

Christian Liberty, Part 4

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May I urge you to turn with me and your own Bibles to Paul's letter to the Galatians, the book of Galatians. And because one of the major headings in the sermon will find us rooting around in this particular chapter, I want to read the entire third chapter in your hearing. And while you are turning, let me also say that having just read this past week some chapters in a very helpful book put together by different authors in honor of the late Dr. James Boyce, one of the chapters is on the place of Scripture in the public worship of God's people, and how in many evangelical churches today there is such a paucity of Scripture, a verse here, a verse there. If you're visiting among us, you will have noticed we opened our worship with reading Psalm 29. Then we read another chapter from the book of the Revelation. Now we're going to read another chapter.

You say, "Why so much Bible?" Well, many reasons, but not the least of which is we're not here to traffic in our own thoughts about God, our own thoughts about life, how to live, how to please God. We're a people of the Book. We believe that God speaks to His people in and through His written Word. And so we want to have our public worship saturated with the Bible. So if you don't get anything from the preacher, at least go out and say, "Hey, I was glad I had that chapter read in my hearing." All right, Galatians chapter 3. Paul begins in a non-flattering way, and says to the Galatians,

"O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you [who spooked you, who bamboozled you], before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified? This only would I learn from you. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are you now perfected in the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain, if it be indeed in vain? He therefore that supplies to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you, does he do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness, know therefore that they that are of faith the same are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all the nations be blessed. So then, they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. Now that no man is justified by the law before God is evident, for the righteous shall live by faith, and the law is not of faith, but he that does them shall live in them. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs upon a tree,

that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men. Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it has been confirmed, no one makes it void or adds to it. Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He says not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to your seed, which is Christ. Now this I say, a covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, does not disannul as to make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, It is no more a promise, but God has granted it to Abraham by promise. What then is the law? It was added because of the transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise has been made, and it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid! For if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law. But the Scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Christ Jesus might be given to them that believe.

"But before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up under the faith which should afterward be revealed, so that the law is become our tutor [and that's a difficult word to use. It's more than just a tutor. This would be a slave who would take the son of a wealthy man under his care to be his instructor, to be his guide, to be his restrainer, to make sure he behaved himself. He had total control over that underage son to make sure he not only learned his lessons but behaved himself. And so the Apostle says we were shut up] that we might be justified by faith], that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor, for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise."

Now we come this morning to the fourth message in a series of studies which I have entitled "A Fresh Look at the Doctrine of Christian Liberty". And while we generally associate this doctrine of Christian liberty with what we call things indifferent, that is, matters concerning which the Bible gives no explicit command nor explicit prohibition, I have asserted that no one is in any position to think or act biblically with regard to those matters of Christian liberty, that is, things indifferent, unless that individual has first of all come to grips with a much broader scope of the biblical doctrine of Christian liberty. And that broader scope involves two very foundational issues of biblical teaching. Number one, the nature of our real slavery and bondage in Adam, and on the other hand, the nature of our real liberty and freedom in Christ. Until we have taken to heart what the Bible teaches, about the nature of our bondage in Adam and the nature of our real liberty and freedom in Christ, we are in no position to talk about Christian liberty in terms of these specific issues that most frequently are associated with the term "Christian liberty".

And so in our initial study, we dug into our Bibles seeking to ascertain from the Scriptures the real slavery and bondage of all mankind in Adam. And we saw that by nature each and every one of us is a real slave of sin, a real slave of the world, a real slave of the devil, a real slave of the idol of self, and a slave of the fear of death. Then, in the next two sermons, we began to open up our real liberty and freedom in Christ. This is sure enough real liberty that Christ gives us whenever He unites us to Himself by the Spirit in the context of the proclamation of the gospel.

And we have seen six facets of our real liberty and freedom in Christ. We have seen that in Christ we are made free from the condemning power of the law of God. We are made free from the sin-provoking influence of the law of God. We are made free from the devil. We are made free from the world. We are made free from the idol of self. Well, there's our six. Slavery to sin, slavery to the devil, slavery to the world, the idol of self, the sin-provoking influence of the law of God, and from the condemning power of the law. I invite you this morning to consider with me, I trust as time permits, three more facets of our real liberty in Christ. And with that we will have concluded that second foundational issue of the nature of our liberty in Christ. And again I say, it is only when we've come to grips with this biblical teaching that we are in any position to discuss the specifics of the so-called issues of Christian liberty.

