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***Christian Conduct in the
Light of Grace***



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CHRISTIAN CONDUCT IN THE LIGHT OF GRACE

Chapter One

No series of messages on Law and Grace would be complete without giving attention to the charge that the preaching of free grace gives the believer a license to sin. It is a frequent accusation when we boldly proclaim freedom from the law. The accusation is, of course, the result of a complete misunderstanding of the truth of Bible grace. But the accusation is not at all new. It was already hurled at the Apostle Paul when he preached grace and complete deliverance from the law. Paul anticipated the accusation and answers it in Romans 6:1-2:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?
God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

Romans 6:1-2

The grace of God gives liberty, but never license. In fact, the grace of God expects more from the believer than the law ever demanded. Our Christian conduct is guided by a far different, a higher law, than the law of commandments and the threatenings of punishment. Our service, instead of being legal obedience, becomes a gracious, willing, loving service to our Lord and Saviour. The rule of conduct for believers who are not under the law is wonderfully set forth for us in the 14th chapter of Romans. This chapter should be studied in connection with 1st Corinthians 8 and 1st Corinthians 10 for a true picture of the responsibility of the believer. In the 14th chapter of Romans, Paul is dealing with the question of the eating of meats which had previously been offered to idols and then sold in pagan idol temples. There were some believers who felt it was definitely wrong to do this, while others asserted that there was no sin in doing so. Paul gives his verdict, therefore, in this chapter, and sums it all up in verses 13 to 16:

"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.

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there

is nothing unclean in itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walk-est thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of."

Romans 14:13-16

The law which God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai was a perfect law, a good law, no better law could ever have been given. It was perfect and holy in every respect. I believe that the law which God gave was the perfect expression of the will of God for every man on earth. If man is to please God by his works, there is the law which lays down its requirements. It demands perfect obedience, absolute holiness, from beginning to end. To fail to keep it means death, eternal death, and judgment. But God also knew that not a single sinner could ever keep that law, because there is "none righteous, no not one." So God demanded in the law something which He knew man could not keep. He demanded the impossible, for "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight."

THE NEED OF GRACE

But God gave more than a law which man could not keep. He also provided grace through Jesus Christ; grace, by which poor, lost sinners might be justified by faith in the finished work of Him, the only One who ever kept the law of God perfectly, and paid its penalty, and bore our sins in His own body on the tree. And now through faith in Him we are relieved from the penalty of the law, and have instead, imputed to us the righteousness of that law by virtue of the work which He completed on Calvary. And so the believer is free from the law. But the believer is not without law, or lawless, for now he is under the law of faith, an inner principle of love which seeks to do the will of God as a matter of love and gratitude rather than compulsion and fear.

This same problem concerning the liberty under grace already occurred in the church of Corinth also, and Paul sets

forth the same truth in 1st Corinthians 8; namely, that we are to live lives which are pleasing to God and edifying to our neighbor. The particular question in Corinth concerned the eating of meats offered to heathen idols. Some Christians said that since they were under grace they could eat this meat without scruples. Their conscience was not violated, and they had perfect liberty in the matter. Others who were weaker in grace believed that it was wrong to eat with unbelievers, and to sit in an ungodly temple. Paul answers the question by replying that there is no harm in eating this unclean meat, if you are persuaded in your own mind to do so. There is no legal restriction, for we are not under the law. For the weaker brethren to judge this liberty of those who did eat in the idols' temple was not an evidence of grace but of legality, and therefore, those "holier than thou" brethren who judged the liberty of others, were themselves sinning by judging them. But, on the other hand, those who did eat in an idol's temple while they knew that it was a stumbling block and an offense to these weaker brethren, were also not walking graciously, but sinning, for they should be willing to forego their own liberty of conscience for the sake of others, and peace and harmony among the believers. Grace people should always be gracious to each other, each one esteeming the other better than himself, seeking the brother's welfare rather than their own.

SAME IN THE CHURCH AT ROME

It seems that this matter of conduct concerning eating meats offered to idols was not a local problem at all, but was also raised by the legalists in other quarters. From Romans we gather that the same problem had arisen. Romans 14 opens with these words:

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." Romans 14:1

We look down upon the weak babes in Christ, and would like to place them on probation, but Paul says, weak Christians need your fellowship more than others, so take them in. Now these weak believers were offended by the liberty enjoyed by some of the more mature Christians who made a

custom of eating in idol temples, and bought unclean meats in pagan markets, and concerning them Paul says, "receive them, but don't argue about it, but each one of you act graciously toward the other." Here we have, in verse 2, the problem stated:

"For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him." Romans 14:2-3

There were those in Rome who understood grace in all its fullness, and ate meats, even meats offered to idols. Other weaker brethren thought the eating of meat to be wrong, and made no bones about their objections, and I suppose they were flying at each others throats and denying the very grace they professed to possess. Now, says Paul, Don't judge one another. If you think it is wrong to eat meat, DON'T EAT IT. Leave it alone, for it would be sin for you to do it. But, while you abstain from meat for conscience's sake, don't commit an even greater sin by judging others and condemning those who DO EAT THIS MEAT, and see no harm in it. Grace people should be gracious to each other. And so I want you to listen to Paul's answer:

