



The Balance Between Liberty and License

By Derek Kiser on April 13, 2021

TODAY'S READING: 1 Corinthians 10

There are extremes to avoid in Christianity. Think of them as ditches on either side of the road or the lines on the road. If you go over the yellow line in the center that could be bad. Likewise, crossing the white line on the right can also be bad. In our walk with God, going to extremes of Legalism or License can be dangerous to you and for those around you. *Legalism* is creating a religion of your own with rules that may not even come from scripture and trying to enforce those rules with those around you. We usually struggle with our previous generation on this. Some traditions that were great for a time are not the biblical standard of godliness. The opposite is also dangerous. *License* is saying that I am a Christian and I can do anything that is not specifically called a sin in the Bible. Legalism and License ultimately involve putting yourself on the throne and lead to idolatry. We are saying we are the ultimate decision maker about what is okay.

In this passage, beginning in verse 23, there is a conversation going on that we may not immediately relate to. With a little work, though, I think we can see how it applies to us.

I am guessing most of your meat comes from Publix, Food Lion, Harris Teeter or Walmart. Some may get their steaks from The Peach Stand. I do not think you are going to a meat market that sells meat that has been sacrificed to Idols. So how does this apply to us? Verses 23-24 state, "'All things are lawful,' but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful,' but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor." Verses 31-32: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God." Putting all this together just because I can does not mean I always should. Sometimes we curb our freedoms in life for the sake of our neighbor. Our area is a melting pot from all over the country and all over the world. That diversity of culture gives us a diversity of customs and traditions. You could have a neighbor from India or another country and some things you do or do not do may affect how they see you and your opportunity to share the gospel later. You could have a neighbor that is from another religion like Islam or Judaism. I love bacon and sausage. I also love country ham. Maybe you do too, but I would not recommend you invite your Jewish or Muslim neighbor to eat breakfast and serve bacon, sausage and country ham (please invite me). In their religion

that would be insulting and sinful. You get the picture. I am allowed to eat bacon and would appreciate the invite, but not your neighbor.

We can do a lot things that are not sinful but may cause someone to struggle with our choices. We can harm our witness to others by how we choose to exercise our freedom in Christ. We should be cautious how we use our liberty.

How can you and I today care more about others around us? What examples is God bringing to mind -- ways you and I can limit our freedom for the sake of others?

PRAYER: God, please help me see ways I can honor my friends and neighbors by limiting things I do that may be offensive to them. Help me care more about relationships than exercising my freedom.

TOMORROW'S READING: 1 Corinthians 11

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