

clearly taught and implemented by Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament. Therefore we Christians are free from the Ceremonial and Civil aspects of the Law, John MacArthur comments on this freedom; *"It is crucial that you understand the nature of Christian liberty. As a Christian, you are not under law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14). Freedom from the law certainly does not mean that the principles of righteousness revealed in the Old Testament law are now nullified. It does not mean that the Ten Commandments have no application to your present life. It does not mean that you can subjugate God's holy standards to personal preference. It obviously does not mean you are free from any moral requirements. What does it mean? It means that Christians are not bound to observe Old Testament ritual. We don't have to sacrifice animals, observe the laws of ceremonial cleanness, and celebrate all the new moons and feasts and sacrifices. We don't have to follow the dietary laws given to Israel through Moses. We are free from all that."* Of course this freedom from Mosaic laws and rituals is clearly taught by Jesus and the Apostles. This is very obvious when it comes to the once for all sacrifice of Christ as our Passover lamb, and the fulfillment of the Priesthood by Christ. This is the comprehensive subject of the book of Hebrews. But what about the other issues of feasts, festivals and unclean foods? These rites are all part of the Ceremonial aspects of the Law which are all now fulfilled in Christ, and are not anywhere repeated in the New Testament as a requirement for godly living. Rather they are referred to by typology in the New Testament, and we are instructed not to allow others to judge us on the basis of conformity to these rites.

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 - 7 Clean out the **old** leaven, that you may be a **new** lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For **Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven,** nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. NASB

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore **let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day** — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. NASB

In fact, some of the Ceremonial aspects of the Law are completely changed to reflect a whole new practice in the worship of God. As a brief example, look at the issue of unclean foods. Jesus clearly taught that all foods were clean. This was also taught and implemented by the Apostles.

Mark 7:18-23 - 18 And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that **whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him;** 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated? **"(Thus He declared all foods clean.)** 20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." NASB

Romans 14:14 - 14 I know and am **convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself;** but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. NASB

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore **let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day** — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. NASB

Hebrews 13:9-10 - 9 Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; **for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited.** 10 We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. NASB

The statement and response given by the Apostles in response to the controversy over the Judaizers in Acts 15 is crystal clear testimony as to what the Apostles required of Gentile believers in regard to the entire Old Covenant Law. See *pages 10-13, and 29-30* of this study for a more comprehensive discussion of this issue and passage. We see then that the Ceremonial and Civil aspects of the Old Covenant have been abrogated in the New Covenant age and fulfilled by Christ. We now live under grace (Rom 6:14) in regard to these and ruled by love (Rom 13 & 14).

The Conscience and Liberty

It is clear then that we are indeed seeking to live a life of separation from sin and live holy lives that are fully pleasing to God, guided by the Word and empowered by the Spirit, all of this living in the freedom that we have being under grace. But how then do we seek to maintain a purity of life and faith, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God, and **yet navigate the many cultural practices and worldly enjoyments that Christians face in every era** of time? How do we make decisions about things that the Bible is silent about? And how do we live and relate to one another in our local churches and among our Christian friends who may have different convictions than we do about certain traditions or cultural practices? After all, the paths we walk in our daily lives in our cultures in the world weave their way through minefields of sin and disgraceful practices. Especially in our media driven culture of the 21st century we face a massive set of challenges in regard to such matters as;

- **Leisure and Lifestyle issues** - smoking, drinking, gluttony, clothing & dress, piercings, tattoos, make-up & jewelry, women in workplace, birth control
- **Entertainment issues** - internet, movies, television, books, music, dancing, gambling, art
- **Church practice issues** - church denominations/traditions/affiliation, women in leadership, giving, Sabbath keeping, church attendance, second level separation,

Indeed the issues we face can be daunting. Let us not lose heart as **the New Testament clearly defines** how we are to **relate to our cultures** and maintain the purity of our worship. We must learn to discern between what are clearly **moral** issues and **amoral** issues, and develop convictions that are pleasing to God based on a thorough contemplation of the Word. Many times there is a **fine line between freedom and sin** and we must be guided by Biblical principles in these areas being careful to maintain a pure life and not offend or grieve the Holy Spirit who lives in us and so defame the name of our glorious God or trample the grace of our loving Savior. Ultimately we seek to **please God, not men**, especially **not ourselves** in regard to sin, as self-denial is the way we follow the Master (Matt 16:24-25). We must have firm convictions developed from the Word that inform our consciences how to maintain the purity of our lives for we serve a holy God who is worthy of our complete devotion.

Biblical principles of discernment on matters of liberty

The New Testament gives clearly defined principles on how we are to relate to the world around us as well as relating to our Christian church family and friends. Romans 13, 14, and 15 gives some of the clearest instruction on the matters. Here we will do an exposition of these texts and gather some supporting verses from 1 Corinthians 6-8, Colossians 2, and a few others.

In **Romans 13:8-14** Paul establishes clear guidelines in view of the glorious Gospel of grace he has expounded throughout the book of Romans. Here he maintains that **love is to be our guide** in relation to pleasing God and others, and in doing this we actually fulfill the Law of God.

Romans 13:8-10 - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except **to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.** 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 **Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.** NASB

Galatians 5:13-24 - 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 **For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, " You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** 15 But if you bite and devour one