

## Everything that does not come from faith is sin 《Ro 14:19-23》

*Prelude:* Apostle Paul said, “The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus”. In fact, faith and love are two of the most fundamental dispositions in our Christian faith. Faith assures us that all love comes from God, and is done before God. Love also enables us to testify our faith. These two are the abundant grace given us in Christ, and they ought to be understood and pursued by us the whole life. In the beginning of <Ro 14>, Paul discussed matters concerning mutual love between brethren. For we live in a world of sin, and we interact with sinners everyday, therefore, surely there is a certain level of challenge in loving one another. In particular, as we encounter a new relationship (relationship of brethren) in Christ where no bloodlines are involved, this mutual love is thus purely born from the precious blood of Christ. Hence, as we love one another in Truth, we could easily have divisions (the matter concerning food is mentioned here) when we face differences. When we talk about the smallest matter, we will discover the deep spiritual meaning behind it. Firstly, through a small matter like this, demon will activate the sinful nature in us (the heart that lacks love, and disobedience), causing destruction to brethren relationship. Here, people loved by the Lord will realize that the training of love starts. Actually, love is not merely about receiving mentally, it requires practical sacrifice (lay down our lives for brothers), just as our Lord who laid down his life for us <1 Jn 3:16>. The result of such sacrifice is **【peace and mutual edification】**. This is the fruit of love. Besides, in the end of <Ro 14>, Paul shifted the entire discussion on love to faith, for a man still need to face God in all he does. Whether he eats or not (or doing certain things), **【if they do not come from faith, they are sin】**. Indeed, this sentence gives us deepest understanding of sin. Often, we assume that sin confines to the letter of Bible and the standard the Bible brings (right vs wrong, can or cannot), but this actually touches the depth of our hearts and bring us to introspect if we really do all things facing the Lord. Faith brings action, but action is unable to reveal the depth of the spirit completely. Here it also says: some people eat while some don't, but are all done in the presence of the Lord, relying on His faithfulness. If no, the Bible said it is sin. Hence, when we teach about loving men and the good examples of love, we should never drift apart from the conscience in God. We could have fulfilled some Christian moral standard in some things that we do, but do we do them according to the faith in Christ and the promise given by God? Therefore, the motive and attitude behind every thing we do is apparent before God. If we are not upright or unclear, we will not be able to please God. May God teach us not to lose the godliness of depending on the Lord in our inner hearts as we love people, for that is more precious in the eyes of God.

### 1. Make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification 《14:19-21》

#### 1) Peace and mutual edification

① Peace carries the meaning of “Shalom” (harmony, peace). Although there are a lot of frictions and divisions as we live among brethren, we still need to be careful not to destroy the peace between believers. Once we lose the peace, suspicious and enmity will follow. Such relationship will not be constructive, not to mention co-working. If the strong always “shake his head” as he faces the weak, the weak will then respond pessimistically, and newcomers may be stumbled by such atmosphere. Hence, we need to make every effort to do what leads to peace, and safeguard the heart of harmony. No matter what, we still need to learn a truth – “the peace that comes from waiting the weak” triumphs “the divisions arises from debating right vs wrong”.

② Mutual edification is a necessary purpose in brethren relationship, it means to enable all parties to receive benefits. To believers, it is most important that faith grows, next is the growth of love. Actually, all blessings are bestowed when these 2 aspects are fulfilled. Hence, everytime as we gather, we need to attain these results. When men live together, they will also influence one another. At times, the weak brethren cannot live out the message preached on the pulpit, but through the encouragement, reminder, testimonies, and examples set by other brethren, they may be strengthened and built up in love and faith. In view of this, the interactions between the brethren are most crucial. Without it, saints can hardly attain the benefit of blessing “one another”.

#### 2) The simple principles established for the the sake of attaining peace and mutual edification

① **Do not destroy the work of God** (the most important thing in God's eyes) for the sake of food (the most trivial and common thing) – Indeed, the faith of believers and the unity of church are important work of God, they are built by God's Truth, prayers, and time of many. To Roman believers, Paul told them to never jeopardize the health of congregation with their satisfaction of stomachs. To us, we ought to be careful not to let our preference, interest, desire, or the deemed good, to destroy the work of God.

② **All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble** – here it tells us that, what is clean will become unclean in certain situation. Objectively speaking, all food is clean, but if we don't think so, yet being pressured by men and circumstances, then it is an unclean act if we eat the food. Besides, if by eating certain food (or by doing certain things) we may weaken the faith of our brethren towards God, the action lacking in love will make us unclean even if we are receiving food that is rightfully clean. Hence, the attitude and motive which we receive are most crucial.

