

Living Free

(An Examination of the Doctrine of Christian Liberty)

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We have all seen a picture of a seagull or some other bird flying through the air. It seems to effortlessly glide through the wind currents enjoying a liberty or freedom to move about in every direction that it pleases. Last week I was watching a giant blue heron fly through the air. It was gliding through the clear blue sky with its giant wings spread out. It didn't seem to have a care in the world as it zoomed over the house and disappeared into the distant horizon. This past year I also saw a bird flying over the Grand Canyon. It was just floating effortlessly in the wind. When viewing a bird in the air we are reminded of the freedom or liberty that God has given to every believer through Christ and in Christ. It's this freedom that I want to speak about in the next several messages.

In this study we want to address the topic of "Living Free" or experiencing our true freedom that we have in Christ.

There are three practical points to remember about our freedom.

A. Salvation's liberty

Have you ever heard those TV commercials which say, "If you send me your money right now, I will give a second one to you absolutely free?" Then, in the small print at the bottom of the screen, it reads: You pay a handling fee and shipping!

Sometimes it's just too good to be true! When someone tells us that something is free, we have the tendency to not believe them! There always seems to be a disclaimer at the bottom of the page which keeps us from believing that something can really be free.

And yet, when it comes to the great teachings of the Bible about grace, righteousness, justification, salvation, eternal life, and forgiveness, we find that these spiritual blessings are given to us absolutely free! If I were to say to you, "I'm going to give you a car, absolutely free, for only \$1,000 dollars," you would think I'm crazy. And yet, this is what the liberal

denominations, religions, and cults teach when it comes to salvation. They sometimes claim that it is free, but when you read the fine print and disclaimer, you discover that their brand of salvation is not free at all!

God wants us to live free. God wants us to enjoy our freedom that the Gospel has brought us. Are you living free from the fear of condemnation and judgment? Are you living with the assurance that God has accepted you?

There are three observations regarding salvation's liberty.

I. The enemies of liberty

Acts 15:1

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.”

Meet the enemies of liberty and grace. The Judaizers were the legalists of the early church. They were teaching that a person was saved by keeping the legal letter of the Mosaic Law and it's this teaching that was counteracted by Paul in the epistles. There are many modern-day Judaizers who are teaching that salvation comes to us through outward acts of obedience, such as our baptism, receiving the sacraments, taking Mass, our commitment to Christ, or being part of a church.

For instance, Mormonism teaches that their brand of salvation (exaltation in the next life) and eternal life with God is conditional and based upon their human works. These conditions are clearly defined in their third article of faith written by Joseph Smith. The third of the Mormon Articles of Faith contains the core of the Mormon doctrine of Salvation. I got this directly off their website.

“We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”

There are no laws and ordinances attached to the Gospel! Let's study our Bibles (1 Cor. 15:3-4). This kind of teaching turns grace into a disgrace! It also robs people of the free gift of salvation and the freedom that they can enjoy knowing God has finally and forever accepted them!

The liberal/modernistic churches still teach that salvation comes through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. For instance, the Church of God and Lutheran Church teaches that salvation comes by baptism. This robs people of their liberty which Christ offers to them which is to receive salvation as a gift, by faith alone, in His finished work. It's a liberty that comes when we trust only in Christ to save us – not our baptism, not our works, not our commitment to Him.

Luther could not fully break away from the Roman Catholic Church and therefore confused people about salvation, when he wrote in his Large Catechism (1529): "Moreover, it is solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized for we shall not be saved ... To put it most simply, the power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of Baptism is to save ... This is why Lutherans still teach salvation by baptism and why many Lutherans are putting their faith in their baptism for their salvation from hell instead of only in Christ. Instead of receiving salvation, as a free gift, they want to do something, to merit their salvation before God. Whenever you trust in a sacrament to save you – you are robbing yourself of the liberty that Christ offers to you, which is faith alone in His finished work to grant your salvation.

Webster's definition of a sacrament: a rite considered to have been established by Christ as a channel for grace. In other words, the liberal denominations believe that sacraments are the way a person receives grace. Instead of grace being free, a person must observe the sacraments to receive grace and salvation. If they don't follow the sacraments, they can't be saved! Many denominations teach baptismal regeneration! It is stated in their creeds in a hidden format.

Are the sacraments really necessary for salvation? Roman Catholicism thinks they are. I'm quoting their own sources:

"The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation."

What are the sacraments?

"There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation,

Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony."

These seven sacraments are nothing more than a series of good works that a person must perform in order to be saved. But the Bible states repeatedly that good works will never save anybody.

Titus 3:5

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Must one be a Catholic to be saved? Since the sacraments are supposedly necessary for salvation, and since the sacraments are only available through the Catholic Church, then obviously, one must be a faithful member of the Catholic Church to be saved. Though you will never hear a spokesman for Catholicism admit it, this is exactly what this Catholic doctrine teaches. Can you accept that everyone outside the Catholic Church will burn forever in hell just because they are not Catholic and do not observe their sacraments?

In Galatians 2:4, the liberty stealers are seen once again:

"And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily (secretly) to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage."

Galatians is the epistle of freedom. It spells out our emancipation from a legal relationship and exchanges it for a grace relationship. We discover in this verse that God wants us to live free from legalism (trying to merit our own salvation) and enjoy our freedom and liberation from God's judgment. This verse refers to what had previously taken place in Antioch (Acts 15:1, 2). Some Jewish teachers from Jerusalem, posing as Christians, had somehow been secretly brought into the church at Antioch and were teaching that circumcision was essential for salvation.

Today they are saying, "You must be baptized in order to be saved. You must take the Mass in order to be saved or confess to a Roman Catholic priest. You must make Jesus Lord over every area of your life in order to be saved. You must follow the teachings of the Church and partake of the sacraments so you can be saved. You must strive to live a good life. The

list goes on and on! Legalism, Galatianism, asceticism, and every other “ism” (modernism, liberalism, Catholicism with its cannibalism, relativism, pluralism, etc.) are against our freedom in Christ, which is to experience forgiveness and righteousness before God, based on Christ alone. Legalism says you are saved when you live by certain standards. Galatianism (another form of legalism) says salvation begins by grace, but then one is kept saved, when you live by certain standards (Gal. 3:2-3; 5:4, 7). Asceticism says you are saved by denying yourself of certain comforts in society (Col. 2:20-21).

The “liberty which we have in Christ” (Gal. 2:4) is a liberty to live without legalism, which is a law relationship and system, hanging over our heads, threatening us to perform certain duties and regulations, or else be judged by God, with the dreadful prospect of not entering Heaven at the end of our days on earth. Legalism is the way of human effort. It involves possessing a condemning relationship with the Law (Rom. 7:4-5; 2 Cor. 3:6) that brings God’s judgment against us for breaking His moral code. It involves a person living by a specific legal code, so the individual can find favor and acceptance with God (Acts 15:1). It’s a relationship with Law instead of grace. It’s a system of terror instead of peace.

According to Galatians 2:4, legalism brings a person “into bondage” because an imperfect person is trying to merit perfect righteousness before a perfect God by keeping the Mosaic code. This is bondage, since a law relationship condemns us to hell for not following God’s moral code, while at the same time, giving no salvation solution for the problem of sin. It also places God’s wrath over our heads for not obeying the rules perfectly. This is a tremendous weight or bondage to live under. Like Cain, the legalist must confess, “My punishment is greater than I can bear” (Gen. 4:3).

Legalism today takes on many forms and shapes but the basic tenants are the same: The person must do something for God to be accepted by him. Modern-day legalists usually cherry pick their favorite rules, which they think they can keep, while ignoring God’s moral code, a moral code which they have repeatedly broken.

The Bible says that every legalist is really under tremendous bondage and slavery. We can describe the bondage in this way. A legalist is enslaved to a system that fails to offer deliverance from the power of sin, freedom from the condemnation of sin, and promise the total forgiveness of sins (acquittal

in God's sight forever). A legalist is a person who lives in a state of obscurity when it comes to his salvation, instead of resting in the free promise of eternal life. He is continually trying to earn righteousness so he can gain God's pleasure and favor. A legalist is constantly reforming his life instead of resting in Christ. He is trying instead of trusting in Christ. He is performing instead of clinging to the promises of Christ regarding salvation. He is trying to hold on instead of allowing Christ to hold him. The legalist lives in a constant state of doubt, fear, and confusion regarding his future. In fact, his eternal destiny hangs in the balances! If enough good works fall on the right side of the scale, as opposed to the sinful works on the left side, then he will be offered a place in Heaven. This is how modern-day legalists think.

The present-day teaching of "Lordship Salvation" (making Jesus Lord or Master over every part of your life in order to be saved) is legalism in disguise. It defies the teaching of the free gifts that are given to the sinner who is in need of salvation and eternal life. If a person must do something, become something, and promise something to God in order to be saved, then the sinner's response to God involves legalism (Acts 15:1). I don't care which way you cut the pie – it's still legalism!

It's faith alone in Christ alone! But the disclaimer of Lordship salvation reads: "It's faith alone in Christ alone, only when a person steps out to obey Christ, follow Him, observe the conditions of discipleship, and promises to make Jesus Lord of his life forever." This cheapens the free offer and gifts of grace, salvation, and eternal life, as we will see in this message. Listen, either it's free, or it's not! You can't have it both ways! Don't talk out of both sides of your mouth.

Lordship salvation is not Biblical repentance, which involves a person changing His mind and attitude about his sinfulness before God, and bringing a person to the place where he is willing to forsake and abandon sin (Luke 24:47; Acts 20:21; Rom. 2:4). It's one thing to repent, but is quite another thing for the sinner to start promising God that he will become His disciple, obey Christ, meet certain conditions, and make Jesus Lord over every area of his life forever. This brings salvation into the arena of legalism – man promising something to God (obedience) in order to get something from God (salvation).

Beware of those who teach that salvation is free, while claiming that you must work and serve God the rest of your life to receive it, or know that you have it!! How can something be free when we promise to serve God and follow Him the rest of our days to get it!!!! I become weary of the “Lordship Salvation” teaching today and want no part of it, since it is not part of the Gospel and free offer of grace and salvation.

Curtis Hutson said:

“You don’t get better to get saved; you get saved to get better.”

II. The proclamation of liberty

Galatians 5:1

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

This is the believer’s proclamation of independence! God wants us to live free and Paul uses the word “liberty” to explain this truth to us. Liberty in this salvation context means that our relationship to God is not based on Law (human works) but on grace (God’s work). In other words, we do not have to obey the Mosaic Law, or live a certain way, so God will accept us. God accepts us unconditionally by His free grace and gives to us a perfect righteous standing in His presence. That is liberty! The word law or works is opposed to liberty. Liberty means we are freed from condemnation forever and can rest in the finished work of Christ.

The Bible says that we can possess liberty through Christ (“wherewith Christ hath made us free”). This means we have been set free from the Law’s condemnation and are freed from its “guilty” charges. In other words, since Christ has paid sin’s penalty upon the cross and satisfied God’s requirement for sin, we are set free from the sinful charges that the Mosaic Law brought against us in our unsaved state. We are forgiven and acquitted of all our sinful charges in God’s presence forever. This is a glorious liberty that we can possess and experience in our daily lives. It’s so very wonderful and liberating to know that our sins are forgiven forever and that God has accepted us forever based upon Christ’s finished work!

Are you enjoying your freedom in Christ? Living free in relationship to one’s salvation is a wonderful liberty to experience. It means we will stop trying to save ourselves and start resting in what Christ has done for us, since He

paid sin's penalty on our behalf. This is true freedom. We know the slate is forever wiped clean and all the sinful charges against are dropped forever! This truth about our spiritual freedom or liberty brings a sweet assurance into our hearts when we know that God has accepted us through Christ's finished and forgiving work.

To experience liberty means we possess the assurance that we are acquitted of all our sinful charges before God forever and that we are made righteous in God's holy presence without legalism, law, or works. When we are finally free we can say:

"I'm free from the fear of tomorrow
I'm free from the guilt of the past.
For I've traded all my shackles
For a glorious song
I'm free, praise the Lord free at last."

Living free involves embracing the teaching of grace instead of legalism (salvation by human achievement). Legalism always judges a man and robs him of the free gift of salvation and freedom from God's judgment forever. Living free means you have been acquitted in God's sight of all your sins forever and have no fear of God's judgment. Are you really living free? We often sing, "My country Tis of thee, sweet land of liberty." We also need to sing of our spiritual liberty, "My salvation secure and free, sweet place of liberty!" To know and rest in salvation by grace alone, without law (human merit), brings us to a place of liberty! We become free from the fear of God's condemnation and liberated from a legalistic system that condemns us to hell, by not matching up to a certain criteria or standard.

Paul counteracts legalism (salvation by works – observing the law for obtain eternal life) in the epistles. He vehemently opposes this teaching as an enemy of grace! There are many enemies of grace today! Legalism is the primary enemy. In Galatians 5:1 we discover that Christ has liberated us from legalism or observing the "law" (a works system) as a means of salvation before God. When a person uses the "law" (Mosaic Law or any system of human works), as the way to obtain or merit their salvation, they become entangled with what is called "the yoke of bondage" (slavery).

Using the Mosaic Law (or any manmade law) as a means of salvation is indeed a “yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1). A yoke was worn by animals that kept them under the power of another person. The Mosaic Law is like a yoke, which enslaves us to obeying and following its rules as a means of our salvation and acceptance before God. The Law commands us to obey it, but does not give us the ability to follow its demands, and then curses us to hell when we disobey them. It provides no way of salvation before God. There is no liberty in legalism for legalism can never make us right before God.

How different Christ’s yoke is who said in Matthew 11:29-30, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” This is freedom! Instead of wearing the yoke of the Law (legalism – salvation by works) we can wear the yoke of Jesus Christ. The yoke of the Law (legalism – salvation by works) puts a Christian under bondage (to the curse of God’s judgment without any cure) while the yoke of Christ set a person free (from God’s judgment and law relationship or legalism by providing salvation). The yoke of legalism brings restlessness and agony into a person’s life, but the yoke of Jesus Christ brings rest to our souls.

Galatians 3:10

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse (the verdict of those who live by legalism – a law relationship): for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

Legalism demands perfection or else God’s judgment. This is slavery! It’s bondage of worst sort! Observing the Mosaic Law for salvation places us in a state of bondage or slavery to a system that we cannot perfectly follow and which cannot save us. When we are cursed or condemned to die the sinner’s death, and are on the way to an everlasting hell, we certainly are not free from God’s judgment. When we are bound to a system that cannot save us, then we are certainly not free from God’s sentence of wrath upon our lives (John 3:36 – “the wrath of God abideth on him”).

This is the nature of all legalism! Modern-day legalism brings us under bondage!! It binds us under a system of rules that we must observe, so we can be saved. It says, “If you don’t do this, or live in this way, then you can’t be saved. Legalism says, “You must be good enough, you must be holy

enough, you must be committed enough, and you must jump high enough if you are going to be saved in the end.” The problem is this. Nobody knows what percentage of goodness and holiness one must possess in order to be saved. Is it 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, or 100 percent? Legalism turns salvation into a game of percentages and chance! It’s like playing Russian roulette with God! It’s like gambling at Atlantic City or Las Vegas.

Liberty in the salvation context means that our relationship to God is not based on Law (legalism – salvation by human achievement) but on grace. A law relationship condemns us to hell while a grace relationship saves us forever. Liberty means we are freed from condemnation (hell) forever and we are acquitted of all of our sinful charges in the courtroom of Heaven. We are forever freed from God’s judgment and must never again fear God’s wrath and condemnation. It’s wonderful and liberating to know that our sins are forgiven forever and God has accepted us forever based upon Christ’s finished work. We are saved, loved, and accepted in God’s presence unconditionally (Eph. 1:6). Are you enjoying your freedom in Christ?

Living free means to live without any system of legalism. It means we can be secure in Christ’s work which God accepts on our behalf. We don’t have to fear God’s judgment or try and merit God’s favor. We know that God has already set us free from condemnation by acquitting us from all our sinful charges in His heavenly courtroom. If we must do anything, so we can be saved, or keep ourselves accepted before God, through meritorious works, then we have placed a yoke around our necks! We have burdened ourselves down with a system that cannot save us or rescue us from hell and damnation. We have placed the whole matter of salvation on our shoulders instead of on God’s! What a heavy yoke, tremendous weight, slavery, and burden this becomes! It’s a burden that I don’t want to bear. The heavy yoke of the Law condemns us to hell without providing us with the way of escape, or way of salvation before God.

“Run, John, and live,” the law commands,
But gives me neither legs nor hands;
Far better news the Gospel brings,
It bids me fly and gives me wings.”

Friend, there is nothing we can do, or must do, to merit or obtain our salvation. If we can do something to earn our salvation and justification

before God, then God made a terrible mistake when He left Jesus die on the cross!

Galatians 4:31

“So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”

Are you enjoying the freedom that you can have? In Galatians 4:21-31 Paul is using an “allegory” (a spiritual application to literal and historic events) to demonstrate the difference between legalism (a work’s salvation) and freedom (a free salvation). Not everything in the Bible is an allegory. Only the writers of Scripture can deem what is an allegory. The slave of Abraham was Hagar and she represented the Law and legalism (see Gal. 4:23). Slavery is a proper way to represent legalism since a person becomes enslaved to a system that can’t save them and a system that can only condemn them to hell. However, Abraham’s wife Sarah represents grace and freedom. She was a freewoman (vs. 22). Paul then uses this allegory (a story that is given a spiritual meaning) to illustrate our freedom or liberty from legalism (using the Law or legalism to attain salvation before God). We are “of the free” (Gal. 4:31). This once again means that we have been acquitted of all the Law’s charges that were against us and have been set free from a condemning legal relationship with God and have been given a grace relationship with Him.

2 Corinthians 3:17 echoes the same truth:

“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

Here another verse that proclaims of our liberty in relationship to salvation. This freedom or liberty is referring to our deliverance from the Mosaic Law (obedience to Law – human works) as a means of salvation (see vs. 6). In our unsaved state, under a law (works) relationship (Rom. 3:19), the Law condemns us, as a sinner, and demands that the death sentence be carried out upon us. There is nothing we can do to appease the Law’s verdict of our lives. The Mosaic Law says, “You must die the sinner’s death and go to hell for breaking God’s moral code.” However, when we place our faith in Christ, we receive freedom from the Law’s condemning charges and God’s judgment since Christ took this judgment on our behalf.

The freedom of 2 Corinthians 3:17 refers to experiencing liberty from using the law (or any human work) as a means for one’s salvation and

acceptance before God (legalism) and resting in Christ's finished work on Calvary to liberate us from God's judgment. It's a liberty we can experience when we know that all of our sinful charges before God have been taken away forever.

Here is the wonderful truth being taught in 2 Corinthians 3:17. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual life ("the spirit giveth life" - vs. 6), when we place faith in God's Son, and we are set free from the Law's judgment. In the spiritual realm we are born free – not under bondage! We are born under grace and freed from God's judgment forever. In a moment's time, we pass from death unto life (John 5:24). As a result, we must no longer fear God's wrath and judgment that is against us.

John 3:18

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

For the unbeliever, the sentence of God's judgment and doom hangs over them, like a heavy weight. However, when we place our faith in Christ to save us from sin's penalty, we are "not condemned." This means we are set free from our sinful charges before God and acquitted of all our sins forever. This occurs when the Holy Spirit gives to us, as a free gift, God's spiritual and eternal life. The Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6) and new spiritual life is what we need. Jesus said "ye must be born again" (John 3:7). The moment we receive God's life (new birth) we are freed from sin's penalty, forgiven of all our sins, given God's perfect righteousness, and are justified in God's presence.

Are you enjoying your freedom which you can have through Christ? Can you say:

"Glory hallelujah, Christ has set me free!
Glory hallelujah, a new life now I see.
My sins are all forgiv'n
I'm on my way to Heav'n'
To live eternally.
Glory hallelujah, He's coming soon for me."

The word "redemption" speaks of our release and liberty from the penalty and power of sin over our lives. The Bible teaches that Christ died on the

cross to redeem us or set us free from the penalty of judgment that we deserved for breaking God's holy Law or moral code.

Galatians 3:13

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

The word “redeemed” (exagorazo) literally means “to buy out of the market” and indicates removal. It's a word that tells the story how slaves in the Roman Empire were sometimes purchased by masters and then set free or removed from the slave market and given a life of liberty. The application of this practice to our own lives cannot be missed. Christ removed us from the slave market of sin, when we were bound to a legal and condemning relationship to the Law, while we were under sin's power and facing sin's penalty for breaking God's Law.

A legal or Law relationship condemns us to hell and gives us no delivering power to live a life that is pleasing to God. Therefore, Christ needed to redeem us from our legal relationship with the Mosaic Law since the Law was actually a “ministration of death” to us (2 Cor. 3:6-7). Legalism is trying to live by the code of the Law, so God will accept us and save us. However, this law (works) relationship places a person under bondage, since it condemns every person to die the sinner's death, without any grace, providing no assistance or help to deliver them from their sins.

This is why we need to be redeemed from the law relationship and have it replaced with a grace relationship with Christ.

Romans 7:4 explains it this way:

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

The Bible teaches that the old condemning relationship we had with the Law was replaced by another relationship with Christ (“married to another”). Law and legalism was replaced by grace and mercy! Therefore, we no longer must be legally bound to the Law as a means of salvation or sanctification. Christ has set us free from this old condemning relationship. He died on the cross to set us free from the enslaving and condemning relationship the Law had over our lives. Legalism (living by law/works to

merit salvation) is a relationship that results in bondage, since the Law condemns us for breaking it, without providing us with any salvation or deliverance. A legal relationship with the Law does not provide us with the grace needed for salvation or sanctification. Legalism (salvation through the Law/works) binds us to a system that cannot save or sanctify us. It tells us how to live but does not provide us with grace to live and be made right before God. This is bondage of the worst kind!

The word “redeemed” (Gal. 3:13) pictures what Christ did for us to free us from this old legal relationship. The Bible says Christ was “made a curse for us” which means He was condemned and judged by the Father in our place, as He hung on the cross. The word “curse” speaks of a sentence of judgment or doom that one receives. Christ bore our curse, which the Law demanded; it was a curse that demanded judgment in an everlasting hell. It was a curse that we were under (Romans 3:19), while living in the slave market of sin (Eph. 2:1-2), and which we deserved in our unsaved state (Gal. 3:10).

The “curse” is viewed in Scripture as a penalty we must pay for our sins, something that we deserve to receive, since we have repeatedly broken God’s moral and holy Law. Lawbreakers must pay a penalty or price for breaking the Law. Every sin that we have committed throughout our lives was a sin against God’s moral Law. Therefore, as Lawbreakers, we must endure the penalty for breaking the Law. This penalty becomes like a “curse” (sentence of doom and judgment) that hovers over us which condemns us to the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:15). The curse (sentence of judgment) is comparable to a price we must pay for our sins.

Legalism (salvation by works or law) is actually a curse, since under a relationship to Law, we are condemned for breaking God’s moral code. We have all lied, lusted, disobeyed our parents or failed to honor them, cheated, put idols before God, and coveted things that God did not want us to have. We have repeatedly broken God’s moral Law and must now be cursed and condemned to hell by a righteous and holy God (“the wages of sin is death” - Rom. 3:23). The “curse” that Jesus bore on the cross (Gal. 3:13) is viewed as the “wages” (a fine or penalty of judgment) that God required we must pay. However, Jesus bore the “curse,” or this penalty of a broken Law in our place (“bare our sins in his own body on the tree” – 2 Pet. 2:24), by paying the necessary price or fine that God required, which was death and judgment (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 3:10). As a result, we can be

redeemed, or freed from the curse or penalty for our own sins, since Christ paid it on our behalf, when He died in our place.

“What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this
That caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down,
When I was sinking down, sinking down,
When I was sinking down
Beneath God’s righteous frown,
Christ laid aside His crown for my soul for my soul,
Christ laid aside His crown for my soul.”

I am told that in Californian, a man pleaded guilty to a traffic violation. The judge read out the sentence, then left his bench and paid the fine he had just assessed. This is exactly what Christ did for us. He paid the fine so we don’t have to die and go to hell. He died so we could go free.

Here is the point. A person cannot declare themselves to be free from the curse or penalty of sin. Only God can, based upon the penalty being paid, and applied to our lives. This blessing can be ours only when we place our faith in Christ to save us from sin’s penalty forever (Acts 16:31). In short, we are saved from the penalty of sin, when we place our trust in Christ to save us, who died to redeem or release us from the penalty forever.

The picture of redemption is one of great freedom! As a slave to sin, we were sure to die the sinner’s death, while living in the slave market. We were in bondage to sin’s power and under sin’s penalty through a legal and binding relationship with God’s Law. There was no way to get out of this predicament. We repeatedly broke God’s Law or moral code and deserve to be punished for violating its holy standards. However, instead of leaving us to die and go to hell, and pay the penalty for our own sins, under the curse of God’s broken Law, Christ bore the curse of the broken Law in our place, paying the penalty of sin that God required in our place. Christ died to take the penalty and judgment of God on the sinner’s behalf. He died to take the curse, or penalty that the Law demanded, out of the way.

Colossians 2:14 puts the icing on the cake and explains Christ's redeeming work in this way: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances" (erase the written civil decree that was against us). Paul is talking about Christ removing the legal charge or sentence that the Law brought against our lives, which is to pay the penalty of judgment for breaking God's moral and perfect Law. The penalty of judgment in hell, which we deserve, is comparable to a fine or bill that God requires to be paid in the court of Heaven, so His righteous judgment can be brought against sin and His holiness can be vindicated.

Paul goes on to say that this condemning sentence of the Law was "against us, which was contrary to us (opposed to us), and took it out of the way (removed it completely and forever), nailing it to his cross" (showing He paid the necessary fine that God required to set the sinner free). When Jesus Christ died on the cross He died to remove the sinner's charge of a broken Law that was before God. He died to cancel our debt before God.

Look at it this way. Since people cannot keep the Law perfectly, they cannot pay back the debt that God requires for a broken Law, which is perfect obedience and righteousness. They have no good works to offer (Rom. 3:10-12) and they are out of hope! Therefore, the debt must be paid in another way. The sinner must be judged in hell forever and pay the curse or penalty for his own sins (Gal. 3:10), so God's righteous judgment for sin can be satisfied. It seems like there is no hope for the sinner. But wait! Jesus, who was perfectly holy, "the lamb without blemish" (1 Pet. 1:19), could pay the sinners debt (the necessary fine that God required for breaking His holy Law), and did, when He died in the sinner's place. Jesus Christ took the "wages of sin" (Rom. 6:23) or the payment that sin required for breaking God's Law, upon Himself. In essence, Christ paid the necessary fine that God required for sin, which was a perfect sacrifice to be judged in the sinner's place, in order to free sinner's from the dreadful curse of judgment.