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, (that is, of meats) to the Lord he eateth not, add giveth God thanks.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Romans 14:4-7

Oh, for the grace to put in practice this principle of Paul and cease forever this judging and condemning of other believers because they do not agree with us in every minor detail. There are those who condemn us and tell us that we are forever destined to hell if we do not observe one certain day or follow some certain custom or ritual. Well, this passage should settle that question. It is not a matter of the day at all. It is a matter of grace and of graciousness. The question is simply this, "Are you under the law or under grace?" If you are under the law, then by all means keep the commandments including every one of them but remember, keep them perfectly, for the Bible tells us that "he that offends in one point is guilty of all". The language of the law is very clear,

"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Gal. 3:10

That is the language of the law, but if you are under grace, and the law was fulfilled in Christ, then everything was fulfilled, and instead, we rejoice in the liberty which we have, and as an expression of our gratitude to Him, we serve Him with the fulness of our hearts, and with all our devotion. Let us listen to Paul's words in regard to this matter:

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Romans 14:5

STOP JUDGING ONE ANOTHER

We cannot, of course, give a detailed, verse by verse, exposition of this entire chapter, but try rather to give you the main teaching, and trust you will study it further for yourselves. But now we would have you notice again verse 13:

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

I know, and am persuaded of the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." Romans 14:13-15

Says the Apostle Paul, "You folks who are offended by my liberty in grace, Stop judging me, for you sin when you do it. And I, from my side, will abstain from every appearance of evil, and refrain from exercising my liberty in grace in order not to offend you or injure my testimony before the world." Now if all Christians would only follow this rule and stop this judging one another's liberty, and on the other hand, not use grace as an occasion for offence to others, we would solve ninety percent of all the legality and trouble among believers, which is such a reproach before the world today. And that is exactly what Paul says in essence, as we continue in Romans 14:19,

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith any may edify another.

For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

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

And he that doubted is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Romans 14:19-23

Here, indeed, is an important lesson bearing on our subject. The question is not; says Paul, "What have I a right to do under grace?", but "What will doing this thing do to another brother who does not agree with me?" For his sake, says Paul, Don't do it. But on the other hand, if you think a thing is wrong, don't do it, and if in doubt, better leave it

alone. We are not to please ourselves, but seek first of all to please Him who saved us, and then to please our fellow believers.

Now our message on Romans 14 would be quite incomplete without the first seven verses of the following chapter, Romans 15. It is just too bad that the chapter divisions are so unfortunately divided. The first seven verses of Romans 15 belong with chapter 14, and I want to read them to you.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Romans 15:1-3, 5-7

People who are saved by grace ought to be gracious. In this passage we are told to bear one another's infirmities. He does not say to "share one another's agreements", but "Bear one another's weaknesses." Grace people should be gracious. Christ is the great example, for He pleased not Himself, but saved us by His wonderful grace. Then Paul says we are to be "likeminded". He does not mean that we must all think alike and act alike, for God has made us all different. God loves variety. It would rob us of much of the spice of life if we all felt alike about everything, but we are to be "likeminded according to Christ Jesus." That is what Paul says in verse 5, "according to Christ Jesus". The Greek word translated "according" is "kata" and one of its meanings is "after the manner of", and that is the meaning, "be likeminded after the manner of Christ." This is further emphasized in verse 7 where we read the conclusion:

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Romans 15:7

And how did Christ receive us? By grace. We deserved to be lost, we were guilty, we ought to go to hell forever, we were all wrong, but Christ forgave us, and saved us and received us in grace, and now the pattern for our lives among the brethren and fellowmen is Jesus. Not the law, but Christ; not Sinai, but Calvary. The law demands only justice; Calvary bestows mercy. My friend, in your dealings with other Christians are you legal or gracious? Grace people, I repeat, should be gracious. Do you stand on your rights, or do you know how to show mercy, forbear, be kind, forgiving, and tender, and be the least? How did Jesus forgive you? By His grace. You deserved judgment, but He gave you grace, and that is "living unto God".

Grace people should be gracious. People who talk about grace should show more grace, and if you, remembering how you were saved by grace, will stop judging your brother, your wife, your husband, your preacher, and at the same time be careful to remove everything from your own life, which might offend others, even though you may have no conscience in the matter at all, most of the trouble in your home, in the church, among your friends, would be at an end forever. Stand on your RIGHTS? Brother, you have no rights, for it is all of grace. If you received your just deserts, and rights, you would be in condemnation today, but God was gracious and gave His Son to save you. And now He becomes our great example, and we read in 1st Peter 2:21-24,

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:
Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously:

Who His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

PEOPLE WHO ARE SAVED BY GRACE SHOULD ALWAYS BE GRACIOUS!

Chapter Two

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not." 1 Cor. 10:23

"All things are lawful for me", says Paul in this chapter. Four times he makes this statement, twice in this chapter, and twice in 1st Corinthians 6. "All things are lawful for me". Paul insists that he as a believer is not under the law of commandments but under grace. His service to God is not legal but voluntary, rendered from a heart of love, devotion, gratitude and not from fear of condemnation. It is his delight to serve the Lord, because he is free from the law and condemnation, and never because he is under the law. He enjoys his salvation instead of enduring it.

