

Topic: Freedom in Christ
Title: All for the Glory of God

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We Americans have recently celebrated, commemorated the 241st anniversary of our Declaration of Independence from the tyranny of a tyrant. The Declaration of Independence is considered the founding document of these free United States. It was the act of the Second Continental Congress adopted July 4, 1776, which declared that “The (13) American Colonies are Free and Independent States. All political connection between the United States and Great Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved.” Our Founding Fathers were quick to acknowledge God as the source of our freedoms and rights. Our Declaration ends with these words in part: “We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions....And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”

Somewhat similarly, we, as Christians of the nations of the world continue to celebrate and acknowledge for some 2000 years in Christ, our declaration of independence from the tyranny of Satan and Sin. The scriptures are our affirming document revealing that by God’s magnanimous grace, paid for by the blood of Christ -in full- and through our individual obedient faith have been set free! Free in Christ, we have been ransomed and released from our arch-enemy, the Devil. We who are in Christ affirm all condemnation from Satan, our adversary, to be totally dissolved!

Rom. 8: 1-2. “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” Notice the reality of no condemnation is NOW, not in some future judgment, but now in Christ. The ‘Spirit of Life’ means the Holy Spirit, who regenerates (we are born from above, born of water and the spirit (John 3:5).

“Law of sin and death’ means a Principle of God’s law, although holy and righteous can produce only sin and death due to mankind’s fallen sin nature. So essentially, the contrast is Freedom to Life eternal versus eternal death and separation from God.

Praise God! In Christ Jesus believer’s judgment for sin is behind us, paid for in full by Christ on the cross. ‘No Condemnation’ means we are declared ‘not guilty’ through obedient faith whereby Christ’s righteousness is credited to believers. Therefore, all our cumulative sin (past, present, and future) as we persevere in Christ, will not be held against us. We have been set free from the ‘Law (or Principle) of sin and death.’ It has been dissolved, abolished – totally in Christ!

Ours is a tremendous treasury of freedom in Christ, which we must apprehend by maturing faith. For example, freedom from the total fear of death – physical death. Hebrews 2:14-15...so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death that is the devil – and fill those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For the believer in Christ, physical death is the doorway to life eternal with God, his angels and all the saints that have gone on before us. This by God’s grace and the “fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel’s veins. And sinner plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.”

In Christ, free at last, we also should understand apprehended by maturing faith in the word of God. For example: I John 5:13. “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” That we in Christ may know this truth now, not have to wait to know it in the future in Heaven. Now we can have assurance of eternal life. Certainly not because we are so good or have earned or merited Heaven. No! But only because in Christ there is now no condemnation....the Spirit of Life set me free from the law of sin and death. Praise God!

We have briefly touched on the major past aspect of our ‘freedom in Christ’, our justification, which is basically the opposite of condemnation for those not yet set free by the blood of Christ. We have also briefly touched on the major future aspect of our ‘freedom in Christ’ our glorification that is when we experience

eternal life with God. Now we will focus on perhaps a more complex aspect of our ‘freedom or liberty in Christ, presently in our process of sanctification using parts of our main text.

1st Principle: Edification above Gratification.

I Cor. 10:23 to I Cor. 11:1 says: “²³“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. ²⁴No one should seek their own good, but the good of others. ²⁵Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, ²⁶ for, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.” ²⁷ If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. ²⁸ But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. ²⁹ I am referring to the other person’s conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another’s conscience? ³⁰ If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? ³¹ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ³² Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— ³³ even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. **11** ¹ Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

This passage has practical Principles for Christians in the 21st Century, as it did in the 1st Century AD. Our freedom in Christ should be balanced by Spirit-led sensibility and sensitivity. In this passage, we will consider four basic principles to responsibly strive to live out in sanctified lives while also not abusing our ‘freedom or liberty’ in Christ. We are dealing here with questionable, or so called ‘gray’ areas not clearly commanded in scripture. 1st principle “Edification above Gratification.” I Cor. 10: 23-24, “Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.”

Everything permissible means everything not sin. Everything permissible in Paul’s case in this passage dealt with (I Cor. 10:25) “Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience.” There were vexing moral conflicts involving convictions and consciences – in the predominately Gentile and pagan city of Corinth whereby converts to Christ had once offered meat sacrificed to idols. Then this same meat was later sold at meat markets, which both unbelievers and believers bought and ate. In this context stronger mature Christians knew, and we should know today, that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Stronger more mature Christians knew and we should know today that through repentant persevering Faith the Believers judgment for sin is behind us, paid in full by Christ on the cross. As in this case all past sin of believers has been covered or cancelled by the blood of Christ and has been forgiven ‘as far as the East is from the West so far has he removed our transgressions from us’. Ps. 103:12.