Krishna Ral put it like this:

"Jesus for thee a body takes,
Thy guilt assumes, thy fetter breaks,
Discharging all thy dreadful debt;
And canst thou then such love forget?"

A story was told about a young man who was getting ready to graduate from college. For many months he had admired a beautiful sports car in a dealer's show room. Knowing his father could we afford it, he told him that was all he wanted. As graduation say approached, the young man awaited signs that his father had purchased the car. Finally, on the morning of his graduation his father called him into his private study. His father told him how proud he was to have such a fine son, and told him how much he loved him. He handed his son a beautiful wrapped gift box. Curious, but somewhat disappointed, the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather-bound Bible. Angrily, he raised his voice at his father and said, "With all your money, you give me a Bible?" and stormed out of the house, leaving the Bible there.

Many years passed and the young man was very successful in business. He had a beautiful home and wonderful family, but realized his father was very old, and thought perhaps he should go to him. He had not seen him since that graduation day. Before he could make arrangements, he received a telegram telling him his father had passed away, and had willed all of his possessions to his son. He needed to come home immediately and take care of things. When he arrived at his father's house, sudden sadness and regret filled his heart.

He began to search his father's important papers and saw the still new Bible, just as he had left it years ago. With tears, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. As he read the words, a car key dropped from an envelope taped behind the Bible. It had a tag with the dealer's name, the same dealer who had the sports car he had desired. On the tag was the date of his graduation, and the words ... PAID IN FULL.

This is what Christ has done for us when He paid the necessary fine that God required to release sinners from condemnation or judgment forever.

"Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow."

Galatians 3:13 ("being made a curse for us") and Colossians 2:14 ("Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us") teach that Christ removed and released us from any obligation to pay the legal fine that God

required for breaking His holy Law, which was judgment in hell. In short, Christ removed our criminal charge for breaking God's holy Law, when He nailed that charge to the cross, showing that He paid the necessary debt or fine that God required, to set the sinner free from His judgment. As a result, we can be now be "redeemed" (Gal. 3:13) or removed from "the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13) and our binding legal relationship under the Law (Rom. 7:4-6), which demanded judgment for our sins, and be released or set free from sin's penalty and power forever. This is redemption! This is living free! We are forever freed from God's judgment and must never again fear God's wrath and condemnation. Redemptive truth is so very wonderful. Christ redeemed us, or purchased us, while we were in the slave market, under the condemnation and slavery of sin, and set us free. And we are no longer for sale!

Galatians 3:13 is worth repeating:

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law (a penalty or judgment that must be paid), being made a curse for us (taking sin's penalty of judgment on our behalf): for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

"Redeemed how I love to proclaim it
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb
Redeemed through His infinite mercy
His child and forever I am."

Dr. A. J. Gordon was pastor of a church in Boston many years ago. One day he met a little boy out in front of the church. The boy was carrying a rusty bird cage in his hands and several little birds were fluttering around on the bottom of the cage, as if they knew they were going to be destroyed.

Dr. Gordon said, "Son, where did you get those birds?" The boy answered, "I trapped them out in the field." "What are you going to do with them?" the preacher asked. "I'm going to take them home and play with them and have some fun with them." "What will you do with them when you get through playing with them?" Dr. Gordon asked. "Oh," said the boy, "I guess I'll just feed them to an old cat we have around the house."

Then Dr. Gordon asked the boy how much he would take for the birds and the boy answered, "Mister, you don't want these birds. They're just little old field birds and they can't sing very well." Dr. Gordon said, "I'll give you two

dollars for the cage and the birds.” “All right,” said the boy, “It’s a deal, but you’re making a bad bargain.”

The exchange was made and the boy went whistling down the street, happy because he had two dollars in his pocket. Dr. Gordon took the cage out behind his church and opened the door of the cage and the birds flew out and went soaring away into the blue, singing as they went.

The next Sunday Dr. Gordon took the empty bird cage to the pulpit to use it in illustrating his sermon. Then he said, “That little boy said that the birds could not sing very well, but when I released them from the cage they went singing away into the blue, and it seems that they were singing, “Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed.””

III. The blessings of liberty

God gives six spiritual blessings to believing sinners.

And yes, they are absolutely free! There are no disclaimers and no fine print that must be read at the bottom of the page. If we are ever going to live free and experience our true freedom or liberty in Christ, then we must accept God’s free salvation gifts and say, “Thank You, Lord.”

➤ Righteousness is free.

Romans 4:3-6

‘For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.’

There are two observations to consider.

1. Believing the Bible (vs. 3a)

“What saith the Scripture?” – not what saith Catholicism, Lutheranism, modernism, or any other ism! What does God say! In the end, that is all that ever matters! God’s Word is the final authority on everything! We must

believe what God says instead of our church councils and own personal beliefs.

The Bible and the Bible alone answers life's most important questions. "WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?" WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY? This is the only thing that really matters! It does not matter what the Pope or the Priest or the Pastor says. What God says is all that matters! Many believe church traditions over the Bible.

I don't care what your theology is. I only know what God's Word says. I don't care what your denomination says. I only know what God says! God is not asking us for our opinions! He is telling us the way it is! And in this text God is telling us the way to receive His righteousness.

2. Being right before God (vs. 3b, 6)

a. The need that we have (to be right before God)

The need that we have is to be made right before God's holy presence. The word "counted" is a banking term that means something is added or credited to a person's bank account. In the spiritual sense, righteousness was credited to Abraham's account (see vs. 3b) and to David's account (see vs. 6). It was not their own righteousness, but God's perfect righteousness, which was credited to their account. This is how a person is made right in God's presence. God's very own righteousness (perfect righteousness) is credited or imputed to a person's account in the place of their sins! We might call this the "great exchange." God exchanges our sins for His perfect righteousness, so we can be accepted in His holy presence. God gives to us something that we could never achieve on our own – perfect righteousness in His sight.

Adams' sin was imputed to the whole human race (Romans 5:12). God sees the whole world sinning in Adam since all of us were born in his line and have received of His sin nature. Adam's sin is transferred to us since he is the federal head of the human race. We are all guilty because ultimately we stem from Adam! We don't become sinners when we sin; we are born as sinners! We do what we do because we are what we are!!

David declared in Psalm 51:5:

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

Adam’s sin was imputed to the whole human race. Since this is true:
MANKIND’S SIN WAS IMPUTED TO JESUS CHRIST WHEN HE DIED ON THE CROSS.

2 Corinthians 5:21

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Have you ever considered the marvel of this verse? Christ took my sin and I take His perfect righteousness. What a glorious exchange! Christ takes my sin upon Himself and I am given in exchange His perfect righteousness, which is credited to my spiritual account before God. God’s righteousness is not simply man’s righteousness lifted to a higher level, it is perfect and pure righteousness untainted from any sin!

A billion bananas added together will never make an orange. In a similar way, all the human righteous acts performed since Adam, when added together, could never make us accepted before God and change God’s attitude toward a single sinner. Man is still unrighteous in God’s eyes, since God demands perfect righteousness to enter His presence. Our righteous acts are seen by God to be as “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6) in His sight since every action we do is somehow tainted by sin. The verdict is very clear. No person can stand in God’s presence without being clothed in the robe of righteousness that God provides. A Bible illustration points to this wonderful robe of righteousness.

Jesus said in Matthew 22:9-13:

“Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Apparently the king gave them all wedding clothes as they arrived, for they came off the streets (vs. 10). The “wedding garment” pictures the robe of righteousness that we need to be clothed in, so God will accept us, and allow us to fellowship with Him, and remain in His presence. This parable reminds us of this truth. God only accepts us when we trust in His Son to forgive us of all our sins and cloth us in His perfect righteousness. Are you wearing the wedding garment?

How wonderful that God gives me His own righteousness and I can experience freedom from sin’s condemnation and live free! I can rest in God’s perfect righteousness, which has been credited to my spiritual account before God, and never again doubt my standing and acceptance before God. I can experience liberty from legalism (saving my own soul), knowing that God has finally and forever accepted me in His presence.

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in Thy great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved from these I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

What is righteousness? Righteousness is the condition of being right in God’s sight. Oh to be right before God!! To know that God accepts me and names me as His own inside the throne room of Heaven! When the Bible speaks of righteousness it speaks of possessing a purity and perfection before God that is flawless, so God can accept us in His presence.

Augustine, aware of his own sin, cried out:
“O God, demand what you will, but supply what you demand!”

When God supplies what He demands we can be sure that those demands have been met. Our problem is this. We don’t have the perfect and pure righteousness that God requires to be accepted in His holy presence. This is why we need God’s imputed righteousness credited to our spiritual bank account in Heaven – so God can accept us in His presence. We have to be perfect to enter Heaven and thanks to Christ we are! However, in our

unsaved state, we fall short of the perfect righteousness, which a holy God requires of His personal creatures.

This is why we are in need of God's imputed and imparted righteousness since we have none of our own in God's sight.

Romans 3:10

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."

I read this verse to a lady on one occasion and her reply was unforgettable, "I don't believe that!" My friend, whether you believe it or not make no difference. There is no person who can stand perfectly righteous in God's presence, since we have all sinned (Rom. 3:23) and fallen short of God's moral perfection and righteousness – the kind of righteousness that a holy God requires. Since we are sinners from the crown of our head to the sole of our foot we can do nothing that pleases a holy God (Rom. 3:12 – "none that doeth good") or gives us acceptance before Him.

If there is no person that is righteous in God's sight, then we must believe that there can be no righteous acts that we can do to provide us with perfect righteousness in His presence.

Philippians 3:9 declares:

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law (legalism - flawed righteousness), but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God (imputed - perfect righteousness) by faith."

I recall the time when we were visiting the Grand Canyon. As I looked from one side of the canyon to the other, I was in awe at the vast chasm that existed between the two sides. The Bible teaches there is an infinite chasm between man's righteousness and God's righteousness. Man's righteousness is flawed by sin and is therefore dirty before God (Isa. 64:6) and cannot be compared with God's perfect righteousness. Since an unsaved man is a sinner by nature (Rom. 3:23), no good or righteous deed that he has done, can be considered righteous in God's eyes. Before we were saved, everything that we did was in some way tainted by sin. Since God cannot look upon sin with His favor (Hab. 1:13), He cannot accept our flawed righteous acts as providing any merit in His presence.

Humanism says that our problem is really the environment and we are in need of education. This is not man's problem. Man's problem is that he is so tainted with sin that God concludes, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:12). No unsaved person has ever done anything that is actually good in God's sight since they are totally polluted with sin. The good things that unsaved people do from humanity's perspective (giving to charities, humanitarian efforts, helping the less fortunate, etc.) are not good in God's eyes, since man is tainted by sin in everything that he does (his motives, desires, ambitions). Therefore, no unsaved person can be made righteous in God's sight by their good deeds or righteous acts.

A sinner may not be as bad as he can be (like Adolf Hitler), but he is nevertheless as bad off before God as Hitler, since His life falls short of God's perfect standard of righteousness.

This is called the total depravity of man and reminds us that only God can save the sinner. "Salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2:9). We sometimes forget that we must measure ourselves according to God's perfect standard of righteousness. When we do, we discover that we have all sinned through Adam (Rom. 3:23) and cannot possibly meet God's perfect standard of righteousness, which we need to be accepted in God's holy and righteous presence. Many people compare themselves to others in order to make themselves look better. They try to cover up their bad side by looking at the evil atrocities that other people do (killing, drunkenness, thievery, terrorism, child molestation) and somehow think this gets them off the hook. However, every man has morally offended God and has fallen from a state of a perfect standard of righteousness, which God requires for entrance into His holy presence. We are much further from God than we could ever imagine! As an unsaved person, we are separated from God, spiritual lost, and headed toward hell (Eph. 2:1-2).

Don't fool yourself. Every person is on Satan's hook and our sins are pulling us closer to the damnation of hell, if we do not possess God's perfect righteousness.

James 1:15

"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

How can we tell if a person is trusting in self or in Christ? Sometimes a question such as this can be revealing: "IF YOU WERE TO DIE AND STAND BEFORE THE LIVING GOD WHO IS AWESOME IN HOLINESS AND HE WOULD ASK, 'WHAT RIGHT DO YOU HAVE TO BE IN MY HOLY PRESENCE?' WHAT WOULD YOU THEN SAY?" Listen carefully to the answer and see if the person is counting on self or counting on God's righteousness to give them acceptance in His holy presence. Nine out of ten people will tell you something like this: "I'm a pretty good person, and I'm trying hard to do better." But doing good or better is not the issue when it comes to salvation.

When witnessing to the lost we must ask: Have you every lusted? Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever taken God's name in vain? Have you every dishonored your parents? Have you ever coveted something that God did not want you to have? Suddenly, man is faced with the truth that he has broken God's moral code in many ways. He is also faced with a dilemma. Since God is infinitely holy, a sinful man cannot be accepted in His holy presence. He must pay the price for his own sins and go to hell. Man without God's righteousness has no hope of Heaven. He is doomed to be judged for his sins in hell. We deserve hell, since we have all fallen short of God's perfect standard of righteousness, and have offended His matchless purity and holiness.

The wonderful truth is this; we don't have to live under God's condemnation and judgment; we can live under the banner of freedom, knowing that we have been declared righteous in God's sight and freed from His condemning sentence that was against us. When we believe that God has exchanged our sins with His own perfect righteousness, we can know that we have been delivered from hell and given eternal life. God's righteousness is without flaw and when we are clothed in His righteousness, we will never again come under condemnation for our sins. This truth should provide us with a sense of peace and rest knowing that we have been forever freed from God's judgment. We can live experiencing a newfound sense of freedom from God's judgment and wrath.

Martin Luther, before coming to grips with justification by faith alone, struggled with his imperfections and sins. He said, "My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him.

Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him.”

Many people are on this same lonely and frightful journey today. God is asking us to trust in Christ’s work upon the cross to save us – and not ourselves. You cannot trust and try at the same time. This is our next point in Roman’s chapter four.

b. The necessary step we must take (believe) – Rom. 4:3-5

Romans 4:3-5

“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

The question naturally arises, “What must we do to receive God’s perfect righteousness?” The Bible answers this question and what it says cannot be easily misinterpreted or misrepresented, since it is made so crystal clear. God’s righteousness can only be applied to our lives through believing God’s message. Today we must believe in God’s Son to be our personal Savior from hell through an act of simple faith (John 3:16). It’s simple belief in Christ that results in God’s perfect righteousness being applied to our spiritual account before God, so we can be accepted in His presence.

Belief or faith is a simple thing. I simply transfer my trust to Christ, who paid sin’s penalty on my behalf and who rose from the dead. When I believe in Christ, I am trusting in Him to grant me the forgiveness of sins forever, eternal life, and cloth me in God’s perfect righteousness. These are free gifts that are given to us the moment we believe.

Instantly, before you can say, “Amen” to your prayer, God clothes you in His perfect righteousness and you are forever accepted in God’s presence. Now, you can experience freedom! You can be liberated from legalism (salvation by works) and find rest in what God has given to you forever – perfect righteousness and legal acceptance in His presence.

1 Corinthians 1:30 declares:

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom (the perfect wisdom related to salvation’s story), and righteousness (perfect righteousness to stand in God’s presence), and sanctification (perfect holiness before God’s presence), and redemption” (perfect freedom or release from all our judgment).

This means that Jesus Christ becomes all of these things to us and for us in the presence of God. His righteousness and holiness is applied to our account before God and we are forever accepted in the presence of a holy God. God sees us as righteous when we are clothed in Christ’s righteousness and sanctified (perfectly holy) when we are clothed in Christ’s holiness. Once Martin Luther grasped the fact that Christ’s death paid the penalty for his sins, acquitted him of all his charges before God, and then supplied Him with all the righteousness he owed before God, he not only expressed faith in Christ, but also dropped the teaching of purgatory, which is not found in the Bible.

The Catholic teaching of purgatory belittles the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The idea that we must add our own agony or suffering to the work of Christ for the sins we committed, or that we still must be further purified in the next life, in an intermediate state between death and Heaven, diminishes the work of Christ, who paid sin’s penalty in full, and who provided us with perfect righteousness before God’s presence.

Christ suffered for our sins, so we never must suffer for them again!

1 Peter 3:18

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”

People say to me, “I confess my sins to God everyday” or “I confess them to a priest” and they think that this will get them into Heaven. This certainly is not the case. No person is saved by confessing their sins; they are saved by believing! God asks us to believe in His Son, so we can receive God’s perfect gift of righteousness. Confession is not the starting point for sinners who are separated from God. Confessing our sins will not make us perfectly righteous in the presence of God. Confession is not

something we do to merit God's righteousness. We must believe in God's son to provide us with this righteousness.

Our problem is this: God demands perfection and perfect righteousness. Therefore, if we base our acceptance before God through confession of sins, we place ourselves in a dilemma. First, we can't be sure that we can remember all of our sins. Second, we might do things that we don't even realize are sinful or wrong, allowing unconfessed sins to remain part of our life. Third, tomorrow would be another day, and the process had to begin all over again, hoping that we don't die with some unconfessed sin in our lives. The point is this; confession of sin does not grant us justification before God. It is belief in Jesus Christ that allows God to wipe the slate clean and provide us with righteousness in God's presence.

Visualize a road or trail on which there are many carved out ruts. The ruts in the road are a picture of all the sins and crimes you did against God which can never be rectified. Then visualize a two-foot blanket of fresh snow that covers all the ruts in the trail. No matter how untidy and deep the ruts are on the trail, they are completely covered and there is no sign of any deep ditches. This snow scene becomes a beautiful picture of God's forgiveness and why He can grant us with acquittal and righteousness in His sight forever. When we are forgiven of all our sins His righteousness can then be applied to our lives and God sees no more of our sins. They are removed and we are covered with God's righteousness.

Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Through Christ our sins can be forgiven. As a result, God can grant us His very own righteousness and write us down, as righteous, in His presence.

In Romans 4:4, the righteousness we receive from God is comparable to a free gift, which a person receives through belief (faith) – not something that they can earn or merit through legalism. The illustration is simple to understand. If you earn something, it cannot be given to you by grace ("not reckoned of grace"), out of God's free favor and kindness, or else it would be like paying back a debt ("but of debt"), a worker's wages, something that an employer owes, since the worker has earned them. This is not the way

God's righteousness is given to us. It comes to us as a free gift through simple faith in God's Son. Free implies no work, while a paycheck implies work. Righteousness is pictured as a free gift given to us by God's grace. God's righteousness is freely bestowed upon the believing sinner as a gift of grace! How wonderful and glorious.

In Romans 4:4-5 there is a great contrast between those who WORK and those who DO NOT WORK. There is a heaven/hell difference between the two groups. All the religious people of the world (including all of the cults and "isms") can be described by the little word "DO." This one word sums up their religion of works. They are trying to do this and to do that to earn acceptance with God. Biblical Christianity (God's way of salvation) can be summed up by the one word "DONE!" "I rest my soul completely upon what Jesus Christ has DONE on the cross for me!" Which word best describes you? Are you busy DOING or are you resting on the finished work of Jesus Christ which is already DONE?

The word "debt" speaks of something we have done which God must repay us for in the end – something God owes to us. The truth is this; God does not owe us anything! He wants to give us something freely! If we would get our just desserts, we would end up in hell forever. God does not owe you anything for your good deeds. He wants to give to you His perfect righteousness as a free gift.

William Newell once said, "I was holding a meeting in St. Louis. At the close of a noon meeting a keen-appearing businessman approached me, saying, "You are speaking to the most ungodly man in St. Louis." "Praise God!" I said. "Do you mean to say you are glad that I am bad?" "No," I said, "but I am certainly glad to find a man that acknowledges that he is a sinner."

"Mr. Newell, I have been coming to these meetings for four weeks. I did not sleep last night. I have had little sleep for three weeks. I have prayed. I have read the Bible. I have waited here today to have you tell me what I need to do." "Now," I said, "we will turn to the Bible (Romans 4:5), and I read, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly—"" "That's what I am—"ungodly"—but please tell me what to do." "This same verse in Romans 4:5 tells you," I said, "that you are to do nothing save one thing—"to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him. ... his faith is counted for righteousness.""

He suddenly leaped to his feet and stretched forth his hand, and said, "Mr. Newell, I accept that proposition!" and off he went without another word. Next noonday I noticed his shining face and introduced him to the great audience. This was his response to my introduction: "I am a businessman, as you know. I know a good proposition. But I found one yesterday that so filled me with joy that I could not sleep a wink all night."

Are you living free? Are you experiencing the joy and rest that comes from knowing that God has forever accepted you in His presence? When you are living free you will feel safe and secure in God's promises.

❖ **Justification is free.**

Romans 3:24

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus

In this verse we see that justification is also free. Everything is free, since it is given to us out of the kindness and generosity of God's grace. Justification follows on the heels of God's righteousness which has been given to the believing sinner. As a result of receiving a righteous standing in God's presence, God can now legally declare us justified in His sight. The word "justification" is a legal term which means to declare someone righteous or innocent. God's decision is to declare us to be as righteous as He is. Justification pertains to our legal standing before God.

Justification changes the way God sees us! God once saw us, as sinners (Eph. 2:1-2), who must pay sin's penalty, which is hell. However, when Christ died on the cross, God's requirement for sin and sinners was satisfied and His anger was appeased (1 John 2:2 – "propitiation"). The word "propitiation" means that God the Father was totally satisfied with the sacrifice made by His Son. The fact that Christ satisfied the righteous demands of God for sin permitted God to forgive sin, provide righteousness for sinners, and present us as justified in His sight. These blessing become ours when we place trust in Christ to save us (Rom. 3:22, 25).

Since this is true, when we express faith in God's Son (faith in Christ's saving work), our sins can be forgiven, the debt of judgment can be canceled, and we can receive a righteous standing before Him. As a result,

God can now see us righteous in His sight and declare us legally justified (innocent). The dilemma of how a holy God can have fellowship with fallen humanity was solved, when Jesus paid sin's penalty on the cross, satisfied God's wrath, and died to give to us His own righteousness.

The justification that we can receive in God's sight is given to us "freely" (Rom. 3:24). This means literally "as a gift." Justification is termed as a "gift by grace" (see Rom. 5:15). God's justification which He grants us is a free gift. There is no such thing as an earned gift! A gift is always free! Righteousness is a free gift that you can't do without!

Elsewhere justification (the declaration of our righteous standing in God's presence) is also pictured as a free gift that cannot be earned or merited by man in any way (see Romans 3:28). A person is declared legally righteous in God's presence when they place faith in the finished work of Christ. It's only then that God can grant them justification (a legally declaration of innocent) in His holy presence.

How wonderful it is to just accept this gift and enjoy your freedom from sin's penalty and judgment. Are you living free? Are you trusting in Christ's death to grant you with righteousness and justification in God's sight? Most people live in bondage never placing their faith in Christ to clear their guilty record in Heaven and set them free from sin's penalty. Instead of enjoying their freedom they are striving to gain or merit God's favor, never being sure that they will enter Heaven in the end.

Even Mother Teresa was not sure that she was going to Heaven. Mother Teresa was a thoroughgoing Catholic. She was a great worshiper of Mary; she believed the cracker of the mass is Jesus Christ; she believed all men are children of God. In her speech before the United Nations in October 1985, she said, "We gather to thank God for the 40 years of the beautiful work of the United Nations for the good of the people. No color, no religion, no nationality should come between us -- we are all children of God. ... If this is true, then faith in Christ alone is not necessary for salvation.

In 1958 she wrote, "My smile is a great cloak that hides a multitude of pains." In another letter she said: "The damned of hell suffer eternal punishment because they experiment with the loss of God. In my own soul, I feel the terrible pain of this loss. I feel that God does not want me, that God is not God and that he does not really exist."

Her comments send a message of confusion regarding salvation through Christ alone. Why the doubts? It's because she was not placing her faith in the finished work of Christ, who paid sin's penalty on her behalf, and who offered to her His perfect righteousness and a justified standing before God. The teaching of the Roman Catholic Church denies that a person can be justified by faith alone in Christ alone.

The Roman Catholic views justification as a gradual process that is earned or merited through good works, as one performs a series of religious duties (seven sacraments), instead of a once-and-for-all legal transaction, which transpires when a person places their faith in Christ for salvation.

Hebrews 10:12

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God."

The Bible teaches that Christ died once and offered only one sacrifice for our sins, since God required only one perfect sacrifice to pay sin's penalty forever – not many sacrifices. The Roman Catholic Mass, the continual repeated sacrifice of Christ, runs contrary to what the Bible teaches. In the Roman Catholic Mass Christ's death is reenacted and repeated and allegedly reapplied to those who literally eat the body and drink the blood of Jesus Christ. We are not saved by cannablisim! We are saved by believing in the "one sacrifice for sins" (not the many sacrifices). To state is simply; we are saved through Jesus finally and forever paying the necessary penalty that sin required to set people free from the condemnation of their sins.

One Catholic Catechism reads on pages 69-76:

"The Holy Eucharist is the Sacrament in which Jesus Christ is really and physically present under the appearances of bread and wine ... The appearances of the bread and wine (taste, smell, color, size, shape, weight) did not change, even though the bread and wine were actually changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. The substance of the bread and wine are changed into the substance of the body and blood of Jesus. This change is called transubstantiation.

"When does the priest change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus? At Mass, when he says, 'This is my Body. This is My Blood.'

..."What is the Mass? The sacrifice of the Cross, the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, offered in an unbloody manner under the appearances of bread and wine ... Who offered the first Mass? Jesus offered the first Mass at the Last Supper when He changed the bread and wine into His Body and Blood ... Is the sacrifice of the Mass the same as the sacrifice of the cross? Yes, they are the same..."

This is blasphemy and is a lie of the devil!

Hebrews 10:14

"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

The Bible says that through faith in Christ's one offering for sin, the believing sinner can be "perfected for ever" in God's sight. This means that God gives us a perfect standing of righteousness in His presence and accepts us as being perfectly "sanctified" (holy) in His sight. Now we can sing:

"Tis done, the great transaction's done
I am my Lord's and He is mine.
He drew me and I followed on
Charmed to confess the voice divine."

