

(Through the Bible) Romans 13-14

by Chuck Smith

As Christians, we are to be subject to higher powers, love our neighbors, and put on the armor of light to survive in a dark world.

Duration: 1:05:18

Scripture: Genesis 6:5, Luke 18:8, Romans 13, 2 Timothy 3:13

Topics: "Through The Bible"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of love and how it fulfills the law. He also highlights the significance of being aware of the times we live in and the prophecies given by God. The preacher encourages believers to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, living honestly and avoiding sinful behaviors. Additionally, he addresses the issue of pornography addiction and its detrimental effects on individuals, comparing it to alcohol or drug addiction. The sermon concludes with a call to wake up from spiritual lethargy and engage with biblical scholarship that is more impactful.

Transcript

So we turn now in our Bibles to Romans chapter 13. As Christians, what should be our attitude towards government? Paul declares, Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God.

The Bible does not allow for civil disobedience. We are commanded by the Scriptures to be in obedience to those governing bodies that are over us. Paul wrote this at the time in which Nero was ruling in Rome.

And we oftentimes say, well, you know, we should be in obedience as long as we agree with what is being legislated. I do feel that there are rare occasions where the law of God does supersede the law of man. And on those occasions, I must be obedient to God.

In this period of the early church, when they were required to declare that Caesar was Lord or be executed, they chose death by martyrdom rather than acknowledging the Lordship of Caesar. When Peter was ordered by the magistrates or by the council actually of the Jews not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus, he said, whether it is right to obey God or man, judge ye, we know that we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. And so when it becomes a matter of my conscience, then I must be obedient to God.

But for the most part, I am to be obedient to those governmental forces over me. I'm to obey the law. Being a Christian does not give me an immunity from the law for the powers that be are ordained by God.

Now, this is an issue that we sometimes are prone to question. Did God ordain this particular government? The Bible tells us that the powers that exist are ordained by God. It is interesting to me that Nebuchadnezzar challenged that truth.

When he was told by Daniel, who was interpreting his dream, that the great image that he saw was the ruling empires that would govern the world. And he said, thou, Nebuchadnezzar, are the head of gold, but your kingdom is going to be replaced by an inferior kingdom, the shoulders and the chest of brass, of silver. And that will be replaced by a yet inferior kingdom, the stomach of brass, and that by a kingdom of iron, the legs.

Nebuchadnezzar turned right around and made an image 90 feet high of all gold and demanded that the people worship it, which was open defiance to the declaration that your kingdom is going to be replaced by the Medo-Persian empire. And as the result of this defiance of God by Nebuchadnezzar, because of his pride, the Lord allowed him insanity until seven seasons had passed over him, until he knew that the Most High God ruled in the governments of man and set over them those whom he would. That was the lesson that God was teaching him during that period of insanity, where he went out and lived with the animals in the fields and ate grass with the oxen.

The purpose of that was that he might recognize that God rules and God establishes those on the throne whom he wills. And he was only on the throne of Babylon by the divine decree of God. And after his insane period, he acknowledged that the God of heaven ruled and those who exalt themselves he is able to abase.

For he had surely been abased, but he recognized that God is the one who establishes the kingdoms and the thrones of man. Why does God then allow evil men to reign, if God is the one who establishes it? Basically because men want evil men to reign over them. And in order that they might be brought to judgment, God will allow those evil rulers to lead the people in order that they might receive that rightful judgment of God.

But I am told here is a child of God to be subject under those higher powers because they have been established there by God. Whosoever therefore is resisting the power is resisting the ordinance of God. And they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation or condemnation.

That is, you will be brought into judgment and thrown in jail is actually what he is telling you. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and you will have praise of the same.

In other words, be a decent law-abiding citizen and you don't have to worry about the authority. The only time I worry when I see a black and white is when I'm exceeding the speed. You know, if I'm going the speed limit or under, I don't worry when I see the highway patrol go by.

But if I'm exceeding the speed, then I think, uh-oh. You know, you look in your rear view mirror and you see him down a mile or so, the lights flashing, and the first thing you do is look at your speed and see how fast you're going. And if I'm exceeding it, I think, uh-oh, you know, and I sort of ease back to the speed limit and stay in my lane and cruise along.

And breathe a great sigh of relief when he goes shooting past. You know, all right, you know. But for a little bit, my heart begins to beat.

But if I look down and I see that I'm in the speed limit, I think, oh-ho, that's great, you know, he's not after me. There are only a terror to the evildoers, not to the good. And thus, if you are living a good life, you need not to be terrorized or be in terror of the authorities.

