

## LIBERTY

The New Testament sees salvation in Christ as liberation and the Christian life as one of liberty.

Paul in writing to the church at Galatia warned them to beware of false teachers, the simple message of salvation by faith alone and gave them advice on how to live a Spirit-filled life.

Gal 5:1 "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

**Christian liberty is:** The release from the obligation of the ceremonial law.

We have been set free from the law as a **system of salvation**.

Gal 3:23-25 "Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."

Being justified by faith in Christ, we are no longer under God's law, but under His grace. This means that our standing with God (the peace and access of Rom 5:1-2) rests wholly on the fact that we have been accepted and adopted in Christ. It does not, nor will it ever, depend on what we do, or be in danger of being lost because of something we fail to do. We live, not by being perfect, but by being forgiven.

Christian liberty is freedom of conscience, freedom from a legal system that can't be kept. It is freedom from the depressing awareness that we can't measure up to God. Through Jesus Christ we have been delivered from the tiring, relentless performance of religious ritual. The Old Covenant law, which was external, was given to demonstrate what true holiness is, and to show men that they couldn't make it. The ceremonial practices were symbolic lessons that taught sacrifice was necessary for sin. They pictured the final sacrifice of Christ and once that reality came, there was no longer any need for the symbols.

It is freedom from the external set of rules and the freedom to function by the internal working of the Spirit.

**Christian liberty is:** Obedience to the **moral law**.

The moral law of God has not changed – nor has our obligation to it.

The doctrine about freedom was difficult for Jewish people to accept because it posed a threat to their religious system. They accused Paul of teaching that Christians had the liberty to do anything they wanted. The Judaizers who were misleading the Galatians charged Paul with rejecting God's ethical law. But Paul hadn't done that. He simply stated that God's ethical law had become internal since Christ had come to live inside the believer.

From the Old Covenant and the Mosaic Law to the New Covenant, the moral law has not changed in the mind of God. God has the same morality now as He did then. The difference is as Christians we live under the internal restraints of the Holy Spirit. We are not reacting to a code, but responding to a person.

Acts 10:9-15, 28, 44-47, 11:18. Peter explains the law to Cornelius and to the believers in Jerusalem.

The moral law has not changed. In fact, through the Holy Spirit in your life right now, God will be able to accomplish what He endeavored to accomplish in the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament. Christianity is not against the moral law of God.

**Christian liberty is:** being set free from sin's domination.

Romans 6:14 "For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace."

Romans 6:18, 21-23 "You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness...What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now you that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Sin's domination involved not only constant acts of disobedience, but a constant lack of zeal for law-keeping, rising sometimes to resentment and hatred toward the law. Now, however, being changed in our heart, we are motivated by gratitude and are being energized by the Holy Spirit, "we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code" Romans 7:6.

**RECAP:** Since we are no longer under the bondage of a ceremonial law/system there is no need to observe feasts, new moons or follow all kinds of rituals. However, it does not mean we change our morality. It doesn't mean that what God held as true in the OT is put aside in the NT. There is no change in the content of God's moral law, only a change in the way God brings about the fulfillment of it: from the external requirement of the ceremonial law to the internal leading of the Holy Spirit.

EXAMPLE: Exodus 21:1-5

When a man chooses to stay with his master and serve, what is the difference between what the servant did for the first six years and what he'll do the rest of his life? The only difference is that it has ceased to be an external requirement and has become an internal desire.

In the same sense when we become a Christian we begin to serve God by obeying His moral

code. Not because it's required of us but because of the love we have for Him. We no longer need the external ceremonial law reminding us that we will never measure up to God's standard, but now we have the Holy Spirit restraining us from doing what is wrong and guiding us to do what is right.

John 16:13 "But when he, the Spirit of Truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth."

What does it mean when we say Christ came to **fulfill** the law and how did he do it?

**Definition:** To meet the requirements of, to bring to an end, to measure up.

How did Christ fulfill the requirements of the law?

- What did the law require?
- What is the end result of not meeting the requirements?
- How do we now meet the requirements?

What did Jesus bring to an end?

How did Jesus measure up to the standard of the law?

- How do we now measure up to that standard?
- How do we fulfill the law?

**What Christian Liberty is not.**

Gal 5:13 "You were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature, rather serve one another in love"

Christian freedom is not an opportunity to indulge in the flesh, or to do whatever we want. The flesh is referring to the part of us that is prone to sin, "the old man" in Col 3:9. Some people think that because of eternal security they are free to do whatever they want. If you are saved you won't indulge your flesh because of the sin-restraining presence of the Holy Spirit that now resides within you.

Some versions use the phrase "for an occasion to the flesh." The Greek word translated occasion here is a military term referring to a base of operations. Don't make your flesh the base of your operation.

Whenever you hear someone saying that Christian liberty allows for indulging in the flesh, you can classify them as false teachers.

2 Peter 2:18-19 "For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity – for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him."

How is this prevented?

Romans 13:14 "Rather clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

Notice the contrast here: You either **make provision** for the flesh or you **put on** Jesus Christ.

Putting on Christ is a strong and vivid metaphor. It means more than put on the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, but rather let Jesus Christ Himself be the armor that you wear. It isn't as if Jesus does it for us as we sit back; instead, He does it through us as we willingly and actively partner with Him. Ephesians 6 says to "Put on the whole armor of God". He provides the armor, we put it on.

It is not freedom to stomp on or condemn other Christians.

Gal 5:13 "rather serve one another in love."

True Christian freedom is to be free from slavery to self-desire and free to do whatever God wants you to do. Our aim is not to please ourselves, but the Lord. Not to be driven by a rigid set of laws but motivated by gratitude to the One who has set us free.

Our liberation in Christ is an opportunity for us to put our personal ambitions aside and be willing to serve other Christians.

There are some churches that have a set of rules and rituals for their members to follow in an attempt to reestablish an external code. There are some people who do not understand their liberty so they live according to these rituals and rules. If you are a stronger brother do not mock a weaker one, nor use your liberty to make an issue over neutral things. By neutral we are not talking about clear biblical commands.

Gal 5:14-15 "The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'. If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."

If you exercise your liberty, inconsiderately stomping all over everyone else, the whole church will end up fighting itself and the unity of the body will be destroyed.

Romans 13:9-10 "The commandments, do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet, and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'. Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

If you're exercising love, you won't commit adultery, kill, or steal from someone you love. If

love is being exercised, the rest of the law is fulfilled.

Christian liberty is not freedom to indulge the flesh, but the liberty to use self-control

Christian liberty is not the freedom to harm others, but to love them by ministering to them.

Christian liberty is not freedom to ignore the law, but to fulfill it.

Notice that Christian liberty affects our relationship to self, others, and God and it is expressed through self-control, love of others, and obedience to God's law.

The operation of Christian liberty is not automatic. We must walk in the Spirit rather than being under control of a legal system. We have the potential to be controlled by a Person: God the Holy Spirit. When God set the law aside at the cross He knew what He was doing. He didn't leave the world without a restrainer. God ran the world for over 2,500 years before the Mosaic Law was given, He can run the world after the law has been put aside.

What about the rules? How will we restrain sin? You restrain sin by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Gal 5:16 "So I say, live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

J.I Packer – Concise Theology  
John MacArthur – Liberty in Christ  
David Guzik – Commentary on Galatians  
David Guzik – Commentary on Romans