



THE THINGS THAT MAKE FOR PEACE

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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The Things That Make For Peace

SERMON REFERENCE: Romans 14:15-19

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2084

The Book of Romans offers a sure word for an unsure age and calls for unity in a divided world. Jesus wants unity in His Church because togetherness is to our great advantage as believers and the thing our enemy dreads most.

When we are anointed by the Holy Spirit as one body, pursuing the things that make for peace among us, the Church is unstoppable.

Romans 14:19 says, “Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”

Unity is a matter of lordship.

Earlier in Romans 14, Paul addresses disputes within the Roman church over diets and holy days. Paul urges believers not to divide over incidentals, but to devote themselves to one another. Paul tells them to receive their weaker brothers or sisters because their salvation is from God. Their service, security, and stewardship are found in Him alone. Rather than judging one another, Paul reminds them that we all answer to God, and only He is able to make us stand.

Unity is also a matter of liberty.

As Romans 14:17 says, “...for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Liberty has its rights, but it also bears its responsibilities.

Adrian Rogers says, “It is wrong for people in church to take their liberties and try to make such rights out of them that they wound the fellowship.” Many things we consider fundamental in church are in fact incidental. We must recognize them as such and choose to love each other over our own preferences.

Finally, unity is a matter of love.

Unity ignites love within the Church, and love will do many things for our fellowship. Love keeps our brothers from stumbling; it does not give reason for sorrow or separation. Love maintains unity in the Church and dispels reason for suspicion.

Romans 14:22 says, “Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.”

Love covers all offenses, and helps the fellowship grow in knowledge and grace together.

Life Application

If you belong to a church, seek the things that make for peace; don't divide over incidentals, opinions, or offenses. Exercise your rights in love, receiving one another and bearing your responsibility as a believer.



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) The book of Romans is a solid word for an unsure age.
 - i) It has been called the Constitution of Christianity.
 - ii) We could spend years and never do a full exposition of this book.
- b) The devil would like to send division into the body of Christ.
 - i) He wants to divide the brethren.
- c) Today's message is about unity in the church.
 - i) The key verse is Romans 14:19.
 - (1) What God wants in the church is unity.
- d) We need to understand three things about unity in the church:
 - i) It is the desire of the Savior.
 - (1) Jesus wants unity in His church.
 - (2) John 17:22
 - (a) Jesus prays His great High Priestly prayer in this passage.
 - (3) One thing that gives great joy to parents is to see their children loving one another.
 - (a) The Lord wants us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - ii) It is the delight of the saved.
 - (1) There is nothing more heartbreaking than to be in a church where there is division.
 - (2) There is nothing more glorious than to be part of a church where there is a sweet fellowship and a oneness of spirit.
 - (a) Psalm 133:1
 - iii) It is the dread of Satan.
 - (1) Satan gets nervous when God's people dwell together in unity.
 - (2) When we dwell together in unity, we become a winning team.
 - (a) What it takes to make a great church:
 - (i) Get right with God.
 - (ii) Learn what being a Christian is all about.
 - (iii) Become a team for the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (3) When we are united together, there is awesome power.
- e) Unity is difficult because there are many different opinions in the church.
- f) The church at Rome was in danger of disunity.
 - i) They were not divided over fundamentals but incidentals.
 - (1) They were divided primarily about days and diets.
 - (a) What foods they could eat and what days they should keep.
 - ii) Both sides were sincere in their beliefs.
 - iii) Paul wrote to the church to bring unity.
 - (1) Sincere people who love God with all of their hearts can have different opinions.
 - iv) In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity.
- g) In today's message, we will discuss essentials, non-essentials, and the love that we should have in all things in the Lord Jesus Christ.



