

## **THE CHRISTIAN'S LIBERTY**

### **1COR.8:9**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. By the Christian's liberty we have reference to the Christian's liberty in serving both God and man within the bounds of God's revealed will, or under the law of God, with God's approval.
2. The liberty or the freedom or the right or the power or the authority to do or not to do as one pleases under the gospel, under certain circumstances as a servant of Christ, in the interest of the gospel and the souls of men, our own and others,
  - a. 1Cor.8:9, "this **liberty** of yours" (EXOUSIA): "right, authority, power W.E.Vine, II,334.
  - b. Thayer,225, (EXOUSIA): "power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases; leave or permission," Ac.5:4; Rom.4:21; 1Cor.7:37; 8:9; 9:4,6,12,18; 2Th.3:9.
3. We are talking about liberties the Christian has the right to exercise or to refrain from exercising, depending on the situation or the circumstances involved, as opposed to what is absolutely required or essential to one's salvation.
4. We are talking about liberties which:
  - a. If exercised under certain circumstances have God's approval.
  - b. Do not involve doing something which within itself is wrong, but due to certain circumstances one must deny oneself the liberty of doing it in order to have God's approval.
  - c. Do not involve doing something which within itself is wrong, but due to certain circumstances one may or may not refrain from doing and still have God's approval either way.

#### **II. DISCUSSION**

##### **A. THE CHRISTIAN'S LIBERTY FURTHER DEFINED AND ILLUSTRATED.**

1. Its nature.
  - a. It is the freedom, the liberty, or the right we are divinely granted to determine our own practices or conduct in things indifferent, or matters of opinion, or things not bound by divine law, or things not sinful in and of themselves, or things not essential to one's salvation.
  - b. It's the liberty to do or not do, which ever we choose as the situation allows.

2. Its extent.
  - a. It reaches to all matters:
    - (1) Not determined by or bound by the word of God which we must do, which would be sin if we failed or refused to do them.
      - (a) Examples to illustrate.
    - (2) Not settled by human relations or civil law, as long as such is in harmony with God's will, Rom.13:1-6; Tit.3:1; 1Pet.2:13,14.
      - (a) God has granted the Christian the right to disobey civil rulers if and when obeying them requires disobedience to God, Ac.4:18,19; 5:27-29.
      - (b) But such is not really a liberty, but something God requires as a matter of faith; for it would be a sin if we didn't disobey in such cases.
    - (3) Not calculated to offend the conscience of others, Rom.14; 1Cor.8; 10:27-29.
3. Its test:
  - a. Can we do it to the glory of God? Will God be glorified by it?
  - b. Can we give God thanks in the doing of it?
  - c. Can we do it with a clear conscience in harmony with God's will?
  - d. Can we do it without offending or wounding the weak conscience of a brother or sister in Christ?

**B. THE CHRISTIAN'S LIBERTY WITH REFERENCE TO EATING MEAT VS. EATING ONLY HERBS, ROM.14:1-23.**

1. Each Christian has the right or the liberty eat both meat and herbs, or to eat only herbs.
  - a. There is no sin in eating either one or both, or in refraining from eating either one; neither one is contrary to or in violation of divine law.
  - b. God accepts both the one that eateth and the one that eateth not, vv.3,4,5,6,18.
  - c. The things under consideration are not unclean (unlawful) in and of themselves; and anyone who exercises his liberty in these things to serve Christ is acceptable to God, vv.3,4,14,18,20.
  - d. Divine law has not bound such things on anyone. Each one is free, has the liberty, to eat or not eat.

2. There are three restrictions set forth in Rom.14, or three ways to violate its teaching and sin.
  - a. By judging or condemning or setting at naught thy brother or judging him unworthy of fellowship as a brother in Christ because he exercises his liberty which you erroneously think is a violation of divine law, vv.3,4,10,13a.
  - b. By becoming a stumbling block to the weak brother (who for conscience sake has bound a practice upon himself, a practice that is not bound by divine law) and make him to offend – i.e., influencing him to eat in violation of his conscience, vv.13,15,20,21.
  - c. By eating in violation of your own conscience; i.e, by eating while believing it is wrong: “for whatsoever is not of faith is sin,” v.21; cf. v.14.