However weaker less mature Christians did not apprehend these truths. they still carried some guilt of their past sin. They still suffered from pangs of weak consciences regarding their former life without Christ. They. and some Christians today. still deal with self-condemnation of past sin. Perhaps some allow the lies of Satan to oppress them. This should not be! A believer knows by the spirit of life he has been set free from the law of sin and death.

Instead of meat offered to Idols, by application today suppose a new convert to Christ today had lived rather immorally in his past and we as fellow Christian friends invited him to go to the beach. But the new brother in Christ declined to participate because of renewed conscience guilt of his past due to remembering the immodest dress at the beach and his sinful escapades at the beach. How would we fellow Christians handle this? ‘Everything is permissible but not everything is beneficial. . . .not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others’. Because as Christians, toward fellow Christians especially we should seek edification ‘to build others up’ rather than our own gratification.

2nd Principle: Liberty over Legalism

I Cor. 10: 25-26. “Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience for ‘The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.’” Paul quoted Ps. 24:1 thereby confirming that as Christians we are no longer bound to Mosaic Law dietary rules, regulations, or rituals. We are at liberty to eat all that the Lord has provided mankind to eat.

By application today, there are still people and professing Christians who claim we must not eat certain foods at all, or not eat at certain times – even binding it as mandatory, and to eat such foods is sin – this is legalism, of which there are sadly many forms of still with us today. Some would even legalistically make dietary requirements a condition of salvation. This should not be!

3rd Principle: Love above Liberty

I Cor. 10: 28-29 ²⁸ But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. ²⁹ I am referring to the other person’s conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another’s conscience?”

Here the context is at a meal with an unbeliever (v. 27) and believers. A less mature and weaker Christian, in spite of his liberty in Christ to eat everything, yet due to his conscience, desires to avoid meat he knows had been offered to idols, even though he now was a Christian and no longer participated in idolatry. The apostle Paul counsels, inspired of the Holy Spirit, a more mature Christian also present at the meal not to eat the meat because he could cause the less mature Christian to stumble, to go against his convicting conscience. Also, because part of our witness to unbelievers is our love – even above our liberty – to demonstrate our discipleship the unselfish ‘agape’ love in Christ.

John 13: 34-35. Jesus said, “a new command I give you, love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” So, love is above even our liberty in Christ. Another application: Suppose we had two Jewish-Christian friends, usually called Messianic Jews (they have both received Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah and Lord). One came from a very conservative Orthodox upbringing, the other from a more liberal Jewish upbringing. Both are now maturing Christians with ministries for Christ.

The Christian with an orthodox background chooses to wear a Jewish skull cap and other traditionally Jewish articles. He also chooses to eat ‘Kosher’ that is only food and its preparation according to Jewish dietary rules. However, he would never bind this on other Christians whether Jewish or Gentile. Nor would he consider his dress or diet anything dealing with his salvation – they are only his preference and choice.

The other Christian of more liberal Jewish background dresses and eats like us Gentiles. It’s his preference, his choice. Both of these Jewish Christians are exercising their freedom in Christ. So, if we had both these dear Jewish background Christian brothers over to our house for a meal, what would we eat? Even though all of us know we have liberty in Christ regarding diet, we wisely could invite the orthodox Christian to purchase the food, prepare the meal, and then could offer to reimburse him the cost, serve the food, and wash the dishes. That is love over liberty in Christ and a powerful witness to others.

4th Principle: Give Glory to God

I Cor. 10: 30-31. “If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Don’t gripe but give Glory to God.

We cannot magnify the glory of God if we gripe that our liberty in Christ is curtailed.

We cannot magnify the glory of God if we cause another to stumble.

We cannot magnify the glory of God if we practice legalism over liberty.

We cannot magnify the glory of God if we put ourselves above others.

We certainly cannot magnify the glory of God if we do not ‘follow the example of Christ’. (I Cor. 11:1)

In a positive vein – ‘for the glory of God’ fundamentally means to worship and honor him in all that we do. Maturing Christians ultimately live to exalt our God in all our everyday life.

God’s glory essentially means someone who is worthy of all praise, all exaltation. It’s his brilliant radiance, his renown before and above everything seen and unseen.

Notice the ending of I Cor. 10:31, ‘do it all for the glory of God’. God’s glory is inherent, it is intrinsically his. Meaning God’s glory is essential to his being. In fact, God is the only being in all existence who possesses inherent glory. We cannot actually give glory to God; he is Glorious even if no one ever gave him praise or honor in worship.

Yet there is another aspect of God’s glory. We cannot give God glory in the sense of adding to his glory, as God is already glorious to the nth degree. However, we can recognize and acknowledge and ascribe to God’s glory.

We can magnify the Glory of God as our testimony to the world around us, and that is what we should strive for in ‘whatever (we) do, do it ‘All for the Glory of God.’

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