This, of course, immediately raises the question, "If the believer is not under the law, then he can live as he pleases, do as he wishes, and it will make no difference." Now, of course, such language reveals a total ignorance of the true meaning of grace, but since it is constantly raised by honest people, the question must be answered, and it must be answered from the Scriptures. The Bible is crystal clear in its answer to this vital question. The believer has liberty but never license. The Bible is clear that there are those things which are evidently and positively sinful and are the works of the flesh and are never to be even considered in the life of the believer. Paul names some of these things in Galatians 5:18-21,

"But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. 5:18-21

These sins are all plainly condemned, and have, of course, no place at all in the Christian's life. There is no argument with anyone on that score. But, how about those things which are not definitely set forth in this category, those things on which there is honest difference of opinion among sincere, earnest, and godly believers who are seeking to please God? How about matters of food and drink and pleasures, social conduct, frequenting certain places, innocent amusement, games, relaxations, about which so many Christians differ sharply? How about habits and hobbies, and some of the things about which many have no conscience? Some Christians believe certain things to be sinful, while others equally sincere see no harm in them at all. Some of these things are geographic and local, frowned on in certain areas, while quite acceptable elsewhere. In some communities certain things are looked upon as sin; in others there is no consciousness of sin about these same matters at all. In certain countries Christians indulge in meats and drinks which if practiced in other localities would cause them to be condemned as not even being saved, or at least being carnal, and not spiritual. But at the same time, the very ones who condemn these things in others, may be doing other things equally condemned by those whom they themselves condemn.

Now we are not to be judges in these matters at all, for the others whom we judge will then have the same right to judge us in the things which we allow. Since there is such variance of opinion, we must turn to the Word of God in regard to this difficult matter, as our sole and only authority and rule of practice. Many passages deal with this, but we begin with one which is so clear as to leave no question. We refer you to 1st Corinthians chapter 8. It opens with these words:

"Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge." 1 Cor. 8:1

A serious controversy had arisen in Corinth among the Christians concerning the question of frequenting pagan temples and eating in ungodly places. May I suggest that you read carefully the entire chapter of 1st Corinthians 8. It would be very profitable. Let me give the setting as briefly as possi-

ble. Paul had been preaching grace, and freedom from the law for Gentile believers wherever he had gone. The legalizing Judaizers of his day, however, took sharp exception to his teaching and sought in every way to bring these Gentile believers back under the bondage of the law. Now in Corinth, Paul's preaching had resulted in the conversion of a large number of Corinthians and these had formed a body of believers called the "church which was at Corinth." Now the city of Corinth was a very religious city and given over to all sorts of pagan idolatries. There were temples and idols and pagan priests galore. In these temples, heathen sacrifices were daily brought and offered, and of course, the worshippers brought the very choicest, fattest and most luscious animals to be sacrificed to their pagan gods. Nothing inferior would be accepted. When the priests had taken these animals and offered parts of them upon their altars, the remaining portions of these choice animals were then offered for sale in the market places so that the priests might realize some money from their sale to maintain their services, while the buyers were able to obtain this very choice meat at a greatly reduced price. In addition to these meats being offered for sale in the market places, they were also served at banquets and meals. These meals were served in the idol temples and anyone could go in, buy and eat these meats with the other courses, just as you can go into a restaurant today and buy a meal, but with this difference, that these restaurants in Corinth were sponsored by pagan priests and were located in pagan temples and the meats were meats, many of them unclean, which had been previously offered and dedicated to pagan idols. This central social function in Corinth centered about these pagan temples and feasts, and were deeply religious in nature.

THE BURNING QUESTION

Now the question which arose among these new Christians was this: "Are we Christians permitted to go into an idol's temple and sit down and eat with pagans of these meats which have been offered to idols?" There were, as there always are, two opinions. There were those who were quick to say that a Christian has no place in an idol's temple, and should

never sit down with these heathen, and especially not to eat of unclean flesh which had been offered to idols. They were quick to condemn and censure and excommunicate all those who were caught doing this very sinful and unchristian thing.

But, there was another group in the church who took the opposite view. They said, What difference does it make? That meat is better than we can buy anywhere else. And it is cheaper too. Why should we not take advantage of it? Now remember, the early Christians were mostly poor, and they might have said, "We have but very little money, and if we can save a little by eating in these more economical places and get better food, we will just have more money to give to the church and missions and charities. There you have the two sides and so, these two groups argued and the controversy waxed so hot that Paul had to give his judgment in the matter, and it was one of the main reasons the epistle to the Corinthians was written.

