

The Sacrificial Life Involves Sacrificing Freedom for Fellowship

Romans 14:13-15:6

Intro:

1. You live in the greatest country in the world.
 - a. With all of its faults, our system of government is still the best in the world.
 - b. You have greater individual freedoms here than anyone else in the world.
2. You have not only been set free from the Law of Moses, you have been set free from the sinful way of life (**Rom 6:19-22**).
3. As an individual would you sacrifice some of your freedoms in Christ for your Christian brother's sake to achieve fellowship?

I. v13-20 - What's the Secret to Establishing Genuine Christian Unity?

A. **v13-15** - By not allowing your freedom in Christ to hurt others.

1. What's freedom in Christ?

- a. It is not compromising a matter of principle - particularly a doctrinal teaching that is clear in God's word.
- b. It does mean that opinion matters are non essential issues of life.

2. Examples:

- a. How to dress - Is dressing modestly in contrast to being stylish more scriptural? No. But ladies, please help us Christian men not be distracted from maintaining a godly mental focus.
- b. What to eat - Is a healthy diet a command? Not in the NT. But wouldn't you like to live healthier in order to keep your body fit & more productive for the Lord?
- c. What kind of entertainment you use - does what you watch on TV or the movies you attend violate the Bible? Probably not. But what you expose yourself to contributes to what you think! Don't you want to keep your thoughts pure and moral?

3. The food question.

- a. No food is spiritually unclean in & of itself. **ILL: Peter on Simon's Rooftop (Act 10:9-16)**.
- b. **v14** - There were some Jewish Christians who couldn't break away from the Kosher food laws.
- c. So - in **5:1** the non Jewish Christians were encouraged to be vegetarians when associating with vegetarian Christians - sacrificing their freedom for fellowship.

4. **v15** - What happens when you offend a brother?

- a. You are not conducting yourself in love towards him.
- b. **v20** - You could be destroying his faith by tempting him to forsake his conscience.

B. **v16-20** - By conducting yourself in a way so no one could speak against your lifestyle.

1. **v17** - What is the kingdom of God?

- a. Living in **righteousness**: giving to God & fellow men what they deserve; love, respect & dignity.
- b. Living in **peace**: not the absence of trouble, but what makes for a person's highest good.
- c. Living in **joy**: isn't selfish - in just making you happy, but sharing the happiness with others.
Phil 2:3 - Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

2. **v18** - The result of this type of living: you are not only pleasing to men, but also to God!

II. v21-23 - Why Can't the Other Guy Take the Initiative?

- A. **v23** - Because he can't participate without committing sin.
 - 1. Example: **The Instrument in Worship Issue.**
 - 2. The non instrument person is usually afraid to participate in what he believes to be wrong, even though it isn't.
 - 3. His participation would be against his conscience - it would be rebellion against what he thinks is God's will.
 - 4. Since his faith doesn't support using an instrument, his participation would be sin to him.
- B. **v20-22** - Because you can abstain without committing sin.
 - 1. It's a freedom in Christ to use or not use an instrument to us!
 - 2. If we invited an acappella church to join us for a worship service, would you be willing to sing songs without an instrument for their sake?

III. 5:1-6 - So How Can You Take the Initiative?

- A. **v1-3** - By deciding who you really want to please.
 - 1. **v1** - You are specifically not to behave just to please yourself. You don't live in a vacuum.
 - 2. Example: **The Social Drinking Issue.** Social drinking is not an issue where the Bible has clearly spoken.
 - 3. The passages that talk about it assume social drinking:
 - a. **I Tim 3:8 - Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.**
 - b. **I Tim 5:23 - Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.**
 - 4. **ILL: But my sister-in-law left her church because of it for several years.**
 - 5. **So** - my wife & I have decided to be total abstainers for the sake of our Christian witness!
 - 6. **v3** - The Lord didn't please Himself.
 - a. He didn't have to die on the cross.
 - b. He volunteered for your sake!
- B. **v2 & 5-6** - When you live to please your brother, you encourage his faith!

You have a lot of freedom in Christ where His word has not clearly spoken. But Lord Jesus would have you relate to your Christian brothers & sisters in love. Will you sacrifice some of your freedoms to win another person or encourage a brother's faith?

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