

INTRODUCTION

I invite you to open your Bibles to Romans 14. We're going to start reading at verse 13. You remember last week, I started the message by holding a gold earring to my ear and some of you thought, well there's nothing wrong with a guy wearing an earring. But others of you, good Christians, said, "That's wrong." You remember last week, also, I had a pack of cigarettes up here. I hope you knew I was just kidding when I said those were Mike Park's. Those were not Mike's; those belonged to my wife. There are some of you who said, "As a Christian, it's okay to smoke." Others of you said, "No, a Christian can't smoke." The same thing goes for wearing a hat inside. You remember where we were going with that? Now, if you weren't here last Sunday, you really need to get the tape from last Sunday, because it's a two-part sermon, and this is the second part. If you're here today and you know some people who weren't here last Sunday who need to hear both of them, get them the tape for either this one or the one before so you can hear both of them.

I heard about a man sitting in the den reading the newspaper. His wife was in the kitchen. He said, "I knew it. I knew that women talked more than men. This article says on the average a woman speaks 30,000 words a day and a man only speaks 15,000 words a day. I knew it." His wife said, "That's because we have to repeat everything we say to you men." He said to her, "What was that, dear?"

REVIEW:

Today, I want to repeat some of the things we studied last week about our liberty in Christ verses 1-12 of Romans 14. Paul is saying guard your attitude, don't have a bad attitude toward somebody who may not have the same list of taboos you have. Now here's the review:

Some conduct is right or wrong

The Bible speaks clearly. Some conduct is right and some is wrong. But the Bible also says

Some conduct is a matter of personal conviction

Some issues are a matter of personal conviction. We talked about some of these issues last week: Dancing, card playing, going to movies. The list goes on and on and on; there are lists of things people say are wrong, but the Bible doesn't address it. It says in 14:1, these are called "disputable matters." What does that mean? It means you may dispute with me about something and I may dispute with you about what's right and what's wrong, but we're to love each other, we're not to disagree in a harmful fashion. We can disagree, but we've got to do it by being loving toward each other. Disputable matters. This is what we said last week:

In the essentials, there must be unity

There are many essentials of doctrine and practice we must agree on. We cannot compromise on the essentials. But,

On the nonessentials, liberty But in all things, charity

There are some people who think that's what the Christian life is. It is a bunch of rules of "thou shalt-not's," and they think being a Christian is thou shalt not dance and thou shalt not smoke and thou shalt not cuss and chew and things like that. Down the road from our church, there is a large group of people, several hundred people who, I promise you, they don't drink, they don't smoke, they don't dance, they don't cuss, they don't chew: They are the residents of Rose Hill Cemetery. They're dead. And by some people's opinions, they would be the best Christians there are, because there's a bunch of things they don't do. That's not what the Christian life is. Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life." It's living the Christian life. And that's what we're going to be talking about today.

I. LIBERTY: I'M CONVINCED IT'S OKAY!

Beginning in verse 13, Paul says, "Not only guard your attitude, don't be judgmental towards people whose list is not your list, but guard your actions." You're free, but you've got to be careful with your liberty. Love is better than liberty. Verse 13, "Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. As one who is in the Lord Jesus." He's talking about himself. "I am firmly, fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him, it is unclean. If your brother is distressed," Underline the word "distressed," we can use the word offended there. "If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you're no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil." And then here's the verse we were just singing while ago. Mike was teaching us this song. "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost. Because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food." He says it again. "Hey, all food is clean." That's liberty. "But it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble." That's love. "It is better to not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. So whatever you believe about these things," Here's good advice, "Keep between yourself and God. Don't argue about them. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith." Maybe you didn't know this, but here's a pretty good statement about sin. "Everything that does not come from faith is sin."

LOVE: WILL IT TRIP-UP A WEAKER CHRISTIAN?

