

CONCERNING THE WAY

April 12, 2011

LESSON 120: PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS



Chapter 13 – Living a Life of Submission

Rome was the imperial capital and the seat of the empire's civil government. The residents of Rome were well aware of that city's glory and shame in the days of Nero, who reigned from A.D. 54 to 68. But believers in the church at Rome were also citizens of Christ's kingdom (Philippians 3:20, Colossians 1:13). How a Christian is to regard his government was an important issue and still is today for us. These are the key New Testament passages on this issue. Other passages that speak to this are 1 Timothy 2:1-4, Titus 3:1, and 1 Peter 2:13-17.

Romans 13:1-2 Every person must be subject to the governing authorities, for no authority exists except by God's permission. The existing authorities have been established by God, (2) so that whoever resists the authorities opposes what God has established, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

This is a powerful truth. The reason why we should submit to governmental authorities is that God is the one who puts authorities in place (see also Proverbs 21:1 and Daniel 4). So if you rebel against the government then you are rebelling against God. This can be difficult for some people to accept, because it means that God has put some pretty evil people in charge of some nations in history. But there it is – no authority exists except by God's permission. He puts people in positions of power to accomplish His purposes in history.

You can see how this was such a difficult issue when we look at the history of how our country was founded. Many good and godly people refused to rebel against England's authority because of these verses. They were taught these truths in their churches. But the injustice of the King's rule got to the point that rebelling against the King of England became the right thing to do. So there are times when it is good and right to rebel against the government, when it goes against God's laws, which England did. There are many things we could talk about here that are related to this issue, but we don't have time in this study.

The point is that government is a good thing, established by God to keep order and protect people. We are to obey our country's laws. There may be many things wrong with our country, but God established it and we are subject to it. We are not to resist the authorities. Jesus also taught this in Mark 12:17. Does this mean we obey the government if they have a law that is against God's law? In those cases, "we ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29). We are subject to God first, and then our government. The shining example of this in the Bible is Daniel in Babylon in Daniel chapters 1, 3, and 6.

Romans 13:3-5 For the authorities are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you like to live without being afraid of the authorities? Then do what is right, and you will receive their approval. (4) For they are God's servants, working for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for it is not without reason that they bear the sword. Indeed, they are God's servants to administer punishment to anyone who does wrong. (5) Therefore, it is necessary for you to be acquiescent to the authorities,

not only for the sake of God's punishment, but also for the sake of your own conscience.

Remember that Paul is writing during the time of the Roman Empire. It was a pagan empire through and through in this time. But it was a good government for the most part, and had good laws. Paul's point is that if you are a lawbreaker, then you should be afraid of the government. If you obey the laws and are a good citizen, then you have nothing to worry about.

Of course, Paul is making the assumption that it is a good government. This would not apply to bad governments like Nazi Germany. That is probably the best example of what can happen to a country when good Christian people go along with the government that is doing evil. Some Christians believe we should not be involved in government at all, and take no action if we see that the government is going bad.

Reinhold Neibuhr was a pacifist during World War I. He felt that capital punishment was wrong and even taking up arms to defend the nation was wrong. But watching what happened as the Nazis took over the German government, by World War II Neibuhr had changed his mind. He argued that Christians have a responsibility to take action to preserve justice and decency against injustice and tyranny. He even felt that for Christians to fail to take action against the injustice of their government was sin.

Is this happening in our country now? Sometimes even good governments go bad. All governments in history have eventually declined and eventually failed. The United States has strayed far from the ideals that it was founded on. We have the responsibility as Christians to try to change things, but within the law.

Government led by godly people was God's design for nations. But that has never been realized perfectly, even at the height of the Kingdom of Israel, because of humankind's sin. We will never see the kingdom God originally had in mind for the human race until Jesus comes back to establish it here on earth in the Millennial Kingdom.

Notice that the government has been authorized by God to administer punishment to anyone who does wrong (verse 4). This includes capital punishment. This is not man's idea, but God's will.

Romans 13:6-7 This is also why you pay taxes. For rulers are God's servants faithfully devoting themselves to their work. (7) Pay everyone whatever you owe them — taxes to whom taxes are due, tolls to whom tolls are due, fear to whom fear is due, honor to whom honor is due.