So we come to number seven. In Christ we are made free from any obligation to the Mosaic law covenant. Now that's a mouthful. And I struggled to see if there was some way I could state it in a way that it didn't sound so pedantic. But there's no way I could. And I put it on the front end, while I trust your minds are still fresh. You're going to have to do what Peter said: "Gird up the loins of your mind." That's the image of a man about to run and he takes the loose flowing folds of his garment, ties them up around his waist and pulls his sash tight. And now he's ready to run without stumbling over his own robe. Well, I don't want you to stumble over the loose folds of your brain. You've got to tie up the loins of your mind and think with me, because this is a precious, marvelous, wonderful dimension of our real liberty and freedom in Christ. It's a dimension of our liberty which, if you do not understand, there are large sections of the New Testament that will be a closed book to you. Much of the book of Galatians will be a closed book to you. There are other sections in Romans that will be closed chapters to you. And I want you to think with me now as we go to the Scriptures and seek to appreciate this blessed reality that in union with Jesus Christ we are made free from any obligation to the mosaic covenant.

Now, as we try to think this thing through together, we're going to do so under three units of thought. First of all, we're going to look briefly at the nature of the covenant made with Abraham. If you were thinking at all when we read in Galatians chapter 3, you had to say there's something in this chapter that has to do in a very fundamental way with God's covenant made with Abraham. That covenant is first of all set before us in Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 to 3. Then it's repeated again in Genesis 15, Genesis 17. And according to Galatians chapter 3, it was a covenant with three dominant characteristics. It was a covenant of promise. Look at Galatians 3 and verse 16: "Now, to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed." Verse 17:

"Now this I say, a covenant confirmed before him by God, the law which came four hundred and thirty years after, does not disannul as to make the promise of none effect." Verse 18: "For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise, for God granted it to Abraham by promise." Promise, promise, promise, promise. Got the message? Whatever this covenant is, whatever this commitment God made to Abraham, it's based upon a promise.

Now, in a promise, you're not telling someone else what to do. You're telling someone else what you are committed to do. I promise to call you at 6 o'clock tonight. I'm informing you of a commitment I'm making. "I promise", you say to your wife, "to take you out to a fancy restaurant on your birthday. Don't forget." It's a commitment that you're making. I saw a wife just get her husband in the ribs right now. I'm not looking in that direction, but apparently he forgot. It's amazing what you see up here if you're looking. All right, so God comes in promise. He is saying, "This is what I am committed to do, Abraham. I'm not telling you what to do, Abraham. I'm telling you what I am committed to do."

Second thing about this Abrahamic covenant, it is to be embraced by faith. What is Abraham to do with that promise? What is anyone who has anything to do with that promise if it's extended to us at all? It is to be received by faith. Look at verses 6 through 9 of Galatians 3: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness, know therefore they that are of faith are the sons of Abraham. The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preached the gospel before unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. So then they that are of faith." So we got promise, promise, promise. We got faith, faith, faith. Whatever this covenant was, it was a covenant of promise. Secondly, it was to be embraced by faith.

And the third thing about it is, it is ultimately fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Look at verse 16: "Now to Abraham, were the promises is spoken, and to his seed [singular] he said not unto seeds [plural] as of many, but as of one, and to your seed which is Christ." Verse 29: "And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." So you've got these three dominant issues with regard to the Abrahamic covenant. It's a covenant of promise, it is to be embraced by faith, and it is fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Do you all see that now? Okay, good. Good. All right.

Now, second thing. Got the loins still tied up? Don't let them get down. Second thing we want to see is the nature of the covenant made with the nation of Israel under the leadership of Moses 430 years after God made the Abrahamic covenant. Now what's the fundamental nature of that covenant? Well, look at verse 17 of Galatians 3: "Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect." 430 years after God spoke the Abrahamic covenant, God enters into this covenant under the leadership of Moses with the entire nation of Israel after He has brought them out of the land of Egypt and He constitutes them a nation.

Now that covenant has three very tightly interpenetrating strands. You will hear people talk about the Mosaic covenant had both moral, civil, and ceremonial dimensions. Now, it doesn't come to us in nice, neat categories, so that we have three chapters in Leviticus that's ceremonial, and then two chapters in Exodus that are moral, and then a couple of chapters that are civil. No, no. There is no nice, neat separation. These things are all woven together.

In the moral dimensions of that covenant, God is regulating how an Israelite is to live before God in terms of ethical integrity, how he is to be holy unto the Lord. In the civil, God is giving laws to govern their life as a special nation, a nation the likes of which there never was before, never will be after. God says, "Which of all the nations of the earth have I marked out and separated unto Myself and given My laws to them?" Israel was absolutely unique in that Almighty God wrote her constitution for her civil life. All right, so God gives moral directives. God gives civil directives. God gives ceremonial directives, laws to govern all of their worship.

