**The Ultimate Duty of All Christians in Exercising Christian Liberties: The Glory of God and Edification of Others 10:23 – 11:1**

Before we conclude the discussion about Disputable Matters and Christian Liberties allow us to briefly review what we have covered thus far. We must remember everything is to be done in love, many activities are not essentially evil, exercising certain freedoms doesn’t mean someone will lose devotion to God, we are to avoid being judgmental, beware of overconfidence and self indulgence, and flee idolatry. As we conclude the study about Disputable Matters or Christian Liberties we must remember that every area of our lives should be lived to glorify God and edify others.

**Edifying Others**

***Vs. 23. “Everything is permissible but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible but not everything is constructive.”*** This verse was mentioned in chapter 6:12 with a slight modification. What Paul means here is that things not mentioned in Scripture are ok to be practiced publicly. Though they are ok to practice publicly they are not always advantageous, profitable, or beneficial for other people. Though they are ok to practice they are not constructive for others.

“Constructive” in the NIV is another word for “edify”. This means to “build a house” or “house build”. It is an architectural them that applied to constructing buildings. Here it is used in a spiritual sense and applied to the building up of others spiritually. There are certain things that God has given or that we are to do in order to build up others:

1. The Word of God is the primary source for building us up, Acts 20:32.

2. Preaching and Teaching builds us up, 1 Corinthians 14:3 – 4.

3. God has given gifts to the Church to build it up, Ephesians 4:11 – 13.

4. Love builds us up, 1 Corinthians 8:1.

5. Proper towards one another builds us up, Ephesians 4:29.

By doing these things we strengthen, fortify, stabilize, the inner man so that we would be built up. In all that we do in this world it should be done to build up others not tear them down.

***Vs. 24. “Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others”.*** This principle applies to Christians and non Christians as well. We are not to seek our own rights and privileges alone but the rights and benefits of others also. Philippians 2:2 – 4, tells us that we are not to do things out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but we are to consider others and their interests. A good example of one who did this is Jesus. Philippians 2:7 – 8 says that Jesus emptied himself of glory and made himself a slave and died for us. He did this because He considered the benefits of others. In the same way, if we are going to be a follower of His we must die to self so others will benefit.

***Vs. 25 – 26. “Eat anything…without raising conscience, for the earth is the Lords…”*** We have the freedom to partake in Christian Liberties without raising the conscience of another person. This is the case because “the earth is the Lords”and everything in it”, Psalms 24:1.

Paul is using this to remind us that everything God made is good but not necessarily in every context. For them to attend a ceremony where an idol sacrifice is offered is to participate with demons, vs 20. But the meat itself that was offered to an idol sold at the market is good for food. It is from the earth that the Lord has made and there is nothing wrong with it. The food is not wrong the context in which the food is received may be wrong. Allow me to use few very controversial scenarios as examples:

1. Let’s say a mother has three children and she is unable to provide for them. She has a fourth son who is much older and is willing to help because he loves her. However, the income he receives comes from an illegal source. Would it be wrong for the mother to receive money to take care of the children? How would you advise the mother?
2. A Christian has a sibling who won a large sum of money through riverboat gambling. Our of love they want to give a portion of their winnings to each family member. Would it be wrong for the Christian to receive the money? How would you advise the fellow Christian?
3. A church member played the lottery and won a large sum of money. They would like to “bless their church” by giving 10% of their winnings to the church. The church doesn’t believe members should **play** the lottery. Would it be wrong for the church to receive the money? What if the church did not know but discovered at a later time the money was given. Should they give it back?

What are the answers to these questions? People have different convictions about them. Some feel that the **money** is wrong because of where it came from. Others would say that the money itself was not wrong but what they did to get the money was wrong. They are able to make a distinction between where it came from and how it is being used now. Many Christians have unbelieving friends who do things illegally to earn money. They use this money to purchase clothing at stores, by food, pay rent or mortgages or even give as gifts. Is the money no good or wrong? Should they throw the money away? Is it ok to receive the money?

Everyone knows that all money comes from God. He made it and uses it to provide for us though some may gain it illegally. Some of us see nothing wrong with receiving the money. However some of us feel differently about this. Whether it is right or wrong is difficult to determine and truthfully I do not know what I would do about answering these scenarios.

But I do know this, a person is not to be forced to violate their conscience regarding these or other issues of Christian Freedoms. To do this is to cause them to sin. If you feel differently than someone else about an issue, do not quarrel with them about it or attempt to persuade them to believe the way you do. Instead, practice your freedom discreetly and let it be between you and God, Romans 14:22. Do not do anything to cause them to question their conscience. We are not acting in love when we do this. Instead we are tearing them down.