Now before we go on, let me ask you a question. With which side do you hold in this matter? Are you one who would say, "It is wrong to go to a worldly place to eat, it is wrong to sit with unbelievers, it is wrong to eat unclean meats offered to idols? I believe in separation and think we should stay away from such places, and not injure our testimony as Christians." Or will you take your side with the others who said, "We are under grace, ALL things are lawful unto us, this is my Christian liberty, and I can do as I please in the matter. It is none of anyone else's business. Unto his own master every man standeth or falleth. I have to answer for this before God, and no one else, and so you have no right to judge me." May I ask you, on which side do you take your stand? All right then, if you have chosen sides, let us hear what Paul says, for you may be surprised at Paul's answer:

"As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many)

But to us there is but one God, the Father of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." I Cor. 8:4-6

Now what does Paul mean in these words? Well, says Paul, for myself, I see nothing wrong at all in this matter of eating these meats offered to idols. I would not even give those idols the satisfaction of even recognizing their existence. I ignore them completely; they are nothing at all to me, and I for myself can eat that meat with a clear conscience without any personal scruples. If the meat is good, I'll eat it. I am not under the law. "All things are lawful unto me", for God hath shown that there is nothing unclean in itself. We know that an idol is nothing in the world. I wouldn't even recognize them. We know there is only one God and one Saviour Jesus Christ, so when I eat of the idol's meat in an idol temple, I do not endorse the idol, I just ignore him, but I give thanks to my God for this good food, even though provided by these pagan priests and chefs.

BUT I WON'T EAT IT ANYWAY

But that is just half of Paul's answer, for Paul merely says, "personally, for myself, I see no harm in it, BUT FOR ANOTHER REASON I WON'T EAT IT ANYWAY." Now the reason why, was this. He said, my reason for not going into the idol's temple and eating that meat is quite another matter, which is not legal at all, but I refrain from eating it because I am saved by grace, and free from the very law which would prohibit me as a Jew from doing so. And then Paul gives his reason for not eating in these places, even though he sees nothing wrong in his doing so for himself personally, and here is the reason which Paul gives:

"Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled." I Cor. 8:7

All believers, says Paul, have not advanced in grace as far as have others. They have not the same knowledge of the liberty of grace that God has shown to me. They still

have the strings of the law tied to them, and they feel just as sincerely as I feel the other way; namely, that it is wrong to eat in an idol's temple and partake of these unclean meats. Of course, if they had more knowledge of grace they would agree with me and see no harm in it, but they are weak and have not yet advanced to this knowledge, and so they think it is wrong for them, and for me as well, to eat that meat, and to be seen in a pagan temple. Now just remember, that those who would criticize Paul for what he did under liberty of grace, are defined by Paul as being weak and lacking in the full knowledge of grace.

THE CRUX OF THE MATTER

Now what are we going to do about it? Paul gives the answer:

"But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat (still talking about this idol meat) are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse."

1 Cor. 8:8

It is entirely up to the individual conscience, and there is no particular merit in eating it, and no merit in abstaining. There is no harm or sin in eating it, neither is a man the worse if he doesn't eat it. The whole matter is a thing of personal conscience. If you, brother, think it is wrong, Paul seems to say, "Don't you touch it, for if you do, it will be a sin," but listen, if I think it is all right, you have no right to judge me. As far then as the meat is concerned, "let every man be persuaded in his own mind."

THE FINAL TEST

But now comes the final test, for this is not the end of the matter. Whether we eat it or not, should be determined by its effect upon our testimony and upon the lives of other believers. If you have the knowledge of grace, and in the light of your knowledge of the liberty of grace see no harm in eating that meat, go ahead, EXCEPT FOR ONE OTHER THING, and this other thing is to be our rule of practice, and here is one of the several "buts" in this chapter:

"BUT take heed lest by any means this liberty of your's become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." I Cor. 8:9-12

Here then is the conclusion of the matter. The sin is not in the liberty which you have to do certain things which others may feel are wrong, but your sin is in allowing this liberty to become a stumblingblock to a weaker brother who sees it differently than you do. My question then is not, "Is it wrong for me personally to do this or that thing"? but, "What will it do to a weaker brother?" "What will it do to my testimony?" Oh yes, I know you say, the folks who criticize you for your liberty are called "weaker brethren", and need more instruction in grace. That all sounds very pious but it is not really the language of grace, but of pride instead. I get sick and tired of people who talk about grace and use expressions like this; "since I saw the light", and "if so and so only knew the Word of God like I do". That very language proves that you need a deeper knowledge of grace yourself. Paul says, if anything I do, (even though it is not wrong for me personally) offends my brother, and causes him to stumble, I will give it up gladly, I will not assert my liberty, and so Paul ends the chapter by saying:

"Wherefore, if meat maketh my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." I Cor. 8:13

Grace people should always be gracious. So will you remember these points. You have no right to judge a brother in regard to his own conscience. We shall deal with that at length in our next message. We may judge SIN, those things that are particularly forbidden, but in regard to these matters of doubt, "let every man be persuaded in his own mind."

Secondly, if you know the grace of God, you will not use

your liberty of grace to injure or offend a weaker brother, who may not have the same knowledge that you have and see things exactly as you do. To say, "I see no wrong in this thing, and even though Brother Doe thinks it is wrong, I am going to do it anyway, for it is none of his business", becomes in itself a sin of being uncharitable and ungracious, and Paul says you are "giving the lie to your statement that you know the grace of God." God help us to order our lives according to the pattern of grace, and not the pattern of law.

