

The Law of Love

I. The Law of Liberty Regarding Doubtful Things

*The Law of Liberty: toward yourself
The Law of Love: toward other believers
The Law of Expediency: toward unbelievers
The Law of Sacrifice: toward God*

Romans 14:1-7:

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

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

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

Who are thou that judges another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Yes, he shall be held up: for God is able to make him stand.

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

He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord; and he that regards not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he that eats not, to the Lord he eats not, and gives thanks.

For none of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself.

The law of liberty is brought out in these verses of Scripture. There are gray areas in the Christian life that the Bible does not identify as sin. Paul identified these as "doubtful things." Verse one tells us we are not to argue about doubtful things. We are at liberty in our own lives to choose for ourselves.

The key to this particular Scripture is the phrase, "*in his own mind*," found in Romans 14:5. You must be firmly convinced or persuaded in your own mind.

Some Christians *do not* go to movies. Others *do* go to movies, but get into confrontations about which ratings are or are not acceptable. What offends one person may or may not offend another person. Often people will say, "God told me," when defending their position. But we find out the Bible doesn't say anything specifically about watching movies.

Some Christians do not own a television. Others may own a television but are very careful about what they watch. Just like movies, the Bible says nothing about television.

Some Christians, and many in the world, look down on those who smoke cigarettes. The Bible says nothing about smoking cigarettes. (Cigarettes will not send you to hell; they just make you smell like you've been there.)

Some people have very strong views on what types of foods we should or should not eat. They try to pull out Scripture to say, "These foods are good for you; these foods are bad for you." We should be wise in our food choices, but eating certain types of food is not sin.

Next is the drinking of wine. This seems to be a geographical sin. I have been to different places around the world where it is acceptable for a Christian to drink wine, but not coffee.

Some church denominations are opposed to dancing, but when the Spirit of God blesses them, they believe dancing is fine. There are many ethnic groups who have had dance as a part of their culture for centuries. What about social dancing? Is it acceptable to participate in ballroom dancing? The Bible says nothing about social dancing.

The observance of certain holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, or Halloween is highly offensive to some people. Some people have problems with bringing a Christmas tree into their home, believing it is associated with something evil. Many Christians want to know about Easter eggs because they have to do with fertility rites. Should we allow our children to paint and hunt for Easter eggs? The point is, God made trees and God made eggs. The vast majority of people are not

worshipping the tree or the egg, which is why the Bible calls all these things, *doubtful things*.

The Bible doesn't talk about these specific things because God trusts you.

Psalm 1:1-3:

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.

And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.

Notice the last thing this says: *whatever I do will prosper!* If you meet the qualifications in verses one and two, God simply says, "I trust you."

II. Being Fully Persuaded

We pray to God about television, movies, and all those other things Christians make such a big deal of, and we can't understand why God doesn't say anything. It is because He has no answer. Think about that. There are times God has no answer because there's no real question. If God could get through to you, He'd say, "You know what? I haven't really been thinking about that today. I've been thinking about the lost in your city. I've been thinking about the people who need to be ministered to, and I really haven't given a television set much thought today. In fact, I'm going to tell you to make up your own mind. I'll just stand behind whatever you decide."

We often want God to verify everything we do, and Scripture does say in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. On the other hand, there are certain things God considers to be doubtful areas, or gray areas of Christianity. Those areas in which you are fully persuaded of He will stand behind you in.

Romans 14:14:

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

This is referring to doubtful things, not to those things identified in the Bible as sin. If a person says, "I just think God says whatever I want to do about adultery is fine." No, God has something to say about adultery. He has something to say about lying and stealing. There are certain sins specifically laid out in the Word of God.

Proverbs 6:1-4:

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

These are things the Bible specifically says are sin. Galatians 5:19-21 talks about the manifestation of the works of the flesh. In chapters five, six, and seven of Matthew, there are lists of sins mentioned. But sometimes situations arise in modern-day society about which people don't know what type of scriptural standpoint to take.

Romans 14:20, 22:

For meat destroys not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.

Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he that condemns not himself in that thing which he allows.

We are not to argue about doubtful things, but to receive each other in love and realize there is something bigger than what we argue about most in the Christian life.

Satan tries to divert our attention away from the real mission God has given us by bringing up things the Bible doesn't say anything about. It all comes back to the Great Commission. He has called us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, lay hands on the sick, see them recover, see them get filled with the Holy Spirit, cast out devils, and make disciples of believers. The Bible doesn't say much about many of the things we bring up today — those things which preoccupy church denominations and our thoughts, causing us to put aside the very thing God has called us to do.

III. Conviction of the Holy Spirit

John 16:8:

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

Of sin, because they believe not on me.

He will reprove the world of “sin,” not “sins.” It is singular. There is a sin the Holy Spirit reproves or convicts of and it is “they believe not on Me.”

There is only one sin the Holy Spirit convicts of: rejection of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. You may say, “What about all those things I feel convicted about in my own personal life?” It is your heart that condemns you. It is your heart that convicts you in those areas. The Holy Spirit can deal with you about areas of your life, but when it comes to actual conviction, the Holy Spirit deals with you about Jesus Christ.

