

# Romans 14:13-23

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're in Romans 14. We're going to be in verses 13 to 23. We're going to finish up the 14th chapter, okay? Romans 14, starting in verse 13 and going down to verse 23.

If you are physically able and desire to do this, I'm going to ask if you'll join with me this morning as we stand together and we read the Word of God, found in Romans 14, starting in verse 23, I mean, starting in verse 13 and going down to verse 23.

I'll catch you up to date in just a moment because we do know that this ties directly into that which precedes it in the first 12 verses of this chapter, but I'll get us up to speed in a few moments.

Romans 14, starting in verse 13. Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this, not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love.

[ 1 : 04 ] Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. Therefore, do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.

The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats because his eating is not from faith.

And whatever is not from faith is sin. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. God, we thank you for the freedoms which we possess. We thank you for those who have sacrificed so greatly to allow us to continue to have these freedoms.

[ 2 : 13 ] God, we thank you for this opportunity where we come and we have the freedom to publicly read your word, to hear what it has to say. And I pray right now that our ears would be open, our hearts and minds would be attentive.

Lord, that we would hear a word from you and not a word or an opinion or a thought of man. But God, that your word would penetrate our hearts. It would penetrate to the very core of our being. That it would show us more of ourselves that we may be more conformed to your image.

Lord, I pray that you would be glorified and honored. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. We have been looking at the book of Romans for the past several months. And we have been seeing how the book of Romans contains for us the foundational doctrines of the faith. And I don't want to rehash too much. But we do understand that the book of Romans can be divided into three sections very easily.

Knowing that Romans chapter 1 to Romans chapter 8 kind of lay out the truth for us. That you are saved by faith through faith alone through the work of Jesus Christ. Not of the work of man lest any man should boast.

[ 3 : 15 ] That there's nothing you can do to earn it. There's nothing you can do to keep it. It is justification by faith. It's that great foundational doctrine that we understand that we are saved through the work of Jesus Christ and his work alone.

And then in Romans 9, 10, and 11 Paul illustrates this truth. That God can keep those who come to him in faith. And he will hold them forever eternally secure.

And he shows us this truth played out in history. Namely through the nation of Israel. And he gives us the display of God's faithfulness to his people who came to him. And then we make the transition

into Romans 12 to the end of the book of Romans.

Which is Romans 16. And God uses Paul to begin to apply this great truth of salvation. If you are saved through faith and faith alone, does that mean that your life looks any different?

Does that mean that you can raise your hand or nod your head and say, yes, I accept Jesus Christ. And then continue to live your life as you've always lived it with no thought of change. And the short answer to that is no.

[ 4 : 18 ] The long answer is because Paul gives us these great truths that are real. That apply to the believer's life because of their salvation. We've seen how it changes their interaction with one another.

We've seen how it changes even the believer's interaction in the country in which he lives. The government which rules over him. The powers to be in the world.

That they respond differently to all mankind because they are saved, not in order to be saved.

We've seen these great truths. And then last week we looked at Romans 14.

And we titled that passage, the first 12 verses, the harmonious walk of faith. That is how the people of God should be able to walk in harmony with one another rather than walking in discord with one another.

Namely, that there are major doctrinal issues of the faith which we must agree on. But then there are those minor issues which the Bible is very unclear, if not even silent on, that are up to man's interpretation and man's conviction.

[ 5 : 26 ] This is not saying that you can take the Bible and make the Bible say whatever it is you want it to say. Rather, this is to say that there are some things that God has clearly said, this is right and this is wrong, do this, don't do that.

And those things we must all be in agreement on. Those are the majors, right? We know that no man is saved by works because Paul tells us that that doesn't happen. We know that you are saved through faith and faith alone because he tells us that.

We know that it is trusting in Jesus Christ alone because the Bible very clearly says that. We know that no man comes to the Father lest he come by way of the Son because Jesus says that. We know that you do not come to the Son lest the Holy Spirit draw you to the Son.

The Bible is very clear. But once we are saved, there are what we like to call gray areas in our life. They were like, so what about this? What about this? Do I need to do this? And how should I do this?

Pastor, what does the Bible say about this? We know through living a life of faith that there are some things that the Bible is silent on. And we know as we read the Bible and we scratch our heads because we have this tendency, if we want to be real, we want the Bible to give us a list of do's and don'ts.

