

Self-Denial Romans 14:1-21

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of self-denial and considering the impact of our actions on others, as we are accountable to God and must follow the law of love.

Scripture: Matthew 7:3, Romans 14:12-13, Romans 14:15, Romans 14:17, Romans 14:19

Topics: "Accountability to God", "Self-Denial"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the principle of self-denial in his sermon on Romans 14:1-21, urging believers to live with a constant awareness of their accountability to God rather than judging others. He highlights the importance of love and consideration for others, advocating that Christians should avoid actions that may cause their brothers to stumble, even if those actions are permissible. Miller illustrates this with examples of personal habits and indulgences, stressing that true liberty in Christ should not come at the expense of another's faith. He concludes that the essence of the Christian life is not about external practices like eating or drinking, but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, encouraging believers to prioritize the edification of others.

Transcript

We are not done with life as we live it; we shall meet it again, every act of it. We are not answerable to men. But we must never forget that there is One to whom we are all answerable. "Everyone of us shall give account of himself to God." The only true way to live, therefore, is to keep God always before us, and do each thing we do to please him. We have not to answer for other people--but neither can other people answer for us.

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more." It is God alone to whom all men are responsible. Of course, if a man lies, or steals, or gets drunk, or forges another's name, or beats his wife--it is not to be expected that nobody shall blame him. But there is a vast amount of fault-finding, condemning and criticism that has to do with things of mere indifference in a moral way--people's manners, their personal habits, their dress, their way of living, their private affairs.

"Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way." That is, we are to watch ourselves, not our brother. Instead of keeping our eye ever on others, looking for faults and mistakes in them--we are to look to our own example lest something we do may hurt their lives, or cause them to do wrong. If everyone would do this--it would go far toward making a paradise of this world of thorns and briars.

We dash at our neighbor's eye to pull out some little mote we imagine we see in it--while at the same time we have a great beam in our own eye which sadly disfigures us and is a reproach to us in the sight of others. The habit of judging and condemning others, for example, is usually a great deal more serious blemish than any of the things we so glibly point out as flaws or faults. The first duty of every Christian--is to make sure that he lays no stumbling blocks in other's way. The other day a prominent Christian man said, "I am very fond of wine and I believe I could drink moderately without danger to myself--but I never touch any kind of wine. I might set the example for some who could not drink moderately without becoming drunkards. My liberty would thus become a stumbling block to others."

"If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love." Love is always to be the law of life. Love must decide all questions. We may exercise our liberty to almost any extent--but it must never be so exercised that it will hurt our neighbor.

If a man is fond of dogs there would seem to be no restriction on his having his home and his grounds full of dogs, provided his neighbors are not annoyed by them. But he must think of his neighbors and restrain his fondness for dogs within the limits of the law of love--the golden rule, we will say.

Paul is talking of eating meat that had first been carried to an idol temple and then sold. He knew that the meat was not hurt by this bit of superstition, and he could eat it freely. But some weak people thought the meat had been defiled and that it was a sin to eat it. "Better give up your meat," said Paul to the strong Christians, "than grieve your weak brethren." It is liberty to eat, regardless of your brother's feeling; but it is love to deny yourself for his sake. There are other people, and we must always think of them in living our own life. It is astonishing, too, how thinking of them by the rule of love will cut into our plans for ourselves.

"Do not by your eating, destroy your brother for whom Christ died." A little selfish indulgence is poor compensation for a hurt to a human soul. Since Christ thought souls valuable enough to die for them, we should have enough regard for them to lead us to make so slight a sacrifice as doing without certain kinds of meat.

"Let not then your good be evil spoken of." There are many ways in which people's good is evil spoken of. Some good men have strange habits that bring them into ridicule and prevent them from being useful. Some excellent women, with kind hearts, spoil all their charity by unfortunate blemishes of speech or manner, which make their good to be evil spoken of, and which destroy its influence. "As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor."

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." It matters not whether a man eats meat or eats no meat, so far as his relation to Christ is concerned. One may be a meat-eater and get to heaven--just as readily as one who is a vegetarian. The same is true of dress; one may be just as holy in camel's hair garments--as in purple robes. But there are vital things--things one must have to be in the heavenly kingdom. Among them are "righteousness, and peace, and joy." There are a great many things we do not need to have to get to heaven. But there are things we must do if we would be God's children. We must be righteous. We must have some measure at least of the peace of God. And we must have joy in the Holy Spirit.

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things with which one may edify another." One of our Lord's beatitudes is, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." A verse in another chapter in Romans reads, "If it is possible, so far as it depends on you--live peaceably with all men." We ought not to be quarrelsome. The special meaning here is that we

ought to deny ourselves things we like--if our indulgence in them will stir up bitter feelings. The second lesson is in the same line. We are to do only the things that edify our build up the life and character of others--that is, things that will make them better, that will add to the beauty of their life, that will strengthen them, cheer, encourage, inspire and stimulate them to ever nobler things.

"It is good neither to eat meat, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby your brother stumbles." This is the summing up of the whole lesson. Anything of the nature of mere indulgence, which would harm another or endanger him--should surely be given up.

Some time ago, there was a terrific explosion in a coal-mine, by which four hundred miners were suddenly hurled amid shattered ruins into a horrible death. The explosion was caused by a miner who had opened his safety lamp to light his pipe. For the poor gratification of his taste for a smoke, this wretched man sent four hundred of his fellows into eternity! Just so, there are men who, for the privilege of sipping their wine, are making ruin in their homes and sending other souls to degradation and death. Is this right?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/self-denial-romans-141-21/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net