"AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?"

Romans 14:13-23
11-29-2020

INTRODUCTION:

Are we really responsible for others? If I believe that what I am doing is okay with God, yet it offends some other believer, should I do it anyway?

***While enjoying your Christian liberty, remember to: <u>keep your brother's best interest in mind</u>!** (keep him from falling)

How?

I. Don't be a Source of <u>Temptation</u> (v. 13-16)

A. Are you a stepping stone or a stumbling block? (v. 13)

B. Are you stubborn or loving? (v. 14-15)

C. Are you careful or careless? (v. 16)

II. Don't Lose Your Spiritual <u>Priorities</u> (v. 17-20a)

A. What matters in life is:
<u>Being spiritual (internally)</u> (v. 17-18)

B. What matters in life is:
<u>Building others (spiritually)</u> (v. 19-20a)

III. Don't Violate Anyone's Moral <u>Convictions</u> (v. 20b-23)

A. Don't violate <u>your brother's</u> moral convictions (v. 20b-22a)

B. Don't violate <u>your own</u> moral convictions (v. 22b-23)

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How?

I. Don't be a Source of _____ (v. 13-16)

A. Are you a _____ or a _____? (v. 13)

B. Are you _____? (v. 14-15)

C. Are you _____? (v. 16)

II. Don't Lose Your Spiritual _____ (v. 17-20a)

A. What matters in life is:
<u>_____(internally)</u> (v. 17-18)

B. What matters in life is:
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INTRODUCTION:

ILLUS: When you brought your baby home from the hospital, some things (practices) had to change in the home. You no longer left the scissors on the chair or the steak knife on the kitchen table. Anything that was potentially dangerous, you kept out of reach (EX: pills, medicine, chemicals, tools, etc.). Even though none of those things were wrong, you did not want your baby near them because of the possible harm that could occur. As the child grew and matured, you adjusted your house rules to deal with him in a more adult fashion.

So it is with baby Christians. (SEE Wiersbe, p. 561)

Beware of what you do around "baby Christians" (or immature Christians).

After Cain murdered his own brother. When God asked him where his brother Abel was, he sarcastically replied: “Genesis 4:9 - I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?”

In the Christian life, we are in a sense, our brother’s keeper. Not that we will answer to God for their life; But as Christians we ought to have a sensitive heart not to ever offend (or cause to stumble) a fellow-believer.

Whereas 14:1-12 described the conducts of both the weak and strong Christian, 14:3-15:6 describe particularly the conduct of the strong (more mature) Christian toward the weaker.

EX: Christ's concern not to offend the tax collectors (Mt. 17:27).

Are we really responsible for others? If I believe that what I am doing is okay with God, yet it offends some other believer, should I do it anyway?

***While enjoying your Christian liberty, remember to: <u>keep your brother's best interest in mind</u>!** (keep him from falling)

How?

I. Don't be a Source of Temptation (v. 13-16)

A. Are you a stepping stone or a stumbling block? (v. 13)

V. 13

Rather than putting thought, time, and energy into scrutinizing someone's life in order to pass judgment on them, we should instead pour our energies into making sure we are stepping stones for others, rather than stumbling blocks.

"Judge this rather" = decide on this

As believers we affect each other whether we realize it or not. We (by our lives) either hold up or trip up (v. 13); we either cause joy and peace or we cause grief (v. 15); we either build up or we might even destroy (v. 20).

"Stumbling block" - a stone that causes someone to trip and fall

"An occasion to fall" = that which trips us up. Greek = "skandalon' - the stick which caused the trap to fall.

We must not only ask ourselves, "Is this practice, place, or product okay for me?" But the spiritual Christian who has his weaker brother's best interest in mind must ask himself: "Would this practice, place, or product cause him to stumble?"

EX: One man may be able to read certain books and not be bothered by them, while a weaker Christian reading the same books might be tempted to sin.

But the issue is not, "How does it affect me?" So much as, "If I do this, how will it affect my brother? Will it make him stumble? Will it grieve him or even destroy him by encouraging him to sin? Is it really worth it to harm a brother just so I can enjoy some food? NO!" (Wiersbe, p. 561)

B. Are you stubborn or loving? (v. 14-15)

Paul's confidence toward God's lifting former restrictions dealing with food (Lev. 11) is revealed in his words: "I know . . . and am persuaded."

Just as Jesus persuaded Peter (Acts 10:15), He also persuaded Paul.