For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if you are doing that which is evil, then be afraid, for he bears not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that is doing evil. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

So as a child of God, I am to be a obedient citizen, and in subject, a subject, an obedient subject to the authoritative government over me. For this cause, pay taxes also. For they are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing.

I agree with that, they're attending continually on this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues the taxes to whom the taxes are due, custom to whom the custom, fear to whom fear, and honor to whom honor is due. Render to each one their dues.

We are not to try to escape our taxes, nor are we to try to smuggle Rolex watches into the United States that we bought overseas. Pay the custom to whom the custom is due. This is something that the scripture commands us to be faithful and obedient, not to cheat on your tax reports.

Fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. Owe no man anything but to love one another, for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet.

And if there is any other commandment, it's briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love works no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Jesus was asked one day, what is the greatest commandment? And he answered, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.

Then he said, the second is likened to the first. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. And in these two, you have all the law and the prophets.

Everything that God has commanded man, how we ought to live in relationship to God and the relationship to each other, is all summed up in these two. Love God supremely and love your neighbor as you love yourself. And if you do that, you will be doing all that God requires of you.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. And so it is interesting that the law was placed really, for the most part, in negatives. Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet, and so forth.

And it was mainly placed in negatives, but Jesus turned around and put it in the positive. And Paul here follows the example of Jesus Christ, and he too puts it in the positive. And he says, look, all of these commandments, not commit adultery, not kill, not steal, they're all summed up in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

That's the summation of it. For love will not work ill to his neighbor. If I'm loving him, I'm not going to be lying, stealing, cheating, or whatever from him.

Especially if I love him as I love myself. So, love is the fulfilling of the law. And that, he said, knowing the time.

God expects us to be aware of the time in which we live, and of the time of God's workings. For this purpose, God gave us prophecy, which is history in advance, so that we would be alerted and aware of the days in which we live. Knowing the time, we are not ignorant of the times, nor should we be.

For we are not the children of darkness that the day of the Lord should catch us as a thief. But we're children of the light, and therefore, knowing the time, it's high time that we wake up from our sleep. I believe that, for the most part, the church is in a general state of lethargy.

I think that it is indeed tragic that men are so concerned with their scholarly research to determine whether or not there were two authors of the book of Isaiah, or perhaps three, and their concern of the authorship of Isaiah is so great, they don't pay any attention to what Isaiah said. I think it's tragic when a man becomes so scholarly that he thinks that he is smart enough to challenge the Word of God, or to challenge the writers of the Word of God. And I think that it borders on blasphemy for a man to suggest from his position of scholarly achievement to suggest that Matthew was embellishing his account of the story of the life of Christ, and that he actually inserted things that really didn't happen in order to make the story more exciting.

And he does this in the name of biblical scholarship in an evangelical college. It's sad indeed that people are sleeping today because this kind of scholarship puts you to sleep. It's high time that we awake out of this lethargy.

I do not know how we seem to just be sleeping when all of these decisions were being made by the Supreme Court putting prayer out of school, the favorable mention of God out of our schools. How we were sleeping when the humanists took over the public school system. My wife ordered some of the McGuffey readers this last week.

They came yesterday. And she started reading me some of the things out of the McGuffey readers. These are the reading textbooks that the children used to have here in the United States.

Stories that had a moral to them. Stories that extolled the virtues of honesty and of goodness. Teaching the children as they were reading that they don't have to fear.

God is watching over and He is near and they can call upon Him. Now what's so wrong about teaching morality and honesty and trusting God to a child? What is so criminal about that that it has become against the law of our land? And where were we when this was going on? The church was sleeping and while we slept the flood tide of evil was open. And now such a flood of pornography has filled our nation.

But we're not alone. In fact we're probably a step behind some of the European nations in that horrible anything goes. The West has been totally demoralized and totally immoral.

You go to Europe and you actually feel that you are in a post-Christian era. For the most part the church is dead in Europe. And you can feel it walking down the streets.

You can sense that spirit of anti-Christ that is everywhere. And we slept and the church was sleeping. But it's high time that we wake out of our sleep.

For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent. I really cannot see how we can sink much lower.

I really cannot see how we can go on much longer. How many more years can we exist adding \$192 billion to the federal debt? How much longer can the banks keep holding Brazil and Mexico and these other countries that are unable to pay their debts? Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent but the day is at hand.