2) UNITY IS A MATTER OF LORDSHIP

- a) The essential is the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- b) Romans 14:9
- c) There were some incidentals that, when compared to the fact that Jesus is Lord, didn't seem so important.
- d) They were disagreeing over diets.
 - i) Romans 14:1
 - (1) Take a new believer (somebody who is weak and doesn't understand many things), receive him into the church, but don't argue with him about incidentals.
 - (a) Incidentals are doubtful disputations.
 - ii) Romans 14:2
 - (1) Herbs in this passage refer to vegetables.
 - (2) In the church at Rome, there were some people who had been saved out of raw paganism.
 - (a) In paganism, they made blood sacrifices to their pagan idols.
 - (3) They saw that some of the people in the church were buying meat that had been offered to idols, and they were eating that meat.
 - (4) These new Christians, who were weak in the faith, were scandalized.
 - (a) They were former pagans.
 - (b) They didn't understand how others could partake of that kind of food.
 - (c) To even keep from touching any of that meat, they became vegetarians.
 - iii) Romans 14:3
 - (1) The Jewish believers, who had been in the faith for a long time, knew that an idol was nothing.
 - (a) They knew that meat is meat and that an idol was just a stick or a stone.
 - (b) Sheer rationality told them that there was nothing wrong with the food.
 - (i) And so, they were a little upset with the weaker believers who said that they should not be eating that meat.
 - 1. They looked down upon them and criticized them.
 - iv) They were divided over an incidental.
 - (1) Whether or not to eat food that had been offered to idols.
 - v) Paul said that it was a matter of Lordship, not a matter of diet.
- e) It is not a matter of days.
 - i) Romans 14:5
 - (1) Paul was dealing with the incidentals.
 - ii) The Jewish people, who thought that it was alright to eat the meat that had been sacrificed to idols, had also come out of Judaism, where they had their special high holy days.
 - (1) Even though they had become Christians, these high holy days meant so much to them that they still observed these days.
 - iii) The believers who had come out of paganism had not previously observed the high holy days, and these days did not mean anything to them.
 - iv) The Jewish believers looked down upon the believers who came out of paganism because they would not keep the high holy days.
- f) Paul said that it was not a matter of diet or a matter of days; it is a matter of devotion.
 - i) Jesus is Lord.
 - (1) We can get divided over incidentals, but we must stay united over one thing; Jesus is Lord.
 - (a) If we do not get this settled in our hearts, then we will have a hard time in this matter of being a Christian.



- ii) When someone receives Jesus as Lord, we receive him and we do not divide over incidentals.
 - (1) Romans 14:1
 - (2) Romans 15:7
- iii) We can be brothers and sisters in Christ without being twins.
 - (1) We do not have to be just alike if we are from the same family.
 - (2) We can have different ideas and different opinions.
 - (3) We can have unity without having uniformity.
- g) Reasons we should receive one another:
 - i) Their salvation is from God.
 - (1) God has received them.
 - (2) Romans 14:3
 - (3) When God receives someone, we need to receive them.
 - (4) If a brother or a sister is a Christian, then we are in the same family.
 - (a) We are in the same body.
 - (b) If we hurt him or her, then we dishonor the Father and harm ourselves.
 - ii) His service is to God.
 - (1) Romans 14:4
 - (2) Brothers and sisters in Christ are servants of God; they are not our servants.
 - (a) We are not to judge another man's servant.
 - (3) It is not our job to pull them down, and we do not have to prop them up.
 - (a) Paul stated that God is able to make him stand.
 - (i) This is also a great statement on eternal security.
 - (ii) Romans 14:4
 - iii) His security is of God.
 - (1) Romans 14:4
 - (a) God is able to make him stand.
 - (2) Someone may not be where we are spiritually, but just give him time.
 - (3) God will help him to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 - iv) His stewardship is to God.
 - (1) Romans 14:10-11
 - (a) When we stand before Jesus Christ, we are only going to have to answer for ourselves.
 - (2) Rather than going around judging other people, we need to be ready to answer to God for ourselves.
 - (3) So many times, we are looking at other people rather than looking at ourselves.
- h) Romans 14:1
 - i) We are to receive Him.
 - (1) Our salvation, service, security, and stewardship are from God and to God.
- i) We are not to disagree about doubtful things.
 - i) Today, the great issues of disagreements are not about diets and days.
 - (1) For example, some disagree on whether or not to celebrate Christmas.
 - (a) But we do know that our Savior was born some time and we need to take a time to celebrate His birth.
 - (2) Others may disagree on whether or not they should applaud when someone sings in church.
 - (a) Neither is right or wrong; it is just a matter of preference.
 - ii) We don't have to make everybody a clone of ourselves.
 - iii) It is easy to get divided over things that are incidental and not fundamental.



- (l) Don't look down on someone, and don't criticize.
 - (a) We're never going to please everyone.
 - (b) If we keep finding fault with people over incidentals, then we're going to divide until there's nobody left standing.
- j) This is the reason why Paul said that it is not a matter of days and diets, but it is a matter of devotion.
 - i) Jesus Christ is Lord.
 - (1) He died, rose, and revived that He might be Lord of the living and the dead.
- k) The unity in our churches is not in the organization, the music, or the preaching.
 - i) It is in Jesus Christ our Lord.
- l) In essentials, we have unity.