**C. THE CHRISTIAN’S LIBERTY WITH REFERENCE TO EATING MEAT THAT HAD BEEN OFFERED IN SACRIFICE TO IDOLS, THEN LATER SOLD IN THE SHAMBLES (THE MARKET PLACE) FOR FOOD.**

1. According to 1Cor.8, the Christian with knowledge of such things had the liberty to eat meat that had been offered unto idols and do it with a clear conscience or conscience void of offence, v.1.
  - a. Because “an idol is nothing in the world,” v.4a.
    - (1) Lit. “there is no idol in the world”
    - (2) In this sense “idol” refers not to the image but to the deity represented by the image or the idol.
    - (3) He is not denying the existence of the images but the existence of the deity represented by the image.
    - (4) If the deity is non-existent, the image is meaningless; how can one make an image of something which does not exist?
    - (5) If there is no Zeus, an image of Zeus is an impossibility!
  - b. Because, not only “an idol is nothing in the world,” but also “that there is none other God but one,” or “there is no God except one,” even though the pagans falsely claim or assume there are many, vv.4b-6; Cf. Deut.6:4
  - c. Because the eating of meat does not affect our right relationship with God, whether or not we eat it: “For neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the better,” v.8.

2. But according to 1Cor.8, we must not use our liberty to eat meat in such a manner as to become a stumbling block to them that are weak, to them who do not as yet have knowledge regarding such things, and who for conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol and defile their weak conscience, vv.7,9-12.
3. Then Paul cited his own conviction and practice as the example we ought to imitate, c.13; Cf. 1Cor.11:1; Phil.4:9.
4. According to 1Cor.10:25, the Christian has the liberty to eat “whatsoever is sold in the shambles (the market place)...asking no questions for conscience sake”
  - a. He is not obligated to inquire in the history of the food sold and bought in the market place when it’s to be eaten in the privacy of one’s own home.
  - b. It was neither wrong to buy it or to eat it in such case. For one would not be engaging in an act of worship to a heathen god or an idol if he ate it for nourishment as a common meal.
  - c. The Christian did not and does not have to burden his conscience with these types of problems either then or now.
  - d. We do not have to establish a “Christian Meat Market” or a “Christian Grocery Store” that specializes in kosher (undefiled) food. Cf. 1Tim.4:4.)
5. According to 1Cor.10:27, the Christian has the liberty as an invited guest to a feast by a non-believer to accept the invitation and to eat whatsoever is set before him, asking no questions.
  - a. Thus, he is at liberty to do the same thing in the home of a non-believer as he is in his own home with reference to eating meat offered to idols.
6. But, according to 1Cor.10:28,29, the situation with reference to the use of his liberty changes when and “if any man (perhaps a weak brother, the one of 1Cor.8:7-12) says unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols,” v.28a.
  - a. When and if this happens, he must no longer exercise his liberty to eat.
  - b. He is now instructed to “eat not for conscience sake,” v.28b.
  - c. V.29 explains whose conscience is meant in v.28 when it says “eat not for conscience sake”
    - (1) V.29: “Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other”
      - (a) Because of another’s conscience; the conscience of the one who said, “This is offered in sacrifice unto idols,” v.28. Cf. 1Cor.8:7.

- (b) Because of his brother's conscience he cannot eat; he must sacrifice his liberty to eat.
- (2) If he eats under this circumstance, two things will happen
  - (a) He will run the risk of becoming a stumbling block to the weak brother. Cf. 1Cor.8:9-12.
  - (b) His liberty will be "judged of another's conscience," or another, because of conscience, will "pass an unfavorable judgment upon, criticize, find fault with, or condemn" his liberty; or he would be condemned for using his liberty.

**D. THE CHRISTIAN'S LIBERTY WITH REFERENCE TO ESTEEMING ONE DAY ABOVE ANOTHER, OR EVERY DAY ALIKE, ROM.14:5,6a.**

1. Whatever each one was doing in this case, he was free to do it; he had the liberty to do it. And the one was not to judge, condemn or set at naught, the other. For God receives and accepts both in what each one is doing, vv3,4,10,13,14,15,18.
2. Vv.5a,6a, "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike...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..."
  - a. Definition of terms
    - (1) "Esteem" (KRINO), "to approve, to prefer" one day above another...to esteem every day, i.e., hold it sacred (consecrated to God). – Thayer,360
    - (2) "Esteem" (KRINO), "signifies to separate, choose; then, to approve, esteem; translated 'esteemeth' in Rom.14:5 (twice) said of days; here the word 'like' (AV) is rightly omitted in the R.V., the meaning being that every day is especially regarded as sacred" (consecrated go God), Vine, II,42.
    - (3) "Regard" (PHRONEO), "to think, set the mind on, implying moral interest and reflection," Vine.III,266.
    - (4) "Regard" (PHRONEO), "to direct one's mind to a thing... to regard a day, observe it as sacred," Thayer, 658.
    - (5) "Above", "beyond, or better than another"
    - (6) Literally, "one judgeth a day beyond – or, in comparison with another."

