

ROMANS 14:14-23

Paul continues in this chapter to instruct those who are strong brethren as to their proper and godly conduct toward their weak brethren. It is one of love and edification that seeks the salvation of another, not carnal, divisive attitudes that destroy souls. Under no circumstance are we to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way (v. 13)

"Stumbling block" (Gk. proskomma) – an obstacle causing stumbling, offense

"A cause to fall" (Gk. skandalon) – a snare, trigger of a trap, cause for error

I) Pursuing Love, Peace, and Edification (14:14-23)

- A) Paul was convinced that there was nothing unclean of itself (1 Tim. 4:4; Col. 2:16; Acts 10:9-16); knowledge of truth informed his strong conviction
 - 1) But to him who considers anything unclean, it is unclean [scruple of personal conscience]
 - 2) If a brother is grieved because of my food [led to sin by violating his conscience], I am no longer walking in love – must not destroy with my food one for whom Christ died (1 Cor. 8:11)
 - 3) Do not let your good [eating all things] be spoken of as evil [selfish disregard for a brother's conscience] (1 Cor. 10:23, 30)
 - a) Kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit – spiritual concerns are greater than earthly concerns (1 Cor. 10:31, 33)
 - b) Giving priority to spiritual concerns is acceptable to God and approved by men
- B) Pursue the things which make for peace and things by which one may edify another
 - 1) Do not destroy work of God [weak brother, Eph. 2:10] for the sake of food
 - 2) All food may be pure, but evil to purposefully cause offense by it (1 Cor. 8:12)
 - 3) Good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything to cause a brother to stumble, be offended, or be made weak (appeal to humility, selflessness, patience, understanding, love; 1 Cor. 8:13; 10:32)
- C) Do not violate your personal faith before God ("faith" = personal conviction/conscience)
 - 1) Do not condemn yourself [in conscience] in what you may approve
 - a) If one doubts [in his conscience] about eating meat, and then goes ahead and eats meat [violates his conscience], this action is condemned – whatever actions are not "from faith" [personal conviction of what is right] is sin

Paul reveals the principle of truth that all should understand – there is nothing unclean of itself. Yet, some, because of their conscientious convictions, held scruples (opinions) that some, or all, meat was unclean. Instead of showing contempt and causing another to stumble, the strong brethren were to walk in love and not destroy their weak brethren in Christ. The kingdom of God highlights spiritual relationships above earthly differences. Brethren who differ on these matters must pursue the things that make for peace and unity, with understanding and love. They must avoid causing another to stumble, be offended, or made weak because of their obstinate, unloving attitude in matters that do not affect salvation and fellowship with God.

One is never to violate his own personal convictions. If one doubts in his conscience that his actions are correct, and then violates his conscience with his actions (not being "from faith" or personal conviction), it is sin. This is why it is so important to grow in spiritual knowledge and to be fully convinced in one's mind. It may be that we will change our convictions to match our ever-increasing knowledge of God's word, and we must act consistently with the convictions that we have at any given time.