[ 6 : 35 ] At least we think we do. We would love for the Bible to say, do this, do this, don't do this, do this, do this, don't do this, do this, do this, don't do this. And the reason we would love to see that in the New Testament is because it would give us a little bit of self-confidence as we put check marks beside each one of those do's and don'ts.

But, friend, listen, go read the Old Testament. God gave them a list of do's and don'ts. And the problem is, is they put a check beside every don't and they left blank every do.

And they messed up and they couldn't hold up to the standard that God set of holiness. So rather than God calling us to a religion, he's called us to a relationship. Rather than God calling us to a list of regulations, praise be to God, he's called us to the person of his son, Jesus Christ, to live in a relationship.

When I do pre-marriage counseling, I always take the couple before we officiate the wedding. And I do one thing that was very helpful to Carrie and I as we went through it, even in the ministry, but I do it in pre-marriage counseling.

Some of you have went through it and you understand I do a thing called mind frames. Which is where I help them each to understand how God wired them. We all think differently with different parts of our minds, right?

[ 7 : 46 ] And I love to set them down and it's this very quick thing and they go through it and they understand, well, I'm an introvert who makes my decisions this way or I'm an extrovert who makes my, I'll just use myself.

I'm an extroverted person who makes very quick decisions and I make my decisions based on my gut feelings. Okay, that's just how I do it. That's how God wired me. My wife, on the other hand, is an introvert person who thinks through her decisions and doesn't make her decisions very quickly. Do you understand how living in a relationship like that, you can get in trouble, right? So I like to do this because I'm telling people you are entering a relationship. What you think, how you think things should be, they're not always going to be that way.

You need to understand your mate because the Bible says the two will become one. So now I begin to think and listen a lot more than I used to and I begin to think through my decisions and she is getting a little bit more spontaneous in her decisions.

It only took us 20 years to begin starting that process, but we're starting, right? And we're getting there. But it's the same way with Christ because we are the bride of Christ. Christ doesn't want to just tell us everything he wants us to do.

[ 8 : 54 ] Rather, he wants us to live with him and to change because of the relationship we have with him. Not to, in our own efforts, make this list and say, well, I'm not going to do all this and I am going to do all this.

And with each of us, we are all at a different point in that relationship, right? There are those in here that have been married one year. There are those in here who have been married two years. There are those in here who have been married 20 plus years.

There are those in here who have been married 50 plus years. And I love to talk to those who have been married the longest because they really know what love is beginning to be about, right? I love to sit down with those who have walked that journey.

And we know that, understand that where they're at in their marriage relationship is not where we're at in the one year. I was sharing with an individual not too long ago and he asked me how long Carrie and I had been married.

And I told him, he said, well, I've only been married one. I said, listen, you don't get to 20 unless you go past one, right? Where we're at right now, you can't expect to be there yet. It's the same way in the believer's life.

[ 9 : 54 ] Friend, listen, some of us have been walking with Christ for a long time. Some of us are babes in Christ. Some of our faith, because we've been walking with Jesus Christ for a long time, gives us certain freedoms that the new babe in Christ doesn't have.

But you can't get to where we've been walking with Christ a long time until you walk with him a short time, right? And we don't need to have judgment. There needs to be harmony. There needs to be peace. And that's what he shows us in Romans 14, verses 1 through 12.

But now he's going to make a transition. That's why he says, therefore, in verse 13, because these things are true, you should live in harmony with one another, which means the freedoms you have in Christ, this person may not have, but you don't need to be judging that person.

Listen, weak believer, he says, or new believer, those who have to have a list of dues and don't. Don't judge the believer who's free to do some things that you can't do yet. Live at peace with them. That's what he says, essentially. But now he makes this transition. And I want you to see this morning how Paul shows us that we can have a faith which grows others.

[ 10 : 55 ] We can have a faith which grows others. See, when we come to Christ, we are coming as individuals, but we are immediately being joined to others.

There is but one bride of Christ. That is the church, capital C. That bride is made up of a multitude of lowercase c, churches around the world.

There is but one wedding supper of the Lamb in the book of Revelations, to which the bride of Christ will come. And that bride is the church. But we understand that that bride is composed of multiple smaller churches all around the world.

Not all of them the same. Some of them behaving totally different. And those churches are full of multiple individuals who came to Christ personally. So that bride is a very complex bride.

And that bride is at different stages with Christ. But we understand here that we are not just individuals with a personal Savior. Rather, we are a part of the bride of Christ.

