

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

Christian Freedom and the Law of God

Galatians 5:1, 13, 18

This past week, I watched a powerful movie for the second time... the movie was called "Amistad," and it was based on a true story... the plight of some Africans who had been abducted from their villages by slave traders and then illegally shipped to Cuba. During the voyage from Cuba in July of 1839, one slave named Cinque managed with extreme effort and the ripping of fingernails and the flesh from his fingertips to pry loose a single nail from a plank of wood to which he was chained... He used that nail to pick the lock of the shackles that bound him, and then freed the other slaves. They grabbed some weapons and took over the ship, slaughtering their captors but keeping the ship's captain and mate alive so they could sail them back to Africa. But the Captain fooled them and sailed them to Long Island, New York. The ship was impounded by the US Navy and brought to New Haven, CT, where the 53 Africans were taken into custody and charged with leading a murderous slave insurrection. The movie unfolds powerfully, revealing the intense political wranglings over slavery that were threatening to rip the United States apart. The legal drama was a focus on the rights these Africans had to regain their freedom from vicious men who had stolen it from them. The opponents claimed they were slaves and had no rights to rebel against their lawful owners. The drama culminates in the case being argued by John Quincy Adams before the Supreme Court of the United States. The soliloquy offered by Adams in the movie is one of the most moving moments I've ever seen in a movie:

He said the center of case comes down to the true nature of man. He cited an article written by pro-slavery Senator John Calhoun which asserted that slavery has been woven into the very nature and fabric of human society from ancient history, even back to the Bible times, and is therefore an essential part of man. Adams strongly disagreed:

I know this a controversial idea—[but the nature of man] is freedom! Is freedom. And the proof is the length to which a man, woman or child will go to regain it once taken. He *will* break loose his chains. He *will* decimate his enemies. He *will* try and try and try, against all odds, against all prejudices, to get home.

I did not intend to couple the watching of this movie with preaching through Galatians 5... but it struck me how they do connect. A major theme in Galatians 5 is the issue of FREEDOM, that Christ has bought us FREEDOM, that it is fragile and needs to be

protected, that it is misunderstood and can be abused... we can take this freedom and use it for the FLESH, for SIN... the very opposite of what Christ intended

So I was led to ask again, what is the TRUE NATURE of man? Were we created by God to be free? Or were we created by God to be slaves? Or is there a deeper answer that draws both themes together and harmonizes them?

As we've said before, only GOD ALONE has absolute freedom in His universe:

Psalm 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

Our freedom is controlled by God's pleasure, God's will, God's purposes for us... our freedom has BOUNDARIES

1. Are there any WALLS around the freedom Christ shed his blood to purchase for us?
2. Are we free to do whatever pops in our minds to do, anywhere the wind blows we may roam... or are there BOUNDARIES?

Genesis 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

You are FREE TO EAT... but YOU MUST NOT EAT...

That is the clear language of freedom within boundary lines

So we were BOTH created to SERVE God and created for FREEDOM:

Philippians 2:6-7 who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage. ⁷ Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men.

^{CSB} Revelation 22:3 and there will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him.

Revelation 22:8-9 I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had shown them to me. ⁹ But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow slave with you, your brothers the prophets, and those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

Romans 6:22 you have been liberated from sin and become enslaved to God

As humans, we were created to SERVE, but in FREEDOM!!

This morning, we will look more deeply into the BOUNDARY LINES of Christian freedom... and specifically, the role of the LAW in the true Christian life. WE will try to

answer the questions in what sense is a Christian free from the Law, and in what sense is a Christian still connected with the Law...

II. Free From the Law... or Free *To* the Law?

A. An Ancient AND a Modern Debate: the Role of the Law in the Christian Life

1. Battle over relationship between justification and sanctification
2. The “Lordship Controversy” between John MacArthur and Zane Hodges (among others)... can you accept Jesus as Savior but not submit to Him as Lord? Can we expect someone who is openly living in sin to have the same assurance of salvation as someone who is putting sin to death by the Spirit?
3. Tullian Tchividjian: *Jesus + Nothing = Everything* (2011)... very much lined up with the themes of Galatians, and Paul’s arguments against the Judaizers... BUT... some questions about whether there can be a confusion of justification and sanctification... is sanctification just a matter of reminding yourself again and again that you are already seen to be perfect by God? Or is there a need for LABOR BY THE SPIRIT IN OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW?
4. Debates with Kevin Deyoung over the role of striving and effort in sanctification... and therefore, the role of God’s Law in the ongoing life of the Christian AFTER JUSTIFICATION

B. So... this is a LIVE ISSUE

C. More than that... each of you struggles with ongoing questions about daily Christian life, and how to walk in the freedom that Christ has given you while also living in a manner that pleases the Lord... WHAT ROLE DOES THE LAW OF GOD PLAY IN THAT DAILY LIFE???

