

Hopewell ARP Midweek Sermon
Wednesday, May 8, 2024

Romans 14:10–23

¹⁰ But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹ For it is written:

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

¹² So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. ¹³ Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.

¹⁴ I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ¹⁵ Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

¹⁹ Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. ²⁰ Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. ²¹ It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. ²² Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. ²³ But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Enjoying Liberty by Employing It in Love

Main idea: those who have gained liberty by a biblically informed conscience should employ it in love, seeking the same for their brethren.

Introduction: v1–9 taught that the congregation is to welcome the weak brother, not permitting or causing dispute, with each being careful of his heart toward all others. Now v10–23 especially address our individual behavior toward one another.

1. Don’t lay a stumbling block, v10–13.

1. Edification and esteem required on the same principle that prohibits idolatry, v10–12 (cf. Isa 45:23). A proper esteem of Christ demands a proper esteem of our brother.
2. So, rather than judging a brother, our goal must be to see our brother shine at the judgment—thinking especially if we are becoming an occasion for him to sin, cf. Mt 18:6–7.

2. Don’t just enjoy liberty; employ it properly, v14–18.

1. The strong brother is correct, v14a
2. But the weaker brother would still be incorrect to eat or drink, v14b. Defilement of the conscience is real defilement.
3. Remember the obligation of 13:8 (v15).
 1. Obligation to brother

2. Obligation to Christ
3. Obligation to our liberty itself (v16).
4. Watch against thinking that these behavioral liberties are the main thing, rather than enjoying heart liberties.
5. How strong must pride and self-indulgence be, for us to need to be urged to something so obviously praiseworthy (v18)
3. **Build one another up**, v19–23
 1. The weaker brother is going to have a hard enough time already in the public life of the church; pursue peace, v19a
 2. Pursue what builds each other up, v19b–20a. [Obligation to instruct the weak!]
 3. Since the unconvinced brother sins if he eats or drinks against conscience (v20b), use your liberty to NOT eat or drink in order to help him (v21)
 4. Even conceal your enjoyment from such a brother (v22)
 5. Only from Scripture should his teachers convince him, so that he can eat and drink from faith (believing what the Bible says; v23). Otherwise, for him it will be sin.

Conclusion: your greatest liberty is liberty of heart toward the Lord. And it is enjoyed, employed, and expressed especially by love!

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Romans 14:10-23. These are God's words. But why do you judge your brother?

Or why do you shall contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ. For it is written. As I live says the Lord. Every knee shall bow to me. And every tongue shall confess. To God. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore. But rather resolve this. Not to put a stumbling block. Or a cause to fall in our brother's way. I know and I'm convinced by the Lord Jesus. That there is nothing unclean of itself. But, To him who considers anything to be unclean.

To him, it is unclean. Yet, if your brother is grieved because of your food. Are you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food, the one for whom Christ died. Therefore, do not let your good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking.

That's righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore, let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify. Another. Do not destroy the work of God.

For the sake of food. All things indeed are pure. But it is evil for the man who eats with a fence. That is good. Neither to eat meat, nor drink wine, nor do anything, by which your brother stumbles or is offended, or is made weak? Do you have faith?

Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he Who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned. If he eats Because he does not eat from faith. For whatever. Is not from.

So far the reading of gods inspired and iner and twerked. Week Brothers. A great opportunity. Into the congregation opportunity for themselves. Of course that they might be instructed by those. Who are strong in the faith. You have a fuller understanding of the scripture and better informed consciences. But opportunity for all of us.

To reflect upon and identify how we are using the Liberty that we have from God in Jesus Christ. Stronger brother. Might, well not Be eating and drinking from Faith. You might be eating and drinking primarily because he figured out a long time ago that it's permissible to eat and drink and he's just really enjoying eating and drinking.

But when his weaker brother comes in, he is forced to remember again. What the scripture teaches and enjoy, not the food or the drink so much, but the creator of the food that is good. And the drink that is good. Enjoying no longer calling that which God has created as good not calling it evil.

But recognizing that the evil is the sin. That was in him. So, there's much that the stronger brother. May reflect upon, and Enjoy even in his Liberty just by the presence of the weaker brother. But now, in these 14 verses this evening, we consider, especially the opportunity that he has for considering how he is using his Liberty to love.

His brother. And so, Whereas the weaker Brothers to be welcomed by the congregation, the command to receive originally in verse 1 is plural, receive one, who is weak But not permitting or causing dispute, but not for disputes over the things in which he doubts.