Now, this passage of scripture, liberty is going to say several things, but then love is going to say something much more important than liberty. Here's statement number one. In verses 13-16, liberty says, "I'm convinced it's okay." You remember Paul was talking about eating meat? Some were vegetarians, and some said, "Well, you don't want to eat that meat because you don't know, it may have been sacrificed to a pagan god." The other issue was a certain day of the week, you've got to keep the Sabbath or do something on Sunday or not do something on

Sunday. Then there was the diet issue and the day issue. Paul makes a statement there, and if you look there in verse 14, he says, "I'm speaking in the Lord Jesus. I'm convinced no food is unclean." That's liberty. I can do this, no problem. But love asks this question. Love always asks, "Will it trip-up a weaker Christian?" Will doing this, that there's nothing wrong with it, will it trip up a weaker Christian, because the Bible says that we need to be considerate of Christians who are weaker? You remember last week we said there are two kinds of Christians? There are those who are weak, they have a list longer than God's list—don't do this and do this—don't make them stumble.

Now, look there, if you would, please, in verse 15. It says, "If your brother is distressed, offended." When you read that you say, "Now are you telling me that I don't ever need to do *anything* that will offend another Christian? Now Pastor, it's going to be next to impossible, because there are so many differences of belief about what's right and what's wrong. Whatever I'm going to do, I'm going to offend somebody." You've got to understand this text is not talking about "don't offend anybody." It's talking about "don't offend a weaker Christian and a certain kind of Christian." You need to make a distinction. Please notice this.

1. If someone is offended because they are spiritually young or immature, you need to consider them

Consider how your action is going to affect them. And if your action is going to cause them to stumble, just don't do it.

In 1 Corinthians 8:9-11, Paul is talking about this very issue about eating meat. And this is what he says, "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. Or if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who has this knowledge" What knowledge? That it's okay to eat meat. "If you have this knowledge, eating in an idols temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this [he says it again] this weak brother for whom Christ died is destroyed because of your knowledge."

Now, the issue a lot of people want to know is, "What does the Bible say about this or that. And sometimes the Bible doesn't speak to it. You say, if the Bible doesn't say I can't do it, I can do it." Not necessarily.

Dr. John MacArthur says this, for instance, about abstaining from alcohol. He says:

Although the New Testament doesn't forbid the drinking of alcoholic beverages, there are many good reasons for a Christian to abstain. One of the most important is the detrimental affect it may have on a new Christian who is a former alcoholic. Our drinking, even in moderation, could easily place a stumbling block in that brother's way and cause him to fall back into his former addiction. A strong, loving Christian will determine in his mind and in his heart to be sensitive to any weakness in a believer and avoid doing anything that might cause him to morally or spiritually stumble.

Now, we're not talking about somebody who's been in the faith for a long time who just maybe has some strange ideas. We're talking about a young, immature growing Christian who is weak.

You know what Jesus said about that? Write this reference down, Matthew 18:6. Jesus said this. "If one of you causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin," Jesus said, "It would be better for a millstone [a 2,000-pound rock] to be tied around your neck and cast into the depth of the sea." He says, listen. "If by your liberty, if you cause a little young immature Christian to stumble and sin," he says, "You're better off dead." He says this is a very serious offense to cause this young Christian to stumble.

This has nothing to do with chronological age. Some young Christians may be 8, 9, or 10 years old, but there are some young Christians who were saved in their 20s. So you may be a young man or young woman, and you're an immature Christian. Or you may be in your 40s and 50s and you have just come to know Christ. And you're still a young, growing immature Christian. You're the ones, those are the ones we need to be considerate of and make sure we don't ever do anything to cause them to stumble. Those are Christians who are learning. I love to see these new Christians, because they're like sponges and they love to soak up the word of God. They're the ones who are always listening, they're leaning forward, saying, "Teach me, teach me, teach me, God. Teach me, pastor. Teach me Sunday School teacher. I want to learn!" Those are the ones we need to be careful we don't offend.

But we must make a distinction, because there's another group of Christians who may be offended by our liberty, and they'll be offended a lot. So here's the second thing I want you to notice.

2. If someone is offended because they are spiritually hardened, you need to challenge them

There's no way you can go through your life without offending these people. Jesus called these kind of people Pharisees. They had a long list of do's and don'ts. But do you know the difference between a young, immature Christian, number one, and a hardened-hearted Pharisee, number two? I'll tell you the difference. A Pharisee is someone who doesn't want to be taught. They are not teachable. They are not sponges that soak up truth, because their sponge is already saturated with their own opinion and their own beliefs. And their attitude is, my mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts. They are what the Bible calls a hardened legalist. This is what Jesus said to these folks in Matthew 23:13. And by the way, the harshest words ever recorded by Jesus were directed toward these hardhearted legalists. He said, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees. You hypocrites. You shut the kingdom of God in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter nor will you let those enter who are trying to." He says, "You make such a long list of do's and don'ts, and your mind is made up. Nobody's going to teach you, nobody's going to convince you otherwise. You don't enter the kingdom of God and you keep others out."

