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MESSAGES FROM ROMANS -- (Series XV)
By Quinton J. Everest

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1
THIS CLOSING NIGHT AND THE GLORIOUS DAWN

"And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof," Romans 13:11-14.

Paul has been speaking at some length concerning the relationships and duties of the Christian. He recognizes that the battle is on -- there is fighting to be done. He declares that if we are going to belong to the day that is about to dawn, it will be necessary for us to keep well equipped with the armor and weapons which God provides. The second coming of Christ has always been an incentive to holy and righteous living; it has encouraged men to faithful Christian living; it has inspired Christians to be true soldiers of the cross. When we think of the second coming of Christ and all that God has in store for the Christian, surely any effort that we have to put forth now is more than worthwhile.

THE PAST

Paul speaks of the night as nearly spent. The contrast of night and day is one of Paul's descriptive phrases when it comes to speaking of the present life in Contrast to that which is future when Christ will come and rule and reign in righteousness. He recognized that Christ's coming would indeed be a day of glory, brightness, and deliverance. Paul is declaring that as Christians, we cannot be contaminated with the works of darkness, such as rioting and drunkenness, chambering, wantonness, strife, and envy. Viewing present-day conditions in the light of this message that Paul gives to the Roman Christians, we would think that he had full knowledge of that which is taking place. It is just another affirmation of the fact that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Every sane-minded person recognizes that we are living in a dark, if not the darkest, hour the world has ever known. Every hour grows darker; unusual, devastating, heartbreaking perils are confronting us. Our fair land is being flooded with the damning curse of liquor. Eighteen years ago we gave the kiss of recognition to a godless nation whose hands were dripping with the warm blood of millions of honorable Christians. By this act, and in loose administrative methods, important government positions in our land were filled with known Communists. It was made easy for traitors to steal our atomic secrets; we've looked to man instead of God for security, and we are getting the usual reward, which is nothing. Instead of security, it is insecurity. We have unrighteousness instead of righteousness and immorality instead of morality.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation states that every day there are 3,927 crimes committed. Every 22 seconds, minute in and minute out of the twenty-four hours of all the three hundred and sixty-five days, a major crime is committed in our enlightened country. They go on to state that the situation is getting worse instead of better. They also state that in this nation we have a standing army of five million criminals which costs us \$17,000,000,000 a year to keep this army from throwing us into utter confusion. Decent, moral people are greatly concerned over the cheapening of virtue and purity in our land. Our morals spell out an increasing stream of sex pollution. Our godless pleasure craze, our devil-inspired greed for money, and all such bid fair to the complete destruction of our civilization. We look at the darkening clouds of Communism; we see our boys going to the battlefield, spilling their blood in a worthless struggle, and we have the

idea that if Stalin and his godless gang did not exist, or if they could be changed, the world would be different, but, my friend, such is not the case. Man in general has sold out to the devil; God has been unwanted. Parents either have not invited Him or kicked Him out of the home. We have a crop of disrespectful, delinquent, and illegitimate parents. They don't know God; they give no attention to His Word; they lack respect for His day; they don't give a rap about being in the house of the Lord on Sunday; there is no prayerful discipline in the home; no God-directed parental authority, and therefore the parents are not respected.

It is also heartbreaking to see the lack of moral character in many of our schools. In altogether too many places the sense of values that has to do with morality and decency has been lost. What can you expect of American youth when they have gambling, drunken, dancing, God-neglecting, Bible-sneering parents and teachers? Thank the Lord, we still have some who are true to the faith, who have respect for God and who accept the Bible as the Word of God, but every last one of us knows that if America is to be spared an early, devastating fall, that this latter group must increase tremendously and that mighty fast! Deeper still is the cesspool out of which this putrid filth is oozing.

In many places that organized group which still calls itself the church of the living God has utterly failed this generation. Instead of challenging teenage youth to heroic attitudes, daring self-disciplines, the real value of virtue and honor in character with their meaning in reference to destiny, and instead of helping them to get to God by the route of old-fashioned repentance, confession of sin, and forsaking of these things, they have become baby-sitters to dances, frolics, and midnight carousals. lest they lose their young people. With so much of this type of thing going on, it is a marvel that even more of our young people have not gone to the devil. Paul described this condition as night, darkness, and working of the devil, but to the Christian, the increase of these things is an indication that the night of time is departing, and that the coming of Jesus and the new Heaven and the new earth are about to dawn.

THE FUTURE

As to the dawning of this new day, or the coming of Christ, Paul says, "the day is at hand." In speaking of the work that needs to be done to win men to God, Jesus said the period of time or the day in which we have to do this is very short and "the night cometh when no man can work," John 9:4.