IV. Conviction of Your Heart

I John 3:21:

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”

There are times when one person's heart may condemn them for a particular thing and another person's heart does not condemn them for that. *Our heart convicts us in line with what we have been taught.* Some

people have come from backgrounds where they were taught it was sinfully wrong to see a movie and when they get near a movie theater, they go crazy. Their heart condemns them. Yet, another Christian walks by a theater and says, “Hmmm, I wonder what’s showing.”

One person feels condemned, another does not. The person who feels condemned often turns to the other and says, “It’s the Holy Spirit that convicts me.” However, the Bible clearly says the Holy Spirit was sent to convict the world of their need of Jesus Christ. In regards to our own personal convictions, we must feed and teach our heart the Word of God. We must teach the Word of God to our children so they can be convicted in line with the Word. Regarding all these doubtful things, God says, “Make up your own mind. I will stand behind you. I want everyone fully persuaded in his own mind.”

V. Walking in the Law of Love

Romans 14:1-7:

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

The purpose of receiving everyone into the congregation is not to straighten them out and make them see things our way. When it comes to church, there is something bigger than our own little personal convictions. We have people from every type of denominational background in our church, and the miracle of it is that some of them have been coming for twenty years. I am sure that at some point they did not agree with me on a certain doctrine.

We have to walk in a higher love. Romans 14 begins with the *law of love*, not with the law of liberty. Something is greater than your liberty, and that is walking in love toward everyone else around you. When someone new comes in to church, you’re not to say, “Ah ha, we have a new person coming to church who believes differently. We’ll straighten him out after a few weeks.” That is not the purpose of church. The purpose of church is to preach what God has told us, minister from the Word, and realize that what unites a church together is *vision*. We are out to win the lost, disciple believers, and raise another generation for the glory

of God so if we pass on before Jesus returns, the next generation will be stronger in the things of God than we were.

Romans 14:13:

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.

The law of love says there is something more important than my liberty. It is the fact that my choices may cause someone else to stumble and prevent them from pursuing the deeper things of God. I do not want to be responsible, through my liberty, for causing another person to stumble. When you are around other believers who are offended by certain things; the law of love chooses not to participate in them.

I have ministered in the past to some who didn't believe in wearing jewelry of any kind. I could have worn my rings, my big gold watch, and talked about my wife's jewelry. I could have so offended everyone because of jewelry it could have prevented them from receiving the Word of God. But there was something more important at that time than a ring on my finger. Yes, I had the liberty to wear it, but I simply took it off before I preached because that was not an issue for me.

Many Christians would have made it an issue. "I'll flaunt it in front of them. I'll rub it in their faces so they will see it my way," and they would have turned the people off to receiving the message they had to give.

There is a higher law than the law of liberty; that is the law of love.

Ephesians 5:21:

Submitting yourself one to another in the fear of God.

There are times when we are to submit one to another. Don't argue about doubtful things. Don't flaunt your liberty.

Romans 14:15:

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

The word “charitably” is the word “agape.” There is something more important than the food on your plate, and that is the fact that Jesus Christ died for the Christian sitting across from you. The purpose of the cross was so they could also go on in the deeper things of God.

We are not to preach on issues the Bible doesn’t talk about. However, if the Bible does talk about something and we preach on it, we are to walk charitably with one another.

Romans 14:21-23:

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

Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemns not himself in the thing which he allows.

For he that doubts is condemned if he eats, because he eats not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Eating meat and drinking wine were major issues back then too. The object in the Christian life is not to force someone else to eat the meat we are eating or to eat the vegetables we are eating. There is something higher in the Christian life than making someone else do what we are doing. We’re going to get to heaven one day where we won’t eat at all, but until that day comes we need to walk in love and in faith with one another.

I Corinthians 8:9-13:

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

For if any man see you which have knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him that 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 you sin so against the brother, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

Wherefore, if meat makes your brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world stands, lest I make my brother to offend.

Meat is not the issue. The issue is our brother. When we sin against him by forcing him to do something, we actually sin against Christ.

Paul isn't saying that once he leaves this man, he'll never eat meat again. Paul ate meat on many occasions. He is simply saying, "On every occasion where I recognize my liberty can cause someone to stumble or be offended, I will not do that as long as this earth stands." There comes a time when the law of liberty has to be overridden by the law of love.

Our daily prayer should not only be that we see people come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ and be born again, but that our life also becomes an example to other Christians around us. Paul said he would be a Roman to the Romans, a Galatian to the Galatians, a Barbarian to the Barbarians, and he simply meant that in certain things, he would do whatever it took to see to it the person came to know Jesus Christ or to expand their walk with Him.

There was a core group of mature believers in Corinth and in Rome. Paul discovered that oftentimes when a person becomes mature in the things of God that it goes to their head and they become arrogant. God doesn't want Christians to be arrogant and puffed up, but rather to walk in humility before Him. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Walk in love toward one another, toward those Jesus Christ shed His blood for so you can grow together in the things of God. Realize the mission He has given you is bigger and greater than anything else there is in the Christian life.