V. 14

"Unclean" = lit. common - "It is a technical term to express those customs and habits which, although "common" to the world, were forbidden to the pious Jew" (Reinecker, p. 380).

"Nothing is unclean of itself."

"Nothing" = things have no morality, people do.

"Of itself" = There is no intrinsic evil in things. It is how they are used that determines whether or not defilement has occurred.

EX: A TV set is not sinful, however, what appears on it often is. A drum set/guitar etc. are not sinful, what man plays on them may be wrong.

No food is sinful, but gluttony is. Drugs are not sinful (when they are prescribed by a doctor), but they are when you use them to gain a selfish high off of them.

V. 15

"Meat" - can be substituted with any potential vice (cp. v. 23- "whatsoever"). EX: TV, social life, associations, reading material, dress and music standards, etc.

If there is a stone that will trip up Christians, it is "Christian rock."

"Now walkest thou not charitably" - You are no longer conducting your life according to love (agapa)

"Charity" - In a similar context, Paul said in I Cor. 8:1 that "knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."

If your brother is hurt, sorrowful or caused to become bitter because of something you deliberately did (in spite of his weak conscience), you did not act out of love.

When you love someone, you will have their best interest in mind, not your own selfish interest. "Love seeketh not her own" (I Cor. 13).

Two good reasons why we should be concerned about not grieving (offending) other Christians by our lives:

1. Many times the things we do are so insignificant compared to the price we pay for doing them.

   "Eating meat" may be a little thing, but if it could destroy someone's walk with Christ, we should not do it.

2. An offended brother is a soul for whom Christ died. If Christ was willing to die for them, is it too great a thing for God to ask us to abstain from certain practices so as not to hurt their faith?

Though our ultimate goal in life is to please God by the way we live, we must be concerned about what others think of us.

We need what Paul had: "A conscience void of offense toward God and toward men."

If someone was to be offended because I owned a corvette, I would not buy one.

If someone was to stumble because on occasion I watch a football game, I would never turn one on in their presence.

If I knew someone had a conviction against caffeine, I would not offer them a cup of coffee, tea, or coke, nor would I drink it in front of them.

If I knew that someone thought it was worldly for a man to wear a beard and jewelry, etc., then I would save it off and wear none.

There are many things that a pastor (especially) shouldn't do (though they are not wrong) that others could do.

EX: The Rockefellers may drive in a Rolls Royce and live in a castle. I cannot. (since some people might brand me another "materialistic minister").

Some people would not think twice about going into a movie theater to see a G-rated film. The conscientious Christian should not. Why? Because he has the best interest of others in mind (a totally unselfish motive).

cp. Jesus warning about offending a "little one" who believes in him (Mt. 18:6).

C. Are you careful or careless? (v. 16)

When we sin (Ex. David & Bathsheba), it gives others cause to speak against (blaspheme) our god, our Bible, our salvation. We must be on guard against sin (note pastors - I Tim. 4:16).

However, as Christians we need to go a step further and be on guard against having the <u>appearance</u> of sinful behavior.

We should avoid appearing to do wrong even though we actually are not.

*Beware of <u>doing</u> what might <u>look</u> like evil.

Ex. drinking soda out of a can wrapped up in a paper bag gives the impression that you are drinking beer.

Ex. carrying a box-shaped New Testament in your shirt pocket often gives the impression of having a pack of cigarettes.

*Avoid being <u>seen</u> in <u>certain situations</u> (EX: alone with a woman in the wrong place at the wrong time).

Many Christians are destroyed (ruined) because of another Christian who is not living right. Someone is watching your life. For their sake, live above reproach!

II. Don't Lose Your Spiritual <u>Priorities</u> (v. 17-20a)

A. What matters in life is:
<u>Being spiritual (internally)</u> (v. 17-18)

V. 17

"The kingdom of God" - the soteriological (present salvation) aspect of the Kingdom. I.E. the saved life; the Christian life; the spiritual life.

The truly spiritual life is not a matter of satisfying carnal appetites at the expense of others. There is more to our saved life than the physical. There are more essential things to do with our lives than utilizing and enjoying our "Christian liberty" to the maximum.

"Not the externals, but the eternals must be first in our lives" (Wiersbe, p. 561).

"Serveth" - to serve as a slave; a devoted bond slave.

If you serve Christ with a life characterized by:

1) righteousness
2) peace
3) joy

. . . you are well pleasing to God.