God gives all these details about how the priest is to cleanse himself, and in what way he's to come into the tabernacle, and what animal, and how he's to prepare it. God gives all of these details with respect to her religious life. And spilling out of that are implications for the personal cleansing of the Israelite man or woman. Detailed laws about a woman and her period, and how long she's clean, and how long she's unclean, and if you buried your Uncle Avey, how long you were clean or unclean once you touched a dead body. All of these details in which God is saying to every Israelite, "Look, look, look, I have taken you out of Egypt to make you My people. I did this in My grace and in My love and in My favor, but to be My people means I've got a right to stick My nose into every single detail of your life."

Now an Israelite who took the Mosaic Law seriously knew that. Everywhere he turned, God was telling him what to do and what not to do. "Don't do this, don't touch this, don't touch this then, you can touch this then." God was hedging up the Israelite to know that to be in covenant with God meant that God was treating us through that law like that tutor, like that pedagogue. He's there constantly telling you, "Don't pick your nose. That's no good. That's not right. Don't scratch your ear in public. That's not kosher." You see, God is giving all these details in every facet of their life. This covenant, with its moral, civil, and ceremonial dimensions, touched all of these facets.

Now why was this covenant made? Well, it was not given to negate or to abrogate the Abrahamic covenant. That's the point Paul is making in verses 17 and 18: "A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, does not disannul..." In other words, as long as the Abrahamic covenant is in place and God has not come and said, "Hey, nation of Israel, look, before I enter into this covenant with you under My leader Moses, I'm going to abrogate the Abrahamic covenant. No longer is there in place a covenant of promise, covenant of faith, a covenant to be filled in Christ." No, no. God does not disannul, and He says,

"Now, whatever arrangement you make after, as long as there's a binding covenant in place, you can't act like that one has gone kaput."

If any of you have upgraded your will, what's one of the statements you put in there? That this particular will, made out at this particular time and signed by my wife and me, what does it do to any previous will? It negates it, right? How many of you have seen that in your will? Good, all right, so at least a few of you understand the illustration. So God says, "When I enter into covenant with My people there at Sinai, under the leadership of Moses, I am not negating the terms of the Abrahamic covenant. The commitments that I made, I am not backing off from them. The terms of that covenant, I am not changing them." So the purpose of the Mosaic covenant was not to negate, to alter the Abrahamic covenant. But the purpose was to hedge up this nation until the promised seed, promised in the Abrahamic covenant, should come and bring the promised salvation.

Look at verse 19: "What then is the law? [What's its purpose? The question I'm asking] It was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." The promise was made to Christ in the Abrahamic covenant. "To your seed, Abraham, that promise was made." Now God overlays that promise with this temporal arrangement because of transgression. Now there are two fundamental ways of viewing that. Most commentators view it this way: God adds the Mosaic Covenant so that He will bring the nation to a heightened awareness of its sinfulness and therefore its desperate need of the promised seed. John Brown takes the position, and I find myself leaning there: no, God looked down at the nation and said,

"Look, I see the history of what men do when I do not hedge them up with specifics concrete directives on the left hand and on the right. And because of the innate tendency of the human heart, if I'm going to have a nation preserved until the promised seed comes, I need to surround it with all these laws and regulations to prop it up."

Look at the text now: "What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions. [And because of this inveterate tendency of the human heart, I'm going to hedge up this nation so at least something of the semblance of a nation through whom I can bring my promised seed will be maintained]." But obviously, obviously, it was when it was instituted, in God's mind, a temporal arrangement. "What then is the law? It was added because of transgression until the seed should come." So it is overlaid upon the Abrahamic covenant until a certain period in human history. So its purpose was to hedge up the nation of Israel.

From the book of Hebrews we learn that it was also to point to Christ and to His work. In Hebrews 10 and verse 1, we read these words: "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of those things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year which they make continually make the offerer perfect." They were a shadow.

I was thinking of this, trying to illustrate. Suppose a man has his house situated in such a way that when he comes home in the afternoon--of course, it would change throughout the year, so the illustration breaks down--but a certain time of the year, when the sun is going down at a certain point, the time that he arrives home, he casts a very large shadow just before he turns the corner of the house to come toward the front door. And his little boy has learned to park himself right in the picture window, and when he sees that long shadow at 4.32, he says, "Daddy's coming. I see a shadow. No shadow without Daddy." And when Daddy comes, he forgets the shadow and he hugs his Daddy.