③ **It is better not to do anything that will cause your brother to fall** – as there are multitude of complex background and beliefs between men, it is best to embrace a vigilant attitude in handling disputable matters. If they may lead to divisions, it is best not to do. This is not to play safe, rather, it is because we care to love, thus we choose to act in love. If we love, we will not feel the injustice, and the heart that we embrace in doing them will be pleasing to the Lord. If our hearts treat our brethren with contempt, and we do out of obedience to the law, then we have problem in our faith – this is also what the following scriptures attempt to resolve.

### 2. Everything that does not come from faith is sin 《14:22-23》

#### 1) So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God

\* This tells us that although our Christian faith is centered on the Biblical standard, in our daily living, the can or cannot in the disputable matters are between ourselves and God. Each of us have a conscience from our faith; because we have believed in God's Word, we feel that certain things are do-able, while others are not. Especially in disputable matters, if our faith tells us certain things are do-able, we should exercise them as in God's presence, keeping them between ourselves and God, and we do not need to boast about our faith, neither do we impose on others. If not, this may also suggest we have an unassured heart before God, or we seek our personal gains. Therefore, in every matter that we do, God sees the deepest motive inside us despite no one is seeing, is that motive towards God or man? That motive comes from the freedom we enjoy in God, or we want others to approve of the freedom we have? We should always reflect if do we do out of faith in God, or due to other motives?

## 2) Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves

\* Actually, the entire being of a person has another layer invisible to the naked eyes – the motivation and attitude beneath his living. This determines if a person act in line with God and thus bold and fearless before God, or he acts to satisfy the desires of his flesh, and thus condemning self.

⊕ Before a person knows the salvation of Christ, his heart and mind do not have God, not to mention the idea of wanting to please God. At that time, men do all things according to his conscience, obligations, or circumstances, all are to satisfy his own flesh. Hence, he cannot be deemed as blessed, for he acts according to the desires of the flesh and not by faith (in God's presence). Despite the good deeds, only God sees through the motive in his inner heart, which aims to accumulate karma, good results, or progressions – they often carry selfish intent, and these are apparent to God who searches our hearts and examine our mind.

⊗ Besides, to a person who has now worshipped God, he also needs to examine if his heart is obeying God and not his own personal desires (desire, likings, or ideals) in all he does. Often, when we do good not facing God, our hearts will have subtle rebuke. This is akin: my kid wants to volunteer in school tomorrow, but I have instructed him to tidy his room before going. But he continues to let it be, therefore, I warn him that if he does not tidy up his room, he is not allowed to go tomorrow. In the end, he is forced to tidy his room, in order to volunteer in school. Try thinking: he seemed to have obeyed me by tidying his room, and has indeed gone to volunteer in school. But in all that he does, it does not have the motivation of obeying his father, so they are not good deeds in my eyes.

\*\* From another angle, what is more important than the action itself is the conscience and motivation behind. Sometimes, we may do all good deeds (keeping Sabbath, tithes, serving, visitations, caring for others etc) and thus satisfy the moral ethics of a Christian, but if we do not do out of obedience to God, and the attitude lacks joy, we may easily have the heart of lamentation towards God. Thus the bible exhorts us not to condemn ourselves in all that we do, in particular in disputable matters. If we do out of clear conscience, and the motive is of loving God and men, we will not condemn ourselves in our hearts – the bible said such person is indeed blessed.

## 3) But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats

\* Here, the Bible integrates the idea of sin with the conscience. Generally, we will assume that it is sin if we do what God prohibits (eg: adultery, theft); if we go one step further to understand, it will be what this scripture says – if we do not consider our brother's faith and do, and thus stumbling him, this is also sin (the sin of not loving man); but people rarely understand sin as doing something that contradicts our conscience. Today, we need to have a deeper understanding of the spirit. Although our conscience is not flawless (what we accept as right and wrong is not absolute), the bible has clearly instructed us not to offend it. This is because when our conscience cannot accept certain things (eg: eating certain food, going to certain places, or speak certain things etc), then who are we doing them for? They are not done in the context of loving and depending on God, rather, we do because we feel pressured by men or circumstances – we are seeking for man's approval, instead of obeying the will of God. When we act this way, we will give room to the devil. Often, as we do out of men's pressure or influence, we will be easily regretful if we encounter bad consequences after.