In other words, our day of opportunity in winning men to Christ will soon be past, but now in the sense in which the apostle was speaking here, it is a very welcome thought and truth that a new day is going to dawn and the shadows of the present will flee away. The full light of God will soon be the portion of those who have accepted Christ as their Savior. The fears, ignorance, and doubt of the present will cease to be. We shall see Christ as He is, and we shall know even as we are known. Friends, I am sure that our salvation is much nearer than we have any idea. The church of Jesus Christ and the cause of holiness has for centuries been standing up against the artillery of the devil; the cause of right and of God has been besieged, and in some respects may appear to be feeble, weary, all but exhausted, and in great straits, but I am glad to tell you that relief is coming. Our King, our Captain is on the throne, and He is going to appear at the right time. In this present night of world affairs and deepening shadows, the prospects seem dim and dark, but I want to

encourage you today to be faithful to Him, to see that your faith wavers not, and your confidence is unshaken, for the morning is about to break. If we as the besieged continue to stand at our post and remain watchful, looking over the walls of Zion, we shall soon behold the coming banners of our Deliverer and hear the welcome music of His Heavenly march.

Our initial salvation took place when we accepted Christ as our Savior and turned our backs on sin and the devil, but our final salvation is near at hand and will be complete when the trumpet sounds, the sky bursts asunder, and Jesus appears to call His own, blood-redeemed to Himself. It is in this light that we are encouraged to look at life at this present time. To be sure, we are besieged by a diabolical foe; our condition is often desperate as looked upon by men, but when looked upon in the light of God's Word and through the eyes of a man who really knows God, our prospects are bright, our redemption is drawing nigh, and our salvation is even at our doors. Wicked men are now having their day and working their will, but don't forget it, God's day and the day for His people is coming -- it is nigh at hand, and He is going to work His will. Whenever God interferes with the doings of men to show forth His power, then His day has come, and I am sure this interference is not far away. For the Christian, this interference is going to mean mercy. We shall be completely delivered from the snares, wicked doings, and traps of men. We shall be living eternally in the sphere of God's love, holiness, and righteousness. For those who know Him not, His coming will be in judgment. Surely the woe and judgment of that man who rejects Christ and dies in His sins is going to be terrible indeed. What a day it will be -- a day of wrath and fire. Here in this world men are made to tremble when they stand at the bar of justice to give an account for their transgressions, but what a day it will be when men look upon that One Who will judge the world in righteousness. If you are so unfortunate as to stand there as a sinner, you will recognize your judge as the Crucified Man of Nazareth, the Christ Whom you rejected, the One Who was preached to you so earnestly on earth, but Whose loving pleas you rejected. You will remember the invitations that were given and the messages that were preached; so it isn't any wonder that men will call on the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, for the great day of His wrath has come. The only remaining word that can be said will be "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matthew 25:41.

From that sentence, there will be no appeal. As a sinner and Christ-rejecter, you will have to go away, sinking into the bottomless pit where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth for all eternity. May God grant that each of you will give serious consideration to this matter of your soul's salvation and be thus fully prepared for that future day.

THE PRESENT

In view of all these things, Paul is telling us that this is not the time to indulge in mere sentiment concerning the sins of our past lives and concerning our relationship to God in the future. This present moment demands our most thoughtful, prayerful and serious consideration. It is time for the sinner to repent and confess. It is time for the lazy, lukewarm, indifferent professor of religion to awake out of his lethargy and sleep; the works of the devil and the darkness of this present time, says Paul, must be cast off. Those who are children of light should be arrayed in that which is suitable for their character. They must cast off the works of darkness. Nothing dark, unholy, or degrading should appear. Licentiousness, lawlessness, selfishness, and indifference

greatly prevail and appallingly increase as the days come and go, but as Christians, it becomes us to keep in touch with Heaven, to keep our hearts warm with the glow of God's love, to have a conscience that is sensitive and an intellect that is alive to the stirring events of this period.

Paul would say that many of you are asleep, you are totally insensible to the alarming conditions of the hour and to the soon appearing of our Christ. The enemy is battering at your very door, and you don't seem to realize it. One of these days, there is going to be a thunder peal from the justice courts of Heaven, but then it is going to be too late to rouse from sleep, get in the place where you belong spiritually, and help others to come to know Christ. May I say further that I believe all of us need to be stirred and awakened anew. There is a chloroform of indifference which the devil has brought over the church in these days which we must constantly shake off by persistent prayer, faith, and confidence in Cod. Remember that spiritually sleepy individuals are an easy prey to the devil and evil. Let us perpetually heed the admonition of Paul when he said, put on the armor of light. Let us give ourselves to the spiritual exercises of holiness, diligence, patience, devotedness, and earnestness in winning men to Christ. Our present crisis in life, the events of each day in which we now live; so many of the things that take place in your lives and in your communities, all speak loudly to us that this night of sin and wickedness is about to be terminated, and this Divine Deliverer is speedily coming.

