

Liberty on a Tightrope

Romans 14:13-23



Our Outline for Today!

- The Correct Stance to Start With, verse 13
 - Two Extremes to Avoid – legalism and license.
 - How can we do it?
- Three Principles for Maintaining Balance, verses 14-20
 - Nothing Is Intrinsicly Unclean, verses 14-16
 - The Essence of Christianity Is Not Found in External, verses 17-19
 - When the Exercise of Christian Liberty Threatens to Hinder God's Work, it Should Be Restrained, verse 20

Our Outline for Today!

- Essential Ways for Guarding Against Stumbling, verses 21-23
 - Be Considerate, verse 21
 - Be Convinced, verse 22a
 - Be Consistent, verses 22b-23

A Footnote:

- **Two Extremes to Avoid** – legalism and license.
 - The first one threatens to place us under a strict, narrow set of rules and regulations.
 - The second urges us toward the bondage of self-centeredness and immorality

The Correct Stance To Start With,

vs 13

- **First, Don't Judge**
 - **Four areas not to judge:**
 - when a hypocrite, Matthew 7:1-5
 - Christian liberty, Romans 14:13
 - motives, 1 Corinthians 4:5
 - salvation, Acts 15:8
 - **What it means?**
 - Carnal, condemn, dismiss as unimportant

The Correct Stance To Start With, vs 13

- **Second, Don't Place an Obstacle or Stumbling Block in the Path**

- Stumble = a misstep or **opportunity** to do wrong.
- Stumbling block = you become a **cause** to sin or ruin. The trigger for a trap
- Now we should note that the context of this counsel does not concern legalists, but it does focus on how stronger Christians ought to treat weaker ones.
- Put another way, we can successfully traverse the tightrope of liberty when we seek a proper balance between self-control and a love for others.

Three Principles for Maintaining Balance, vss 14-20

- **First, Nothing Is Intrinsicly Unclean, vss 14-16**
 - **God created the universe good, Gen 1:31**
 - **It is still good, vs 14a; 1 Timothy 4:4**
 - **Not all can accept this fact, vs 14b**
 - If a good practice is considered unclean, it is to that one, unclean.
 - And this lack of acceptance affects and can hurt their walk if they do it anyway. NS

Three Principles for Maintaining Balance, vss 14-20

- A Practice which hurts others, reveals a lack of love, vss 15
 - Because it can hurt others
 - Hurt is word for: made sad, distressed, grieved.
 - Recognize a brother is more important than liberty.
 - The privilege in itself, now is used to ruin the one Christ love's.
- That which is useful, upright, good, is now reviled and defamed, verse 16
 - Paul does not deny the privilege, but that the believers growth in Christ is more important than the full exercise of freedom.

Three Principles for Maintaining Balance, vss 14-20

- **Second, The Essence of Christianity Is Not Found in Externals, verses 17-19**
 - What we should promote is: (vs 17)
 - Righteousness - obedience to the Word.
 - Peace - unruffled mind, unity, oneness.
 - Joy in Holy Spirit - contentment with circumstances.
 - When we exercise these qualities, it is acceptable to God, verse 18
 - Negatively, if our actions before certain individuals will not promote these qualities, then don't do it around those people. Vs 19

Three Principles for Maintaining Balance, vss 14-20

- **Third, When the Exercise of Christian Liberty Threatens to Hinder God's Work, it Should Be Restrained, verse 20**
 - All is essentially good, we can enjoy it.
 - Keep our rights and privileges from becoming a use of evil or stumbling block. Don't do them.
 - Love demands that we limit our liberty when necessary, for the sake of others.

Essential Ways for Guarding Against Stumbling, verses 21-23

- **Be Considerate, verse 21**
 - If in the company of Christians who regard certain good things as evil, we should avoid those things.
- **Be Convinced, verse 22**
 - If we practice certain activities that are not clearly prohibited by Scripture, then we should be confident in our thinking that they are right. If we have any doubts about these actions, then we should give them up.
- **Be Consistent, verses 23**
 - When we conclude that something is right, unless we receive solid confirmation to the contrary, we should not waver in our conviction.

Plan of Action

- Have you been guilty of causing a brother to stumble?
 - Isn't it time to make things right?
- If you have caused a fellow Christian to stumble, contact him.
 - Use the meeting as a chance to demonstrate the love, consideration, and control we've been studying about.
 - Strive for a meaningful occasion of restoration.
- If you search your conscience and find you've not caused anyone to stumble, spend this time in prayer.
 - Ask God to help keep you from becoming a stumbling block to others.