

164. Do Not Abuse Your Christian Liberty.

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. 1 Cor. 10, 23.

Christ has made us free. He has fulfilled all the commandments of God for us, and He thereby worked out for us a spotless righteousness which we appropriate to ourselves by faith in our blessed Redeemer. What God demands of us now is not that we should attempt to gain heaven by keeping the commandments, but that we should believe in His dear Son and obtain eternal life through His name. .

Now, this doctrine of our Christian liberty has often been grossly abused. People are frequently using this liberty for a cloak of maliciousness. They have been arguing in this way: If Christ has made us free, then we can do as we please. But such thoughts come from the Father of Lies, the devil. Christ has not made us free that we should sin, but that we should walk in true holiness. And this all the more because there are so many weak Christians in the Church, whom they should not give any offense.

Who are these weak Christians? They are those whose knowledge and understanding of divine things is very limited. A scornful remark about their religion, an unkind act, a little gust of adversity, and they are in danger of falling away. What, then, is the duty of the strong? Paul writes, Rom. 15, 1. 2: "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," that is, the strong ought to be considerate of the weak and be of great service to them that they may be edified and built up. They ought to set them right in all Christian kindness and patience. And they ought to refrain from things that are in themselves indeed innocent and lawful, rather than to offend a weak brother by making use of their Christian liberty. My liberty shall not cause one to stumble for whom Christ has died. Do not abuse your Christian liberty, but always be guided by love toward those who have not yet become strong in faith.

Prayer.

O Thou God of peace, unite our hearts with the bond of peace that we may live with each other in peace and unity, in humility and meekness. O Thou God of patience, give us patience for the time of our sojourn and perseverance unto the end. Fill our hearts with love and charity toward our neighbor. If he is in danger of being led astray, let us plead with him not blindly to follow the crowd, but to seek the narrow way, which leads to life. Let us refrain from using things if a weak brother is not yet aware of the freedom of a Christian in those things which are not forbidden in the Law. Amen.

Where'er I go, whate'er my task,
The counsel of my God I ask,
Who ruleth all things right.
Unless He gives both thought and deed,
The utmost pains can ne'er succeed,
And vain must be man's might.

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