

Faith And Love – Romans 14:14-23

Bible Study ~ 10/12/16
Grace Church of Lockeford

Last week we discussed how we have the liberty in Christ to eat what we want, observe the days we choose, and we will only answer to God for our own decisions. Building on these ideas, Paul exhorts his readers in these verses to exercise their liberty with faith and love. Using our liberty without faith and love brings devastation to our spiritual life and that of others. **First he presents...**

1. The Blessing Of Self-sacrificing Love vv. 14-18

Paul understands and is persuaded of the truth of this statement in *v. 14*. Nothing is unclean of itself. CONTEXT! He is talking about areas of personal freedom. Areas not specifically governed by Scriptural revelation. He is convinced by the Lord Jesus. This is not the opinion of Paul; this is the revelation of the Holy Spirit. He offers a very important exception statement though. To the one who considers something to be unclean, it is unclean. If your conscience will not allow you to participate in an activity, don't do it! *V. 15* is the heart of the whole argument. Is food more important than your brother or sister in Christ? Is it? What about movies, music, or clothing? If your brother is grieved – then you are no longer walking in love. Our love for one another is the important issue here. Paul issues a command in the end of the verse. DO NOT! Destroy - ἀπόλλυμι *apollymi* *destroy; perish; lose. To spiritually harm – to cause irreparable or tremendous spiritual damage to someone (as to one's conscience or faith); conceived of as physically destroying someone.* Do not cause tremendous spiritual damage to one for whom Christ died! Food is not worth it! This is serious business! This is an eternal being for whom the God of the universe suffered on a Cross to redeem! Your food is not more important!

V. 16 exhorts us not to let our good be spoken of as evil. Here's the thing. There is nothing wrong with eating meat. It can even be called good. But when it causes harm to a brother in Christ, it becomes something else. This also is a command. Don't take your liberty so far that good because something spoken of as evil. "Be spoken of as evil" is literally blasphemy. Don't let your good be blasphemed by abusing it. *V. 17* tells us that the kingdom of God has nothing to do with food. It is all about righteousness, peace, and joy and these come through the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God is not a physical kingdom! It is spiritual. When we trust in Christ, His righteousness is imputed to us, we are given peace with God, and the joy of the Lord becomes our strength! All of these things are produced by the Holy Spirit when He takes up residence in our lives. These are to be our focus, not food and drink!

V. 18 proclaims that if you serve Christ like this, if you live this way, it makes you acceptable to God and approved by men. Acceptable – εὐάρεστος *euarestos* *pleasing; acceptable. Well-pleasing – giving pleasure and satisfaction.* We bring pleasure and satisfaction to God when we voluntarily limit our freedom for the sake of others. Approved – δόκιμος *dokimos* *approved; tested. Accepted – generally approved; especially as proven genuine.* We prove ourselves to be genuine to others when we behave this way. This is the blessing of self-sacrificing love. We bring pleasure to the Lord and demonstrate to men the genuineness of our faith in God.

Love for our brothers and sisters in Christ voluntarily limits our freedom that we might protect their conscience. The bigger issue here is that they are ones for whom Christ died and as such they are far more important than any personal freedom! This is how we serve the Lord. **Paul also describes...**

2. The Blessing Of Others-first Faith vv. 19-23

This is how we serve Christ and how we bring God pleasure and gain approval before men. Because all that is true, *v. 19* tells us to pursue the things that make for peace and the things that edify. I love how this is worded. We pursue, we strive and chase after peace. We do all we can to live in harmony with one another. But we don't just seek peace. If peace were the highest objective, compromise would be

inevitable. We also seek to edify. This is the Greek word οἰκοδομή oikodomē *building; edification*. *Building up – the act of bringing something closer to fullness or completion; understood as if assisting in the construction of an incomplete building*. This is how we are to think of one another. As buildings that are incomplete. We want to be part of the building process, not demolition. Pursue that which builds up! In [v. 20](#) we again have a negative command. Do not destroy. This is a different word than [v. 15](#). This word destroy is the idea of throwing down or causing to fail. Don't tear down the work God is doing in the life of another believer! Especially not over something like food! As in [v. 14](#) Paul states that all things are pure. But pure things become evil when we eat in such a way that we cause offense.

[V. 21](#) is a powerful verse. This is what is good, what is wiser or more advantageous, to do nothing that would cause a brother to stumble, be offended, or weakened. We don't want our liberty to cause someone else to sin or even to cause their faith to be weakened. As he said in [v. 19](#), our focus is to be building one another toward completeness in Christ! We are not to be weakening and causing one another to sin. According to [v. 22](#) having the faith to eat something is between you and the Lord. Don't bring condemnation on yourself through what you do. The implication here is that if we do not follow what has been outlined above, we will bring condemnation on ourselves. The conscience of our brothers and sisters is far more important than the exercising of our freedom. So eat with faith, but be wary. [V. 23](#) says that eating something you do not personally feel the freedom to eat brings condemnation. Paul presents this as something that is bound to happen if we do not exercise our liberty with deference and love. If you don't believe you have the freedom to do something and do it anyway, you sin.

Here is the blessing. If we have faith, we have freedom. Our goal as the body of Christ is to strengthen and build one another up until we are all mature in the faith. That doesn't mean we go around "fixing" people. It means we are self-sacrificing in our love and others-first in our faith that we might all grow in grace together.

Challenge: Exercise freedom in faith and love putting others first.