

Bible Reading

Galatians 5:13; 6:2
Romans 3:24-27; 8:2
James 1:25; 2:12
I Corinthians 10:25-33

I Corinthians 8:4, 13
Galatians 2:11-14
Romans 14:13; 15:1-2, 5-6

Review Questions

What two aspects of Christian liberty are addressed in Galatians 5:13?

Read Romans 3:27, Romans 8:2, Galatians 6:2, and James 1:25. What four “laws” are given by God to guide the use of our liberty?

In I Corinthians 10:27-29, what is the context that shows our use of liberty should consider the consciences of others?

In I Corinthians 10:32, what admonition is given to believers, and how does this affect the use of our liberty in Christ?

According to I Corinthians 10:31, what is the test that should be placed upon all our actions?

The Misuse of *Liberty*

“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

The freedom we enjoy behind the wheel of an automobile traveling the interstate highway is governed by the rules of the road. Like all freedoms, freedom of travel demands restraint and responsibility.

In like manner, Christian liberty functions within clear boundaries. Believers who abuse Christian liberty by claiming that “grace” has removed all restraints, and believers who misuse Christian liberty by acting as though they are not accountable to others have an irresponsible view of their freedom.

In Galatians 5:13, Paul acknowledges both aspects of true Christian liberty. First, there is a restraint. He writes, *“Use not liberty for an occasion for the flesh.”* Second, there is responsibility in that he admonishes concerning the use of their liberty, stating, *“...By love serve one another.”* That is the proper and responsible attitude toward our freedom in Christ. The New Testament offers three guiding principles that protect believers from misusing their liberty. Let us look in God’s Word at these three principles.

Notes

Restraint and responsibility are two equal parts of true freedom.

Christian liberty is real freedom in Christ, but it must always operate within God’s boundaries.

Our Liberty Is Limited by a New Law

Being under grace does not mean the child of God is without law. In the New Testament, we discover four immutable laws that fortify our liberty in Christ.

The first is The Law of Faith (Romans 3:24-27). Liberty is purchased by Christ and is available to all through faith in Him. The second is The Law of the Spirit (Romans 8:2). The power to live in the newness of life is possible by the Holy Spirit. The third law that protects our liberty is The Law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). By this, Paul refers to the example of Christ Himself and the distinguishing mark of His disciples: love. This divine love compels the Christian to exercise restraint over his will and seek the good of others. The fourth law is The Law of Liberty (James 1:25; 2:12), which is the Word of God. The Scriptures guide us, nourish us, and equip us for spiritual battle.

If we exercise our freedom within God's laws, we will not misuse our liberty.

Our Liberty Considers the Consciences of Others

In I Corinthians 10:29, the Apostle Paul asks, “*Why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?*” The question is set against the backdrop of Christians consuming meat that had been offered to idols. The responsible use of our liberty considers others' consciences.

Although the Word of God may not explicitly forbid a certain thing, if it offends others, it should be avoided.

Paul exhorted the Corinthian Church, “*Give none offence, neither to the Jew, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God*” (1 Corinthians 10:32). We misuse our liberty whenever we exercise freedoms that knowingly offend others' conscience.

Regarding the unsaved, Paul personally restrained his liberty for the welfare of others in hopes that they might be saved (I Corinthians 10:33). How many unbelievers have been put off from the gospel because a Christian misused his liberty?

Our Liberty Is Governed by the Glory of God

I Corinthians 10:31 teaches us, “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*” This verse is set in the context of a believer's use of Christian liberty and sets the standard by which every action is measured. The child of God must ask himself, “Does this glorify God?”

Christian liberty, rightly understood and exercised, glorifies God and unifies believers (Romans 15:5-6). In matters of preferences, standards, and convictions as they relate to our Christian liberty, the unifying consideration is the glory of God. Every Christian must filter these through the same question: Is God glorified? Paul's admonition is clear: “*Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*”

Every decision we make must pass through one great filter: Does this glorify God?

A mature Christian restricts his personal freedom for the benefit of others.