

Free in Christ



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It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery... You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you bite and devour one another, watch out or you will be destroyed by one another... But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law (Galatians 5:1, 13-15, 18).

In the days leading up to Canada Day on July 1st, and during the same period of time, leading up to Independence Day in the United States on July 4th, North American airwaves along with print and digital media are filled with talk of freedom. It's the time of the year when politicians and government officials throw the word "freedom" around like confetti at a wedding. Talk of freedom is everywhere... but what does freedom mean?

While physical freedom from political tyranny is wonderful, and we must never take it for granted, as Christ-followers we know spiritual freedom to be the greatest freedom and the most incredible miracle, leading us to be thankful for the greatest freedom—freedom in Christ. *What does it mean to be free in Christ?*

Freedom From and Freedom For

Those who are enslaved by Christless religion (or any Christless "ism" or

ideology) dismiss and devalue freedom in Christ, given by the grace of God, as producing permissiveness and immorality. *Blasphemously suggesting that freedom in Christ leads one to live a life of self-centered indulgence is the last bastion of those who know little, or nothing at all about the beauty and reality of God's grace.*

However, Christians who are free in Christ do not live just as they please, following after every whim of permissiveness, indulging all their senses and gratifying the lusts of the flesh. Jesus Christ, their risen Lord, lives within them producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit (described later in this chapter of Galatians).

Christians who are free in Christ follow the perfect law that gives freedom—they obey Jesus, who, because he lives in them, produces obedience within them. They are free *from* all anti-Christ religion and political tyranny *for* their obedience to Jesus Christ. We read about the perfect law of freedom in the first and second chapter of James, the law of liberty that ironically is given to those who obey... but their obedience is to Jesus, not religions or political systems. Thus, freedom in Christ, from religious bondage, is given for the high calling of following Jesus Christ.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law (Galatians 5:18).

"Under law" refers to the bondage and spiritual slavery that insists human beings may please and

appease God by virtue of being "under law."

Slaves of Christless religion are "under law" and endlessly toil and labor. Recalling lyrics from that old gospel song *Old Man River*—"toting that barge, lifting that bale"—those "under law" endure spiritual struggles assuming that God will one day be pleased and appeased enough to grant them blessings and "freedom."

Freedom in Prisons and Cemeteries

Apart from the obvious pitfalls of the pseudo-freedom offered by political viewpoints, many others are deceived into thinking if they carefully follow and obey the laws of their religion, with all of its requirements, ceremonies and rituals, then they will be free—and they believe they will remain free as long as they do and do and do. In essence, people in religious bondage actually believe they are free, and that they will remain free (in their religious penitentiary) as long as they keep doing what their taskmasters order and inflict on them.

I am reminded of a story—a Christ-follower who absolutely believed in the grace of God realized the obvious flaws in legalistic religion and had been delivered from his bondage. His good friend who happened to be a pastor decided that such a belief must be eradicated before it spread and grew (perhaps like a mustard tree—like the gospel itself?!). The pastor defined faith in terms of laws that needed to

be obeyed and behaviors that must be avoided.

The Christ-follower said to the pastor, "Would you like to live in a town where no cigarettes or cigars could be smoked and where all forms of alcohol were against the law? And would you like to live in a town where church attendance on Sundays was required?"

The pastor who was in bondage to legalism took the bait. "You bet. It would be a virtual paradise to live in a community where everyone was required to attend church every Sunday and where no one could ever touch a drop of alcohol and where everyone was forbidden to smoke tobacco."

Then the Christ-follower who wholeheartedly embraced God's grace said to the pastor who defined Christianity by how rigidly and rigorously one obeys religious law, "so... just to get this right ... are you saying if everyone in this paradise-like town was forced to do the right things, as you perceive them, and not allowed to engage in bad behavior, as you define it, then everyone in that community would be a Christian—right?"

The pastor then swallowed the bait—hook, line and sinker: "Yes,

if everyone lived like that in such a community then the entire village or town would be a Christian."

With all of that said, the Christ-follower summarized the logical position that the pastor was advocating:

"Well, if you want a perfect Christian community on earth right now I suggest **two places**. A prison is the *first place*.

In prisons the guards and wardens do their best to regulate and restrict the behavior of prisoners. It seems to me, by your standards and measuring sticks of Christianity, if someone could just enforce all of your rules in a prison, then everyone in the prison would be a Christian. But, as we all know, prisons, in spite of all those controls and laws, are still filled with sin.

So...

The second and BEST place where we can find a perfect Christian community, at least by your definition, is the cemetery. No one in the cemetery is breaking any rules—they are all perfectly obedient... they are dead, but apparently, according to your logic, good Christians."

Nothing to Hide, Lose or Fear

Christ-followers are free in Christ and are given three supreme blessings: 1) we have nothing to

hide, 2) we have nothing to lose and 3) we have nothing to fear.

People who are trapped, seduced, brainwashed, deceived and enslaved by Christless religion and anti-Christ political philosophies have *everything to hide*—they must forever pretend to be something they are not.

It's hard to go through life worried that someday someone will discover one of your dirty little secrets. Freedom in Christ is knowing that all is forgiven and that we, as Christ-followers, have *nothing to hide*.

People who are in spiritual bondage feel as if they have *everything to lose*—if they fail to measure up to religious standards they are convinced they will burn forever, tormented eternally in a hell fire that religion has invented to keep them in line.

Those in bondage to Christless thinking and philosophies worry about losing the status they have earned and that they deserve—but their status is like a mirage in the desert. People in bondage to Christless religion live in a state of constant agitation, stress and anxiety—they live with shame and guilt, all induced and caused by Christless religion.

But as the lyrics of an old song propose, "*Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose.*" Freedom in Christ is knowing that we are spiritually free and *have nothing to lose*.

Those in bondage to Christless religion have *everything to fear* from the fabricated god of religion who is filled with recrimination and condemnation, having replaced the one true God of grace, mercy and love.

Freedom in Christ is knowing the one true God and knowing that he is completely misrepresented by Christless religion and that, in Christ, by the grace of God, we have gained freedom in Christ and thus have *nothing to fear*.

Being free in Christ means we have *nothing to hide, nothing to lose and nothing to fear*. □

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