The Council Of Trent, in Canon 24, which was never overturned by the Roman Catholic church, states: "If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof (of justification): let him be anathema."

This statement and many others show that Romanism teaches justification is a gradual process that people obtain before God through religious works. And yet the Bible teaches our sinful record in Heaven is cleared forever and we are once-and-for-all justified by faith in Christ! We do not obtain justification through our good works, penance, baptism, or any other meritorious system.

Justification before God is not something we obtain through a long journey. It is something we receive forever, when we come to faith in Christ.

Romans 8:33-34

“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

There is no legal charge given in Heaven that can condemn His children! Why? It's because God has already and eternally justified us or declared us legally righteous and accepted in His presence. When my name is sounded off up yonder in Heaven, I will never face a condemning sentence (“Who is he that condemmeth?”). Why? It's because Christ has died for me (“It is Christ that died”), paying the penalty of judgment that I deserved, and has “risen again” to intercede for me in Heaven (“who also maketh intercession for us”), declaring me to be free of condemnation, on the basis of His death on Calvary.

Christ's intercessory work in Heaven, on our behalf (Heb. 7:25), means that He presents Himself as the all-sufficient Savior of every person, who has believed on Him. Christ presents His one-time death on Calvary's cross, as the sufficient payment necessary to release us from sin's judgment, and God the Father accepts this proposal every time and never condemns us. Christ's intercessory work in Heaven is not a resacrifice but a reminder of that sacrifice which He made on Calvary's cross.

“And now for me He stands,
Before the Father's throne.
He shows His wounded hands
And names me as His own.

Romans 8:38-39 concludes:

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Nothing will ever separate us from God's love, as seen in Christ's payment for our sins, and our legal declaration of innocence in His presence. Nothing! You can scan the universe and search in every corner of every galaxy and find nothing that can separate from God's love!

He begins by searching the realms of death, life, demons (the angelic or spiritual world) and finds nothing that can separate us from God's love (vs. 38a). No devil or demon can ever separate us from God. He then begins to examine "things present" (vs. 38b) and finds nothing! He then searches "things to come" (38c) and peers out into the future. Who knows what these words mean as they relate to the ages of eternity! Who can fully comprehend them? But as he looks through the ages of eternity there is nothing there! There is nothing in the future that will separate us from God's love.

But he does not stop at the future. He scans the entire universe, the heights and depths of it (vs. 39) and finds nothing! Nothing is there! One would think that Paul had covered everything, but lest he may have missed something, he says, "nor any creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Nothing can separate us from God's expression of love, which in this context involves Christ dying to pay sin's penalty, God justifying us in His presence, and freeing us from condemnation forever. God loves you and He will love you forever "in Christ Jesus" (vs. 39) or through what Christ has done for you.

"Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Vast unmeasured, boundless, free!"

When a person places their faith in Christ's finished work (the Gospel – 1 Cor. 15:3-4) they are justified in God's presence forever. Christ's death (paying sin's penalty), Christ's burial (pointing to the evidence for Christ's death - Christ was not buried alive – He really did die on the cross to pay sin's penalty), Christ's resurrection (proving sin's penalty was accepted by God), and Christ's intercession for us in Heaven (promoting His finished work on our behalf) results in our ongoing and eternal justification in God's presence.

Romans 8:33-34 teaches that our justification before God is based upon Christ's finished work – not what we do! We don't have any righteousness that can justify us before God. It takes Christ's righteousness, imputed to our account, to free us from sin's charges forever and make us righteous in God's presence. The charge of being a sinner can no longer stand in Heaven since Christ has freed us from all our sinful charges! No condemning sentence against God's saints will be heard in God's heavenly courtroom! Praise the Lord!!

Romans 5:9

“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

Through Christ’s death (the shedding of His blood) we are justified in God’s presence (Rom. 5:8), which means we are declared legally righteous in His sight. How does this transaction take place? First, Christ’s payment for the penalty of our sins (Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Cor. 15:3) grants us legal acquittal or forgiveness in God’s sight forever (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). Second, as a result of our forgiveness, Christ’s perfect righteousness is then transferred to us, so we can be fully, finally, and forever accepted in God’s presence (1 Cor. 1:30). God first takes away our sin (Heb. 9:26) and sins (Col. 1:14) and clears us of all of our sinful charges in Heaven; He then credits the believing sinner with His very own righteousness (Rom. 4:3-6; 2 Cor. 5:21). This entire transaction is the result of Christ’s blood being shed on our behalf. God views Christ’s blood as providing forgiveness and righteousness in His presence which results in justification.

The sin question is first settled and all our sinful charges before God are dropped. We are eternally forgiven of all our sins. But then the perfection needed to stand in God’s presence is granted through receiving Christ’s very own righteousness. Our sins are forgiven and we are credited with Christ’s own righteousness. The result is justification in God’s presence!

The Bible teaches that Christ blood, which He shed on Calvary’s cross, justified us, or declared us legally righteous in God’s presence. Furthermore, Christ’s ongoing intercessory work in Heaven (Heb. 7:25 – “ever liveth to make intercession for them”), which involves the declaration of His completed sacrifice on our behalf, frees us from any legal obligations before God. God sees Christ’s blood as paying sin’s penalty, which results in total forgiveness and a righteous standing in His presence.

Speaking of the blood, someone wrote:

Let the blood of Calvary speak for me.
Let it write me down as righteous
Where no righteousness has been!
Shielding me from wrath and judgment
As it covers all my sins

There's no work that I've accomplish
Nor my goodness would I plead
Just let the blood of Calvary speak for me.

This is what Christ does in the courtroom of Heaven and no person, demon, or the devil himself, can reverse the work of Jesus Christ. Christ can write me down as righteous in God's presence since He has paid our fine (sin's penalty), set us free from God's judgment, and provided us with forgiveness and righteousness in His sight forever.

Christ maintains our justified standing in Heaven. The good news is that justification involves the righteousness of God covering us right now and through eternity! It settles our legal obligations with God forever! Think of it this way. Twenty-four hours a day God demands perfection (perfect righteousness) and twenty-four hours a day Christ is my righteousness before God. He will be there for me tomorrow and the day after. Christ is committed to bring us all the way home! We must be perfect in order to enter Heaven, and thanks to Christ, we are!!

Christ intercedes for us today in Heaven at God's right hand (Heb. 1:3; 8:1) to declare that we are legally justified in God's presence based upon His blood sacrifice (Rom. 5:8), which resulted in forgiveness of sin and God's righteousness being applied to our lives.

Sometimes justification has been defined in this way: "just as if I'd never sinned." Although some refuse to accept this definition for justification, it really is true! When we are given Christ's righteousness and are declared legally righteous in God's sight, it's then that God sees the believing sinner as Himself – sinless, pure, and living a life of perfect obedience. What a free gift!

There was a man in England who put his Rolls-Royce on a boat and went across to the continent to go on a holiday. While he was driving around Europe, something happened to the motor of his car. He called the Rolls-Royce people back in England and asked, "I'm having trouble with my car; what do you suggest I do?" Well, the Rolls-Royce people flew a mechanic over! The mechanic repaired the car and flew back to England and left the man to continue his holiday. As you can imagine, the fellow was wondering, "How much is this going to cost me?" So when he got back to England, he wrote the people a letter and asked how much he owed them. He received

a letter from the office that read: "Dear Sir: There is no record anywhere in our files that anything ever went wrong with your Rolls-Royce." This is a way to look at the doctrine of justification. God looks at us and in our files recorded in Heaven and says, "There is no record anywhere in my files that anything ever went wrong with you." This is what it means to be justified in God's presence.

What a free gift! But there is more to the story.

❖ **Salvation is free.**

In his book *Illustrations of Bible Truth*, H. A. Ironside included the story of a new convert who gave his testimony during a church service. With a smile on his face and joy in his heart, the man related how he had been delivered from a life of sin. He gave the Lord all the glory, saying nothing about any of his own merits or what he had done to deserve the blessings of redemption. The person in charge, who was very legalistic, didn't fully appreciate the reality of salvation by grace through faith alone, apart from human works. So he responded to the young man's comments by saying, "You seem to indicate that God did everything when He saved you. Didn't you do your part before God did His?" The new Christian jumped to his feet and said, "Oh, yes, I did. For more than 30 years I ran away from God as fast as my sins could carry me. That was my part. But God took out after me and ran me down. That was His part." Commenting on this testimony, Ironside wrote, "It was well put and tells a story that every redeemed sinner understands."

Another great word of Scripture that is related to salvation's freedom is the word *salvation*. When we are free from the fear of God's judgment and condemnation we can sing these words:

"Life now is sweet
And my joy is complete
For I'm saved, saved, saved!"

Sometimes we pass over words and don't really think what they mean and the message they are conveying. *Salvation* is one of these words. The word "salvation" means to be delivered or rescued from God's wrath ("saved from wrath through him" - Rom. 5:9). When a person is saved it means they are delivered, rescued, and safely preserved from the

expression of God's righteous wrath, which must be meted out upon the sinner who has broken God's Law (Gal. 3:10). When a person is saved it means they no longer must face God's condemnation or sentence of judgment for their sins, which is damnation in an everlasting hell.

John 3:17

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

You will note that salvation is opposite of condemnation. It means the believing sinner has been delivered from God's sentence of judgment, which was against him, and has been safely preserved from the expression of God's wrath and condemnation.

John 3:18

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Condemnation means we are sentenced to be judged for our sins and are already sentenced waiting to die the sinner's death and go to hell. If you are unsaved then you are already condemned or sentenced by God to enter hell after you die.

Hebrews 9:27

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Salvation is a spiritual deliverance from the penalty of judgment that we deserve, or the fine that God calls the "wages of sin" (Rom. 6:23). This is the fine we must pay for our sins. Salvation is being delivered from what we deserve – hell. If a person is not saved they are damned to hell. The word damnation means to be tried, sentenced, and punished for sins in hell (Matt. 23:33; 2 Thess. 2:10-12) and experience spiritual ruin in hell – the loss of our soul (2 Pet. 2:3). You can't escape the damnation of hell if you are not saved, but Christ came to "save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21), which means the consequence of their sins (damnation in hell).

A woman in India was confronted by the fact of God's holiness, and she realized that she was a sinner. Immediately her heart cried out, "Oh, how I need some great prince to stand between my soul and the Almighty!" She

had heard that the Bible told of One who had died for mankind, and so she asked an instructor to read it to her. Turning to the first chapter of Matthew, he began with the genealogy of Christ. As she listened, she thought what a wonderful Prince this Jesus must be to have such a long line of ancestors! When the teacher read, "Thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins," the woman exclaimed, "Ah, that is the Prince I want--the Prince who is also a Savior!"

Sin deserves a penalty which is "death" or separation from God in hell forever (Rom. 6:23); however, Christ came to save (deliver, rescue, preserve) us from this penalty and free us from our state of condemnation before God. This is the wonderful story of salvation! Tell me the story of Jesus; write on my heart every word!

We need deliverance from hell since we are going to hell! My Son was witnessing to a Jewish lady the other day and she said there is no hell and that everyone goes to Heaven. If this is the case, then why would Jesus die on the cross!! He died to save us from hell! When we accept God's free gift of salvation we are set free from the condemnation of hell and damnation forever and can sing:

'Tis the song of the soul set free,
And its melody is ringing.
'Tis the song of the soul set free;
Joy and peace to me it's bringing.

When He came to save me, He set the joybells ringing,
And now I'm ever singing, For Christ has ransomed me.
Once I lived in darkenss; the light I could not see.
But now I sing His praises, for He was set me free.

'Tis the song of the soul set free;
And my heart is ever singing,
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The song of the soul set free!

You can be free from condemnation! If you receive God's gift of free salvation you can be free.

Ephesians 2:8-9

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

This is one of the clearest declarations of Scripture. If you miss what God is saying in these verses, you will be robbed of your freedom! You will not experience the free gift of salvation and rest in your deliverance from hell and damnation.

There are two observations in this text.

1. The way people are saved.

The Bible says we are saved “by grace” which speaks of the kindness, benevolence, and favor of God. This is the way we are saved. God saves us out of His own kindness and benevolence. Salvation is an act of God’s grace being showered upon our lives. God had to intervene in the human race to provide sinners with salvation. Our salvation is based upon Christ paying sin’s penalty on our behalf and delivering us from hell. This is the expression of God’s grace (Eph. 2:7 – “riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”). This is how God’s grace (kindness) is portrayed in this context of Scripture. The expression of God’s grace is seen in the death of Christ, when He paid the sinner’s penalty of judgment on their behalf. A person can only be saved by an expression of God’s grace. God has shown His favor and kindness toward us in that He gave His only Son to die in the sinner’s place.

Titus 3:4

“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.”

The phrase “through faith” speaks of how God’s salvation and grace comes into our lives. What does faith in Christ really mean? It’s a faith (trust or reliance) upon Christ to save us from hell, since He paid the penalty for sin that God required, which can result in our forgiveness or pardon in God’s presence.

When I’m placing my faith in Christ, it means I am transferring my trust in His sacrifice, to save me from hell, by clearing my record of sins in Heaven, and giving me acceptance in God’s presence. It means I’m transferring my

faith in a resurrected Christ that can give me eternal life (John 6:47; Rom. 6:23).

A person cannot believe in Christ alone for his eternal destiny and also believe that he must do something to earn it or keep it. Salvation is completely free! It's a free gift to receive only by faith in Christ.

Can it be true that God does not require the sinner to do anything in order to be saved? Can it be true that God only asks a poor lost sinner to take salvation as a free gift? Can it be true that salvation does not require any previous commitment to following Christ or obedience? It is true salvation is called "the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8) and a person receives this gift "through faith" (not through obedience or following).

2. The way people are not saved

These verses are teaching that salvation (deliverance from hell) is offered on the basis of a gift – not works (legalism or the way of human effort).

When the text says "and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" it is grammatically referring back to the subject of salvation. You are saved by grace and this salvation has nothing to do with yourself, since it is God's free gift to you. If you want to be saved from hell then you must simply receive it as a gift given by God.

The Bible reinforced the truth that salvation is a gift by proclaiming that salvation is "Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:9). This once again means that salvation cannot be earned or merited in any way. It is absolutely free. This is true since salvation is a free gift!

A young man named Allen Stewart was greatly disturbed because he wasn't sure where he would spend eternity. A Christian friend, noting that he was under deep conviction of sin, counseled with him about his soul and told him he only had to believe on the Lord Jesus. But Stewart thought this was far too easy, so he decided to follow his own ideas. He joined a church, sang in the choir, and became a busy worker, hoping that through these efforts he would gain salvation. Yet nothing he did brought him inner satisfaction and joy. One day as he was reading Jesus' parable of the sower, he was struck by the verse, "Then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved"

(Luke 8:12). As he pondered the last phrase, the truth suddenly dawned on him. "Will you look at that!" he exclaimed. "Even the devil knows that a man finds salvation if he just believes!" Thus awakened, he turned from his own works and accepted Christ. By trusting Jesus, Stewart at last found the peace he had so desperately sought.

2 Corinthians 9:15

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

God is the greatest Giver of all and salvation through Christ is the greatest gift of all! Salvation is repeatedly likened to a gift. Here it is "unspeakable" which means it is indescribable or beyond human description. When we think of what God has given to us freely, we can't fully convey the glory and wonder of it all!

"Oh the wonder of it all
The wonder of it all
That God should love me."

Yes, there is a wonder or amazement attached to God's free gift of salvation. Let's just believe what the Bible says today. Salvation cost God's Son everything, when He died on the cross paying sin's penalty, but it costs us nothing. We come with our hands open and God freely gives us this wonderful deliverance from hell.

D.L. Moody said this of salvation:

"Take it as you take the air into your lungs. It's free."

Let's stop misinterpreting the Bible, as many do today, and just believe God at His word. Salvation is free! It requires no human achievement or works. It has nothing to do with legalism. It really is free! It is absolutely free!

❖ Eternal life is free.

Romans 6:23

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Bible teaches that we need eternal life since we are faced with eternal death (Rom. 6:23). The kind of "death" being spoken about in this context is spiritual death or separation from God in hell forever. Since death is

contrasted with eternal life the verse is referring to eternal spiritual death which is separation from God forever in the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 20:14-15

“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

The second death refers to a spiritual separation from God’s presence forever where an individual is judged for his sins in the Lake of Fire. It is a terrible death, related to both the resurrected body and human spirit, which will live on forever, enduring suffering in direct relationship to a person’s sins which he has committed in this life. When I read this verse I shudder realizing the awful fate that awaits Christ-rejecting sinners. I’m so glad that eternal life is a free gift to receive so I can escape the eternal death and judgment of God in the Lake of Fire.

The Bible says in Romans 6:23 that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This means that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins, so you don’t have to endure eternal damnation and separation from God in the Lake of Fire. Christ died to set you free from eternal judgment and give to you the free gift of eternal life! What a message of hope! What a message of freedom! When you express faith in Christ’s death and resurrection you can be given the free gift of eternal life and be freed from eternal condemnation.

The Bible declares that we can receive eternal life freely!

Revelation 21:6

“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”

Revelation 22:17

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

In these verses the subject of eternal life is compared to a refreshing drink of water that one drinks which provides satisfaction forever. Jesus

compared eternal life to a spring of water that continually satisfies (John 4:14; 7:37-39).

John 4:14

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

As the Scriptures make clear, the gift of eternal life (here called the water of life) is free. How can this be? It's because eternal life has been paid for by the death of Christ on the cross and is extended to all who are willing to receive it in simple faith. Can you imagine buying a bicycle for your child giving the bike as a birthday gift, but demanding that the child earn the bike by doing chores around the house for three months? You say, “That's absurd.” Yes, it is an absurdity. Whenever you must earn a gift, it takes away the value of the gift. A gift is free and does not require any requirement to receive it. However, many today are presenting salvation and eternal life as something a person must earn. Instead of being free gifts, these spiritual blessings are earned or merited in some way.

Lordship Salvation advocates are one example of those who present salvation as something a person must earn. They try and explain to people that salvation is a free gift only if a person is willing to do something, become something, and promise something to Jesus. Here is the bottom line of what Lordship Salvation teaching is really saying. If you don't meet the requirements for discipleship you can't be saved. If you don't become a follower of Christ, you can't be saved. If you don't commit yourself totally to Christ, you can't be saved. If you don't take the initiative to obey His commands, you can't be saved. If you don't make Jesus Lord over every area of your life you can't be saved. If you don't comply with the conditions that Jesus requires for salvation, then you can't be saved. If you don't step out to serve Christ, you can't be saved. In short, you must do these things if you are going to be saved.

In the lordship teaching duty and demands are placed along side of the death of Christ, salvation is no longer free, and the gift of eternal life must be earned. Lordship Salvation essentially teaches that an unsaved person must make Jesus Lord of his life and become an obedient follower of Christ in order to be saved. Lordship Salvation teaching requires the sinner to make a contract with God. The sinner must measure up to His side of the

bargain, if he is going to receive eternal life. The sinner must do something, be obedient to Christ's commands and plan for discipleship, so he can receive eternal life. The teaching basically says that when a person promises to give something to Christ, it's only then that Christ will promise to give eternal life to him. In essence, if we give something to Christ then Christ will in return give something to us.

Now just stop and think of witnessing to a man called Billy. What will you say to Billy if you espouse Lordship Salvation teaching? It would probably be something like this. "Billy, you *must* become a follower or disciple of Christ in order to be saved? You *must* make Christ Master of your life so you can have eternal life. You *must* obey His commands and come to terms with Christ's conditions for salvation. You *must* surrender your entire life to God before He will accept you as His child. You *must* give up all your sins and sign on the dotted line. You *must* make a promise that you will live for Christ the rest of your days on earth, so you can have eternal life. You *must* commit your entire life to Christ so you can be saved and sure of your salvation. Billy, are you ready to be saved?"

Lordship Salvation goes beyond trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior. It includes the teaching that a person must cooperate with Christ's program of discipleship, or make a contract with God, which involves obeying the commands of Jesus and making a commitment to Christ's lordship, as a necessary condition of eternal life.

❖ **Forgiveness is free.**

Jesus said in Luke 7:41-42:

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?"

In this parable Jesus taught that forgiveness is free. The two people which were indebted to the creditors had nothing to pay; however, the creditor decided to forgive them of the debt and let them go free. Jesus taught that the person with the greater debt would be even more appreciative of what the creditor had done. This illustration teaches that Christ's forgiveness is free and those who are forgiven of many sins should be grateful to God for His forgiveness. When we are unsaved there is "nothing" we can offer to

God that would grant us forgiveness (“when they had nothing to pay”). We are indebted to God to pay the penalty for our own sins. But there is “nothing” that we can do to appease God’s wrath and be released from His judgment. God’s forgiveness cannot be bought by our good works, since we have no good works to offer to God (Rom. 3:10-12; Isa. 64:6). God is not looking to be paid back since He is offering a free gift to us! Therefore, the only thing we can ever do is trust in Christ to grant us with free forgiveness and pardon.

“Gone, Gone, Gone, Gone!
Yes, my sins are gone.
Now my souls is free,
And in my heart’s a song.
Buried in the deepest sea,
Yes, that’s good enough for me.
I shall live eternally,
Praise God! My sins are gone!”

Christ never promised to forgive people on the basis of discipleship standards, obedience to Him, and their promise to make Him Lord of their lives forever. The account in Luke 7:36-50 portrays Christ as freely forgiving sinners without making any requests or demands upon their lives.

Luke 7:42

“And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?”

The word “frankly” means that these people were forgiven graciously and freely. This is free forgiveness! It’s the only kind that God offers.

As Wesley put it:

“Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

Isaiah 55:1 also speaks of the freeness of forgiveness.

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

A meal without a price! This is the way the Bible pictures our salvation. In this Bible verse we see how the forgiveness of sins is portrayed as a free gift. If a person is thirsty and wants to be released from all his sinful charges before God and saved from hell, he can “come to the waters” which speaks of the cleansing and purifying waters of forgiveness (Isa. 44:3).

Ezekiel 36:25

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.”

A person can come to the waters of God’s forgiveness and be cleansed from all their sins forever! You can come to the waters and be forever free from all your sinful charges before God.

Someone wrote these words in connection with this passage of Scripture.

“You said you'd come and share all my sorrows
You said you'd be there for all my tomorrows
I came so close to sending you away
But just like you promised, you came here to stay
I just had to pray.

Your goodness so great, I can't understand it
And dear Lord I know now that all this was planned
I know You're here now and always will be
Your love loosened my chains, and in You I'm free
But Jesus why me?

Jesus I give You, my heart and my soul
I know now without God, I'll never be whole
Savior, You opened all the right doors
And I thank You and praise You from earth's humble shores
Take me I'm Yours!

And Jesus said,
'Come to the water, stand by my side
I know you are thirsty, you won't be denied
I felt every tear drop, when in darkness you cried
And I strove to remind you, It's for those tears I died.'"

When we come to the waters and the banquet of God's salvation there is no charge! All the wine and food are free. By the way, the Bible uses the term wine in several different ways. It is often referred to as the fresh juice of the grape which is still on the vine in the form of grapes (Judges 9:13; Hosea 14:7). Alcoholic wine is not portraying God's free blessings in salvation. The fresh juice of the grape and milk were important commodities to the people and they are seen as illustrating the spiritual blessings of salvation. When it comes to salvation, the drinks are on the house, but they are not alcoholic drinks! The wine and milk are representative of the spiritual blessings and riches that come to us when we embrace God's grace for salvation. God wants to give us a free banquet that will satisfy our soul forever.

Song of Solomon 2:4 says:

"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

❖ **Grace is free.**

Grace is God's unmerited, undeserved, and unearned kindness bestowed upon us through Jesus Christ's death. As we have already seen in this study, grace is always associated with free gifts such as the gifts of salvation (Eph. 2:8-9) and justification (Rom. 3:24; 5:15). Grace is something that provides free gifts! This must also mean that grace is free.

Let's think this though Biblically. If righteousness, justification, salvation, eternal life, and forgiveness are free gifts, then grace must also be free in providing these gifts, or else the gifts could not be free. If you give someone a gift, out of the kindness and generosity of your own heart (out of grace), then you don't expect someone to reimburse you for the gift. Both the gift, and your gracious generosity or kindness in giving the gift, will cost the receiver nothing. In a similar way, God's favor and kindness (grace) has been expressed to us through the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross (Rom. 5:9), so we might receive the free gifts of righteousness, justification, salvation, eternal life, and forgiveness.

Romans 8:32

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

Free grace is how a person is saved.

Romans 3:24

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

If justification is free then the way to receive it must also be free. Grace is free! God’s grace is not something earned or merited. When a person attempts to merit God’s grace they create a system of graces which they do in order to gain God’s favor. Graces are not the same as grace! Grace is God reaching down to us without any human attempt to merit His favor and blessing. Grace is God at work; works are man at work.

Both the gifts and the giving are free. What you get before God (righteousness, justification, salvation, eternal life, and forgiveness) and how you get it (grace) are free. Everything is free! It costs the receiver nothing. Free grace is the only way a person can receive the free gifts of justification (Rom. 5:15), salvation (Eph. 2:8-9), and eternal life (Rom. 6:23). If these spiritual blessings are given to us as gifts, out of necessity, the Giver must also provide them freely, without demanding any cost on the recipient’s part. Since God’s grace is free, it means a person does not have to promise something to God, do something for God, or become something before God to merit or receive His grace.

“Mercy there was great, and grace was free;
Pardon there was multiplied to me;
There my burdened soul found liberty,
At Calvary.”

It’s interesting that God’s grace (favor, kindness, generosity) is always contrasted to human works indicating that the expression of God’s grace is always free.

2 Timothy 1:9

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

Romans 11:6

“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

God’s salvation purpose is always rooted in grace. God’s benevolence or kindness is that which brings salvation’s blessings into our lives – not man’s works or involvement in salvation. If you add works to grace you tarnish the meaning and understanding of grace. God’s favor toward us is underserved, entirely a gift from Him to us. God doesn’t expect to be paid back!

You would think that everyone would be flocking to accept God’s grace. Not so. Grace is difficult to accept because of man’s human pride regarding his alleged good works. The religious type of person, or the “Goody Two-shoes” type of person, thinks he has never done anything bad enough to go to hell. Intuitively many think we need to have some part in our salvation. There are many today who think they only need God’s help but not God’s grace! They want to do their part and then let God do His part to help them get to Heaven. My friend, we don’t need help; we need grace!