Well, the congregation welcomes him. Each of us, then. Uh, in welcoming the weaker brother. Uh, both the strong and the weak are to be careful of their own heart towards all others. And this was primarily what we heard last week in verses one through nine, the Temptation, on the one hand, especially on the, on the part of those who are weak, who are still following these rules from the ceremonial law that belonged to the priesthood of Aaron and the prophethood of Moses, not the priesthood and prophethood of Christ.

That their special temptation is judging those. Who are not? Keeping for instance circumcision. As in the central portion of the book of Acts there was such an issue and Holiness code. The clean and unclean Foods. And as we hear, even, as we get into our passage tonight, drinking also Was something apparently.

There were those who were still taking Nazarite vows. And thoughts that all believers should take and keep perpetually an azrite vow, you know, T totaling wasn't invented in the 19th century. It was only perfected by the pasteurization of the grape juice so that you no longer had to drink wine at the supper, as Jesus had offered and the church had done for 1800 years.

But there was tea totaling in the first century. And so there was the Temptation on the part of those who were weak to judge those who ate foods that they considered unclean those drank alcohol. Those who did not keep the ceremonial calendar of the Jews. But then there was also the temptation on the part of those who are strong.

We heard last week. To Value less those who were not yet, as well, informed, in their conscience or mature in their faith. And therefore, Last week taught that the congregation is to welcome the weaker brother but not for permitting or for causing disputing in the congregation. And that it was an opportunity for each to be careful of his heart towards the others.

Now in verses 10 through 23, we move not only from the heart, although there's going to be of course, much consideration of our hearts, in these 14 verses, but particularly Behavior And, Very Loosely outlined in verses 10 through 13, especially There, in verse 13, we take our theme for those three verses do not lay a stumbling block.

So now it's not just that we should not be judgmental towards a brother on the one hand or devalue or esteem less a brother on the other hand but that we should also With our Behavior, be careful, not to lay a stumbling block for our brother or a cause to fall.

And then in verses 14 through 18. And this is especially addressing the stronger brother. In these verses. Uh, that we'd not just enjoy our Liberty. But that we enjoy employ our Liberty properly. And therefore, Verses 19 through 23 that we build one another up and that we build one another up in the right way.

First, then do not lay a stumbling block, verses 10 through 13. Says, but why do you judge your brother? Obviously, from the categories he gave us last week especially talking to the one who is weak in faith. Or why do you show contempt for your brother? Again, from the categories, from verses, one through nine talking, especially to the one who is strong in faith.

And then making the For we shall all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ for it is written. As I live says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me. And every tongue shall confess to God. Now, that's quoted from Isaiah 45 verse 23, which we have been to been through together, Not very long ago.

And in that section, he's dealing especially with idolatry and he's urging All Nations. To recognize Yahweh. The Holy One of Israel alone as That we must not put anyone else any other God or any other imagination of men. Uh, next to the true and living God, that we must not trust in them and we must not worship them.

Well. In this context, it's Taking the same point and making a different application now. A proper esteem of Christ, says You don't allow any other gods whatsoever. You don't bow the knee. To any other God whatsoever, you don't pray to or trust in Uh, anyone else whatsoever? But here a proper esteem of Christ.

Demands. A proper esteem of our brother. And so, he bookends on each side of this quote, end of verse 10 for, we shall all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ and then afterward. So then each of us shall give account of himself, To God. Now, if each of us knows that we are going to stand before, God that brings a third infinitely greater factor into every one of our relationships.

We tend to think of our interactions with other people as bilateral there are the the two parties involved. But he's reminding us that in all of our interactions, there are always three parties involved And our primary thought about ourselves is. How does God think of, how am I really?

I am relating to my brother. But also, when I think of my brother, I need to be remembering. That I want to love him in a way that answers. How does God think of what my brother is doing? And that's what brings up in this whole section. The fact that if my brother is not convinced from scripture, Of what I am persuading him to do.

I am not actually persuading him to enjoy a liberty. I am persuading him to defile his conscience. I am persuading him to sin against God. And so, whether I think about myself does God want me to do that. Obviously not, I will answer to God for what I did to the one for whom Christ died for the one, who is a work of God, according to the rest of this chapter.

And so, certainly, I must not try to persuade a brother or manipulate pressure of brother persuade, As from scripture, especially for those who are given the office of teaching, Uh, just because your brother disagrees with, you doesn't mean it's your job to persuade him from scripture. There are men whom the Lord has appointed for that.