3) UNITY IS A MATTER OF LIBERTY

- a) Romans 14:17
- b) When we are saved, the Lord sets us free.
- c) Liberty has its rights.
 - i) There are certain things that we can do just because we have been set free in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - ii) Romans 14:14, 22
 - (1) Paul was saying that he had faith and that there was nothing wrong with the meat.
 - (a) He could eat it if he wanted to.
 - (i) He had his rights.
- d) Liberty has its responsibilities.
 - i) Romans 14:16-17
 - (1) Paul talks about things that are good, but he says that we should not let our good be evil spoken of.
 - (a) This is the responsibility of liberty.
 - ii) Paul said that there were some things that he would give up because it was no big deal to give them up.
 - (1) Romans 14:17
 - iii) It is wrong for people in the church to take their liberties and make such rights out of them that they end up wounding the fellowship.
 - (1) This is what happens when we do not realize that rights have responsibilities.
- e) We are here to reach souls for the Lord Jesus Christ, and there are some things that are incidental and some that are fundamental.
 - i) The thing that is fundamental is that Jesus Christ is Lord.
 - (1) It is a matter of Lordship and a matter of liberty.
 - (a) We have liberty, but liberty has its rights and responsibilities.

4) UNITY IS A MATTER OF LOVE

- a) Romans 14:15
 - i) "Charitably" means in "love."
- b) If we wound a weaker brother, then we are not walking in love.
- c) Things love will do in a church:
 - i) It will keep your brother from stumbling.
 - (1) Romans 14:13, 21
 - (2) Love is not going to give someone a reason to stumble.
 - (3) There are certain things in life that we don't do, not because we think that they would



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Take your Bibles now and turn if you will with me to Romans chapter 14 as we're continuing through the book of Romans. A solid word for an unsure age, that's what the book of Romans is. It has been called the Constitution of Christianity and for a number of weeks now we've been making our way through this wonderful book and very frankly we have only touched the very surface of this book. We could spend indeed not weeks, months, but years and never do a full exposition of the book of Romans. I want to tell you something as you're finding the book of Romans chapter 14, about the devil and what the devil would like to do. The devil had rather send division in the body of Christ than to open a porno palace or open a new distillery, did you know that? Satan wants to divide the brethren.

Now what we're going to be talking about today is unity in the church and the key verse here in chapter 14 is verse 19, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace." And that's the title of our message today; "The Things that Make for Peace." Because what God wants in the church, and if you're listening through television, in your church as well as this church, is unity in the church. Let me tell you three things about unity. Number one, **it is the desire of the Savior**. Jesus wants unity in His church and in John chapter 17 the Lord Jesus is praying His great high priestly prayer and He prays in verse 22, "Father, that they may be one even as We are one." One of the things that gives Joyce and myself great joy is to see our children loving one another. We pray for our children every day, we pray for our children and grandchildren and we want them to love Jesus, we want them to love us, and we want them to love one another. And I'll tell you that our Lord wants you to love your brothers and sisters in Christ, all of his children. It is the desire of the Savior.

I want to tell you something else about unity; **it is the delight of the saved**. There's nothing more heartbreaking than to be in a church where there's division. There's nothing more glorious, in my estimation, than to be part of a church where you have a sweet fellowship and a oneness of spirit, is that not true? What a fellowship and what a joy divine. That's the reason the Psalmist said way back yonder in Psalm 133 and verse 1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." And I just thank God for the unity that God, by His grace, has given us here in this, our wonderful church that we thank God for.

Unity is the desire of the Savior, it is the delight of the saved, and **it is the dread of Satan**. Satan gets very nervous when God's people dwell together in unity when they become one, because when we dwell together in unity, we become a winning team. Coach Wooden of UCLA, great basketball coach, a legend, was asked, "What does it take to make a winning team?" Now, they were expecting some great, convoluted explanation. He gave the most simple explanation of what it takes to make a winning team. He said, "Number one; get the players in condition. Number two; teach them the fundamentals of the game. Number three; teach them to play together as a team, teach them unity." Isn't that simple? That's exactly what it takes to make a great church. Get in condition, get right with God, learn the fundamentals of the game, learn what this thing of being a Christian is all about, and then, folks, become a team for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I don't know how many of you read Peanuts, in the comics, you know I'm a connoisseur of the comic strips. Lucy came in the room where Linus was watching television. Linus on his beanbag watching television, and Lucy says to Linus, "Change the channel." Linus looks up and says, "Why should I do that?" She said, "I'll give you five good reasons." She held up five fingers and she said, "You see those? Like that they're not much, but" she said, "when I curl them together like this they're a power awesome to behold." Linus said, "What channel do you want?" And then after he changed the channel, he held up his five fingers and said, "Why can't you guys get together like that?"



