

Title: Christian Liberty and Love

Text: Romans 14:13-23

Take your Bibles, please, and turn with me to the Book of Romans. The book of Romans chapter 14. Romans chapter 14 is dealing with the issue of Christian liberty. Now, that we have been freed from the condemnation of sin. Now, that we have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ. Now, that we have been sanctified by God. Now, that our security is in the love of God which will never leave us nor forsake us... *Now that all of that is true*, HOW DO WE APPLY ALL OF THAT WONDERFUL TRUTH IN DAILY LIFE?....Well, that is what *the* Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul is talking about, here, in Romans chapter 14. THE APPLICATION OF GOD'S WONDERFUL RIGHTEOUSNESS IS DEMONSTRATED IN OUR CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

Last Sunday, we saw that Christian liberty will exclude Judgement of other believers. This was the subject of verses 1 thru 12 *of ch 14*. Today, we come to the *and third areas of* (1C) second ~~area~~ CHRISTIAN LIBERTY WILL EXERCISE LOVE.

Romans chapter 14 beginning with Vs 13..(READ 13-23)

PRAYER

(2C) O.K. if we really know what Christian Liberty is all about, we will exercise love. This is the theme of verses 12 thru *21* ~~20~~. Christian liberty will exercise love towards others.

OH, let me tell you. There is nothing like love. But, it is really hard to know when there is real love. Right? It is very hard. Sometimes you hear people say that they love. But you are not sure it is there. Well, dear friends, God is going to talk about REAL LOVE here in this whole issue of Christian liberty.

But, there is always one thing we must keep clear. LOVE always builds up. *Love* always edifies. *Love* always encourages. No matter when or how it comes.

And, also, remember, *Real Love* ~~love~~ or *agapa* comes from God. And the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. You see, we do not have the ability to love as God wants us to love. But, in Christ, We do have the *potent* ~~ability~~ to love. Because the Holy Spirit dwells in our life, we have the wonderful potential to love as God wants us to love.....

So, in this area of Christian liberty, Paul is going to talk about HOW we can exercise love. And he mentions several principles.

(1D) Number one, if we are really exercising love, it will never cause a brother or sister to stumble. Vs 13 says, "Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way."

Let me illustrate: Let's suppose for a moment that you like green ties. I mean you are a big green tie fan. Green ties really turn you on.

And here comes another Christian. And this guy is horrified with your green tie. And he comes up to you and says, "HAY, YOU ARE WEARING A GREEN TIE!" And you respond, "Yes, I am."

And he says, "How in the world could you call yourself a Christian and wear that green tie?"

"Well, it is easy. I put it on this morrowing to wear to church." He says, "Every time I see a green tie, I turn green. I know that it is wrong. God has shown me that wearing green tie to church is wrong. You should never wear a green tie."

And so you look at your brother in the Lord and say, "Let me get this straight. Am I causing you to wear a green tie?"....."NO! NO!..I would never wear a gren tie."

"Great! Then get off my back." Then you go out and buy a half dozen more green ties, because you are not at all bothered by that. And you feel that you have no responsibility towards that brother.

You see, we have confused the issue a little bit. We are often quite legalistic in our attitude. We might demand, now, that all Christians get rid of their green ties. Because I believe that you should not wear a green tie.

Do you realize, dear friends, that if every person had a say so here, how far this would go? I mean, you would wind up having no choice of clothes... Do you see how it could go? That is why we need LOVE towards one another.

And so you look at the brother and say, "Well, let me get this straight." ~~Number one, Am I causing you to wear a green tie? "Why, certainly not. I will never wear a green tie." "Good! you might go out and buy a half dozen more. Because you are not at all bothered by that. You have no responsibility towards that brother.~~

~~You see, we have confused the issue just a little bit. We are often quite legalist in our attitude. We might demand, now, that all christians get rid of their green ties. Because I believe that you should not wear a green tie. Do you realize that if every person had a say so here, how far this would carry? And then you would wind up having no choice of clothes. Do you see how it could go? That is why we need love towards one another.~~

Let's carry the illustration at little further.

Suppose the brother ^{who hates green ties} would say to you. "Well, you know, if you continue to wear that green tie, you are ^{causing} ~~causing~~ me to wear a green tie."

"Well, why am I causeing you to wear a green tie?"....?Because I look up to you as one with spiritual maturity. I believe you would know whether a green tie was right or not. And now I am ~~am~~ going to wear this green tie because you wear one, even though it bothers my conscience ^{and I don't like Green Ties}

Do you know what you should do in that case according to the Bible?... You take the green tie off and threw it away.....And you don't wear a green tie anymore.....WHY?....Because I am causing a bother to do it....

