

International Sunday School Lesson for June 21, 1931

SIN OF CAUSING OTHERS TO STUMBLE

Printed Verses, Romans 14: 13-23

Golden Text: It Is Good Not to Eat Flesh, Nor to Drink Wine, Nor to Do Anything Whereby Thy Brother Stumbleth.

The Lesson

Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling. I know, that am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself; save that to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love. Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that herein serveth Christ is well pleasing to God, and approved of men. So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another. Overthrow not for meat's sake the work of God. All things indeed are clean; howbeit it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth. The faith which thou hast, have thou to thyself before God. Happy is he that judgeth not himself in that which he approveth. But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatever is not of faith is sin.

Comments on the Lesson

Paul's letter to the Romans, from which this lesson is taken, reads as if it were addressed particularly and directly to the people of the United States today, instead of being directed to the Roman Christians in the year of our Lord, 57. Paul was at Corinth, where he stood when on his way to Rome, remaining there for three months, and then being turned toward Jerusalem where he was arrested and imprisoned. It was during this three month's stay in Corinth that the great missionary wrote these letters. He was giving the Roman Christians instructions in treatment of the question of the eating, drinking and other customs of the non-Christians. Paul well knew that Christianity would grow only as those who were Christians lived and moved and had their being among the non-Christians. In other words, a Christian's attitude would make his Christianity an appealing cause to others, or it would hinder others in joining the rapidly growing band of the followers of Jesus Christ.

The letter from which our printed verses are taken starts off with Paul's analysis of the customs of the day. He advises the Christians to receive those who are weak in the faith, but not to doubtful disputations, for one believeth that he can eat all things, and another is weak and believes that he can eat only herbs. Let not him that eateth all things despise the one who eateth herbs alone. Nor should the one who eateth all things sit in judgment upon the one weaker man who eateth

nothing but herbs. Then Paul emphasizes his remarks by asking: Who art thou, to sit in judgment upon another man's servant? That servant is responsible only to his own master. One man, Paul says, esteems one day above all days, and another man esteems all days alike. These differences of opinion on the non-essential questions are not to be used as subject of argument, but let every man be persuaded in his own mind as to these things. Just so a man is in partnership with God, looking to God for guidance and strength and support, ever mindful of the welfare of those about him, the road which such man is traveling leads direct to the throne.

Paul continues his letter by reminding the Roman Christians that no one lives unto himself alone, and no man dieth unto himself; that, whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For it was to this end that Jesus Christ died, and rose, and ascended, that He might be Lord of both the living and dead. Then Paul asks a question that all of us need to ask ourselves today: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, for the Lord has said that every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue shall confess to God, so that each shall give an account of himself to God."

And then the letter continues with the opening verse in today's lesson, with Paul adjuring the Roman Christians to refrain from judging one another any more, but rather let us judge ourselves, that we place no stumblingblock in the way of any other man, nor cause him to fall. Things, within themselves, are not unclean, Paul says, but are clean, or unclean, according to the viewpoint of man. He was speaking directly on the subject of his day as to whether a man should eat meat that had been consecrated to an idol. About all the meat that was sold in the shops in Roman and Greek countries then was the unburned portion that had been offered in heathen sacrifices. Some people did not believe that such meat should be eaten. As for Paul, meat was meat, and a heathen idol was a mere nothing, therefore he had no scruples against eating such meat. But the great lesson that he is getting across to the Christians is to respect others about him, and those who believed that such meat was unclean, for their sakes, then refrain from eating that meat. Whatever grieves, or hurts, your brother, Paul said, should be discarded, regardless of your own belief in the matter. If you love your brother, then do nothing that will grieve him, or place a stumblingblock in his way. Destroy not, Paul says, the man for whom Christ died, when all you get out of it is the satisfaction of eating a little meat that is pleasing to your appetite, or simply because you feel that you have a right to eat meat, regardless of its effect upon your brother. Let not your good be evil spoken of, for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, habits and custom, personal privileges and liberties and license, but it is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, for he who serves Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men. Then, Paul says, let us follow after the bigger things, the higher things, the holier things, that make for peace, and for things which will edify one another and lift one another up. This is so much greater and bigger and better than merely satisfying one's own gluttonous appetite with meat or drink. God's work is so much bigger than mere meat, or appeasing an appetite, that it is evil for a man to destroy God's work simply for the sake of satisfying his own appetite.

Please study this:
IT IS NOT GOOD TO EAT FLESH, NOR TO DRINK WINE, NOR TO DO ANYTHING WHEREBY THY BROTHER STUMBLETH.
Happy is the man, Paul says, who has a good conscience, and does not allow himself to secretly do that which he knows is wrong for him to

do, or harmful to another for himself to do. Those who do things that they are in doubt as to their right to do, are already condemned both in their own eyes and in the eyes of God. Whatsoever is not right, is wrong and is a sin. Any indulgence in a practice that influences others to do wrong, or hinders others in doing right, is a staggering sin.

