

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

PUT NO SPIRITUAL STUMBLING BLOCKS IN THE PATH OF PEOPLE

Romans 14:13 “. . . make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.”

In the Bible, the Greek word *skándalon* is used to describe something that causes people to sin, or that causes them to lose their faith in Jesus. Jesus issued a stern warning, “Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble. So watch yourselves.” (Luke 17:1-3)

A short explanation in Wikipedia says that a scandal is performed with the intention of inducing someone to sin. . . In the case where the person urging the sin is aware of its nature and the person he is urging is ignorant, the sins committed are the fault of the person who urged them. Scandal is also performed when someone performs an evil act, or an act that appears to be evil, knowing that it will lead others into sin.

There are fifteen separate places in the New Testament where the word scandal is found. From this it is apparent that such behavior as explained in the previous paragraph is at least somewhat common. In the immediate context of Romans chapter 14, the eating of food became the scandal or stumbling block. Jewish converts to Christianity brought with them their dietary laws from the Old Testament. Even though Jesus had abolished those laws, these Jewish Christians insisted that eating certain foods such as pork or food that had been sacrificed to pagan gods was a sin. They, not God, laid these dietary burdens upon Gentile Christians.

Think of how in the today's church behaviors are said to be sins that are not. Those who insist they are sins, lay undue burdens of conscience upon believers. “Jesus said, “If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. . . Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:31-32, 34-36)

Prayer: Help me LORD, to never place a spiritual stumbling block in the way of others. Instead, cause me to share only the truth of Your word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Christ be my Leader by night and by day; Safe through the darkness,
For He is the way. Gladly I follow, my future His care,
Darkness is daylight when Jesus is there.

Christ be my Teacher in age as in youth, Drifting or doubting,
For He is the truth. Grant me to trust Him; though shifting as sand,
Doubt cannot daunt me; in Jesus I stand.

Christ be my Savior in calm as in strife; Death cannot hold me,
For He is the life. Nor darkness nor doubting nor sin and its stain
Can touch my salvation: with Jesus I reign.
(LSB 861)