## 4) Everything that does not come from faith is sin

\* This sentence is possibly one that gives the most vivid and insightful definition about sin, because it reveals the root of the mentalities and action of all sins – not according to the faith in the Lord. Actually, the matters of eating and drinking do not define sin, instead, the spirit before God as one eats or drinks defines sin. Why do we not eat or drink in love? Why does the slightest matter destroy the work of God? This is because it is not from faith that all these are done. Certainly, to a non-believer, he has yet to born again, he cannot do for the Lord and rely on Him by faith. Hence, no matter how great is the thing he has done, it can never please God. However, to us who are in Christ, when we doubt our Lord's promise and do certain things out of goodwill, that does not please the Lord. Try thinking, when I face critical situation, a good friend tells me, "hey friend, I assure you in my reputation and my everything that I will help you through this ordeal," but if I reject or even decline him, is it not a great sin to his character and dignity? If that friend is very dignified and faithful (eg leader of a nation), am I then not committing a great sin? Hence, when God gives us His promise and tells us, "you will receive the most perfect blessings in me", or "you can just eat and drink freely", and if we doubt God, certainly He will not be pleased. The faithless heart will eventually lead us into doing things according to our own motive, and hoping in our ideal outcomes. Eventually, this is not glorifying God. We also need to understand: in this, sin is not confined to God's law. Sin is not about not murdering, not committing adultery nor in the boundaries of theft, instead, the scope has expanded to whether we are doing according to the faith in Lord (do by acknowledging the Lord). Hence, it is sin to stay at home on Sabbath, it is potentially also a sin to go to church on Sabbath; accumulating without offering is sin (stealing that which belongs to God), but offering is also sin (being pressured, or not giving willingly); extramarital affair is sin, but the sin between spouse or rejecting sex could also be sin. Here, we are not trying to enter into an overly sensitive state about sin, but we need to know sin all over again, so that we can pursue to do all things by faith in our living. When we do not act by depending on God, it carries our own motivation and calculation, that does not glorify God, neither is it pleasing to Him.

## 凡不出于信心的都是罪 《罗 14:19-23》

序论：使徒保罗说：“我主的恩典是格外丰盛，使我在基督耶稣里有信心和爱心”。事实上，信心和爱心是我们基督信仰里两样最主要的性质。信心使我们确定一切的爱是从神而来，也向着神而行，爱心又是叫我们的信心能被验证。这两者都是神在基督里所赐予我们的丰盛恩典，也是我们一生在基督里要认识与追求的。在《罗 14》一开始，保罗谈到有关与肢体在一起相爱的事。这相爱有它一定的挑战，因为我们活在一个有罪的世界，天天与有罪的人相处。特别，当我们在基督里面对一个新的关系（肢体关系），这背后没有血缘关系，也没有相似的背景，所以这个的相爱纯粹是来自基督的宝血。所以，在这真实的相爱中，我们一定会面对两者不一样而容易产生的分歧（在这里讲说食物）。当我们谈到这最小的事情时，我们会发现背后有很深的属灵意义。首先，通过这小事，魔鬼要引发我们里头的罪性（没有爱与不顺从之心），带来给肢体之间的关系破裂。在此，蒙受主爱的子民就会发现爱心的操练就出现了。原来，爱不是单单精神上的接受，乃是实际要作出牺牲的（为弟兄舍命），如同主为我们牺牲《约壹 3:16》。那么，这牺牲所带来的结果就是彼此的【和睦与建立德行】之事。这就是爱心所结出来的果子了。另外，在《罗 14》的结束，保罗将整个对爱心的说法转移到有关信心的道理，因为人最终还是要面对神来行一切的事。无论是吃或不吃（行或不行某事），【若不是出于信心的都是罪】。确实，这句话带给我们对罪最深沉的认识。往往，我们都认为罪是限制在圣经字句里面所给与的水准（是非能否），但这句话将我们带到内心的深处，让我们反思我们所做的一切是否是认定神而做的。确实，信心带来行为，但行为无法完全显露人的心灵深处。就好比说：有些人吃，有些人不吃，但这是向着主所做，是信靠主的信实而做的吗？倘若不，圣经说那就是罪了。所以，今天当我们讲到有关爱人的教导与榜样，我们千万不要将专注转离我们面对神的良心。可能有时我们在外表的行事上都满足了一个基督徒道德指标，但那是借着对基督的信心与对神所赐的应许而做的吗？所以，我们做一样事情背后的动机与心态是唯有神看得清清楚楚的。倘若我们这方面不正直或不清晰，我们便不能蒙神喜悦。愿神教导我们在爱人的事上不失去内心信靠主而带有的敬虔。那在神眼中是被视为更可贵的事。