But whether I'm thinking about me and and whether God approves of my pressuring him, no, well, I must stand before the Judgment seat of Christ. Which by the way hope it is not lost on you that Yahweh the Lord from Isaiah 45 as Christ before whose judgment seat. We must stand.

In verse 10. But then my brother also, Must stand before the Judgment seat of Christ. For how he lived according to conscience from the scripture. So, do not A stumbling block. Remembering, of course, Matthew 18 verses 6-7. That says that the one who causes one of these little ones of Christ's stumble.

It would be better for him to have had a millstone tied around his neck and to be cast into the sea, that defenses must come. But woe to him who becomes the occasion, the one by whom. The offenses, come. So don't A stumbling block resolve not to lay a stumbling block verse 13.

The second place. Don't just enjoy your Liberty from the Lord do, enjoy your Liberty. From the Lord is actually going to Encourage us to do that and verse 20:22 to enjoy our. But don't just enjoy your Liberty from the Lord employ your Liberty properly. Now, he again makes clear which one is biblically?

Correct? Which of the two brothers is scripturally, right? And it is the strong brother. Who says all the days are the same, the ceremonial days of Of the aaronic priesthood are gone. There's the one day of the Lord Jesus's priesthood the Lord's day, and that sabbath, keeping that remains.

But every day of the year for a Christian is higher And then the ceremonial days every Lord's Day of the year at least is higher than the ceremonial days. The highest ceremonial days of the Jewish calendar. And so he affirms again. I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus.

That there is nothing unclean of itself. Okay, so there's no like theological Christian maturity. Um, Dei initiative in Rome here. Uh, the he's not valuing diversity of theological opinion and saying well you know, the weak Brothers have a point in the story. No, he's convinced by Jesus. That the weak brother is wrong.

Which means the weak brother. Wrong.

The weak rather would also be wrong to eat or to drink. You see the food is not defiled, and that the drink is not defiled. But if the weak brother, who doesn't know those things from the Bible who isn't convinced of those things yet by Jesus, if he eats his conscience is, genuinely defiled.

If he believes that he is supposed to keep this Perpetual Nazarite vow and then he gets persuaded by someone at church to drink alcohol. Even though he's not been convinced from the Bible, he hasn't been convinced by Jesus. He was just convinced by, Another follower of Jesus. And not by Jesus himself from the scripture.

And so, for the one who has not yet been convinced. It his conscience is defiled. And defilement of conscience is real defilement. It's worse defilement. Is the sort of defilement that you can't just wash with water. And And change your clothes and be and clean until evening.

And so he says, if your brother is grieved because of your food And that word is really the the word for sorrow. It reminds us that a genuine brother in Christ. Needs to be convinced from the Bible. Because after he's gone home from the party, And he's digested and passed the bacon and the scotch.

He still has to deal with his conscience. And you know how it is. Don't you? When you've sinned against God again. And that, especially in that thing that has been such a big deal for you. Whether it's lost or gossip or laziness or whatever it is, whatever your besetting sin is and you know the sort of grief that causes And so now, now not only have you disregarded that your brother has to stand before Christ and disregarded that, you're pressuring him into defiling his conscience.

You have brought sorrow. And to your brother's life. By your food. He says, in verse 15. That's not loving. Love. Is that Perpetual obligation that? We owe everyone all the time that even after we have discharged the other duties, we still owe them to love them. Isn't that what we heard just a chapter ago?

In chapter 13 Verse 8, oh no one anything but to love one another And so here is the one who's so concerned for his Liberty and maybe even be telling himself that if his brother eats or drinks, he'll have Liberty. No, if his brother is convinced from the Bible, he'll have liberty.

If he eats and drinks. Without being convinced. He hasn't just enjoyed Liberty. And you haven't loved him. You've hated him. You've destroyed him. He said well, I meant to We don't talk that way as Christians we Define as love. What God calls, love, not what we mean to be loving.

And we Define as hate what God calls hate. And just so that you can see the the full hatefulness of it. He uses the language of murder, doesn't he do not destroy with your food. The one for whom Christ died. And so, praise God, praise God, that they're all these people who as they come into.

Of Fuller and more correct, understanding of scripture and application of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and understanding the administration of the covenants. And, and eating, and and drinking. There are people who come From moralistic branches of of the visible church and they discover that their rules were man-made. And that they can enjoy food.