Now folks, listen, the devil dreads it when many become one, when we are united together, then there is awesome power. And I think of the power that's in this building today, when we, anointed with the Holy Spirit, as one body, go out; onward Christian soldiers, to do what we ought to do. Now, unity, however, is difficult, because, folks, you'd have to be a pastor to know how many different opinions there are in this church. I mean, you'd have to read my mail sometime to know.

Now, the folks at Rome, and it was a good church, a Bible church, the folks at Rome were in danger of disunity, and that's what this chapter is written about. Now let me tell you what they were divided about; not fundamentals but incidentals. They were divided primarily about two things: days and diets. What foods that they could eat and what days that they should keep. And both sides were sincere. And so Paul was writing to get unity in the church, and I think that it's a wonderful chapter for us to study together because we can learn that sincere people, people who love God with all of their hearts, can have different opinions. Have you learned that yet? If you haven't learned it, you will learn it.

A statement that I would like for you to remember; you've probably heard it before, talking about what attitude we should take, when we differ in the body of Christ. "In essentials, unity," now got that? "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity." Did that sink in? If not, I'll give it to you again. "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity." Now I'm going to borrow those thoughts and use that as an outline to think about today. Because we're going to think about essentials, and then we're going to think about non-essentials, and then we're going to think about the love that we ought to have in all things in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let me tell you number one about unity. This is the first point, **unity is, number one, a matter of Lordship.** That is the essential; the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Now look if you will in Romans 14 verse 9 of this chapter, and this is another key verse, "For to this end, Christ both died and rose and revived that He might be Lord, both of the dead and the living." It is a matter of Lordship. Now, there were some incidentals, when you compared to the fact that Jesus is Lord, don't seem so important. For example, **they were disagreeing over the matter of diets.** Go back now to Romans 14 verse 1, "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." That means take a new believer, somebody who is weak, who doesn't understand a lot of things, receive him into the church, but don't argue with him about incidentals, doubtful disputations, that's just arguing about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. For he goes on in verses 2 and 3 says, "For one believeth that he may eat all things. Another, who is weak, eateth herbs." Herbs is vegetables.

Now, in the church, there were some people in Rome who had been saved out of raw paganism, and in paganism they made blood sacrifices to their pagan gods, to their idols, and these people had been saved out of that paganism. And they saw that some of the people in the church were buying that meat that had been offered to idols and they were eating that meat. And these new Christians, weak in the faith, they were scandalized, they were former pagans. They said, "How could you possibly partake of that kind of food? Why, lest I should touch any of it, I've become a vegetarian." And then Paul says in Romans 14 verse 3, "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not." That is, if you're strong, and these Jewish believers who've been in the faith for a long time, they knew that an idol was nothing. They knew that meat is meat and that idol was just a stick or a stone and just sheer rationality said, "There's nothing wrong with this food." And so, they were a little hacked at these pestiferous, weaker brothers who say, "You ought not to be eating that." And so they're looking down on these people who are criticizing them. And Paul says, "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him which eateth not judge him which eateth, for God hath received him." They were just divided over an incidental; whether or not to eat food that had been offered to idols. So that, in the matter, Paul is saying, "Look, it's a matter of Lordship, not a matter of diet."

And now here's a second thing that was dividing them; not only diets but **days.** Look if you will in Romans 14 verse 5, "One man esteemeth one day above another. Another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own heart." Do you see how Paul is dealing now with the incidentals? Now, how did this work out? Well, the Jews, who thought it was quite all right to eat this meat that'd been sacrificed to



idols, also have come out of Judaism and they had their special high holy days. And even though they had become Christians, these high holy days that to the Jews had meant so much to them, so they observed these days. Now these pagans had not observed these high holy days and these days didn't mean anything to them. And the early Jewish believers looked down upon these pagans because they would not keep those high holy days. And they said, "Well, it's just a day, we're saved, and we're in the Lord Jesus Christ." Now again Paul is saying, "Look, it's not a matter of diet, it's not a matter of days, **it is a matter of devotion.** Jesus is Lord." Now, folks, we can get divided over incidentals, but we must stay united over one thing, Jesus is Lord. Now get that down in your heart. If you don't, it's going to be a long, hard ride in this matter of being a Christian.