Well, I don't know if all rulers are faithfully devoting themselves to their work, but Paul's point is we are to pay taxes and honor our rulers, not because they deserve it, but because God has placed them in authority over us. We have, for the most part, lost the respect for authority in this country. Most people do not respect or honor our policemen, our military leaders, our congressmen, our judges, and our presidents. Do they deserve respect? No, many of them are not doing a good job, and some of them are corrupt.

God put them in those positions to do right. But if they do not do right, that's another thing. We have the right to vote the elected people out. But we should honor them when in those positions because of the positions God has placed them in, and we must obey the laws and pay our taxes while we're trying to affect change.

Romans 13:8-9 Do not owe anyone anything — except to love one another. For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. (9) For the commandments, "You must not commit adultery; you must not murder; you must not steal; you must not covet," and every other commandment are summed up in this statement: "You must love your neighbor as yourself."

So, we are to submit to our government. That's the first principle of living a submissive life. Now Paul goes to the next principle. People love to pull verse 8 out of context to try to say that we should never borrow or lend anything. Well, staying out of debt is a good idea, but Paul is not talking about finances here. Look at the next verse. Paul is talking about love here. He's simply saying to treat other people the same way you would want to be treated. The debt of love is the only debt we should owe, and it is one that will never be repaid. This is the 2nd principle of living the submissive life. Jesus basically said the same thing in Mark 12:30-31.

Paul quotes some of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) to make his point. Since Christ came and fulfilled the Law we are not under the Law of Moses any more. But some commands are for all time, and are repeated, like these, in the New Testament. In fact all of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the NT except for the law of the Sabbath.

Not murdering someone is submitting your anger and hatred toward another human being to the grace of God. Not committing adultery is an act of love toward someone by not violating the sanctity of marriage. Not stealing means submitting to what God has given you and being content with that, and not taking something from someone else. Not coveting is bringing under submission your natural desires to want what belongs to someone else. Commandments that Paul didn't mention also have to do with submission. Honoring your father and mother is submitting to their authority. Not lying means submitting to the truth no matter how much it hurts, and resisting the temptation to make yourself look better. The first four commandments are all about submitting ourselves to God.

Romans 13:10 Love never does anything that is harmful to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.

Paul stresses how important this is by repeating himself. Loving our neighbor as ourselves is the fulfillment of the Law. Living a submissive life fulfills the Law.

Romans 13:11 This is necessary because you know the times — it's already time for you to wake up from sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we became believers.

I'm not sure that Paul is thinking that the Tribulation and the return of Christ being near in this verse. He could be simply saying that life is short. When you're young you feel like you will live forever. But that's not true. You can have an accident, contract a disease, etc. And even if you live a full life, it goes by so quickly. We're closer to eternity every day. Don't put off loving your neighbor, you may not get another chance. Wake up — what are you doing for others? "Salvation" here is our ultimate salvation, going to be with the Lord at the time of our death.

But this can also apply to the general times today. We ARE in the end times, and we don't know how much time is left. The return of Jesus Christ has always been imminent.

Luke 12:54-56 Then Jesus said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud coming in the west, you immediately say, 'There's going to be a storm,' and that's what happens. (55)

When you see a south wind blowing, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and so it is. (56) You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky, yet you don't know how to interpret the present time?"

"There their Messiah was, in their midst, and they knew Him not! Why? Because they did not apply themselves to know the time they were in, although they could have known it, both from the prophetic Word which was being fulfilled before their eyes in Christ; and also "of their own selves," if they had set themselves to judge truly of the moral conditions about them and the necessities of action involved therein. If the Jews even then were called by our Lord "hypocrites," for applying their God-given discernment to the signs of the weather, and neglecting to apply it to spiritual things, and so going on blindly to judgment; how much more this should arouse us who have so much greater light and knowledge, in view of Christ's death and resurrection, and the presence of the Holy Spirit; and the certainty of our Lord's coming, and our uncertainty as to the day and hour!" William Newell

Both Jesus and Paul expect us to recognize the times we are in. Only those who are sticking their heads in the sand fail to recognize that the return of Christ is very near. We need to start living a submissive life! Then people will see Christians who know how to live in light of what they believe. We need to walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

Romans 13:12 The night is almost over, and the day is near. Let's therefore put aside the actions of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Paul considers this age as "the night". We live in a very dark world. Eternity with Christ is "the day". We currently live in the dark! C.S. Lewis called it the "Shadowlands". Real life doesn't begin until we are home in heaven with Jesus.

