

We must learn then to walk in the wisdom of the Word, empowered by the Spirit to live a fruitful life that pleases God. As a part of this, we must learn to **enjoy our freedom** while at the same time **being careful not to offend others** by practices that violate their conscience and also not allow the convictions of others to be our guiding influence, but rather we must be **guided by the Word of God**. Ultimately we seek to **please God, not men**. This does not mean we walk over others convictions, but that we do not let others put us under bondage with their convictions, but we allow the Word of God to define what our faith and practice shall be.

As Christians we are free to do what we will in life, provided that we do not transgress God's clearly defined will in Scripture. We are free to enjoy God and all the good things in the world in every way, provided that we do not sin against God in our freedom. **We are free from sin but NOT free to sin**. This would be an abuse of the free grace of God. We are free to serve and obey God, not free to transgress Him. Suffice to say that there is **liberty to live how you will**, provided that you;

- 1) fulfill what Scripture requires or prescribes
- 2) do not violate what Scripture forbids.

It is important to **discern between** the first form of **heretical legalism** and the second less lethal form of legalism regarding **man-made religious rules**. When a dispute arises regarding the first form of **legalism regarding our justification** before God, this is a very **serious matter** that demands our diligent attention and unwavering commitment to Scripture to guide convictions in the matter. We must be willing to divide with so called Christians who demand that we must do some sort of religious work or duty in order to be justified, rather than simply trusting in Christ by faith to be justified and given blood bought eternal favor with God. Remember that Paul called down a curse on the works driven Judaizers of his day.

Galatians 1:9 - 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man **is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed**. NASB

Salvation is based on Christ's ability to justify us before God and solely on Him and His work, and NOT on anything that we do apart from a repentant faith to receive it. A wrong decision here could be a tragic mistake that leads you and your family down a very destructive road with many spiritual casualties.

When a dispute arises regarding **man-made religious rules** concerning how we worship or live the Christian life, there is much more latitude on how we can address these issues. In these matters we must be guided by wisdom and love for our family in Christ. For example, you may decide to conform to someone else's desire in order to please them out of a sincere love and desire for peace in your relationship. This would be your prerogative to decide which way you will choose, but we must be guided by a sincere desire to love and serve one another being careful not to bite and devour one another with our judgments and convictions.

Romans 14:19-21 - 19 So then **let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another**. 20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. 21 **It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles**. NASB

1 Corinthians 8:13 - 13 Therefore, **if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble**. NASB

We will see that the Bible addresses these issues comprehensively in Romans 14 below, but we must be careful not to let others put us in bondage. We must at times, defend our freedom and "stand firm" in it, not allowing others convictions to define our faith, but be convinced in our

own mind what pleases God. While at the same time seeking to please God and be guided by the Word, we must take into account all the dynamics that go into a given situation, sincerely desiring to please our brother for his good.

Lastly, it is important to always **keep the Gospel in focus** when considering freedom issues. We must never forget the depth of sin and depravity from which we have been forgiven, and the debt that Christ paid for us which we could never have paid apart from eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. We must never forget the amazing love of God expressed to us through the self-sacrificing passion of Christ, and His sincere desire to pay the ultimate price for us because of His great love for us. Let this love of God in Christ be the motivation for our sincere desire to please God first, then others, insomuch as that is possible.

Christian Liberty and the Mosaic Law

It is imperative to remember as New Covenant Christians that the **Old Covenant Mosaic Law** has been **fulfilled in Christ**. The Old Covenant was a **temporary** covenant that God made with the ethnic nation of Israel at Sinai, and not with the church. It is through the Old Covenant that God has now brought about the amazing mystery of the Gospel through Jesus Christ, who was the fulfillment of every Old Covenant type and shadow, and the very substance of all that God has intended both for Israel and the church, whom He has now made one in Christ. God has now instituted a New Covenant which is not like the Old Covenant He made with Israel, whereby He is now calling out a people from every tribe and language and nation and people. He is not choosing people from only one ethnic background and not prescribing that they live in a given location with civil laws to govern, but rather is gathering remnant of called and chosen people from every civil government and ethnic tribe across the entire globe. In this New Covenant He has prescribed for us a new and living way He is to be worshipped in the Spirit through Christ, and has granted the transforming power of regeneration by the Holy Spirit in order to write the Law upon our hearts and transform us in the inner man. This powerful transformation of the new creation in Christ also then molds and shapes us into His character and image as the Holy Spirit now continues to work sanctification in us, transforming us from glory to glory as we become like Jesus through the Word by the Spirit.

Therefore in regard to the **Old Covenant Mosaic Law**, we are **not bound to keep either the Ceremonial or the Civil Law** that God prescribed for Israel at Sinai. We do not serve in the *“oldness of the letter,”* but in the *“newness of the Spirit.”* Jesus has fulfilled the Old Testament sacrifices and priesthood contained in the Law perfectly and completely. Christians have *“died to the Law through the body of Christ”* and have been *“released from the Law”* in order that we might *“bear fruit for God”* by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Romans 7:4-6 - 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to **die to the Law through the body of Christ**, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might **bear fruit for God**. 5 For **while we were in the flesh**, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to **bear fruit for death**. 6 **But now** we have been **released from the Law**, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we **serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter**. NASB

As we discussed earlier in our lesson, this does not set us free from the moral aspects of the Law. The same God that commanded Israel to live in a morally appropriate way as they worshipped Him in the Ten Commandments of the Old Covenant, is also the same God that commands us Christians to live in a morally appropriate way as we worship Him in the New Covenant. Therefore we **Christians are indeed bound by the moral aspects of the Law**, a fact that is