



Christian Freedom (Part 2)

Romans 14:13-23

#21 in a series on Romans

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The description of Christian freedom. May 15

Theme: **Use your freedom constructively—not destructively.**

The dangers of Christian freedom.

1. The danger of throwing stumbling blocks.
 - a. Negatively: undiscerning use of freedom can trip and ensnare others. (13)
 - b. Positively: true freedom is driven and limited by love for others.
(13-15, 19, 21; see also 13:8-10; 15:2; 1 Corinthians 8:13; 10:23-24; 14:26; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 5:2; Colossians 3:14; 1 John 4:7)
2. The danger of freedom becoming sin.
 - a. Using freedom thoughtlessly results in bad press and a poor reputation.
(16; see also 2:23-24; 2 Corinthians 6:3)
 - b. Flaunting freedom turns relationships into a demolition derby.
(13-16; 20-21; see also Matthew 15:11; Mark 7:18-19; Acts 10:15; 11:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:8-13; 10:23-31)
 - c. Indulging freedom at the expense of others is sin.
(15, 20-21; see also 1 Corinthians 8:12)
3. The danger of hardening your conscience.
 - a. Personal conviction is to lead where God's word is silent. (22; see also 14:5)
 - b. Going against your conscience is dangerous... and sinful.
(22-23; cf. 14:5; 1 Corinthians 8:4-13; Ephesians 4:17-19; 1 Timothy 4:1-2)

Looking ahead: May 29 The Duties Of Christian Freedom (15:1-13)

In My Life This Week

As you use this daily guide, write out your observations and responses on a separate piece of paper and save them with this sheet for reference.

Monday. Read Romans 14:1-23. On May 15 we looked at the description of Christian freedom in the first twelve verses. Paul does not spell out the exact nature of the examples of freedom he presents. In preparation for zeroing in on the dangers of your freedom in Christ this week, remember that when the Bible gives direction by commands of clear principles, we are to obey. There is no freedom to do otherwise. Where the Bible does not give direction by commands or clear principles, there is freedom. Now review the four points from May 15 on how freedom is to be practiced. Have you been aware of these throughout the last week? How have you been doing in light of them?

Tuesday. Always use your freedom constructively—never destructively. Undiscerning use of freedom can trip up or ensnare other believers (verse 13). This can happen even when we are sincerely trying to follow God. One key to preventing this is to make sure our freedom is driven and limited by love for others (see the Biblical references on the outline). Think of some examples from your own experience on both sides of the fence—giving and receiving offense. How could have, how will love for others help you in those and similar situations?

Wednesday. When freedom is not used responsibly there is the danger of it becoming sin.

- Using freedom thoughtlessly results in bad press and a poor reputation.
- Flaunting freedom turns relationships into a demolition derby.
- Indulging freedom at the expense of others is sin.

Remember also that Paul is assuming sincere faith on part of both the one strong and the one weak in faith. *King-pin conqueror* and *professional weaker brother* attitudes and actions are another issue, and clearly are sinful.

Can you see times when your thoughts and actions about your freedom were sinful? Have you cleared that up with God? If you *know* the other person is aware of your sinful action/response, have you cleared that up with him/her?

Thursday. Not using your freedom in Christ responsibly can have the effect of hardening your conscience (see verses 5, 22-23; also see 1 Corinthians 8:4-13). Why is this dangerous? Look at the pictures in Ephesians 4:17-19 and 1 Timothy 4:1-2. While these statements are directed at those who do not have true faith, the principles of how it affects the conscience and behavior apply.

Friday–Saturday. On Sunday we plan to continue examining our freedom in Christ, focusing on some duties. Read 15:1-13 in preparation for our time together.