

Blessed Liberty – Romans 14:1-13

Bible Study ~ 9/28/16

Grace Church of Lockeford

We have been given liberty in Christ. This blessing carries with it great responsibility. Romans 14:1-13 describes the blessing and responsibility of freedom. Paul points us to three truths that emphasize the freedom we have. At first glance these may not seem related to liberty, but they are. We are not to concern ourselves overmuch with the opinions of others. It is God we serve and it is Him we will stand before and give our accounting. Liberty is found in our position in Christ. **And so Paul's first emphasis in describing our liberty is...**

1. The Judge Before Whom We Stand vv. 1-4

v. 1 is talking about a fellow believer who the local body is to receive. The key to understanding this section is right here. Paul is discussing the behavior of believers in light of those who are weak in the faith. We are to receive them but be careful not to tangle them up in disputes. I like the way ESV translates this; welcome them “*but not to quarrel over opinions.*” The rest of the section is spent describing what opinions they were quarreling about in that time. Some of these quarrels still exist and we have even added to the list! The point is, don't welcome a weaker brother into fellowship for the purpose of persuading him to agree with your opinion. Paul begins his illustration in *v. 2*. One believes he can eat all things; a weak believer eats only vegetables. Now, if we were to read this verse and ignore everything else in the context, we could use it as a stick to beat people with. I have heard things said like this “See vegetarian Christians are weak in their faith!” Talk about missing the point! God told Noah in Gen. 9 that they could eat meat. In Acts 10 the Lord made it clear that there were no longer any diet restrictions. But the weakness or strength of believer's faith is not Paul's point here! Look at *v. 3*. “Judge” here is the idea of *evaluating*. *To form a critical opinion of something*. There is a negative connotation here. If you eat meat, don't despise those who don't. If you don't eat it, don't despise those who do! Why not? Because it has nothing to do with your salvation! God has received you based on faith in Christ! Not based on what food you consume! “Received” is the same word as *v. 1*. Paul makes the point even stronger in *v. 4*. We are God's servants. Servants don't get to judge one another; the master is our judge! We stand or fall to His judgment not to that of our fellow servants. We will be made to stand because that is what God has promised to those who place their faith in Christ for salvation.

The blessing here is that we will give account to the judge who knows all things. He knows our thoughts and intentions and will judge righteously. We will not stand and be judged by fallen men who ascribe to us their own sinful motives. We have a tendency to assume the worst in each other. Especially when we have been repeatedly let down and been exposed to the ugliness of sin. Let's sum up Paul's exhortation. You eat meat and you don't. So what?! Who cares?! Let it go! We answer to God for matters of opinion and freedom, not to each other! **Paul's second emphasis in describing our liberty is...**

2. The Lord Before Whom We Live Or Die vv. 5-9

In *v. 5* Paul moves from food to the observance of days. This refers to more than just the Sabbath. I believe he is referring to all the days that were considered sacred. Remember that he is addressing a church that would have been a mix of Jews and Gentiles. There would have been misunderstanding and confusion on both sides as to why certain days were or were not important. Paul says “It doesn't matter!”. What matters is that you are convinced in your own mind. I want to refer us again to *v. 1*. Paul is discussing things that are matters of opinion, not issues of sin or violating Biblical requirements or standards. Paul clarifies why he holds this view in *v. 6*. If you observe (*set one's mind on. Regard highly*) a day or eat food you eat it to the Lord. If you don't, you don't to the Lord. Paul places the emphasis on the attitude of the individual. If the believer is convinced in his own mind and walking in a desire to please God, it shouldn't matter to us what they do in areas of freedom. The trouble comes in when people confuse areas of freedom with commands of Scripture.

V. 7 explains that we do not live or die to ourselves. This is an important point. Turn to [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#). We are not our own. We have been purchased. The impact of this is seen in [v. 8](#). Once we have trusted in Christ we are His. If we live, we live for Him, if we die, we die for Him. Whether living or dead we belong to Him and all of our activities are done before Him. We are His! [V. 9](#) explains that this was the purpose of the death and resurrection of Christ. To be Lord of the dead and living.

I no longer live for myself. The decisions I make are made before the Lord. He is the one before whom I live or die. What matters most in life is that He is pleased with my actions, words, and thoughts. The convictions I hold on matters of opinion and personal preference are between me and the Lord. They are not binding for others nor should them living differently than I do alter my treatment of them. The blessing here is that whether I live or die, I am His and I live to please Him, not others. **Paul's third emphasis in describing our liberty is...**

3. The God Before Whom We Will Give Account vv. 10-13

In understanding [v. 10](#) it is important to look back at [v. 3](#). This is the first time “judge” was used. In this context Paul is referring to an attitude of despising and contempt for those who hold different opinions on matters of personal liberty. We are talking about things where we have the freedom of choice. So here in [v. 10](#) when Paul asks why we judge one another, it is that type of judgment he has in mind. This is made clear in his second question. “Why do you show contempt for your brother?” “Contempt” is the same word translated “despise” in [v. 3](#). Paul reminds us that we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Not just your brother in Christ, but you as well. [V. 11](#) is a paraphrase of [Isaiah 45:23](#). We are familiar with this because of how Paul uses it in [Philippians 2:9-11](#). We are included in this group of people. We will bow before Him and we will confess. Paul interprets this Isaiah passage in [v. 12](#). Paul reminds us here that we will give account of ourselves to God. “Account” literally means *word or message*. The idea is that of *a record or narrative description of past events; especially for the determination of accountability*. I will not give an account of you and you will not give an account of me. The one I need to be concerned with, as far as this type of judging goes, is myself. Am I “fully persuaded in my own mind”? How I handle myself in matters of personal freedom will be between me and the Lord. Having emphasized personal responsibility Paul addresses our attitude toward one another in [v. 13](#). The way this is worded implies discontinuing a present activity. Stop judging one another with condemnation and an attitude of despising. Instead, resolve not to cause your brother or sister in Christ to stumble. “Resolve” is the same word translated “judge”. A stumbling block is something that causes sin. A cause to fall is a trap. Don't be the cause of an occasion to sin in the life of a brother or sister in Christ. Don't lead them into a trap through the exercising of your freedom.

I will give an account for myself. Not for anyone else. I will stand before Him and answer for how I have conducted myself. In light of that, we should resolve to walk in love toward one another. Not flaunting our freedom, but protecting the conscience of others. That is what Paul will address in the rest of the chapter.

CHALLENGE: Walk in liberty knowing that we will answer to God in how we use our freedom.