Now, because Christ is Lord, listen, when somebody receives Jesus Christ as Lord, we receive Him and we don't divide over incidentals. That's the way he leads out this chapter. Look in Romans 14 verse 1, "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye," don't argue with him, "not to doubtful disputations," don't divide over incidentals. And he says the same thing in Romans chapter 15 verse 7, "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." Learn this about being a Christian, you listen to me; we can be brothers without being twins. We don't have to be just alike if we are from the same family. We can have different ideas, difference opinions of different things. There, you can have unity without having uniformity.

Now why should we welcome those who differ with us? Why should we not try to make everybody march in lock step? Well, first of all, we ought to receive them because God has received them and **their salvation is from God.** Notice Romans 14 verse 3, "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth," now watch this, here's the key, "for God has received him." Now folks when God receives somebody you'd better receive them, say, "Amen." When God has received them, you had better receive him. You see, his salvation is from God. If the brother or the sister is a Christian; we're in the same family; why we're even in the same body. And so, if you hurt him, you dishonor the Father and you harm yourself. So put it down. Why do you receive a weaker brother? Well, number one, his salvation is from God.

Number two, **his service is to God.** Look in Romans 14 verse 4, "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." Now, if you have somebody working for you in your business, who am I to come in there and tell him to do this or not to do that or to criticize the way he does what he does in your business. He doesn't answer to me, it's your business, he answers to you.

Now, folks, in the same way, brothers and sisters in Christ are servants of God, they're not your servant, and who are you to judge another man's servant. "To his own master he stands or falls," so it's not your job to pull him down and you don't have to prop him up. Paul goes on to say, it's a great statement on eternal security, "God is able to make him stand. God is able to make him stand."

Now we're talking about why we should receive one another. Number one; his salvation is from God. Number two; his service is to God. Number three; look at it right here in verse 4, **his security is of God.** God is able to make him stand. He may not be where you are spiritually, just give him time. You don't pull your radishes up by the roots to see how they're growing and then jam them back in the ground again; give him time. God will help him to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

His salvation is from God, his service is to God, his security is in God, and **his stewardship is to God.** Look in Romans 14 verses 10 and 12, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at naught thy brother?" That is to say to him, "You're not worth much." "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, 'As I live,' saith the Lord, 'Every knee shall bow to Me and every tongue shall confess to God,'" and when you and I stand before Jesus Christ, I'm not going to have to answer for you, you are not going to have to answer for Adrian. Your stewardship is to God and my stewardship is to God. And so you know, rather than going around judging other people, we'd better to get ready to answer to God ourselves, isn't that right? We'd better get ready to answer to God for ourselves.



Now, folks, so many times we're out there looking at other people rather than looking at ourselves. Faults in others I can see, but praise the Lord, there's none in me. Well, listen, in Romans 14:1, Paul says, "Receive Him." His salvation is from God, his service is to God, his security is in God, his stewardship is to the Lord.

Now, therefore, we're not to disagree about doubtful things. Very frankly, the great issues of disagreement are not about diets and days. Not really, to some degree it may be, but we have our things that we disagree with. Well, come to think about it, we do have disagreements in the Christian body. For example, I love Christmas. Do you love Christmas? I love Christmas. I love everything. I love the sights, the sounds, the lights, the music, I love our pageant that we have here and everything. But do you know, every time we have a Christmas pageant, I'll get some letters from some people, they'll say, "How on earth could you celebrate a pagan celebration like Christmas?" And they will send me volumes of material to tell me all of the pagan accouterments of Christmas and all of that sort of thing. And then, I think, "Boy, I know that there's a lot of junk out there. But I know something else, I know our Savior was born sometime and I love to take a time and celebrate it. And we've seen multiplied thousands of people come to Christ by the pageants and so forth that we do. But I'm telling you, folks, there are good and honest people who love God as much or more than you who think that Christmas celebration is wrong. Have you discovered that? Well, what do we do? Listen, folks, we can't judge them, they're not supposed to judge us.

