
Words of Truth

Don't Abuse Your Liberty In Christ

By: Brian A. Yeager

We are under a spiritual law. That spiritual law is referred to as the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). It is also called the “perfect law of liberty” or the “law of liberty” (James 1:25; 2:12). Having said that, it is not the same as the law of Moses was in many ways (Acts 13:38-39, Galatians 3:15-4:7, Hebrews 9:15-10:18, etc.). One of the greatest differences between the Law of Christ and that of Moses’ law is that the Law of Christ is not a burden. Notice: *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”* (I John 5:2-3).

Under the Law of Christ you have freedoms such as choosing to marry outside of the faith (I Corinthians 7:1-15 and I Peter 3:1-5). Under the Law of Christ you can eat things without the many restrictions the Law of Moses had (I Timothy 4:1-5). Under the law of Christ you can celebrate different cultural events, feasts, etc. with the only restriction being your conscience and consideration for the consciences of others (Romans 14:1-15:7). We have a certain level of freedoms to attend things such as social events, at the invitation of unbelievers, if our conscience or the consciences of others are not offended. In those cases we can even be among certain religious abominations (I Corinthians 8:1-13).

Freedoms of choice can be dangerous though. Just because something is permitted, that doesn't mean it is always wise or expedient (I Corinthians 10:23-33). Therefore, we have to use wisdom in how we exercise our freedom in Christ. Consider the following Scriptures along this line of thought: *“For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil... See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is... Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time”* (Romans 16:19, Ephesians 5:15-17, and Colossians 4:5).

You have likely heard someone say something like this: “if you give him an inch he will take a mile.” This study is about not abusing the liberty that Christ gave us. We don't want to find ourselves having so much rope we end up hanging ourselves (figuratively speaking). We have to balance what the Lord expects of us with the freedoms He grants to us. We have to guard against allowing our freedom to become our license for sin.

Don't Use Your Liberty To Satisfy Fleshly Desires

In a context dealing with the differences between carnal and spiritual thinking/actions, we read the following: *“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another”* (Galatians 5:13). After the Apostle Peter taught about obeying civil authorities, he stated this: *“As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God”* (I Peter 2:16). The two Scriptures we just read make it abundantly clear that our Lord does not want the freedom He has given us to turn into our doing the wrong things.

Throughout the New Testament we are warned about serving our fleshly desires. Jesus taught Peter this: *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”* (Matthew 26:41). The congregation in Rome was told: *“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof”* (Romans 13:14). Back to the context from which we earlier read, erring saints from the churches of Galatia were told: *“And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts”* (Galatians 5:24). After Peter told the saints he was addressing that they were priests of God, he then said: *“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”* (I Peter 2:11). Do you see the pattern? From that, what can we learn?

If The Desires To Serve The Flesh Are Gone, We Won't Abuse Our Liberties

In Christ, we are supposed to put to death the desire to behave in a carnal manner (Romans 6:1-23, Ephesians 4:17-5:11, and Colossians 3:1-17). Think about that. Our Lord tells us to stop the appetite for sinful things. If we stop the appetite for things we shouldn't do we can go to the buffet (so to speak) and not overeat (again; so to speak). For sin to occur you first have to have the desire for that sinful thing (James 1:13-16).

We are taught of God not to love the world nor things of the world (I John 2:15-17). We need to understand that such proper thinking will have us not seeking to conform to this world (Romans 12:1-2). We are taught to think about our citizenship as in Heaven, rather than on earth (Philippians 3:20-21 and Hebrews 12:22-23). That is a huge help in understanding how not to be too attached to this world and the things of this world (Hebrews 11:8-16; 23-26).

Conclusion

Don't be the child that tries to wait for the right moment to steal the cookie out of the cookie jar. God has not put you in chains. Don't make Him regret giving you the freedoms that we have through Christ. Rejoice that you are free to enjoy this world without abusing that freedom (I Corinthians 7:31).