Thank God, all of us who know Him welcome His approach, but let us keep our lamps trimmed and burning, and those of you who know Him not, may you come to know Him and thus be a king in the kingdom of God, where battles will be over and never again will you know bondage. In this world, we are as it were, in exile; we are in poverty; sorrow abounds; sometimes our fare is not too fabulous, but to be faithful to God means that we are going to be crowned with an eternal crown and receive the reward which is reserved in Heaven for those who are faithful. We shall eternally be surrounded with untold wealth; we shall revel in unspeakable happiness; we shall be, as it were, kings in a house of many mansions, in a city whose walls are jasper, whose streets are gold, whose gates are pearl, whose fruits and flowers are perennial, whose society is angels, archangels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs.

Surely the alive, wide-awake Christian realizes that he has been born to greater things than those of this world. In view of this, I again admonish you, let us walk honestly, prayerfully, and gracefully, as in the day -- not in rioting, drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but in putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and making provision for the enlargement and development of our spiritual man and our eternal prospects. May God richly bless you.

* * * * *

2

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (A)

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. 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. One man esteemeth one day above another:

another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother, or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? 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. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way," Romans 14:1-13.

Today and the two following Sundays, I am speaking to you on the subject of Christian Liberty. Many people have trouble deciding what is right and wrong for the Christian. Multitudes are greatly distressed at the seeming inconsistency of conduct of their fellow Christians. This unsettledness and uncharitableness have resulted in untold confusion, division, and destruction. It is a glorious thing when we can see one Christian taking a proper attitude and living in proper relationship to his Christian brothers.

In this chapter and in the first part of chapter 15, Paul comes to grips with the question as to how Christians should live in view of the differences of opinion concerning every-day, personal conduct. Paul does not have in mind the great questions of spirituality and morality, such as the prohibition of adultery, stealing, false witness, covetousness, and so on. These are undebatable duties and requirements, given us by God's Word. But he is talking about the minor matters of detail that arise in our daily lives. To be sure, the things with which Paul is here dealing were of a local difficulty, but in solving these, he lays down some principles which can be applied to the difficulties which might arise in any and every age.

The thing about which we need to be greatly concerned today is that we do not allow insignificant differences to create major divisions. Many an individual would today be loving Christ with his whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and would be exceedingly valuable to Christ and his cause, were it not for the uncharitable, harsh, and sometimes envious attitudes and actions of someone else who professed a high state of grace. Christianity's highways are strewn with the disillusioned, the defeated, the battered, the bleeding, and the spiritually slain, because of unChristian, carnal and too often devil-inspired actions of others. It is even possible for sincere and over-enthusiastic souls to mislead others if they do not live consistently, prayerfully, and carefully in the light of the Word and in the presence of the Master. It must be remembered that ever-changing methods of living bring new obligations and make necessary new decisions. Some of our Christian forefathers considered that pictures on the walls of their homes, curtains at the windows, the observance of Christmas and New Year's, and such things were wrong. The question is: How are these matters that arise with every age to be decided? God certainly couldn't print a book that would take care of all of the features of such an advancing civilization. As I have already stated, what He did do was to give us his Holy Word, in which are principles by which we can try our thoughts and actions, amid the changing scenes of society.

THE PROBLEM

First of all, we note that in the first five verses of this chapter Paul presents the problem of Christian liberty. Here are some people who had been Christians for a considerable length of time; others, just for a short while. Some were converted from Judaism, others from heathenism. These two groups were not as patient and considerate one of the other as they should have been. Paul declares that the strong are not to despise the weak, and the weak are not to be censorious of the strong. Their lack of Christian consideration one for the other was leading them to quarreling and quibbling over things that have no moral or spiritual consequence. They were trying to regulate the conduct of each other by their own human reasoning, rather than by Biblical and Holy Spirit revelation. They were trying to enforce the ideas and concoctions of their minds and customs, rather than the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. In reality, this had developed into a sickening Phariseism.

What a tragedy that so many people by their carnal bickerings, and their contention for certain unscriptural customs and peculiarities, have become isolated Pharisees. They defend some little petty, nonsensical, personal concoction and give themselves and their time to the defending of the same and let the world of sinners go on their way to Hell. Oh that we would get our eyes on Christ and His great salvation that was provided through His blood and let this be our gospel and our message, thus winning souls from the darkness of eternity's night and from the binding chains of the devil into the glorious light, liberty, and love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

None of us has any right to throw unscriptural charges and heap anathemas upon those who do not regulate every phase of their living according to our eccentric and sometimes misguided notions. There is a vast difference between personal convictions and Biblical injunctions and declarations. Inasmuch as possible, our personal convictions should be based upon scriptural injunctions and declarations. When this is true, it is a mighty fine thing to not only have personal convictions, but to see people standing true to them.

Then, too, it is well to remember that we do not all have the same amount of light. To be sure, we all have the Word of God, but one man has gone on farther with God than the other; therefore, he has a greater amount of light and instruction. Both men are honest in their decisions and in the quality of their acts. Even though they do not have the same degree of light, if they act with a true spirit that has been definitely converted, purified, and desires the leadership of the Holy Ghost, we can be sure that such will not go far astray. We may, with a spirit of love and consideration, try to reveal to him that according to our standard, he is wrong, but it is not ours to condemn and judge. It is always well to remember that man looketh at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.

