork because the Jews were told not to eat pork. And you might have met some, and you might have even have come from some of that background yourself. It still exists. He says, listen, if they think that something is unclean and should not be eaten, well, it would be wrong for them to eat it. Why?

Because it would violate their conscience. And Paul is a big proponent of not violating our conscience in these gray areas, you know. Don't try to get somebody to violate their conscience. Hey, there's nothing wrong with pork. Come on, grow up.

We're having, you know, pork ribs. You can eat them. You'll be just fine. Now, I'm not going to say that to a brother whose faith is weak and whose conscience could be violated. And so, he, that would, because that would cause my brother to stumble.

That's the point. Don't cause your brother to stumble with a weak conscience. And then later on, you know, you're going to go to hell. And, you know, and you and I know he's not going to go to hell. But the point is, he thinks so.

We've caused him to stumble. That's on me. Okay? That's on me. I got to be careful.

I got to be careful not to push, you know, my freedom. I got to be careful not to push my freedom. I got to be careful not to push, you know, my freedom on somebody else who considers it wrong. Verse 15, he says, 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.

And again, again, we don't often come across people who are abstaining from certain foods, although it does still happen. It doesn't happen very often. So, you may need to think about other things that people are concerned about that may be against, you know, their conscience, something they consider wrong that, you know, you have the freedom to do. Paul says in verse 16, so do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. And what he's saying here is this, your freedom will ultimately be spoken of as evil if you use your freedom to hurt a brother or sister.

Okay? And that basically means don't let your freedom become something that is spoken badly about. Your freedom should be a good thing. Okay? And then Paul reminds us of a very important truth in verse 17, for the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness.

It's about peace. It's about joy in the Holy Spirit. And he says, whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So, then, let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. And let's stop trying to tear people down by what we believe or what we think.

And so, if I elevate the exercise of my freedom above the heart and conscience of my brother or sister, I've lost touch with what the kingdom of God is all about. Did you hear me? I said, if I elevate my freedom above my brothers and sisters, then I have lost touch of what the kingdom of God is all about. And honestly, I'll tell you something, this issue has become even more of a problem with social media. Social media.

Yeah. When I see a social media post by a believer who's raising a cup of a glass of beer or a cup of a glass of wine, and they're toasting or something at dinner, and they have alcohol or whatever, I think to myself, I don't judge them from the standpoint that that's wrong. Because you do know, right, that the Bible does not forbid the drinking of alcohol. What it forbids is drunkenness. Okay?

So, here's the deal. There are a lot of people out there who believe that any consumption of alcohol of any kind is wrong. And so, you, as a mature believer who understand that you have certain freedoms to have like a glass of wine with dinner for Example, you understand that, and that's fine. So I have a glass of wine with dinner. Just don't take a picture and post it on social media because you've got brothers and sisters who A, think it's wrong, and B, can't go there because they've got a past of alcoholism or what the Bible calls drunkenness, okay?

They can't have a glass of wine, but they're gonna look at you and know that you're a believer and they could be possibly emboldened and that could cause them to slip back into an addictive lifestyle. See, these are things we don't think about. We just post our pictures and we think it's no big deal. But like Paul said, you're not an island unto yourself and even less so with social media. Everybody sees what everybody's doing.

So do you care about your brother who can't drink or do you care about your sister who believes that drinking is wrong but who's following you on Facebook? Paul says, if I use my freedom to cause a brother or sister to stumble, that's on me. I gotta care. I have to care. And that's something that we don't particularly like to hear because we're Americans and we relish our freedom.

We love our freedom, I'm free. And then when we learn that we're free in Christ, we even got more freedoms than the Constitution talks about. And I've got other freedoms too and I'm free to do this and I'm free to do that. Yeah, you are, you're free, but don't let your freedom, first of all, be a cover up for sin and don't let it stumble your brother. Paul says, look at what he says in verse 20.

Do not for the sake of food, and I'll throw in drink, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats or drinks or whatever, right? And so you can see that the message is fairly clear. And by the way, in case you're wondering, when Paul says everything is clean, well, how do we know everything is clean other than the fact that Paul says everything is clean? Well, Jesus said it.

Is that a good enough authority for you? Let me show you a passage on the screen from Mark chapter seven. It goes like this. And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him

about the parable, and he said to them, then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him since it enters not his heart, but his stomach and is expelled?