Below are some questions you might ask yourself to see if you are trusting in God’s grace to save you. Could you go to Heaven:

- Without being a church member?
- If you commit a sin just before you die?
- If you lack a certain amount of good deeds or works?
- Without a priest?
- Without last rights being administered to you?
- Without being baptized?
- If you are not a Lutheran, Catholic, or Methodist?
- If you are not a Mormon or Jehovah’s Witness?
- Without taking mass?
- Without church sacraments?
- Without praying through the rosary?
- If you have not followed the Ten Commandments?
- Without forgiving someone?
- If you are not very religious?
- Bypassing purgatory?

- Without Mary?
- If you have lied, stolen, cheated, committed fornication, adultery, or murder?
- If you have not given money to the church?
- If you have not helped the poor, given to charities, and supported other good causes?
- Without being a good person?

If you have answered “no” to some of these questions, then you have not passed the grace test, according to the Bible. This is because the Bible says your faith (trust, reliance, confidence) must only be rooted in God’s free grace for personal salvation or deliverance from hell. God’s grace is showered upon us freely – it’s not something we earn or merit. Whenever you attach anything to something that is free and given by grace, then you have lost the true nature of the gift! It cheapens the gift.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:8, “freely ye have received, freely give.” This is how God demonstrates His grace to us. When it comes to the blessings related to salvation they are absolutely free. Let me be very clear at this point. When you come to Christ, you do not come to give, you come to trust. You do not come to be helped, but to be rescued (rescued from hell and sin). You do not come to only to be made better; you come to be made alive!

Have you received righteousness, justification, salvation, forgiveness, eternal life through God’s free grace? If not, you are hanging on to something, which you think you need to get to Heaven. The truth is this; grace is all you need to get to Heaven. If you will simply put your faith in Christ to save you, then grace will take over and give you eternal life and acceptance before God.

Ephesians 2:8

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

“Some day the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing;
But oh, the joy when I shall wake
Within the palace of the King!

And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story—Saved by grace;
And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story—Saved by grace.”

Since the spiritual blessings are free, which are related to a person’s acceptance before God (righteousness, justification, salvation, eternal life, forgiveness, grace), they can only be received by faith. If the blessings of salvation are free, one cannot do anything to earn them. They can only accept these blessings by faith. This is true since a sinner is only asked to “come” (Rev. 22:17) and “take the water of life freely” (not follow). It is true since salvation is offered freely “without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1).

Salvation is a *free gift* (Eph. 2:8 – “it is the gift of God”), eternal life is a *free gift* (Rom. 6:23 – “the gift of God is eternal life” and “take the water of life freely” (Rev. 21:6; 22:17), God’s imputed righteousness is a *free gift* (Rom. 5:17-18 - “the gift of righteousness”), justification is a *free gift* (Rom. 3:24 – “justified freely”), and forgiveness is *free* (Luke 7:42). Salvation, eternal life, righteousness, justification, and forgiveness before God, cannot be gifts, if the recipient must promise to surrender every area of his life, as long as he lives, to get them!

An aged saint, on being asked to describe salvation, aptly replied, “Something for nothing.” Another aged saint, who had weathered the storms for many a long year and was nearing the Heavenly harbor, on hearing this story related, exclaimed, “Yes, it’s even better than that. It’s everything for nothing.”

Yes, nothing!

“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.”

B. Sanctification's liberty

In Battle Creek Michigan every year there is a hot air balloon festival where literally hundreds of balloons take to the air. I have seen them on many occasions while visiting my wife's parents in the month of July. The balloons come in all shapes and figurines. There are Tony the Tiger balloons, Hershey Chocolate Bar Balloons and just about anything you could imagine. When you see a balloon moving effortlessly through the air you think of freedom. In our present study we are researching the subject of Biblical freedom. God wants us to live free and enjoy the liberty that He has provided for us, not only in salvation, but also in the area of sanctification. Are you living free from the power of plaguing sin?

In our second major point in this study, we discover that sanctification and living free are connected together since one cannot experience true freedom without practicing sanctification or holiness.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.”

Many times we could figure out what God's will is for our life by simply practicing sanctification or separation from the culture of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The word sanctification means to be “set apart” or consecrated and essentially is a life that is lived out in holiness before God and others.

1 Thessalonians 4:7

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

The same Greek word is translated holiness in Romans 6:19 and 22. Living a sanctified, or holy and consecrated life before God, provides us with true freedom from sin's power. A sanctified life is a free life! A sinful life is a bound life. When we are bound to the chains of sin we are not living free. When we are allowing rebellion and sin to rule our hearts and lives we are not living free. Every teen needs to understand this who is living in open rebellion against their parents and every adult who is living in rebellion

against the Lord. When we rebel against God's design and truth we are no longer living free.

There are four areas of sanctification.

❖ **Freedom from personal sin**

John 8:32

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

The Jews did not know the truth and they were in a terrible bondage. They were in bondage to ignorance, error, sin, and religious superstition. However, when they heard the truth about Christ setting people free from the power of sin, they could be liberated from the tyranny and stronghold of sin. When Jesus said he would “make you free” He was talking about living free from the power of sin, but the Jews did not understand that Jesus was referring to spiritual slavery. They thought Jesus was referring to physical slavery, since they bragged about their heritage or lineage to Abraham and their alleged claim to never have been physical slaves to anyone (“were never in bondage to any man” - vs. 33). However, this was not true since Israel had been in bondage to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and now Rome. However, Jesus was referring to their spiritual slavery to sin, and while they spoke with the Lord Jesus, they were in bondage to sin and to Satan and were soon to plot the death of Jesus.

As a result of their ignorance, Jesus clearly explained they were a “servant of sin” (vs. 34) and that servants, or slaves, never remain in the house forever (vs. 35), much like Ishmael was cast out of Abraham's house (Gen. 21:8-21). Jesus was referring to the family or household of God. The Jews who had rejected Jesus Christ, as the saving Son of God, were slaves who possessed no rights, security, or inheritance in the household of God. These religious Jews only viewed themselves as the physical descendants or sons of Abraham, but not the spiritual sons of God. They thought they were sons but they were actually slaves to sin! Jesus was speaking of the danger of false profession and the eventual judgment of unsaved people who are bound to Satan and sin.

But then Jesus shares another bright note!

John 8:36

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

Only Jesus can break sin’s fetters or chains if we are saved and then yield to His mastery over our lives. Only Jesus can clean up our filthy mouths and lives from the most binding and horrible habits. Only Jesus can release us from immoral habits (lusts of the flesh) and sinful thinking (lusts of the mind). Man has his own psychological methods to try and reform sinners today but Jesus is still the only Person and way a person is truly released from His sinful past and ways. It takes God’s spiritual power to change the course of a person’s life.

People who are unsaved need to be freed from sin and Satan’s power. The salvation experience is to produce liberty from the strongholds of sin. It takes us away from the old life and gets us started on a new way of life. The word “indeed” speaks of the reality of being inwardly delivered from sin’s power which is distinguished from the mere outward profession. We are talking about real deliverance – not temporary deliverance. To be “free indeed” from sin’s power is one of life’s greatest treasures and blessings. People become truly free by becoming sons of God by faith in Christ (Gal. 3:26) – not by merely being physical decedents of Abraham. We need a spiritual link to be freed from sin and not a physical link like the Jews prided themselves in. The truth is this; when a person comes to the Savior and receives eternal life from Him, that person is freed from the slavery of sin, legalism, religious superstition, and demonism. Jesus came to set us free from sin’s power and Satan’s evil clutches.

“God rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay;
Remember Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas Day,
To save us all from Satan’s power
When we were gone astray.

O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy!”

Jesus said in Luke 4:18:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”

Jesus came to deliver people who were held captive in their sins and He did not give them a psychology course (Psychology 101) before delivering them. It takes the power of God to change the lives of people. Human therapies cannot reach the soul and deliver the soul. They are merely band aids. It takes the transforming power of Jesus Christ to deliver people from the strongholds of sin. This has been the testimony of millions of Christians down through the centuries. Jesus changes lives! He sets people free from evil passions and lusts and the terrible sins which plague the lives of mankind. Jesus can set us free from the strongholds and stranglehold of any sin. He is the deliverer!

There is an increasing emphasis in secular humanistic society that man's human therapies and psychological methods can transform people and make them into something new. The TV commercials promote the books and methods of man which are designed to bring lasting change in the lives of people. Let be blunt at this point. The messages of modern psychiatry, pop psychology, and Dr. Phil will not influence people spiritually. Man's human theories may rearrange the furniture but they can't give spiritual aid or help to people. It takes the Son of God to set people free!! I also believe that Christian psychology gives counterfeit solutions to emotional and spiritual issues.

The psychological counseling movement was virtually non-existent prior to World War 11. It began in the 1950's and has come full bloom since then. I wonder how Christians were delivered from their sinful past and problems prior to 1950? Could it be that Jesus delivered them? Yes, Christ is the Deliverer. The point is this. It takes the power of Jesus Christ to truly liberate people from sin and change their lives. Let's stop buying in to all the humanism today and start looking to Jesus once again!

John 8:36

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

“Jesus is still the answer
And though time and ages roll
Jesus is still the answer
He's the answer for your soul
And though some may say
That He doesn't fit with their philosophy
I know Jesus is still the answer
He's always been and always will be.”

The word psychology is derived from the Greek word for soul (psuche) and can accurately be termed as the study of the human soul. The soul relates to man's thoughts, feelings, decisions and behavior patterns since all these things stem from the area of his inner life or soul. Secular psychology tries to find physical reasons and answers as to why man behaves in certain ways and why he experiences inner turmoil. The behavioral sciences then create physical solutions to man's behavioral problems and invent therapies designed to improve his life and give him a happy existence on earth. However, the fly in the ointment is that man's problems, as they relate to his soul, are primarily spiritual in nature and not physical. The soul of man is connected to the spiritual world and therefore he needs spiritual assistance to aid and help him in his inner life – not physical diagnosis and help. Secular Psychology does not have the answer – only God's psychology has the answer! Jesus Christ is the only person who can free the soul of overcoming sin and give a person a new life, a new start, and change a person from within.

Dr. Andrew Telford, a well-known Bible teacher of yesteryears, wrote a letter to me many years ago. This was before the days of email. It was a personal letter. It was also an encouraging letter. In the letter he wrote: The world, the flesh, and the devil, will always seek to undermine your life and ministry. Turn your back on all three of them and go on with the Lord.

Have you been living free? Have you been enjoying your freedom from sin? As a Christian, Christ has come to set us free from sin's power and mastery. If you are saying, “I don't want to yield my life to Jesus Christ, I want to live my own life,” then you are in the worst type of bondage possible. You are bound to sin and held captive to Satan's power. You might say, “I want to live the free life.” The problem is that sin's freedom is

really bondage but slavery or being a servant to Jesus Christ is really freedom.

1 Corinthians 7:22

“For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.”

If a person living in the Roman Empire was a slave, at the moment of his salvation he becomes the “Lord’s freeman.” In other words, even though he remains a physical slave to a secular master he is actually a free man in relationship to His new life with the Lord since Christ frees this man from his sinful habits and ways. You don’t have to live in sin. You don’t have to be controlled by self, sin, and Satan. You can be the “Lord’s freeman.” This is when we are truly free for the text reads, “being free, is Christ’s servant.” When we are truly liberated from sin it’s because we have become Christ’s slave or servant, who obeys His commands, and follows His plan for our lives. There is no true freedom outside obedience to Jesus Christ and His ways. Everything else that seems like freedom is really bondage and slavery to sin and Satan. It will lead you down a path of destruction, misery, heartache, and emptiness.

If you think for one moment that you are living free because you can listen to rock music, drink booze, run around with worldly friends, and live what you call the “free lifestyle” then you are in the worst type of bondage possible. Sin deceives us (Heb. 3:13) and keeps us in spiritual chains.

Woodstock and the hippie movement claimed to have the answer to living free! They called it sexual freedom and liberty do as one pleases. Let me tell you that drugs, sex, and rock music never frees a man. It brings him under the worst type of bondage possible. These three vices will eat away at a man’s soul and robs him of true spiritual liberty from sin.

Romans chapter six speaks of our freedom from sin, which we possess as God’s children.

Romans 6:7

“For he that is dead is freed from sin.”

Romans 6:18 declares:

“Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”

Romans 6:22 also says:

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

Praise God, I don't have to live for sin and devil any longer. I'm free!

“I'm free from the fear of tomorrow,
I'm free from the guilt of the past.
For I've traded all my shackles
For a glorious song,
I'm free, praise the Lord free at last.”

This should be the story of every Christian life. Our union in Christ's death and resurrection provides us with liberty or freedom from the power of sin. The theme of Romans chapter six is how to stop doing bad things. It tells us how to stop sinning as Christians and how we can live in victory over the flesh.

There are three simple instructions for victory over sin.

1. Know (vv. 1-10) – this deals with the mind

Romans 6:1-2

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

Grace never leaves a man where it finds him! Grace always changes a man for the better. Therefore, to think that grace would give someone an attitude to live in sin is absurd. Paul says, “Perish this thought!” There are always those who try and use grace as an excuse to live a sinful lifestyle but Paul says they are dead wrong in their thinking and philosophy. We can actually violate the principle of grace when we allow sin to rule our lives, since grace should transform our lives and make us holy.

Romans 6:14

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

The expression of grace in this chapter is referring to the believer's union with Christ and the victory over sin that comes into his life because of this union. Grace liberates us from sin; it does not give us the license to sin!

What must we know if we are going to have victory?

- a. We must know the facts (vv. 3-5)

Romans 6:3-4

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? [Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

This is speaking about the Holy Spirit's baptism (the real baptism) – what the Holy Spirit did for us at the time of salvation. Water baptism does not give us victory! He united us to Jesus Christ in a saving and sanctifying way. This is what happened. The Holy Spirit brought us into a spiritual union or tie with Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), so that when Christ died, we died with Him, and when Christ rose from the dead, we rose with Him. Our spiritual union with Christ in His death and resurrection, through baptism of the Holy Spirit, assures us of victory.

Romans 6:5

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”

- b. We must know the results (vv. 6-10).

Romans 6:6-10

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”

The context of Christ's death in this chapter relates to Christ dying on the cross to cancel sin's power over our lives. Romans 6:10 says "He died unto sin" (vs. 10). In Romans chapter five Christ died to deal with penalty of sin (Rom. 5:10) but in Romans chapter six Christ died to break the power of sin over our lives (Rom. 6:10). Jesus died to free us from sin's power – to bring a death to the old person we used to be under sin's power.

In view of our death and resurrection with Christ, the "old man" (the old unregenerate person we used to be under slavery to sin – vs. 6) has been put out of business. This is explained as "the body of sin" (the human body controlled that was once controlled by sin – vs. 6) might be "destroyed" (done away with - taken out of business – vs. 6). This means we no longer must serve the sin nature and sin ("that henceforth we should not serve sin" – vs. 6b and "For he that is dead is freed from sin" – vs. 7). This means we are freed from the powerful influence of the sin nature and sin which seeks to control and dominate our lives. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He defeated sin, and we died with Him, and obtained a victory over the old person that we used to be under sin's bondage. The old individual that we used to be, bound to sin, has been defeated when we died with Christ on the cross.

After Augustine was saved and old lover came calling and said to him, "Augustine, it is I, don't you remember me?" "Yes," Augustine replied, "But it is no longer I." Augustine was changed man. The same is true regarding all of us who have undergone this identification or spiritual union with Christ's death.

But there is more we need to know! The story does not end here. We are also raised with Christ.

Romans 6:8-9

"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him."

Jesus also rose again from the dead (vs. 9). In His resurrection, Christ defeated the realm of death and will never again die. This means that we too can live in spiritual union with the resurrected Christ and draw upon His

resurrection power for daily victory! Our resurrection union with Jesus Christ grants us with His resurrection power to live victoriously over sin.

Romans 6:4

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Since we have been raised with Christ and live in union with Him, we can rely upon Him for daily power and victory. We can depend upon His risen life to grant us victory along the way. I serve a risen Savior but also depend upon a living Savior to give me His power for daily victory.

Galatians 2:20

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

“Yet not I.” Victory does not revolve around us; it resides in the Lord! We claim our victory as we rely upon Christ’s resurrection power that we share.

Philippians 3:10

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”

Thin if it; we have the same power residing in us that enabled Christ to rise from the dead! When we experience Christ’s resurrection power in our lives we are on the road to recovery and victory! There is victory in Jesus!

Romans 6:10

“For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”

This verse reminds us that Christ “liveth unto God” and this means we can also live for God by possessing a new relationship with God (vs. 11), as we rely upon the indwelling power of Jesus Christ for victory, who lives within us. The secret of victory is knowing what has happened (we died and rose with Christ) and what are the results (we are freed from sin’s power and can rely upon Christ’s resurrection life for victory). Christ died to defeat sin and we are victors in Him and with Him! We claim our death to sin’s power

and our resurrection power in view of our union with Christ and depend upon Him everyday victory over sin.

2. Reckon (vs. 11) - this deals with the heart

Romans 6:11

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The word “reckon” is a banking term which means to consider or count something as being true. You can bank on God’s promise of victory! This verse tells us that we must reckon on what we know is true! The word “reckon” means to rely on, to claim for yourself that which God says is true in the Bible. If I mail a check to you for 25 dollars and you don’t cash the check – you have not yet reckoned the check as being valid or true. How do you know you died with Christ on the cross and that He defeated sin? How do you know that you are alive with Jesus Christ and can depend upon Him for victory right now in your life? You reckon these things to be true. You believe them and claim them for yourself. This is decisive action. It’s called standing on the promises of God!

“Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
By the living word of God I shall prevail,
Standing on the promises of God.”

On July 4, 1952, Florence Chadwick began the twenty-one-mile swim across the Catalina Channel. The water was ice-cold, and a dense fog shrouded her view of the support boats surrounding her. Several times, her support crew drove approaching sharks away with rifle fire. For almost sixteen hours, Florence swam on. In complete exhaustion she finally quit— one-half mile from her goal. She later told reporters, “I’m not excusing myself, but if I could have seen the land I might have made it.” It wasn’t the cold, sharks, or weariness that stopped Florence short of her goal—it was the fog. Many times we too, fail to reach our spiritual goal of victory in life, because we allow our minds to become clouded by the fog of the enemy, and we believe we can’t really live victorious. We feel overwhelmed in their icy cold waves, and we fail to remember that God has promised to sustain us through these difficulties.

It's interesting that two months after Florence's unsuccessful swim, she again attempted to cross the Catalina Channel. The water was just as cold, and the fog was just as dense as on her previous attempt. But this time, in less than fourteen hours, she made it, breaking the current world record by more than two hours. What was the difference? Even though Florence couldn't see the shore, she kept the goal clearly pictured in her mind, put her confidence in the fact that the shore was not far away, and this carried her to victory.

We must do the same thing when it comes to spiritual victory in our Christian lives. We must place our confidence in what Christ had done for us and this will carry us to victory! We must reckon ourselves to be victors in Christ through His death and resurrection. Reckoning is not trying to work up and experience. Some people think they need to walk down an isle every Sunday to reckon themselves dead to sin for another week. But what about midweek when the devil is tempting you? Others think they must kill (eradicate) their old nature and work up an emotional experience that they call the baptism of the Holy Spirit where they speak in gibberish and claim to be victorious over sin and spiritual. My friend, this is not how we reckon.

When I reckon something, I am simply believing something that God says, and I am actively applying it to my life. Reckoning simply means that I am acting in faith. Verse eleven says we reckon ourselves to be "dead indeed unto sin" (sin's mastery or power over our lives) and are now "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This means that when we place faith in Christ for salvation we become spiritually alive (born again) and have a new slave relationship with God through our experiential union with Jesus Christ. We claim our victory in Christ and can experience this new relationship with God's life. We can fellowship with Him and enjoy His presence as we live in victory over sin through Christ. It's wonderful to be alive to God! We once were dead (Eph. 2:1-2) but now have been born again, and can fellowship with God, and He can be our new loving Master. Yes, it is glory just to walk with Him.

3. Yield (vv. 12-23) – this deals with the will

Romans 6:12-13

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are

alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

Jesus Christ has done everything, so you can possess victory. Now, all you must do is yield to God. We must yield Him our body! These verses are not talking about a once-and-for-all decision that puts us on such a high plateau or plane that we will never be tempted again. This is talking about a daily yielding of our body to God and trusting in Christ to provide us with victory on a daily, hourly, and moment-by-moment basis.

Notice there is a distinction made between the sin and the body (vs. 12). The body is neutral but a force at work within the body called “sin” (sin nature) is constantly at work. This is why you commit sin. It’s why you become jealous, lustful, unforgiving, angry, worldly, and caught up in a variety of sins which seek to dominate and control your body. Does sin have you in its powerful grip today? Maybe there has been some particular sin that has been controlling your body. Perhaps God is putting His thumb upon that sin today showing you that He wants to liberate you from sin’s power.

These verses in Romans chapter six command us to yield our bodies to God, since He is our new Master, (“yield yourselves unto God” – vs. 13 and “yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” – vs. 19). Yielding is our part. It means that we are going to love God more than sin and yield the members of our body to God (“your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” – vs. 13). Every member of our body must be yielded to God during the time of temptation - our eyes, ears, hands, our the sexual parts of our body.

Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;
Each vict’ry will help you some other to win;
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue;
Look ever to Jesus, He’ll carry you through.

Ask the Savior to help you,
Comfort, strengthen, and keep you;
He is willing to aid you,
He will carry you through.

Instead of yielding to sin we can yield our bodies to God. God wants you to give Him your body – all of it! This may sound ordinary but it is one of the most spiritual things that you could ever do! If God is going to use you, He must have your body! Have you laid your body on the altar lately?

The victory of Romans chapter six is a very practical matter that must take place on a daily, hourly, and sometimes moment-by-moment basis. When Satan and the sin nature work together and begin to tempt us, we must know what Christ has done for us, reckon or claim our victory in Christ by faith, and then yield our bodies to His control and mastery. This is the way of victory!

“Principalities and powers
Mustering their unseen array,
Wait for thy unguarded hour;
Watch and pray.”

Sin usually comes in as a guest and then becomes a friend to you. Then this friend called sin becomes a servant to you, but eventually the servant becomes a master over your life. You think you are controlling sin but sin is controlling you! Sin takes you further than you want to go and keeps you longer than you want to stay! But God’s promise is sure today and we can yield to God and claim the victory! The victory is ours! Psychology says we are victims but God’s Word says we are victors!! The devil tells us we are quitters but God says we are winners! We don’t have to live in defeat and sin. We don’t have to give in to the enemy of our soul. If we will yield ourselves to God, we will have the victory over Satan and stubborn sins. The question is this: How much do you love God? Do you really want to love and serve God as your Master instead of sin? You can be free! You can live free instead of being chained to sin within the devil’s dungeon.

“Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?
Your heart, does the Spirit control?
You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest,
As you yield Him your body and soul.”

Beloved, “We are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37). Let us never forget who we are and what we have in and with Christ!

“We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us so.
The Christ who dwells within us is the greatest power we know,

He will fight beside us though the enemy be great.
Who can stand against us?
He's the Captain of our fate.

Then we conquer never fear,
So let the battle rage.

He has promised to be near until the end of the age.
We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us so.
The Christ who dwells within us is the greatest power we know.”

Shout it from the rooftops! And live free!

We have all read about the stories of those magical fairy tale creatures called trolls, who sit under a bridge, and wait for unsuspecting victims to pass by. The troll comes out, clubs the victim, captures them, and the victim becomes their slave. Well, this may be a fairy tale, but in reality some people can act like trolls, make people their slaves, and keep them under slavery and bondage. This is what we are going to talk about in our next point under sanctification.

❖ **Freedom from people's enslavement**

1 Corinthians 7:23

“Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.”

Our sanctification applies to living free from the enslavement of others. When others seek to override our Biblical convictions and stunt our spiritual growth we are not living as God wants us to live. The context will allow us to understand what this verse means. Some of the Christians were abusing their freedom in Christ. Since they understood they were Christ's slave (1 Cor. 7:22), some of the saints were coming to the conclusion that they no longer had to be obey their earthly masters. This certainly was not the case. Paul advises the newly saved convert to “abide in the same calling wherein he was called” (vs. 20) meaning that a person should remain in the position or vocation where they have previously worked, after they are saved, unless God frees them from their earthly master and clearly moves them in another direction (vs. 21).

The reason why a Christian can remain a slave in the Roman Empire (“being a servant” or slave) is because every Christian, spiritually speaking,

is really a “freeman” (free from Satan and sin’s power), even though he still serves an earthly master. The same is true regarding a person who is not a slave in the Roman Empire (“being free”); they too are “Christ’s servant” (slave).

Let us not forget that we are a slave to Jesus Christ. Our slave relationship with Christ is not a form of bondage but blessing and freedom. Every day I am accountable to Him and should love Him as my personal Master who has freed from Satan and sin’s power. I am a slave to Jesus Christ which means I should live under His rule and authority. I’m His slave and should render service and obedience to Him all the days of my life.

“I own no other master
My heart shall be Thy throne.
My life I give henceforth to live
O Christ for Thee alone.”

The point is this; no matter what our vocation is and where we are at in life, we are to foremost be a servant or slave of Jesus Christ. This is because Jesus Christ owns us (“Ye are bought with a price” - 1 Cor. 7:23; 1 Cor. 6:19). Jesus Christ has purchased us out of the slave market of sin, so we might become His slave to righteousness. The purchasing price was His blood (1 Pet. 1:18). I thank God for Calvary, for it’s the blood that sets me free!

Since Christ paid the necessary price to free us from the power of sin and Satan, we should gratefully turn around and serve Him, instead of men. This is why 1 Corinthians 7:23 adds, “be not ye the servants of men.” What Paul means is that we are only to be a slave to Jesus Christ and no other person. While we serve and obey others in this life we should never become their slave. We must remember who owns us and who we are serving. Even though there are others who still have authority over our lives (earthly masters, bosses, pastors, and leaders), we must never forget that Jesus Christ is our real Master and we are His slaves.

We must reaffirm that every Christian is ultimately Christ’s slave and therefore should render obedience to Him in everything that they do. In the context of the work force, it means that every vocation or job position should become a Christian service performed for Jesus Christ, since He is our real Master (Eph. 6:5-8). Our secular job is not a job that is necessarily

rendered unto men. As I obey those who are in authority over me, I can remember that I am actually obeying Christ, and rendering obedience ultimately to Him, as my only true Master. In this way, I remain a servant of Christ and do not become a slave to anyone else in this life. My mind, heart, and goal should be to render service unto Jesus Christ in everything that I do (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:21) since He is my real Master.

