

“Don’t Be a Stumbling Block to Others”

Romans 14:13-23

*“Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead
Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in a brother’s way.” (14:13)*

Paul’s main focus in ch. 12 and on is how believers in Christ should walk in love (12:9-10; 13:8-10) because of their love for God. We are to be living sacrifices, daily putting to death those sinful areas in our life which want to rise on top. In 14:1-12 Paul dealt with the issue of eating certain foods that some felt were ‘clean’ while others did not. Some ‘meat-eaters’ looked down on meat-abstainers while some meat-abstainers condemned meat-eaters as if they lacked faith. This is not love. So Paul says we’re not in the place of judging; actually, we’ll be judged for judging! Vv.1-12 deal with how to decide on these issues (are you convinced before God it is fine [v.5] and can you thank God for it [v.6]?) and now vv.13-23 deals with how we live with each other if we differ.

“Don’t Be a Stumbling Block”

(14:13-18)

Who does Paul say should set the example here? The stronger or weaker brother?

14:13 “Therefore let us stop passing _____ on one another. Instead make up your _____ not to put a stumbling block or obstacle in your _____ way”

A stumbling block or obstacle to what specifically?

The word ‘make up your mind’ is the same word as ‘pass judgment’ [krino]. When are we to do this? What does that imply?

We have a tendency to focus on the issues. How does Paul deal with ‘the issues’?

14:14a “As one who is in the Lord Jesus I am fully _____ that no food is _____ in itself.”

Is he alone in this thinking or does he have biblical support?

Mark 7:17-23

Acts 10:9-15

1 Cor. 10:25-26

So then how come some people differ as to what is ‘clean’ or ‘unclean’?

14:14b “But if anyone _____ something as unclean to him it is _____.”

Paul stresses that the stronger brother must be sensitive to the ones who do not feel they the same liberty on some issues. What happens when ‘stronger’ believers don’t think about others when exercising their freedoms?

14:15 “If your brother is _____ because of what you eat you are no longer acting in _____. Do not, by your eating _____ your brother for whom Christ died.”

In what sense can we ‘destroy’ a fellow believer?

What does Paul anticipate happening if the ‘strong’ believer is insensitive about exercising his freedom?

14:16 “Don’t allow what you consider to be _____ to be spoken of as _____.” [lit. “blasphemed”]

Now Paul appeals to the ‘bigger picture’ in vv.17-18. Why is this so important?

14:17 “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of _____, _____ and _____ in the Holy Spirit because anyone who serves Christ in this way is _____ to God and _____ by men.”

How does Eph. 4:32-5:2 challenge us to do the same?

4:32 “Be _____ and _____ to one another, _____ each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

5:1 “Be imitators of God as dearly _____ children

5:2 “and live a life of _____ just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up _____ us as a fragrant offering and _____ to God.”

“Instead Be a Building Block!” **(14:19-23)**

Paul knows negative commands need to be reinforced with positive ones. What should we be doing instead?

14:19 “Let us make _____ effort to do what leads to _____ and to mutual _____.”

Note how Paul uses the Greek word ‘dioko’ [‘make every effort’] elsewhere.

Phil. 3:12 “Not that I have already obtained all this but I _____ On to take hold of that which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”

Phil. 3:14 “I _____ on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me _____ in Christ Jesus.”

Paul’s word for ‘edification’ is literally “build up”. This is also a key focus for Paul and every church.

Eph. 4:16 “From Him (Christ) the whole _____ joined and held together by every _____ ligament grows and _____ itself up in _____ as each part does its work.”

What happens when we don’t build each other up?

14:20 “Do not destroy the _____ of God for the sake of food. All food is clean but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to _____.”

14:21 “It is better not to eat meat or drink _____ or to do _____ else that will cause your brother to ____.” [stumble]

So how should a ‘strong’ believer exercise and enjoy his freedoms in Christ?

14:22 “So whatever you believe about these things keep between _____ and God. Blessed is the one who does not _____ himself by what he approves.”

Paul also issues a warning to the believer who is not sure about some of these freedoms.

14:23 “But the one who has _____ is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from _____ and everything that does not come from faith is _____.”

Here is what it boils down to – the exercise of our faith. What can we be guilty of if we are insensitive in exercising our freedoms?

What must the ‘weaker’ believer be careful of when seeing a believer exercise their freedom in something he/she is not sure they can do yet?

[The Bible verses quoted are from the NIV 1984 edition © International Bible Society]

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