GRACE PEOPLE SHOULD ALWAYS BE GRACIOUS!

Chapter Three

"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not." 1 Cor. 10:23

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." 1 Cor. 6:12

If there was any one single thing which Paul was dead set against, it was against being put back under the law from which he had been delivered by the grace of God. For many years Paul had lived under the law of Moses, and done his very utmost extended best to keep that law in all sincerity, so that he could say, "as touching the law, blameless", and yet at the end of all those years of struggling to keep the law he found himself a poor lost sinner standing in the need of the mercy and the grace of God. Paul knew the utter futility of trying to please God by his own works, and therefore, was ready to fight to the finish those who would bring believers back under the bondage of the law.

And so Paul repeats **FOUR TIMES** in this one epistle to the Corinthians the statement, "All things are lawful for me." As far as the law is concerned, I am free to do as I please. Now, don't misunderstand that statement, for Paul did not say that

he could do anything that he pleased and there would be no wrong in it. Ah, no, quite to the contrary. What Paul says is this, as far as the "law of Moses" goes, I am not under it any longer. But I am now under the law of grace, and my Christian conduct is now motivated by a higher law, the law of love for God and a gracious consideration of my fellow brethren, even those who may disagree with me. Our service is just as punctual as the law ever demanded, and more so, but it is not merely because the law commands it. It is not legal, but the result of gratitude for His great deliverance. The true believer will seek to do God's will and follow His commandments to be sure, but not because the law demanded it primarily, but because grace expects it. Personally, the believer is not under the law but stands in the perfect liberty of grace. But as a member of the body of Christ and of society, his conduct is determined by another rule, and that is, his influence and effect upon other people, and the glory of God, and not his own feelings only about the matter. Paul had been setting forth this great truth in 1st Corinthians 8 which we have studied, and also referred to in Romans 14. To show how important it is to get this proper and important slant on the matter of living under grace, it is again repeated in 1st Corinthians 10. Here is the passage I would like to have you consider:

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth (welfare).

Whatsoever is sold in the shambles (butcher shop) that eat, asking no questions for conscience sake.

For the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."

1 Cor. 10:23-26

How clearly Paul states the matter. He says we are not under the law. The word, "shambles" in verse 25 means "butcher shop" and what the Apostle says is, "there is nothing unclean in itself." But if this action of mine in exercising my liberty under grace in eating these meats which have been offered to idols, offends a weaker brother, I should be gracious enough to let his conscience lead me, rather than my own conscience. Now as an illustration of this, Paul continues in verse 27:

"If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake." I Cor. 10:27

Here indeed is the problem. Suppose that an unbeliever should ask you to a feast in his home, as his guest, or probably in an idol's temple if you lived in Paul's day, What should you do? If you have conscientious scruples about it, because at an unbeliever's feast ceremonially unclean food would be served, then you should not go. If you think it is wrong, then it would be wrong for you to go. Remember, this is in Corinth, a heathen city, given over to idolatry. But, says Paul, if you want to go, there is no harm in going. As Paul puts it, "if ye be disposed to go" then go ahead, eat what they serve and enjoy yourself, asking no questions.

THE INEVITABLE "BUT" AGAIN

But there is one condition attached to this liberty. Listen to it in verse 28:

"BUT if any man say unto you, This (meat) is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:

Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?

For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." I Cor. 10:28-31

You see the point, I trust. If that which you do under grace in the liberty of faith, offends another, then you sin if you, knowing you are offending a brother, continue in it. You may reply, as Paul states it here, "why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? Why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?" And the answer is that no man liveth unto himself. The question is not MY LIBERTY and MY RIGHTS, but the GLORY of God. People who are saved by grace should be gracious. Since we are saved by grace, we have renounced our own will and seek now only to do the will

of God to please Him and our neighbor, and not ourselves. That, my friend, is living by grace. That is living unto God, and that is what Paul means when he says:

"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Gal. 2:19

The question is not one of legality at all, but "what can I do to please Him who hath redeemed me by His grace?" I serve Him, not because I fear punishment if I don't obey, or lose my salvation, but I serve Him because He has so wonderfully saved me and given me eternal life.

SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

We repeat again, people who talk about grace should be gracious. It is a sad, sad thing that many, many believers including fundamentalists, always talking about grace, grace, grace, are often the most legal Christians in all the world. They lay down rules and laws, and judge one another, and find fault, and condemn and exclude. If you don't part your hair like they do, conform to all their local and often provincial "do's" and "don'ts" and customs, you are excluded from their fellowship. If you are born again, my friend, and washed in the blood, you are my brother in Christ, and I want fellowship with you. I may not agree with you in all things, but let's disagree in love, and let us be gracious about our differences, at least, and seek to help one another.

