

How to Sin with Your Food

Romans, Part LXIII

Romans 14:13-15:6

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I. By your food and with your food

"Carnal food is defined as food that is thought of carnally. The sin is never in the food because Jesus declared all foods clean. The sin is always in the sinner. This means that we can sin with our food but we cannot sin by food." (Wilson, 32)

Romans 14:13–15:6 (NKJV)

¹³ Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. ¹⁴ I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ¹⁵ Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

¹⁹ Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. ²⁰ Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. ²¹ It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. ²² Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. ²³ But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

¹ We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. ³ For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." ⁴ For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. ⁵ Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Kingdom is not Eating and Drinking

A. Don't put a *stumbling block* or *cause to fall* in our brother's way (14:13-18)

Paul warns the strong not to *put a stumbling block or cause to fall in our brother's way* (13). For while there are *no unclean foods*, to eat food with a guilty conscience is to sin (14). So if you *grieve your brother* by tempting him to violate his _____, then *you are no longer walking in love* (15a) but *destroying with your food the one for whom Christ died* (15b). So don't use your liberty of eating whatever you like (*your good*) for such an *evil* purpose (16). After all, food and drink are not the central thing (17). So to *serve Christ* by limiting what one eats on certain occasions is *pleasing to God* and a *blessing to others* (18).

B. Pursue the things that make for peace and edification (14:19-23)

Rather than causing division in the body or compromising our brother's spiritual health, let us pursue *peace* and his *edification* (19). Let us beware lest we *destroy the work of God for the sake of* _____ (20). For our brother to *stumble* is to violate his conscience and sin; for him to *be offended* is to divide him from the body by getting him to eat what he otherwise would not; for him to *be made weak* is to be opened up to other temptations (21).

C. Bear with the scruples of the weak and please your neighbor (15:1-6)

So what ought the *strong* to do? How ought the *strong*, those who know that they have the right before God to eat whatever is set before them, act toward the *weak*, those whose consciences are bothering them in such matters? The *strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak* (1). We ought not to eat whatever we want to *please ourselves* but consider how to *please our neighbor for his good, leading to edification* (2). And why should we do this? Because this is the example that _____ *Himself* set for us (3).

III. How to sin with your food

A. The end of food (Pr 9:1ff; Is 25:6ff; Mt 20:1ff)

_____ is a means to an end, not an end in itself. So what is the end of food? *The end of food is that by eating it and sharing it we may serve Christ and edify one another so that with one mind and one mouth we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Hence, the chief way to sin with our food is to fail to give God thanks and praise:

⁶*And in this mountain The LORD of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees. ⁷And He will destroy on this mountain The surface of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. ⁹And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isaiah 25:6–9)*

Another way to sin with our food is to fail to love our neighbor (15b). We are to use our liberty to eat whatever food the Lord has set before us to bless our neighbors (16). We do this because the _____ itself doesn't matter – what matters, the end for which food exists, *is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit* (17). As we pursue this end, we will *serve Christ*, please God, and be *approved by men* (18).

B. The perversion of food

Using our food for merely selfish pleasure or to grieve our brother is to pervert it from its proper use. So Paul warns us lest we *grieve* or *destroy* our brother with our food (15,20). He outlines three ways we can do this (13, 21):

- A *stumbling block (proskomma)* is an action committed by a strong brother which tempts the weak brother to violate his conscience and so transgress against the Lord.
- A *cause to fall (skandalon)* – a trap or snare is an action committed by a strong brother that offends the weak brother and causes division in the body of Christ.
- To *be made weak (astheneo)* is to be opened up to other temptations; to make it more likely the weak brother will violate his conscience again or react and become even more scrupulous.

By putting a *stumbling block* in our brother's way, we tempt him to violate his conscience and practice *unrighteousness*. By *laying a trap* for him, we undermine the *peace* of the Church. And by *weakening* him, we undermine his *joy*. (cf. 14:17)

C. Lessons for the weak and the strong

IV. Conclusion