### 1. 追求和睦和彼此建立德行之事 《14:19-21》

#### 1) 和睦与建立德行

① 和睦的意思带有“沙龙”的意思（平安，和平）。纵然在肢体生活当中会有许多摩擦与分歧的事情产生，我们总要小心不要破坏信徒之间的和睦。因为当和睦一失去了，下面来的就是怀疑与敌意。这样的关系根本不能带来任何建设性，更不能带来同工了。倘若坚固的人总是对软弱者带着“摇头”的心态，软弱者因此消极的反应，新来的肢体也会因这样的气氛跌倒。为此，我们在这方面要积极的追求，保守和睦之心。所以，无论如何，我们还是要学习一个真理，就是“等待软弱者所带来的和睦”总胜于“争议是非而带来的分歧”。

② 彼此建立德行是肢体关系中一个很必要的目的。这话的意思是让彼此得益处。对信徒而言，最重要就是信心的增长，另外就是爱心的成长了。其实，一切的恩福是在这两方面的临到而赐下的。所以，圣民每次的相处是一定要取得这样的果效。确实，当人生活在一起，我们是彼此影响的。有时，软弱的肢体暂且无法行出讲台所传讲的话语，但是透过旁边肢体的勉励、提醒、见证与设下的榜样，他们会被坚强，在信心与爱心上得造就。因为这点，圣民之间的交流是极其重要的。倘若没有交流与交换信心的经历，圣民很难取得在此“彼此”祝福的功效。

#### 2) 为取得和睦与建立德行的事上所设定的简单原则

① 不可因食物（最小或最普通的事）毁坏神的工程（在神眼中最重要的事） - 确实，信徒的信心与教会的合一都被视为神的工程，是借着神的道，在透过多人的祷告与时间来建立的。对罗马信徒而言，保罗告诉他们绝不能将肚腹的满足放在教会群体的健康之上。对我们而言，我们要谨慎不让我们的喜好、兴趣、欲望、或是我们暂且认为的良好原则来破坏神的工程。

② 万物固然洁净，但有人因食物叫人跌倒，就是他的罪了 - 在此告诉我们洁净的事物在某些情况中会成为不洁净的。若是客观来说所有食物是洁净的，但若我因认为是不洁净的，却因为人或情况的压力而领受，那在领受那食物上便成为了不洁净的举动了。另外，若我在吃某些食物（或说做某些事）会造成肢体对神的信心削弱，那没有爱的举动就叫我在领受那洁净的食物为不洁净的。所以，我们领受的心态与动机是最关键的。

③ 只要是叫肢体跌倒的事，一概不做才好 - 因为人与人之间有个别错中复杂的背景与信念，我们最好在此多以谨慎的心态来面对疑惑之事。若是会带来分歧的，我们一概不做是最好。那不是安全起见的心态，乃是借着爱人的考量，选择在爱中行事。若是爱，就不会有冤屈，做的心也蒙主喜悦。若是带着厌弃肢体之心，然后将此话当做律法来遵守，那就是信心出现了问题。这也是圣经在下一段落要解决的问题。

### 2. 凡不出于信心的都是罪 《14:22-23》

#### 1) 你有信心，就当在神面前守着

\* 这句话告诉我们虽然基督徒的信仰是以圣经为准则，但在生活当中有许多疑惑之事的能否是我们个人与神之间的事。确实，我们每个人都有信心所带来的良心。我们因为信了神的话，认为有些事可行，有些不可行。特别在疑惑之事，倘若我们坚强的信念告诉我们某些事是可行的，我们就当在神面前守着，不需夸耀我们的信心，也

更不需强加于别人。若非如此，这也很有可能显示我们自己在神面前得不着确定的心，或是要达成某些自己私人的意思。所以，每个人在行一件事，要知道虽他人看不到，但神却是看得到我们里头那最深的动机，而那动机是向着神还是向着人，是享受我们在主面前的自由，还是要人认同我们的自由？所以我们要反省自己是因对神的信心而做，还是因另有其他目的而做？

## 2) 人在自己所行的事上能不自责，就有福了

\* 其实，人的整个行事为人是同时有另一个层面，是肉眼看不到的，那就是他行事为人背后的心态与动机。这断定人所行的是向神而行，因此向神坦然不惧；或是带有满足自己肉体的动机而行，以致受自责。

① 其实，当人还未认识基督的救恩时，他的心思意念里没有神，也没有讨他喜悦的信念。人那时所谓按良心行事、按责任行事，或是按情况行事，都是在满足自己的肉体。所以，他不被称为有福的，因为是随从肉体而行的，不是借着（对神的）信心而行。所以，纵然一个还未信主之人很积极的要行善，但唯有神是看到他内心里的动机，可能是要累积功德、取得功德圆满，或是力求上进，或是总总私人的意思，这都是察看与试验人心的神看见的。