That was forbidden or they can enjoy drink. That was previously forbidden. But when they become evangelists for their food and drink, Or in our circles more often of their drink and smoke. And their pressure. Brothers, who are not convinced of that from the Bible. Constantly ribbing them, constantly enjoying it.

In front of them, constantly inviting them. To have it. Jesus says, That is hate and murderous. And we do not have the Liberty. To redefine that.

So remember. Your obligation to love your brother. Remember your obligation to love Christ. If Christ died for your brother. That he might have a clear conscience before God. And your brother is now having difficulty applying to his conscience, the shed blood of Christ because he is grieved. By the defilement of conscience that you pressured him into.

Then you have acted hatefully not only to your brother but also to Christ. And of course, all hate towards your brother is hateful to Christ to whom your brother is united. And then the great irony of it. You have acted hatefully to the very Doctrine and the very Liberty that you claim to enjoy.

Verse 16. Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil Straight talk from Paul to the stronger brother. You're right about the difference that Christ is coming. Has made has made But you are becoming the occasion. For people to slander the truth. For people to slander, the Liberty that you have in Christ.

And so, in a great irony, many Who enjoy their drink or their smoke Etc? In a way that does not prioritize love to brother. And the preservation of the brother's conscience. They are causing their Liberty itself to be slandered causing their good to be spoken of As evil. And that all comes, because They made a great mistake about the nature of Liberty and the nature of the Kingdom.

Verse 17. For the kingdom of God is not. Eating and drinking. But righteousness and peace and joy. In the Holy. Behavioral Liberties are not the main thing. In the kingdom of God, they are not the main thing in the coming of Christ. They are not the main thing in the setting, aside of the ceremonial law.

Getting to do new stuff. Is not why Jesus came. He came to make us know that we have our righteousness. Only in him. He is all of our right standing before God, and that any right living, that comes out of us. It's not because of the ceremonial code or how meticulously we keep it.

It's because the life of Jesus is in us. Now conforming us to the character of God that is expressed in the moral law.

And so our righteousness comes from having peace with God. And we Rejoice over that righteousness. And, yes, there are some things that have changed. And we and when we enjoy them and we remember that as a token of the fact that Christ has come, which is why those things have changed there is greater joy in the coming of Christ.

And no longer keeping an azrite vow and no longer. Avoiding foods that were previously unclean.

And so the kingdom is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy

Behavioral Liberty is not the main liberty of the Christian Life, heart Liberty before God in Jesus. By the spirit who is continuously. Remember chapter 5 pouring out the love of God into our hearts so that we Rejoice in the hope of the glory of God and we Rejoice. Even in our sufferings, you remember chapter 5, How small is the rejoicing of him?

Just so glad he's not a Baptist anymore. Because now he can drink and smoke. That he's a quote unquote, reformed Baptist. The primary distinctive of whom is he can drink and smoke. Isn't that? Perverse.

Indeed, how strong must be our pride. On the one hand, to want to show off our Liberty, Or our self-indulgence, on the other hand to want to exercise it, every chance we can get as far as Liberty of food and drink goes. For us to need to be urged to do something that has.

So obviously praiseworthy praiseworthy. So he says verse 18 for he who serves Christ in these things. Is acceptable to God and approved by men. You know what, sometimes you serve

Christ by enjoying that behavioral Liberty that you're free to enjoy. And sometimes you enjoy Christ by deciding not to exercise it.

You know, actual Liberty. Is only really experientially. Enjoyed, if you can also choose not to for good reasons. Like, loving your brother. And he who serves Christ in these things, then is acceptable to God. And approved by men. You know, it's not a bad, you don't do things to be approved by your brother.

But why would you not want to serve the Lord Jesus? In a way that also pleases your brother.

So in the first place versus 10 through 13, don't lay a stumbling block in the second place. Verses 14 through 18, don't just enjoy your Liberty employ, it properly, employ it in love to Christ and love to brother. And the third and last place this evening versus 19-23, build one another up, Build one another out.

You know the weaker brother. Is going to have a hard enough time in the life of the church. Especially the Nazarite fella. That we are introduced to and he says eating and drinking verse 17 or drinking wine verse 21. Because we just we just heard in verse one last week that when you received the weaker brother, you don't introduce disputes in the public life and public Ministry of the church.

There's no split tray. Dr. Welch's, that's his actual name. The Methodist minister in the 1800s. Had not perfected. The pasteurization of the grape. They're serving wine. And the Lord's suffer in Rome. So, if you've got a brother with this conviction, They're not keeping. The Jewish ceremonial days. And the church in Rome.