Now, the writer to Hebrews says all of these details of the priest doing this and the washing of this and this sacrifice were shadows of something that was coming. And what was the something that was coming? It was God's perfect Lamb, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It was God's perfect Priest who would offer up one sacrifice for sin forever. It was God's perfect way of approaching Him. Until that came, they had the shadows: "Oh, I see that shape. That looks like Daddy coming. That looks like Daddy coming, like a Daddy." But when Daddy comes, you forget the shadows. You're done with the shadow. The substance is here. And that was one of the purposes of God in the Mosaic Covenant, particularly in the ceremonial details, the details about the priesthood and the offerings and the sacrifices, etc., etc.

Colossians 2:16. You hanging in there with me? Still got your loins all girded up? We're going somewhere. Just stay with me. Verse 16: "Let no man judge you in meat or drink in respect to a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day, which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is Christ." Daddy is coming. The body is Christ. These are but the shadows. They are the foreshadowing. So when we ask, "This covenant made with the nation of Israel under the leadership of Moses was intended to be a temporal covenant, what was its purpose?" It was not to impart salvation by people keeping that covenant in all of its details. No. It was given to hedge up the nation. It was given to reveal its sin. It was given to foreshadow the great realities of the redemption that would come through the promise that is there in the Abrahamic covenant which was never annulled or cancelled by the Mosaic covenant.

If I break my arm and I have a cast, that cast is put on temporally until the bone heals, and then it is split and it is removed, that my arm might be fully functional without the impediment of the cast. Here's the Abrahamic covenant. God overlays it with the mosaic. He doesn't remove it. He doesn't cancel it. Until, until, until the promised seed comes, and when He comes, God splits the cast, takes it off, and throws it away. Am I making sense?

Now then, what is the implication of all of this? What in the world does this have to do with the doctrine of Christian liberty? Well, it has everything to do with it. The Mosaic Covenant is done away with in its entirety as a covenant binding upon anyone. Within that covenant, God articulated moral demands that are applicable to all men

everywhere in every age. The Ten commandments. The first two great commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, soul, and strength, thy neighbor as thyself." You find in the New Testament, even in some of the civil laws, there are principles that are binding upon us to the end of the age.

When Paul's trying to demonstrate why pastors and preachers and evangelists should be supported by the gospel, you know how he proves it? He says, "Does not the law say the same? Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn." He said there's one of those civil laws that has a moral principle and he picks it up and he plumps it right down in the New Covenant community. So we are not saying that there are no abiding moral demands and directives embedded within the Mosaic Covenant. What I'm saying is the Bible teaches that the Mosaic Covenant as an entirety is done away and is binding upon no one.

The language of the book of Galatians is absolutely, unmistakably clear: "This covenant [verse 19 of Galatians 3] was added till the seed should come." Then Paul goes on to say in chapter 3, verses 23 and following, "The law was a tutor." Often people quote this in verse 24: "The law has become our tutor to bring us unto Christ." The words "to bring us" are in italics. They're not in the original. The law as a covenant in its entirety has become our tutor unto Christ. But when Christ comes, the tutor is no longer needed because in Christ we are not only adopted, we are given the spirit of adoption. He goes on to teach this in chapter 4, verses 1-6. And we are now born as free sons. We are no longer under the Mosaic covenant as a covenant. And one does not need then to be circumcised and become a Mosaic Covenant-keeping person to be a full-blown Christian, part of God's spiritual Israel.

You say, well, I can see that. Well, that wasn't very easy for people to see in the first century. That's why you've got the Book of Galatians. Because what was happening with these Christians in the Galatian area and that Paul became aware of and had to address? Well, you had people who were coming to these Gentiles, who had repented of their idolatry, who had laid hold of Christ crucified, buried, and risen as their only hope of life and salvation, had been incorporated into the new covenant community, and along came these people we call the Judaizers, and they said,

"Hey, look, you got Christ? That's good. That's good. We don't want to do anything with getting rid of Christ, but if you want to be a full-blown Christian, you have now got to be circumcised and become a kosher Jew. You have got to not only embrace the promise of God that God gave to Abraham that is fulfilled in Christ, but you have got to put the cast around your Christian experience. You've got to be circumcised and become a full-blown Jew, or you're not fully accepted before God."