Look what it says parenthetically. Thus, he declared all foods clean. Are all foods clean? Clean is an Old Testament term, and I should be careful, let's say appropriate or available. The Bible in the Old Testament called things unclean.

There were clean and unclean things. Jesus declared all food clean. You know that. Some people don't. So be careful around your brother.

Doesn't mean you have to limit yourself at home, but be careful around your brother or around your sister. And that is the point because look what Paul says in verse 21. Here's his determination. In verse 21, he says, it's good not to eat meat or to drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. And he's not talking about never doing it like in the privacy of your home.

He's talking about in front of your brother where it's gonna be an issue or on social media, even though you may be in the privacy of your home. If you put it on social media, it's not in the privacy of your home. It's in the public forum. Don't do it there. Don't do it.

And that's okay. We can do that. We can lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters in Jesus, right? That's the example Jesus gave to you and me. He laid down his life for us.

We're to do that for them without getting, you know, an attitude. So he's basically saying here, it's better to love your brother than to exercise your freedom in front of him and to cause him problems. He says in verse 22, the faith that you have, and what he means is the freedom, the mature faith that you have and the freedom that comes with that faith, he says, keep between yourself and God. That means keep it private in the sense of in your own home. You want to exercise things that some people think are wrong, but it's a gray area, a disputable matter, or as the new King James says, a doubtful thing?

Then do it at home. Keep it between you and the Lord, right? That's the point of what he's saying. Don't force what you believe on those who aren't ready for those kind of revelations. Middle of verse 22, he says, blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.

In other words, you may have the freedom, but don't be a jerk. You know? And cause yourself judgment by demanding that everyone around you think exactly like you do. We do that sometimes. We want people to, you know, you need to think like me.

Last verse, verse 23. But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats because the eating is not from faith. And that means if I try to convince my brother that it's fine to have those pork chops, and I force him, I kind of, you know, bully him into doing what he thinks is wrong, he's no longer acting out of faith. Okay? Why is he acting?

He's acting out of obligation or because he's being bullied or pressure. He's not acting out of faith anymore. And look what the last statement is that Paul makes in this last verse. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. Now guys, remember something.

You might ask yourself the question, how can something be a sin for someone and not for somebody else? You gotta understand, sin simply means missing the mark. That's the literal definition of the word. So all Paul is saying here is that whatever doesn't proceed from faith misses the mark. It comes from some other sense of obligation or pressure or whatever, and that misses the mark because that's not how we're supposed to live.

We're supposed to live by faith. The righteous shall live by faith. We're supposed to be prompted by faith and have belief and faith. I sit down with that big huge burger and I think I got faith. Now this is just fine.

A little bit of a joke. But you know what I'm saying. If it doesn't come from faith, he says, it misses the mark for that person. And that's why it can be a sin for him. And frankly, it's a sin for you too if your conscience is going against it.

So if someone is troubled about taking some kind of direction or form of action, that tells you that they're not acting out of faith. If they say, I don't know if I should take this head covering off. Well, that's not faith. They have their doubts. Leave them alone.

Leave them alone. Let the Lord deal with it. He'll handle it. We should do things because we feel the freedom and approval to do them by faith. I trust, this is okay.

The Lord, you know, yeah, I have faith. So again, this kind of brings to the forefront this whole issue of the conscience, which is, you know, that inner moral compass that you got to be careful not to violate. Don't violate your conscience because the Holy Spirit works through your conscience. And he uses that, you know, to kind of direct your course. And so you don't want to violate that tool of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, all people have a conscience, but yours is activated and used by the Holy Spirit. And that's an even greater source of direction and wisdom for you. So, chapter 14, amen? Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much.

Even though this chapter, Lord, was really all about just kind of one main theme that is laid out here, we trust that we've heard your voice tonight and that we've recognized the wisdom that the Apostle Paul is laying out in this chapter about caring for one another and the essence of what Christian relationships should look like. Father, I pray that you would help us to care more and more for our brothers and sisters in Christ to truly care about what they think and to be careful not to cause anyone to stumble. We thank you, Father, for the grace that you give us every day. We thank you for the freedoms that we have in Jesus. We praise you for those freedoms.

Help us, Lord, never to use those freedoms as a coverup for sin or a cause of stumbling. We thank you and praise you in Jesus' precious name and all God's people said together, amen. Amen. you