

## SERMON NOTES

### A. Introduction

1. the love constraint is a measure by which we can test whether our actions are P\_\_\_\_\_ to God (1 John 4:7–10)
2. lessons that we have already encountered in the book of Romans
  - a. Romans 8:2: we are F\_\_\_\_\_ from the law of sin and death
  - b. Romans 6:1–2: we are not to C\_\_\_\_\_ in sin
3. the alternate text from 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23
  - a. an action is E\_\_\_\_\_ when it A\_\_\_\_\_ the cause of the church of Jesus Christ
  - b. an action is S\_\_\_\_\_ when it E\_\_\_\_\_ obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ
  - c. an action is W\_\_\_\_\_ when it B\_\_\_\_\_ U\_\_ (“edifies”) believers in the Lord Jesus Christ
4. Romans 14:14–23 speaks particularly about sinning against one’s conscience in the matter of what one E\_\_\_\_\_, but it involves principles that can be used to test our other actions and activities

### B. Does this action A\_\_\_\_\_ the Church of Christ?

1. what is the church?
  - a. Universal (Invisible or “Catholic”)?  
(A) It consists of A\_\_\_\_\_ believers, P\_\_\_\_\_, P\_\_\_\_\_ and F\_\_\_\_\_ (see, for example, Ephesians 5:27)
  - b. Local (or Visible)? (for example, Faith Fellowship Baptist)  
(A) it consists of a B\_\_\_\_\_ of believers meeting together in order to ...
2. why is it important to A\_\_\_\_\_ the church?
  - a. because of C\_\_\_\_\_ L\_\_\_\_\_ for it (Ephesians 5:25)
  - b. because it is the P\_\_\_\_\_ of God (Titus 2:14)

3. what does it mean to A\_\_\_\_\_ it?
  - a. Matthew 28:19–20: to make D\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Acts 1:8: to be W\_\_\_\_\_ to Jesus Christ
  - c. Colossians 3:16: to W\_\_\_\_\_ together
  - d. Ephesians 4:11–12: through men G\_\_\_\_\_ by the Lord Jesus
  - e. accomplished on a daily, personal basis by  
(A) Romans 14:16: forfeiting our rights if they would cause them to be spoken of as E\_\_\_\_\_

(B) Romans 14:17: pursue things that G\_\_\_\_\_ God

### C. Does this action E\_\_\_\_\_ obedience to Christ?

1. the alternate text teaches us that we should forgo legitimate pursuits
  - a. if they inhibit my A\_\_\_\_\_ to obey Christ
  - b. if my E\_\_\_\_\_ detracts from others obeying Christ
2. Romans 14:18: denying myself in this way E\_\_\_\_\_ me to S\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus Christ in a fashion acceptable to God
3. Romans 14:22–23: tells us we should be truly C\_\_\_\_\_ that an action is right, carrying it out whole-heartedly with faith
4. Romans 14:19: tells us to pursue those things that make for P\_\_\_\_\_ and for the last test question, ...

### D. Does this action B\_\_\_\_\_ U\_\_\_\_\_ believers in Christ?

1. 1 Peter 2:9–10: yes, Jesus loves the church as a body which He has formed as God’s special possession, but
2. Galatians 2:20: Christ lives in M\_\_\_\_\_, He loved M\_\_\_\_\_, He died for M\_\_\_\_\_, so every individual believer is W\_\_\_\_\_ of our best efforts in B\_\_\_\_\_ them U\_\_\_\_\_
3. Romans 14:15: warns us to give up our rights and liberties if they should in any way liable to D\_\_\_\_\_ a fellow believer
4. Romans 14:21: avoid anything that might cause a fellow believer to S\_\_\_\_\_

### E. I intend, therefore, to ...

A. Introduction

1. the time is the end of the year, and Hobbes, the tiger who only comes to life when they're alone, asks Calvin —{2}.
  - a. "How are you doing on your New Year's resolutions?"
  - b. to which Calvin replies: "I didn't make any. See, in order to improve oneself, one must have some idea of "good." That implies certain values. But as we all know, values are relative. Every system of belief is equally valid and we need to tolerate diversity. Virtue isn't "better" than vice. It's just different.
  - c. Hobbes, rolling his eyes to heaven, comments: "I don't know if I can tolerate that much tolerance."
  - d. and Calvin concludes: "I refuse to be victimized by notions of virtuous behaviour"
  
2. well we grin, or perhaps grimace at this dialogue
  - a. but it reflects the thinking of the world
  - b. but for you and I as Christians there is a solidier standard, a yardstick of life whereby we can test our actions if they be pleasing to God or not
  - c. this is the love constraint
  - d. and there is probably nowhere where it is expressed more clearly as to who and why we should love than in 1 John 4:7–10 (NAS): 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
  
3. so before we look further into this section of Romans, let us consider an ...

