

Christian Liberty

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“Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.”

Romans 14:22

“But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.”

I Corinthians 8:9

Preparatory Reading: Romans 14:1-23; I Corinthians 6:12-13; 8:1-13; 9:19-23; 10:23-33. ALSO SEE Christian Liberty Expanded ...[here](#).

Basic lesson: For you to allow broad freedom to every other saint, and not to use your freedom for causing any trouble!

What is Christian liberty?

- A. It is the freedom God gives individual Christians to do whatever they enjoy in matters that He has not addressed in the Bible, with no fear of rejection or punishment by the church or other Christians.
- B. There are activities, even religious ones, God does not regard (Rom 14:1-8; I Cor 8:8; Nu 30:1-16).
- C. Any part of private or public life God has addressed, we must obey without question or compromise!
- D. What God commands, we do exactly and nothing else; what God condemns, we stay away from it!
- E. However, liberty has limitations, which provide the basis and purpose of this study of God’s word.
- F. No pastor, church, or Christian has the right to demand his preferences or condemn those of another.
- G. The only truth worth dividing over will be clearly and forcefully specified in the Scriptures of God.
- H. This subject will evoke strong feelings in every person, because each person foolishly believes his personal preferences are surely God’s way, the right way, and the only way (Prov 16:2; 21:2; 20:6).
- I. While we do not have activities corresponding directly to meat offered to pagan idols or Jewish feast days, we can still learn the lessons of charity and apply liberty to the many internal differences all churches have. However, there will be far less allowance given for your offence at others’ choices.
- J. The following examples are for illustrative purposes – God’s saints may be on either side of them, and any Christian on either side will be defended in his right to liberty before God (Rom 14:3-4).

What are some examples?

Drinking wine	Having a television	Home births	Vaccinations	Health foods
Smoking cigars	Children in sports	School Curriculum	Epidurals	Birth control in general
Voting in elections	Pants on wife	Firearms in house	Pets in house	Circumcision
Visiting the beach	Spectator sports	Restaurants with bars	Activities on Sunday	Schooling options
Makeup on girls	Wives with outside jobs	Children in daycare	Interracial marriages	Drinking beer
Coffee and tea	Breastfeeding or bottles	Cigarettes	Union membership	Gym membership

Male or female doctors	Alternative medicine	Cosmetic surgery	Birth control forms	Bungee jumping
Hunting and fishing	Pledge to the flag	Junk foods	Wedding rings	Dating or courting
Coarse language	Marriage	Length of hair	Wife's attire at home	Mother's Day
Hard to punish	Tattoos	Hours at work	Hobbies	Being a lawyer

What are the limitations?

- A. You cannot get so accustomed or dependent on a thing you could not leave it (I Cor 6:12; 9:19-23).
- B. You cannot argue, debate, declare, or question matters of liberty (Romans 14:1-4,13,22; I Cor 13:5).
- C. You cannot do anything publicly that might cause another to stumble (Rom 14:13,21; I Cor 8:9-13).
- D. You cannot do anything your conscience does not have faith to do (Rom 14:5,14,22-23; I Cor 8:7).
- E. You cannot do anything that does not edify the church in love (Rom 14:15,19; I Cor 8:1; 10:23-33).
- F. You must be able and you must actually practice liberty as unto the Lord (Rom 14:6-9; I Cor 10:31).
- G. You cannot publicly do or promote anything that another conscience condemns (I Cor 10:27-33).
- H. In spite of these limitations, no man has the right to press offences on others (Rom 14:1; Phil 2:3-4).

What are doubtful disputations?

- A. They are arguing, debating, or otherwise wrangling about your ideas on matters of Christian liberty.
- B. This kind of arrogant and disruptive strife is prohibited in the churches of Jesus Christ (Rom 14:1).
- C. It is seditious in nature and stupid in content, because neither God nor men care what you think.
- D. Wise use of liberty requires (1) a very sensitive spirit to perceive where differences exist that warrant adjusting conduct and (2) a charitable heart that will accept and adjust for those differences.

What if my conscience condemns me?

- A. Then your conscience has made the thing, even if a clear liberty, a sin for you (Romans 14:22-23)!
- B. Not every conscience has the knowledge necessary to do things without personal guilt (I Cor 8:7).
- C. Your conscience needs to be taught by the word of God and your faith increased in the word of God.
- D. Your conscience is not sacred; but it is binding until you educate it to where things become of faith.

