

S.O.H.L.

WEEKLY MINISTRY MEDITATIONS

Pronounced "Soul"

March 31, 2014

Causing others to stumble

LEVITICUS 19:14 NLT – (14) Do not insult the deaf or cause the blind to stumble. You must fear your God; I am the LORD.

The concept of not causing others to stumble is found in **Romans 14** and **1 Corinthians 8**. In these chapters, Paul talks about personal convictions and our responsibility to our fellow believers in Christ. He highlights several topics over which believers have disagreements—food, drink, and sacred days. In Paul's time, the disagreements were mostly concerning Jewish law versus the new freedom found in Christ. We experience much the same type of disagreements today, even over the same topics, to which we could add things like body piercings, tattoos, clothing style, movies, video games, books, and alcohol/tobacco. In these areas the Bible does not provide specific instruction and yet, these are areas where many feel conviction. Engaging in some of these activities can lead to worldliness, sin, impurity, or even become an obsession/idolatry. Conversely, legalism and avoidance of anything the world has to offer can also result in idolatry.

Paul tells the Romans, "So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way . . . So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin" (**Romans 14:12-13, 22-23**). Paul is telling us to enjoy our freedom in Christ, but along with that freedom comes the responsibility to protect those around us who have doubts about that freedom.

The example of alcohol is relevant here. Alcohol is not inherently evil, and the biblical prohibitions are not against drinking but against drunkenness. Someone who tends toward alcoholism very often knows he must not drink and often believes others shouldn't drink, not even in moderation. If a Christian has a friend who is convinced drinking is wrong, then drinking around that person may cause him/her to "stumble" or trip up. The Greek word for "stumble" gives the sense of stubbing one's toe. As Christians, we are forbidden to do anything that may cause our brothers and sisters in Christ to stub their toe, spiritually speaking. Stubbing the toe can cause a person to fall in the spiritual sense, or to damage or weaken their faith. In all things, the important lesson is to "make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (**Romans 14:19**). In this way, God is glorified, believers are edified, and the world sees in us "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (**Romans 14:17**).

SCRIPTURE READING

JAMES 5:20

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Never look down on anybody unless you're helping them up!

April 1, 2014