I mean, in the body of Christ, you know, I'm sure we have in this church some members who, when we have a pageant, just stay home, say, "I just want preaching, praying, and singing." That's fine, that's fine. Let me tell you another thing. I'm just giving you some examples. Did you know when we come in a church like this and somebody will sing, there are people who want to applaud, they just, they're just so blessed, they say, "Praise God, that was wonderful." Other people say, "Don't you know we're in church?" And, "Save your applause for the theater. Now, that was unto God. You don't need to applaud some man, some woman, some performance." Well, who is right and who is wrong? May I suggest to you neither is right and neither is wrong, it's just a matter of preference; it's a matter of difference? Some people call that a twentieth century Amen, and the Bible says in Psalm 47:1, "Clap your hands, all ye people." And sometimes I get so excited I can't sit still. That's fine. I mean, we don't have to make everybody a clone of ourselves. I jokingly said sometime we're going to have the ushers at the door greet the people when they come and say, "Clapping or no clapping?" And sit them on either side of the church. Hey, folks, let me tell you something. You want to have some fun? You ought to be a pastor! I'm telling you, it is so easy for us to get divided over things that are, you know, incidental and not fundamental.

People talk about the way we dress, you know, and some people think, "Man, you're so snooty; you come to church and you wear a tie. Who are you trying to impress? Why, we ought to just, I mean, this is just family. You don't have to wear a necktie to come to church and dress up and show off your glad rags. Who are you trying to impress? We just think we ought to come in our cut-offs, our blue jeans, our sandals." Well, you're welcome that way and you're welcome to wear a necktie and dress the way that you think is appropriate to give honor and glory to God. Hey, but don't look down your nose at somebody else and don't criticize; folks, we're never going to please everybody, and if we keep picking fault with people over incidentals, we're going to divide till there's nobody left standing but you and me and then it'll just be me. You know, all kinds of things.

Politics; boy you talk about it, some folks that say, "I would to God that you never mention anything political from the pulpit every again." And other people say, "Good night, when is somebody going to stand up and speak out and say what is wrong in this world and call the people of God to action." Both people are sincere. Now, folks, can you understand the kind of situations that arise in churches? But you see, you just come back to one thing. That's the reason Paul said, "Look, it's not a matter of days, it's not a matter of diets, it is a matter of devotion." Jesus Christ is Lord to this end. He died and rose and revived that He might be Lord of the living and the dead. And the unity in Church is not in the organization, not in the music, not in



the preaching, it is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Say, "Amen." Now folks, we need to understand that. In essentials we have unity.

Donald Gray Barnhouse was a great Presbyterian preacher and he went to a conference one time to preach. And it was a Bible conference and some of the women there were not wearing stockings and some of the older ladies in the church were scandalized that some people had come in to the worship service and were not wearing stockings. And they told Barnhouse about it and here's what Barnhouse said. He said, "Did you know that the Virgin Mary did not wear stockings?" And he said, "They were first worn by prostitutes in the fifteenth century." And then he said, "A lady of nobility wore stockings one time to a court ball and that was a scandal to many people. But before long, people in the upper classes began to wear the stockings, and then Queen Victoria began to wear stockings and then wearing stockings became the badge of a prude." See, those are incidental things. Sometimes we say this is right or that is right, and these are incidental things.

Now, listen to me, we're talking about the things that make for peace. Number one: unity is a matter of Lordship. Number two: unity, not only is a matter of Lordship, **unity is a matter of liberty**, that's the second point. Unity is a matter of Lordship, that's the first point. Number two, unity is a matter of liberty, that's the second point. Look if you will now in Romans 14 verse 17 of this chapter, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink," that is what you eat or what you drink, "but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." When you're saved, our Lord sets you free. Now, **liberty has its rights**. There are certain things that I can do just because I have been set free in the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 14 verse 14, Paul said, "I know and I'm persuaded by the Lord Jesus, there's nothing unclean of itself, this meat offered to idols, there's nothing wrong with that." Look if you will in Romans 14 verse 22, "Hast thou faith, have it thyself before God." Paul is just saying, "Look, I have faith, there is nothing wrong with this meat, I could eat this meat if I wanted to, I have my rights." And you see liberty has its rights.

Now, but not only does liberty have its rights, **liberty also has its responsibilities**. Look if you will in Romans 14 verses 16 and 17. Now Paul is talking about things that are good, nothing wrong with them, but he says in verses 16 and 17, "Let not then your good be evil spoken of." That's the responsibility of liberty. Look at the balance in this chapter. Liberty has its rights and liberty has its responsibility. I know that it's fine, nothing wrong with it, but I don't want my good to be evil spoken of. Now you see, Paul says, "There's some things that I'll give up because it's no big deal if I give them up. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost.

