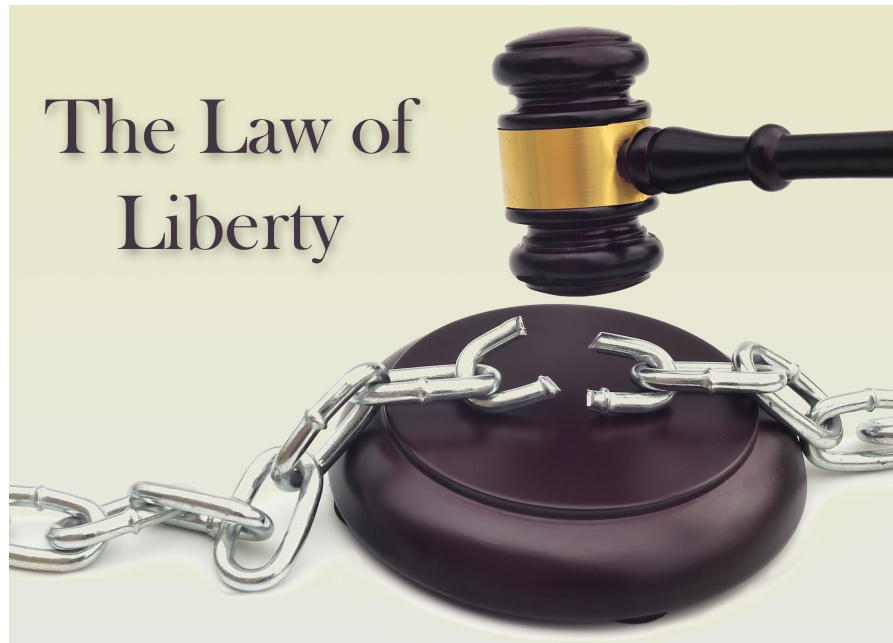
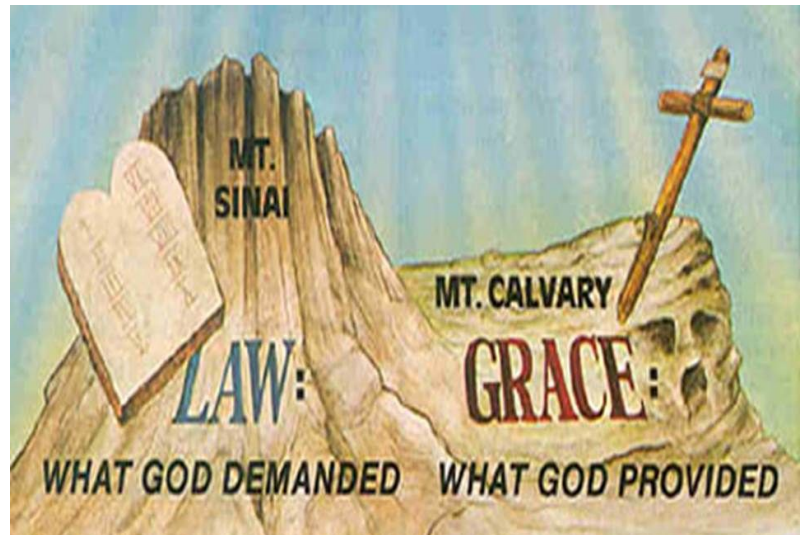

THE TRUTH ABOUT THAT TRADITION



The Law of Liberty is a familiar term among Christians; and if you asked ten people what it means, you would probably get ten different answers! Most people would probably say it means that, as Christians, we have the freedom to do as we please... “the freedom to engage in any activity not expressly forbidden in the Bible”. I know, because I used to think the same. Some Christians go as far as to say that they are free to drink alcohol, do drugs, “party” — in other words, they are free to look and behave like those in the world, even though they call themselves Christians... all because they have *liberty*.

Well, if we take the term at face value, one could perceive those things to be true. However, further study of the Word of God paints a very different picture. To understand the liberty that we have in Jesus Christ, we must first understand His redemptive work on the cross for mankind; because He died for our sins, we have “redemption through His blood, and the forgiveness of sins” (Ephesians 1:7). And the Bible says that “as many as received Him, to them gave He *power* to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12).

The power spoken of refers to the baptism of the Holy Ghost, made available to anyone who would ask (Luke 11:13; Acts 2:39... see Traditions article, Issue 4). The Holy Ghost enables those who receive the Lord to have victory over sin, Satan, and the flesh; as it is written, *“If the Son (of man) therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed”* (John 8:36). And *“sin shall not have dominion over you, for Ye are not under the Law, but under grace”* (Romans 6:14).