- (7) Berry's Lit. Translation: "one judgeth a day (to be) above a day; another judges every day (to be alike)."
  - (8) Lenski's Commentary: "We have the idiomatic use of PARA (above): to judge a day 'beside' a day, in comparison with, making a difference, placing one day below or above another. So also to judge every day alike means to put every day on the same high plane. What the first judges only regarding a certain day, the second judges regarding every day."
- b. **I do not know precisely and specifically what they were said to be doing** as an individual liberty, but I know some things they were not doing.
- (1) Whatever they were doing when esteeming one day above another, or every day alike, they were not being "esteemed" or "preferred" or being observed in the sense of being essential to one's salvation, but as a matter of liberty in matters of indifference, or as things not essential to one's faithfulness to God.
  - (2) Perhaps it was with reference to customs of some kind.
  - (3) For if what they were doing had been regarded as essential to one's salvation, their practice in that case would have been condemned as a sin as per Gal.4:8-11, and not considered a liberty, a harmless practice acceptable to God.
- c. In addition to the condemnation of Gal.4:8-11, the language of Rom.14:5,6a cannot be understood with no qualification whatsoever as to certain specific things to be done by the individual on certain days as divinely ordained essential items of worship.
- (1) For the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week has been specified by divine authority as the day on which we are:
    - (a) To eat the Lord's Supper, Ac.20:7; 1Cor.11:17-29.
    - (b) To lay by in store as God has prospered us, or as the day the local church is to raise its funds with which to perform or support its divinely ordained work of evangelism, edification and benevolence, 1Cor.16:1,2.
  - (2) Therefore, this individual liberty herein permitted would not be allowed to contravene, obstruct, set aside, nullify, or violate, God's law.

- (a) That is, to esteem or prefer one day above another, or every day alike, would not and must not be allowed to cancel out his obligations to God on the Lord's day or the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week.
- (3) It would not be right; in fact, it would be a sin to do on Thursday or on any other day of the week, except the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week, that which the Lord has prescribed or specified to be done on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week.
- (4) This language refers to and must be limited in application to days and to activities independent of God's specific appointments for the saints.
- d. But whether it be the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, or any other day of the week, one is no better than the other; no one of them is above or beyond the other; they are all alike in character.
  - (1) There is not one iota of sanctity attaching to one day that does not attach to all.
  - (2) Not one of them is holy or is a holy day in this dispensation.
  - (3) Even though Sunday or the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week is called the Lord's day and the day the Lord's church is required to eat the Lord's Supper in memory of his death till he comes again (Ac.20:7; 1Cor.11:17-29); that does not mean and is not the same as recognizing it as a holy day or as observing it as a holy day, as were the Sabbath day and the Great Day of Atonement of the O.T. dispensation.
  - (4) What we do on Sunday in worship unto God is holy rather than the day itself. The observance of the Lord's supper on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week does not make the day (that 24 hour period) holy; we have no word of Scripture, no book, chapter and verse, by which to say so!
  - (5) All days are gifts of God and in that sense sacred or consecrated to God!
- e. Pulpit Commentary makes the following comment on Rom.14:5a,6a that may be significant: "A comparison with Gal.4:10 and Col.2:16 suggests rather a **general reference to days of observance** under the Jewish law...The supposed reference to Jewish **days of obligation in general** is not inconsistent with the apparent condemnation of the observance of such days...in Gal.4:10 and Col.2:16. When the observance

came to be insisted on as obligatory on principle (and not as a matter of liberty,ejd), it was a different thing from mere conscientious scrupulosity.” (emp. mine, ejd)

For additional comments see Moses Lard’s Commentary on Rom.14:5a,6a as follows:

1. “One esteems one day above another”
  - a. “The person here alluded to has been assumed by many to be the Christian Jew, and the days to be Jewish Sabbaths and other sacred days. The Christian Jew is certainly referred to, but it will not do to say that he exclusively is referred to.
  - b. “Nor will it do to say that the ‘day’ includes only Jewish sacred days. Such limitations are without warrant either from the nature of the case or any thing else.
  - c. “The term ‘one’ includes every Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, who esteemed one day above another; while ‘day’ includes every day so esteemed, whether it be a Jewish or a gentile day.
  - d. “At the time when Paul wrote, it was customary for certain Christians to esteem one day above another. This they had, and they still have, an absolute right to do, whether that day were a Jewish sacred day or a Gentile sacred day, a Sabbath or a first day of the week, a Wednesday or a Thursday; and no one was at liberty to pronounce them wrong, or in any way to interfere with them.
  - e. “And what was then the liberty of Christians is their liberty still. Had we Jewish Christians among us now, and did they choose to esteem and treat the ancient Sabbath as better than any other day, no one among us would have the right to move a lip against them.
  - f. “Only in keeping (or in esteeming, ejd) their days, they could not be allowed to do any thing violative of the law of Christ.
2. “Another esteems all days alike”
  - a. “The person here alluded to, and placed over against the other, was either a Gentile or a very enlightened Jew who knew and conceded that the whole Jewish ritual, worship, and service had been set aside for the gospel.
  - b. “But no matter who he was or what his nationality, he esteemed, and with the sanction of both God and Christ, all days alike.
  - c. “With him the Jewish Sabbath was no better than the day before it or the day after it; the first day of the week was no better than the last day or the second day; and he was just as certainly right as the person who esteemed one day above another. Both were right, and neither wrong.
  - d. “And so is it, so far as the New Testament is concerned, even now.

