

Romans, Part 35

The next section of Romans addresses acting out of love. Paul is addressing strong Christians who are mature in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is writing from a distinct intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Therefore, Paul is convinced of these facts.

We should look at this section with three thoughts in mind.

First, our relationships and fellowship should be controlled by love, not just by our Christian liberty.

Second, no food is in itself unclean, but if anyone regards something to be unclean, because of their conscience, then it is unclean for them.

Third, some thoughts, words, and actions are evil by nature.

Romans 14:13-14 NIV Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another.

Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. AS ONE WHO IS IN THE LORD JESUS, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.

Romans 14:15-16 NIV If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, **you are no longer acting in love.** Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil.

Romans 14:17-18 NIV For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

Romans 14:19-20 NIV Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.

Romans 14:21-22 NIV It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.

Romans 14:23 NIV But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

This text has been difficult for some believers to receive.

Shall I allow my Christian liberty to be brought into bondage by another believer?

Remember this text is written to mature believers.

Romans 14:15 NIV If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, **you are no longer acting in love.**

Most believers are not fully aware of the complete liberty they have in Christ Jesus. Love is the guiding principle for true believers. Love limits our liberty out of respect for a weaker believer's conscience. In this instance, Paul was talking about eating

and drinking. Remember Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees over what is clean and unclean. They were irritated at Christ and His disciples because they ate with unwashed hands. Some of the Jews had developed many extra-biblical rules about being ceremonially clean. They debated how many times one should wash in order to be clean. To the Pharisees, some foods were ceremonially or culturally unclean. Culturally and locally, some food or drink represents moral and spiritual questions. What if a meat or grain was offered to an idol? What if that drink or food was concocted by a witch, cultist or worshiper of Satan? What if my brother or sister's life was destroyed by my consuming that drink?

Four times in this text Paul refers to the weaker believer, (verses 10, 13, 15, 21).

The major emphasis should be, "*for whom Christ died*" and not "*my Christian liberty.*" Does Christ love the "weaker" believer enough to die for them? Did Christ sacrifice Himself for their well-being? If Christ did, shall we wound their conscience by our Christian liberty? If Christ loved them, we should not destroy them.

The Holy Spirit is calling believers to refrain from passing judgment on one another.

If we are going to judge, we should judge ourselves. According to this and other texts, we are to allow every other believer to do what **God** allows them to do. This is the main point of the subject. We can love them and pray for them, but we should not put a stumbling block or hindrance in their way. When another believer sins, our duty is to love and pray for them.

We are to hate sin but love the sinner.

Is it possible to love the sinner and hate the sin? Do you object to that idea? Did you ever do something you hated that you did? Do you love yourself? When we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, we are empowered to hate the sin and love the sinner.

How do we use our Christian liberty?

Christian liberty is a work of the Holy Spirit within the individual believer.

Romans 14:5 KJV Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Romans 14:12 NKJV So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

1 Peter 4:5 NKJV They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Hebrews 4:13 NKJV And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Matthew 12:36 NKJV But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 NLT Young man, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do.

We all have a full-time job keeping our own heart and mind clear before God.

Each of us must dedicate ourselves to maintaining a clear conscience that is entirely free of guilt before God.

1 John 3:21 NKJV Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

We can find no greater place of liberty and peace than walking with a heart that does not condemn us before God. While we must live with confidence toward God, we cannot choose another's path.

Titus 1:15 NKJV To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. It is imperative for each of us to judge ourselves correctly. We must watch after our own conduct, choices, and ways. At the same time, we must resolve to not judge others or put a stumbling block in another believer's way. We have been delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Yet, we must refrain from any action that will cause another believer to stumble, fall, or sin.

What do we do about others who practice non-biblical legalism?

This scripture was not given for people who are supposed to be well established in the faith. This scripture was not for those who practice non-biblical legalism.

The Holy Spirit is concerned about the immature believer who is not established in the faith.

There are degrees of knowledge of Christ.

Romans 14:14 KJV I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus.

Paul was convinced because he knew the Lord Jesus.

Do you remember the man that was blind who sat by the pool of Siloam? (John 9:11)

When Jesus came by, He made clay, anointed his eyes, and told him to go wash. He went and washed and received his sight. When the Pharisees asked him where the man was who healed him, he replied, "I don't know." When they asked who it was that healed his eyes, he said: "He is a prophet." They continued to press the man with questions. They were convinced that Jesus was a sinner.

John 9:25 NKJV He answered and said, "*Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.*"

The only thing he knew about Jesus Christ was He healed his eyes.

Paul said, "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus."

When Paul was given this revelation of our Christian liberty, it went against all of the rules and traditions of his past. He was raised in the strictest sect of the Jews as a Pharisee, (Acts 26:5). He adhered to all of their rules and ceremonies. His clothing, food and drink were controlled by their legal customs. Anything that could possibly go into his mouth was classified as either clean or unclean. Within the Pharisees beliefs, ceremonial washing was more important than kindness or love. He was convinced that some things were unclean. This is a major turn around for Paul.

Now he said, "I know that nothing is absolutely unclean in itself." He is not referring to sanitary laws, allergies, calories, protein, or carbohydrates. Food and drink and observances of days and times are not the fundamental importance.

Paul had found liberty in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 5:1 NKJV Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

What is the Holy Spirit showing us?

We are not to follow a religion of rules, but the Holy Spirit. If, for any reason, you think something is unclean, you must abstain from it. We must live before God with a clear conscience and we must live with others without causing offense. Our only example is Jesus Christ.

2 John 8 NIV Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.

We must keep the END in mind.

2 Corinthians 5:10 AMP For we must all appear and be revealed as we are before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive [his pay] according to what he has done in the body, whether good or evil [considering what his purpose and motive have been, and what he has achieved, been busy with, and given himself and his attention to accomplishing].

Romans 14:17-18 NKJV For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

What then makes us right in the sight of God?

Job 9:2 NKJV "...how can a man be righteous before God?"

Most believers are concerned about peace and joy, but we can never enjoy true peace and joy without righteousness. The Law was given to direct people to righteous living.

Psalms 15:2-3 NKJV He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;

Psalms 15:4-5 NKJV In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the Lord; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change; He who does not put out his money at usury, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

How can we attain righteousness?

The first step toward righteousness is being cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

You must be born again and have your sins forgiven.

Galatians 3:11 NKJV But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

Philippians 3:9 NKJV and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Second, we must be accepted of Him.

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 AMP Therefore, whether we are at home [on earth away from Him] or away from home [and with Him], we are constantly ambitious and strive earnestly to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...

God does not want a legalistic walk that satisfies our own flesh. We are to constantly strive earnestly to live and walk in such a way to be pleasing to Christ. Our ultimate hope is to be presented acceptable and pleasing to God, covered with the righteousness of Christ.