B. Alternate "text" for what it has to teach us

1. in our studies in the book of we have come across two truths
  - a. Romans 8:2 (NAS): For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

- (A) namely, that through the righteousness which we have in Christ Jesus, we are freed from the Mosaic Law, that law which could bring only condemnation and death
  - (B) this is Christian liberty (but today's society might well label this "Christian rights")
  - b. and, Romans 6:1–2 (NAS): 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?
    - (A) namely, that we are not released from our obligation of seeking to follow the moral law of God; that is, we do not have license to continue in our pre-Christian life
    - (B) this is walking in the Spirit
2. so, let me suggest an alternate text to this passage, being a composite of 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 1 Corinthians 10:23
3. All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any ... all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not
- a. let us look this morning at ways in which love — Christian love — is to constrain our Christian rights or liberty
  - b. Christian love — love for Christ, for His church, and for our fellow Christians — constrains our liberty by realizing
    - (A) an action is expedient when it advances the church of the Lord Jesus Christ
    - (B) an action is suitable when it will empower obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ
    - (C) an action is worthy when it builds up believers in the Lord Jesus Christ
4. now, this passage that we read
- a. is speaking particularly about eating
  - b. with respect either
    - (A) to the dietary laws to which the Jews adhered, or
    - (B) to the concern that some food may have been used for pagan purposes
  - c. and the effect that these have on some people's conscience
  - d. but the conclusions that Paul draws in that context are of application in other areas
  - e. of actions which are not in themselves wrong, but need to be considered in a larger context before we

engage in them

- f. so, let us consider these verses using these test questions that the love constraint imposes on us
  - (A) "Does this action Advance the Church of Christ?"
  - (B) "Does this action Empower obedience to Christ?"
  - (C) "Does this action Build Up believers in Christ?"

C. "Does this action Advance the Church of Christ?"

1. Now this question means we need to know

- a. what is the church of Christ is?
- b. why is it important to advance it?
- c. what does it mean to advance it?

2. what is the church?

a. we decided at a recent Board meeting that I should present some information over the summer months on this subject in reference to Faith Fellowship Baptist Church

- (A) what we view as our particular ministry, now and in the future, here in Aurora
- (B) how our current plans and programs tie into that view
- (C) what is involved in committing to church membership

b. in thinking and praying about these, I have been struck once again by the New Testament view of the church:

- (A) yes, the Bible does speak of the church
  - (1) as being made up of all believers everywhere:
  - (2) the redeemed people, past, present, future
  - (3) the Church Universal, the Church Invisible

(B) but much more frequent are such reference as

- (1) the church in so-and-so's home
- (2) the church in such-and-such town
- (3) that is, a body of believers of a community having fellowship together
- (4) this is the Church Local, the Church visible

(C) this is the church that will impact society today; where believers assemble in Christ's name be it

- (1) in Community Bible church over on Bathurst
  - (2) in Cornerstone church on Industrial Parkway
  - (3) in Jim Newman's congregation at First Baptist
  - (4) right here this morning in Faith Fellowship
  - (5) and in similar congregations around the world
- c. the church, then, is God's people, meeting and serving together in worship, in prayer, in communion, in study of the word of God, in mutual support, and so on

3. why is it important to advance it?

a. because, as Ephesians 5:25 tells us, "... Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,"

(A) the purpose of God's in His Messiah

(1) planned from before Creation

(2) was that God the Son, Jesus of Nazareth

(3) should die on the cross

(4) that a new people should be formed, Titus 2: 14 (NAS) He "gave Himself for us, that { this "that" tells us the purpose} He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

(5) and that people is the church, Universal and Local

(B) if, then, the church was so important that the Counsels of eternity decreed the death of the second Person of the Trinity, so that it might come into being: then it is most worthy of our every endeavour to advance it

4. what does it mean to advance it?