What about important things?

- A. Of course, you think it important, because every man thinks his way is important and right (Pr 21:2).
- B. If God has not specifically addressed an issue by precept or principle, then it is not very important!
- C. The only way a thing can be a law is to prove God addressed it by precept or principle in the Bible.
- D. Any application of principle must (1) have at least two Bible witnesses, (2) consistently handle various liberties, and (3) be approved by the pastor, who is responsible to end doubtful disputations.

What about dangerous things?

- A. Do you mean such as riding a motorcycle? It is a liberty, and you can limit yourself to a Hummer!
- B. Every single activity can be construed to be dangerous if enough time is spent trying to condemn it!

- C. Do you mean such as eating red meat, drinking coffee, skydiving, scuba diving, working on an oilrig, or chewing gum while playing basketball? You are welcome to stay in bed and eat salads!
- D. Your idea of danger, especially as you get older, is another man's idea of pleasure. Be charitable!

What about deadly things?

- A. Some argue that if a thing causes death once in a while, it is tempting the Lord and therefore sin.
- B. Jumping off a 700' pinnacle of the temple is likely to cause death, but riding a motorcycle is not.
- C. If the argument is true, then we would need to prohibit cars, red meat, alternative medicine, alcohol, traditional medicine, hunting, motorcycles, home births, hospital births, smoking, etc., etc., etc.
- D. Every day in this generation during the current information explosion, we can read about something else that causes cancer, leads to heart disease, or has risks of death associated with it.
- E. For example, the slight risk of abortion by BCP's is no more certain than that of red meat, hunting, or other liberties, all of which have their studies pro and con regarding the associated danger.
- F. If we pick one of these "deadly liberties" and condemn it, then we must condemn the rest as well.
- G. Children driving at 16 is the most dangerous thing we do, should we require 21? 30? Horses? Mules?

What about blessed things?

- A. Some argue, but if a thing is a good thing and blessed by God, then it must be an absolute command!
- B. Wine is definitely a blessing from God that makes the heart glad, but we do not force it on anyone.
- C. Rain is also a blessing from God, but we use umbrellas, construct drainage ditches, and go inside!
- D. Childbirth is a blessing from God, but that does not make it a command to have as many as possible; therefore birth control is a matter of Christian liberty. We are not Roman Catholics!
- E. Since we cannot even require marriage – the basis for childbirth, how can we require childbirth?

What if I have seen the danger of some liberties?

- A. This is typical of those who grew up with drunkards for parents when considering the wine issue.
- B. If your parent was a drunkard, it was not the fault of wine, but of their wicked heart (Matt 15:11).
- C. Your personal experiences are statistically insignificant to an absurd degree, and you mistrust God.
- D. The blessed God has seen everything by infinite wisdom, and you should trust His judgment totally.
- E. The abuse of a thing does not condemn the proper use of a thing except to a very perverted mind.

What if my liberty is the most conservative?

- A. This thinking assumes a more conservative position must necessarily be right or at least more right.
- B. If your position is more conservative than God's, you can rejoice in being a Pharisee (Acts 26:5)!
- C. If your position is more conservative than others, you are only unmerciful (Matt 12:7; Col 2:20-23).
- D. Being conservative to the right of God's commands is as evil as being liberal to the left (Deut 5:32)!
- E. Is not drinking to avoid drunkenness wiser than God's allowance for moderate drinking? I trow not.

F. If you want to miss God's best for your life by not drinking wine, that is your own personal choice.

But what about principle?

- A. Before you get too haughty, remember that most "principle" is merely disguised human pride!
- B. Your "principles" are your own liberty, and neither God nor anyone else really cares about them!
- C. Unless you can prove your principle clearly from the Bible, your principles are merely opinions!

What things are not a liberty?

Flagrant speeding	Marriage in the Lord	Church attendance	Drunkenness
Catholic holidays	Shoulder harnesses	Abortion or devices	Flags in house of God
Polygamy in the U.S.	Casual church clothes	Evil on television	Sedition re: government
Organ in the church	Filthy speech	Thanksgiving	Single but burning
Long hair on men	Short hair on women	Gambling	Marijuana in the U.S.
Training for children	Poaching	Appearance over spirit	Strike against employer

What are other guidelines?