② 另外，对于一个已经信奉神的人，他在所行的事上也必须试验自己的内心是否是遵行神，不是体贴自己的情欲（欲望、爱好、理想）。往往，当我们信徒行出善事却不向神而行，我们心里也存有很微妙的自责。这就好比说：我的孩子明天想到学校做义工，但我嘱咐他先将房间打理好了才去。但他继续不打理房间，我便给他警告说若房间没打理，明天不能去。最后他不得以打理了，所以才被容许到学校去做义工。试想：他似乎听了我的话打理房间，也的确是到学校做义工行善，但他做这一切的动机里毫无听从父亲的意思，所以虽做了但在我眼中并非善行。  
\*\* 因此，从某一个角度来看，信徒行事的良心与动机比所行的事更加重要。有时，我们有可能满足基督徒弟道德礼仪的一切善行（守主日、奉献、侍奉、探访人、关怀肢体等），但若是心里没有确定是遵行神而做，我们做这些事的心态不喜乐，也很容易会向主发出怨言。所以，圣经说我们要在所行的事上不自责，尤其是疑惑之事，若我们通过无愧的良心与爱神爱人的动机而行，心里便毫无自责。圣经清楚说这人就有福了。

## 3) 若有疑心而吃的，就必有罪

\* 在此，圣经清楚将罪的观念与良心的事结合造一起。一般上，我们都认为若行了神的话所禁止的事（例如：奸淫、偷盗）就是罪；若是在进到更深沉的认识，就是此经文所说到若我们不考虑弟兄的信心而行，以致叫他绊倒的也是罪（这是不爱人的罪）；但很少人明白违背良心而行的必有罪。今天，我们要对心灵之事有更深沉的认识。纵然我们的良心不是绝对无误（我们现在所接纳的对错不是绝对的），但圣经清楚指示我们不可侵犯它。这是因为当我们的良心还不能通过做某件事（例如：吃某些食物、去某些地方、说有些话等），试问我们是因谁而做的？那不是因爱神与信靠神的心而做的，乃是因有些人或情况所带给我们的压力而做的，所以在此是要得着人的称许，不是遵照神的旨意而行。当我们这样行，就会让那恶者有机可乘。所以，往往我们因受到人的压力或影响做了某些事，后面便很容易因遇到了不良的后果而感到后悔。

## 4) 凡不出于信心的都是罪

\* 这句话可能是在圣经里对罪最真切与渗透的定义了。这是因为它将一切罪恶的心态与举动的根源明确指出，那就是不按着对主的信心而出发的。原来，罪恶不是以吃喝的事来断定的，乃是以他吃喝时在心灵对神的信从而断定的。为什么吃喝不按着爱心行呢？为什么在做这样简单的事会拆毁神的工程呢？理由是因为在做那事的时候不出于信心。当然，对一个非信徒而言，他还未重生，所以根本不能借着信心为主与靠主做。所以，他所行再伟大的事也不能达到神的喜悦。但是，对我们在主里的信徒而言，当我们怀疑主的应许与良善来行某些事，那本不是主所喜悦的。试想，若我遇到急难之事，有一位好朋友告诉我说：“朋友，我以我的名誉和一切所有的来担保我一定帮助你度过难关”，若我不领情，甚至拒绝他的帮助，那岂不是对他的人格与尊严一种极大的得罪吗？倘若那朋友是越有尊荣与信实的（若是国家的领袖），我对他的得罪岂不是更大了。所以，当神将他的应许赐给我们，告诉我们说：“你在我里面一定会得蒙最美好的祝福”，或是“在这件事上你尽管自由的吃喝”，我若带着怀疑他的心来领受，那绝不是他所喜悦的。这样的不信之心最终一定是叫我按着自己的动机行事，也盼望自己所理想的结果。最终，那就是毫无荣耀祂之心了。另外，我们还要明白说：若按此而言，罪也不限制在神的律法了。罪在此的定义已不限制在不杀人，不犯奸淫，不偷盗的范围里了。反而，那范围是扩大到有否靠那对主的信心而行（认定主而行）。所以，主日留在家是罪，主日上教会也可能是罪；积攒而不奉献是罪（偷取那属神的），但奉献也可能是罪（受压力或不是甘心乐意的）；婚外情是罪，但夫妇之间的性爱或拒绝性爱也都有可能是罪。在此，我们并不是要将信徒带入一种对罪过分猜疑的光景，但我们要重新对罪了解，以至我们在过信仰生活时，总是要追求那凡事出于信心的行事。因为一旦不出于信心依靠主的，那就带有人自我的动机与谋算在里头，那不荣耀神，也不蒙主所喜悦。