a. we could spend a lot of time debating about the wording of mission and vision statements, but the Bible gives clear direction of what these should consist, including

b. Jesus words in Matthew 28: 19–20 (NAS): Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

c. and again in Acts 1:8 (NAS): but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and

you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

- d. and of how it worships together; see what worship means in Colossians 3:16 (NAS): Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
- e. and how this is accomplished, Ephesians 4:11–12 (NAS): And He {that is, Christ} gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;
- f. but on a lower and more practical plane, today's passage gives this advice on advancing the church, in exercising our love for it as has Christ:
  - (A) restrain your freedom from the law in order to be an effective witness to the world: Romans 14:16 (NAS): "Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;"
  - (B) pursue those things that glorify God: Romans 14:17 (NAS): "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

5. which brings us to the next test question to be asked:

D. "Does this action Empower obedience to Christ?"

- 1. you remember that from our alternate text, we read these words "all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any"
  - a. which brings out the point
    - (A) that there are many good, honest, valid life pursuits
    - (B) but if my pursuit of them
      - (1) inhibits my ability to obey the weightier command of my Lord for my life
      - (2) or, by example, distracts someone else from obey Christ's command in his or her life
    - (C) then we have failed to exercise our love for Christ by taking advantage of the liberty that we have received
  - b. so love for Christ should always cause to review whether our actions — or activities — are a stumbling-block which is preventing either ourselves or others from following the Lord with a singleness of heart

2. this passage in Romans 14 has a few points to make on this matter
  - a. after talking about restraining our liberty in the Gospel, and pursuing that which is rather worthwhile, we are told how this promotes service, that is, obedience to Christ in verse 18 (NAS): *“For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.”* — note the two-fold acceptability of such restraint on liberty empowering
    - (A) acceptable service (and hence, obedience) to Christ
    - (B) an effective witness to believers and unbelievers alike
  - b. and verses 22 and 23 (NAS): *“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.”* which tell us
    - (A) in this context, then, check that your action is one that you are truly convinced you are free to do
    - (B) no matter how right it may seem, if you are not so convinced, then it is sin ... don't do it!
  - c. and in verse 19 (NAS) it tells what should be pursued that will empower obedience to the will of Christ:
    - (A) *“So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”*
    - (B) that which makes for peace, for unity, for fellowship
    - (C) that which will edify: build up other believers ... which brings us to the last test question

E. “Does this action Build Up believers in Christ?”

1. we have already pointed out that Jesus Christ loved the church
  - a. and gave Himself for it in order that He might form the church for Himself, as we are told elsewhere (1 Peter 2:9–10, NAS) *“a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession”* — (in words originally applied to the nation Israel), but we also find that Christ's love is not just for the body as a whole
  - b. but even as we speak of Jesus Christ as our own, personal Saviour, so also each and every one of us who believe is an individual, personal object of His love, for every one of us can say with Paul (Galatians 2:20b, NAS): *“... Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*
  - c. so, just like the church, so also each and every believer is therefore worthy of every effort that any one of us can make to build him or her up, to cause them to grow, to support them: the constraint that love

places on personal rights or liberty will then cause us to test actions and activities in the light of their effect on other believers

2. so let us conclude with a few comments on some verses from this passage in Romans 14 showing the importance of the test question, "Does this action Build Up believers in Christ?"
  - a. verse 15 tells us of the danger of freely exercising our own rights and liberties in a callous fashion; if we then we "are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food {the particular example of liberty that Paul was using} him for whom Christ died."
    - (A) and I cannot think of anything more the opposite of building up, of edifying, than that which destroys
    - (B) this then, let us endeavour to do, test our actions to ensure that we walk in love, that we strengthen and build up one another in faith and in service
  - b. so, still using the example of diet, Paul in verse 21 warns us not to do anything, "by which your brother stumbles."

#### F. Conclusion

1. fellow believers, let us leave this place this morning, determined that through restraint upon our own rights and liberties, we will endeavour in our actions and activities
  - a. to Advance the Church of Christ,
  - b. to Empower obedience to Christ, and
  - c. to Build Up believers in Christ.
2. friend, if this morning you are still outside of this great body that Christ died for, the church, because you have not believed in the One Who love you, and gave Himself for you, will you not come today in confession, in repentance, and in faith to Jesus Christ as your Saviour? Then you, too, will be able to join in with a full heart as we sing our closing hymn, "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord."

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, [www.holwick.com](http://www.holwick.com). Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick's database are identified by "Holwick" followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. Calvin & Hobbes comic strip by Bill Watterson from the Daily Record - Holwick illustration #2980