As long as our Lord was on earth, He was the light of the world (John 9:5). Since He is gone, it is spiritual night. But He says we are, "God's children without any faults among a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world as you hold firmly to the word of life." (Philippians. 2:15, 16). Of course, it was night for the human race from the moment Adam sinned; and even deeper night, as sin increased.

Then Paul tells us to put on the armor of light. Christians are soldiers in a conflict who need to be alert and equipped for battle (Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:8). Upright, Christ-honoring living is often referred to as being in the light (John 12:36; Ephesians 5:8, 14; Colossians 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 John 1:7; 2:10).

Romans 13:13-14 Let's behave decently, as people who live in the light of day. No wild parties, drunkenness, sexual immorality, promiscuity, quarreling, or jealousy! (14) Instead, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, and do not obey your flesh and its desires.

Paul is speaking to believers here. He is warning believers not to practice these things. Do believers do these things? Yes they do. None of us walk perfectly. But Paul is saying we should not behave this way. These things we have been reading in chapters 12 and 13 are mandates for the Christian in our daily lives.

Instead of doing the things in verse 13, we are to wear Jesus Christ. We have to put Him on like a coat. That way people will see Him in our lives. The flesh can be not just the wants of our physical bodies, but also our minds. Our minds can dream up all kinds of sinful desires. The secret to living holy lives is for Christians to clothe themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10). That involves the theme of this chapter – living our lives in constant submission to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 14 – Living a Life of Sensitivity

Now Paul speaks about relationships with other believers. It's amazing that the same issues that were in the early churches are still issues today. Getting along with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ is so important, but it can be a problem sometimes. We all mature in Christ at a different pace, we're all on different levels, and we have diverse backgrounds that affect our attitudes and practices. The key to living in harmony with other Christians is to not be judgmental, but to accept other believers, to be sensitive to their feelings and to how God is dealing with them at this point in their lives.

Romans 14:1-4 **Accept anyone who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of arguing over differences of opinion. (2) One person believes that he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. (3) The person who eats any kind of food must not ridicule the person who does not eat them, and the person who does not eat certain foods must not criticize the person who eats them, for God has accepted him. (4) Who are you to criticize someone else's servant? He stands or falls before his own Lord – and stand he will, because the Lord makes him stand.**

Those who are “weak in faith” are not people who just don't have enough faith, and that's why they are weak. They are Christians who don't have full understanding of what salvation really is. They do not understand that it is completely a free gift of God and believers face no condemnation whatsoever because of Christ's atonement. Paul understood his salvation completely and enjoyed the liberty he had in Christ to the fullest. He was totally free from foolish superstitions, manmade traditions, and unbiblical taboos. Some people in the Roman church and even today still cling to those taboos, because they just can't seem to fully accept the doctrine of justification by faith alone. So Paul in this chapter talks both to the Christians who were living freely in Christ and the Christians who were weak in faith – bound to fleshly legalism. But neither type of person should criticize the other, because God has accepted them both.

“Unless some practice is specifically revealed in Scripture to be right or wrong, each believer should be free to formulate his own convictions about it. New Christians may still feel constrained by certain criteria they had followed earlier, and thus may be reluctant to change when they become saved. Unless these are specifically enjoined or prohibited in the Word of God, older believers should receive them into fellowship without argument or criticism.”

Henry Morris

I'm sure most of us remember that Jehovah had given Israel rules and regulations for what was to be considered clean and unclean animals for eating. You can find these in Leviticus 11:1-47 and Deuteronomy 14:3-21. But Jesus said this:

Mark 7:15 **Nothing that goes into a person from the outside can make him unclean. It's what comes out of a person that makes a person unclean.**

Mark 7:18-21 He said to them, "Are you so ignorant? Don't you know that nothing that goes into a person from the outside can make him unclean? (19) Because it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and is expelled as waste." (By this he declared all foods clean.) (20) He continued, "It's what comes out of a person that makes a person unclean, (21) because it's from within, from the human heart, that evil thoughts come..."

So there was a conflict between believers in the church. Those weak in faith believed it was unlawful and unspiritual to eat certain meats, especially those offered to idols (see 1 Corinthians 8). Those that were strong in the faith knew they could eat any kind of food, including meat offered to idols, because these idols weren't real and couldn't have any effect on the meat.