~~Suppose~~ Now, let's look at the other side of the illustration. Suppose I want to that borther who didn't like green ties. And I would say to him "Oh, come on...wear a green tie. It is alright. ^{It is alright} Everybody is wearing a green tie."

You would be wrong, my friend. You would be sining against the Lord and against that brothers conscience. It would be wrong for you to do that.

(Now, men if you have a greentie , I am just illustrating..no harm meant)

But, you see, you must determine in your heart that you will not cause a brother or sister to stumble. So, first of all, you have to figure out if you are causing the brother to stumble. Many christians who call themselves "strong" insist that others follow their standard. And that is not right. We are not to cause anybody to stumble....

(20) Now, the second principle about exercising love is our discernment of unclean things. Vs 14 to 16. And I want you to look at this very carefully. Our discernment of unclean things. There are ^{Three} ~~four~~ things that I want to share with you *from these verses*

(1) Number one, the issue is not dealing with things that are sinful. I don't know how many people read these verses and conclude that it is dealing with sinful things. Because you look at the word "unclean" and right away you think "sin." *We have been programed to think that way, but* It is not dealing with sinful things. The word "unclean" is the word "common."

For example: when I was in Seminary I took a course in ~~XXXXXX~~ N.T. Greek. ^{Koina} It was called Koine Greek as opposed to Classical Greek. The word "Koine" is the word for "common." It means the ^{language the} common people spoke. ~~etc~~

Now, you put "Koine" in a longer form and you have Koinina". And that word is translated "fellowship." Meaning that which we share in common. As christian we ~~share in fellowship~~ fellowship because we share in common the life of Jesus Christ, regardless of our likes or dislikes.

^{So} Now, that word "common" is right there translated "unclean." ~~Or for~~ *the content,* ~~is he saying.~~ The word "common" came to mean "devoid of spiritual value." It was a common thing they would say. Meaning it is not sacred. It doesn't have any spiritual value.

So, here is what Paul is saying in Vs 14 "I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is common through itself." There isn't anything that of itself is lacking spiritual value.

Let's take this hymn book....You may look at this and say, "Oh, it is ^{gold} ~~red~~ ^{gold} It is a ~~red~~ ^{gold} book. I have never read its content. But I know right away that it ~~has~~ ^{has} spiritual value *because it is a song book*

Listen, friends, it is a book. And without knowing the content it has no spiritual value.

Not one thing is devoid of spiritual value, or, has spiritual value. It all depends on how it is used and how you regard it. This is very ~~important~~ important. Paul is not talking about anything called sin.. *Very important*

(2) Secondly, According to the end of Vs 14, if you believe that something is lacking in spiritual value, then to you it is. That is an amazing thing. It may not be in and off itself because nothing is lacking in spiritual value. But if you think that it is, lacking in spiritual value, then according to the bible to you it is then. And you would be wrong for going against your conscience. *Do you understand?*

(3) Third, we are to be careful to act in love towards a brother ^{note} who is grieved. Vs 15 "For if because of food your brother is hurt or grieved."

Now, this isn't talking about eating or not eating. Obviously you can't stop eating, or you will soon die. The issue is what kind of food you are eating.... This takes us back to Vs 2. One person thinks he can eat anything. The other thinks you should eat only vegetables and leave the ~~meat~~ ^{meat} out.

Now, the word "grieve" doesn't mean angry. It means "sorrow". He is really hurt. It deals with causing him to ~~stumble~~ ^{stumble} again. He is really hurt.

Now, if he is grieved with your food, Paul says you are not walking in love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

That is a very important ^{principle} ~~principle~~. The underlining issue here is not food, it is love. Because you see, you could stop eating meat for the brother who thinks you should only eat vegetables. You could stop eating meat and say, "O.K. I stopped eating. Are you satisfied."

Listen, if it isn't done in love, you might as well keep on eating it. Because it is the love issue that is the principle. You are hurting your brother because he knows you don't care anything about it. It is love for the other person that causes you to do what you do. ~~Now~~

(4) Now, the fourth thing that I want you to see is that according to Vs 16 the good that is evil spoken of would be eating the food which the weaker brother can't eat. Notice that carefully. "Let not your ~~good~~ ^{good}." He is talking, ^{about a strong} believer, in contrast to the weak one. The strong to the weak. He ~~is~~ is saying, "let not your good," which would be your ability to eat all kinds of food, "be spoken of as evil." Why? because you didn't love, you see...

Did you know that if you don't love that person, I don't care what you are doing, they are not going to think much of you?... *Did you know that?*

Why, you may be right. You may have 50 people agreeing with you. But if you don't love, you will discover a bad response from those you are trying to prove a point to. Love covers a multitude of sins. Love builds up. Love bears all things, hopes all things, believes all things. That is the issue here. It is very powerful.