D. Clear Assertions in this Chapter... and Elsewhere

Galatians 5:1 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.

Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

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

1. So also earlier in Galatians, Paul has been asserting the freedom all Christians have from the Law
 - a. The Judaizers were teaching a false gospel which had at its core the NECESSITY of obedience to the Law of Moses in order to be saved

b. The best summary of their doctrine is in Acts 15

Acts 15:1 "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

Acts 15:5 "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."

2. Paul has clearly taught that justification from sin is by faith apart from works

Galatians 2:16 [We] know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

3. So, he has asserted that Christians are FREE from the Law

Galatians 2:19 For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God.

Galatians 3:19 What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.

Galatians 3:24-25 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Galatians 4:24-26 One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. ²⁵ Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.

4. And this is taught in many other places as well

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Romans 7:4 So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

Romans 8:2 through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 10:4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

5. The summation of all this is powerful: in some very real sense, Christians are no longer under the Law... we died to the Law; we are free from the Law; the Law has ended in reference to us...

E. BUT... Other places seem to teach the opposite

Romans 3:31 Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Matthew 5:17-19 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Galatians 5:14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Why would Paul write that if the Law had nothing to do with us whatsoever?

So also this verse:

Romans 8:4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

And especially this:

Ezekiel 36:25-27 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

It seems like the Law brings us TO CHRIST for forgiveness; Christ gives us His Spirit; and then the Spirit brings us BACK TO THE LAW to know how we should now live in order to please God

The essence of our salvation is a transformation from within so that we now DELIGHT in God's Law as the most beautiful way to live... but we don't TRUST IN our own efforts to obey the Law to justify us from our sins!!

F. The Nature of Christian Freedom

1. Negatively: Freedom *from*...

- a. Freedom from Satan's power
 - b. Freedom from Sin
 - c. Freedom from the Ceremonial Law as a Covenant
 - d. Freedom from the Law's Curse: the Power to Condemn Our Souls
 - e. Freedom from Death
 - f. Freedom from the Grave
2. Positively: Freedom *to*...
- a. Freed from a state of wrath and brought into a state of MERCY AND FAVOR with God
 - b. Freed from a state of condemnation before God and brought into a state of justification, perfect righteousness in the sight of God
 - c. Freed from a state of enmity with God and brought into a state of reconciliation and friendship with God
 - d. Freed from a state of spiritual death, and brought into a daily experience of spiritual life by the Spirit
 - e. Freed from a state of sinful rebellion against God, and brought into a life of obedient service to God
 - f. Freed from a state of bondage and slavery in our service, we are brought into a spirit of sonship and freedom in our service
 - g. Freed from death and hell, and brought into life and glory in heaven

III. Six Vital Questions

A. Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*

1. Samuel Bolton (1606-1654), Puritan pastor
2. Wrote a careful little booklet in 1645 by that title: *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*
3. The BOUNDARIES of Christian FREEDOM
4. Paul was adamant that the Galatians not allow anyone to make them spiritual slaves

Galatians 5:1 ¶ 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.

5. By telling you that there ARE limits to your freedom, and those limits are perfectly described by God's Holy Law, am I trying subtly to craft a yoke of slavery now and slip it over your necks?
6. I read Samuel Bolton's six probing questions on this issue, and felt immediately led to ask them in front of you, and seek to answer them and apply them to your lives in Christ... to show you the TRUE BOUNDS of Christian freedom
7. His six questions:
 - a. Question 1: Does our being made free by Christ deliver us from the law?
 - b. Question 2: Does our being made free by Christ deliver us from all punishments for sin?
 - c. Question 3: Is it consistent with Christian freedom to perform duties because God has commanded them?
 - d. Question 4: Can those freed by Christ come into bondage again through sin?
 - e. Question 5: Is it consistent with Christian freedom to perform duties in order to be rewarded for our obedience?
 - f. Question 6: Does the freedom of a Christian free him from all obedience to other people?

B. Question 1: Does our being made free by Christ deliver us from the law?

1. What is "the Law"?
 - a. The word is used in a variety of ways in the Bible
 - i) Sometimes it refers to the Books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets

John 10:34 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'? (Psalm 82)

- ii) Sometimes it refers to the Five Books of Moses alone

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

- iii) Sometimes it refers to any word from God

Isaiah 1:10-11 Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! ¹¹ "The multitude of your sacrifices-- what are they to me?" says the LORD.

