

1 Corinthians 8:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

Analysis

Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth (οὐ μὴ φάγω κρέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ou me phago krea eis ton aiona, "I will never eat meat forever")—Paul's emphatic double negative (ou me) expresses absolute resolve. He personally pledges perpetual vegetarianism if meat-eating causes a brother to stumble. This isn't hypothetical posturing but apostolic example: love gladly surrenders even legitimate liberties for others' spiritual good.

Lest I make my brother to offend (ἵνα μὴ τὸν ἀδελφόν μου σκανδαλίσω, hina me ton adelphon mou skandaliso, "lest I cause my brother to stumble")—the verb skandalizo (σκανδαλίζω) means to cause someone to sin or fall away. Paul's priority is protecting his brother's conscience above asserting his own rights. This is Christian maturity: the "strong" prove strength not by exercising all liberties but by surrendering them for love's sake. Chapters 9-10 will apply this principle to Paul's own apostolic rights, demonstrating he practices what he preaches.

Historical Context

Paul's pledge wasn't ascetic legalism (he affirms meat's goodness elsewhere, 1 Timothy 4:3-4) but pastoral love. In a culture where social meals cemented relationships and identity, Paul's willingness to forego meat permanently for a

brother's sake was staggering. This set the pattern for Christian ethics: love limits liberty, and the mature willingly accept restrictions the immature cannot yet bear.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What legitimate Christian liberties is God calling you to surrender for the sake of weaker believers?
2. How do you distinguish between enabling legalism versus protecting a brother from stumbling?
3. Where do you need to imitate Paul's radical self-denial for the sake of others' spiritual growth?

Interlinear Text

διόπερ εἰ βρῶμα σκανδαλίσω τὸν ἀδελφόν μου οὐ
Wherefore **if** **meat** **I make** G3588 **brother** **my** G3756
G1355 G1487 G1033 G4624 G80 G3450

μὴ φάγω κρέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἵνα μὴ
G3361 **I will eat** **flesh** **while the world standeth** G3588 G165 G2443 G3361
G5315 G2907 G1519

τὸν ἀδελφόν μου σκανδαλίσω
G3588 **brother** **my** **I make**
G80 G3450 G4624

Additional Cross-References

Romans 14:21 (Parallel theme): It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

2 Corinthians 11:29 (Parallel theme): Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

2 Corinthians 6:3 (Parallel theme): Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

1 Corinthians 6:12 (Parallel theme): All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

1 Corinthians 13:5 (Parallel theme): Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;