

Stumbling Blocks Romans 14:13-18

It is important to remember the context of our text. Any text taken out of its context is nothing but a pretext. Paul's theme in this chapter is "*accept him who is weak*" (v.1). We are to accept our brother who knows Christ because God has made him accepted. This acceptance of your weak brother means that you always do what is best for him. "*The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Rom. 14:17).

I. I refuse to do something that would cause my weaker brother to stumble.

To stumble has the idea of "tripping" in one's walk with Christ. Your conduct causes a brother in Christ to doubt the reality of God's transforming grace. The illustration used in the text is one of "eating meat" that has been offered to idols. The pagan priests used the proceeds from the sale of meat offered at the temples as salary.

(A). I know my righteousness is not obtained by my actions . . . (v.14).

I can eat meat sacrificed to an idol because I am persuaded it is not "unclean."

(B). I will not flaunt my freedom to the detriment of my weaker brother (v.15).

I will abstain from a particular practice "for the good of my weaker brother."

(C). For I seek to encourage, strengthen, and lift up others by my actions (v.15).

This is Paul's ultimate conclusion, "*Therefore, let us do things that edify*" (v.19).

Therefore, I am constantly asking myself, "How can I draw attention to Christ?"

II. I recognize I am the weaker brother when I judge others as "unspiritual."

This is the whole theme of Paul's writing --- "*accept your brother.*" It is not my job to measure the spirituality of those around me. It is my job to encourage them to see Christ and His righteousness as the basis for their hope, joy and contentment.

(A). I accept the brother who has convictions different than mine.

This is the highest form of spiritual strength. We are accepted in Christ Jesus.

(B). I am willing to adapt my convictions for the good of others.

Commandments are to be obeyed. Convictions are flexible boundaries. Paul would have refrained from eating meat around those who had an offense with it, but he would have enjoyed the meat offered to idols with those who enjoyed it.

Paul said, "*I become all things to all people that I might win some*" (I Cor. 9:22).

(C). I avoid the temptation to major on the minors and minor on the majors.

The major teaching of Scripture is the doctrine of justification by God's grace.

I refuse to take issue with people who understand the truth but live differently.

III. I rejoice when my brother and I live at peace with one another serving Christ.

A number of problems within a marriage, a church or a family could be resolved if God's people practiced the above principles. Peace and harmony are good things.

"Let us therefore follow after things which make for peace" (Romans 14:19).

I respect the strengths, accept the weaknesses, and enjoy the differences in others.

May God give us the grace to remove the stumbling blocks that cause others to miss Christ. May God focus me on the boundaries I need, and accept others as they are.