[ 12 : 04 ] United to others. Peter says we are being joined together, built up to a spiritual house. We are united to others. And we ought to have a faith which grows the brother and sister beside us in their faith.

Paul had said earlier in Romans 14, that not one of us lives to himself or dies to himself. Rather, we live and die to the Lord. We are the Lord's. We belong to Him.

So He has the right to push us together with others and want to use us to grow the faith of others.

Some, they want to have faith in Jesus Christ all on their own, by themselves.

Leave me alone. I have my faith. This is my faith. This is my faith, my convictions, my decisions, my Savior. And to answer that, I'll say, wait a minute, my friend. The Bible says that your faith is not just your faith.

Your faith is connected with other people of faith. So I want us to see this morning how we can have a faith which grows others. Because, by the way, if your faith, the faith you have in Jesus Christ, is growing and maturing other people in the faith, I can promise you one thing.

[13:11] You will never have conflict with other people of faith. You'll never have conflict. There will be no argument if you are maturing other people in the faith. Or, if others' faith is maturing you, you will have a hard time fighting and arguing with someone who is growing you in Christ.

Because you are being edified, that's the word, being matured in the faith because of their faith.

And it's hard to be angry with someone like that, who is doing you good rather than doing you harm.

So I want you to see three things that really signify a faith which grows others. Number one, it is a faith which looks beyond itself. It is a faith which looks beyond itself.

In Romans 14 verses 1 through 12, Paul is talking to individuals of differing levels of faith. He is talking to people of strong faith. He's talking to people of weak faith.

And he tells the people that are weak in the faith, don't pass judgment on those who are strong in the faith, that have more freedom in Christ than you do. And then he tells the people who are strong in the faith, don't mock and ridicule the people who are weak in faith just because they can't do some of the things you're doing.

[14:20] And to kind of put it on in perspective of what he's talking about, this brother over here can't eat a T-bone steak because he thinks that it's been offered to idols and he thinks that those idols mean something.

So he's not going to do that because he thinks if he eats that steak, he'll be offensive to God. That's the weak brother. This strong brother over here knows there's no such thing as a false god. He knows that there's only one true God.

And even if there was a such thing as a false god, the God he serves is bigger than that little God.

So he's stronger than all these little gods. So he's just going to eat the steak and thank God for it, right? We can go with that and say, thank you, Lord, for this hunk of meat.

And buddy, what he is saying is, weak brother, don't get mad when you see him eating a steak.

Don't say, oh, that guy, he's not very Christian-like because look, he's over there eating a steak.

And then he's saying to the strong believer, don't mock that man.

Go, yeah, but it sure tastes good. You wish you could have it, but you can't. Don't do that, right? He says, watch what you do. Don't judge, don't mock, don't ridicule. Don't do those things because you are responsible.

[15:18] Here we're beginning to make the transition. Faith which grows others looks beyond itself. Look at verse 13. Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore. We would long for that verse to stop there.

There are a lot of believers who read that verse and they put a period where there's a comma, right? There's a comma right there. There's not a period. That means that statement's not done. I'm not really good at English, but I do know some things of grammar.

I know a comma means it continues. A period means it's over, right? But it says, therefore, let us not judge one another anymore. Some of you all of a sudden are going, that's right, that's right.

Nobody needs to be judging me because I can do the things that I want to do.

Problem is there's a lot of I in there, okay? And Christianity is not about I anymore. It shouldn't be much I in there. And this is what it says. It has a comma. But rather determine this.

Now he's talking to those who love their freedoms, those who have the right to do some things. And understand this. The faith that looks beyond itself is a faith that is exhibited by determination.

[16:17] Which means if you don't intentionally make the decision to do these things, they won't be done. If you do not say, I'm going to do this in Christ, I'm going to do this, your natural tendencies will not behave this way, by the way.

Okay? You are completely redeemed in Jesus Christ. He owns all of you. You are set free in Jesus Christ. Understand your salvation. I know I'm taking a long time to lay this out, but it's important to see this.

You are completely redeemed. The old has passed away. Behold, all things have become new. But the problem is, is that that which has become new is still taking up residence in the old called the flesh.

Because until you lay this tent down and put on that heavenly body, as Paul called it, until the Galatians 5 principle where you become fully like him, then you have this new being contained, being kind of limited by this thing called the flesh.

And the flesh still has these sensory issues. So, which means this type of faith is a determined faith. It is something you're going to decide to do in Christ. You can do it because you're in Christ.