Look at Acts 15 in verse 1. Don't take my word for it. Look at the Scripture. This was the issue that had to be sorted out with that council at Jerusalem. Acts 15:1: "Certain men came down [that is to Antioch] from Judea and taught the brethren saying, except you be circumcised after the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. [You've got to become a Jew under the Mosaic covenant to be fully saved. Christ is not

enough.]" And so Paul has to write and say to these Galatians, "No, no, no, you don't understand. In Christ you are free from all obligation to the Mosaic covenant as a covenant." And he goes on to make this so abundantly clear. Look at chapter 5, verses 1 and following:

"For freedom did Christ set us free. Stand fast and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage. Behold, I say unto you, if you receive circumcision [not simply as a cultural thing or as a matter of a health practice, but if you receive circumcision], believing that without it you're not really fully in the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, you've got to also come into the Mosaic covenant. If you receive circumcision, you're a debtor to do the whole law. You have severed yourself from Christ, you who would be justified by the law. You are fallen away from the principle of grace."

And so the apostle had to make it clear to these poor Galatians. And apparently, as we look at chapter 4, some of them had a pagan background in which with their pagan religions They had their rules and regulations in order to make themselves acceptable to the gods. And notice what Paul says in Galatians 4.8: "How be it at that time, not knowing God, you were in bondage to them that by nature are no gods. [They were idol worshippers.] But now that you've come to know God, or rather be known by God, how do you turn again to the weak and beggarly rudiments whereunto you desire to be in bondage over again?" He said,

"Look, when you were worshipping your pagan gods, you had your fast days and your feast days and you had your no-no foods and your yes-yes foods and that was all part of your silly, empty, idle, demon-impelled religion. You turned from all of that. What in the world are you doing going back to it now in a different way?"

Verse 10: "You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I bestowed labor upon you in vain." You see what he's saying? You're leaving one form of bondage for another. God didn't set you free to go back into bondage. "For freedom did Christ set you free. Stand fast in that freedom and don't be entangled again in the yoke of bondage." You see it?

But what's that have to do with me? Nobody here running down to the local rabbi down the street here, saying, "Rabbi, I think I need to become a Jew." No. What's it say to us? Ah, listen to me. Listen to me. The legalism of the human heart is not peculiar to the first century. When this form of legalism was rife and was crippling the church, the human heart has a deep-seated aversion--hear my words carefully--the human heart, your heart, my heart, has a deep-seated aversion to undiluted and naked grace. We have an aversion to undiluted grace.

Salvation's all of grace, bound up in the promise to be received by faith in Christ alone. And the human heart says, "Sounds too easy. Got to put a few drops of", and then the drops. In some circles, it's you've got to have at least six months to six years of seeking and feeling conviction of sin. That becomes the Mosaic covenant. In other circles, you've got to change your wardrobe and make sure it looks just like this or

that. In other circles, it's this, it's that. What is that but Judaism? That is saying there are rules and regulations that I must somehow encrust around the pure promise of grace in Jesus Christ.

The human heart has an aversion to undiluted or what I'm calling naked grace, in which I stand before God in all the wretchedness, in all the defilement and hell-deservingness of what I am as a sinner. And from the depths of my being, I throw myself upon Christ Himself, Christ alone, Christ plus nothing. And it's vital for us as God's people to understand, if we're to appreciate the biblical doctrine of Christian liberty, that we are in Christ not only set free from all these other things we've considered, but we are set free from any obligations to the Mosaic covenant as a covenant administration. We dishonor Christ We dishonor his work. We dishonor the grace and mercy of our God. Listen to what one of the old writers said.

"It is plain from this passage [the passage that I read, chapter 4 and verse 10 and 11] that some of the Galatian converts had yielded to the Judaizing teachers and commenced in good earnest to keep the law. While they were Gentiles, they performed a set of useless ceremonies in honor of their false deities. And now they do the same thing, though unintentionally, in honor of the true God. Under the Christian dispensation, with the exception of the Lord's Day, all days are alike. God may be worshipped at all times and in all places. The phrase 'days' probably refers to the Jewish Sabbath, the great day of expiation, months to the festivals at the new moons, times to the annual feasts such as Passover, Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles, years to the sabbatical year, and the year of Jubilee."

He said, "You're going back to the very things God took you out of. Now, we don't have time to go into the fact--we'll get into it when we get into Romans 14--that someone may for other reasons do things that are required within the Mosaic Covenant. Paul said, "To the Jews, I became as a Jew." He didn't do it thinking it would elevate his Christian standing. He did it to take away unnecessary offense when trying to bring a Jew to understand that that Jew needed to get into Christ in terms of the Abrahamic Covenant.