- b. Theologians have divided the Law of Moses into three main headings
 - i) The Ceremonial Law: circumcision, dietary laws, sacrificial system, worship, annual feasts
 - ii) Civil Law: by which the nation of Israel was run... matters of the king and taxation and justice in the courts and provision for the poor, property rights, etc.
 - iii) Moral Law: timeless moral principles having to do with God and humanity—you shall have no other gods, you shall not worship idols, honor your father and mother, you shall not murder or steal or covet
- c. Christians are FREE from the first two... we are no longer required to be circumcised or to offer animal sacrifice or go to Jerusalem three times a year to worship; neither are we required to honor Israel's king or follow Israel's national laws... we are not Israelites in that sense
- d. But the Moral Law remains binding on the conscience of the Christian... we still MUST obey it!
- e. Jesus' summary of the Law seems to point to the Moral Law:

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

- 2. Assertion #1: The Moral Law remains a rule of daily life for God's people
 - a. When Paul says we are "free from the Law," he clearly doesn't mean we don't need to obey these two great commandments any more
 - b. I can't imagine any Christian claiming we no longer have to love God or love our neighbors
 - c. The New Testament epistles make it clear that the Moral Law still speaks an obligation to Christians

1 John 4:21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

- d. And in our very own passage this morning, the second great commandment is repeated as clearly binding on Christians

Galatians 5:13-14 serve one another in love. ¹⁴ The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

3. Assertion #2: God's grace empowers us to fulfill the Moral Law
 - a. Loving God with all our hearts is the whole point of the transforming power of the Gospel and the indwelling Spirit

Ezekiel 36:25-27 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

- b. Ezekiel promised that, in the New Covenant, God would remove our heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh? Remember that He said He would put His Spirit in us and MOVE US to obey His Laws? Remember that He said He would do all of this AFTER He cleansed us from our sins?
- c. The cleansing from sin is done at the beginning of the Christian life, at justification... so also the transformation of our hearts making us new... then comes the gift of the Spirit... then comes the power of the Spirit to MOVE US to obey God's Laws

Philippians 2:13 it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Hebrews 8:10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.

4. SO... being "free from the Law" does NOT mean being free from the daily need to obey God's moral Law...
5. But it means being free from needing to obey it ON OUR OWN, UNAIDED BY GOD'S SOVEREIGN GRACE... and it does mean being free from the moral Law's power to condemn us to hell when we fail to love God or our neighbor
6. The moral law (Love God with all your heart, love others as you love yourself) describes the most beautiful human life that one can possibly live! It is the life that Jesus Himself lived every moment... it is the very life the Holy Spirit is working in us moment by moment... and it is the life we WILL LIVE IN HEAVEN!!!
7. Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon called "Heaven is a World of Love"... in it he proclaimed that since 1 John 4:8 says "God is love", it follows that

God is an infinite fountain of love, Seeing he is an all-sufficient Being, it follows that he is a full and overflowing and an inexhaustible fountain of love. Seeing he is an unchangeable and eternal Being, he is an unchangeable and eternal source of love. There even in heaven dwells that God from whom every stream of holy love, yea, every drop that is or ever was proceeds.

Revelation 22:1-2 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Not merely “river of life” but “river of love”... we WILL LOVE GOD PERFECTLY as He does... and we WILL LOVE OTHERS PERFECTLY as He does as well... and we will not need to be COMMANDED to love Him any more than we will need to be COMMANDED to breathe or to delight in the beauty around us or commanded to be happy in the ocean of joy that we will be swimming in... HEAVEN IS A WORLD OF LOVE... so the Holy Spirit moves in us on earth as much as possible to

Ephesians 5:2 live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us

C. Question 2: Does our being made free by Christ deliver us from all punishments for sin?

1. Is it possible that God can completely forgive us from sins, cover us in the righteousness of Christ, welcome us to heaven despite our sins... yet bring heavy consequences and chastisements for our sins?
2. Scripture clearly teaches YES!!!
3. Scriptural support
 - a. The Law of Sowing and Reaping

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

- b. The Teaching on God’s Fatherly Discipline

Hebrews 12:6 the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.

