

BAIT OF SATAN #5

“When It’s Wrong To Assert Our Rights”

I. The Culture Wars

A. The Battle Over “Rights” Is Raging Today

1. What is a “right”?

“right”

A just claim or entitlement, whether legal, prescriptive or moral

Dictionary.com

- a. **Civil** rights; “all men are created equal”
 - b. The right to bear arms; given to Americans in the 2nd amendment
 - c. A woman has a right to have an abortion; court decision in Roe v. Wade...sometimes what's legal for the world would be immoral to a Christian
2. The political race has the Presidential candidates inventing new “rights”:
- a. Every American is has a right to free health care
 - b. Is entitled to free college education
3. We love our rights! And history shows people tend to vote for whoever promises to give them more rights and entitlements. But if you really want to elect the leader who gives you more “rights” than anyone....

B. Vote For Jesus!

- 1. If you become a Christian, no one gives you more “rights” than King Jesus!
 - a. He gives you power to become a child of God
 - b. He makes you a joint-heir with him of all things
 - c. He sets you free from keeping the Law to be saved

“When you realize how free you are in Christ, it will scare you.”

Bob Mumford

2. There are 613 commandments in the Old Testament law. And Jesus fulfilled them all. Only the moral law, the 10 commandments, pertain to Christians today...but even breaking those cannot cost you your salvation because...

a. We are not under law, but under grace!

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 8:1

3. When we comprehend God’s “amazing grace”, which endows us with so many “rights” and privileges, it boggles the mind!

4. In Christ, I have a right to EAT what I want; to DRINK what I want; to WEAR what I want; all movies and TV shows are mine to take it or leave it.

5. We have so many “rights” in Christ that a burning question bubbles up our of our souls...

“IS IT EVER WRONG TO ASSERT OUR RIGHTS?”

The short answer is the message today;

It's always wrong to assert our rights if it brings an offence or puts a stumbling-block between others and God.

II. The Classic NT Text On Offences: Matthew 18

A. The Context: The Incident Of The Temple Tax in Matthew 17:24-27

24 And when they had come to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma *tax* came to Peter, and said, "Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma *tax*?" 25 He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?" 26 And upon his saying, "From strangers," Jesus said to him, "Consequently the sons are exempt."

1. All Jews paid the “temple tax” and now they came to collect it from Jesus and Peter.

a. Jesus question: who has the right to the taxes? The kings and their sons or the ordinary people? Peter answers, the ordinary people pay the tax.

b. Jesus says, “then the sons of kings don’t pay”, (meaning HIMSELF)

2. Jesus was pointing out that as the SON OF GOD, the Temple was His! He had a RIGHT not to pay the tax!

3. But look what’s next: **“But lest we offend them...”** (Matthew 17:27)

“But, lest we give them offense, go to the sea, and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find (the money).

Take that and give it to them for you and Me.”

a. Jesus is Lord; the Creator of all things; the owner of the Temple; He had a right not to pay the tax. But He did!

b. It’s interesting to note how we focus on the miracle of the coin in the fish’s mouth and miss the main message. It all happened because Jesus didn’t want to needlessly offend them!

4. We’ve already seen that Jesus offended many people during His ministry.

a. He claimed to be the Son of God; He claimed to *be* God

b. He called the religious leaders snakes and vipers

c. He told people that the only way to God was through Him

BUT HE NEVER CAUSED AN OFFENCE IN ORDER TO ASSERT HIS OWN RIGHTS!

Theme

Asserting our rights is always wrong if our freedom causes others to stumble!

5. What follows is a long chapter, Matthew 18, where the Lord tells us:

a. Offences must come

b. But woe to him by whom they come!

c. It would be better for him if a millstone were tied around his neck and he be thrown into the sea...better to cut off his right hand or pluck out an eye if it offends!

6. Using my rights may be wrong if it makes others to stumble...

POTENTIAL STUMBLING BLOCKS

**What we EAT; what we DRINK; the clothes we WEAR;
the ENTERTAINMENT we pursue.**

B. The Apostle Paul To The Corinthians On What To EAT

1. Paul was a “father” to the Church at Corinth.
2. He was dealing with many problems in the Church; one of them was the issue of how they were offending each other over food.
 - a. Some of the meat sold in the market was left over from the sacrifices of the idol worshippers; some of the believers bought the meat and ate it with no worries; but it was OFFENDING others in the church! So how does Paul handle it?
3. He begins by asserting his “rights”: in Christ He is free!

1 Corinthians 10:23

All things are lawful for me,* but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me,* but not all things edify.

1 Corinthians 10:23 NLT

**You say, "I am allowed to do anything"/*—but not everything is good for you.
You say, "I am allowed to do anything"—but not everything is beneficial.**

1 Corinthians 10:24

No one should seek his own good, but the good of others.

- a. Paul knew Jesus did away with the food laws in Mark 7; he knew that an idol was nothing and the meat was OK to eat...
 - b. But just because he is free to eat doesn't mean he should eat!
4. Some “rights” become “wrongs” if they aren’t “helpful”; don’t “edify”; or cause others to stumble...
 - a. Using our rights when it needlessly offends the conscience of others is wrong!