God had dismantled the Mosaic Covenant. Christ died. The substance is here. The types and shadows are needed no more. This is all the difference in the world. Eating kosher food in order to win a Jew to see he doesn't need to eat it anymore. You see? And eating kosher food because I think that makes me a step closer to God. All the difference in the world.

And you see, if you don't understand this, then you won't understand when we get into the particulars of Christian liberty. What's behind, "As a Jew I became as a Jew. To the non-Jew I became as a Jew." What lies behind that? It's Paul's understanding that he has nothing to do with the Mosaic Covenant as a covenant. He's utterly free from it in Christ. And God grant that we understand it as well.

Well, we've got to hurry on. Number eight. This should be easier now. In Christ we are free from the tyranny of man-made doctrines, rules, and regulations. Not only free

from the rules and regulations embedded in the Mosaic covenant, but free from the tyranny of man-made doctrines, rules, and regulations. The most succinct and clear statement of this blessed truth that I have found, we'll come to the Scriptures to see its support. I found, again, in my good friend John Brown, in his comments in the verse in 1 Peter, "As free, not using your freedom as a cloak of maliciousness." Listen to John Brown:

"The Christian does not act in character if he receive any doctrine, observe any ordinance, perform any duty on any ground except he has seen with his own eyes, in what he knows to be a divine revelation, that Christ has revealed the doctrine, appointed the institution, commanded the duty. Christians obviously act at variance with their high calling, which is a calling to liberty, when in deference to human authority they receive doctrines which Christ has not revealed, observe ordinances which He has not instituted, and perform as a duty what He never made one, or what it may be He has forbidden as a sin."

"When a Christian is tempted to do any of these things, that is, believe a doctrine that he's not persuaded comes from the Scripture, submit himself to a duty or a prohibition he's not convinced comes from the Word of God, when a Christian is tempted to do any of these things, he's distinctly to say to those who would bring him into bondage, 'Who gave you authority over my conscience? Who authorized you to add to or alter or repeal any of Christ's ordinances? I have a Lord of the conscience, but it's not you. If I were your servant, I could not be his, whether it be right in the sight of God to obey men rather than God, Judge ye' (Acts 4:19)."

I love that. I love the pizzazz that's in that. There's a little bit of what? Something in there. I like it. I like it. See what he's saying? "I am bound to believe no doctrine. I am bound to submit to no directive and duty unless I see it with my own eyes in my own Bible." Our confession of faith is very clear on this point. Chapter 21, paragraph 2:

"God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His Word, or not contained in it, so that to believe such doctrines or obey such commands out of conscience is to betray true liberty of conscience, and the requiring of an implicit faith in absolute and blind obedience is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also."

Now why were our spiritual forefathers so strong on this point? I want to give you a little historical background. Have you ever asked why in the Reformed confessions is there a very clear section on the doctrine of Christian liberty? Well, I'll tell you why. They had a sense of the horrible bondage that existed throughout the so-called Christian world up until the Reformation. When papal and church councils were creating doctrines not found in the Bible, were laying burdens upon people (no meat on Friday, the clergy must remain celibate, etc., etc., etc.), and people like Martin Luther, their conscience is bound by all of the regulations and all of the rules of this system that was not rooted in the Word of God. And when they saw that in Jesus Christ they could look at this imposing structure that had held whole countries for

dozens and even hundreds of years in its grip and stand back from it and say, "Unless I see it in my Bible, I will not believe it; unless I see it in my Bible, I will not do it", that's why this doctrine was such a precious thing to them.

And that's what grieves me when I see it being used for people to justify carnality in entertainment, immodesty in dress, and floating the term "Christian liberty". My friends, that was not the issue involved with these men at all. The issue with these men is they were living strictly in areas where God had not at all commanded them to say no to this and yes to that, believing doctrines that were a form of mental and spiritual torture. And so they came to understand, "No, that in Christ I am free from the tyranny of man-made doctrines, rules, and regulations."

Now, where do we read in the Word of God that that is the nature of our liberty in Christ? Well, let's look at several key texts. 1 Corinthians chapter 7. Here in this chapter, Paul is responding to one of the questions raised by the Corinthians: matters of marriage, mixed marriages, by implication, dealing with divorce. And now here in chapter 7 and verse 17, he takes up another subject:

"Only as the Lord has distributed to each man as God has called each, let him walk, and so ordain I in all the churches. Was any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has any been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing. Uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God."

