

**Adult Sunday School Lesson**  
**Nassau Bay Baptist Church**  
**May 24, 2020**

As you watch and listen to the video, please feel free to pause the video for any reason, including to discuss something with others, to take time to look up a verse or passage, or to take a break. Remember, you also are able to go back and to repeat any part.

**Read Romans 14:1-23**

Paul moves from putting on the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of Romans 13 to avoiding disputes over “casuistic liberty.”

**Casuistic Liberty**—Determining the right action in exercising my Christian liberty, case by case.

The Casuistic Laws are the laws found, for instance, in Exodus 21:2-22:19, that utilize the “if . . . then” formula. These are what we call “case law,” laws built upon events and circumstances. For instance, we are not to work on the Sabbath, but “if” my ox falls and is trapped in a ditch on the Sabbath, what “then?” Do I leave it there for the wolves, or am I allowed to save it.

Most of Jesus’ interactions with religious leaders were of this sort. The Pharisees asked Jesus about his disciples picking grain to eat on the Sabbath. Their casuistic teaching was that no one should pick grain on the Sabbath, for that was work. Jesus observed what David did by eating the bread of the Presence and then redefined Sabbath case law when he added in Mark 2:27-28, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”

Liberty is not freedom as it is defined today. Liberty, or biblical freedom, is what we might call “freedom under God with responsibility.” While we, as Christians, are not under the Old Testament Law, we retain responsibility to the Law, particularly as it sets standards of righteousness before our Lord. We still see laws regarded as “rules” for living in the New Testament. (For example: Matthew 19:17-19; 22:35-40; Ephesians 4:25-29; Revelation 21:8; 1 Timothy 1:8-11)

We will call these Apodictic Limits, and they are derived from Apodictic Law. Apodictic Law in the Old Testament is law, such as the Ten Commandments, that are timeless, divine commands and are not directly related to any given situation.

**Apodictic Limits**—Submitting my thoughts, words, and deeds to God’s requirements of holiness and righteousness.

So, the question is, how do we navigate between our New Testament Apodictic Limits and our New Testament Casuistic Liberty. This is what Paul is addressing in Romans 14, and the very last thing he writes is central to the entire matter.

The key for a New Testament Christian is found in the last section of the last verse of Romans 14, “for whatever is not from faith is sin.” Romans 14:23b

### **Out From Faith**

The Greek for “from” is perhaps better translated “out from.” This is a small difference, but it indicates that whatever we think, do, or say that does not flow “out from” faith is sin.

This word for sin is the same word we see in Romans 3:23, *hamartia*, and means “miss the mark.”

So, whatever, in our words, thoughts, or deeds, does not flow out from faith is sin. It misses the mark and comes short of the glory of God. Notice: that which does not flow out from faith might not seem bad. In fact, it might seem good. If my financial giving to the church does not flow out from faith, it is sin. Wow!

### **So How Do I Think About Faith In This Way?**

Let’s think about faith in three ways:

1. What it is.
2. What it is not.
3. What are its priorities?

#### **1. Substance—What it is.**

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for . . . (Hebrews 11:1a NKJV)

The Greek word here for “substance” is *hupostasis*. It means that if my uncle were to leave me a beach house in his will and to send me the deed, the deed would be the *hupostasis* of the beach house. I would know I own that house.

A better translation for *hupostasis* might be \_\_\_\_\_ . Faith actually is substance. Faith is a deed. Faith is the reality of that in which I place my faith.

*Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for . . .* (Hebrews 11:1a CSB)

In other words, through faith, I have Heaven, in reality, with me and in me. We do not think this way, but the Apostle Paul did, as did the writer of Hebrews. God, Heaven, angels, etc. were completely real to Paul, and through faith he held them and knew them as real, not as some figurative or hoped for thing out there in the future.

#### **2. Skepticism—What it is not?**

Many Christians follow the world’s philosophy and see virtue in having some measure skepticism in their faith. They claim, we do not know. We just believe. That is not the New Testament understanding of faith. Through NT faith we do not just “believe,” we know. How could it be possible for the Holy Spirit of the Almighty God to dwell in me and I not know it? Skepticism is denial. Denial is doubt and hesitation. Skepticism eliminates New Testament faith. (Romans 14:23)

Faith is not mental agreement or a “hope and a prayer.” Faith is certainty of the things of God, a certainty that changes the way I think, the decisions I make, and the attitudes I hold.

### **3. What are its priorities?**

Faith pursues peace and the edification of one another. (v. 19)

Faith seeks not to destroy the work of God. (Romans 14:20)

Faith seeks to strengthen your brother to stand in righteousness before God. (v. 21)

Faith calls us to live in the reality of the Kingdom of God. (Hebrews 11:1)

Faith calls us to live as a servant of God, not as a judge of other servants. (Romans 14:4)

#### **Read Romans 14:1.**

What does “weak in the faith” mean?

Weak here does not mean someone who is skeptical. That is someone without faith. It means someone who is certain of an understanding of the Christian life that is less than mature.

The Kingdom of God is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,” and the one who is acceptable to God serves in these things. (vv. 17-18)

**Take time here to ponder how these truths impact your daily life, your faith, and your walk with our Lord.**