(3D) Now, the third thing I want you to see about exercising love toward others is in the spiritual development of others. Spiritual development.

Instead of centering in on the food, find out what it is that will build up your brother or sister.....Concern for spiritual development.

Paul says in Vs 17 .."the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking." If you believe that is the thing that is important, dear friend, you are wrong. The things that are important according to Vs 17 is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men."

Did you know that if you are really building up people, they can even take things that you are doing which they think is wrong? Did you know that? It is true. I know it is true. There are people who minister to me and build me up and encourage my life in the Lord, and I know the things they do. I wouldn't do them. But, I want to tell you that they can build me up.

WHY? Because there is love there, not judgment. But real love and concern. Very important.

Vs 19 says.."So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another." We ought to consistently seek to build one another up. Not to evaluate the things ^{they} we do as right or wrong. Let the Lord take care of that. We are to build up.

(4D) Now, the fourth thing I want you to see about exercising love toward others involves our personal desires. Our personal desires.

Here, I believe, we can center in on the real problem. The real problem in the person who supposedly is a mature christian.

Vs 20 says.."Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food."

Listen, dear friends, if I eat meat and you don't think I should eat meat,

Listen, dear friends, if I eat meat and you don't think I should eat meat, if will never hurt the work of God one little bit. RIGHT? It will not hurt the work of God.

Let me tell you what will hurt the work of God. Look at the last part of Vs 20.."All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense."

This is not talking about the weak brother going against his conscience. It is talking about the strong brother or sister who says that he or she can eat all things even though his weak brother or sister is being hurt. And he ~~eats~~ ^{eats} with the idea of offending...causing offense in that weak brother or sister.

Oh, listen, dear friends, that is sin....I don't care what the issue is. If you are trying to cause that brother or sister to stumble, if you are just acting in a stubborn way, it is sin for that person who gives offense. And it matters not the cause or the issue. It is plain ordinary sin...

(3C) O.K. This leds us, now, into the third major area concerning our Christian liberty. First, Christian liberty will exclude judgment of others. Secondly, Christian liberty will exerise love toward others. (3C) And third, Christian liberty will experience discernment for yourself.

Let's talk about yourself...Vs 22 and 23...Two things here.

(1D) Number one, it involves the matter of your personal happiness. Your peace of mind that you are on the right track. Vs 22 says..."The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemr himself in what he approves."

Do you know that you have to live with yourself? You are doing something that you know is wrong, you will not be happy. Happiness comes to the one who is not condemning himself in the things that he is doing. If you know it is ~~w~~rong, then don't do it. When in doubt, play it safe, don't do it.

(2D) The second thing that is involved here according to Vs 23 is sin. It says, "But he who doubts is condmened if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin."

The opposite of faith is doubt. You doubt whether this thing is right that you are doing and you go ahead and do it, it is then sin...And you are wrong for doing it, because you did not completely trust in faith. You know, dear friends, you would be a much happier person if you did only those things that you know by way of conviction are right for you.

Now, in looking at all of this ---WHAT SHOULD WE CONCLUDE? Two things...
KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE.

You may have all the knowledge as to what is right or what is wrong. But if that knowledge is not exercised in love it doesn't do anything for anyone..NO RESULTS.

Now, you may have all the love in your heart, but you don't know the principles of Christian liberty. And thus you apply it in the wrong ways and you end up hurting people or confusing people.

KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE, DEAR FRIENDS, ARE BOTH IMPORTANT.

But, let me try and tie this together. Nobody is free to exercise Christian liberty until they are really free. And I want to leave you with two verses which I hope will tie all of this together. Turn, please, to the book of Galatians. Galatians chapter 5 verses 1 and 13....

Galatians chapter 5 verse 1 says.."It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

Listen, dear friends, not a one of us has any liberty unless Christ has set us free.

And he says "don't be subject again ~~to~~ to the yoke of slavery." In this case it is the law. Don't be subject to ~~it~~ it. Stand fast in the freedom that you have in Jesus Christ.

But now look at Vs 13 ~~vs~~ you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

Some people use liberty to appeal only to their own sin nature. To do the sinful things of self and sin.

Listen, "by love serve one another."

You will never be free until Christ makes you free. That happens the moment you believe in him as your lord and saviour. You have stopped the game of trying to be good before God. And you have recognized that when Jesus died on the cross he paid for every sin that you and I have ever committed or ever would commit. That is what faith is all about. Believing that Jesus substituted himself for me at the cross. And the moment I accept Christ on that basis, is the moment I am saved, and I become a new person in Christ. Not trusting myself and my performance, but trust Jesus. And that is freedom, both. That is freedom sisters.....

And you can be free, right now, by turning to Jesus Christ. ~~And in faith believing that he has already done it for you....~~

Let us close in prayer

and...