So, we see Paul here at the church in Rome, composed of Jews and Gentiles. The Jews had just come out of Judaism with its forms and ceremonies which they had been trained to believe were a means of salvation. Therefore, they are very rigid in keeping certain days and customs, and abstaining from certain meats that were offered to idols. The Gentiles hadn't received any such training before their conversion; so now they are giving way to condemning one another because they don't all see alike. To the Gentile, meat that was in the public market and might have been offered to an idol, was just as good as any other, but the Jews strongly disapproved of its use.

Already in Paul's day, the keeping of the Lord's day as the Sabbath was increasing, while the keeping of the seventh day was decreasing. It wasn't a question as to whether they were to keep one day out of seven or not, but the question was: Which day? To Paul, this was all immature and infantile bickering. To be sure, they were not to live like godless souls, indulging in sin; neither were they to become godless in their attitudes one toward the other. These Christians were keeping the first day of the week as their Sabbath, in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ. To them, it testified of a joyous experience in being delivered from sin. It spoke to them of a new dispensation, and it reminded them constantly of the resurrection of Christ and of their future resurrection with Him. Those converted from Judaism still contended for the Sabbath of the Old Testament.

THE CRITERION

The question now comes: How are these things going to be decided? Paul makes it clear that our convictions on these matters must be as a result of our faith in Christ, the experience that we have had with Him in being regenerated and made new creatures. His conclusion is, then, that our standard of conduct and behavior, is Christ. When we have accepted Him and when we are walking honestly and sincerely in the light of His Word, our actions, habits, pleasures, companions, and all else, will be in the light of the Lord. We are not little gods, to set our own course as we please. Our regenerated thinking and our new life from Christ are now lived within God's will.

The questions come: Can I go here? Can I do that? Can I engage in this business? Is this social circle such that I should be affiliated with it? Thus, the questions go on.

Let it be said right here, that no Christian can arrogantly say that he is going to do just as he pleases, if he doesn't please according to God's will. The law of our land doesn't allow that, much less the law of God. If you were trying to commit suicide and the law would catch you, it would arrest you for it. The moment you try to commit spiritual suicide by doing just as you please, apart from God's Word, His law will step in and arrest you. God says of us, "Ye are not your own." To be a child of God means that we are brought out into new and glorious liberty, but there is also a responsibility that accompanies it. We are to live unto the Lord. Everything you do or say, every decision of your life should be done in the light of Jesus Christ and His Word. If there is any difference of opinion between you and the Lord, you then should have no difficulty deciding who is right. While Christianity is glorious liberty and individualism, it must be remembered that it is never a new-dealism. It is deliverance from sin and the devil, and liberty, light, and life in Jesus Christ. Many people are carrying this thought of Christian liberty to the extreme, and rather than living according to the faith of our fathers, they are living according to the faith of the present-day faddist. As someone has said, those whose eyes are raised to the stars, should not crawl on their bellies.

Many of you listening to me, have been living altogether too carelessly, thoughtlessly, and even Christlessly. You know all too well that your life is not being lived to the Lord, and that your thoughts and actions are not really enjoyed in His presence. Listener, if you have only a profession, you are therefore a hypocrite; by your life, you are bringing reproach on the cause of Jesus Christ

and leading your fellow-men astray. Why not this very moment open your heart, confess your sin and hypocrisy to the Lord, and let Him change and transform you, so that you can be genuine to the core and then live acceptably and effectively for Him? Your life will then be lived by the intelligence of the Holy Spirit. It will be free and happy. It will be clean and conscientious. It will be Godly and Christlike. You will then decide the various questions that come to you by asking: "What influence will this have on society and on individuals? Will it help or hinder the work of God? Is it pleasing or displeasing to Christ?" You will no longer plead for sin in your life and try to make out that God's Word is so strict and narrow that you cannot live it.

THE REVELATION

By serving Christ faithfully and loving Him whole-heartedly, it will be revealed to you that He is your judge, not only at the judgment day, but also here in this present world. Friends, let us remember this: don't try to judge in the light of your own intelligence whether you are right or wrong. Look to God and His Word. All of us are very soon going to be at the judgment seat of Christ, and there be judged. Only the righteousness of Christ and His imparted holiness will stand the test of that tribunal. The judgment seat of Christ is not presented here by Paul to frighten us, or to cause bondage to fear, but as a reason why we should have great charity for others. When we judge others, we need to remember that we, too, must be judged. There are men who ridicule the idea of the judgment day, but let them know that God has declared that it will take place.