Let us not judge one another anymore, but seek to help and instruct and correct in the spirit of love and graciousness. Are you prone to judge and criticize others for things they do, about which they may have no scruples at all? Ninety-nine times out of a hundred when we judge some sin in others, we are only throwing up a smoke screen to divert attention away from some sin or habit in our own lives which may even be ten times worse than the one which we condemn in the life of someone else. I do not find one verse in the Bible which tells me to judge my neighbor, but rather that we are to judge ourselves. We may judge sin and error in people's lives, but we are never to judge one another. And,

my friend, when we start looking into our own hearts and lives, we find so many faults, that others will look like angels in comparison. You are very censorious and critical about something your brother does, but do you realize that you are judging him, which is an even greater sin? Do you ever judge the politer but more serious sins of your own life? Do you ever gossip? Do you ever whisper? Ever pass along to others some sin or fault of a friend? The Bible has far more to say about gossip than the sin that you may be condemning in your brother at this very time. Gossip is worse than stealing a man's possessions. These may be replaced, but a good name stolen through careless gossip can never be replaced. Slander is more than merely spreading derogatory things about a neighbor. It is murder, murdering a man's reputation, never to be undone. Before you judge your neighbor again for something your self-righteous soul condemns, ask yourself the question, "Am I guilty of some of the things the Bible condemns in me, while it is probably utterly silent concerning that thing you are so scathingly denouncing in your neighbor"? You can condemn your neighbor for being a spend-thrift, but are you covetous? I know people who would condemn a poor man for filching a loaf of bread because his family was starving, and yet, while he himself loudly howled for the indictment of the poor man for petty larceny, he himself was as covetous as the devil himself, ran a sweat shop, drove his employees like slaves, squeezed the last drop of sweat and blood out of them in his shop or factory, to swell his coffers with his ill-gotten gold, and then was a big shot in the church because he took a few hundred dollars of this "blood" money and gave it with much publicity and fanfare for the poor benighted heathen, while he trafficked in men here at home.

There is a sin worse than a poor man stealing a loaf of bread. We do not justify the theft, but it may be as great a sin to sit in judgment upon him, when you have an abundance and don't know what poverty or hunger is. Are you stingy? Have you an unforgiving spirit? Are you proud? Ah, friends, these are the politer sins which do not come up for condemnation, but according to the Word of God are denounced even more vigorously than many a fault which you may condemn in your fellow man.

ARE YOU GRACIOUS?

People who have been saved by the grace of God should always be gracious. Do you think of others rather than only of yourself? You see, this enters into every single department of our lives. It is the little things which are the evidence of grace in our every-day life. Do you drive your car graciously, always thinking of the other fellow, or do you double-park and tie up traffic and inconvenience everybody else? When you park your car do you leave room for someone else, or do you park in the middle of a two-car space, so no one can get ahead or behind you, just so it will be a little easier for YOU to get out by and by? You see, I am trying to get this thing of grace down to where you and I live. That's what is wrong with the world today. Everything runs by law, instead of by grace. We stand on our legal rights instead of acting in grace toward one another. Ah, my friend, if you were to receive your deserts and your rights, you would be lost today, but by His grace you have been saved. Let us listen to the words of grace as found in Ephesians 4:29-32,

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption .

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Eph. 4:29-32

There is a pattern of grace, not law, but grace, forgiving because we have been forgiven.

Now before I close this message, may I emphasize this very solemn warning. Even though we are saved by grace, it does not mean that God will not hold us accountable for our deeds. The very fact of grace carries a tremendous responsibility. If we turn our liberty into license and turn the grace

of God into lasciviousness, He surely will visit His children with severe chastening. God does not punish His children who are saved by grace, but He chastens them. The law punishes, but love chastens. The punishment of the law is retributive and punitive; chastening is corrective. And so if you abuse God's grace, He will surely chasten you. You may recall that in Matthew 18 Jesus gives the parable of the unjust servant who owed his master ten thousand talents, approximately twelve million dollars, a sum he could never expect to pay. But the master freely forgave him all the debt because he had compassion, and that was grace. And then that same servant forgot all about it all too soon, and we read:

"But the same servant found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him a hundred pence (15 dollars): and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

And his fellow-servant besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not: but went out and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and told their lord all that was done."

Matt. 18:28-31

How ungracious! He had been forgiven twelve million dollars, and he wouldn't even forgive his fellow-servant fifteen dollars. And notice what the other servants did when they heard of this very ungracious act. They were sorry and told their lord. They were not like too many of us, secretly happy to see the other fellow fail. They did not rush to the telephone to tell everybody what a mean man he was. They did not gossip and whisper about him, and spread the bad news. Ah, no! They told no one, but went and told it to their lord. God help us to be like that when a fellow Christian stumbles and sins. Let us be sorry, to be sure, but let us tell no one but go to the Lord, and tell Him alone, for He alone is able to deal with him in grace and in chastening. Right here we might well quote Galatians 6:1,

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Gal. 6:1-2

Now I have tried to be very direct and plain in speaking to you, and I do hope and pray that you will also be gracious in receiving this message. Maybe you do not agree with all I have said, especially concerning our freedom from the law. Maybe you differ sharply with some things which I have said, but if you do, be gracious about it. Some of you have written to me, many in a very condemnatory tone, consigning me to judgment itself, because I have preached pure grace, and grace alone, wholly apart from our own merit. Some of you have accused me of preaching "that damnable doctrine of free grace". Now, beloved, that is not gracious. Of course, if you are under the law, then that explains your legal and condemnatory attitude, but if you are under grace, you should be gracious. May God help us to put into practice this great principle.