The Bible does face reality and it does see the darkness of the night. But thank God the Bible gives us a hope. After the dark night is over a new day is going to dawn.

The day of God's glory that is going to cover the earth. And that hope sustains us in the dark night. But let us cast off the works of darkness.

And let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day. Not in rioting or revelry.

Not in drunkenness. Not in immorality and shamelessness. Not in strife or in envy.

These are all a part of the flesh. And the life after the flesh. But put you on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof. I believe that today there is an evil spirit that has invaded the land. And this evil spirit operating through the pornography.

I believe that people can become addicted to pornography just as much as they can become addicted to alcohol. Or to drugs. And it has the same powerful hold over their lives.

As does alcohol or drugs. They are drawn to it. They are attracted by it.

And when they get away from it they say, I'll never do that again. And they are shamed by what they have done. But somehow they seem to be lured and drawn back to it again.

And it can get a hold on a person's life. And he can become a slave to this spirit and power that is there. Operating through this it can get a hold on a person's life.

And you can become a victim. Desiring more and more and more. And different types of pornography.

And it seems to be a progressive thing like drugs and all. Where you have to go deeper and deeper and more and more. There are many homes today being destroyed.

Because of pornography. Because of the, what Paul called here, chambering. Or immorality.

The Greek koiti. Or the desire for the forbidden bed. Many marriages being destroyed today because of incest.

Many marriages being destroyed today because of the pornography and these things. And it is tragic to see a person that is a victim of these things. I believe that it is a work of Satan in the last days.

And I believe that our only power against it is prayer. I believe that it is definitely a spiritual battle. And the Bible says the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God.

To the pulling down of the strongholds of the enemy. But I think that we have to use spiritual weapons. I don't think that just nagging a person or getting on a person's case for it is going to do it.

That's using carnal methods. It is a spiritual battle and we must combat it with the spiritual weapons that God has given to us. And in this case that weapon of prayer.

An intercessory prayer. Paul tells us that we might take them from the captivity of the enemy who is holding them captive against their wills. If a person opens his mind and opens the door to these kind of things.

It can actually get a hold on that person's life. We have an interesting case in the Old Testament where Amaziah had sent his troops against the Edomites. And he had experienced a victory against the Edomites.

And so he wrote to the king of Israel in the north. Jehoiah has. And he challenged him to come out and fight.

And Jehoiah has sent back a message and said, Look, you went down and you had victory over the Edomites. Stay home and enjoy the victory. Why should you meddle to your own hurt? But Amaziah flushed with the victory over the Edomites said, Come on out you chicken and face me, you know.

And so Jehoiah has come out with his troops. And they defeated the troops of Amaziah. They came to the city of Jerusalem.

And they took many captives. And they broke down the walls of Jerusalem. And they carried away the treasure out of the temple.

Why? Because he didn't have enough sense not to meddle to his own hurt. To meddle in places where he had no business being. And there is a lot of meddling that is going on.

As a person begins to meddle with things that he has no right to meddle with as a child of God. And when you do, it is always to your own hurt. And even as they tore down the walls of Jerusalem, so that he lost his defenses.

So Satan will tear down your walls. And you'll begin to lose your defenses against him. And you'll find that you don't have defenses when he comes attacking again.

You've meddled around and now you've been defeated. And the walls are down and you have no real defenses against the enemy anymore. You're a victim.

And he is holding you captive. But we are told that we should take them from the captivity of the enemy who is holding them captive against their will. How do we do that through prayer? Satan is holding many people's lives today as captives.

Captives of their own lust. But God has ordained that you be the instrument through which God delivers them from that captivity. And it comes by intercessory prayer.

Holding that person before the Lord. And binding the power of Satan that is holding them captive. We have the authority in the name of Jesus over all the principalities and powers.

For they are subject unto Him. And when we come against them in the name of Jesus, they must yield. And thus through the power of the name of Jesus, we can set people free from the captivity of Satan.

We can set them free from that binding force that he is exercising over them. That blinding influence that he has. Because people who are being held captive by Satan are also blinded and they don't even realize their problem many times.

For the God of this world, the Scripture said, has blinded their eyes and they cannot see the truth. And so through prayer, I combine that work of Satan so that their eyes can be opened. Through prayer, I can set them free from the power of Satan that is holding them.