And so it's going to be very difficult for this weaker brother already. And so, pursue the things which make for peace. And if you're thinking about the personal application for a Roman believer, it wouldn't it's not very difficult to imagine what this means for him. This means that if he's got this still very Jewish-minded brother.

Over at his house. Then he's not serving bacon. Or having it out. He's not if he's got a nazrite observing. Brother. He's not offering him wine or saying, oh, I know you won't have any but I'm going to enjoy it anyway.

He said, no pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another You know, it's I really love for you to stick with studying that from the Bible. There's this there's this great letter that the Apostle Paul has written for the Hebrew speaking people.

Or Apollos or whomever, but it was Paul.

And he's shown how all these things pointed forward to Christ. And certainly Christ's sacrifice is once for all, isn't it?

And so we must pursue peace and we must pursue what builds each other up which by the way Includes an obligation to instruct the week. This isn't like, don't ask don't tell for ceremonial law. Or. Uh, vows of abstinence from alcohol. Now not everyone is obligated to be an instructure of the week.

There are those whom the Lord has put in his church as teachers. And they are to be those who have displayed the fruit of the spirit and whose teaching has been proven. In other circumstances and we could go to First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and other places and see that.

But part of what builds each other up is being patient. Yes, the scripture is God. Breathed and is useful to prepare the man of God for every good work, including not calling food that God has created good or drink that God has created good evil. But if you just flip the go a couple verses into the next chapter there in second Timothy 3 and now into verse 2, Timothy chapter 4 He tells him to convince.

With all patients and instruction. Well, it's not just the teacher. Then who has to be patient? Is it the rest of the congregation should be patient? If the brother has not come to that conviction from the Bible, Then you try not to create a fence because you want the brother.

Not only to see the difference that Jesus has made and what you can put in your cup. But to see the difference that Jesus has made and what he has put in the hearts and in the behavior of the church as a whole. And seek that this brother would be convinced from scripture.

And so pursue, what edifies, what builds up? One another. Includes instructing the week. But patience while you wait for the conviction to come.

And what does that patience mean? What is that? Edification mean. It means not destroying the work of God for the sake of food. He repeats again. That the strong one is correct but that if Um, the man is scandalized by what he eats, if he stumbles in what he eats, if he defiles his conscience, it's evil for him.

And so, the Apostle Paul tells him, It is good, neither to eat meat, nor drink wine, nor do anything. By which your brother stumbles. Or is offended and the word offended. There is really the word for made to fall. Or is made weak? So, this even means sometimes Concealing your enjoyment of such things from such a weaker brother.

It's not a deception. He knows, you enjoy it. He knows it all too, keenly. But you restrain yourself from enjoying it or from communicating, the greatness of your enjoyment of it to him. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God? Happy is he who does not condemn himself?

And what he approves. Enjoy your Liberty. But even for the sake of your brother's conscience, who still being built up, who still isn't yet convinced from scripture. Conceal, that Liberty. That's what have it to yourself before. God means And then when you enjoy your Liberty in an unconcealed fashion, before men, still have it to yourself before God.

Make sure that the enjoyment is more in the heart of gratitude and the secret place. You remember the secret place from The first half of Matthew chapter 6, That's the place to have your enjoyment, not on your taste buds. Not in the warm feeling that The that you get in your tummy.

Not in the relaxation, and all of those. Other good physiological benefits that that God may give you through it.

But enjoy, especially in the secret place. God The Giver Of the good thing. Only from scripture should a brother be convinced. He who doubts, he who is not convinced from the Bible is condemned if he eats because he does not eat from faith. And Faith here, meaning. Believing what God says.

Believing the Bible. For whatever is not from. Is. And that doesn't just go for the weaker brother, does it? You know, life, the Christian Life lived on autopilot is actually very sinful. Because we're not living in response to and contemplation of what God says so that our our living proceeds from faith.

Anything that proceeds from merely having the two checklists and you got the the do's and you check those and the don'ts and you check those But you're not. You don't have the Um, the checklist as it were from the Bible, you're not conscientiously doing things because God says, so We're not doing things because God says not.

So,

So your greatest Liberty to your Christian Is your Liberty of heart toward the Lord in Jesus Christ. And it is enjoyed. And employed. And expressed, especially My love for God, love for Christ. Love for your brother. Who is the work of God? And for whom Christ died.