You see, here is one of the outgrowths of being utterly free from the Mosaic Law covenant. You couldn't say that under Moses. If you weren't circumcised, you could be cut off from Israel. Now he says circumcision is nothing. Imagine Paul as a Jew saying this, when for years he'd look upon an uncircumcised man as a Gentile dog. And now he says, "Circumcision is nothing. Uncircumcision, circumcision. Gentile, shmentile Jew don't make any difference to me anymore." He says all of that's been dismantled in Jesus Christ.

Now, verse 20: "Let each man abide in that calling wherewith he was called. Were you called being a bond slave? Don't care for it. Nay, if you can become free, use it rather." In other words, if you're a slave, don't make that the beginning, middle, and end of your life. Just go on doing the will of God. On the other hand, if you can gain your freedom honorably, take it. "He that was called in the Lord being a bond slave is the Lord's free man." Ah, the doctrine of Christian liberty. He said somebody may have a piece of paper and on it it says you are his property, you are his bond slave. But he said, "You know who you really are. You can write over that in big red letters, "I am Christ's free man." See that?

That's what he's saying. Were you called being a bond slave? Don't care for it. If you can come free, use it rather. He that was called in the Lord being a bond slave is the Lord's free man. Likewise, he that was called being free is Christ's bond slave. Isn't that a beautiful turn? He said, "Ah, you're free in Christ, but you're free in Christ

because you've been enslaved to Christ." As we saw in our study of Romans 6, we're all slaves. Slaves of sin or slaves of Christ. One or the other.

Now then, he goes on to say, "You were bought with a price. Become not the bond slaves of men. [Remember who bought you to make you His bond slave, don't let anyone treat you as though they have a legal right to you. Only One has a legal right to you, and He has sealed it with his own precious blood.]" I've been bought by Christ. I'm his bond slave. He gives me His will in His Word. He tells me what to believe. He tells me what to do. He tells me what not to do. And therefore, if I am to be true to my true Master, I will not allow any man to own me. That's what he's saying. Do you see that in the text? You were bought with a price. Be not the slaves of men. Let no man bring your conscience into bondage with regard to doctrines, rules, and regulations for your life. Matthew 23, 8-10.

The second vital passage: Matthew 23, verses 8-10. Jesus has been warning the disciples about the influence of the scribes and the Pharisees in the first 12 verses. He is speaking to His own disciples. Beginning at verse 13, he brings the seven woes directly to the scribes and the Pharisees. But now notice verses 8 to 10: "Be not you called Rabbi, for one is your teacher, and all of you are brothers. Call no man your father on earth, for one is your Father, even He Who is in heaven. Neither be called masters, for one is your master, even the Christ."

Now is the Lord saying that in no situation we should use titles of respect to various individuals? Of course not. That would be disobedient to the biblical injunction, honor to whom honor is due. I don't call my physicians by their first name, even though most of them are young enough to be my sons. It's Dr. Frank. It's Dr. Gold. It's Dr. Safer. What the Lord is saying? Don't call with the disposition that generally goes with that designation.

That's what happened among the Pharisees. They were making void the Word of God by their own traditions. Rabbi so-and-so. They would quote Rabbi Ben so-and-so. Rabbi Ben so-and-so, knowledgeable of men's opinions. But as you heard in the previous hour, Matthew chapter 15, they were making void the Word of God by their human traditions, and they could support their human traditions by quoting all the rabbinical scholars.

Jesus said, "No, among you, my disciples, don't you be called rabbi. Don't you take the place or allow anyone to give you the place of an authoritative lord over their conscience. And don't you give that to anyone else. Call no man father on the earth, for one is your Father." Don't allow any human being to enter that theater of the conscience where God alone should enter with regard to what you believe, your doctrines, what you do and do not do, the rules by which you will govern your life.

One other clear example, Colossians chapter 2. The mouth of three witnesses are to establish this. The Colossians were being plagued by false teachers, and the best scholarship generally agrees that there was a strange mixture of Judaistic legalism, incipient Gnosticism, and pagan asceticism all mixed up in the soup. But what it was

doing, it was replacing the centrality and the sufficiency of Christ and the glory of what these believers were in Christ.

One of the things that comes through very clearly, not only we looked at verse 16 and 17, the Judaistic tendency, but look at verse 20:

"If you died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourself to ordinances, handle not, taste not, nor touch all of which things are to perish with the using after the precepts and doctrines of men, which things indeed have a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and severity to the body, but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh."

You want to be a holy man? Here's our list. Here's the things you're not to touch, not to handle. Paul says this is ludicrous. He said, "These are nothing but the doctrines and precepts of men. You're united to Christ. You were crucified with Christ. You were raised with Christ. And in Christ, you are free from the tyranny, not only of the doctrines, but the rules and the regulations of mere men."