There are a lot of hardhearted Pharisees in existence in the church of the Lord Jesus today. And you know how you can sometimes recognize them? Their attitude is, "You can't teach me anything." They seldom bring a Bible to church and open their Bible, although they claim to have been a Christian for years and years and years. They're not interested in what the word of God says. They've got it all figured up out here. Jesus said those are the people who better be careful.

Now, it is a dangerous thing to offend a young immature Christian. But those who are just set in their ways and you're not going to convince them, those are the ones who need to be challenged. By the way, Paul did that. The book of Galatians is the book in the New Testament that most addresses the freedom we have in Christ. God willing, in the 21st century, sometime I'll preach through Galatians for you but sometime go and read chapter 2. Here's Simon Peter, a good Jewish disciple. Here's Paul. Peter comes down to Antioch. And at Antioch it's mostly Gentile Christians, and so you know what Peter does? He starts eating Gentile food. He goes into the home of Gentiles. I imagine he eats a little pork every now and then. But then some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem come, and Peter goes back to his legalism. And suddenly, he says, "Oh, no, I won't eat that. That's Gentile food." And he just kind of makes Paul sick. It says in chapter 2 of Galatians Paul says, "I confronted Peter face-to-face in the presence of everybody." I can imagine that little Apostle Paul walking up to Simon Peter and saying, "Hey Peter, is that ham I smell on your breath? Come one, Peter. Loosen up buddy. You were set free. Now you've gone back to legalism." Those are the ones the Bible says you can't keep from offending them. Instead what you ought to do, you ought to challenge them.

Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse was a great Bible teacher in the early part of this century. Let me just read something he wrote. See, I don't want to offend you, but I don't mind him offending you, okay? So I'm going to read this. He writes,

“Many years ago, I led a Bible conference at Montrose, Pennsylvania. There were about 200 young people present and about 100 adults. One day, two older Christian ladies complained to me in horror because some of the girls were not wearing nylon stockings. These ladies wanted me to rebuke these girls for their unchristian behavior.

Looking those ladies straight in the eye, I said, ‘Well, the Virgin Mary didn't wear stockings.’ The two ladies gasped and said, ‘She didn't?’ I answered, ‘No. In Mary's time, stockings were unknown. In fact, I've done some research into it, and we know stockings were first worn by prostitutes in Italy in the 15th century,’ I said as I glanced at their stockings.

Later, a class of nobility wore stockings to costume balls, and then later, Queen Victoria wore them, and they became a badge of the prude.”—In other words, it went from being a badge of prostitution to a badge of prudery.—“These ladies were a holdover from the Victorian era, and I did not rebuke the girls for not wearing stockings.

This was all in 1928. Just a few years later, many women went without stockings during the war, and nobody thought anything about it. Nor do I believe that young girls not wearing stockings led to the disintegration of moral standards in the United States.”

There's a gutsy guy who had the guts to challenge some ladies who were legalists. The Bible didn't say it, and he just told them what the truth of the word of God was.

II. LIBERTY: THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH IT! LOVE: WILL IT TEAR DOWN THE WORK OF GOD?

Liberty says, "I'm convinced it's all right." But love says, "Is it going to trip up a weaker Christian?" Here's the second thing liberty says. There's nothing wrong with it, but love asks this question: Will it tear down the work of God?

Now, would you look, please, at verse 20? He says, "Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food." He says it again. He says, listen, "There's nothing wrong with it. All food is clean. But it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble." Verse 21, just write it down and memorize it. "It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to fall."

We have been talking about weaker Christians. Let's talk about a strong Christian, because down there in 15:1, he says, "We who are strong." Can I give you two characteristics of a maturing Christian? I didn't say mature Christian. Because mature carries the idea you've arrived. I am not a mature Christian. I hope I am a maturing Christian. I'm not a Bible scholar. I hope I'm a Bible student. I'm always trying to grow and learn, and I hope you are too.