Paul uses food as an example, but this is a more far reaching principle than eating. There are practices I have that you might consider stupid, and there are practices that you have that I might consider stupid. The principle is that we must not criticize our fellow brothers and sisters for doing things that seem silly or even possibly sinful, because those people are accepted by God, and only God can judge them. Sometimes it's just our personal opinion, not who's right or wrong.

The point is that we should accept each other no matter what each other's opinions and practices are. We must be careful not to turn outward things into a spiritual issue. We all have differences in opinions, and we have different levels of faith. Some do not have the faith to eat or drink certain things. Isn't it interesting that Paul states that the one who says that they can't eat or drink something is the one that is weak in faith? But we should never look down on someone who is weaker in the faith, who seems to have convictions about outward physical things that seem silly to us. We should respect their opinions.

Romans 14:5-6 One person decides in favor of one day over another, while another person decides that all days are the same. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind: (6) The one who observes a special day, observes it to honor the Lord. The one who eats, eats to honor the Lord, since he gives thanks to God. And the one who does not eat, refrains from eating to honor the Lord; yet he, too, gives thanks to God.

Try to imagine the confusion and difficulties that the church in Rome had. This was a church composed of new Jewish and Gentile believers. So they had Jews that were having trouble getting used to the idea of eating certain things and Gentiles who ate things that seemed disgusting to Jews. And some Jews probably were trying to tell the Gentiles that they needed to observe the Sabbath and other Jewish holy days. That was not familiar to Gentiles and they probably thought it was stupid. They were really coming from opposite directions.

Paul and other Christians strong in the faith knew they were to worship and serve the Lord seven days a week, not just on some "holy" day. We are not to regard one day above another any more. The fourth commandment, to observe the Sabbath day, is the only one of the Ten Commandments that is not repeated in the New Testament.

*"Paul's instruction is, **Let each man be fully assured in his own mind.** Moses never could have said a thing like that! There is a sense in which these words reveal our liberty in Christ as does no other single passage. The Law allowed no liberty of action in such things: its very spirit and*

essence was bondage to a letter. Conscience was judged beforehand by the letter of the Law; conduct was prescribed. When a man gathered sticks on the Sabbath, he was stoned! Not so, now! Not being under the Law, or the legal principle, but in the Risen Christ, under God's eternal favor, we have entered upon what the Spirit, in Chapter Twelve, calls our "intelligent service." Here is an amazing sphere of holy freedom in which each of us, learning the truth, is treated as a king in the realm of his own mind. Instead of being told what he must or must not do, he is freely exhorted to assure his own mind and heart fully, and walk as Christ's free man." William Newell

Everything belongs to the Lord and is sanctioned by Him (1 Corinthians 10:25-27; 1 Timothy 4:3-5). A believer's individual accountability to the Lord in every area and experience of life is the overriding principal. Each Christian in both life and death is accountable to Him, not to other Christians. But Paul brings it home in verse 6, by stating that whatever we do, we should be doing it to honor and give thanks to God.

Romans 14:7-8 For none of us lives for himself, and no one dies for himself. (8) If we live, we live to honor the Lord; and if we die, we die to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

What a powerful statement. Do you really feel that you belong to the Lord? If you have decided to follow Christ, then you belong to Him. Everything you do and say should be to honor the Lord. We are His servants. Paul called himself Christ's slave. He owns us (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). This change of heart, this belonging to God should affect every aspect of your life. It's easy to say, "I'm a Christian, I serve God." But are you really? Do you really serve God? Or do you most of the time serve yourself and your fleshly desires?

If you truly belong to God, it should affect how you relate to your family, to your neighbors, and what your attitude is towards the world. One of the best ways to check the depth of your commitment to Christ is to ask yourself, "Does this honor the Lord Jesus?" We should ask ourselves that before we do or say anything, it should be second nature. We should live by the Spirit and not the flesh, and then all the differences we have with people won't matter.

Romans 14:9-12 For this reason the Messiah died and returned to life, so that he might become the Lord of both the dead and the living. (10) Why, then, do you criticize your brother? Or why do you despise your brother? For all of us will stand before the judgment seat of God. (11) For it is written, "As certainly as I live, declares the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will praise God." (12) Consequently, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Paul is making the point that we should never look down (despise) on another brother or sister in Christ. The reason? We will spend eternity with each other, for one thing. But first we all will end up in the same place, standing before Jesus Christ where we will have to explain how we lived OUR lives. I won't have to answer for what you did, and you won't have to answer for what I did. No excuses, no blaming someone else, all we'll be able to do is bow our knees to Jesus and praise Him for redeeming us, because we certainly will have nothing else to brag about what we have done – only what He has done.