Although we are called to serve others (John 13:4-17; 2 Cor. 4:5) we are never called to be the slaves to others! There is a difference. God owns us – not men! The phrase “be not ye the servants of men” (being only a slave to Jesus Christ) is also a reminder that Christians should never allow other people to enslave them and control their lives. No other person should control our lives, since Christ is our only Master, and we are slaves to Him. This means no pastor should become a spiritual dictator over the lives of His people.

1 Peter 5:3 gives this reminder to pastors:

“Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

What Peter is teaching is that pastors should never become like trolls and tyrants over the lives of the sheep. Some pastors can become a dominating pest and intrusion over the lives of their people. Every pastor must lead his sheep but not fleece them! They must direct them but not destroy them. They must free them but not enslave them! We need spiritual mentors (1 Cor. 4:15) but we don't need spiritual dictators running our lives. Again, there is a difference between those who want to give us spiritual guidance and instruction (2 Tim. 2:2) and those who want to run our lives in relationship to every decision we make or whatever we do on a daily basis. There is also a difference between a preacher proclaiming Bible-fashioned separation and a preacher bellowing out petty commands that have absolutely nothing to do with living the Christian life.

If we are not careful, we can become in bondage to others! I have talked to many people over the years and some of them have shared with me how they were at one-time part of a “pastor king” church, where the preacher was treated like a king, and how he ran the lives of others like some medieval dictator. This certainly is not the way God wants the church to function. Every pastor must be a leader and every pastor should be followed; however, no pastor should become a tyrant running the lives of

his people. This is because God does not want us to become a slave to others. Every pastor must remember that the flock does not belong to him; it really belongs to God. There is no room or time in the ministry for bully preachers. God does not want us to become a slave to other people.

There is another case in point. Many Christians, especially teens, with their peer pressure, live in fear of other people. In one sense, they become bound to the pressures of others. In doing this they become a slave to others without realizing it! Young person, God wants you to live free!

Proverbs 29:25

“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.”

When we express fear toward others we can verily easily fall into the fear trap and be enslaved to others. Are you fearful of what others might think of you, if you don't follow their exact path and give in to their pressure? Many young people are fearful that if they don't dress like others, look like others, talk like others, and act like others that they will lose friendships and no longer be accepted by their peers. Listen, if this is your mindset; you are a slave to others! You have become a slave to the opinions and carnal practices of other people, instead of being a slave to Jesus Christ! When we are enslaved to the worldly opinions of others we will find ourselves becoming worldly in our lifestyle. We must be careful that we do not serve the mindset and opinion of others instead of serving God. God wants us to live free!

Galatians 1:10

“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”

I have discovered that I can't live to please people in ministry; I must live to please the Lord. I must keep my eyes on Him. If want to live to please people, I will end up in the mental hospital. If we seek to please other people and accept their teaching or practice, which is doctrinally unsound and worldly, then we will become enslaved to their false teachings and practices, instead of being a slave to Christ. We must examine our lives and see if we are really living free. It is wonderful to discover the freedom from people, where we no longer worry about whether they like us or dislike us, whether they approve or disapprove of our ministry and living. If we are

doing the will of God according to the Word of God then the opinions and practices of others should not shipwreck us!

Do the pressures of others keep us from following the truth and keeping our lives pure and holy? Are we so fearful of what others think that we are not willing to take our stand for Christ? Are we willing to stand in the gap? Do the changing churches with their rock sound and worldly emphasis dictate how we are going to live? Evangelist Oliver B. Greene once said, "Some people think I'm cracked, but I'm glad I'm cracked, for this is where the light got in." Friend, don't become bound to the worldly living and thinking of other people who are not willing to live a life that pleases God. You are Christ's slave; not man's slave.

❖ Freedom from the past

Our sanctification also involves living free from the past. Many people are controlled by past sins, past regrets, and past failures. This is true even among Christians. The devil keeps them bound to their past sins and failures in order to wreck their effectiveness for the Lord and fruitful living in the present. Instead of living in the present tense many Christians are living in the past tense.

Someone said:

"The past should be a rudder to guide us and not an anchor to drag us back."

There are three things you must do to be free of the past.

1. You must accept God's forgiveness.

As a Christian, God has completely dealt with all of your sins by placing them on Christ (1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24). As a result of Christ taking your sins upon Himself, you can know, as a Christian, that God has completely and forever acquitted you of all that you ever did that was sinful or wrong (Col. 1:14; 2:13).

Psalm 103:12 describes forgiveness in this way:

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

Micah 7:19 says this about God's forgiveness: "and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Someone added to this verse: "And God put up a sign which reads, "No fishing!" Friend, as seen in a previous study, we have been forgiven completely, totally, and graciously on the basis of Calvary's cross. Paul had done many wicked things in his past but he looked into the past with praise for God's forgiveness and mercy at the cross (1 Tim. 1:12-13). Many people can't forgive themselves for sinning while God is waiting without outstretched arms to grant them forgiveness and freedom from the past. Accepting God's forgiveness frees you from the past. It must be done or you will never get the goat off your back and live free.

2. You must forgive others.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:14-15

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

An unforgiving spirit and bitterness hold people in bondage to the past. It keeps them from experiencing freedom from their past and freedom from an unforgiving spirit. Jesus is not teaching that you must earn forgiveness. This verse is not speaking of our salvation forgiveness before God (Eph. 1:7) which grants us acceptance in God's presence, but our personal forgiveness in our Christian walk before God. Jesus is saying that we must learn to forgive others in our Christian life before our own personal forgiveness and fellowship with God can be restored. Jesus is informing us to stop living as a hypocrite, by refusing to forgive others, while at the same time wanting God's forgiveness for our own personal sins.

Most of the ground that Satan gains in the life of people is due to unforgiveness (2 Cor. 2:10-11). Matthew 18:21-22 says, "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." Jesus was using a fictitious number to teach an important lesson. In essence, He was saying that every time you think of what somebody did to you, there needs to be forgiveness. You must make a point to remember to forgive that person. Jesus then told a parable of a king who audited his books and discovered that one of his servants was robbing him (Matt. 18:23-35). The king was

going to sell the slave to pay off his debts but the servant begged the king for forgiveness. Out of compassion the king forgave him the debt. However, the same servant who was forgiven of this great debt turned around and would not forgive a fellow servant of a much smaller debt. This was hypocrisy and showed a calloused and unbelieving heart. The lesson is this. We should stop playing the hypocritical game. We must learn to forgive others and not allow an unforgiving spirit us to haunt our lives. Get over it and go on! This is God's psychology.

Ephesians 4:32

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

William Sangster was a great Methodist preacher in Great Britain. One Christmas he was making out his Christmas card list. His wife looked at the list and said, "Surely you're not going to send a card to him," naming the person. Sangster asked, "Why not?" His wife asked, "Do you remember what he did to you and what he said about you?" Sangster thought for a moment and said, "Oh yes, yes, now I do remember – but I had made it a point to remember to forget." Friend, all of us need to remember to forget. We must learn to forgive others. It will free us from the past and allow us to live a life that is free from bitterness, an unforgiving spirit, and anger.

Here are some practical points to remember when forgiving others.

- a. Forgiveness is a choice - not a feeling.

Forgiveness is a choice. The old nature will never create within us the right feeling to forgive. We may not feel forgiving toward somebody but we must forgive them as an act of the will based upon what is right to do. You do not have to be a victim of your feelings and circumstances. The Bible (truth) needs to become the center of your existence – not feelings and circumstances. God's commands are directed to our wills, not to our emotions. He does not say, "Do this if you feel like it." The Bible says you must forgive. When you choose (not feel) to obey God and His Word your feelings will eventually fall in line with the truth. You must never allow your feelings to become the criteria for what is right. However, when you do forgive the Holy Spirit and new nature will work together to generate proper thoughts and feelings of love, mercy, and grace toward those that have wronged you in the past. In Ephesians 4:32 God is not asking you to feel

something but to do something! Are you ready to forgive in spite of your feelings? Forgiveness is a choice, a crisis of the will.

b. Forgiveness involves a willingness to live with sin's consequences.

When forgiving yourself you must be willing and ready to live with some of the circumstances which you cannot undo. You must also be ready and willing to live with the ongoing circumstances of the offender's actions. The consequences of the offender's sins may continue to go on. You do not always get a storybook ending to your life, where an offender apologizes, and seeks to set things straight. This is not realistic. Are you willing to live with the circumstances created by someone who has wronged you in the past? We must face reality. For the most part those who have offended us are not coming back to apologize. Therefore, we must learn to live with the consequences if we are going to be released from a bitter spirit. We must be willing by God's grace (1 Cor. 15:10) and the Spirit's assistance (Gal. 5:25) to live with the circumstances, which have been created by the past, and commit our way unto the Lord (Psalm 37:5). Are you willing?

c. Forgiveness must be specific.

Don't say, "Lord, I forgive all those who I need to forgive." This is a shallow cover up for your sin. Don't say, "Lord, please help me to forgive," because He is already helping you to forgive. Don't say, "Lord, I want to forgive," because in saying this you are bypassing your own personal responsibility. Specifically name those you need to forgive and then forgive them and free yourself from bitterness. Forgiveness is always a straightforward confession (1 John 1:9).

d. Forgiveness can only take place when you stop blaming others.

Sometimes we can't forgive others simply because we think they are responsible for the way we turned out. In other words, we can't forgive others, since we believe we have committed sin, as a result of what others did to us. The old sin nature wants you to blame other people and even God for what is really your own fault and sin. Stop passing the buck (Gen. 3:12-13). You must face the facts and take responsibility for your own sin if you are ever going to forgive others (James 1:14). You can never allow God's grace to work forgiveness in your heart, when you push the blame on others, or use them as a scapegoat for the way that you have turned

out. If you are blaming others for your sin, then you cannot forgive them. Remember that the greatest freedom in the world is the freedom of forgiveness. When we truly forgive others, we will not live like a hypocrite, and we will be freed from bitterness, heartache, and from the past.

A stubborn old farmer was plowing his field. A neighbor, who was watching as he tried to guide the mule, finally said, "I don't want to butt in, but you could save yourself a lot of work by saying 'gitty-up' and 'woe', instead of jerking on the reins." The old-timer mopped his brow and replied, "Yep, I know; but this here mule kicked me 6 years ago, and I ain't spoke to him since!" Sadly, there are many Christians who live this way. God wants to work the grace of forgiveness in your heart so you can be free of bitterness and the past.

Philippians 3:13

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before."

Forgive, forget, and follow on! This should be the story of our lives. This Bible verse teaches that you should be future-oriented in your living ("forgetting those things which are behind") instead of baby-sitting the past. Please keep in mind that in Bible terminology, "to forget" does not mean, "to fail to remember." Apart from hypnosis or a brain malfunction, no mature person can literally forget what has happened in the past. You may wish that you could erase certain bad memories, but you cannot. "To forget" in the Bible sense really means to "no longer to be influenced by or affected by something."

So, "forgetting those things which are behind" does not suggest an impossible feat of mental and psychological gymnastics by which you try to erase the sins and mistakes of the past. It simply means that you break the power of the past, by no longer allowing the past to influence your life, and you make the decision to live for the future. You cannot change the past, but you can change the powerful influence of the past. You cannot go in the past and rewrite it but you can rewrite your future and the way you live today.

How do you forget the past or refuse to allow the past to ruin your Christian life in the present? It's very simple. There are some hints within the context

of this passage. You must accept God's forgiveness and the righteousness that you have in Christ (Phil. 3:9), develop a close walk and relationship with Christ (Phil. 3:10), accept your imperfections (Phil. 3:12), and live for the future (Phil. 3:13-14 - "reaching forth unto those things which are before"). The things that lie before us are new spiritual goals, spiritual plans, spiritual adventures, spiritual victories, spiritual growth, and most of all, Christlikeness, or striving to be more like Christ in our daily living (Phil. 4:14 "- I press toward the mark"). God wants us to press on to Christlikeness instead of being pounded by the past.

"I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining ev'ry day;
Still praying as I onward bound,
'Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.'

A young boy asked his mother if he could help her wash the windows. She welcomed his offer and told him to begin with the one in the kitchen because it was the dirtiest. He went outside and worked diligently until he thought it was clean. Then with a dry cloth he rubbed until his arms were tired, but the pane of glass still had many smudges. Frustrated, he called his mother and asked her what was wrong. Looking at what he had done, she said with a smile, "Why, you have been spending all your time washing the glass out here. What's wrong is that the dirt is on the inside!"

The boy went into the house, and soon his efforts made the window clean and sparkling. Many times we forget that it's the sinful dirt of an unforgiving spirit on the inside of our hearts that keeps us from growing in our spiritual life and moving forward in our Christian experience. You must wipe the slate clean by confessing to God your unforgiving spirit and letting the past be bygone. We can be freed from the heavy burden of past sins, regrets, and failures. God can work the grace of forgiveness within our heart, so we can get the goat off our back, and go on in life experiencing new growth, victories, and Christlikeness.

❖ Freedom from physical things

Our sanctification also applies to living free from the influenced of material things. We live in a world that is saturated by things, It's easy for us to get attached to things and be controlled by things. Each one of us must determine that material things are not going master our lives.

Matthew 6:19-24

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Jesus informs us that “mammon” or material things can master our lives (vs. 24). We can become strangled in life by the incessant drive for material things. Therefore, we must learn to be freed from covetousness and material living which keeps us from faithfully serving God and storing up heavenly reward for the next life. A little outline may be helpful as we look at this text of Scripture.

1. Earth's bank (Matt. 6:19)

When Jesus spoke about “treasures on earth” He was referring to the material things of society which can overtake our hearts and lives. He was talking about earthly accumulation and pursuits which take us away from doing His will. He was referring to covetousness, which causes us to accumulate earthly things, at the expense of gaining heavenly things (heavenly reward). Jesus is not saying that it's wrong to have things; it's wrong when things have us! If all we do is strive for greater riches and forget to serve God faithfully and live for eternity, then we have become a slave to wealth and material things!

Many people are in bondage to things. They live for materialism and all of their energy and time is wrapped up earning more money and having greater wealth or riches. We can work our lives away for house payments, cars, material living and lose sight of eternity and what lies ahead for those of us who faithfully serve God. The god of materialism is a 21st century god in the hearts and lives of many Christians today (1 John 5:21). We need a right perspective on money and wealth today. The Bible has much to say

about handling money. We must remember that we can own things without allowing things to own us!

Someone said:

“It’s good to have the things money can buy, provided we don’t lose the things that money can’t buy!”

The things that money can’t buy refer to eternal riches and reward. This brings us to our next point.

2. Heaven’s bank

The “treasures in heaven” refer to the heavenly investments we give to God in acts of service rendered unto Him. The “treasures in heaven” refer to the reward that we have accumulated when we stand before God someday for living and giving to His cause. Many Christians only live for the world of today instead of the world of tomorrow. They live for the world’s economy instead of God’s economy. They forget that a day of reckoning and reward is coming for our faithful living and giving.

How can we invest in Heaven’s Bank?

a. By keeping our heart right (vs. 21).

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Everything boils down to your heart. The heart speaks of our decisions and desires that come from within. God is looking for your heart! Your heart and energies will be poured into those things that you treasure or prize most in life. If you are primarily living for this economy, then your heart will be fixed on gaining more material wealth and things, instead of serving the Lord and gaining eternal reward. If you are living for God’s economy, then your heart will be focused on serving the Lord faithfully and investing your time, talents, and treasure in the Lord’s work. Friend, our time is running out. “The Lord is at hand” (Phil. 4:5). We had better be putting more investments in heaven’s bank and eternity. Our hearts need to be centered upon winning people for Christ, building up God’s Church, and living faithfully before a holy God. Keep your heart right!

b. By keeping our conscience right (vv. 22-23)

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

Jesus is speaking in a metaphorical way to illustrate a person’s devotion to God and His cause. The physical body can see and find its way through life with the aid of a “single” (wholesome or healthy eye). In this sense the healthy eye is the lamp of the body (“the light of the body”). A clear or good eye allows light to enter the body so “the whole body shall be full of light” and possess the necessary vision to move about freely without any problems. However, an “evil eye” or literally a physically diseased eye leaves the body in darkness (“full of darkness”) and the human body cannot see to move about freely and with ease.

Jesus now applies the physical illustration to the spiritual world. The human body is a reference the entire person and Jesus concludes: “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” He is referring to the light of conscience which becomes darkened by the sin of hoarding materialism and riches. A healthy conscience, like a healthy eye, will warn us when we veer off the path but a darkened conscience, like a diseased eye, will keep us from serving God and living for eternity. It will promote earthly materialism and mammon over the eternal reward and riches.

Covetousness can snuff out the light of God’s conscience from within, which is intended to warn us of those things that are contrary to God’s purpose and plan for our lives. The point Jesus is making is very clear. When the light of conscience goes out we are setting ourselves up for spiritual darkness to establish itself as a beachhead in our lives. We lose sight of what is most important in life because we can’t see past the dark spot in our soul. The overcoming desire for greater wealth and riches steals our time and treasure and robs us of the true riches of eternal reward.

2 Peter 1:9

“But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”

And Jesus adds, “How great is that darkness!”

c. By keeping our perspective right (vs. 24)

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Time and eternity are separated by a very thin line. Therefore, the right time to obey God and to do His will is always today. An unusual advertisement for Ford automobiles was in the form of a cartoon. Two men on a street corner were holding large signs in front of them. The one, with a somber face, carried this message: "The world will end tomorrow." The other, who stood just around the corner of a building, was capitalizing on this doleful warning. His sign read: "That still gives you all day today to shop your Ford dealer's year-end clearance." Ironically, in that one scene the cartoonist had captured both the absurdity of living solely for material values and the importance of taking advantage of today's fleeting opportunities.

Don't lose perspective on this issue that is at hand and fool yourself. You can't serve two masters at the same time. You cannot have two coaches yelling two different things at you at the same time. You must make a choice which coach you are going to follow. This is a matter of loyalty. Jesus warns us that we can't live for the economy and eternity at the same time. In other words, we cannot have a divided heart. We will either allow material things to capture our hearts and run our lives or we will allow eternal things to captivate us and run our lives.

No person can serve God (be God's slave) while at the same time be a slave to "mammon" (materialism). It is a wonderful thing when God liberates you from the tyranny of things. Being a slave to materialism is a stronghold for many people today. Bigger things, better things, and buying things can eat away at our time and treasure and keep us from serving the Lord, being devoted to Him, and living for the future.

A man became envious of his friends because they had larger and more luxurious homes. So he listed his house with a real estate firm, planning to sell it and to purchase a more impressive home. Shortly afterward, as he was reading the classified section of the newspaper, he saw an ad for a house that seemed just right. He promptly called the realtor and said, "A house described in today's paper is exactly what I'm looking for. I would like

to go through it as soon as possible!" The agent asked him several questions about it and then replied, "But sir, that's YOUR house you're describing which we are trying to sell for you."

The emphasis on material things is pushed today in our country. Our country worships materialism but Jesus has a different perspective on the economy of America.

Luke 12:15

"And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

If we learn this lesson early on, it will save us from a lot of misery and heartache. Life does not revolve around the things that we possess but our relationship with God and the refreshment and we find in Him. It's not about things; it's about Him! We should love God, serve God, fellowship with God, and not allow the things of this world to steal away our loyalty and love for Him.

Psalm 42:1

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

This is living free! Free from the world of materialism and free to enjoy the blessing of God's presence in our lives.

"One by one God took from me
All the things I valued most,
And there was nothing of which to boast.
And as I walked along in grief,
In my rags of poverty,
I heard His Spirit pleading,
'Lift your empty hands to Me.'

So I held my hands heavenward,
And He filled me with His store,
Till my hands were so full,
They could contain no more.
At last I comprehended,

With my stupid mind so dull,
That God cannot pour His riches
Into hands that are already full.”

C. Special liberty

On July 4, 1776, the final draft of the Declaration of Independence was adopted by the 13 colonies in the Pennsylvania State House. The representatives who attached their signatures to the document knew that the cost would be high. In his thrilling book *The Rest of the Story*, Paul Harvey calls the roll of those brave men who said, "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." The author tells an amazing account of 56 gallant patriots and the awesome sacrifice they made to fulfill this solemn vow. We should always remember what they did to gain our nation's freedom lest we take for granted this precious commodity. Liberty never comes cheap!

The same is true in the spiritual realm. Our special liberties, which pertain to being freed from the strictness of the Mosaic Law, have not come to us cheap. We possess many new liberties after Christ died on the cross and brought an end to the Law dispensation.

Matthew 27:51

“And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.”

A dispensation can be termed as “the way God works.” A dispensation involves a specific period of time in which God chooses to govern people by clearly defined practices and procedures. Dispensationally (regarding the way God works) the Law ended with the sacrifice of Christ (Rom. 10:4; 2 Cor. 3:7-11; Gal. 3:19, 22-23). When Christ died on the cross the official end of the Law dispensation took place. This was indicated by the tearing of the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies where God manifested His divine presence. The Law dispensation dramatically and officially ended when God tore the veil in the Jewish temple. Since the Law contained 613 different commands, and since this dispensation or economy in which God worked has ended, this must mean that Christians living after the time of the Law have new liberties, which they can exercise, in light of their release from the Mosaic regulations of the past dispensation.

Under this third major point in our study, we want to address the special and personal liberties that we have in our Christian lives, since we are no longer under the Mosaic Law dispensation (Rom. 6:14). God has turned the tables and introduced a whole new dispensation or economy by which His people can now live. Their conduct and lifestyles are to be lived out under the umbrella of grace, instead of by a Mosaic code. Living under the grace dispensation frees us from the intricacies of Mosaic Laws and many of the practices and rules for conduct that were expected under the Mosaic code (Matt. 23:13).

I. Freedom from laws

The New Testament epistles speak about the believer's release from the Mosaic Law and the freedom that this brings under the new grace dispensation. I know of no person today who is willing to be placed under all the minute Old Testament laws that pertain to dietary regulations, farming, clothing, worship, and holy days (Matt. 23:23; Exodus 30:19-21; Lev. 5:2; 11:29-32; Numb. 6:18). The Bible teaches that such laws have been rescinded (Col. 2:16, Heb. 9:10) and that we are no longer commanded to live under the strict outworking of the Mosaic dispensation (Rom. 6:15) with its inflexible procedures, practices, and penalties (Duet. 27:15-26). There is a newfound freedom that can be practiced from Mosaic regulations of the past. The question is this; how far do we take this freedom?

I am very thankful that I don't have to live under the practices and penalties of the Mosaic Law. The Law was a rigid system designed to bring Israel to Christ (see Gal. 3:24-25) and teach the typical lessons about Christ in picture format (Heb. 9:9, 23-24). In case you have not noticed, tabernacles, temples, and typical lessons in feast days (Lev. 23) are no longer God's plan for the Church. The ceremonial laws were also object lessons designed to teach practical separation or holiness in the Christian life (Lev. 11:44-47; 19:1-2; 22:31-33) and worship (Lev. 23:2-4). They could be viewed as teaching tools or object lessons to help the people understand that God was holy and they were required to live in a holy fashion (Ex. 19:3-6).

The intricate laws between the clean and unclean and the entire Mosaic code was a perpetual reminder of God's holiness (Lev. 19:2; 20:7, 26) and that Israel was to be set apart from the pagan nations around them (Ex.

19:5-6; Lev. 20:26; Deut. 14:1-2; 28:1) under the old covenant of the Mosaic Law. However, under the New Covenant and grace living these laws have been rescinded and are no longer required to be followed by New Testament Christianity. There is a sense of freedom that we should experience from the many rules and regulations that God required for those living under the Law.

God's New Testament saints, who live under the grace dispensation, are no longer called upon to live in the shadows and teachings of the past (Col. 2:17; Heb. 10:1). We don't use animals and object lessons to guide us in our spiritual growth but the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18) and the New Testament Scriptures which are given to the Church (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:16). We don't bring animals to the altar and slay them nor are we required to make distinctions between clean and unclean meat for consumption (Acts 10:11-14). The church is never commanded in the New Testament to follow the many tedious rules that pertained to God's dispensational purpose for Israel, under Law, which have no further purpose or typical lessons behind them under grace (Matt. 23:23; Exodus 30:19-21; Lev. 5:2; 11:29-32; Numb. 6:18).

Nevertheless, the timeless principles taught by these laws (holiness, separation, reverent worship) should still be followed under grace ("That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" - Rom. 8:4), but these laws are not required to be implemented in the exact manner as they were under the Mosaic system. For example, God wants us to display holiness in our lives today (1 Pet. 1:15-16) without using all the object lessons and intricate laws that He required under the Mosaic system. We can still maintain a holy life today, even when we choose to sow different seeds in our garden (Deut. 22:9), buy a garment with wool and linen sown together (Deut. 22:11), or eat a pepperoni pizza (1 Tim. 4:4). Grace frees us from the intricacies of the Mosaic system and gives us the freedom of choice.

Here is the main point. After Israel rejected the Messiah (Acts 1:11) and Christ died on the cross (Mark 15:38; Gal. 3:19), God officially turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 26:20) to form the New Testament Church composed of both Jew and Gentiles (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 3:1-10). Israel was temporarily set aside by God (Matt. 21:43; Rom. 11:15); therefore, the purpose and practices of the Mosaic Law ended, since they were designed specifically for the nation of Israel (Rom. 9:4). God spelled out His new purpose and commands for the New Testament Church in the epistles or

the New Testament document (“whether by word or epistle” - 2 Thess. 2:15).

There were also major differences between the way God implemented His laws in the old Mosaic dispensation (Old Covenant) and the new grace dispensation (New Covenant). Under grace the strict outward character of a legal system on stones has been done away with (2 Cor. 3:3) and the new character of the grace dispensation is presented through the indwelling presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit (Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27; John 14:16-17; Eph. 2:22). Of course, God’s moral laws never end nor do they change. They existed prior to the Mosaic Law and therefore mankind knows intuitively that it’s wrong to steal, murder, and commit adultery with another man’s wife (Rom. 2:14-15). Although believers have been released from the Mosaic Law regulations, as an outworking of many minuscule rules, they are still obligated to follow the unchanging moral and ethical laws of God and the righteous principles taught behind the Mosaic regulations of the past (Rom. 8:4). God presented typically what He wanted His people to portray practically in their lives. No Christian is lawless!