[17:27] But you must decide to do it because what you are in Christ still exists in the flesh. And in the flesh, we're still weak. And in the flesh, we still have temptation. And in the flesh, we still care about ourselves.

And in the flesh, I still want to please myself. But I must determine, he says, determine this not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. Now, all of a sudden, the focus has shifted from what I have the freedom to do to what I'm doing, how what I'm doing affects the person beside me.

The faith which grows others is a faith that looks beyond itself. Paul says, It is a faith which determines, though I may have the right to do it, it might not be right for me to do it because of the brother beside me while I do it.

And this is the balancing act of Romans 14. Are you free in Christ to do it? Absolutely. Absolutely. Are some in Christ not free to do it? Absolutely.

So does that mean that you can disregard those who can't do it and go ahead and do it anyhow? Absolutely not. Why? Because he says, Determine this, not to put a stumbling block in a brother's way.

[18:42] Look at what he says. Let's continue on. I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus. Now, this is Paul. I love this. This is Paul, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a member of the Sanhedrin, right? This is a man who lived of the highest religious standards.

And if you want to talk about a man who found his freedom in Christ, this is him. He really understood grace. He understood mercy. God blinded him for three days so that he could get it, put him in the wilderness of Arabia for three years so that he could learn it, right?

And Paul didn't come out of that ignorant. He came out of there fully educated. He says, I know and I'm fully convinced, which means I know that I know. I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself.

But to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. What is Paul saying? It is not a matter of the thing, whatever that thing is, whatever that blank, that gray area.

There are some things the Bible tells us are wrong. There are some things the Bible tells us are right. Then there are some things the Bible is silent on. And it is those things that Paul is speaking to.

[19:45] Paul is saying this thing may be okay. Because in Christ all things are redeemed. But to him who thinks it's unclean, it's unclean.

And we'll get to this principle in just a minute. So Paul goes on and he says in verse 15, For if because of your food, for if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love.

Oh see, the believer in Christ who has experienced the freedom in Christ, who now has the liberty of Christ, who can live his life free from that which used to hold him back.

See, so many people think if I trust Jesus Christ, my life is going to be boxed in. And God is going to put all these rules and regulations on me. And God is going to kind of suffer me and suppress me. No, no friend, that's the work of Satan.

Satan is an organizer of religion. Religion ties. Religion binds. Satan is the giver and the enticer of sin. Sin binds and sin ties. By the way, it is the chain of sin.

[20:51] You say, well, no, sin is fun. Really? Can you quit doing it? No, you can't quit doing it.

That way it's got you held captive, right? So now it's binding you and it's tying you. So that's the way Satan works. Jesus comes and he offers you freedom.

Rather than boxing you in, he sets you free. And now all of a sudden you find this redemption, this glorious redemption in Christ. And you can do the things that God is putting in your heart. And all of a sudden, in the Jewish context, this Jewish believer who went so long only eating kosher foods, all of a sudden found out he could eat all foods.

And he had been smelling hamburgers cooking for a long time. And now all of a sudden he can get those things. And he's like, yes, I'm going to do it. I'm going to do it all day, every day. I had this newfound freedom. And all of a sudden Paul says, wait a minute, wait a minute.

There are still some people around you who can't do that. Whatever that thing is in your life. See, he's not giving us specifics here. And I love it sometimes when the Bible is very clear.

But I also love it when the Bible allows Jesus to work it out in us. Because he says, look at what he says here. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

[ 22 : 01 ] Do you understand that it is absolutely possible for us to tear down what Jesus has been building up? It is absolutely possible for us to tear down what Jesus is building up.

You say, what do you mean? Well, I mean, I've done it and you've done it and we've seen it. How many of us have seen a new believer get so on fire for the Lord, he makes some of us old time believers a little bit uncomfortable.

And he, you know, the flames are getting a little too hot. And we're content with our embers, but we don't know if we want a flame. And we're content as long as there's some holy smoke, but we don't want a holy fire. And all of a sudden this new believer gets so on fire.

And we're like, hey man, just calm down. Just calm down. Just calm down. What are we doing? We are tearing down what Jesus was building up. We are throwing some water, calling it holy water, on the flame of the Holy Spirit that is in that believer's life.

And we're tearing down because we have a freedom to be still. Or even with our legalism, we begin to suppress those things. And Jesus said, even your freedoms, that which you have the right to do in Jesus, can be used to tear down what he's building up.