- c. Christ’s Clear Statement in Revelation

Revelation 3:19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

4. Examples from Scripture:
 - a. David and Bathsheba

- b. The Corinthians and the Lord's Supper
5. Why God disciplines His forgiven children

Hebrews 12:10 God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

6. What disciplines we may expect
- a. The "law of sowing and reaping"... perhaps a Christian couple may have premarital sex... it is possible they may have to face the challenging circumstances of premarital pregnancy. Perhaps a Christian may stray into internet pornography... he may lose his job as a result; perhaps a Christian may get into habits of overeating... he may gain a lot of weight as a result; perhaps a Christian may get angry and say some very unkind things to another person... that relationship may be permanently damaged as a result... a lie may deeply damage trust; a pattern of laziness may result in someone failing to do preventive maintenance on a car and failing to change the oil, resulting in major engine damage... ; a pastor may get lazy and fail to prepare his sermons diligently, and the result will be mediocrity in preaching and a failure to produce fruit as he should; **JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE A CHRISTIAN DOESN'T FREE YOU FROM THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING...** much more on this when we get to that passage in Galatians 6
 - b. Fatherly discipline: God may bring chastisements in our lives not directly tied to sowing and reaping... for example, he may bring health troubles or financial troubles on you because of some spiritual sin—some pride or hardness in your heart; he may lead you to give to missions or the poor and needy, and you harden your heart and fail to give—then God will bring a major car repair or other financial loss that teaches you to give money when God says to give it; any time you have a health problem, you should seek the Lord to see if you perhaps are being disciplined for sin

James 5:14-16 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

7. Walking in the fear of the Lord's discipline
- a. We should FEAR SIN and FEAR THE LORD'S FATHERLY DISCIPLINE for sin
 - b. Just because we are free from the condemnation of the Law doesn't mean that we are free from consequences for sin

D. Question 3: Is it consistent with Christian freedom to perform duties because God has commanded them?

1. Obviously, the answer must be YES!! Or else why should we read any of Paul's epistles?
2. Paul is continually giving commands to God's justified people that he expects them to obey

Galatians 5:13 serve one another in love.

Galatians 5:25-26 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Galatians 6:6 Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

3. Scriptural support that Christians still must OBEY CHRIST though they are not "under Law"
 - a. Obedience comes from love... the stronger your love for Christ, the more you will obey Him!!

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

- b. Obedience comes from faith... the stronger your faith, the more you will obey Him

Romans 1:5 the obedience that comes from faith.

Romans 16:26 so that all nations might believe and obey him

Obey WHAT???? Obey God's laws... God's rules... God's word!!!!

So, being free from Law does NOT mean being free from obedience to God

4. Ways Christians ARE free from "duty"
 - a. Free from "duty" as a burden

1 John 5:3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome

- b. Free from "duty" as a trade by which we earn wages

Romans 4:4 Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.

John 10:13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

c. Free from “duty” as if done by slaves

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

5. Instead, Christian obedience becomes Christian DELIGHT

E. Question 4: Can those freed by Christ come into bondage again through sin?

1. Two kinds of bondage:

a. Universal bondage to Sin as a tyrannical principle...

b. Partial/gradual bondage to sin by false doctrine or habitual sin

2. We shall NEVER again be enslaved by Satan, sin, death, Law as a condemning power

a. If Christ ever sets a soul free from sin as a lawful power, if Christ ever delivers a soul from Satan’s dark kingdom, they can NEVER be enslaved again

b. We are totally secure in our freedom from sin and Satan and hell!!

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Colossians 1:13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves

3. BUT we can sin ourselves into habitual bondage

a. Bondage of legalism

i) This is the very thing Paul was pleading with the Galatians about!!

ii) The Judaizers were trying to enslave their consciences with the Law, saying they had to obey in order to be saved

iii) So Paul commanded this:

Galatians 5:1 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.

- iv) We also need to be constantly reminded even in the absence of false teachers... a sick conscience can be used by Satan to trick us into legalism and bondage to fear
- v) When we sin, we feel that we need to DO SOMETHING to earn back our right standing with God... we feel we need to DO SOMETHING in obedience to the Law to pay for our sins... but the answer to sin will always be the same: REPENT AND BELIEVE IN CHRIST!!!
- vi) Obedience to the Law can never be used to pay for sins... cling to Christ
- vii) Confess your sins, acknowledge that you have violated God's best for you... repent, grieve over the sin, resolve to fight it... but KNOW THAT FORGIVENESS IS A FREE GIFT GIVEN BY THE GRACE OF GOD THROUGH THE CROSS OF CHRIST!!! Not by works, so that no one can boast
- viii) So STAND FIRM, and do not yield to the bondage of legalism

b. Bondage of license

- i) On the other hand, sin can entangle us in its ways by habitual yielding to temptation
- ii) A lust can trick you and surprise you into some sin... some internet site visited... some movie watched... some
- iii) Or spiritual laziness can trick you into skipping your quiet time or skipping church... little by little, some bad habits can creep in