1 Corinthians 10:25-31

25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; **26** for "the earth is the Lord 's, and all its fullness."*

27 If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. **28** But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake;* for "the earth is the Lord 's, and all its fullness."* **29** "Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? **30** But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks?

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. **32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God..**

5. The misuse of our rights can cause people to stumble right out of the Gospel. We don't deny ourselves our rights out of legalism but out of love!

...just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

1 Corinthians 10:33

And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1

6. Jesus was willing to offend people by telling the truth; but He was never willing to offend when it was just an exercise in His own rights.

7. Testimony: Things I have seen cause people to stumble...

- Drinking beer in front of a brand new believer
- Serving wine at a leader's meeting
- Recommending a movie to someone you don't know well: "R" (or even PG-13) rated movies you like might offend someone else
- Blurted out a message in tongues when visiting a Baptist Church or praying out loud in tongues at a city-wide minister's prayer meeting
- Not to mention these *Presidential candidates* who both claim to be Christian while they tell lie after lie and call each other names! (If this message is right, they will have to answer to God for all the damage they are doing)

8. We find the same thing in Paul's letter to the Church at Rome...

C. Paul To The Romans

1. Romans if THE most theological book in the New Testament.
2. But at the end, after all the deep theology, the Apostle Paul gets intensely practical about how we relate to other Christians.
3. Walk through the Chapter 14:

Rom 14:1

Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.

a. There will always be people in the church who are weak in faith...they don't know how free they are to enjoy their rights in Christ...don't judge them.

b. First he addresses the matter of food:

2 For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. **3** Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them. **4** Who are you to condemn someone else's servants? They are responsible to the Lord, so let him judge whether they are right or wrong. And with the Lord's help, they will do what is right and will receive his approval.

c. Then he moves on to the matter of holidays:

5 In the same way, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike. You should each be fully convinced that whichever day you choose is acceptable. **6** Those who worship the Lord on a special day do it to honor him.

d. Accept each other...don't get into arguments over non-essentials because offences make us judge one another:

10 So why do you condemn another believer*? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God...**12** Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. So...

Romans 14:13

So let's stop passing judgment on each other. each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall.

e. Paul goes into more detail in the rest of the chapter...

14 I know and am convinced on the authority of the Lord Jesus that no food, in and of itself, is wrong to eat. But if someone believes it is wrong, then for that person it is wrong. 15 And if another believer is distressed by what you eat, you are not acting in love if you eat it. Don't let your eating ruin someone for whom Christ died. 16 Then you will not be criticized for doing something you believe is good

17 For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too. 19 So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.

Romans 14:20

Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat.

Remember, all foods are acceptable, but it is wrong to eat something if it makes another person stumble. 21 It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble. 22 You may believe there's nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God. Blessed are those who don't feel guilty for doing something they have decided is right. 23 But if you have doubts about whether or not you should eat something, you are sinning if you go ahead and do it. For you are not following your convictions. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.

f. The bottom line is that lives to help others!

Living to Please Others

15 We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. 2 We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. 3 For even Christ didn't live to please himself.

12 And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. **13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble.**

1 Corinthians 8:12-13 NASB

III. Summary

A. Principles

1. We have amazing freedom and God-given rights as children of God.
 2. But asserting our rights would be wrong if it causes others to stumble.
 3. We must be willing to change our behavior and make adjustments in our conduct when we know others will be needlessly offended.
- This is not being a hypocrite
 - The moral law of God (the 10 c's) still define sin for the Christian
 - But the believer's conscious (hopefully controlled by the Holy Spirit) makes the calls on all the multitudes of choices we make every day

Don't let another judge you

If it's not a sin to you, be free

If it is a sin to you, don't do it

If you believe it's not a sin but you know you're around those it would offend, don't do it

In all cases, love for others must trump self-love and self-assertion

"The cross of Christ is in itself an offence to the world. Let us take heed that we add no offence of our own."

C.H. Spurgeon

B. Practical Tips

- Be bold. Share the Gospel with everyone you can, even it offends them.
But don't smoke a cigarette while you're doing it.
- If you're a vegetarian, I'm not. Please spare me the sermon.

- There's really nothing in the bible that prohibits drinking alcohol. Anyone who tells you Jesus drank grape juice will lie to you about other things too. But don't drink in front of people with a weak conscience about it. And drunkenness is a sin.
- Wear what you want as long as it is modest. To the women: PLEASE! Anyone who tells you it's ok to feel sexy and dress that way is not your friend!
- Only recommend movies to people you know really well. Everyone else will usually end up offended. (And don't judge people for the movies they see...you can only watch "Frozen" so many times!)
- If you have people you don't know well over to the house, skip the wine/why run the risk?

(And one last little tip...)

- **If you get to eat breakfast with a Rabbi, why not skip the bacon?**

C. Altar Call And Prayer

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