[ 23 : 15 ] See, the faith which builds others up is a faith which looks beyond itself and always looks to others. The question is, does your freedom, which you love to exercise, build others up or is it tearing them down?

You say, well, how will I know? Just look at their life. Are they growing in the faith or are they struggling in the faith? That's how you know. Number two, this goes hand in hand with it, and I know it sounds a lot like it, but it's okay.

Number two, the faith which builds others up not only looks beyond itself, it pursues the edification of others. It pursues. So we must determine, okay, Lord, I thank you for this newfound freedom, but I'm not going to do what I may be free to do because of the people around me.

And that's a determination. Lord, I'm going to allow you to show me. And now here it is. I'm going to pursue something. It says in verse 16, Therefore, do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil.

The world is watching, right? And man, the world has a way of pointing out some things to us which are good, but to the world they like to say it's evil. In verse 17, For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

[ 24 : 33 ] Now Paul begins to take the body, the whole body, into the picture. For the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God is not composed just of you, me, myself, and I, right? I'm not the only person in the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is not all about me. Actually, the kingdom of God is all about the king, and I am a part of the kingdom of God. And the kingdom of God, which is the people of God, is not just about what I am free to eat, or what I am free to drink, or what I am free to do.

Rather, the kingdom is all about righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. That is, righteousness being right with God and right with our fellow man, peace with other believers, and joy in other believers through the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

And it says in verse 18, For he who in this way, through righteousness, peace, and joy, serves Christ, is acceptable to God and approved by man. Which means there is a way to live out your faith, which is pleasing to God and approved by man.

Which man is like, you know what, that's great. There is a way which is disapproved by man, which man looks at you and says, well, I don't want to have that faith, even though you may be free to do that. Here it is in verse 19. So then, it's another intentional decision, an active being.

[ 25 : 41 ] So then, we pursue the things which make for peace, and the building up of one another. We pursue the things which make for peace, and the building up of one another.

Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. We pursue the things which make for peace. Oh, this goes completely contrary to the flesh, right?

We find a freedom in Christ, and what we want to pursue is the things which we thought we couldn't do, and now all of a sudden, we can do. And if you don't agree with me, well, then that's your problem. That's not my problem.

That's not what the Bible says. The Bible says, if what I am doing is offending you, it's not your problem. Now all of a sudden, it's my problem, because something I am doing, even if I have the right to do it, is an offense to you, and God's telling me that I need to change my actions, you don't need to change your interpretation.

Because the only way you will grow in your interpretation is if I build you up through my actions. So if my actions are not producing peace, this is a convicting message to the pastor, right? If my actions are not producing peace, they are not producing joy, they are not producing love, they are not producing all of those things, and the believers around me, then it's not that the believers around me need to grow up, it's that the person inside of me needs to change.

[ 26 : 57 ] That's the crux of the matter. That my life of faith, my steps of faith, should be a life of peace. It should be a life of growth. It should be a life of endurance.

People should be edified, because they come into contact with my walk. Which means if someone hangs out with me for a while, or someone comes and talks to me about the things of Christ for a while, edification means to be building up, to grow in the knowledge, to have a desire to become more like something, if I am a believer in Jesus Christ, and somebody hangs out with me in everyday life, right?

Not to church-face life, not to, you know, it's amazing on Sunday mornings, everybody's doing great, even though by the time we leave, and we go eat lunch, all the problems in the world have come on our table. I don't know how that happens, but it happens.

I mean, it's one of those great miracles. And I'm not talking about Sunday days, I'm talking about Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. I'm talking about every other day of the week, that if you hang out with me in my life, at my home, in my vehicle, then you should walk away being edified, being grown up in Christ.

Because if there's anything in my life that is not producing more joy, peace, patience, love, kindness, gentleness, self-control in you, then I need to change something I'm doing. And that's a convicting matter.

[ 28 : 13 ] But it's not just the pastor. That's not a pastor's responsibility. That's a believer's responsibility. That everything we do, every action we take, is not really about ourselves, but it ought to be a pursuit of intentionally growing others.

It ought to be a pursuit. It ought to be the ambition. I want people around me to grow in the faith. I would love for some people to experience the freedoms in Christ that I have experienced, even though I need to meet them.

That's what Paul says. I have become all things to all people that I may win the more, meet them where they're at, so that I can lead them to where Christ is at.

