

Sermon Title: The Law of Love Supersedes the Law of Liberty, Part 1

Sermon Text: Romans 14:12-15

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to walk in sacrificial love in the area of doubtful things.

Sermon Proposition: There are 3 attitudes and actions the loving Christian avoids with the weak.

- I. The loving Christian is determined not to be a stumbling block with their liberty for the one saved by Christ. V.12-13
- II. The loving Christian is determined not to cause injury to the conscience with their liberty for the one saved by Christ. V.14
- III. The loving Christian is determined not to destroy with their liberty the one saved by Christ. V.15

- I. The loving Christian is determined not to be a stumbling block with their liberty for the one saved by Christ. V.12-13

Paul is exhorting the “strong” to not use their liberty in such a way that they would cause the “weak” member to suffer spiritual ruin. (eg, “stumble” is reiterated in vv.13b, 20b-21) Paul uses a play on words to emphasize his point. The Greek word “Krino” is the word “judge” and “resolve”. The word “judge” is telling us what not to do. We are not to condemn the weaker person. While the word “resolve” is in the positive meaning to determine or decide to not be or place a stumbling block in front of the “weak.”

1 Peter 2:16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

Stumbling block translates “causing a person to trip or stumble” (skandalon) “don’t cause an offense” or “occasion of misfortune,” or “cause to be ruined.” Paul is exhorting us to not be judgmental over doubtful things (food, drink, days, etc) of fellow believers but instead we should use our judgment to help others.

Paul provides the same instructions in his first letter to the Corinthians [**1 Corinthians 8:9** But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.] avoid causing others to stumble into sin. We must understand that our liberty in Christ, must be regulated and take into consideration the impact it may have on those who don’t understand that the behavior and choices of the “strong” could bring spiritual damage or ruin upon the “weak.”

The loving, caring, and mature Christian will determine or decide in their heart and mind to be sensitive to any weakness in a fellow believer and avoid doing anything, including what they have a right to do.

- II. The loving Christian is determined not to cause injury to the conscience with their liberty for the one saved by Christ. V.14

Paul being a Jew, and adequately trained in Old Testament Law, would have been taught and trained to avoid anything that was common or unclean. But under grace or the Law of Love there is a change of mind toward those things.

A. There is nothing unclean in and of itself. V.14a

- 1. Nothing from the outside going in defiles.

Mark 7:15 "There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man.

- 2. Everything created by God is good.

1 Timothy 4:3-5 forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. **4** For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; **5** for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

- 3. To the pure all things are pure

Titus 1:15 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.

- 4. There is only One God - **1 Corinthians 8:4-7**

- 5. What God has cleansed, don’t call unclean – **Acts 10:15-34**

- B. The **“weak”** considers there to be still unclean things. V.14b
- What Paul wants the “strong” to realize is that people differ in their ability to internalize and discern truth related to this issue of unclean and clean.
1. Homeschooling vs. Secular School
 2. Owning a TV vs Not owning a TV
 3. Sports participation vs non-sports participation
 4. Secular music vs Christian music only
 5. KJV vs other translations

“The fact that Christ’s coming brought an end to the absolute validity of the Mosaic law (cf. 6:14-15; 7:4) and particularly to the ritual and ceremonial provisions of the law, was standard early Christian teaching.” [Douglas J. Moo: The New International Commentary of the New Testament “The Epistle To The Romans” p. 853]

“And at the intellectual level, the “weak” Christians may themselves have understood this truth. But Paul wants the “strong” in faith to recognize that people cannot always “existentially” grasp such truth – particularly when it runs so counter to a long and strongly held tradition basic to their own identity as God’s people.” [Ibid., p.853]

III. The loving Christian is determined not to **destroy** with their liberty the one saved by Christ. V.15

- A. Do not cause destruction by **hurting** the “weak.” V.15a

Grieve or hurt (lupeo) carries the basic meaning of causing pain, distress, or grief.

John 21:17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

This should not be done related to these issues. The major emphasis in this passage is on how our words and actions affect the spiritual welfare of fellow Christians. It is a sin to hurt or grieve another brother or sister in these matters (**1 Corinthians 8:8-12**).

- B. Do not cause destruction by not walking in **love**. V.15b

Positively, Paul urges the “strong” to recognize that their freedom on these matters (their good in v.16) must be governed by love for their fellow believers (v.15) and concern for the “building up” of the body of Christ (v.19). The eating of the “strong” coupled with the attitude of superiority and scorn toward those who think differently on these issues can cause the “weak” to feel pressured into doing things even when they do not yet have the maturity of faith to believe that it is ok to do without feeling guilty.

The “strong” by their attitude and behavior are forgetting the previous instructions found in Romans 12:9-21; 13:8-10 relating to basic Holy Spirit empowered conduct. “love for the neighbor”

- C. Do not because of your preferences **destroy** the fellow Christian. V.15c

The word “destroy” refers to spiritual grief or guilt, resulting in self-condemnation for the “weak.” Apollumi (destroy) is used also in (Matthew 18:14). Causing the “weak” to violate their consciences, could eventually lead to ruin of the well being of the “weak.”

Paul offers as a solution the sacrificial death example of Jesus Christ. How can a Christian refuse to pay the same price, over a minor issue and an occasional restriction in their diet, celebration of days, or drink.