Surely it is a glorious privilege to live for Christ and to serve Him. There is absolutely no other life that equals it, yet let us remember that it is serious business. If we want to give a good account of ourselves before the Lord in that day, let's see to it that we give a good account of ourselves before Him and in the presence of the world now. My friend, have you set your house in order? Are you living your life in the light of sanctifying truth and the coming judgment? Have you measured your own behavior, and your heart condition, in the light of Christ and His Word? If you have, and if you are His. I am sure that your heart is full of assurance and that instead of placing stumbling blocks in the presence of others, you will place before them stepping stones to help them on to higher ground, and finally to live eternally with Christ. Then we can say with Paul, "whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and 'whether we die, we die unto the Lord.'" It makes no difference whether we live here, or whether we die and are living with Christ in Heaven, we are the Lord's. May God bless you and help you to know Him is my prayer.

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3

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (B)

"I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ's acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin," Romans 14:14-23.

Last Sunday I spoke to you in a rather general manner on this subject of Christian liberty as it pertains to the Christian himself. Today we shall think of it in relation to our fellow-Christian. Unquestionably the very best we can do will be evil spoken of by some evil-minded individual. We can't hope to escape the slander of evil talebearers and of those who are full of carnal enmity and jealousy. This was experienced even by Jesus and the Apostle Paul. The one thing they did do, however, was to so live that the slanderous tales were baseless. If we conduct our lives according to the laws of God's spiritual kingdom, we can have His peace in our hearts, even though all about us there may be the strife of evil tongues.

In last Sunday's message, Paul reminded us that we are all going to stand before the judgment bar of God. He emphasized that since we are going to be judged in righteousness by Jesus Christ, therefore, we should be careful in our judgment of others. Keeping in mind that we shall have to give an account in that day certainly will help us in our attitudes toward the other individual here and now.

A certain king wanted to build a beautiful pavilion on a field near his garden. The widow who owned the field did not consent to sell it because it was the inheritance of her father. The king, therefore, in a false manner, seized it and erected his building. The poor widow was deeply pained because of the action of the king and complained to one of his overseers who promised to do all in his power to assist her. One day while the king was out in this field looking at his newly-erected building, this overseer came with an empty sack and asked permission to fill it with the earth on which he was treading. The king granted him permission, and when the sack was full of earth, he asked the king to assist him in placing this on the back of his beast. After the king and this man tugged at the sack of earth a bit, the king ridiculed him for filling it so full. Then the man said to him, "This is only a small part of the ground which you have unjustly taken from one of your subjects. How then are you going to bear the weight of the whole field when you appear before the Judge of all the earth, laden with this iniquity?" The king thanked him for this reproof and not only restored the field to the widow but also gave her the building which he had erected and all the wealth which it contained. So I am sure if we think of our actions in the light of the judgment day, it will help us now in our attitudes toward our fellow-Christians.

CONSIDER YOUR BROTHER

Paul has just said, "There is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean."

Some might have thought, "Now there he goes, playing fast and loose with God's law, thus making allowance for sin and unrighteousness." But right here is where we need to use caution. He

is speaking of things indifferent: ceremonial observances, etc. I find that there are a lot of people who like to pervert this Scripture and say that it doesn't make any difference what one does or where he goes, since to Christians the only wrong is in the attitude, therefore, everything is clean and everything is permissible. Such attitudes are absolutely contrary to God's Word and can be inspired by none other than the devil. Such are false ideas and low-minded principles. It must always be remembered that the Christian life is above the gutter, the gambling-den, the beer-joint, the house of ill-fame, and so on. The Christian's life is pure, high, lofty, and beautiful.

The Bible speaks in no uncertain terms about things that are morally impure. To these, we must be perpetually and violently opposed. But Paul is recognizing here that there are some matters that need to be decided by personal attitudes. We are constantly dealing with life situations that involve people who do not possess our view. Paul says this is where we are going to have to let love do its work. Love not only gives us a distaste for those things specifically and unquestionably prohibited by God's Word, but it is also willing to give up personal privileges and rights in order to keep a fellow-Christian from stumbling and falling, and as Paul says, being "destroyed." It is true that our consciences may allow us perfect freedom to do certain things, but the Christian who is conscientiously interested in his fellowman and desirous of being a blessing will give every care not to be misunderstood if he can avoid it. I know that some of you are pretty well frustrated in trying not only to help a new convert who has just found Christ and is conscientious, but also in trying to please some carnal, old church boss who is trying to cover some major sin in his life by amplifying some of your apparent inconsistencies. You will have to remember that there are still some wolves in sheeps' clothing. Someone has said that if an angel would try to come into this world and live, someone would come along with dark glasses and shoot him for a crow. These are things we must keep in mind, but I believe if we are honest, sincere, and faithful in reading God's Word and diligent in the life of prayer, that God's love is going to so fill and overflow our lives as to decide and dictate what is right and what is wrong. After all, says Paul, the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