That influence that is keeping them bond, a slave and captive to those things. And I need to exercise this intercessory prayer in delivering them from the power of the enemy that they might come into the glorious liberty and freedom in Jesus Christ. Therefore, because we are living in a dark world and the night is far spent, the only way we're going to survive is by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and not making any provision for our flesh to fulfill the lust thereof.

It is a heavy spiritual warfare and it's becoming heavier every day and is going to continue heavier every day until the Lord snatches us out of it. Things are not going to ease up. Evil days, the Scripture said, shall wax worse and worse.

And Jesus said, because the iniquity of the world will abound, the love of many shall wax cold. Talking about the time of His coming. In fact, He said, when the Lord comes, will He find faith? Yes, He will, if we will determine to walk and to live after the Spirit and put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for our flesh to fulfill the lust of them.

How opposite that is from the world today where the doors have been opened for man to live after His flesh in any manner that his mind can imagine. And we think of the words of Jesus concerning His coming and as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man. And one of those conditions of the days of Noah, it said, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

They didn't restrain themselves from anything. And we are living in that kind of an age today where there seems to be no restraints. Men living after the flesh.

Fourteenth chapter, Paul deals now with another issue. Him that is weak in the faith, receive. But not to doubtful disputations.

Don't get into arguments with them. Don't doubtful disputations. A person who is weak in the faith.

And in this case, the person weak in the faith is the one who has very limited or narrow convictions. For one man believes that he can eat anything. Another who is weak in the faith is a vegetarian.

There are some religious groups today that advocate being a vegetarian. There are some who believe that we should follow the dietary law of Moses and thus we shouldn't eat lobster or shrimp or pork or the other forbidden unclean animals of the Old Testament. But there are others that say, I like pork chops and I like lobster.

So, those that are strong in the faith, eat meat. Those that are weak in the faith, eat vegetables. Now, should we get in big fights and arguments over this? Should I say to that vegetarian, Oh, that's stupid.

There's nothing wrong with eating meat. That's just plain dumb. And should he point his finger and say, Aha, you can't be a Christian because you're eating meat.

Man, God's going to damn you to hell because you're eating meat. You know, it's sad that these kind of things have brought this kind of division within the church because someone is convicted of something and they want to convict everybody else of the same thing or make everybody yield to their convictions. Paul says, Let not him that eats the meat despise him that doesn't eat meat.

And let not him which eats not the meat judge him that eats, for God has received him. So, in this matter, our convictions are to be personal things. In these areas where the Scripture does not give us precise, definite teaching.

There's a latitude. And I am to have sympathetic understanding towards those whose convictions are narrower than mine. And I am also to have a sympathetic understanding for those whose convictions are broader than mine.

And that's where I have my problems. I can sympathize with a person who's a vegetarian. That's alright.

He doesn't want to eat meat. That's fine. But some fellow who has convictions that are a little broader than mine and is doing some of the things that I don't feel that I can do as a child of God, I have an awfully hard time not judging him.

How can he do that? And so that's where my problem lies. No problem dealing with those who have stronger convictions as long as they leave me alone. You know, don't lay your trip on me.

But when it is the other way around, how I would love to lay my trip on some people. Rebuke them for the things that they are doing which they feel the liberty to do. Now, naturally this is in Scriptural limitations.

There are things that the Scripture tells us are wrong and with that there is no question. But in these areas where the Scripture does not speak specifically, then we are to have this latitude in the receiving of each other. For who are you to judge another man's servant? You see, who are you to judge me? I'm not your servant.

Now, if I were your servant, then you'd have a right to judge me. But I'm the Lord's servant. Therefore, the Lord is my judge and He shall judge me.

In the same token, you are not my servant so I have no right to judge you. Again, you are the Lord's servant and so He will judge you. For before a man's own master he either stands or falls and Paul says, yes, he will be held up for God is able to make him to stand.

And I like this. God has helped a lot of people to stand that I was sure they were going to fall. The way they were living, I knew they were going down the tube but God held them up and He was able to make them to stand and to the surprise of a lot of people, He's helped me to stand.

On the issue of eating meat, but then it also goes over on the issue of the respect of the holy day. For one man esteems one day above another. Another esteems every day alike.

Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Now, on what day are we to worship the Lord? On Saturday or on Sunday? If we worship on Saturday, are we then to follow the Jewish custom of the day begins at sundown and should we begin worshipping God on Friday evening as the sun goes down and worship until Saturday evening sundown? Or is Sunday the day that we should worship the Lord? And there were those and there are those who are very vehement in their feeling that Saturday is the only day to worship the Lord and if you worship the Lord on Sunday, that's tantamount to taking the mark of the beast for Sunday worship is the mark of the beast because Sunday was actually named after the sun god. Sunday and thus it was after the sun god.

Thus, we ought to worship on Saturday, but they don't tell you that that's named after the god Saturn. So, one man esteems one day above another. Oh, this is the only day.

I'm in the second category here myself. Another esteems every day alike. That's for me.

Doesn't matter. I worship God on Saturday or Monday or Wednesday or whenever. Doesn't matter to me what day I worship.

I worship the Lord every day. As far as I'm concerned, every day is the Lord's day. I live my life for Him.

And so, I worship the Lord every morning. I worship the Lord all the time. And every day is alike to me.

Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord. And he that regards not the day to the Lord, he does not regard it.

He that eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks. And he that eats not to the Lord, he eats not and gives God thanks. For none of us live to himself, and no man dies to himself.

For whether we live, we live unto the Lord. Whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's.

And this, of course, is my feeling entirely. My life, I live for the Lord. I'm not living for myself.

I won't die for myself. But whether I live or die, I'm the Lord's. For to this end, Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living.

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you set at naught your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So, Paul is really discouraging this practice that we have so often of judging each other within the body to commit that judgment unto the Lord because we are all going to appear before this judgment seat of Christ.

He's the one that we must answer to. He is our Lord, the one that we serve, and thus, the one to whom we will ultimately answer. For every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord and thus, my relationship to him is something that he will judge.

So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not, therefore, judge one another anymore. But judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

Now, let's not judge each other, but as we're living together, let's let love be the rule of life. Loving our neighbor as ourself. And in love, let's not do something that will cause a brother who is weaker to stumble.

You may have liberty in a certain area. Don't flaunt that liberty before a weak brother. Nor should you try to argue a person out of their convictions.

If a person comes to me and says, I believe it's a sin to eat salt, then it would be wrong for me to try and argue him into the folly of that kind of a position. Why? There's nothing wrong with salt. It's just calcium chloride, you know.

Nothing wrong with that. It might bother your heart a bit if you get too much, but you know, moderation. And I might try and talk him out of his convictions.

I shouldn't. Because if he feels it's a sin to eat salt, to him it is a sin, because that's the way he feels. And so if I say, oh, try a little salt, and I shake a little salt on his head, it tastes so much... Potatoes are so flat without... Come on, just try a little salt, you know.

And I'm encouraging him into something that he has a conviction against, and he takes that potato, and ooh, that is good. Yeah, my flesh can go for that, you know. But then every time he's using salt because he has that conviction, he's like, oh, man, oh, I'm a sinner, you know.

And he's troubled now with his conscience. And I've stumbled him. I've caused him to stumble.

Therefore, you can come to me and tell me any kind of weird conviction you have, and I'll sympathize with you. I won't try and talk you out of your convictions. I don't think that that is my place.

We are not to put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in our brother's way. For I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him that esteems anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Now, Paul is saying basically, look, I can eat ham.

I can eat pork chops. It's not unclean of itself. It's not going to damn me.

I know that. I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus there is nothing unclean of itself, but if a man esteems it to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Here is a matter of faith.

And herein I feel that the church has done a great disservice in preaching conviction or convictions on people for some of the things that they do that are not things that are relative to the person's eternal salvation. When I was growing up as a child, over and over and over again, I heard it preached that you could not go to heaven if you smoked. That this was a damning sin and no person who smoked could expect to enter the kingdom of heaven.

And I heard that preached so much that I was convicted that it was true. Now, in a sense, I'm glad that I had that preaching because it kept me from ever smoking a cigarette. I've never smoked one in my entire life and I don't feel I have missed a thing.

I'm happy that I don't smoke, but not for spiritual reasons, but for physical reasons. And I happen to distaste smoking extremely. I think the closest I've come to putting my fist in somebody's face was over a cigar on an airplane.

And our whole compartment stinky because one stubborn character wanted to enjoy the pleasure of his cigar. I made it very unpleasurable for him, but not for spiritual reasons. Now, many of the young people who were my contemporaries who went to church with me, as they were growing up, as boys do, they began to experiment and pick up cigarette butts, you know, and light them and smoke them.

I grew up in the days of depression. You couldn't go out and buy a pack of cigarettes. Nobody had that kind of money.

And a lot of them started smoking. But coincidentally, with their starting to smoke, they also left their walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. Because they believed that you could not be saved and smoke because that was what was preached at them.