We must remember that nine out of the Ten Commandments are restated in the New Testament teachings of grace in the present dispensation, at least in principle form (1 John 3:11-15; 5:21; James 5:12; Eph 4:28-29; 5:3; 6:1–3; Col 3:5–10; 1 Thess. 4:3-7; Rom. 13:8-10), and these are all valid for believers to follow in the present dispensation, with the exception of the Sabbath observance (Col. 2:16). This is because nine of the ten pertain to the moral law of God and are rooted in God’s essential holy and righteous character, which must be observed by everyone in every generation or dispensation and under all conditions. However, since God has not given 613 specific commandments in the New Testament, as He did in the Old Testament, this means that living under the grace dispensation grants the believer with newfound freedom and some special and personal liberties, which the Old Testament saints did not possess. We have been liberated from the many intricate laws that the people had to follow in the Old Testament and have been given freedom to choose how we want to live in relationship to amoral issues (Romans 14). We will deal with this later.

For now, let us remember that all of the ceremonies of the law have been fulfilled by Christ (Matt. 5:18) and every demand and debt that the law ever mounted against us has been paid for through Christ (Col. 2:14). Therefore, the temporary purpose, program, and pictures of the law have all been

done away with through Christ (Gal. 3:19; Matt. 27:51). God has now written His moral law upon our hearts (Rom. 8:4; 2 Cor. 3:3). All of these conclusions would lead us to believe that Christians today no longer live under the Mosaic system. We have been completely freed from all the law. In the New Testament teaching, this means we are no longer “under the law” as way of salvation, sanctification, or as a special dispensation system, where God requires obedience to many intricate and complex laws. Instead, we now live “under grace” (Rom. 6:14-15) which means grace saves us, sanctifies, and sets us free from the many rules and regulation that God required under the Law.

Under grace we have been given the inward witness and work of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17-18), as a new dynamic and manifestation of the grace of God in the present dispensation (Gal. 5:18), which is termed the dispensation of the grace of God (Eph. 3:2). In the present order, with the death and indwelling presence of Christ (Gal. 2:20), we can say grace directly saves us (Titus 2:11), distinctly sanctifies us (Rom. 6:14-15; Titus 2:12), and decisively frees us from the many rules and regulations that Israel needed to follow under the Mosaic code, such as Sabbath laws, dietary laws, ceremonial laws, and civil laws, which were designed to bring the Jews to Christ (Gal. 3:24-25) and teach them about Christ (Luke 24:27).

In conclusion, the New Testament believer has been freed from the condemnation of the law’s sentence of death (Gal. 3:10; 13), the observance of law for salvation (Gal. 5:1), and the many multifaceted practices of the Mosaic Law (Col. 2:16), such as dietary regulations, days, and distinctions between the clean and unclean (Lev. 11:47). These laws have been rescinded (Acts 10:9-16; Rom. 14:14; 1 Tim. 4:1-5) for New Testament living, but the principle of holiness which they taught remains intact (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Furthermore, the moral character of the Mosaic Law has not changed and should be worked out in the believer’s heart and life (Rom. 8:4).

In this study we need to discover how to properly express our freedom, while living under grace, instead of Law. The major questions that need to be asked are these: “What does our freedom consist of as New Testament saints?” and “How far do we take our freedom from the Mosaic Law?” and “How can our freedom be expressed without abusing it?” We want to answer these questions as we move through our final outline for this study.

The teaching of our special freedom can be explained in three ways.

- The plot against Christian freedom

A. License

License is the enemy of all true freedom or liberty. The teaching of license is used as a plot to keep God's people from experiencing true Christian freedom from the world. Christians can abuse their privileges under grace. Living under grace is a privilege to be enjoyed – not a license to please ourselves through sinful living. Paul dealt with false teachers who promoted a false form of freedom or liberty from the Mosaic Law, which permitted Christians to condone their sin, while making the bold claim that they were experiencing their liberty as New Testament saints.

2 Peter 2:19

“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”

The context of this passage is talking about false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1) and how they lead newly saved converts (2 Pet. 2:18) into a form of false freedom that we can term as license. The false teachers promoted that newly saved converts are free from the Mosaic Law and therefore can live as they please. They teach that grace frees them from every law, even moral restraint, and now one can live as they please. Of course, this is a distortion of what it means to live under grace (Rom. 6:1-2). The text says that “they promise them liberty” or the false teachers promise the newly saved converts liberty, but “they themselves are the servants of corruption.” Those teaching about liberty are not really liberated and their teaching about liberty is severely flawed. They themselves are actually slaves to moral corruption and sin; therefore, they cannot teach others how to live free.

Those who practice false freedom live a life that is controlled by lies and which is motivated by lust. I have had homosexuals tell me they are free to live as they please since they are living under grace. Another said that they are free to be a Christian call girl in order to win the unsaved men to the Lord. This is not freedom – it's bondage to sin! When you practice false freedom you deceive yourself with lies and are really under bondage to

sinful and lustful practices which God condemns. False freedom always leads you back under bondage and slavery to sin.

1 Peter 2:16

“As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”

Liberty has its limits. Although God has freed us from the many miniscule laws of the Mosaic code and the practice of legalism which the legalizers or false teachers were presenting (salvation by adherence to the Mosaic Law) we still have limits and boundaries. We must remember that we are “servants of God” (slaves to God – God is our Master) and for this reason we should never use our “liberty for a cloke of maliciousness” or as a disguise which is trying to hide “maliciousness” (badness, evil, moral depravity). This reminds us that Christians can waive the banner of freedom and use it as a way to disguise their sinful and wrong living. They can use liberty as a way to cover up their sins and lustful wants and desires.

The expression of using “liberty for a cloke of maliciousness” is evil masquerading itself in religious cloth. It’s trying to cover up sin! There is a lot of this going on in the Church today. People are claiming to have liberty from the Mosaic Law, which is interpreted to mean that there are no more boundaries to follow, or lines to be drawn in the sand. As a result of this modern mentality of false freedom we have rock concerts being played in the hallowed halls of the Church and hippies with their rebellions lifestyles trying to teach other Christians how to live free! Something is drastically wrong!

There is a false freedom being promoted today among evangelicals, which began to be spread back in the early 70’s, within the New Evangelical Church movement, and this teaching has grown into a gigantic religious octopus, with its tentacles now reaching into the local churches everywhere. It is a movement that has openly disavowed Fundamentalism, what this church stands for and others represent, and is opposed to the teaching of Bible separation (2 Cor. 6:14-17). It is a movement that emphasizes a “false freedom” by condoning apostasy, ecumenicalism, worldliness, dancing, and many other worldly taboos that were forbidden throughout the history of the Church. I have renounced any involvement and ties with this unseparated movement within Christianity, which

promotes the hippie music of rebellion, ecumenicalism with denominational apostasy, drinking strong drink, and many other worldly vices.

Some people teach and believe that liberty has no boundaries. This is false and is actually absurd. Think of the freedom or liberty that we enjoy in this country. Doesn't our freedom have certain limits and boundaries that must be followed? We can't go out and drive one hundred miles per hour on the freeway nor can we neglect to pay our taxes, which are required, so our nation can function. All freedom has boundaries or limits. Freedom does not mean a free-for-all.

Galatians 5:13

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”

The New Testament believer has been liberated from the Mosaic code and all of its intricate laws. We have also been liberated from the false teaching of legalism, which is using the Mosaic Law, as a means to salvation and sanctification. We do have true liberty from the Mosaic code but this liberty can be abused and used as a scapegoat to serve our flesh or old nature (“use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh”). This means we can wave the flag of freedom, while committing sin, and try and excuse ourselves as living within the bounds of liberty. The apostle once again reminds the believers of their freedom in Christ and warned against this freedom being converted into license.

Specifically, Paul charged the Galatians to never use their liberty as “an occasion” or base of operation for sin to gain a foothold in their lives. Just as an invading army will seek to gain a beachhead and use it as a base of operations for further conquest, so the flesh will utilize a little license to expand its territory. We are not to allow our liberty become the impulse which will ignite the old nature and cause it to reassert itself again.

If we are not careful, we can use the teaching of liberty from the Mosaic Law as a starting point for sinful lust to grab hold of our hearts and lives. However, instead of using liberty for lust, we must use it in a way where we can express love to one another in the local assembly. The point seems to be this. True Christian love is the motive of true Christian conduct – not sin. Christian liberty does not permit sin; it rather encourages loving service toward others.

Many Christians need to remember that true liberty has boundaries and without Biblical boundaries we will find ourselves being swept back into the bondage of sin.

Jim Logan said:

“I’m asking God to bring healing from my involvement in Satanism and the horrors of those early years of my life. Whenever I hear rock music, whether it’s supposedly Christian or not, my reaction is extreme. I can’t handle it. I don’t care what the words say; as soon as I hear the beat, it takes me back to those services where we called the enemy to empower us to do great evil.”

Let us remember that when the enemy wants to control and eventually destroy a person spiritually, music is often his weapon of choice. Don’t you fool yourself! Don’t buy into the messages of false freedom today which says you can live as you please and listen to any music that you like. Many people today want to excuse their sin and do their own thing in the name of liberty. They wave the liberty banner and claim there are no laws to live by and no direct commands to be followed under grace. May God deliver His Church from this nonsense! God gives many commands in the New Testament that we must follow, which helps us to discipline and structure our lives, so we can live free from sin and according to God’s holiness (2 Cor. 7:1). Living free from the Law and under grace (Rom. 6:14) does not mean there are no commands to follow.

The idea that there are no commands and rules under the grace dispensation, or while living under grace, is the biggest hoax that New Evangelicalism (modern evangelicalism) has sold the Church since the early 70’s. The New Testament document contains many commands and rules to follow (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 2:11). As a Christian allows the Spirit to direct their lives in holiness, various boundaries and standards will be erected to maintain a holy stance and separation from the world (1 John 2:15-17). Also, godly men and mentors will disciple and direct their followers and sheep showing them the path of holiness which they must take as a new convert (2 Tim. 2:2; 24-25). Allow me to repeat something I said earlier. *The grace way of living is still the Bible way of living.* Grace still has rules to follow; however, the way all standards and rules are followed “under grace” (Rom. 6:14) is in the context of God’s sanctifying power (Rom. 6:1-14).

The mindset of modern-day grace teachers seems to suggest that there is no room for godly discipleship and mentoring. Instead of really discipling people and teaching them how to make better decisions, and avoid certain taboos that will destroy their personal lives and families, we must now say, "Do whatever you think is right. You are free to choose for yourself." That's like telling a newborn baby to go out and get a job and earn their own living. This whole idea of free choice under grace is exaggerated and taken to an extreme level today. Whatever happened to discipling young converts and giving them the initial guidance they need in their decision-making process?

Let us remember one thing. Living under grace does not mean we are free to live any way we choose. Nor does grace mean that God will smile on us no matter what we do. Grace never gives us a license to sow to our flesh (Gal. 6:8), do wrong, act in a manner that the Scripture clearly condemns, and which offends God's holiness (2 Cor. 6:14-17). Many Christians have a lopsided and warped view of what it means to live under grace. They have forgotten that grace not only liberates them from the laws condemnation and bondage (Rom. 7:6; 8:15; 2 Cor. 3:17) but also enslaves them to another Master that they must obey (James 1:1; Col. 4:1). The epistle of 1 Corinthians 7:22 reminds us once again, that "being free," we are "Christ's servant." Paradoxically the believer is free to serve another Master! But it's our Master who frees us from the bondage of sin.

Oswald Chambers said:

"God who made the birds never made birdcages; it is men who make birdcages, and after a while we become cramped and can do nothing but chirp and stand on one leg. When we get out into God's great free life, we discover that that is the way God meant us to live "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Titus 2:11-12 explains what it means to live under grace:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

These verses teach us that a believer can violate the principle of grace, and what it means to live under grace, when they engage in ungodly living and lustful practices. Of course, many want grace truth today but they do

not want separated Bible truth. This conclusion is contrary to the teaching of grace. Living under grace means that we have a new Master to guide us and liberate our lives from sin. Many want to celebrate the liberation that grace brings into their lives (from the Mosaic Law) but forget about the purification that grace is to have upon their lives. Grace places a constraint and control over our lives and teaches us to live godly and righteously in the present world. The teaching of grace limits our liberty! It keeps us from moving into the realm of false liberty.

There are two observations from this text.

1. Grace is negative

When we reflect upon God's grace, which nailed Jesus on the cross for our own sins, it should stab us in the heart, and cause us to forsake worldly living. There is a negative side to grace in spite of what the positive grace teachers are saying. A right view of grace teaches us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts." When a man wants to look like a woman, by wearing long hair, and when a woman wants to usurp the authority of the man in the home – it is ungodliness and worldly lust. When a man wants to watch immodestly dressed women on TV - it is ungodliness and worldly lust. When a woman wants to read smut books and gossip all over creation – it is ungodliness and worldly lust. Grace will eventually teach us to get rid of the skeletons in our closet.

2. Grace is positive

There is a positive side of grace. Grace will teach us to do positive things such as learning to "live soberly, righteously, and godly" in our present society. The word "soberly" speaks of self control and "righteously" speaks of living in an upright manner, while the word "godly" means to live in a way which reflects God's nature which is holy, loving, pure, kind, gentle, patient, longsuffering, and merciful. Listen, grace wants us to get rid of the negative things in our lives and create the new positive godly virtues in our life. Grace wants to clean us up! Grace reforms our lives! A right view of what God has done for us through Calvary's cross causes us to forsake sinful and ungodly habits and manifest new godly traits in our lives.

Grace won't give us this care free attitude that many Christian have today which say, "God will accept me no matter what I do." What a total

misunderstanding of grace! Grace needs to melt your heart if you think that way. It's true that grace does mean that God accepts us, but it does not mean God accepts what we do! Let's get real! Grace teaches us to hate all sin and ungodly practices. Grace truly does free us; it does not contaminate us and cause us to become worldly in our approach to life (1 John 2:15-17). I'm deeply disturbed at the false freedom that is being promoted today in our churches.

The mindset that freedom (liberty) and maturity, which comes from living under grace, involves being able to handle a little alcohol, a little tobacco, a little nudity, a little immodesty, a little cussing, a little rock music, "and such like" (Gal. 5:21), is an absurdity. It is grace gone wild!! This is not freedom. It sets us up for bondage. Grace does not set us up for spiritual defeat; it sets us up for holy living. It steers us away from the questionable and motivates us to live above reproach (Phil. 1:9-10).

Ernest Pickering has wisely said:

"The New Testament is not all about what we can do, but it is also about what we cannot do."

There is a current misunderstanding of grace in many Christian circles. Let's set the record straight. Grace does not make us liberal; grace liberates us from sin. The instruction and discipline of grace does not grant us a free-for-all lifestyle. Living under grace results in believers practicing holiness (1 Pet. 1:14-16; 2 Cor. 7:1), separating from and not supporting apostasy or unrighteousness in any way (2 Cor. 6:14-17); respecting their bodies as the dwelling place of God (1 Cor. 6:19-20), repudiating fleshly lusts (1 Pet. 2:11), refusing to conform to the cultural patterns of the world (Rom. 12:2), not fellowshiping with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11) and proving all things (1 Thess. 5:21). All these verses appear in the grace dispensation and are part of what it means to live under grace! There is a negative side to grace!

Let's set aside all of this marketing and malarkey that is being promoted today, which equates grace to never judging, never speaking out against sin, and never hurting the feelings of someone else. Look at where this has taken the local churches today and how it has allowed worldliness to filter into the lives of new converts. The whole mindset and idea that there are no rules or guidelines, since we live under the grace of the New Testament, is a travesty or mockery of what it means to live under grace. The message

of grace helps us to build parameters around our lives, so we can be liberated from sin, and present ourselves to God as holy vessels (Rom. 12:1-2), which are fit for the Master's use (2 Tim. 2:21). When grace is at work in my life, it will correct me, and set my feet on a path that will lead me to a new way of life. It will lead to Christian virtues – not vices. It will lead to higher ground – not lower ground.

“Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith on heaven's tableland,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”

2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Grace takes us from the past (“old things are passed away”) and moves us into the present (“behold, are things are become new”). This “old things” refer to our unsaved old way of life under sin. It means that we have been removed from our old position in Adam, when we were a slave to sin, separated from God, and living independently from God (Rom. 6:6). As a result, everything has been made “new,” which speaks of a new position in Christ out of which a new life, nature, and newfound freedom from sin occurs. This verse is speaking in the past tense. God has already done this remarkable transformation for us, when we were born again, but now it must be practiced in our daily living and conduct. This saving and surgical transformation of the new birth should be reflected in our everyday living. Grace changes our old patterns of living and makes us into a new person, an individual that has new motives, new virtues, new drives, new goals, new fellowships, new music, and new clothing. Grace covers everything from A-Z. It builds parameters around our lives so we can live a new way of life.

Winston Churchill once said:

“I spent the first twenty-five years of my life wanting more freedom, and the next twenty-five years of my life wanting more structure, and the last twenty-five years of my life realizing that structure is freedom.”

Freedom does not mean the absence of commands, constraints, or certain moral absolutes. Suppose a skydiver at 10,000 feet announces to the rest

of the group, "I'm not using a parachute this time. I want freedom!" The fact is that a skydiver is constrained by a greater law--the law of gravity. But only when the skydiver chooses the "constraint" of the parachute, he is free to enjoy the exhilaration and freedom of gliding through the air. God's moral laws and the New Testament commandments act the same way: they restrain, but they are absolutely necessary, so we can enjoy real freedom or liberty from sin.

The Holy Spirit uses the New Covenant document to free us from sin's slavery and power ("the perfect law of liberty" – James 1:25). Freedom actually means we can follow all the New Testament commands in the context of grace living, by allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us in truth (John 16:13) and empower us to live according to God's holy standards (Gal. 5:25), so we can be transformed by the Spirit into Christlikeness "from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). What we need to remember and reinforce is that all true freedom has limits.

Tom Landry said:

"Most successful football players are free to perform at their best only when they know what the expectations are, where the limits stand. I see this as a biblical principle that also applies to life, a principle our society as a whole has forgotten; you can't enjoy true freedom without limits."

There is no such thing as freedom without responsibility! Whoever or whatever promises you freedom, without adding self control (Gal. 5:23; 1 Cor. 9:24-27), will lead you into bondage and misery. The Prodigal Son wanted freedom, but he didn't want responsibility. As a result, he lost his true freedom, and ended up in the pig pen (Luke 15: 12-16). There can be no true freedom without discipline and responsibility. Satan offered to Eve a false freedom that lacked responsibility (Gen. 3:1, 4-5) and basically said, "Exercise your freedom. You can get away with it!" The trouble is this; we never get away with sin, and sin is not true freedom. Sin robs us of true liberty. Don't let the devil deceive you into thinking that you can label sin as freedom.

The point is this. Freedom from the Mosaic Law does not mean antinomianism (no law). Freedom from the Law does not mean we are free to live without any commands or Scriptural directives. Total freedom is actually a new form of bondage. It becomes anarchy. Our freedom is based upon liberty from sin (Rom. 6:14; 8:2) – not liberty from all standards and

Bible separation. *The grace way of living is still the Bible way of living.* Grace still has rules to follow; however, the way all standards and rules are followed “under grace” (Rom. 6:14) is in the context of God’s sanctifying power (Rom. 6:1-14).

Therefore, freedom that does not implement God’s instructions and commands for holy New Testament living leads to bondage and sinful departure from God’s will. I find it interesting that none of the New Testament commands (1 Thess. 4:2; 1 John 5:2; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; 1 John 2:15-17) or Scriptural principles (2 Thess. 2:15) promote the strict regulatory laws of the Mosaic code (Col. 2:16-17) and the New Testament allows freedom of choice in regards to amoral areas of living (Rom. 14:1-5) and giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:1-23; 9:7, 14-15) as we will see in our final point. We do possess freedom in our eating, living, and giving as long as God’s New Testament commands, Bible principles, and moral laws don’t condemn our conduct. However, true freedom never means there are no strings attached to us!

There is a fable of a kite that once said to itself, “If I could just get rid of that man who is holding me back, then I could fly above the clouds and kiss the stars.” One day the string broke. Now at last the kite was free to fly without any restrictions and soar to heights that it never had gone before. But much to its surprise, it did not rise above its present height. The kite had not realized a fact of aerodynamics: the string holding a kite down is the same string holding it up. In a similar way, God’s Biblical commands and good Bible standards, which are formulated from the timeless principles of the Word of God, do not hinder our Christian liberty or freedom because they hold us down. On the contrary, good Biblical guidelines or standards, when applied to our lives and coupled with the Spirit’s power, actually discipline our lives and hold us up, while at the same time they hold us down! Praise God for this! God’s commands and Bible-based standards can keep us from collapsing in our spiritual walk.

Where are you at in your spiritual walk with God these days? Are you living a pure life? Is God pleased with what you are doing? Yes, grace will always accept you as a person (Rom. 8:34-39), but grace will not always accept your actions (Titus 2:11). Grace will transform us! Grace will reform us! Grace will make us holy! Maybe you need to take inventory and make some changes in your life. You may know that some specific areas of your

personal life, both inwardly and outwardly, need to be changed. Let grace do its work in your heart and life today.

B. Legalism

Today the bugaboo word of “legalism” is used by modern evangelicals as a scare tactic to keep Christians from practicing balanced Bible separation from the world and apostasy (1 John 2:15-17) and stop attending a church that promotes Bible Fundamentalism, as taught in the Bible, and which promotes standards to live by. Legalism is used as a plot which keeps God’s saints from experiencing true Christian freedom from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Legalism has become an accepted theological cuss word for New Evangelicals to use against separatists who want to practice Biblical separation and standards. For instance, when a believer denounces devilish music that mixes the world with the church and separates from ecumenical evangelism, he is termed as a hair-splitting legalist.

A wrong view and teaching about legalism has invaded the church since the 1970’s which on a large scale has given many Christians a contemporary false freedom to live lives of questionable conduct and practice. The standard taboos of previous generations of Christians are seen as archaic, such as listening to rock music, dancing, drinking alcohol, wearing tattoos, long hair on men, attending the movie theater, watching nudity and other questionable conduct on TV. The whole idea of standards and rules linked to both living and church ministry is said to be legalistic. Many raise the flag of legalism up the pole when we should raise the flag of “testimony” up the flag pole and remember that in order to express a testimony before God and the world there will be standards that we must erect in our lives.

1 Timothy 4:12 says:

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word (what we say), in conversation (what we do), in charity (what we love), in spirit (what we are), in faith (what we believe), in purity (what we desire).”

It’s assumed that whenever we have rules, any kind of rules that must be followed, we are promoting legalism, which is defined as implementing rules, as the Pharisees did, in order to elevate themselves as “holier than

thou” and promote an unscriptural way of living. Great lengths are taken by modern grace teachers to denounce the use of all standards, rules, and restraints. This has led many Christians down a path of worldly living and heartache. They have been following a false freedom which ultimately takes them down the road of carnality and careless living.

Let me say several things at this point. It's not legalism to live by spiritual virtues (2 Pet. 1:5-9), values (Heb. 11:24-27), and valid Biblical commands (John 14:15) and principles (2 Thess. 2:15). God's Word sanctifies us (John 15:3; 17:17) as we apply it to our daily lives through structured living. How can possessing rules of conduct constitute legalism? God gave many commands (1 John 5:2-3) and Bible principles to follow in the New Testament. He even includes various lists to follow (Gal. 5:19-23; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 5:11-15; 2 Tim. 3:1-17; 1 Pet. 4:3-5). If we don't follow the commands, Bible principles, and lists that God gave to us, and apply them to our daily living and decisions, then we will not live lawfully (2 Tim. 2:5), or play by God's rules, and become worldly in our approach to living. Friend, the Bible calls us to a life of discipline (1 Cor. 9:24-27), which means we must put up parameters and make rules and guidelines to keep us within the boundary of true freedom. Discipline is not legalism in spite of what some “freedom” teachers are proclaiming today.

Something else needs to be said at this point. Believers in the New Testament were told not to attend certain places (1 Cor. 10:20), commit various sins (1 Cor. 6:18, 7:1; Galatians 5:19-23), practice specific disorderly actions (1 Cor. 11:20-21; 1 Cor. 14; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; Acts 15:28-29), and dress in a certain immodest or ostentatious way (1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3). This would indicate the need for preachers to establish some general corporate standards for assembly life (Heb. 13:17) and also that church people should establish personal standards for their own lives, so they can accommodate these Scriptural teachings in their everyday living. In other words, a believer must not do these carnal things, or else they will become worldly, and not live a consecrated and holy life, as a Christian, in various areas of conduct.

Today, if any person imposes any kind of list of rules or regulations upon others and tells them what not to do, they are seen as a legalist. This is not true nor is it a right assessment of legalism. If this is the case, then our employers are legalists because they impose a list of general rules to follow at work, our parents our legalists when they place parameters

around our lives, and our spiritual mentors who disciplined us, and told us to stop drinking, listening to rock music, and living in sin, are legalists. It also means that every pastor who faithfully applies the doctrine of Bible separation to the lives of his people is a legalist.

Pastor David Moss makes this comment, in his book, *social vices*:

“The lists provided by separationists serve as sources of advice in determining what is clean and what is unclean. Mature believers who provide such lists in no way suggest that a person can get to heaven by meticulously following their so-called “man-made” rules. Rather, they are providing insight based on their knowledge and experience to growing Christians as to the kind of activities which have the potential of preventing them from possessing their vessel in sanctification and honor. This is precisely what the Apostles and Elders were doing when they told the Gentile believers to abstain from meats offered to idols. This was what the church fathers were doing when they instructed Christians not to attend the theater.”

If legalism involves the presence of rules and commands, then God is biggest legalist that has ever lived, since He gave 613 commands in the Old Testament. The presence of rules and regulations do not necessarily promote the practice of legalism. Neither rules nor regulations in and of themselves promote legalism. It's actually one's attitudes toward rules and regulations that create legalism. Are we basing our entire salvation, sanctification, and security of salvation on a certain list that we are following? If so, then we are practicing legalism. Are we using a list of regulations to compare our overall spirituality with other saints and boost our own ego or pride? If so, we are seeing the fruits of legalism manifesting themselves in our lives? Legalism is essentially obeying rules and regulations without possessing a proper relationship with God.