This reveals that genuine religion is more than external observances or righteousness. It is the righteousness of soul which is the result of the forgiveness of sins and the cleansing of the heart wrought by God. It brings the peace of God which passes all understanding. There is in the heart a supernatural joy which is produced by the indwelling Holy Spirit. All of this is something like Heaven itself -- righteousness without sin, peace without disturbance, and joy without any kind of mental agony or distressing fear. The greatest delight, then, is not merely in the food we can eat -- the stuff we can put in our stomachs. It is not mere physical indulgence, but it is something which God does in our soul and spirit. It is a supernatural transformation wrought by God in the heart of man. To be sure, God wants us to enjoy things that are physical, social, financial, material, and so on, but man cannot really enjoy life and appreciate the fact of his own existence until he has had this supernatural regeneration and has been given a heart appreciation of God Himself. Certainly, to be accepted and approved in the sight of God brings to man the greatest possible satisfaction. As Paul says, such a life will be approved of all men who have experienced such a transformation. He doesn't mean to say that men outside of Jesus Christ are going to give popular approval to this kind of life with all of its principles and practices. To them, such a life is foolishness, for they live entirely outside such a realm. They know nothing of the righteousness, peace, and joy which there is in knowing Christ and living for Him. There are, however, many, who even though they would persecute a man who lives a holy life would approve a life of holiness. I have heard many an

individual say that if he ever became a Christian, he wouldn't want to be a hypocrite, but a genuine follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. So there is a sense in which the standard of the world for Christians is holiness, and we as Christians should appreciate this and do our best to maintain and live the standard. These are days when too many people are making allowances for anything and everything, and it is always refreshing to come in contact with an individual who has well-defined, clear-cut standards as to what a Christian ought to be. As Paul states, a Christian will go to any extreme possible and will make any personal sacrifice in order to have peace, but he is not willing to have peace at the sacrifice of undebatable Bible principles. Too many times we have seen contentions over nonessentials and have sacrificed peace, unity, and aggressiveness until our emphasis on the fundamentals did us little or no good. We are living in a day when it is high time for the genuine Christians of all denominations to agree on the fundamentals of God's Word and do our best to rescue men from the awful night and devastating power of sin and Satan. To be united on this all-important matter will also help us to build up one another in godliness and holiness of heart and life.

CONSIDER YOUR GOD

Paul finally comes to the place where he asks these people whether they are sure that God is approving what they think, say, and do. You can argue that a certain thing is either right or wrong, that a belief is truth or error, but the question is -- Have you subjected it to God? Many people, and even some religious people, have bribed their consciences because their hearts were sinfully inclined; therefore their belief and practices will not stand the scrutinizing eye of the Almighty. As Paul says, "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth."

There are many people who would not be doing some things that they now practice if they would live up to their innermost convictions, and as I have said, they still have carnal desires and propensities that lead them to do the things which they know are positively prohibited by God's Word. Several times in the last few weeks, I have had people say to me that during Lent they were not going to smoke cigarettes, they were not going to drink liquor, they were going to refrain from gambling, or some other such thing. During the rest of the year they practice these things. The very fact that a man will abstain from some things during Lent or any other particularly religious period of time and practice it at another time is a sure indication that he is condemned in doing that thing. During the time that he practices it, he pleads Christian liberty; in reality, it isn't that at all, but sinful bondage. But now the man is trying to ease his conscience just a bit by trying to build up for himself a little merit by depriving himself of something for a little period of time which condemns him all the rest of the year. This same thing could be carried out in a great many spheres of living. Too many things are being accepted and approved under the guise of religion, even by religious leaders. It is tagged, "the new theology," "broadmindedness," or some other term that is swallowed by carnally gullible people, and the devil sits on the sidelines, laughing in glee because he has succeeded in blinding religious leaders and leading multitudes into Hell over a liberal theology. Occasionally you may find a fellow who seems to be a little bit too narrow, but I certainly don't think we can consider that our greatest menace today. I am sure of this -- if a man is genuinely converted and filled with the Spirit, even though he may be just a little bit too narrow in some things, yet there is far more happiness and joy in that than in being too broadminded, which robs us

of that real, genuine, inner peace and joy of the Holy Ghost, and also keeps multitudes of other people questioning as to where we stand spiritually in our relationship to God.

Friends, let's see to it that we are definite and clear-cut in our belief of God's Holy Word and in our living out of this life before the people of the world. If we, by faith, have been saved and filled with the Spirit, let us continue to have this same belief in Jesus Christ and His Word. If we do not walk by this faith, and if we do not follow the dictates of the Holy Spirit, certainly we are going to walk in condemnation and unhappiness. When we get away from simple but strong faith in Jesus Christ, then we are going to act from the standpoint of selfishness, public opinion, custom, popular standards, and so on, and such actions will lead us to sin. That is exactly the reason why so many of you are miserable in the religion that you have. Your life is sinful and questionable, and you are trying to keep a little religion on hand to keep all this covered. Oh, my friend, let's quit it -- discontinue that two-faced living, open your heart wide to God, acknowledge to Him your sinfulness, and I guarantee you that He will meet your need, and with Paul, you will discover that the kingdom of God is far more than meat and drink, money, fame, and popularity, but it is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, both here and hereafter. To be genuinely converted, to have the heart cleansed and filled with the Spirit is the only power and means which will destroy that thing that mars our relationship and fellowship with God and His people. That one thing that destroys is sin, but thank the Lord, there is a remedy for it. May God grant that you shall accept that remedy as we come to the close of this broadcast today.