Those virtues are produced by the Holy Spirit (v. 17), not the flesh, which is more concerned with "meat and drink."

V. 18

"Approved" - to find something to be genuine after examining it.

The world is looking for something <u>real</u> in us! As they scrutinize our lives, they do <u>not</u> find true spirituality in the insignificant petty things we do or don't do, but they find genuine Christianity in our righteousness, peace, and joy. All of which come from supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.

B. What matters in life is:
Building others (spiritually) (v. 19-20a)

V. 19

"Follow after" = hunt after, to zealously pursue.

Our objective in life is not to do things that would tear apart relationships with other Christians, rather our goal is to do everything in our power to:

1. maintain peaceful relationships (Jms. 3:18)

2. build strong relationships ("edify" = to build up)

V. 20

"Destroy not" - Don't tear down or undo the work of God.

God is contrasting the "edifying" commanded in verse 19, with someone who would tear down God's edifice.

Prov. 18:19 - "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle."

III. Don't Violate Anyone's Moral Convictions (v. 20b-23)

A. Don't violate your brother's moral convictions (v. 20b-22a)

V. 20

All things (meats) indeed are pure (clean), but they are bad (wrong) for someone whose eating becomes a stumbling block to someone else.

V. 21

If whatever I do as a Christian will either stumble, trip, or weaken a fellow believer, I should out of love refrain from it.

"Stumbleth" - lit. "to strike against." The word is used of those whose feet strike against a stone or other obstacle in the path (Reinecker, p. 380).

A good reason for abstaining from alcoholic beverages (other than God's commands - Prov. 20:1, 23:31; Eph. 5:18) is so that you won't be a source of temptation to a brother who might justify drinking because of your example.

Anything that would induce someone to sin is wrong!

Anything that would be a source of temptation is wrong for me to participate in.

My attitude should not be:

--"Well, this is my Christian liberty! If you don't like it, go live in a monastery!"

--"If you disapprove of my practice, tough luck!"

--"I don't care what you think!"

New Evangelicals are guilty of violating the conscience of many! They are quick to call you a "legalist" because you hold to certain standards that they don't have. By doing this, they actually are not practicing Christian love.

V. 22

"Hast thou faith" = Do you have full confidence that you can in the eyes of God Almighty, participate in a certain practice which others question! If so, keep it to yourself! Keep it between you and God.

One way to violate someone else's conviction is to force your convictions on them.

They must be taught in an atmosphere of love so that they can have their own convictions.

Even though you may think that someone else's personal convictions are immature, you must never violate that person's conscience. ~This would do great damage to his spiritual life. For example, the mature Christian knows that an idol is nothing. But a young Christian, just converted out of pagan idolatry, would still have fears about idols. If the strong believer forced the new Christian to eat meat sacrificed to an idol, the younger Christian would experience problems in his conscience that would only further weaken it (SEE I Cor. 8 - 9)" (Wiersbe, p. 561).

B. Don't violate your own moral convictions (v. 22b-23)

V. 22

"Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing (whatever it may be) that he alloweth" = Blessed is the Christian who does not feel guilty about the practices he views as okay to do.

If you can do it with a clean conscience, then do it! If it bothers you and you do it anyway, you have sinned and have condemned (judged) yourself as "guilty."

V. 23

"Doubteth" = lit. to "judge between," to hesitate, waiver, to be unsure about what you are thinking about doing.

"Is damned" = is judged as guilty.

"Because he eateth not of faith" - everything we do should spring from a confidence that it is okay to do it.

"Whatsoever" = all you do; everything you do (the application Paul now makes broadens the principle to every area of life, not merely eating meat).

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" = If it is doubtful, it is wrong for you. It is sin when you don't have the confidence ("full persuasion" - cp. v. 5, 14) that what you are doing is right.

"If it's doubtful, it's dirty."

If you question it, don't do it. Run from it!

CONCLUSION:

Your life is being observed.

You are making a profound impact on someone else.

Do you have their best interest in mind?

Are you living for their growth?

We are our "brother's keeper." We must be concerned about the spiritual lives of others. Their heart, mind, and soul should be that which we want to strengthen, never weaken.

--Will any lost person stumble into hell because of your life?

--Does your life, give cause for someone to justify sin in their life?

--Could a new believer's life be shipwrecked if he sees something that to him seems inconsistent in your life?