Right? This is the pursuit of edification. He says we ought to be intentional about this. We need to do this regularly. He says, in verse 20, we'll read it again, do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food.

All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. Here it is. It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine or to do anything by which your brother stumbles, which means sometimes a faith that grows others is a faith that abstains from things which it can do.

[ 29 : 30 ] Just because you can do all things does not mean you should do all things. The determining factor in the believer's life of freedom is what is the life of the weakest believer in my presence.

That's the level I'm going to live at. That's the level I need to make a decision at. Now, third and finally, I want you to see not only is it a life that looks beyond itself, not only is it a faith that pursues the edification of others, it is a faith which possesses a conviction of assurance.

You know, there's something to be said about a personal conviction. There's something to be said about a personal conviction. Because if I can convince you of something, someone else can

convince you of the polar opposite.

If I can talk you into something, someone can talk you out of it. That's persuasiveness, right? If I can persuade you that I am right, then someone can persuade you that I am absolutely wrong.

That's the danger of the classroom that we see when someone stands up with an opinion rather than with a fact or a conviction. And when you are convinced of something, that is a mental exercise.

[ 30 : 44 ] That mentally, you have agreed to it and mentally, you will hold on to it as long as something better doesn't come along. As long as it continues to appeal to your flesh and as long as it feels right, as long as it seems right, then you'll hold on to that.

That's something to be convinced. A conviction, on the other hand, is a matter not only of the heart, but it moves forward to the heart and the mind. A conviction grabs a hold of a person.

A conviction changes the person from the inside out. And a conviction is something that someone will stand next to even when it doesn't feel good. A conviction is something that has the person, not that the person has.

If you are convinced, you have an agreement. If you are under conviction, that conviction has you. And when conviction has you, then it doesn't matter the circumstances any longer and it doesn't matter what someone tells you.

It is the picture we get of Peter and James in the book of Acts when they are speaking to the man who is begging for alms and they told him to get up in the name of Jesus Christ and walk and he walked and they were brought in before the rulers and the authorities and the authorities said, don't talk anymore in the name of Jesus of Nazareth and Peter looked at him and said, whether it is right for you to agree, I don't know, to obey man or to obey God, you decide, but we are going to obey God.

[ 32 : 04 ] Why? Because they were under conviction. Paul would say, those things which I have seen, I will talk about. I am under a matter of conviction. I have to preach.

We see these things over and over again. There is a difference between being convinced of something and being convicted of something. A faith which grows others is not a faith that is convinced of truths.

Now, I know that seems wrong, but follow with me. It is not just a faith that goes, yeah, that is right. No, it is a faith that is under the conviction of truth.

Which means, I am going to believe that it is true no matter if all the world tells me it is not true. Billy Graham came under that great conviction you may remember the story, maybe some of you have seen the movie of Billy the early years and I have read the story in one of his biographies of Billy Graham's decision right before that great 1949 Los Angeles crusade.

The crusade really that put him on the map. Billy Graham was one of the traveling speakers with Youth for Christ. He was not the best evangelist in the Youth for Christ brigade.

[ 33 : 16 ] Rather, it was another man first named Charles who was the best speaker in the Youth for Christ. Billy Graham was kind of like the secondary act. This man was like the best preacher that traveled around sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

The problem is is that Charles was convinced that the Bible was true. And Charles was a very intellectual man. And someone came along and convinced him that it was absolutely false.

So he changed, he retired from, he left Youth for Christ, he resigned his role as a pastor of a good sized church and he embraced agnosticism which says that he didn't know if God existed or not.

And he died an agnostic. There is a interview, a recorded interview, one of his, Lee Strobel uses it in his case for faith. One of the last recorded interviews, he was up in Canada when he died of, did he believe?

He said, I wish I could believe what Billy Graham believes. Well, when Charles left the faith, he began to try to persuade his partner with Youth for Christ which was Billy Graham that these things were false.

[ 34 : 21 ] I mean, you gotta think this was in the height of some of the atrocities of World War II and they were seeing on the movie screen all these things that were going on over in Europe and Charles said, there's no way there's a God of love if he would allow these things to go on.

So he began to convince or try to convince Billy Graham that the Bible was false and it was absolutely wrong. And Billy likes to tell the story, he used to tell the story that right before the great Los Angeles Crusade in 1949, he went out into the Redwood Forest in California and he found a

tree stump and he laid his Bible on the tree stump and he got on his knees and he said, God, there's a lot of things in this Bible I don't know but by faith I'm gonna accept this Bible as true even if everything around me looks like it's not true, I'm gonna live under the conviction of its truth.