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CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (C)

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost," Romans 15:1-13.

The last two Sundays I have spoken to you on this subject of Christian liberty. We discover that the first part of this fifteenth chapter of Romans is a summarizing conclusion of this subject. To clinch his presentation and argument, the Apostle brings to our attention the example of Christ, Who, in making salvation possible for us, pleased not Himself, but sought constantly to do the will

of His Heavenly Father. Looking at the life of Jesus, we discover two things continually emphasized and exemplified. One was His desire to please His Heavenly Father and in every way do His will; the other was to save humanity. These are two thoughts that every one of us needs to keep in mind continually. Many times questions that people ask concerning certain things only reveal their shallowness. They haven't really been born again, and as a result are desirous of living in sin; therefore, they plead for certain things. They then come around for some preacher or Christian individual to state that they can't see anything wrong or any harm in the dance, the gambling-joint, drinking liquor, and numberless other things.

Undoubtedly the Holy Spirit anticipated these very questions in our day, for certainly many things which we have discussed in the last chapter and which we now find in this chapter today give splendid advice and correction on these matters. Anyone who is willing to be led out of the low-lying filth of self-seeking up to the lofty heights of God-glorifying will have no difficulty making a decision after reading these portions of Scripture. Take out of the heart the desire for self-gratification and implant in that heart a desire to please God and to be a blessing to humanity, and many of the problems with which people have been wrestling will soon be settled. I am sure there are some people who are sincere in asking some of these questions, but, as I have said, a great many of them are trying to find a loophole for their sins and inconsistencies. They know well enough that the things for which they are pleading are not character-builders; they are not a mean's of edification to a fellow-Christian. Even by great masses of people who do not profess to be followers of Christ, these things are well-known and commonly-confessed evils.

UNSELFISHNESS OF CHRIST

Paul declares here in our lesson that if we claim to be strong, stalwart Christians, we shall consider the infirmities of the weak and not be given to mere self-pleasing. Even though you might think you can do certain things and get by with it yourself, if you are a genuine, Spirit-filled, Spirit-directed Christian, you will at least consider the other individual and think of the influence your actions will have on him. Then to emphasize this thought, Paul speaks of Jesus Christ Who pleased not Himself that we might be saved and delivered from sin and the power of the devil. We need to remember, however, that Paul is not urging people to imitate Christ without first knowing Him as their personal Savior. To try to imitate Him without knowing Him in His converting, regenerating power brings discouraging and despondent frustration. A man who is outside Christ cannot understand things that are spiritual -- they are foolishness to him. You tell such an one that he is to imitate Christ, and right away, he will tell you that it is impossible, which it is. He has some mighty big obstructions in the way, which are his own sins and his own perverted nature. These things must be removed by the application of the blood of Christ. When these are removed, there will follow a beginning of understanding concerning the things of God and the life that God expects us to live, and then it is that man can grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This thin, sickly idea that is presented by a lot of religious unregenerates that all we have to do is look to Jesus as a great teacher and example, produces little or nothing that is worthwhile, but certainly when we have been born again, are sincerely following the Lord Jesus Christ, and think of all that Christ has gone through for us, we shall be only too glad to make some sacrifices and to bear reproaches for Christ and His cause. When Jesus healed the sick, gave sight to the

blind, restored hearing to the deaf, cleansed the leper, raised the dead, comforted Martha and Mary, and healed the brokenhearted, certainly His motive was not self-pleasing, but it was a self-sacrifice that brought blessing to others. Think of His last journey to Jerusalem; think of His trials, the agony, and the suffering. Hear Him as He prays, "Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done," Matthew 26:42. And then we see Him drinking the bitter cup during the agony of unknown suffering, placing Himself in the position of sinners, exhausting their punishment, and why all this? Listener, it was for you and for me. He pleased not Himself that we might be saved, and now some of you whine, fuss, and fume because you say you have to give up some things for Jesus and to live the Christian life.

Thinking of what He has sacrificed for you, you ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourself and rejoice that it is your privilege to lay aside even some legitimate things if that be necessary in order that the cause of Christ be furthered and some one of your fellowmen be brought into the fold. Oh, what a day of spiritual revival would dawn if self-seeking could be taken out of every church, its leaders, and its members. Selfishness and worldliness have in an appalling number of ways ruined and destroyed what should have been a powerful, spiritual influence for God. In reality, a church controlled by worldly men and worldly policies, given up to carnivals and carnal contraptions has ceased to be a church of Christ. Upon such sham churches and people, God declares, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" James 4:4.