Proverbs 24:33-34 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest--³⁴ and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

- iv) Or some excess enjoyment of various pleasures—not sinful in and of themselves, but soon, you have built up a habit: living for pleasure—Redbox, or Netflix or some computer game... or living for weekend getaways or living for food or living for sleep

c. Paul's clear warning:

1 Corinthians 6:12 "Everything is permissible for me"-- but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"-- but I will not be mastered by anything.

- 4. Both forms of bondage are powerful but EARTH-BOUND... the bondage of legalism through false doctrine and the bondage of license through habitual sin

5. The whole time, the true Christian is FREE and can walk out of the voluntary prison

Illustration: *Pilgrim's Progress*... Christian and Hopeful imprisoned in Doubting Castle by the wicked tyrant, Giant Despair... he comes daily and beats them and assaults them and accuses them of crimes and tempts them to commit suicide... but all the time they had the key to their own release in their breast pocket: the Key of Promise! Trusting in God's promises, they found the key could unlock any door of their prison and set them free. They could have escaped at any moment. So it is with genuine Christians! We NEVER NEED TO SIN AGAIN... but if you have enslaved yourself to legalism on the one hand, or to habitual sin on the other, you can walk away by trusting in the promises of God

6. Here we must read again Galatians 5:1 and realize that you are responsible to keep yourself free from VOLUNTARY ENSLAVEMENT... either to legalism or to licentious sin

7. Application:

- a. Are there any habits that you have that have secretly, silently put chains around your heart?
- b. Are there any patterns of activity that are effective idols in your life, that you effectively can't live without?

1 Corinthians 6:12 "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything.

Is anything enslaving you? Any pattern of eating? Or drinking? Or watching? Or playing? Or spending? Or recreating? Or sleeping? Anything enslaving you? If you're not sure, trying FASTING FROM IT for a time... a day for food, or a week from some recreation or comfort food or hobby... the harder it is to live without something, the more certain you may be that it has its chains around your heart... that you have VOLUNTARILY ENSLAVED YOURSELF

Mark Twain: "Giving up smoking is the easiest thing in the world. I know because I've done it thousands of times."

F. Question 5: Is it consistent with Christian freedom to perform duties in order to be rewarded for our obedience?

1. Being "free from the Law" does not mean we are free from the necessity of obedience in order to be rewarded by God
2. REWARDS are a big topic in the Christian life...
3. The New Testament reveals that God gives rewards based on obedience
4. The more you obey the more He will reward you

5. The greatest single statement proving a works-based reward system comes from Christ in Matthew 6

Matthew 6:1 "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Matthew 6:3-4 when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:6 when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:19-21 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Galatians teaches us very plainly that we can't "store up" forgiveness by works, we can't store up a righteous standing with God by works; we can't "store up" payment for sins by works; we can't "store up" enough heavenly credit to be adopted as His sons and daughters. All of those things are given by grace through faith apart from works

So... what treasure do we "store up in heaven"? I believe we begin "storing up treasure in heaven" the moment we have been justified by faith... from then on, every good work we do is stored up in God's book, waiting for our reward!!! We store up good works for reward AFTER JUSTIFICATION

And how do we know what "good works" are? BY THE LAW!!

6. The Bible gives LAWS, RULES, PRECEPTS, COMMANDMENTS... including in the New Testament

- a. We are commanded to give generously financially... and are told the more we invest in the Lord's work, the more we will receive of His blessing

2 Corinthians 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

- b. We are commanded to work hard as for the Lord, not for men; and the better we work, the more the Lord will reward us

Colossians 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

- c. We are commanded to evangelize, and people we win to Christ will be our crown

1 Thessalonians 2:19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?

- d. We are commanded to support the Lord's servants in their ministry, and the more we support them, the greater will be our reward

Matthew 10:41-42 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴² And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

- e. We are commanded to help build the Lord's church, and the more we use gold, silver and costly stones rather than wood, hay, and straw, the better our reward