And he made a transition from being convinced to a truth to being under the conviction of the truth and as we say the rest is history. One man died an agnostic, the other man died a hero of the faith. Why? The difference between being convinced and being convicted. Now let's bring that home. Look at what Paul says here. Look at what he says right here. Verse 22.

The faith which you have, you, now we're talking about you, we're talking about me, we're talking about not necessarily the actions we take around our other brothers. Now he's gonna turn the spotlight on us.

[ 35 : 46 ] The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Which means whatever you're doing, do it because of a conviction, not because of a thought.

Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats because his eating is not from faith. And whatever is not from faith is sin.

You say, well, what's the application to that? It's pretty simple. Whatever freedom you have in Jesus Christ, whatever that gray area in your life is, this is the way I try to answer it for individuals.

Pastor, what does the Bible say about this? Is this okay for me to do? This is the way you answer that. Are you under the conviction that Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior, has told you you could do it?

Or are you doing it just because you want to do it? That's a big difference. A freedom in Christ is a freedom that exists because of a conviction that God has given me the freedom to do this.

[ 36 : 58 ] Not because of an opinion, it feels good and I think I can do it. which means that if any other brother or sister in Christ doesn't have that freedom, you can in good faith stand up and say, the freedom I have in Christ gets me and allows me to do it.

That changes the ball game because now we're leaving the decision up to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, not up to the flesh that desires the freedom.

Now we're saying, Lord, my life is no longer my life, my life is your life. And Lord, I know you're a great taskmaster, but I know you are the master. Lord, I know your burden is light and I know you seek to give me the desires of my heart.

Lord, you made me and you wired me and you fashioned and you formed me. So Lord, every desire that I have, you know all about me. So Lord, I come before you not thinking that you're going to keep good things from me, but Lord, knowing that anything you allow me to do will be good for me.

So Lord, I come to you now saying, Lord, am I free to do this? Whatever that blank is, in Christ, can I do this? And if you are under the conviction that you can do this, brother or sister in Christ, by all means, in Christ, do it.

[ 38 : 19 ] If you can't, by all means, no matter how much you want to do it, don't do it. Because it says, if you can't do it in faith, then you're doing it in sin.

You say, well, the Bible's gray about it. The Bible doesn't tell me I can't, but has Jesus told you you could? Because while the Bible may be gray, Jesus is a taskmaster who is just as much present today as He was in this day.

He wants you to live in relationship with Him. He wants you to live in fellowship with Him. And you say, well, I don't want to ask Him about that. Why not? I'm afraid He may say no.

Well, then if He says no, glory, hallelujah, you're not supposed to do it. If He says yes, glory, hallelujah, you can do it. You say, well, pastor, I'd rather ask you. No, you wouldn't.

Because my thoughts, my life, may not be your thoughts in your life. My desires may not be your desires. But I know one who knows us all. And I may not know what's best for you, but I know one who does.

[ 39 : 20 ] It is a matter of conviction. Friend, listen, if you live a life of faith that is operating by conviction, then you don't have to worry about any other brother or sister in Christ watching you in your faith.

because you can say, see how good a master Jesus is. Isn't He great?

See how much freedom He's given me. Or you see the things He's told me I don't have to do anymore? You see how good this is? And all of a sudden, that faith begins to grow the people around you.

I know it's a penetrating message for just a few of us here, but listen, what a joy to know God has made us dependent upon a relationship with a good Savior.

And we can say, oh Lord, Your will be done, not my desires be filled. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, I do thank You for this day.

[ 40 : 32 ] God, I praise You that there are some things we simply must rely upon You. for. God, I praise You for every freedom in Christ You've given us, for every ability You've blessed us with to live for Your glory.

And God, I know each one of us may be in a different way, in a different walk, in a different place, may be in a different way. may each one of our faiths be that which builds up our brothers and sisters.

May it be a faith that testifies to Your goodness and Your glory. May it be a faith that displays not what we can do, but what You can do for others.

Lord, if there's any here today who do not know You, maybe they don't even know the first being of freedom in Christ. maybe they're still living in the chains of religion, Lord, would You set them free by the power and presence of Your Holy Spirit?

Whatever it is You want to do, Lord, would You do it today? We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

[ 42 : 17 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.