This is what is called the Bema seat, the Judgment seat of Christ (also see 2 Corinthians 5:10 and

Philemon 2:10-11). Paul quotes Isaiah 49:18 and 45:23 here. It is a place where all believers (Paul is writing to only believers here and he says “all of us”) will be judged for what they did for the Lord. We will be rewarded for the good works we have done for Him. Some will receive great rewards; others will receive very little because they did very little. Keep in mind this judgment is not about salvation, no one will be sent to hell at this judgment – this judgment is for believers, and their eternal destiny is assured. But there will be different levels of rewards and responsibility in God’s Kingdom, and that’s what this event is all about. Other verses that related to this judgment are John 5:22,27; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; and 1 Corinthians 4:4-5.

I think when we stand before Jesus and see His majesty and glory in full, we will all fall on our faces. Having to answer to Him, we will be undone. We will, for the first time, see how undeserving we are and understand fully what God has done for us. We will see how much of our life was just wasted in selfishness and just existing, just passing the time doing worthless things.

Do you really believe verse 12? Most of would say, yes, we believe it, but we don’t really live that way. Most of us live as if we’ll never have to answer to anyone ever. Oh, Lord, help us live every day with this in mind – we are going to have to explain to Jesus what we did with our lives!

Romans 14:13-14 **Therefore, let's no longer criticize each other. Instead, make up your mind not to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. (14) I know — and have been persuaded by the Lord Jesus — that nothing is unclean in and of itself, but it is unclean to a person who thinks it is unclean.**

So, because the Lord Jesus is the one who will judge us all, we should not judge each other. Going further than that, we should not hinder a brother or sister from their path towards sanctification, their journey of becoming like Jesus.

Paul is talking about things that some people might consider to be a sin, but are not. Eating certain foods was an issue in the church in Rome. Today it could be something like drinking alcohol, smoking, going to the movies, dancing, music genres, going to nightclubs or casinos, holidays, dress styles, etc.

To the believer, saved by grace through faith in Christ and His provision of full forgiveness and justification, all things are legal. You can see more confirmation of this in verses like Titus 1:15, 1 Corinthians 10:23, and Galatians 5:1, 4. However, since he should now desire to live and die honoring the Lord (Romans 14:8), this should clearly affect all his behavior and make him very different from unbelievers.

Martin Luther began his writing “On the Freedom of a Christian Man” by saying, “A Christian man is a most free lord of all, subject to none.” In the very next sentence he said, “A Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” Even though we have liberty in Christ to participate in certain activities, it might not be good for us to do those things. We may offend someone by doing so.

I should mention that Paul is not saying we should say nothing if we see a fellow believer doing something that is obviously sin and is destructive for them. That’s not judging or criticizing, but discernment and love for them. Of course we should go to them and tell them in a loving way that they are doing wrong. But we should never criticize or look down on a fellow brother or sister in Christ about outward things that we have freedom in Christ to do or not to do.

Romans 14:15-16 **For if your brother is being hurt by what you eat, you are no longer**

acting in love. Do not destroy the person for whom the Messiah died by what you eat. (16) Do not allow what seems good to you to be spoken of as evil.

Ray Stedman has a good illustration of this. He says it's like a swinging bridge over a mountain stream. Some people can run across that bridge even though it doesn't have any handrails. They're not worried about the bridge swaying or falling into the river. But others are very uncertain on a bridge like that. They may shake and tremble and go very slowly. They might even get down on their knees and crawl across. But if you give them time, they will eventually make it across. After they've crossed that bridge a few times, they will gain confidence and before long they will be able to run right across. In this example it would be cruel for the person who boldly crosses the bridge to take the arm of the one who is timid and force them to run across. They might even lose their balance and fall off. That's what Paul is warning about in verse 15.

Now this is important. Yes, we have freedom in Christ to do many things. But if it offends someone we know, we should not do it. We shouldn't flaunt it. One example is going to see a band at a nightclub and having a glass of wine. For some people this would be a sin issue for them. They would feel that it is sinful for them to do something like that. For other Christians it is no problem – it is not a sin issue. But the believer who goes to a nightclub should never flaunt it in front of a believer who doesn't, and the believer who doesn't should never look down on the other or feel more "spiritual" because he does not practice such things.