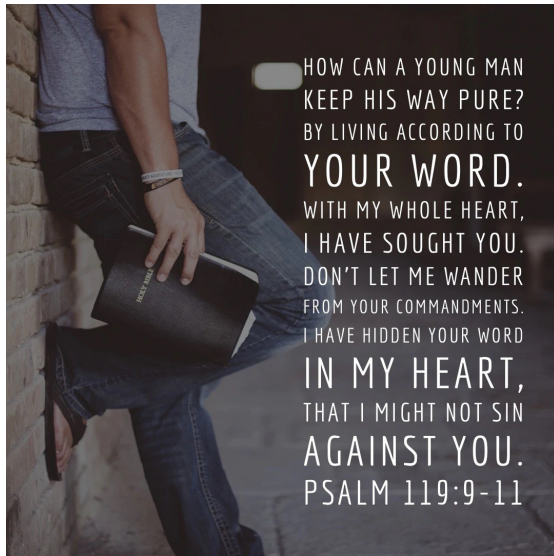


The Law of Liberty is the freedom and grace to obey the Word of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, who works in us! In Galatians 5:1, the Apostle Paul admonishes the church to *“stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and to be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage”* that comes from sin. For those who believe they can identify with Christ, yet sin by making provisions for the flesh, Paul further warns that *“a little leaven (of sin), leavens the whole lump”* (Galatians 5:9). Therefore, *“let him that think he stands, take heed, lest he fall”* (1 Corinthians. 10:12). We cannot continue to sin and have the blessings of God’s grace. As Christians, we must examine our hearts to make sure that we are not using *“the law of liberty”* as an excuse for not maintaining a lifestyle of holiness. In 1 Peter 2, we are told to *“abstain from fleshly lusts”*, and to walk upright among unbelievers, so our good works would glorify the God we serve.

We are also told that we should not use our liberty for a *“cloak of maliciousness”*, meaning, to cover sin; but instead, it should be used for the service of God. I believe Paul summarizes the law of liberty best in 1 Corinthians 10:23, *“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient (proper or suitable); all things are lawful for me, but all things do not edify (benefit or uplift)”*. He mentions it again in another manner in 1 Corinthians 6:12... *“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power (control, bondage) of any”*.

So when a child of God decides to exercise his liberty, he should ask himself... Is this action proper or appropriate for a Christian believer? Will it be beneficial in helping others see Christ in me, or will my actions possibly be a stumbling block for me or another?

As born again believers, we must remember that we have the power to refrain from the carnal behaviors and sins that kept us in bondage when we were in the world; because of the Holy Spirit abiding within us, we now have the liberty (power) to walk in the Spirit and not succumb to the lusts (strong desires) of the flesh. Galatians 5:13 put it this way, “Brethren, you have been called unto liberty, only, use not liberty for a occasion to (satisfy) the flesh, but by love, serve one another”



When Liberty Becomes a Stumbling-block

The misuse of Christian liberty may not necessarily involve questionable acts of “sin”, but it could also be a matter of allowing our liberties to offend our brothers and sisters who may be weak in the faith. Romans 14 addresses this matter in detail as it relates to eating meats, and even drinking wine. It explains how our attitudes concerning such things could become a stumbling-block to others.

For example, if one believes that he has the liberty to “eat all things”, but another who is “weak in faith” refrains from certain foods (such as meats), then we are admonished not to judge or despise one another for our choices; we are to “let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind”. Ultimately, each decision becomes a matter between the individual and the Lord (according to Romans 14:1-10). But on the other hand, we must also consider (as with all things in Christ) that “we who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves “ (Romans 15:1). Why? Because we understand that with liberty, there is also accountability; not only to others, but also to God.

Many Christians are especially divided on the subject of drinking wine or other alcoholic beverages. This was also the case with those in the early church. Paul summed up the matter in *Romans 14:21* saying, “It is good neither to eat flesh (meat) nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbles, or is offended, or is made weak”. This means that sometimes the law of liberty would lead those who are mature in the faith (with understanding) to refrain from exercising their liberties. They may choose not to eat certain meats (such as pork) or to drink any kind of alcoholic beverage, simply because it could cause someone else to waiver in his faith (doubting).

Furthermore, we are told in Romans 14:22 that if you have the faith to partake in things which others may be offended by, then you should *“have it to thyself (in private) before God”*. And if the Lord allows it without bringing conviction of sin, then there is no condemnation. But for those who partake, doubting, for them it would be sin; because *“whatsoever is not of faith is sin”* (Romans 14:23).

With the establishment of denominations in the church-world, there came further divisions because of those who decided to adopt some elements of the Old Testament Law to govern themselves; thus, mixing the Law with New Testament faith in Jesus Christ. Consequently, there are now Christians who have found themselves in other forms of religious bondage by practicing standards based upon the traditions of men; e.g. keeping the Sabbath, dietary restrictions, and even dress codes (like forbidding women to wear pants, from wearing jewelry, from cutting their hair, or requiring them to wear head coverings).

The Law of Liberty



Galatians 5:1, 13

James 1:22-25; 2:8, 12

In the book of Proverbs, the people of God are often admonished to get

wisdom with understanding also. In *Galatians 3:24-25*, we are told that *“the law was our schoolmaster to bring us onto Christ... but after faith (in Christ) is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster (the Law).”* Therefore, as saints of God, we must pray to understand the heart of God concerning the reason for the Old Testament Law; and once we come to Christ, we should not govern ourselves by the letter of the law, but we should live as new creatures in Christ; for Jesus Christ came and fulfilled the Law, and also brought Liberty! (Matthew 5:17)