There are two characteristics according to this text.

1. A mature Christian will seek the kingdom of God, not religion

Look at verse 17. "The kingdom of God is not what you eat or what you drink. It is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Now, before I go too much further in this verse, Mike was right when he told you earlier in the service, next Sunday I'm going to come back to this verse and I'm going to preach a whole sermon on what the kingdom of God really is. In preparation for that message, I would like to ask you to memorize two verses of scripture. Simple verses. Some of you already have the first one memorized.

The first one is Matthew 6:33. It says, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." In other words, the very first priority of my life and yours ought to be to seek the kingdom of God. You say, "Okay, what *is* the kingdom of God? I've got to know what it is before I can seek it." Well, friend, that's the answer to that question.

Romans 14:17 is the second verse I'll ask you to memorize. "That the kingdom of God is not eating or drinking; it is righteousness in the Holy Spirit, it is peace in the Holy Spirit, it is joy in the Holy Spirit." We'll talk more about that next week.

All these other things people think is religion, man's own rituals and acts to try to please God; they're just all temporary. They're not permanent. The kingdom of God is permanent. Look what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:18. He says, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen," that's the temporary, "but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." Do you know how to tell the biggest difference between religion, which kills and a relationship with Jesus Christ which gives life? Here's the question you always ask. "A thousand years from now, will this thing matter?" A thousand years from today, will this matter? Some of those taboos we have on our list won't matter a thousand years from now. But I promise you that

righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, a thousand years from now, they're going to be sweeter than ever before. So there are a lot of things in life, you just need to write these three letters over a lot of things in life. I.D.M. You know what that stands for? "It Don't Matter." It just don't matter! A thousand years from now, it won't matter. So don't fight over it now.

This is a true story from southern California. There was a church dispute over a children's Christmas choir program. Some of the children's parents had the audacity and the gall to erect a Christmas tree in the church. Some of the members of the church thought it was a desecration of the church and so they were terribly opposed to it. And so after the parents of these choir kids set up the tree, you know what they did that night? A bunch of them came in after the rehearsal, dismantled the tree and took it out. Next morning, when they came in for the next rehearsal and they saw it was gone, you know what those parents did? They set it back up again. And that night after rehearsal, you know what the folks who didn't like it did? They snuck in and tore it down. The next day, the parents of the choir kids were waiting for the tree-dismantlers, and when they approached, they told them, "No you can't take this tree down." The other Christians said, "You are desecrating the house of God. You've got to take it down." It resulted in a fistfight. A fistfight. And then it resulted in a lawsuit. And this was all in the papers of this little local town in Southern California. And why do you think people out there without Jesus Christ think Christianity is just a bunch of nonessential things that don't matter? I'll tell you why. Because most of our lives, we spend all of our time majoring on the minors and minoring on the majors.

Here's a second sign of a maturing Christian.

2. A maturing Christian will yield his rights, not demand them

Galatians is the key book in the Bible about freedom in Christ. This is the key verse in the key book. Galatians 5:13, "You my brothers were called to be free, but do not use your freedom to indulge your sinful nature. Rather, serve one another in love." Have you ever been driving along in your car and you see a triangular sign that says yield? You know what it means, don't you? It means you need to look for someone else, and if someone else is already in that lane, you don't go in that lane. You yield to them.

That's what the Christian life is all about. It is us looking around at other people, and that's what love is, saying, "How's it going to affect this other person?" And you yield to them. You don't demand your rights, "I've got a right to do this, this is not wrong, I'm convinced it's okay." The greatest right a Christian has is the right to yield their rights. Look earlier in the chapter, if you would, please, the passage we looked at last week, Romans 14:9. Here's the key issue, "For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord, the Lord of both the dead and the living." You know what it means to live the Christian life? It means you submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Dr. C.I. Scofield, after whom the Scofield Reference Bible is named, lived in the city and he loved dogs. One day someone gave him a beautiful full-grown collie, full of energy and friendly. He said the only problem was the dog was raised out in the country where it could run anywhere it wanted to go, and he lived in the city. So he said he decided to take the dog out on a walk the first day there in the city. So he put a leash around the neck of the dog and a collar around the