A closing word to the sinner, gathering up what we have said so many times in this series of messages, your only hope of salvation, my friend, is to abandon every dependence of saving yourself, give up all your own righteousness and admit and acknowledge that you have broken every one of God's commandments, that you cannot keep them, that you are under condemnation, and your depraved nature is unable because of the weakness of the flesh to please God, and then cast yourself entirely upon the mercy and the grace of God.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

Not of works, lest any man should boast.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:8-10

Chapter Four

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou but charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of."

Romans 14:13-16

This is the divine principle of Christian grace which so few people seem to understand, and so few believers are willing to accept and practice. We may sum up this whole matter of Christian liberty in these words, "the Christian should never give way to any known or definite sin, but consider himself to be dead to all sins clearly indicated in the Bible." The Word of God leaves no room for doubt in this matter. It names many of them, fornication, adultery, lying, stealing, gossiping, whispering, envyings, jealousies, variance, emulations, seditions, temper, profanity, drunkenness, covetousness, unforgiveness, malice, evil speaking, and all the other definite sins, are condemned in the Scriptures. When these are continued in, and unrepented of, we must withdraw ourselves from all such that they may be brought to repentance. This is clear from the words of Paul in 2nd Thessalonians 3:14-15,

"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

2 Thess. 3:14-15

The assembly of God has a responsibility in disciplining those who thus walk unworthily and in open sin. Failure to deal with erring brethren who walk in open disobedience to the clear teaching of Scripture will injure the assembly's

testimony, and result in the loss of blessing. In 1st Corinthians 5 we have an example of a case in point. There was a man, a believer, a member of the assembly in Corinth, who lived in open sin. The Corinthian church is severely rebuked by Paul for failing to deal with him. He may have been an influential or a very wealthy man, and probably gave liberally to the church. Too often believers who harbor sin in their lives try to cover it up by other acts of seeming devotion, in an effort to salve their conscience and gain people's admiration, and so divert their thoughts in this way from the sin which they harbor in their lives. It is a fact that people often exhibit great zeal, while living in sin, as if this would justify their error.

No, says the Apostle Paul, you are wrong in failing to deal with any sinning brother, no matter how influential he may be. Here is Paul's statement very definitely given: (1st Cor. 5:1)

"It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife."

1 Cor. 5:1

This man in Corinth was living with his father's wife. Instead of dealing with this sin, they had allowed it, and so Paul continues:

"And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you."

1 Cor. 5:2

Paul says, if the man will not repent, you ought to pray for the Lord to remove him (apparently Paul is referring to removal by death, according to 1 Cor. 11) rather than have him continue in his unrepentant condition. And then follows Paul's admonition, and he says:

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." 1 Cor. 5:4-5

This was to be an assembly action. They were to break fellowship and cease to pray for him, except that God might intervene and take him away by death if need be, to stop his continuing in this sin. This evidently is the sin unto death, of which John says in 1st John 5:

"There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."

1 John 5:16

Now so much for this aspect of our subject. We have spent this time to give this explanation because when we speak of the believer's liberty of grace in Christ, some people suppose that we are giving license to sin, but it is nothing of the kind. Those sins which are positively condemned in Scripture should be judged and taken care of, but there are some matters on which the Bible is silent. These are matters of personal conscience. They are called "weights" as distinguished from clearly forbidden sins. In Hebrews 12:1 we read:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every WEIGHT, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

Hebrews 12:1

Will you carefully notice that in this passage two things should be put aside by the Christian. "Weights" are distinguished from "sins" in this particular verse. The figure which Paul uses is that of a race. The believer is represented as a runner in a race for a prize. The runner is not only to abstain from all things which would definitely be harmful and weaken him, but in addition to these definitely prohibited things, he is also to discard every bit of extra weight and external impedimenta, which would hinder his free motion. He is to lay aside all extra and unnecessary clothing and apparel which would impede his freedom in running. Now, wearing clothing is not wrong, but in a race it

becomes a "weight" which hinders us in the race.

Just so in the race of the believer's life, definite sins are clearly condemned in the Bible, and have no place in our Christian life, of course. On this there is no argument. But there are these other things on which the Bible does not speak with definiteness, and which are not clearly forbidden, which may nevertheless become "weights" and hindrances in our lives. They are those matters of personal conscience. They are the questions of meats and drinks, customs and personal habits, amusements, and innocent pleasures, games and apparel and feast days and holidays and sabbath days. These present a different problem. They may not be sins in themselves, but may become sins by our attitude toward them. Paul refers to them in these words:

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

Romans 14:1

If a believer is weak in the faith and is given to judging his brother's liberty in grace, don't ignore him, receive him, but not for doubtful disputations, or to argue about the differences of opinion. "Doubtful disputations", Paul calls them. Don't argue about doubtful matters. There are some things which YOUR conscience may permit, which mine definitely won't. They are matters of "doubt", because they are matters of personal liberty. And as an example Paul says:

"For one believeth that he may eat all things: another who is weak, eateth herbs.

Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."

Romans 14:2-4

You see, in matters of personal liberty concerning food and drink and such things, says Paul, we are not to judge,

but "let every man be persuaded in his own mind." (Romans 14:5) Now the same thing is true of special days and seasons, for Paul continues:

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be persuaded in his own mind."

Romans 14:5

There is no direct command anywhere in the New Testament for a certain day to be observed above all others by believers in this dispensation. By precept and example, to be sure, Christians have set aside the first day of the week as a special day of worship and assembling themselves together, but if another day had been chosen, it would have made no difference. It is not the day, but the spirit of our worship. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." For the sake of order and unity and to prevent confusion, we regard this day as the most appropriate and significant in view of Jesus' resurrection, but again, I repeat, the New Testament contains no command concerning any one special day. It is rather the principle of one day in seven which is important. Now, before you take exception to this statement, and take issue with me, you try and see if you can find a single command concerning a special day. To be sure, the first day of the week was practiced and observed by the apostles, and we follow that practice of the early Christians as a matter of grace, but not as a matter of command. We do have it, I repeat, by precept and example under grace, but not as a matter of law.

And so we are definitely warned not to judge one another in this matter. Paul says in Colossians 2:16,

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, (HOLY DAY, not holiday) or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

Col. 2:16-17

And then to clinch once and for all the Christian's liberty and grace, he says in verse 20:

"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

(Touch not; taste not; handle not;

Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?"

Col. 2:20-22

So far then we can sum up Paul's teaching as follows: We are not to judge matters of personal liberty in other believers, but again, we repeat, as we have said so many times before, this is only half the story. For neither are we to allow these matters of personal liberty to become an occasion for stumbling or offense to other people round about us. The rule of my life is not to be MY conscience in the light of God's Word, but I must be guided by YOUR conscience in my life and conduct. I think this will bear repeating. I as a believer under grace am not only to be guided by my own conscience according to the Word of God, but by the conscience of others as well. Let me clarify this. We refer you again to 1st Corinthians 10:29 where Paul says in this connection:

"Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other."

Now that may seem strange, and yet it is very clear. The setting of this we have already seen. Paul says if you are invited to a feast in an unbeliever's home and you feel you can be of some usefulness for Christ in going, and giving your testimony there, go ahead. Eat whatever is placed before you, asking no questions, for conscience sake. It may be that some of the food will be food dedicated to idols and bought in an idol temple, and under the law ceremonially unclean. For you to eat it, if you see no harm in it, is no sin, however. But, if there is someone else there who does not see it the way you do, someone who believes it to be wrong to eat this meat offered to an idol, and says, "that meat you are eating is unclean, it is a sin for you to partake of it", then for the sake of not offending this man's conscience, you

should be willing to forego your own liberty, and your own ideas in this matter, and for the sake of another's conscience refrain and abstain from it. To insist on your own liberty in grace, to the offense of others then makes your liberty a sin, instead of liberty. And so Paul concludes this section in 1st Corinthians 10 with these important words:

"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God."

1 Cor. 10:32

Paul could say, "I have become all things to all men, if by any means I might win some." How necessary, therefore, the warning of 1st Corinthians 8:9,

"But take heed lest by any means this liberty of your's become a stumblingblock to them that are weak."

1 Cor. 8:9

But now you immediately ask the question, how far must we go in this matter of ordering our lives and conduct for the sake of other people's conscience? Some people object to my wearing jewelry, some object to my amusements, my use of a little makeup, some Christians find fault with the clothes that I wear, what I do with my money, what I do on Sunday. Some object to my friends, to my use of coffee, and tea, and what not. How far must I go in this matter? Listen, my friend. That will depend entirely on how much grace you have in your heart. The more grace, the more you will be willing to sacrifice for others. If you are legal, you will probably continue to judge others and say it is none of anyone else's business what I do. But if you are really gracious, you will in so far as possible, do what Paul did when he said:

"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

1 Cor. 8:13

Paul says, I won't even eat ceremonially clean meat, lest people should mistake it for unclean meat and condemn me. Or listen to Paul again, in 1st Corinthians 10:31 and 33,

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, (that is, insisting on my own rights) but the profit of many, that they may be saved." I Cor. 10:31,33

Or listen to this from the Apostle Paul:

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean."

Romans 14:13-14

"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." Romans 14:21-22

GRACE PEOPLE SHOULD BE GRACIOUS

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

Romans 14:13

GRACE PEOPLE SHOULD BE GRACIOUS

I should like to close this message and this series of messages with a quotation once again from Romans 15:1-3,

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is writ-

ten, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." Romans 15:1-3

May the Holy Spirit of God Himself teach us who are saved by grace to put in practice his admonition:

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."
Romans 14:19

If this little-known truth, so little preached in our pulpits today, were better known by God's people and practiced, it would end much of the division and the trouble and the criticism and the splitting which has become such a reproach to the cause of the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. May we have burned upon our own hearts this great truth that people saved by grace should be gracious.

GRACE PEOPLE SHOULD BE MORE GRACIOUS!

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