1 Corinthians 3:8 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.

1 Corinthians 3:14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.

- f. SO obedience to the Laws of God results in great reward... both on earth and even more, eternally in heaven
7. Everything we get is a gift of grace... we don't truly merit anything ever! Even our best actions are tinged with sin, hardly perfect... that God would ever reward any action on our part is SHEER GRACE!
 8. But... it seems that, in the New Testament, there are an array of blessings given both on earth and in heaven that are rewards for obedience... and this pattern of obedience being rewarded IS NOT a violation of Christian freedom
 9. On earth: there are conditional blessings, gifts given are a reward for obedience to Christ's commands
 - a. Again, we appeal to the Law of sowing and reaping
 - b. If you sow to the Spirit by laboring on your soul in a pattern of consistent prayer or scripture memorization, you will reap REWARDS: a deeper walk with God, a more thorough knowledge of the Scripture, a wider scope of ministry, more fruit in evangelism
 - c. Hard workers in the Kingdom are rewarded IN THIS LIFE with more and more blessing from God

- d. The more we obey, the stronger will be our ASSURANCE OF SALVATION... we should not expect someone in willful sin to have a strong confidence that all is well with Jesus... this is part of the earlier discussion of DISCIPLINE... God will withhold assurance from a willfully sinning Christian... conversely, He will pour out assurance on the sacrificially obedient Christian
- e. Obedient children will KNOW GOD BETTER THAN DISOBEDIENT ONES

John 14:21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

- 10. In heaven: there are rewards given to those who serve Christ faithfully here on earth; they are contingent upon OBEDIENCE... Works done by faith

Revelation 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

- 11. SO... we should LIVE DAILY for rewards... and understand those rewards come as a result of obedience to God's commands

G. Question 6: Does the freedom of a Christian free him from all obedience to other people?

- 1. Two kinds of subjection: subjection which violates Christian freedom; and subjection yielded as a part of Christian freedom
- 2. Subjection which violates Christian freedom
 - a. Submission to false teachers who impose legalism on your souls

Galatians 2:5 We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

- b. Submission to government authorities which command you to violate God's Laws and your conscience

Acts 4:18-19 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.

Acts 5:29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

- 3. Subjection which is a part of Christian freedom
 - a. Submission to God-ordained authorities in general

- i) Submission of a wife to her husband, of children to their parents, of church members to elders, of citizens to the governing authorities

Romans 13:1-2 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.

IV. Application to Unbelievers and Believers

A. To Unbelievers: Understand your present state of bondage... and let Christ set you free!

1. The FREEDOM we've been talking about... if you're not yet a Christian, you are still a slave to sin
2. You are still in Satan's dark Kingdom
3. You are still under the curse of the Law and the wrath of God
4. FLEE TO CHRIST!!!

John 8:34-36 "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.... ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Look to Christ crucified... trust in Him and He will make you free

B. To Believers: Defend your Christian freedom, but understand the delightful submission to the perfect Laws of God

1. Understand the answers to these six questions:
 - a. Question 1: Does our being made free by Christ deliver us from the law?

We are delivered from the Law as a condemning power and a crushing burden... but we are still instructed by the Law in the most beautiful way of life to glorify God

- b. Question 2: Does our being made free by Christ deliver us from all punishments for sin?

No... God may still chastise us for disobedience

- c. Question 3: Is it consistent with Christian freedom to perform duties because God has commanded them?

Yes... we have been saved into a KINGDOM and the King still commands His subjects; we have been adopted into a FAMILY, and the Father still commands His children. The New Testament is FILLED with commands to justified Christians, and we would have no way to understand those commands if “freedom from the Law” meant we never have to obey again

d. Question 4: Can those freed by Christ come into bondage again through sin?

No, we can never be kidnapped back into Satan’s dark kingdom to serve sin again; no we can never sin our way back into condemnation by the Law; BUT we can give away our freedom by legalism or by license... we can try to live the Christian life in the flesh as if we were slaves—in constant legalistic terror of offending God; OR we can throw off constraints in areas and become temporarily enslaved to specific sins—like lusts, or food, or hobbies, or lies, or gossip... our habits can enslave us if we are not constantly vigilant. God’s Law is PURE and the more obedient we are, the more free we will live!

e. Question 5: Is it consistent with Christian freedom to perform duties in order to be rewarded for our obedience?

Yes. All of God’s rewards are conditional, given to those who obey. Judgment Day is clearly a time in which God “will give to each person according to what he has done.” This is consistent with Christian freedom.. we are free from the Law’s condemning power; but the Law perfectly describes the life God will reward by grace.

f. Question 6: Does the freedom of a Christian free him from all obedience to other people?

No. God has given to created people delegated authority... and He commands us to obey them as long as their commands do not contradict His.