

Love and Liberty

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1 Corinthians 6:12-20 (NKJV) “Glorify God in Body and Spirit. All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. ¹³ Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! ¹⁶ Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two,’ He says, ‘shall become one flesh.’ ¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

The cross of Christ changed everything! Through the cross of Christ, we who are born again by the Spirit of God are living in the New Covenant—free from the Law of Moses but subject to the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21). The Law of Moses is called a “yoke of bondage” to which we are warned not to return (Acts 15:10; Galatians 5:1). Because of the freedom from this “yoke”, the law of Christ is also known as the law of liberty (James 1:25; 2:12). The reality of this liberty is so amazing that Paul was able to say, “All things are lawful for me.”

The Law of Moses was given by God for the lawless and insubordinate (1 Timothy 1:9). That includes us all because we have all sinned (Romans 3:23). Thus the Law was given not to make us righteous but as a tutor to reveal our sin and bring us to Christ. Once we come to Christ in faith we are no longer under the tutor of the Law (Galatians 3:24-25).

Has God done away with the Law by sending Christ? Not by any means (Matthew 5:17). The Law continues as God’s tutor for those who have not come to faith in Christ. Although the Law is still in effect for the lost, we have been set free from the Law through faith in Christ. How is this possible? A careful reading of Romans 7:1-7 reveals that just as a married woman is freed from the law of her husband when he dies, through the body of Christ WE have died to the old husband of the Law so that we might be married to another husband—even Christ. Therefore we are no longer subject to the Law of Moses but to the law of Christ.

Through faith in Christ and his cross we are rendered dead to the old life (Galatians 2:20). At the same time we are betrothed to Christ as our new husband (2 Corinthians 11:2). Now that Christ has paid the dowry price with His blood, we are not to return back to Law’s bondage. Paul declared, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” (Galatians 5:1 NKJV).

Unfortunately it is easy to forget the work of Christ and His cross because of the allure of self-righteousness by keeping the Law. We must be diligent to remember that Christ has set us free. James 1:25 (NKJV) says, “But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” James 2:12 (NKJV) says, “So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.” Those who attempt to be justified by the law make themselves estranged from their true husband, Christ (Galatians 5:4).

Some might suggest that being free from the Law gives us a license to sin. This is a complete misrepresentation of God’s grace. Although we are not under the Law of Moses, we are under law toward Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). In fact, Paul rejects the idea of using grace as a

license to sin: *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"* (Romans 6:1-2 NKJV) Through the cross of Christ, we not only died to the Law, but we also died to this world: *"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."* (Galatians 6:14 NKJV) As believers in Christ Jesus, we are neither called to live under Law nor free to live according to the flesh. Paul said, *"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."* (Galatians 5:13 NKJV) The apostle Peter said we are to live *"as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God."* (1 Peter 2:16 NKJV) Now that we belong to Christ, we love Him by walking responsibly under His law of liberty.

What is the law of liberty? It is called the "royal law" which is the law of love (James 2:8). Love is the law of the New Covenant that governs Christ's kingdom. On the night before He was crucified, Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant and gave one commandment: *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."* (John 13:34 NKJV)

Under the New Covenant we have one law—love. But it is not love by our definition. Jesus commanded us to love one another AS HE HAS LOVED US! In other words, we are to love according to the standard set by Christ. His example of love is the standard by which we define the law of liberty. We are free from the Law of Moses but we are constrained by Christ's love. Following Christ's example, we are not here to be served but to serve Christ and others and to lay our lives down for their sake (Matthew 20:28). Paul declared that he did not please himself but became all things to all men so that he might win some (1 Corinthians 9:19-22). It was liberty guided by love that enabled the apostle Paul to build bridges of salvation to both Jew and Gentile.

It is important to note that if we fail to live according to the law of love, we will also fail to experience the liberty found in Christ. As a result, we will find ourselves entangled again with a yoke of bondage—either a yoke of legalism in the Law or a yoke of license in the flesh. That is why Paul said, *"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."* (1 Corinthians 6:12 NKJV) Paul understood that liberty is an awesome gift. It is to be received with fear toward God and responsibility toward others. We can only do this with the help of the Holy Spirit. When we walk in the Spirit we will walk in Christ's love and will manifest the fruits of the Spirit against which there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).

Ultimately our love and liberty should fulfill one purpose—the glory of God. Paul declared, *"For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."* (1 Corinthians 6:20 NKJV) As we stand fast in Christ's liberty—being motivated by love—we will live our lives in a way that will bring glory to God.