In verse 16 Paul is saying that if you do flaunt the fact that you can do these things without guilt to a person who thinks it is sin, then that turns something that is not sin into something evil because you're hurting your brother. In any case, these are not issues we should be fighting about. They are not important. Next Paul tells us what is important:

Romans 14:17-18 For God's kingdom does not consist of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy produced by the Holy Spirit. (18) For the person who serves the Messiah in this way is pleasing to God and approved by people.

These are the things that count. By the way, Paul is not saying there will be no food or drink in the Kingdom (Matthew 6:25; Revelation 22:2), but that food and drink will not be as important there. In this life food and drink are very important to us. Our lives revolve around eating and drinking, we can't help it. But the Kingdom will be about righteousness, peace, and joy. Our old flesh will not be there to have to always be feeding and entertaining. All these things that we worry so much about in this life and tend to judge others about are just not very important. The spiritual health of a fellow Christian and the work of God is what is important.

So, the person who thinks first of other believers and their feelings is the one who will please God and be approved by people.

Romans 14:19-21 Therefore, let's keep on pursuing those things that bring peace and that lead to building up one another. (20) Do not destroy God's action for the sake of food. Everything is clean, but it is wrong to make another person stumble because of what you eat. (21) The right thing to do is to avoid eating meat, drinking wine, or doing anything else that makes your brother stumble, upset, or weak.

There is Paul's point. These are not sin issues – Paul says everything is clean. The point is we should not do anything that would make our brother stumble or offended. The person who is offended

is the weaker brother, but the person who offends should respect and love the weaker brother and be careful not to offend.

A Christian who knows that they have the liberty to do something but they refuse to do it for the sake of another brother or sister: that is a beautiful picture. That is living a life of sensitivity. That is love.

Concentrate on building each other up, not tearing each other down. God is working in that other person, even if you don't like some of the things he does. I may think you do some strange things and have strange ideas, but I know God is working with you, and God is working with me.

Romans 14:22-23 *As for the faith you do have, have it as your own conviction before God. How blessed is the person who has no reason to condemn himself because of what he approves! (23) But the person who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not act in faith; and anything that is not done in faith is sin.*

The person who feels that it is sin for them to drink wine, then they should not do it. It would be sin to do something that you feel convicted is wrong for you. Then you're not doing it in faith. I am able to drink wine occasionally because I know it is not a spiritual issue for me and I have no problem drinking in moderation. But some people should never drink any alcohol because they cannot stop, they have a problem controlling themselves.

This can really be a problem in a peer group. If you are in a group of Christian people and the group wants to do something that you are convinced is not right for you, to go along with the group and do it would be sinful. That would be acting because of peer pressure and not because of faith.

This is a difficult thing, isn't it? Sometimes it is hard to walk that line where we are living in faith in the liberty that Christ has given us, but trying not to offend anyone else. Sometimes legalism rears its ugly head in a church. What do you do? Well, you have to live your life before the Lord, you will answer to Him, no one else. But we also have to walk having respect for the feelings of our fellow believers.

I like what Henry Morris has said to use as a guide for us when it comes to these "questionable things":

"Although all things are, indeed, legal for a true Christian, he will try to do only those things which please his Lord. When he encounters questions not specifically mentioned in Scripture (e.g., smoking, movies), he should consider the various Scriptural principles that are given as guideposts to help him make such decisions. One of those is given in this verse, namely, he should be able to do it in full confidence that it is pleasing to Christ. Some of the principles, with typical supporting Scriptures, may be noted as follows:

- *The act has positive value and is, without question pleasing to the Lord (Romans 14:23; 1 Corinthians 10:23; Colossians 4:5);*
- *The act is consistent with our new life in Christ (Colossians 3:1-4; 2 Timothy 2:4; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15);*
- *We can sense the positive leading of the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Galatians 5:16-18);*
- *The act will not diminish our Christian influence (Romans 14:13, 21; 1 Cor. 8:8-13; 1 Thess 5:22);*
- *The act does not pose a danger of our becoming addicted to it (1 Cor. 6:12; Ephesians 5:18; James 1:14-15);*
- *It can be done consistently with the example set by Jesus (1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6; Philippians 2:5);*
- *It can be done in confidence that it brings glory to God (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:23)."*