You know what is wrong in a church, when people take their liberties and try to make such rights out of them that they wound the fellowship? Let me share this with you. I think it's one of the funniest things I've ever heard, but you'd just have to be a pastor to understand this, but I think you can understand it. A lady is writing and she says, and I quote, "A lady took my seat in church a while back. It's not that important, really. She is a very nice lady, kind and considerate, a good friend, in fact. There were several other seats available. I can sit anyplace. The people in our congregation are as friendly and as caring as you will find any place in the world. A person should be comfortable sitting any place. It's no big deal. My seat is on the seventh row back from the front of the church. I'm sure that she did not intend to take my seat. She just wouldn't do that, nor would anyone else in our fine church. It doesn't make that much difference. My seat is on the end of the pew on the north side by the windows on the left as you come into the sanctuary. I can rest my left arm on the end of the pew. It's a good seat, but I would never raise a fuss about a seat. She probably didn't intend anything personal by taking my seat. I would never hold a grudge. Actually, it was about three months ago when she took my seat. I really don't know why she took it; I've never done anything to her. I've never taken her seat. I suppose I will have to come an hour earlier now to get my seat, either that or sit on the south side. She really took it because it is one of the best seats in the house. That's why she took it. She had no business taking my seat and I'm not going to church two hours early to get what was rightfully mine from the beginning. This is the way great social injustices begin, abusive people taking other people's seats in church. This is the way the seeds of revolution are sown, a person can only stand so much. Where



is it going to end; if somebody doesn't stand up and be counted, nobody's seat will be safe. People will just sit anywhere they please, and the next thing they will do is to take my parking place, too. World order will be a shambles." That's what happens, folks, when we don't realize that rights have responsibilities. And you know, sometimes it breaks my heart, it'll happen down here, somebody will come down and sit down here. I've seen people try to move a guest out of their seat. May God have mercy upon your poor, pitiful soul! God have mercy upon you; some soul that may be lost and on the road to Hell. And you say, "Pardon me, that's my seat." Folks, I want to tell you, it ain't your seat.

We're here to reach souls for the Lord Jesus Christ, and there's some things that are incidental and there're some things that are fundamental. The thing that is fundamental is that Jesus Christ is Lord and it's a matter of Lordship and it's a matter of liberty. We have liberty, but liberty has its rights and liberty has its responsibilities.

Now here's the third thing I want to say. Unity is a matter of Lordship. Unity is a matter of liberty. And last of all, li, **unity is a matter of love.** Look if you will in Romans 14 verse 15, "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably," charitably, that means in love. Charity in the King James version, is love. Now if you wound a weaker brother, you're not walking in love.

Now, let me tell you what love will do in a church. **Love will keep your brother from stumbling.** Look in Romans 14 verse 13, "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." Look in verse 21, "It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended or made weak." Now, you see, love says, "I'm not going to give him a reason to stumble." Now, there're certain things in life that I don't do, not because I think that they would hurt me but because I think they may hurt somebody else who would see me doing those things. And I wouldn't want to cause anybody else to stumble. Now I don't drink wine, I don't touch it, I don't drink beer, I don't drink alcoholic beverages. I believe it's wrong, I believe I could give you a Bible reason, and I have done this on occasion, why no Christian should drink even moderately. But one of the major reasons I wouldn't do it, even if I thought I could argue the case is I wouldn't want to cause somebody else to stumble. I'll tell you, if you were to walk in a restaurant and see me sitting in there drinking a beer or wine, it would hurt my testimony before most of you and especially little children. You had a son, a teenager who said, "Well I want to go out with the boys and drink some beer." You say, "You ought not to do that." "Well, Pastor Rogers does it, he's a good man." You see, we have to be careful, folks, we have to be careful that we don't do anything that causes somebody else to stumble. "It's good neither to eat meat or to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother is offended or is stumbled or is made weak."

And so, love does not give somebody a reason for stumbling. And **love does not give somebody a reason for sorrow.** Look in Romans 14 verse 15, "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest not thou charitably." I wouldn't want to do anything that would break your heart, even though I said, "I have every right to do it." But you say, "But, Pastor, it grieves me to see you do that." And then he says, "Don't destroy your brother with your rights." The word destroy here actually means to overthrow or to ruin. Don't mar his well-being.