Thus Samson, shorn of his locks, grinds corn for the Philistines while some of them laugh, others mock, Hell rejoices because of its increased population, and angels stand by and weep. Just to hire a godless choir to entertain, a popular preacher to please, and have a congregation of sufficient size to pay the bills are certainly not all that are needed. Such a set-up could be, and in many instances is, nothing but an insult in the face of omnipotence. If such a set-up is for the purpose of covering known sins, trying to get by with something in the sight of God, and sort-of soothe and quiet a speaking, guilty conscience, then certainly the selfishness of Satan is at the bottom of the whole thing. Men, instead of being brought to Christ and strengthened in the faith are driven from Him, and in all too many instances mistakenly conclude that all religion is a farce, and therefore they will have nothing to do with it. Oh, how my heart longs today to see more of the genuine, old-fashioned, Holy-Ghost, Bible-founded religion in evidence. It is this and this alone that is going to save our nation and spare this present generation from an awful and indescribable end. If you are a true Christian, you welcome all the light that shines from the Word and then allow the consequences to be what they may. Regardless of what sin the Word may reveal to you, you are going to be done with it because God disapproves it, and as I have been saying, will even be done with inconsistencies that will in any way hinder others from coming to Christ, and hinder fellow-Christians from becoming established in the faith. You can just mark it down that people who are unscriptural in their practices and have no love for searching the Bible may be professors of religion but are certainly in no wise possessors of salvation.

UNITEDNESS IN CHRIST

Paul further declares that Christian liberty as revealed in Christ not only produces consistency and unselfishness but also a unitedness. This doesn't mean religious regimentation or mental limitation, for God has created us with great diversity. We have the mind of Christ when it

comes to getting rid of sin and taking our stand against it. Baptized into one body by the Spirit of God, there is a divinely imparted unity of faith, of love, and of expectancy of Christ's return. They may be Jews or Gentiles, educated or uneducated, rich or poor, but as branches of the true vine, they derive their life and strength from one center and unitedly bear fruit for the glory of God. In many ways there is variety which is only beautified by the unity and harmony that comes as a result of being in Christ. Personally, I don't see any reason why, even though there are many differences along some lines among Christians, the essential unity of knowing Christ in converting and purifying power, cannot exist. Jangling, jealous, self-seeking, position-grasping individuals might creep into the church, but certainly if the fire of the Holy Spirit is burning in that place, their hearts will soon be melted, and they will be what Christ desires or else they will move out. To have unitedness in Christ certainly makes for a powerful witness to the glory of God. I have often wondered how much the world is suffering, how much God is robbed of praise and adoration, and how many people are plunging into Hell simply because of petty controversies. You hear a lot of people and preachers talking about the problem of God's work -- it isn't the work, but the worker. If God can control him and bless him, and if God's all-sufficiency is in the messenger, His work is going to go forward because of the beautiful life and the powerful message of the messenger.

Today we are thinking of the resurrection of Christ, and someone has very well stated that the church of the present hour is living between Easter and Pentecost. I fully agree with this, and I am sure that the thing that is most needed is the fullness of power that comes as a result of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It may not even be more preachers and church members we need, but if the ones we already have would be endowed with holy enthusiasm which is the result of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we would soon hear the people of the world saying that "these ... have turned the world upside down," Acts 17:6.

Prompted by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and endowed with the power of the Holy Ghost, the church always goes forth, climbing the thorny steep, descending into serpent-infested ravines, braving heat, cold, poverty, fire, and sword to become all things to all men that it might save some. A stream of testimony broke forth from that early church like a mighty Amazon: at home, abroad, in private, in public, among friends or foes, the members of that group ceased not to speak forth the power of Jesus to fully save. And this, my friends, is that in which we need to be united in this hour in which we live. Nothing in all the world will take the place of a Holy Ghost-united witness that Jesus is able to save from sin and to fully sanctify the soul. A dumb Christian or church on the subject of experiential salvation is certainly a dead one, no matter how aggressive they may appear to be along other lines. A Holy-Spirit life always brings the blossom and fruit of a glorious and powerful testimony.

UNMEASURED HOPE

Finally, Paul declares that with such a flood of God's blessing realized in unselfishness and in unity, there will be produced an unmeasured hope. His hopes are not pinned on this present world with its promises and possessions. His pull of power is from Heaven. His main interest and his greatest treasures are in Heaven; therefore, all of his thoughts, energies, decisions, and actions are with a view of not only getting there himself but helping his fellowmen to make it through.

My friend, I am glad to tell you that God gives joy and peace to all those who will trust Him and believe in Him. Will you just now pause where you are, open your heart, and let the Lord Jesus Christ meet your need. You can experience real, genuine, Scriptural Christian liberty and have a hope within your breast that will keep you steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord. May God bless and help you to realize the forgiving and cleansing power of Christ, and to know that the Holy Spirit is your constantly abiding Comforter.

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THE END