

Series: 1 Corinthians
Title: Law of Liberty, Law of Love
Text: 1 Corinthians 9: 7-18
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1 Corinthians 9: 19: For though I be free from all *men*, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

There is a difference between having head knowledge and having heart knowledge. A spiritually dead sinner can have head knowledge. Only those born of the Spirit of God have heart knowledge.

When God creates a new heart in his child, God writes on our hearts the law of liberty and the law of love. God promised in the new covenant, “I will put my law in their hearts, and write it in their inward parts; and will be their God and they shall be my people.” (Jer 31: 33) The law which God writes on the new heart is not the law of Moses. Dead sinners know it is wrong to steal. (Rom 2: 14) The law God writes on the heart is the the law of righteousness, the law of life in Christ, the law of faith, the law of liberty, the law of love. God gives an entire new constraint, new motive, and new way of deciding what we should do. Our rule is not in the letter but in the Spirit. Our new rule applies to every situation we face. The rule by which we are governed is what glorifies Christ and is best for my brethren and for needy, perishing sinners?

In our text today, the apostle Paul continues to teach on the subject of “The Law of Liberty and the Law of Love.”

He has two points: knowledge and charity. In 1 Corinthians 8: 1, he wrote...”we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.”

In chapter 8, he first focused on knowledge of the law of liberty which all mature believers have written on the heart by God. We know an idol is nothing. We know there is one God. We know meat commendeth us not to God. All mature believers have knowledge of our liberty from the law.

Then, he focused on charity—the law of love. There is not in every believer that same knowledge of liberty in Christ. Therefore, our liberty is apt to become a stumblingblock to weak believers. Knowledge of liberty without charity will say to the weak brother, “That is just tough if you are offended by me eating this meat that was offered to an idol. You must not be a true believer else you would know what I know!” You see, knowledge of liberty without love only puffs a man up. But the believer grown in grace, who has the knowledge of liberty along with the law of love written on the heart by God, says, “If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.” (1 Cor 8: 13)

So in our text in chapter 9, Paul divides his teaching on liberty between these same two points. First, he focuses on knowledge of liberty. All had knowledge of his right to be maintained as an apostle by the church. Then secondly, he focuses on charity. He shows what the law of love written on the heart by God made him to do.

The main point we see is that knowledge of liberty alone will make a man insist his rights be honored without caring if he offends. But when the law of liberty and the law of love is written on the heart by God, the rule that governs our actions will be ‘what gives Christ all the glory and is best for my brethren?’ Therefore, the believer matured in grace by God will set aside his rights, his liberties, his power given him by Christ, if it will be glorify Christ and best benefit his brethren.

KNOWLEDGE OF LIBERTY

Paul had knowledge of his liberty—his right—to be supported as an apostle by the church at Corinth. Other believers matured in grace by God also had knowledge of this liberty. But Paul asks a number of rhetorical questions which are so obvious that even the natural man could have knowledge of this liberty. All know that anyone who works to benefit another has a right to receive some benefit in return. So without a work of grace done in the heart, even a spiritually dead sinner can have a head knowledge of liberty.

First, we all have knowledge of a preacher's liberty to be supported by the church by the law of universal practice—**1 Corinthians 9: 7: Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?** Everyone has knowledge that those who work for another's good have liberty—have right—to in turn receive payment from those they provide for. A nation provides payment to the soldier who fights for them. The ground gives back fruit to the farmer who gave it seed. The sheep give back milk to the shepherd who feeds them. Even the natural man has knowledge of this liberty.

Everyone can have knowledge of this liberty by reading the old covenant law of Moses—**1 Corinthians 9: 8: Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9: For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10: Or saith he *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.** By reading this right here, right now, even those who are not born of the Spirit of God have knowledge of this liberty. We all have knowledge that God says the laborer should labor with some hope—some expectation—and he should be a partaker of that which he hopes for. Without having a new heart, we can read this and have knowledge of this liberty.

Everyone has knowledge of this liberty by the law or principle of profitability and reciprocation—**1 Corinthians 9: 11: If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?** We all have knowledge that if someone benefits us with something of great value, it is no great thing for that person receives from us something of lesser value. Even a natural man can have knowledge of this liberty based on this principle.