Love does not give my brother reason to stumble. Love does not give my brother reason for sorrow. **Love does not give my brother reason for separation.** Look in Romans 14 verse 19, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and whereby we may edify one another." Love says, "What can I do that will maintain the unity in the church." We must not do anything that causes division or separation.

And last of all, **love must not give my brother reason for suspicion.** Look in Romans 14 verse 16, "Let not then your good be evil spoken of." And look in verse 22, "Hast thou faith, have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he allows." Now what does all that mean? It means look, perception is one of the cruelest forms of reality and if somebody sees you do something that in itself is not bad, but Paul says, "Don't let your good be evil spoken of."



Years ago I shared this story with you. Down in Florida I had a lady come to see me, and alcohol was her problem; ultimately we got there. But one of her problems, I counseled with her. She reached in her pocketbook at the close of the session and took out a pint of whiskey and said, "Pastor, I'm finished with that," and set it on my desk. Fine! We prayed and I felt God had done His job and she walked out and now I'm sitting with that pint of whiskey on my desk. I said, "This will not do," so I said, "Well, what'll I do with this pint of whiskey? Well, I'll throw it in the trash can." I said, "No, I can't do that. The janitor, you know, he'll come and pick that out of the trash can." I said, "Well, I don't want to leave it sitting on the desk. Somebody will come in here. I know what I'll do, I'll hide it behind my books." I said, "Oh, no, that's worse, just as sure as I put that pint of whiskey behind my books, somebody's going to come down and pull and look and there it'll be. What am I going to do with this pint of whiskey? Well, I've got to get rid of it, how am I going to get rid of it? I'm sure not going to drink it, what am I going to do with it?" And so I said, "Well, I'll dispose of it on my way home in some neutral spot." So I put it in a bag and put it in my car. I said, "God, if I have a wreck, don't let it happen, Lord."

And so I'm driving around with this pint of whiskey in my car. And I stopped at a wooded spot and I said, "Well, I'll just walk out there in the woods and throw it away." And I said, "What if I get caught out in the woods with this pint of whiskey out here?" Somebody sees me out here, folks, I breathed a prayer and walked out in the woods with that bottle and; I don't believe in littering, but I did, I poured it out, killed some ants, and threw that bottle away; I felt incriminated. Now, you say, "That's just a silly thing." Yeah, maybe, but you know what? The Bible says, "Don't let your good be evil spoken of." Don't do anything to cause anybody to be offended.

Now folks, listen to your pastor today. We've got a wonderful church. Those of you who are listening by television, I believe your church may be a wonderful church. Don't get divided over incidentals, okay? Not over days, not over diets, not over opinions, not over what somebody else does. If you know your rights, fine, but also exercise those rights in love and receive one another. When people come into Church they may not know what you know. They don't need to be criticized, they need to be loved, they need to be received and to help them to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus; isn't that true? Now folks, you know what makes this church the great church that it is? It's not a what, it's who; His name is Jesus. That's what we started with; Christ is Lord. He's like the hub of a wheel. Our membership; the rim of that wheel. The members, the spokes in that wheel, and the closer the spokes get to the hub, the closer they get to one another. Our unity is in Jesus.

Let's bow together in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you begin now to pray for people that may not have yet received Christ as their personal Savior and Lord? Remember one day you received Christ and you know what it means to you to know Jesus. Just pray that others might come to know Him. And while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, precious friend, would you like to receive Jesus? You see, the Bible says, "We're to receive one another because He has received us," and I can promise you that He will receive you. And Jesus said, "Him that cometh unto Me I will never cast away." If you'll come He'll receive you, I promise." You say, "What if I'm not one of the elect." If you come to Jesus, you are the elect. Just come, just come, come to Jesus.

Pray this prayer, "Lord Jesus, I need You, I want You. Thank You for dying for my sins. I believe You're the Son of God. I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross and I now, at this moment, yield my heart and life to You. I receive You as my Lord and as my Savior. Cleanse me, save me, Lord Jesus." Pray that from your heart. "Save me, Lord Jesus." Pray it and mean it. "Save me, Lord Jesus." Did you pray it? Then pray this, "Thank You for saving me. And Lord Jesus, because You've saved me, I will follow You all the days of my life and if You will only help me I will never be ashamed of You. Help me never ever to be ashamed of You, Lord Jesus, because You died for me. In Your name I pray, Amen."



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