- e. “As for myself, I esteem all days exactly alike. Sunday with me is no better than Monday; and Monday is no better than Thursday. There is not a vestige of sanctity attaching to one day which does not attach to all.
  - f. “But although all days are in character exactly alike, all days are not to be indiscriminately used for the same purpose.
3. “Let each be fully satisfied in his own mind”
- a. “Let each be fully satisfied in his own mind, and so let him act.
  - b. “If one Christian esteems one day above another, be it so. He has the right, and no one can interfere.
  - c. “If another esteems all days alike, be it so. He is to judge for himself, and no one may question him.
  - d. “Both are right when both are satisfied.
4. “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.”

Moses Lard, Commentary On Romans, pp.416-418

For other additional comments on Rom.14:5,6a see Roy Deaver’s comments as follows:

1. “One man esteemeth one day above another”
- a. “Many hold that this passage refers to Jewish brethren, who, after becoming Christians, continued to hold certain days and feasts prescribed by the Law of Moses.
  - b. “However, it seems clear that there is no exclusive reference to Jewish brethren, and neither is there reference to days prescribed by the Law of Moses.
  - c. “We must keep in mind that Paul is here discussing matters of indifference – matters right if done, and right if not done (no sin involved either way, ejd).
  - d. “It is true that there were some things which were involved in the Law of Moses which it was all right to continue to practice after the Law had ended. But, these things could not be practiced as matters essential to one’s salvation.
  - e. “For example, there is nothing wrong with the practice of circumcision (or, I might add: fasting, or even tithing, ejd), even now. However, it would be sin for one to practice circumcision as a religious matter, and as essential to salvation (same is true of fasting or tithing, ejd).
  - f. “This is, in fact, the kind of thing which Paul discusses in this chapter: things right if done, but right if not done (Liberties, ejd).
  - g. “Religious observance of days prescribed by the Law of Moses would have been sinful, Gal.4:9-11; Col.2:16

(Note: The only wrong in this would have been in judging or condemning the brother who refused to esteem one day above another, or in condemning the one who did so esteem one above another, ejd).

2. "Another esteemeth every day alike"
  - a. "To him each day was exactly alike. Remember that reference is to things right if done, and right if not done.
  - b. "But, it would not be right to do on Thursday that which the Lord has prescribed to be done on the Lord's Day.
  - c. "Therefore, 'esteeming every day alike' refers to days and to activities independent of God's appointments.
  - d. "Excepting for proper regard for God's appointments, one could set aside certain religious activities, or he could refuse to do so, according to his own will."
3. "Let each man be fully assured in his own mind"
  - a. "Each brother was to make up his own mind and to act accordingly.
  - b. "Each was to be conscientious in his doings.
  - c. "Neither was to look with suspicion, contempt, and scorn upon the other.
  - d. "Each was to respect the conviction of the other."

Roy Deaver's Commentary on Romans, pp.542-544

### III. CONCLUSION

1. I'm still not sure what specific things were involved in the matter discussed in Rom.14:5, but whatever it was:
  - a. It was right to do it, and it was right to not do it. No sin was involved either way. For the Lord had neither bound nor condemned the practice. It was a matter of liberty.
  - b. It was not something they were doing or regarding as essential to their salvation. For had that been the case, their practice would have been condemned as sinful as per Gal.4:8-11.
2. If one regarded certain days for certain customs to be observed as mere customs he had that right; on the other hand, if another did not do so, he also had that right.
3. Paul is an example of one who practiced what he preached concerning the Christian's liberty, whose example we are urged to imitate.
  - a. 1Cor.8:13.
  - b. 1Cor.9:1-23, he had a right to be supported by brethren as he preached the gospel. He also had the liberty of setting aside that right in the interest of reaching some with that gospel if he determined the gospel would better be served by doing so.
  - c. 2Cor.11:7-9, he cites Corinth as an example when and where he practiced that liberty.
  - d. 2Th.3:7-9. He did the same thing at Thessalonica.
  - e. 1Cor.11:1; Phil.4:9, he urged saints to follow his example in all things as he followed Christ.