Those born of God have knowledge of this in a greater way. The Apostle Peter said the incorruptible seed is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. This is the seed Christ's preacher sows unto his people. We have "sown unto you spiritual things", Paul says. By the incorruptible seed, Christ has created a new man in some of you and blessed you with the unsearchable riches of Christ: you have free justification, perfect righteousness in him; you have a pure heart created in his holiness by the Holy Spirit by Christ being formed in you; God has made with you an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure; God has promised you an eternal inheritance reserved in heaven for you; you have eternal life, the salvation of your souls. Paul said, "If we have sown unto you such infinitely valuable spiritual treasure as the Bread that never perishes, is it a great thing if we shall reap the far less valuable carnal bread that perishes?" Every believer has knowledge this is right.

Everyone has knowledge of this liberty from the law of equity—**1 Corinthians 9: 12: If others be partakers of *this* power [this liberty, this right] over you, are not we rather?** The law of equity teaches us it is not right to provide for one person who labors for us and not provide for another who does the same labor for us. A natural man has knowledge of this right from the basic principle of equity.

It is possible for a natural man to have knowledge of the preacher's liberty by reading the law of the Levitical priesthood—**1 Corinthians 9: 13: Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of *the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?** A casual

reading of the scripture will show that God provided his priests with a portion of the offerings so the priests could devote all their time to the service of the temple.

Finally, most importantly, Paul and believers at Corinth had knowledge of this liberty by the ordination of Christ himself—**1 Corinthians 9: 14: Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.** But even a natural man could read this and have a head knowledge that this is liberty the Lord ordained.

Here is the point for us to get from these commonly known rhetorical questions. Paul said “We know we all have knowledge; knowledge puffeth up.” By these rhetorical questions, Paul shows that even a natural man can have knowledge of the preacher’s liberty to be supported financially.

But Paul said that knowledge of liberty alone only serves to puff a man up. If all a man has is knowledge of liberty, it will only serve to lift him up in pride. He will insist his liberty, his right, be honored by others no matter what. If he be a religious man, he may renounce those who do not honor his liberty as unbelievers. The legalists in Galatia had only a head knowledge of liberty so they used liberty as an occasion to feed their fleshly lusts. Those with only knowledge of liberty do not care if they cause weak brethren to stumble.

Without a new heart—without God writing the law of liberty and the law of love on the heart—a man may have knowledge of the doctrine of liberty in Christ. But merely having a knowledge of liberty does not make a sinner free. Even if knows something of the doctrine of grace, he will still be a legalist the same as the man who preaches free-will, works religion. Those with only a head knowledge of liberty do not have Christ dominating the heart and setting them free from the chains of their sin-nature. Therefore, their sinful lusts will demand their liberties be honored by all.

THE LAW OF LOVE WRITTEN ON THE HEART

The apostle Paul says—**1 Corinthians 9: 15: But I have used none of these things:...**

Paul had all these various laws. But he used none of these laws to constrain the Corinthian church to honor his liberty: not the law of Moses, not the law of temple service, not even the ordination of Christ.

The man who only has a head knowledge of liberty—even it is true knowledge of the doctrine of grace—will use law to put sinners under a legal constraint. He will use the law of Moses and he will even turn the ordination of Christ into a legal constraint to guilt men into obedience. The natural heart is so dead in sin that it will turn liberty into law!

But Paul had more than head knowledge of liberty. God created a new heart in Paul in regeneration. The finger of God wrote the law of liberty as well as the law of love on his heart—they are one. What is the law of love? It is the law of Christ.

Galatians 6: 1: Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2: Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

The spirit of meekness is to trust Christ to teach and constrain brethren. Considering ourselves is to consider how Christ took the burden off us by bearing it on himself. The thing we do not want to be tempted to do is to put a yoke on our sinning, stumbling, burdened brother. Instead, bear his burdens—put up with his faults. This is what it is to be constrained by the law of Christ, the law of love, because this is what Christ did for us. Christ commands his people, saying,

John 13:34: A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

We do not have to guess how we are to love on another. Christ said, “As I have loved you.” Christ gave a visible example to illustrate how he loved his people. He laid aside his robe, bent down and washed his disciples feet. Then he said,

John 13:14: If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15: For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

We had no liberty, no right. We were dead in sins and slaves to sin. But Christ had liberty! As God, he had the right to be submitted unto, believed and worshipped. But not one of his people honored his liberty while dead in our sins. Yet, how did Christ love us? What was he showing by removing his robe and washing his disciples feet? He was showing how he laid aside his liberty, in order to accomplish the work of redeeming us from the slavery of sin by his death on the cross.