In short, legalism is not caused by merely possessing a list of spiritual guidelines as so many suggest today. Rather, it comes to life when we have a *wrong attitude* toward any list of rules or guidelines. If we expect to be saved or made holy by a cold outward compliance to a list of rules, forgetting about God's saving and sanctifying grace (Titus 2:11-12) and the inner power and working of the Spirit in our lives, then we become legalistic in our manner of living.

Did you know that the term legalism is not even a Bible word? It is not found in Scripture anywhere. However, the concept of legalism is derived from following the legal letter of the Mosaic Law.

1. The meaning of legalism

Legalism has a two-fold meaning. The raw form or basic and underlying teachings of legalism cannot be missed. First, legalism is the teaching of salvation by works\law (Acts 15:1; Gal. 3:3; 5:1-9). Legalism raises its ugly head when a person attempts to earn and merit their salvation through compliance to a system of works. It's the way of human effort as it relates to the matter of a person's salvation before God. Second, legalism is the teaching of sanctification that is sought through works\law. Legalism involves self-discipline, self-effort, and self-sanctification or human determination as the primary means to holy living (Ex. 19:8 – "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do"). In respect to the Christian life, legalism is dependence upon outward fleshly performance for victory, instead of the inward assistance of the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-4). Legalism manifests itself in cold compliance to outward externals instead of the inner working of the Spirit (Romans chapter 7:14-25 – the "I" principle). Legalism is neither a means of salvation nor the instrument of sanctification as seen in the experience of Paul the apostle. Legalism is using the Mosaic code unlawfully. It involves following the Mosaic Law (and law in general) in order to produce a person's salvation (Acts 15:1; Phil. 3:9), sanctification (Rom. 7:6-25), and secure one's final acceptance before God (Gal. 3:2-3; 5:4).

2. The marks of legalists

There is a difference between the definition of legalism and the practice of legalists. Those who practice legalism (salvation and sanctification by law) usually invent their own ex-cathedra rules and commands to follow which burden down people in their daily living (Mark 7:1-13). The creation of extra biblical rules, which have no Scriptural basis or Biblical guidelines, have always been the marks of those who practice legalism.

Those who are quick to compare Fundamental preachers, who warn against basic worldly taboos and ecumenical practices, to the Pharisees, should remember the outlandish and silly things that the Pharisees were actually teaching. The ex-cathedra oral traditions of the legalists, later to

be recorded in the Jewish Talmud and Mishna (an exhaustive collection of laws and guidelines for observing the Law of Moses), burdened the people down with many minute details of living (Matt. 23:4). Their rules became a dizzy array of regulations that kept people under strict adherence to traditions instead of God's commands and true Biblical principles. Perhaps the original intent of the Pharisees was good as they sought to properly apply the Law to the lives of the people. They wanted to make the commandments practical and applicable to their lives. But eventually the application became outlandishly stretched to the point where the Talmud forbid walking more than 2,000 cubits on the Sabbath except between one's own personal possessions!

The Babylonian Talmud is so comprehensive and detailed that an English edition of this work fills 36 volumes and almost 36,000 pages! The extremes to which the rabbis went bordered on the insane. Josephus records how it was forbidden to stuff a little piece of wax in the hole of a container to stop the liquid from running out since this was viewed as working on the Sabbath. Nor could a person wipe a wound on the Sabbath. A man could not move a sheaf in his field on the Sabbath but he could lay a spoon on the sheaf and in order to remove the spoon, he could also indirectly remove the sheaf on which the spoon lay.

One can hardly compare a fundamental pastor, who is denouncing worldly rock concerts and immodest dress, as being in the same category of the Pharisees. To do so is not only an insult but also a total misunderstanding of the actions and conclusions of the Pharisees. Practical Bible application to the lives of God's saints is the preacher's prerogative and privilege (2 Tim. 4:2). However, it seems that those who want to go beyond what God's Word teaches and run peoples lives, begin to erect their own rules and regulations, which become a standard to govern and mark the overall spirituality of other people (Luke 18:10-12).

The Bible warns about comparing ourselves with others (2 Cor. 10:12). We might not smoke, chew, or go with the girls who do, but there are other various sins that can overtake our lives. It's never wise or right to compare our spirituality with others. Those who practice strict legalism, as the Pharisees, do not possess a right relationship with Christ (Mark 7:6; Phil. 3:10) and normally possess a cold, insensitive, unloving, prideful, and competitive heart toward people (Luke 11:46; 18:9-13).

Remember that there can be a difference between those who are genuine legalists (believe that salvation comes by following commands) and those who may practice some of the marks or fruits of legalism in their approach to living (the creation of unnecessary rules, comparing oneself with others, and the spirit of pride). The modern legalist basis his spirituality on following traditions or manmade ideas, rules, methods, and preferences, which have nothing to do with spiritual living. He also thinks that following a certain list will guarantee his spirituality. Things such as no shopping or eating out on Sunday, no jewelry or make-up on women, no TV or Internet service, no pants on women, no buying products in a store that sells alcohol or tobacco, no radio, no attending sports games, no light bulbs, no electricity, no rubber tires on tractors, no tractors, no red cars, no chrome showing on cars, no cars, etc. can become legalistic approach to life for some.

Of course, these personal practices and preferences are not necessarily legalistic, unless they become the sole basis for one's spirituality, and when they are imposed on others as absolutes for godly living. Manmade traditions are not the same thing as Biblical traditions, which are based upon clear Scriptural commands and principles given to govern or regulate our conduct (2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6). With this being said, let's consider a church list.

A church can have standards for membership without being legalistic:

- If it does not create a list of standards as the way of salvation (Acts 15:1; Phil. 3:9) and the sole identifying mark of one's sanctification (Gal. 5:22-23)
- If it does not promote following a particular list of regulations through self effort and discipline (Rom. 7:7-25).
- If it does not use a list of standards as a way to compare one's spirituality with other assemblies or saints (2 Cor. 10:12)
- If it does not burden people with unbiblical, unreasonable, and unbending rules which have no relevance to godly living (Matt. 23:4).

Here is a simple summary to remember. In true Bible *separation* Scriptural commands and principles are understood (2 Cor. 6:14-17; 2 Thess. 2:15) and external standards are implemented, both corporately and privately, in people's lives, to declare a stand, uphold reverence, and maintain a disciplined pattern of holy living. In *legalism* commands are followed for

both salvation and sanctification, though human achievement, while external manmade standards are implemented, which have no Scriptural basis. However, in *libertinism* Biblical commands and principles are forgotten or minimized and external standards are generally despised (Judges 17:6). The third description seems to be where the vast majority of the church is moving today. The stage is at least set for Christians to depart further away from clear Biblical commands and Scriptural guidelines which promote group and personal standards for reverent church services and holy living.

Today churches that still have standards and preachers who denounce certain actions of questionable conduct are normally labeled as legalists by the modern evangelical community. There are several points that need to be made concerning these false assessments.

First, preachers and those in leadership are given the authority to promote various regulatory standards and expect their people to uphold them (Acts 15:29; 1 Cor. 10:20; 1 Cor. 11:20-21; 1 Cor. 14; 1 Timothy 2:9-12; 1 Timothy 3:1-12; 1 Peter 3:3; 5:5; 2 Tim. 4:2; 2 Cor. 13:10; Heb. 13:7, 17). There is no such thing as radical individualism (autonomy) seen in New Testament living which rejects and neglects church authority (Heb. 13:17), discipleship training (Matt. 28:19-20), and godly example (Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:6).

All of these things involve directing young converts in the way of holiness and teaching them that certain places (dance halls, rock concerts) and practices (porn, drugs, listening to rock music, CCM, etc.) should be “off limits” for born-again saints. The very fact that leaders are responsible for the spiritual and moral training of the believers (2 Tim. 2:2) necessitates practical instructions and guidelines for personal holiness. This has always been true in the matter of discipleship. Living under grace does not mean that “every man is for himself” and that he makes all of his own decisions about every spiritual decision without receiving godly discipleship, spiritual training and considering Biblical authority.

Second, the Holy Spirit can use the teaching, discipline and wisdom of spiritual leaders, within a cultural setting, to instill Biblical and “necessary” standards in order to aid other believers in their walk with the Lord and create unity among the saints (Acts 15:28). The Bible says

that in the multitude of counselors there is much safety (see Prov. 11:14; 24:6). Pastors and instructors seek to give out counsel and wisdom as they teach and apply certain Biblical principles to the lives of Christians. After all, wisdom involves the *right application* of truth to our lives and learning how to apply truth to our lives is part of the growing process (Col. 1:9). Instead of depriving people of how to think for themselves the application of certain standards to the lives of Christians can actually become an important learning experience for God's people, which can enable them to make many more detailed decisions that revolve around the issue of holiness and decency ("that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect, will of God" - Rom. 12:2).

A general application of Bible principles to the lives of God's people will not dwarf the minds of Christians and keep them from being able to think for themselves and make decisions in their everyday lives ("prove all things" - 1 Thess. 5:21). Please note that when some choices are made for Christians, it does not mean that all choices are made for them, which cover every area of their personal lives and in all areas of personal conduct. Separation does not standardize all decisions as modern evangelicals seem to think. There are areas of latitude and room for disagreement, but the main teachings of Bible separation (2 Cor. 6:14-17), with proper application, will be clearly taught and maintained in Fundamentalism.

Third, the Holy Spirit does guide people in the truth and application of God's Word to their lives (John 14:26; 16:13) as He writes the righteous character of the Law upon their heart (Rom. 8:4; 1 Cor. 3:3). But this New Testament grace feature of the Spirit's inner teaching ministry does not do away with the necessity for sound Biblical teaching (2 Tim. 2:15) nor does it overrule the establishment of standards based upon the truth of God's Word, which is part of our instruction in righteous living and growth (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Standards based upon Biblical principles, which are clearly developed from the Scripture, can be confirmed in the heart of Christians, through the Spirit's inward teaching ministry. In fact, both Biblical and arbitrary standards can be followed in the context of grace, as the Spirit confirms upon the hearts of Christians their need to maintain purity and unity among the saints – a unity based upon truth, humility, and love (Eph. 4:3).

John Miles, the president of the Bible Institute where I attended, once said this about standards and rules: “Rules are made in times of quiet to protect and guide us in times of stress. Rules are simply goals, fulfilled through God’s power, that can help discipline and direct us to God-honoring lives. Rules can make group living more pleasant, declare a stand, and help establish order in lives that are undisciplined.”

This statement is a breath of fresh air in the midst of a movement and day when all standards are being swept away and called legalistic. The whole idea that standards are a form of legalism and that they become “grace killers” (destroying our freedom of living under grace) is a New Evangelical cover-up or smokescreen that is really designed to be a “fundamentalist killer.”

Chuck Swindoll wrote a book in 1990 called “The Grace Awakening.” In the book he talks about believers being delivered from a works/salvation and living a life of grace toward other people. I commend him for this part of the book. But the main thrust of the book is that there needs to be a “Grace awakening” that takes people away from the old taboos, which he calls legalistic standards, and essentially allows them the freedom to choose Christian Rock Music, go to ecumenical rallies with liberals, as he does, attend the Movie Theater, smoke, dance, socially drink alcohol, wear bikinis, and watch questionable content on TV. Since when have these things become freedom? These things have nothing to do with grace or liberty.

The mentality of modern-day grace teachers is that all rules hold us back and keep us from experiencing the “grace way” of living which is the free lifestyle of living without religious taboos, rules, laws, and judgment. Rules are said to be “grace killers” that keep us from living free from rules during the grace dispensation. Well, it depends on how you define freedom and liberty and it depends on how you perceive rules and regulations.

I am going to give you a general overview of this book and the general mindset of modern-day grace teaching, which began to overtake the churches during the 1970’s, and which today has spread like a prairie fire among the local churches, condoning irreverence, godless music, and acceptable vices in the local churches. Let me say that a true “Grace Awakening” needs to occur in the local churches today – it’s not an awaking to rock music, tattoos, body piercing, long hair on men, and short

skirts on women, but an awakening to sin, godlessness, and unrighteousness. I am very tired of modern grace teachers leading young converts back into the world system and not giving them the sanctified teaching they need to lead them out of the realm of sin.

Titus 2:11-12 once again reads:

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

This is not an attack upon Chuck Swindoll’s character. It’s neither right nor Christian to do this. I have no personal animosity toward the author of this book. But his book has lead many Christians into what we have called a “false freedom” instead of a path of separation of holiness and discipline in the Christian life. When a man exposes a book to the Christian public he should be open to scrutiny for writing error and making exaggerated claims about Fundamentalism.

In his book Swindoll uses many catch phrases and exaggerations for the sake of effect. He talks about extreme cases where some people were hounded by control freaks and how they were so thankful to be freed from this type of lifestyle. Certainly no true fundamental pastor will ever seek to become a tyrant over the lives of his people (1 Pet. 5:3) so to make a caricature of the whole movement by the antics of some of the pastors is certainly misleading and unfair. Let me just say there are “kooks” and unbalanced people in any movement, whether is Fundamentalism or New Evangelicalism, which repudiates Bible separation. There are always those individuals who have twisted concepts about personal separation. However, it certainly is not accurate to depict the majority of godly pastors as overbearing dictators over the lives of God’s people. We must remember to never throw the baby out with the bathwater.

The “free thinkers” of today, like Chuck Swindoll, normally present two widely divergent or extreme options and ignore the possibility of a third - a balanced view. They paint and ugly picture that if one has any standards (do’s and don’ts), they are living a rigid and grim life, whereas those who live apart from rules, are free Christians. It never occurred to them that Christians can possess rules without rules overtaking their lives and trapping them in some kind of legalistic dungeon. Any person can set up

two extremes as the only options available with no ground left between them.

Chuck Swindoll's arguments are as follows:

- Evangelical Christianity is widely characterized by joylessness brought about by excessive rule-making.

In attacking Fundamentalism, which speaks out against worldly vices, Swindoll talks about how most Christians are being victimized by a system that steals our joy. We are told that manmade rules are "joy-killers" and those who defend standards of living which they believe are based upon the Bible are in his own words "cold-hearted" (pg. 12). He talks about lists which rob people of joy and freedom to express themselves and cites Romans chapter six as an expression of this freedom. Church sights Romans chapter six to speak about our freedom. However, Romans chapter six is dealing with freedom from sin – not freedom from a list that is against worldly taboos. Swindoll wrongly applies a list of separated standards to sin based upon Romans chapter six. The truth is that Romans chapter six is not teaching that believers are free from Bible standards but that they are freed from sin.

If a person is following rules to merit their personal salvation or relies on a list of rules for their actual sanctification, then they can become a joy-killer. But Swindoll seems to think that everyone who has a list has lost his true Christian joy. Of course, this is actually an absurdity. Our joy is never based upon adherence to a list of taboos or standards but it promotes inwardly in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22; 1 Pet. 1:8).

Were the great expositors and men of the past, who preached against worldly sins, such as dancing, drinking, attending the Movie Theater, and such like, joy killers? One must wonder if the Puritans, John Bunyan, and men like R. A. Torrey, D.L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Harry Ironside, Vance Havner, Bob Jones Sr. and other giants of the past, were joy killers. The rationale that preaching against worldly taboos and teaching Bible separation stifles the Spirit's ministry and joy in our hearts is both illogical and bizarre.

It should be noted that the New or modern Evangelicals (comprising part of Christianity) who criticize the standards of Fundamentalist Churches have

their own set of standards. Even the most relaxed of churches do not yet have choir members singing in bikinis or allow their youth pastor to share marijuana with the teenagers. They may not like the place where we draw the line, but they cannot legitimately argue that there should be no lines and standards!

Here is the point. The goal is never to get anyone to live by a list but to help people live by Biblical convictions (Dan. 1:8; Heb. 11:24) which a list may highlight in some measure. There is a vast difference in having rules and living by rules. Our life should revolve around Christ and His life (Phil. 1:21; 3:10) and not some external conformity to a list of regulations. Christianity isn't simply living by a list of rules. However, while Christianity is not essentially a list of rules, there are rules! The Christian life is not devoid of a structured way of living. There is a need for certain parameters are built around our lives. Christians need boundaries and practical parameters today as they live in a world of carnality, confusion, and contemporary culture. If we refuse to love the world and not participate with its folly (1 John 2:15-17) we will be forced to erect certain standards and parameters around our lives which will enable us to live holy. We must apply God's truth to our lives by building boundaries around our lives, so we are not overcome by the world system.

- Christians ought not to judge one another since this is a violation of the principle of grace.

I'm surprised that Chuck would make a statement like this and that many believers accept these statements with no effort to ascertain whether or not they are really accurate. The Bible does not call us to be a *heart* judge (judging the inner motives of people - 1 Cor. 4:3-5 - since only God knows what's on people's minds); a *gossiping* judge (backbiting, gossip and constant nitpicking and faultfinding - Gal. 5:15; James 4:11; 5:8-9), the *hypocritical* judge (judging by unbiblical standards and judging with open sin and scandal in your own life - Matt. 7:1, 5), a *scrupulous* judge (judging by personal convictions and ignoring personal liberty - Romans 14:10-13 – judging those who differ from us on matters that are morally indifferent or non-essential), a *partial* judge (judging people by their social status - James 2:1-4), an *ignorant* judge (judging superficially without having all the facts - John 7:24), a *competitive* judge (judging others so as to make yourself look more spiritual - 2 Cor. 10:12), and an *obnoxious* judge (judging in a manner that is unkind, unloving, and unconcerned - Col. 4:6, "let your speech be

always with grace”). The Bible does not tell us it’s wrong to judge. It simply says we must judge in a proper or righteous way (John 7:24). We must remember that we are called upon to “prove all things” (1 Thess. 5:21). We are to judge corrupt living (Matt. 7:16-20); worldly and unruly actions of brothers (2 Thess. 3:6-7, 14; 1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Tim. 4:10), the extreme forms of sin within the church (1 Cor. 5:1, 7, 12) and reproofing the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11 – “reprove”). If we are only out to be nice, mild-mannered folk, who never say anything negative, we should either change our name or change our calling!

Judgment is to be a natural part of our daily living, as discerning believers, to go throughout their normal day-to-day routines approving those things that are “excellent” or superior (Phil. 1:10). This judgment does not necessarily involve personal confrontation with every person that we come in contact with who we might disagree with. Rather, it manifests itself as a settled conviction in our own heart as we walk with the Lord in the light of His holiness and Word (1 John 1:7). Psalm 119:66 says, “Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.” Someone remarked: “The current popular notion that judging others is in itself a sin leads to such inappropriate maxims as 'I'm okay and you're okay.' It encourages a conspiracy of moral indifference which says, 'If you never tell me that anything I'm doing is wrong, I'll never tell you that anything you're doing is wrong.'" There is a place for righteous judgment. It can be done in grace and with uncompromising allegiance to truth and holiness. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov. 27:6).

- It is a violation of the grace principle for believers to impose life-style standards on others. This is legalism.

Chuck makes the bold claim that pastors and preachers who preach against worldly taboos and place various standards of living on others are conspirators who want to enslave others and keep them from living free. This is an exaggeration which does a great disservice to many Christian leaders who are seeking to guide their people according to truth and righteousness. Swindoll is obsessed with the lists that someone may encounter when joining a church or serving in a local church. His claim is that any manmade list, which is not found in the Bible, becomes a legalistic attempt to run the lives of other people. This again is an exaggeration since the vast majority of fundamental pastors who have sought to hold the line in

matters of personal separation are not legalistic in the approach to living. Chuck wrongly uses Galatians 2:4-5, as an example of preachers who try and control their people with lists. However, this text is referring to false teachers getting people to follow the Mosaic Law for salvation and final acceptance before God. In all my years of ministry, I have never personally met a fundamental pastor who actually thought that following some general rules on a list would save his people, or make them perfectly holy in their overall manner of living. True legalism involves following a list of rules in order to obtain a salvation and sanctification, which is based upon human determination, works, and commitment (Acts 15:1; Phil. 3:9; Rom. 7:7-25; Ex. 19:8).

Myron Houghten has written:

“A distinction must be made between lists and legalism. It is certainly true that believers differ on their lists, and we must evaluate each item on a list in light of relevant scriptural teaching. But disagreeing with fellow believers over whether or not Scripture supports their lists has nothing to do with legalism. Legalism is related to why one should obey a list rather than to the rightness or wrongness of the list.”

If we do not obey a list for the stated reasons above there is no reason why we can't conform to a list of basic standards for group fellowship and even for personal living. Here is the point. If you don't stand for something, you will fall for everything! Modern evangelicalism has basically fallen for everything that has come down the pike. Why? Its' because they have not applied and implemented the commands and enduring Biblical principles of Bible separation to their ministries, people, and own personal lives. Without developing standards in ministry and our own personal lives, which are reflected in Biblical command and principles, we will be open target for the enemy.

A person can follow church and personal standards for several reasons:

- a. In obedience to God (1 John 2:4; 3:22)
- b. In obedience to authority (Heb. 13:17)
- c. In love for the saints (Gal. 5:13)
- d. In the promotion of unity (Acts 15:28-29; Rom. 14:14-17)

- Each believer should be able to determine his own life-style individually and creatively without fear of rebuke from other believers.

Here is another major point of Swindoll. His claim is that it's a violation of the grace principle to make applications of scriptural principles to specific life situations in an authoritative manner. Neither preachers or others should judge the actions of others. Everyone should be able to do what they want to do whenever they want to do it. This sounds like the day of the Judges when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). He says, "Being a person of grace requires letting go of others" (p. 146). However, we have seen that grace does not let go of others; it teaches others to live soberly and righteously in the present world (Titus 2:11-12). Furthermore, godly pastors are given the mandate to teach God's Word, which involves the application of Bible texts to everyday living (1 Tim. 6:2-4). Also, God's people are to exhort and at times rebuke others so they will live for God (Heb. 10:25). "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov. 27:6). The idea that preachers or others can't say anything negative to a fellow saint about his lifestyle choices is absolutely unscriptural. Paul leaves the door open for preachers to enumerate on the "such like" works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:21-23.

2 Timothy 4:2 gives preachers the permission to:

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Titus 2:15 also commands:

"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."

The problem in our churches today is that nobody wants to be told what to do! And most preachers have a much easier job in not telling their people how to live godly. They candy-coat their sermons and are "scaredy-cat" preachers.

According to Chuck's grace philosophy a pastor cannot legislate or force anything on anyone else. In other words, it's wrong to tell a person to stop smoking, going to the dance hall, dressing in bikinis, listening to rock music and wearing immodest clothing. Chuck places handcuffs on preachers, who are willing to speak out against social vices and ecumenicalism,

informing them that they cannot apply the doctrine of Bible separation to the lives of their people, unless they want to become like the Pharisees and legalists mentioned in the Bible. This certainly is classic New Evangelicalism. Swindoll claims that any pastor who tries to preach against certain social vices and point at others is a “dictator,” “manipulator” and “controller” over the lives of people. In other words, they are doing what they are doing for selfish and prideful reasons. It does not seem to occur to Swindoll that many who believe in preaching against social vices and who have high standards for local leadership in the church are seeking to honor God and His Word.

According to Chuck, Bible preaching separatist preachers are engaged in an evil plot to ensnare others and keep them from having “fun” in their Christian lives. He claims that every person should be “free to choose” (p. 139) his own way in life and “Give people room to make up their minds” (P. 163). He then talks about how every person has different tastes, entertainments, clothing, opinions, and styles of life. He talks about “The Grace to Let Others Be” in one of his chapters in order to articulate his philosophy. The question we must ask is what Swindoll terms as fun and where he finds in the Bible that pastors should never challenge their people to live according to Biblical commands and principles.

The issue is not whether a person is having fun, or whether he has a different taste, opinion, or style of living, the issue is whether or not this lifestyle and taste is appropriate in the light of scriptural teaching (1 John 1:7). Swindoll appeals to Romans 14:1-6 and talks about the “doubtful things” mentioned in this text which are food and special Sabbath days under the Mosaic Law. Chuck seems to forget or completely ignore the fact that there are some styles of living, types of music, or articles of clothing that do not fall under the category of “doubtful things.” They are clearly outside the bounds for a believer who wants to obey God’s Word.

Swindoll talks about letting others go and enjoy their “different expressions of art and music” and their “jazz or rock” (p. 155) music. He wants everybody to follow “their own tastes” and likes without ever being put down or preached against. This kind of modern mentality is why rock music has invaded the hallowed halls of the church. Music is only seen to be a matter of personal taste. This author seems to have forgotten that the Word of God must govern our music and that moral and Biblical principles must be applied to our music, personal tastes, and preferences in life. Life is not

a “free-for-all” but should be lived out in accordance with God’s Word. The doctrine of God’s grace does not free anyone to listen to rock music, wear immodest clothing, and drink beer with the buddies. Chuck seems to suggest that grace should accept everyone for what they are and never challenge them to change their lives regarding their worldly patterns of living. Of course, grace certainly means we should be kind to others (Col. 4:6) but it does not mean that we should accept the worldly vices and departures of others (1 Thess. 5:21) and never speak out against them (Prov. 27:6).

Acts 17:11

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

Is what a person saying really true? Is what a person doing righteous? We must search the Scriptures to find out the answers to these questions. Here is something else to think about. If we really want to disciple a new convert we won’t have the mentality to “let them be” (Matt. 28:19-10). We must guide them in the truth and help them apply it to their lives as they begin their new Christian journey. It’s a terrible thing to allow a baby to fend for themselves!

Unbelievably, Swindoll gives an illustration of a legalistic preacher. His name is called Haggai. Church seems to think that Haggai was a legalistic preacher who failed in his mission. He said that Haggai the prophet was sharp, stinging, grim, and negative and was full of “sarcastic comments” and “severe admonitions” (p. 215). “So the temple remained unfinished in spite of Haggai’s persistent albeit wearisome harassment” (p. 216). Let me just say that this analysis of the prophet of Haggai hardly seems to be a respectful and appropriate treatment of an inspired prophet of God! He claims that Zechariah accomplished the task because he was “easier to live with” (p. 216).

Chuck seems to suggest that a strong denouncer of sin will not accomplish as much for God as will a gracious and likeable minister of grace. Actually, both elements are needed in preaching – the negative and positive. The negative as well as the positive is the true message of grace (Titus 2:11-12) – not Swindoll’s philosophy of grace. He concludes by saying, “Be warned, there are grace-killers on the loose.” No Chuck, there are New

Evangelical compromising preachers on the loose, and there are preachers who disagree with your philosophy of grace, who are like Haggai and the other prophets, who are not afraid to stand up against sin and preach against rock music, contemporary Christian Rock Music in the church, ecumenicalism with liberals, worldly pragmatism, and other worldly vices which are plaguing the church today. No wonder the church is worldly today. We have this mentality being promoted today which says, “Live and let live.” It’s a skewed form of Christian liberty which is not taught in the Bible that began to invade the local churches in the 70’s along with the hippie music of rebellion. We have allowed the culture to capture the church today and since the 70’s the hippie philosophy of false freedom has slowly invaded and overtaken the church.