neck of the dog and a leach and he's walking along. He said it was a miserable experience for both of them, because here was this powerful collie pulling against the leash and just choking himself, and here was Dr. Scofield hanging on for all of his might. He said it was not a very pleasant walk. He said it went that way day after day after day. He was trying to teach the dog something important. He was trying to teach him the meaning of the word "heel," which means, "You come and stand behind my heel and walk at my side as we walk." He said it took weeks and weeks and weeks, but before long, the collie was not pulling on the leash as much. And when he would say, "heel," with a little slack in the leash, the dog would walk beside him. Finally the day came, they went out for a walk and he did not put the collar on the dog. He said the dog ran off out of sight until he said, "[Whistles] Heel, boy." He said the dog heard his voice. You could tell there was a moment of indecision. Then the beautiful collie came and stood at his side and walked at his heel with no leash needed. That is one of the most beautiful pictures of the Christian life. By the way, did you know the name "Caleb" in the Old Testament, that great man of God, his name literally means, "follows God like a dog?" That's what it means.

We are free in Christ. We can do anything we want to as Christians, anything the Holy Spirit of God allows us to do. But what Christ has called us to do is come, follow him, serve. If you want to say it, He said, "Heel." And it's our right to yield our rights and to follow him. That's what love says.

III. LIBERTY: IT'S BETWEEN ME AND GOD! LOVE: DOES IT TEST OUT WITHOUT DOUBT?

Here's the third thing liberty says. Liberty says, "Hey, it's between me and God." But love asks, "Does it test out without doubt?" Does what I'm about to do, does it really test out without doubt? Would you look there, please, at what it says in verse 22? It says, "Whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourself and God." That statement is true. Ladies and gentlemen, there are some of these issues you may not agree with me on and I may not agree with you on. Let's don't argue about it. It's between you and God. It's between me and God. Now if the scripture speaks to it, we agree on it. These issues are nonessentials, it's between you and God, between God and me. That's what liberty says. But love asks, "Can I really do this without doubt?"

Last week I gave you a little guideline. I wanted to reprint it here for you. Before you do anything, apply this five-fold test to it.

1. What does the Bible say about this?

It was so funny to hear some of the teenagers last week after the message. They said, "Well, man, I'm going to get my ear pierced. I'm going to get a tattoo. I'm going to do whatever I want to do." You're right, the Bible doesn't address those things specifically, but I'll tell you what, the Bible does say, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." That's what the Bible says about it. If they say, "No, that's what the Bible says about it." You understand? You obey your parents in the Lord. "The Bible doesn't say anything about smoking pot. I guess I can smoke pot." No, you can't, because the Bible says your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. You can't abuse it. It also says you're to submit to the government authorities. It's against the law to do that. Some

Christians may choose to smoke. Teenagers, it's against the law to smoke before the age of 18. Just apply what the word of God says. You may be free to do that, but you choose not to, because you want to be pleasing to God.

2. Can I thank God for it?

Before you do this thing, can you honestly with a clear conscience, say, "God, I ask you to bless this that I'm about to do and I thank you for it." There are a lot of things you cannot do with a clear conscience. Next, you ask the question:

3. If Jesus returned, would I be ashamed?

If Jesus returned would he be ashamed if he found me doing this? I John 2:28 is a good verse to learn. It says, "Now little children, abide in him" That is, in Jesus "so you may have confidence before him and not be ashamed at his coming."

Sometimes teenagers ask me, "Pastor, on a date how much can you do, hugging, kissing, holding hands? What's the line you should not cross over?" It's real simple. Teenagers, don't do anything on a date you'd be embarrassed to be found in at that moment if Jesus came back. That's not just good advice for teenagers; that's great advice for every one of us. Here's number four. This is what we have been talking about all day:

4. Would it make a weaker Christian stumble?

Is what I'm about to do going to make a true, immature, weaker Christian stumble? If it is, I'm not going to do it. Here's the last one.

5. When in doubt, don't!

That's what it says in verse 23. "But the man who has doubts is condemned." In other words, almost if you have to ask the question, that's a good proof you don't need to do it.

I heard about a guy who was back in his bedroom, and his wife was in another part of the house. He was getting dressed and he said, "Honey, is this shirt too dirty or do I need to put on another one?" She said, "Put on another one." Later he walked in there with the other shirt on and said, "You didn't look at that shirt. How did you know it was dirty?" She said, "I didn't have to. I know you. If you had to ask, it was too dirty, believe me."