- A. There are other guidelines that help in determining whether you should or should not do a thing.
- B. Is it forbidden in God's word (I John 3:4; Psalm 119:105; Ecclesiastes 12:13; II Timothy 3:16-17)?
- C. Does it compromise or tend in the direction of breaking God's command (Pr 4:14-15; Rom 12:1-2)?
- D. Does it have the appearance of evil, so either I or others might think so (I Thess 5:22; Jude 1:23)?
- E. Will it create an opportunity to be tempted and sin (Rom 13:14; Eph 4:27; Matt 5:29-30; 26:41)?
- F. Will it hinder the effect of God's word upon me and my obedience to it (Luke 8:14; I Cor 3:1-3)?
- G. Can I do it to God's glory in the name of Jesus Christ with thanksgiving (I Cor 10:31; Col 3:17)?

May I be strong in my liberty?

- A. Certainly! But your strong position does not allow you to question or condemn others at all.
- B. You can require your liberty in your own house and of your own children, but you can go no further.
- C. If you do not want to allow a television in your house at all, more power to you in your house!
- D. If you want to swear off owning real estate and the products of grapes like Jonadab, go for it!

How can I protect my liberty?

- A. Keep your liberty to yourself, as commanded (Rom 14:22). Do not broadcast your liberty to others.
- B. If they do not know what you are doing, then they cannot find fault with it and be offended.

What if someone objects to my liberty?

- A. Since we do not have liberty issues of idols or O.T. holy days, we defend liberty almost absolutely.
- B. The questioning or complaining brother should be reminded that what you are doing is a liberty.
- C. A next step might be to avoid doing that thing in the presence or knowledge of the weak party.
- D. If your liberty is a public issue, such as schooling choice, you will be defended from Romans 14:1.

What about believers vs. unbelievers?

- A. Paul taught avoiding moral offences that reflect on God with all types of men (I Corinthians 10:32).
- B. If you seek to convert someone, it is your duty and privilege to adjust to him (I Cor 9:19-23; 10:33).
- C. Abstain from evil's appearance and provide all things honest (I Thes 5:22; Rom 14:17; II Cor 8:21).
- D. The Lord Jesus Christ gave a clear lesson that Pharisees do not deserve kindness (Matt 15:12-14).

How do we protect against excessive offence?

- A. No one has the right to run around finding offence and using this study to press their preferences.
- B. If anyone can be offended when they feel like it, men with evil hearts will effectively destroy liberty.
- C. Since we do not face idols and O.T. days, we will enforce Romans 14:1 with much more latitude.
- D. Doubtful disputations will not be tolerated. Such offenders will be excluded for violating our peace.

Are all matters of equal importance?

- A. No, they are not all equally important, though idols and O.T. holy days were considered comparable.
- B. It is one thing to give up chewing gum in church, and another for a wife to quit her job to stay home.
- C. If someone does not like your schooling choice, then they will need to learn to accept it or leave.
- D. Since the issues we face are not directly like those at Rome or Corinth, we primarily defend liberty.

What about a pastor's liberty?

- A. He should be more careful in the warnings above, for he must be an example (I Tim 4:12; I Pet 5:3).
- B. He must be moderate and temperate in all things, lest he defile a church (I Cor 9:24-27; I Tim 4:16).
- C. If any man's liberty or faith should be followed, make it the man of God (Heb 13:7; II Thess 3:7-9).

Are there other considerations?

- A. Children living at home must comply with the liberty their parents impose on them, though a father may give a child their own liberty in some matters, if he chooses to do so (Num 30:1-16).
- B. A wife must comply with the liberty of her husband, but a wise man will consider her conscience.
- C. Wise parents will be cautious in imposing their liberty on children, waiting to use their authority for important issues; and they will seldom impose their liberty on married children out of their house.

For Further Study:

1. Sermon Outline: "[Birth Control, Job Hunting, and Skydiving](#)," deals with tempting God, foolish risks, and liberty.
2. Sermon Outline: "[I Corinthians 8](#)," covers Paul's rules for eating meat offered to idols in the pagan city of Corinth.
3. Sermon Outline: "[I Corinthians 10](#)," covers Paul's rules for eating meat offered to idols in the pagan city of Corinth.

4. Sermon Outline: “**Kingdom Duties**,” covers those things that godly men ought to do to promote Christ’s kingdom.
5. Sermon Outline: “**The Law of God: Christian Ethics**,” deals with little known principles of righteousness for wisdom.