Liquor Is Our "Meat" Problem

America has no meat problem, as the people had in that day when Paul was writing these matchless letters. But America has a more serious problem than that of meat. It has the whiskey problem. Paul's letters have great significance to the American people. There are those who believe that the prohibition law is all wrong, and that it takes away from a great many people their personal liberties. Some men say: "It does me no harm to take a drink of whiskey, or to have whiskey about me." Probably so, yet even that question is debatable. But granting that John Brown may take a drink of whiskey without its hurting him. What about John Brown's neighbor, or his neighbor's boy, or his own boy? What effect and influence will it have upon those all about? That is what Paul is telling us about in these letters and in this great Scripture.

We do know that whiskey is bad—for every one within the reach of its influence. It is bad for the family of the man who drinks it. It is bad for the community in which the man lives who drinks it. What personal privilege is there, then, so important as to justify the existence of a thing that is bad for everybody?

Others claim that the prohibition law is a failure—and some people go so far as to declare that there is more whiskey consumed now than was consumed before prohibition. Such claims as these are an insult to the intelligence of the American people. The prohibition laws have not been as successfully enforced as they could and should have been, due to many causes. One chief cause is that so many church members and professing Christians have locked arms and linked interests with the whiskey element that it is hard to fully enforce the law. The younger people may easily be led to believe that there is as much whiskey consumed now as before the enactment of the Volstead law because they know nothing about the former conditions. Those of us who lived when the saloon was the master of everything about it, know that such claims are as false as hell itself.

Paul says it is not good to eat flesh, or to drink wine, or to do anything that will cause a brother to stumble, personal liberty or no personal liberty. I know what I am talking about when I say to you that the giving of one drink of whiskey has caused many men to suffer the tortures of hell, drove women to distraction and robbed little children of food and warmth and clothing. There are men in your community right now who are working hard for their families, striving to do the right thing, yet who would be ruined for days and weeks should they take the first drink of whiskey. That first one leads on to more and more and more, and leads into the mire and the mud and the murky ways of low life. Would you place a saloon under such a man's nose, simply because some fellow reared up on his hind legs and shouted that he must have his personal liberties.

"Ah, shucks!" you say, "that man should not be so weak." What made him weak? What is his weakness? The very fact that strong men grow weak when they acquire an appetite for liquor is the strongest condemnation it is possible to make of liquor. Anything that is so destructive in its gripping power that it makes the man who uses it change from a real man into a weakling, is by its very nature a thing to be shunned by the individual and by society.

The prohibition law is blamed for the power of gangland today in the United States. Statistics show that only 20 percent of the revenues collected by gang chiefs come from handling whiskey and beer. Industry and commerce pay 80 per cent of these bills, and this is largely due to cowardice on the part of those paying the demanded revenues, coupled with the fact that many officers of the law are in cahoots with the gangs. Yet prohibition gets the blame for all of gangland's operations. People forget the boss of the ward, under the old regime. The saloon was the boss—boss of politics, boss of everything about it.

When professing Christians do as they are told to do here in this letter to the Romans, and throughout this great Book of Books, the prohibition laws will be enforced. Destroy not with thy meat the man for whom Jesus Christ died. When a man places whiskey within reach of his

brother he is not only violating the Volstead law—he is violating a law far greater than any ever enacted in the Congress of the United States. He is violating the laws of God, and setting at naught the great suffering and sacrifices endured by Jesus Christ who died on the cross to save the very man that we are sending to destruction when we place whiskey within his reach.

Jesus Christ died to save men. He gave His life that others might live. Are we, as His followers, not willing then to surrender what we call the personal liberty in order to save men?

There is no argument in favor of whiskey, because there is nothing to its credit. Whiskey has never done any good anywhere at any time.

Whiskey has destroyed more men than all other causes combined. Whiskey has ruined more lives than all other causes combined. Whiskey has wrecked more homes, broken more hearts, caused more gray hairs, put more children in rags, caused more hunger and want, sent more women to the wash tub, than any other agency that the Devil has ever had at his command.

The problem is still with us, even with prohibition. Men are still making it, because other men buy it and drink it. The church is not doing very much to assist in the enforcement of the prohibition law, because so many members of the church buy it and drink it, some of them being in partnership with the maker or seller, or both. Just as soon as pro-

fessing Christians become real Christians, the prohibition law will be in full force and effect. When we follow after things which make for peace, and edify one another, then whiskey will be barred. Whiskey cannot edify any one—it degrades them and destroys them.

Nearly half the population of the United States belong to the church. Church members ought to be Christians. Christians ought to be, and must be, willing to obey the scriptures. Whenever the church members, therefore, reach the point that the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ means more than that insignificant little appeal of personal liberty, then we shall be free from destructive influences of whiskey.

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4.50-21 Ford	5.69	5.69	11.10	5.25-18 Marquette	7.90	7.90	15.30	6.00-20 LaSalle	11.50	11.50	23.00
4.75-19 Ford	6.65	6.65	12.90	5.25-21 Buick	8.57	8.57	16.70	6.00-21 Pierce-A.	11.65	11.65	23.30
4.75-20 Erskine	6.75	6.75	13.10	5.50-18 Auburn	8.75	8.75	17.00	6.50-20 Stutz	13.10	13.10	26.20
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