Now hear me carefully, kids, because some of you say, "Oh boy, I'm going to go home tonight and when dad tells me to do something, I'll say, 'Pastor said we're free from regulations.'" Oh, no, no, no, no. It's not a regulation of man that says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Gotcha. It is not a regulation of man that says in Romans 13, "Obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, for there is no power but that which is ordained of God." Speed limit signs. Taxes coming due. You don't say, "Oh, I'm free in Christ from all the rules and regulations." No, no. You have responsibilities to the civil authority. God tells you you do. You kids, God tells you you've got responsibility to obey your parents. Church members, you've got responsibilities to obey your overseers. Obey them that have the rule over you and submit to them.

However, even within the framework of those relationships where God has constituted legitimate authority of one man over another, that authority must never be allowed to bully you into doing that which is explicitly against the law of God. When the authorities came to the apostles and said, "Shut up! Stop preaching!" They said, "Sorry boys, we've got to obey God rather than men. He told us, Preach; we're going to preach. You want to throw us in prison? Fine. We'll rot in there or God will let us out like he did before and we'll go back to preaching." So we're not saying, the Bible doesn't teach that we are free from the restraints of any human authority. But what I am saying and what the Bible teaches is this is the glory of our liberty in Christ. We are free from the tyranny of man-made doctrines, man-made rules and regulations.

And that's why those of you who have been under this ministry for years have heard me say times without number, "Believe nothing because I say it, because I say it passionately, because I say it convincingly. Believe it when you see it with your own eyes in your own Bible." Our task is to be to you what my glasses are to me. I'm right now looking at Colossians 2 and verse 1. If I didn't know it from memory, I couldn't tell you what's there. Now the text is there. That's the Word of God. It's objectively there.

What do my glasses do? They don't change it. They don't make something new. They just help my eyes to see it. Now that's what we as your pastors are to be. We're to be your eyes to help you see what's there. We're not penmen to write it, to change it, to alter it. We're to be eyes to help you to see it. And so our task is to teach and to persuade.

But if you're not persuaded that what we teach is found in this book, Christ mandates that you not receive it. His blood sets you loose from the tyranny of believing what we say you ought to believe if you're not persuaded it's in this book. And likewise with what you do. See, this is why I do these little droppings about our worship.

You see what a serious thing it is for one of us to stand up here and to direct the whole congregation into the sacred, solemn worship of God? If we don't have biblical warrant for what we're doing, do you see what we're doing? We're lording it over your conscience to cause you to act in a way that is unwarranted. That's a horrible thought, a horrible thought. In the sacred worship of God, we have no right to seek to direct you into any other activities but that which I and we and you are persuaded the Word of God says are the means, the elements within the legitimate worship of God: praise, prayer, preaching, giving unto God, sharing each other's lives in loving, open-faced fellowship, concern, and communication one with another.

So, when we come to the specifics of Christian liberty, you see, that's why the thing gets abused, because we refuse to come up with a checklist and say, "Here are the books you can read. Here are the movies you can see and can't see. Here's a ruler, and your dress has got to be so long." No. We have no biblical warrant to make all these kinds of rules.

No. We have a mandate to bind your conscience to the biblical principles which a bond-slave of Christ will hug to his or her heart. And in that sense, as I hope we'll see, the person who understands his or her identity as bond-slave of Christ and not a bond slave to man-made doctrines, rules and regulations, will live a far stricter life than one who has a checklist of do's and don'ts made by men. A far stricter life because you will have internalized what a verse like this means, "Be ye holy in all manner of living, for I am holy." And you look at your list and say, "Hey, this ain't on the list, but God says this is part of my life and I must live as a man or a woman separated unto God. How can I do this as one separated unto God? I must do this because I am separated unto God." It's vital that we grasp that in Christ we are free from the tyranny of man-made doctrines, rules, and regulations.

And I have to let the third one go. Time is gone. But I trust, as we've tried to wrestle with these things this morning, if you're not a Christian, have we made you thirsty? It's wonderful to be free, to be free even from the condemning voice of that law that says the wages of sin is death; that in Christ He has swallowed up the wrath of God against my sin, to know that in Christ my conscience is free, as it is bound to Him, to His law, to His word. God grant that if you do not know that freedom, you will run to Christ, who said, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."

And for you, the Lord's people, I hope you will be brought to a new of well-informed rejoicing of the nature of your freedom in Christ. It has been dearly bought. May God grant that we will cheerfully and joyfully appreciate it.

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