- To cause people to feel shame is to be a grace-killer.

This sounds good and it sells books – but it absolutely false! Chuck says that when we try to shame people we are really telling them that “having fun is sinful” (p. 232). In all of my years of ministry, I do not recall any responsible Christian leader saying that it’s wrong to have fun. The question centers on this, “How should we define fun?” If having fun involves listening to the latest rock music CD, being able to drink alcohol, and go dancing with the opposite sex, then I guess we can’t have fun anymore! There is a type of fun that contrary to God’s Word. We must not ask, “Is is fun?” but “Is is holy?” The whole idea that grace-speaking people should never challenge people and seek to “bring guilt upon them” is erroneous. A wild party with lots of liquor and scantily dressed women would be fun to a worldling but is should be appalling to a Christian. A Halloween party that represents the devil and demons may be fun, but is it an appropriate place for a Christian to be? Let’s stop giving in to the culture and this warped free mentality that when we seek to liver a balanced separated life we can’t have fun.

It’s true that some preachers probably spend too much effort trying to put people on “guilt trips.” They do not balance their ministry with encouragement and positive edification (2 Tim. 4:2). However, it is necessary to rebuke the saints for their sins and bring shame upon their lives. God does shame people at times and He often uses human instruments to do so. The prophet Ezekiel did not mince words.

Ezekiel 16:52

“Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.”

Paul adds in 1 Corinthians 15:34:

“Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.”

There are times when people should feel shame and remorse for their sins and wayward living!

James 4:8-9 declares:

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.”

Grace does not rid us of all shame (Titus 2:11-12). Church Swindoll’s book called the “Grace-Awakening” has an overall warped philosophy and has omitted the discipline of grace. The sole function of grace is to liberate us from sin and worldly living. After reading this book I have asked myself this question: “Why have I never felt this great burden of “bondage” about which he writes? In all my years of schooling and ministry, I have never felt I was abused, or that I needed to be freed from what Chuck calls “the legalistic bars” of other people. I have sat under mentors in Bible College and churches who expected me to follow some basis guidelines and standards, and who exposed sinful and worldly living, but I have never felt chained in a dungeon wanting to be freed. I suspect that the freedom Chuck talks about isn’t really freedom; it’s a worldly philosophy. Church is simply barking up the New Evangelical tree.

This book was written to counter the extreme cases of pastoral abuse and those who have assumed more authority than they should and who display their authority in abusive and repulsive ways. No godly pastor who wants to really help his flock will become abusive to them as he preaches against worldly vices and sins. This book does not represent the majority of God-fearing pastors who are standing against the tide of worldliness in the church. They are not dictators or tyrants attempting to rule the lives of their

people; they are simply preaching against worldly vices and sins, which are causing the church to become leavened in these last days (2 Tim. 3:1-7). In summary, God's grace motivates people to live a holy life (1 Pet. 1:14-16), which is a theme that is conspicuously absent in Chuck Swindoll's book.

II. Freedom to decide

a. The personal preferences of Christian freedom

The Bible teaches in Romans chapter fourteen that a man should be fully persuaded in his own mind (Rom. 14:5) concerning what God's will is for his personal life. However, the persuasion or decision in a person's mind cannot bypass God's unalterable truth and unchanging moral, ethical, and Biblical principles, as found in His Word (2 Cor. 6:14-17). God's will never side-step His eternal Word! In other words, a person should not persuade themselves to do something that is contrary to God's will. Beware of this!

Romans 14:1 talks about "doubtful disputations" which are actually referring to disputable matters. A doubtful matter involves a particular action that can be done without violating any Scriptural command or Bible principle. Paul is saying that we should not squabble over things that are not made clear in the Bible. He is teaching that a believer with certain scruples is not to be welcomed into the fellowship with the intent of changing his views or opinions by quarreling with him about them. In Paul's day the issue arose between observing certain Sabbath days or whether or not it was right to eat certain meats. The questions and conflicts revolved around the Jewish Mosaic Law and how grace had revoked the Mosaic code.

Paul knew that these things would work themselves out as the church matured, but in the meantime, he taught that there was personal preference in relationship to these areas, since no moral or ethical law was being broken and overturned by eating certain meats or worshipping on a certain day. When it comes to amoral areas, where there are no clear commands or Bible principles that would condemn a certain action, one must be persuaded or convinced in his own mind about the rightness or wrongness of the action. These are not dealing with matters that are actually right or wrong but between the personal preferences or decisions that people make regarding certain activities in which they engage themselves. People are free to choose the places they want to attend and participate with those activities which are not forbidden by clear scriptural

commands or principles; however, Paul sets up two parameters that will keep the saints unified, and their own personal conscience from being wrecked, in the decision making process.

The general teaching of this passage is two-fold.

1. Never do anything to harm the work of God.

Romans 14:19-21 says:

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”

We need to value God’s work once again. Our heart and soul should be in tune with God’s people and God’s work. In this passage we find that God’s people must choose to sometimes limit their personal liberties, when they meet together with God’s people, and even within their own personal lives, if these liberties promote division and not build up the personal lives of other believers. We are not out to wound the conscience of other people who see things differently than us on various amoral issues. We are commissioned to build up God’s work by sometimes limiting our liberty. Therefore, we should refuse to practice our liberties in their presence and promote them within the fellowship of the saints.

Romans 14:15

“But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.”

If a brother is grieved by your big screen TV, then don’t take him into the room where the one-eyed monster is sitting! If a brother is bothered by your swimming pool in the backyard, then don’t invite him over to take a swim. I personally don’t mow the yard on Sunday for this reason, or visit the mall on Sunday, knowing that I might offend certain brethren. I may not ask a certain brother to attend a certain restaurant because I know he might not feel comfortable eating in a certain atmosphere. We shouldn’t play golf on Sunday afternoon, even though we have the liberty to do so, since this may offend another brother or sister. We should be willing to limit our liberty when necessary. The same is true in relationship to church standards and

group fellowship within assembly life. We need to sometimes lighten up and remember that ministry is not about ourselves and getting our way, through promoting non-essential things; it's about spiritual things and the main things that will last for eternity.

Romans 14:17

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

2. Never do anything to harm your conscience toward God.

Romans 14:22-23

“Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

The Bible is teaching that if you cannot do something with an open conscience before God, in good “faith” (with complete confidence), then don't do it! Refuse to do it. You will be “damned” or judging yourself if you decide to do something that is not right according to your personal conscience. If it's doubtful; it's dirty! This reminds me that the Bible teaches there are no “gray areas” in relationship to a person's own life and personal decisions of conduct. The color gray is actually a mixture of black and white. In fact, it is the presence of black in the color gray, which has taken away the purity of what was originally white. With this in mind, how can a sanctified believer justify indulging in an activity that has been compromised with the mixture of black and white? The Bible says we are to abstain from every form of evil (1 Thess. 5:22). If something has enough darkness in it to call is gray, surely the appearance of evil cannot be far away! The point is this. When it comes to making personal decisions in life there can be no room for gray living. We must live under black and white so our conscience is not offended, so our conduct is pleasing to the Lord, and so we can possess a consistent testimony before God and the unsaved.

b. The parameters of Christian freedom

The non-moral Mosaic laws no longer have any jurisdiction over our lives (Col. 2:16). They have been revoked and we are no longer bound to observe them today. As mentioned previously, the Mosaic laws with all of

their dietary regulations, days, and distinctions between clean and unclean (Lev. 11:47) have been rescinded (Acts 10:9-16; Rom. 14:14; 1 Tim. 4:1-5), but the principle of holiness which they taught remains intact (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Time does not change principles. God still wants us to represent His moral holiness in all of our actions and decisions in life. God still wants us to be faithful in our service and dedication to Him.

God still wants us to remain separate, distinct, and holy from the pagan influences that surround us, without enforcing the exactness of the ceremonial Mosaic regulations of the Law upon people, which typically taught the doctrine of separation and holiness. The ceremonial Law taught Bible separation in typical forms, lessons, and pictures. The ceremonial teachings of the Law were similar to a Sunday school teacher presenting truth to children in picture format. The pictures were designed to convey the truth that God wanted His people to live separate from sin and sinners. God presented typically what He wanted His people to portray practically in their lives.

Today God still wants us to live separate from our pagan neighbors (2 Cor. 6:14-17), but not in a ceremonial or isolated way, since we no longer live under the Mosaic regulations of the past. The truth is this. We should be able to work and live among pagan influences but not become like pagans. The old adage is still true. We are to live *in* the world but not become *of* the world. The same principle of separating from worldly influence is applied in the New Testament without all the baggage of the ceremonial regulations (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:33; 1 Pet. 4:4). We must live above the fallen world and display redemptive holiness to pagan people who live among us (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Col. 4:5; 1 Thess. 4:12).

So even though the regulations for ceremonial laws have been removed, what these laws revealed remains relevant and instructive for believers today (Rom. 15:4). When studying the Old Testament Mosaic laws, we can see the pictures God was painting and the typical lessons He was teaching. This is why all Scripture is profitable for doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16). Nevertheless, the Christian is no longer to observe the strict outworking of the laws rules and regulations (Rom. 6:14). He has been given freedom from the laborious and miniscule rules of the Mosaic code. However, we are not lawless. With this in mind, we must now explore the parameters of our liberty.

What are the parameters of liberty?

- ✓ Our liberty should never lead us to sin (principle of license).

Your Christian liberty stops when you begin to sin! Our liberty must not lead us to license or where we begin to use our liberty as a scapegoat for sinful living. Galatians 5:13, “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” When Paul says that we are called unto liberty he is referring to the time when God called us to salvation. The Christian is a free man. He is free from the *guilt* of sin because he has experienced God’s forgiveness. He is free from the *penalty* of sin because Christ died for him on the cross. And through the ministry and power of the Spirit, he can live free from the *power* of sin in his daily life.

The Christian is also free from the *Law* with its demands and threats to condemn us. We are “called unto liberty” because we are “called into the grace of Christ” (Gal. 1:6). *Grace* and *liberty* go together. However, we must beware of condoning sin in our lives by turning liberty into license. We can use liberty for an “occasion” to serve the flesh, which really means “a base of operation” for sin to gain a foothold in our lives. We should not use our liberty that we have as a starting point or springboard for any sinful action that comes from the old nature. We must not allow our liberty to degenerate into license. We must beware of those who offer freedom without responsibility! Beware when people try to disguise liberty as license. 1 Peter 2:16 says: “As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke (veil) of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.” The word “maliciousness” means badness, wickedness, evil or depravity. Peter warns that our liberty can become a cover up for evil acts that stem from man’s depravity and fleshly nature.

- ✓ Our liberty must not become a disguise to cover up sinful living (principle of false pretence).

Our liberty stops when we begin to use it as a disguise and excuse for fleshly living. We have addressed this in a previous study. 1 Peter 2:16 says: “As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke (veil) of maliciousness” (badness, evil). I once knew of a Christian who was part of the Ku-Klux-Clan. He walked about in their garb and supposedly gave himself the permission to be part of a hateful group such as this. Sometimes believers

can try to use their liberty as a way to disguise their sin. They permit all types of indecent conduct under the disguise of Christian liberty. Their actions are termed as liberty when in reality they are nothing more than a display of the flesh. We can create a false liberty that abuses what it means to be living under grace. In 1 Corinthians 6:12 Paul says, “All things are lawful unto me ...” Please note that when Paul says, “All things are lawful unot me,” he does not by the context mean all things in an absolute sense, but the eating of foods which are designed for human consumption. Paul would never teach that everything was lawful for him to do in an absolute sense since this would be license (Rom. 6:1-2).

If every action was lawful, then it would be permissible for Paul to walk into a nudist colony, or take crack cocaine for God’s glory! This is absurd. Many New Evangelical Christians would take a verse such as this and try to build a false foundation for Christian liberty and use Paul’s advice as a way to do what they want in life. They will use Paul’s words as a way to repudiate the doctrine of separation and cover up their own sin by identifying their actions as their own personal liberty (“cloke of maliciousness”). We must understand that Paul is not intending to convey by these words an absolute freedom without any checks and balances. This kind of lifestyle will only lead to bondage. Paul is talking about the freedom to live as one pleases in relationship to those areas of normal living that the Word of God does not specifically address or condemn either by direct commands or by governing principles.

- ✓ Our liberty should never lead us to bondage (principle of authority).

Your Christian liberty stops when you are controlled by something else other than the Holy Spirit. “All things are lawful (principle of liberty), but all things are not expedient (principle of expediency): all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any (principle of authority)” – 1 Corinthians 6:12. The word for “power” has the meaning of authority or control. This principle of authority or control means that no believer is to use his liberty to the point where some habit or practice enslaves him. Some things might be lawful and yet they might become enslaving to us. Many things can enslave Christians today. Books, magazines, computers, Internet, TV, videos, sports, hobbies, food, music, work and campers can become like an enslaving power over the lives of saints so that they take their freedom and turn it into enslaving practices that keep them from doing God’s will.

- ✓ Our liberty must be properly displayed (principle of expediency).

1 Corinthians 6:12 says that “all things are not expedient.” Our Christian liberty stops when our action or conduct is not properly displayed in a manner that will profit or benefit others. 1 Corinthians 10:23 also states: “All things are lawful for me (principle of liberty), but all things are not expedient (principle of expediency): all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not (principle of edification).” The word “expedient” means to be proper, fitting, conducive or suitable. Would my action be suitable and fitting for a given location or in a given setting with other believers? Paul is simply saying that certain things might be legitimate and yet not profitable to others. If this is the case, don’t do them. You may have the liberty to go out and play nine holes of golf on Sunday afternoon but the risk of offending another brother may be too great. Your action does not become conducive or proper. A certain action or thing may be lawful and yet not suitable or advantageous to God’s work and people.

Romans 14:20

“For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.”

- ✓ Our liberty must be edifying to others (principle of edification).

1 Corinthians 10:23

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.”

Our Christian liberty stops when we are no longer building up other believers through love. We must not forget the principle of building up the personal lives of others when it comes to exercising our Christian liberty. We must remember that if we are not going to build our brother up with our action or choice, then we might as well not exercise our liberty in front of him, or do something that might offend him. We should live our lives by the principle or law of edification (1 Cor. 8:1 – “love edifieth” and Rom. 15:1-2). A believer must determine what things are “expedient” and what things “edify” in determining his actions before the saints. Liberty does not flaunt itself before others but graciously conforms itself so as not to offend. As someone has well said, “May God help us to stand, withstand and understand!”

- ✓ Our liberty must express love toward others (principle of love).

Galatians 5:13 says, “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” Our Christian liberty stops when we fail to express love to others. *Love limited liberty* is an important principle to follow in our relationships in church and even outside of church. Because we love the brethren we will not openly flaunt our personal liberties before others and seek to draw them into our personal choice and right. 1 Corinthians 8:13 says, “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

- ✓ Our liberty must not cause division (principle of unity).

Romans 14:19-20 states:

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace (peaceful unity), and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure; but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence.”

Our Christian liberty stops when we begin to divide God’s saints. Let us remember that unity is an important guiding principle attached to liberty. We should seek to dwell together in unity by refusing to exercise liberty when other people are offended by our actions. We should not hinder the work of the Lord from being done in the local assembly of believers by trying to flaunt our liberty before others. We must long for unity, instead of pressing our liberty upon others, during assembly life, causing unwarranted division – “Let not then your good be evil spoken of” (Rom. 14:16). This brings us to our next point.

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- ✓ Our liberty must not hinder the work of the Lord (principle of God’s work).

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:22, “To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some” (see also 1 Corinthians 9:19; 10:32-33). Our Christian liberty stops when we enter certain cultures or churches, where a particular practice is forbidden, and when something is seen as a suspect activity.

Paul was not using these statements as an endorsement to use worldly methods or pragmatic approaches in his ministry.

These are not verses that promote the wearing of tattoos, heathen body piercings, and the use of Rock Music to win people to Christ. This kind of reasoning is a total distortion of what these verses are teaching. Paul is not referring to Christians identifying with the worldly lifestyle of the lost, so that they might somehow be seen as one of them, or understanding of their sinful lifestyle. Rather, these verses are saying just the opposite. Paul was not teaching that he would live a liberated life in front of everyone else, without any measure, but that he would limit certain areas of his conduct, so he would not offend others in different cultures. Paul is saying that he gave up his own personal freedom or liberty, so he might not offend the local customs and practices of others.

These verses are not talking about promoting some kind of worldly liberty but limiting one's liberty for the sake of winning people to Christ. They are not referring to Paul expressing his freedom but limiting his freedom. Paul is talking about sacrificing his own personal agenda and interests or pursuits in everyday life, so he might not offend others in his outreach and ministry. In that day it meant refusing to eat certain meats while living with and witnessing to the Jews. It seems that Paul always sought to honor and respect the non-sinful customs of an area or people. He did not want to violate the honored local customs of a society that did not dishonor the Word of God. He chose to limit himself in this way to not hinder the work of God from getting done.

Sometimes we must give up the "standard" way we might do something in order to be able to connect with poor lost souls who are in need of Christ. This is why we do balloon animals at our local fair. We get many more tracts in the hands of people this way. We also don't wear suits and ties downtown when doing this type of ministry, knowing that this is not part of the local custom of our society. Let us remember that our actions and conduct must always be conducive to leading people to faith in Christ. This means we should not become worldly in our outreach, since sameness does not bring people to Christ (Matt. 5:13-14), nor should we distance ourselves from our culture, since we are part of it in many ways. All of our actions and conduct must be God-honoring, while at the same time, sensitive to our culture.

- ✓ Our liberty must be submissive - (principle of church authority).

Acts 15:28-29

“For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.”

Hebrews 13:7

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

Hebrews 13:17 also states:

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

Our Christian liberty stops when we seek to undermine local church authority. The Bible still teaches the authority of the local church. Twice in Hebrews we are reminded that there are rulers in the local churches, who in the exercise of their pastoral responsibilities, will set certain guidelines, exercise authority, discipline, and make rules for church members. The principle of church authority is clearly stated in the Bible. Exactly how far this goes is not stated. We can be sure that it does not pertain to becoming “lords over God’s heritage” (1 Pet. 5:3) by making every decision in the lives of people and becoming a dictator over their every action. It does not involve burdening people down with extreme regulatory mechanics that have no connection with holy living (Matt. 15:9). However, without this rule anarchy would exist and worldliness would enter the church. The believer is expected to place his liberty under the local rule of church authority.

John Cawood said:

“The point is clear. The Word of God says that men are set as standard setters over others, and we are to obey those rules with joy so that it would be joyous for them as for us. It is biblically right according to Hebrews 13 for one group to set a standard for another.”

If a person rules he will need some rules!! The truth of Scripture, basic biblical and separated guidelines, various corporate instructions, and the establishment of standards should be lovingly embraced in the context of elder rule. Many pastors today are more worried about their job security than they are about the Holy Spirit. This is why they don't sound out the alarm against Contemporary Christian Music, immodest dress, and the heathen practices of compromising Christianity today.

- ✓ Our liberty must not lead us to temporal living – (principle of transience).

Our Christian liberty stops when it only promotes temporal living. In the very context of liberty (1 Cor. 6:12), Paul says, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" (1 Cor. 6:13). This food for the stomach and the stomach for food was another slogan by which some Corinthians sought to justify their immorality. They reasoned that "food" was both pleasurable and necessary. When their stomachs signaled hunger, food was taken to satisfy them. So too, they argued, sex was pleasurable and necessary. When their bodies signaled sexual desire, they needed to be satisfied. Paul shoots down this argument, but in doing so, he gives a principle to follow within the context of liberty.

All meats could be eaten without any qualms. Meat is for the belly. Nevertheless, meats, like sex outside marriage, should not rule the lives of God's saints. This is because eating meat is not to be the greatest thing in life, since our perspective should be on the eternal and not the temporal. The point seems to be this. Our meat and belly will not last forever! The physical pampering that we do to our body will have no significance in eternity. Only what we do for Christ will last forever. Therefore, our liberty should never cause us to become focused only on our present pleasures in life, since this will cause us to forget about the future life of reward and blessing (1 John 2:15-17).

- ✓ Our liberty must reflect God's glory – (principle of God's glory).

1 Corinthians 10:31

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Our Christian liberty stops when it does not reflect God's glory. We are to "do all to the glory of God." It's interesting that this verse is put in the context of loving other believers by limiting our liberty in their presence (1 Cor. 10:23-30). When we practice limiting our liberty, we live for the glory of God, by expressing and reflecting God's character of love toward others. Actually, everything we do in life should reflect God's glory. To glorify God actually means we will uphold His character and personal traits of holiness and righteousness. In other words, all of our personal tastes, decisions, and actions in life should reflect God's nature. Only when our lives reflect the Lord's holiness, righteousness, and love will God be truly glorified. Our liberty should be kept in check by the principle of God's glory.

- ✓ Our liberty must lead to conformity to Christ (principle of Christ likeness).

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Our Christian liberty stops when it does not lead us to Christlikeness. Indeed, we have liberty ("there is liberty"). We have liberty from the penalty of the Law or the Law's dreadful condemnation over our lives (2 Cor. 3:6). We have now been freed from the Law's jurisdiction over our lives as an evil master condemning our lives. Instead of being a slave to the Law and its condemning voice, we have now experienced freedom from judgment (vs. 17). But this freedom does not mean we can live or do as we please in the flesh. It means that we have a newfound freedom, where we can now be changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ, by the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It's a freedom to mold our lives to the likeness of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, Christians today, in the name of so-called freedom, frequently leave good fundamental Bible-believing churches to join one of the looser, easy-going congregations called "free churches." Usually these churches are lackadaisical about church attendance. They place more emphasis upon personal and family relaxation and recreation, upon sports and the great outdoors, and an endless variety of other activities unconnected with God's service. They trade the old hymns of the faith for

the jazzy charismatic "praise" music and Christian rock. They develop a careless attitude toward doctrine, emphasizing, instead, "love" and "unity," fellowshiping with anyone who "loves Jesus" regardless of whether or not they are committed to sound doctrine. Their ecumenical sympathies increase dramatically, as does their aversion (dislike and avoidance) to Biblical separation. When asked about the change, they testify: "I feel more *liberty* now, more *love*; I am having *fun*; I am glad to be free of *legalism*; I don't hear *criticism* at my church; *no one judges* what others do."

Through the years every separated pastor has witnessed, with sorrow, a number of his sheep who were captured by this alleged "free thinking" and false sense of liberty or freedom. These believers become confused about the true nature of Christian liberty. Christian liberty does not mean to disobey God, neglect church attendance, and no longer be challenged to live holy and separate from the world system (1 John 2:15-17).

Consider the following Bible preachers as they gave out God's truth. Would a person who focuses on liberty and fun be comfortable under such preaching?

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3:7-10 – John the Baptist).

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye

holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:14-17).

"Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:6-11).

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

These men do not sound like modern, liberty-fun, sort of guys to me! Liberty from the condemnation of the Law and the old sinful bondage of our past life – yes! Liberty to have fun and live as one pleases, embracing sin's vices and pleasures - no! As we have seen, Paul warns of using Christian liberty as an "occasion for the flesh" (Gal. 5:13), which results in disobeying God's orders and holy commands. The Christian has no liberty to walk in any type of unholiness, no liberty for moral looseness, no liberty to serve the world and neglect God's clear commands. To the liberty-fun Christian, his personal desire is the chief issue in the decisions he makes about daily living. To the Bible-believing Christian, God's pleasure, obedience, and the edification of God's people are the chief issues.

There is a place for having fun. But there is no emphasis upon "fun" replacing one's holy living before God. The emphasis is upon obedience, extreme spiritual caution, and spotless separation from the world (James 1:27). The previously quoted Bible preachers sound like the old-fashioned, Bible-believing men of God, of past generations, who railed against sin and called God's people to holiness and separation from this wicked world. The average worldly Christian today would not be comfortable under this type of

preaching. If these holy men of old were to stand before them and preach what we have recorded in our Bibles, no doubt they would be labeled judgmental fun-hating legalists. Today Christians search out preachers who will proclaim a positive Christianity, who will encourage them in their idolatry of "fun" and their yearnings for carnal "liberty."

Many say today that they are free. Free from what?

- Free from serving the Lord in the local church and attending church regularly?
- Free from preaching that no longer convicts and warns you of worldly living?
- Free from all negativism and conviction over sinful living?
- Freedom to vacation whenever you want to without anybody ever saying, "I missed you?"
- Freedom to no longer place yourself under the authority of the local church?
- Freedom to listen to Rock, Christian Rock Music, and Contemporary Christian Music?
- Freedom to dress in a provocative manner where men will readily lust over your body?
- Freedom to place tattoos all over your body?
- Freedom to watch R-rated movies which place nudity before our eyes?
- Free to live without ever being challenged to clean up your life?
- Freedom to no longer be challenged how to raise your children in a godly manner?

Of course, these are false views of freedom are not supported in the Bible. But they are the kinds of "free philosophies" being prompted today in the name of so-called liberty. Let me close with some good old-fashioned rebuke (2 Tim. 4:2). Stop sanctifying your disobedience and worldliness! Leviticus 10:10-11 reminds us of a timeless principle: "And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean ..." Your life and personal actions can be placed into one of three categories – Liberty, legalism, or license. Many Christians today want to sanctify their worldly lives by exchanging true liberty for license and calling old-fashioned obedience to God legalism. Liberty is the catchword! It's a true liberty that

can be experienced daily from the penalty, power, and past ceremonies of the Mosaic Law.

Tradition holds that the Liberty Bell rang out for the First Continental Congress in 1774, The Battle of Lexington and Concord in 1775 and on July 8, 1776, when it summoned the citizens for the reading of the Declaration of Independence produced by the Second Continental Congress. The verse inscribed on the Liberty Bell is Leviticus 25:10 – “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.” A bell of liberty should be ringing in our hearts today and the message of spiritual liberty should be proclaimed to every Christian.

“When we walk with the Lord
In the light of his Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!

While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey,
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus
But to trust and obey.”