Philippians 2: 6: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Christ is God. Yet, he set aside his liberty and made himself of no reputation and was made in the likeness of men. He did not put a heavier burden on his people, he took the form of a servant to serve God for his people. He bore our sin-burden upon himself, he bore our law-burden upon himself and he bore the burden of the wrath of God in our room and stead. Christ did it all in the spirit of meekness—obedient unto the death of the cross—looking to and trusting the Father to deliver him. This was Christ’s joy set before him that made him suffer the cross, despising the shame. And doing so he highly exalted the Father and the Father highly exalted him to be Lord and Christ over his body the church.

Do we want to highly exalt the Father and the Lord Jesus? When our weak brother or sister is at fault, not understanding liberty, not understanding that Christ has set us free from the law of Moses entirely, then let us set aside our liberty and bear their wrong even as Christ bore ours. Love one another as Christ loved us and gave himself for us.

Even when Christ came and taught us his right to be glorified, he did not put any of these things on us. Christ used his preacher to do what Paul did here: he used the law to teach us our sin. It was not to guilt us into serving him from a legal constraint, but simply to give us a knowledge of our sin. Then Christ showed us how he laid aside his liberty, bore our sin and saved us on the cross. It was his grace and love for us that melted our hearts into submission and faith, not law. So now we have liberty in Christ. He has written the law of liberty on our hearts, along with the law of love!

Free from the law
O Happy Condition
Jesus hath bled
There is remission

Yet, not all brethren chosen of God, redeemed by Christ and regenerated by the Spirit are grown in grace to the same measure so as to have knowledge that our liberty from the law is complete. They trust the sovereign God of glory. They rejoice in particular redemption accomplished by our Substitute. They love the message of God’s irresistible, preserving grace. But some, from a true heart desiring to glorify Christ, think they should observe a day or abstain from meat and drink or some other vain tradition. So does the law

of love motivate us to do? What was Paul's motive?—**1 Cor 9: 12...[we] suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.**

Paul's motive was that he did not want to get in the way of Christ receiving all the glory. Paul's motive was the spiritual growth of his weak brethren and the salvation of perishing sinners. Knowing Christ would bring himself glory and accomplish the salvation of his people through the preaching of the gospel of Christ, Paul would do nothing which hindered his brethren from hearing him preach the gospel of Christ. So when Paul detected at Corinth that receiving money from them would hinder them hearing his preaching, even though he knew this was his liberty, he laid aside his right and provided his own living. That is what a child of God will do who is matured by God's grace and in the knowledge of how the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for his people.

But if the church did not return a remuneration to Paul then what was his wage?—**1 Corinthians 9: 15...neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.**

The word "glorying" means "rejoicing, happiness, joy." Paul's reward—his wage—was his joy, his rejoicing, his happiness. From what? It was from obeying Christ by loving his brethren as Christ commanded. He said—**1 Corinthians 9: 18: What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power [my liberty] in the gospel.**

Paul rejoiced to be able to love his brethren even when it meant laying aside his liberty. His rejoicing was that all he had to do was preach Christ. He did not have to abuse his liberty. He did not have to constrain men. All he did was preach Christ and him crucified, glorying in the cross of Christ! His rejoicing came because through that message, without Paul's constraining power, Paul saw Christ bring glory to himself by saving his brethren. Paul said I would rather die than some man make my happiness void.

After the Savior commanded us to love one another as he loved us, he said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (Jn 13: 17) Paul says this is my payment—obedience is its own reward. The happiness that comes from obeying Christ and loving my brethren is reward enough.

Our reward, our rejoicing, is to see Christ receive all glory and our brethren saved by his grace. If you want to be happy simply obey Christ. Bear witness of Christ in the spirit of meekness—in the spirit of trusting Christ to make it effectual without our constraint or the constraint of law. Bear the burdens of our brethren—put up with their weaknesses. Pray for Christ to bless them and wait on Christ to do so! Even if Christ saves no one through our witness, we will have happiness and rejoicing in Christ simply because we obeyed him and did not abuse the liberty he has given us. He said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (Jn 13: 17)

This is what we will do if we have the law of liberty and the law of love written on our hearts by our Master and are matured by his grace and in the knowledge of his love for us. If the love of Christ constraineth us then we know it will only be his love, not law, that will constrain our brethren!

Amen!