And so the minute they started to smoke, they left their fellowship with the Lord because they felt that fellowship with the Lord was impossible as long as you were smoking. And so I grew up in that kind of a background. Imagine my shock when I heard that Spurgeon smoked cigars.

I can't believe it. You know, he's the guy that I admire as the greatest preacher almost in the history of the church. And G. Campbell Morgan had a pipe.

Oh, no. How could you? Smoking is not a damning sin unless you believe it is. But if you believe it is, then it can be, you see.

If a man esteems a thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Now, I definitely esteem it to be unclean. Therefore, I could not... If I smoked, it would be a sign of my rebellion against God.

But in the same token, I can accept the fact that Christians do smoke. Now, I appreciate their graciousness for not smoking around me. And I'm sincere in that.

I hate smoke. I hate to smell someone else's smoke. And I appreciate that they don't smoke around me, but I also respect their problem.

And I would not and do not condemn their smoking as long as they don't do it around me. And then my condemnation is not spiritual. It's just purely physical.

I am persuaded by the Lord Jesus there is nothing unclean of itself. But to Him that esteems anything to be unclean, to Him it is unclean. But if your brother is grieved over your liberty to eat meat, now you are not walking in love.

Don't destroy him with your liberty to eat meat for whom Christ died. We are not to flaunt again our Christian liberty before the weaker brother. If it offends him, if it's hurting him in his walk to see my liberty, then I should not exercise my liberty before him.

Why should I destroy one for whom Christ died just because I feel, well, I have a right to eat meat anytime I want. Let not then your good be evil spoken of, for the kingdom of God is not meat or drink. These are not the true issues of the kingdom.

People like to make them the issues. They're not. The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

For He that in these things serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and things whereby we may build up one another. And for your liberty at eating meat, do not destroy the work of God.

All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that man who eats with offense. It's evil if I would exercise my liberty in such a way as to offend a weaker brother in Christ. And so it is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor anything whereby your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

And thus, I live in the law of love a more stringent life than my own convictions because I would not want to do something that would stumble someone else. And though I feel a personal liberty that I could do those things without hindering my fellowship with Jesus Christ, I will not do them for love and for love's sake so that I would not be a stumbling block to someone else. Somewhere and somehow, I guess, a rumor got out that I had a drinking problem.

But I actually quit drinking Cokes about five years ago. And that's the worst thing I ever drank. That doesn't sound right, does it? But again, hey, I grew up under the law.

And again, I'm thankful in a way because I have never tasted an alcoholic drink in my life. So that's the kind of problem I have with it. Nor would I because I don't need it, for one.

And two, I realized and I do realize that if I would exercise liberty in Christ and say, oh, I can have a, you know, champagne or I can have wine or something in my meal that there may be weaker persons seeing us and feel emboldened to do so and be destroyed. Now, we do go to the airport or for lunch every once in a while and it is a champagne brunch on Sunday. And they do give us sparkling apple cider or grape juice.

And it could be that someone saw me drinking my sparkling apple cider and thought that I was bibbing but such is not the case. They would have noticed my little grandchildren right beside me were drinking the same stuff. Do you have faith? Then have it to yourself before God.

Let it be a personal thing. Don't do it openly where it can hinder someone else. For happy is he that condemns not himself in the things which he allows.

It's great to have, really, that kind of faith in God that nothing really comes between you and God. As they sang tonight, happy is the one whose sins freely are forgiven, whose innocence has been declared by the Lord of Heaven. And it's great.

Happy is the man whose heart does not condemn him in the things that he allows. But he that doubts is damned if he eats because he is not eating of faith. For whatsoever is not of faith is sin to that individual.

If you can't do it in faith, if you are being condemned as you do it, then to you it is sin. And for him that esteems something to be unclean, to him it is unclean. So, my Christian liberty, how am I to exercise it before God in private? Not to stumble someone else by those liberties that I may feel.

Again, the whole idea goes back to chapter 13. Walk in love for he who loves has fulfilled the whole law. Loving one another.

Walking in a loving relationship with each other. And because of my love for you and my love for Jesus Christ, not doing anything that I know could be offensive to you or might stumble you in your walk because of love. Living a life more stringent than my own personal convictions so that I would not stumble a weaker

brother.

God help us to live and to walk in love even as we're commanded. Father, we thank you tonight for your Word, a guide unto a life. Help us, Lord, to walk in the path in which it leads us.

Following after righteousness and walking in love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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