The same is true with a lot of moral issues. If you have to ask whether it's right or wrong, chances are, you don't need to mess with it. There's a great verse in Hebrews 13:18. Can you say this? "Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience." That's the issue. Can you live with a clear conscience with what you do and you don't do and desire to live honorably in every way?

As I finish, I know most of you can't see the floor up here, but I have got some masking tape up here, and I'm going to try to walk the line without falling off this masking tape. I'm pretty good. You know, I don't have any trouble doing that. I can walk that without any problem.

Several years ago, a French tight wirewalker by the name of Louis Philippe went to the top of the two World Trade Towers in New York City, and he strung a wire between the 130 feet between those two buildings, 1,350 feet above the ground. You know what he did? He walked across a wire no wider than this piece of tape. I don't have any trouble doing this. But do you think I want to get up that high and walk on a tight wire? What he did was illegal. It was against the law. He did it as a publicity stunt. In fact, he walked back and forth seven times in 45 minutes with New York police at each end trying to get him off the wire. One New York City policeman said, "If you don't come in right now, I'm coming out to get you!" But finally, when he was finished, he surrendered himself. But you know, even Louis Philippe said he would never walk on a tightrope without a balance bar, the long bar enabling him to keep him balance.

This is a picture of Christian liberty. It is a tightrope. It's not just a wide valley you stroll through with no consideration of other people. Christian liberty is a tightrope. On one side, if you're not careful, you will fall into legalism and go back to your list. On the other side, if you're not careful, you will fall into unrestrained license. "[whispers] Just do it!" But somewhere in between the two is the beautiful tightrope of balance, and the balance bar for a Christian is love. Love for God on one hand and love for others on the other end. And when you understand love is more important than liberty, you'll be able to walk the tightrope of liberty, and you'll enjoy the Christian life and you'll be a blessing to others.

OUTLINE

REVIEW: Some conduct is right or wrong. Some is a matter of personal conviction. ("disputable matters" 14:1)

In the essentials—unity; in the non-essentials—liberty; in all things—charity

I. LIBERTY: I'M CONVINCED IT'S OKAY!

LOVE: WILL IT TRIP-UP A WEAKER CHRISTIAN? (13-16)

1. Young—Consider them

Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge? *1 Corinthians 8:9-11*

2. Hardened—Challenge them

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to."
Matthew 23:13

II. LIBERTY: THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH IT!

LOVE: WILL IT TEAR DOWN THE WORK OF GOD? (17-21)

A maturing Christian will:

1. Seek the kingdom of God—not religion!

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. *2 Corinthians 4:18*

2. Yield his rights—NOT demand them!

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. *Galatians 5:13*

III. LIBERTY: IT'S BETWEEN ME AND GOD!

LOVE: DOES IT TEST-OUT WITHOUT A DOUBT? (22-23)

Five-fold test:

1. What does the Bible say?

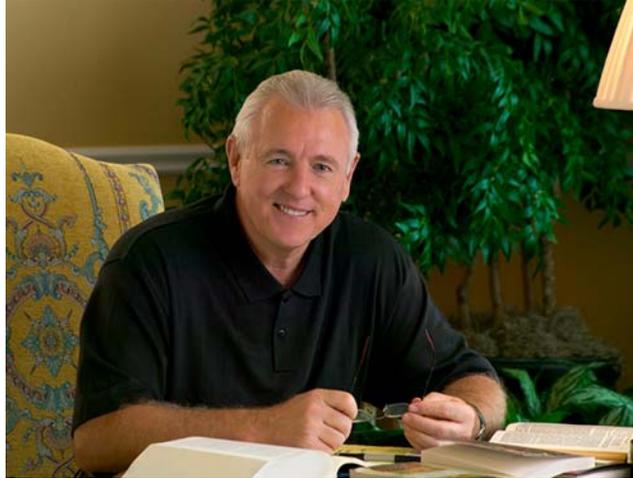
2. Can I thank God for it?

3. If Jesus returned, would I be ashamed? (1 John 2:28)

4. Will it make a weaker Christian stumble?

5. When in doubt—don't!

Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. *Hebrews 13:18*



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes