



1. My life as a free child of God

*Christians are free to love
God and one another*

Introduction

Freedom of Speech

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Even the First Amendment has some limitations. What might be some legitimate limitations?

We might prohibit using obscenities in the media, yelling “Fire!” in a crowded building, slandering, sharing state secrets with another nation, etc.

The Scriptures Say

1. What freedom did Christ win for us? What was the price he paid to win it?

Colossians 2:13,14 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

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.

Freedom from sin (its guilt, punishment, and power)

Freedom from the law (I don't have to obey it to be right with God)

Freedom is not free. It cost a lot.

In Christ we have freedom from the threats and accusations of the law. We have freedom from sin by the cross paid for by the blood of Christ.

Agree/disagree: Christians don't have to obey the law. True, in reference to justification; yet, in reference to sanctification, we want to do what God commands. Christian freedom where God doesn't command is adiaphora.

2. Although we are free, we place limits to our freedom on ourselves. Show from the passages below what limits we might use.

1 Corinthians 6:12 “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but **I will not be mastered by anything**. If the exercise of my “freedom” controls me, it’s not freedom (smoking, gambling, screen time, politics, sports, stock market, work)

1 Corinthians 14:40 Everything should be done **in a fitting and orderly way**. The exercise of my freedom should not lead to disorder (e.g. singing during a sermon, administering a baptism, serving HC,

Ephesians 4:3 Make every effort to keep the **unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace. Is the exercise of my freedom creating disharmony and division? (e.g. insisting on my favorite translation; not supporting a congregational vote for a new gym,

1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do **it all for the glory of God**. Let the expression of my freedom, not be for my glory, but God’s (e.g. putting my name on the banner I made; or insisting on my freedom at the spiritual harm of others, e.g. alcohol)

Christian freedom is not individuality or personal preference.

3. Carrying out our Christian freedom in a God-pleasing way is difficult. By its very nature there are no laws for what is right and wrong. So what attitude should we take when deciding how to carry out our blood-bought freedom?

1 Corinthians 10:23,24 “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is **beneficial**. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is **constructive**. **No one should seek their own good**, but **the good of others**.

Galatians 5:6 The only thing that counts is **faith expressing itself through love**.

Galatians 5:13-15 You, my brothers and sisters, 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 each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

We limit our freedom for the sake of others, not ourselves—serving others in love.

4. Read the following passages and describe how civil freedom and Christian freedom differ. E.g. **freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, privacy, fair trial**

1 Corinthians 10:24 No one should seek their own good, but **the good of others**.

1 Corinthians 10:33 I try to please everyone in every way. For I am **not seeking my own good** but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

1 Corinthians 12:7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given **for the common good**. Civil freedoms tend to be exercised for the good of the individual and can be divisive. The exercise of our Christian freedom is to bring unity, always with an eye on what is good for others.

The Principles

Because the Bible clearly teaches the following truths . . .

1. I believe I have freedom from the law in Christ.
2. I believe Christian freedom is not individuality or personal preference.
3. I believe I limit my freedom for the sake of others (love, beneficial).
4. I believe the exercise of my Christian freedom is to bring unity.

Focus

When Freedom Isn't Free

To recognize the cost of freedom, visit a cemetery on Memorial Day. The freedoms we have in this country were paid for with a heavy price—the lives of our fellow citizens. This urges all of us to make responsible use of our freedom as citizens of the United States.

The freedom we have as Christians was paid for at an even greater price, the blood of the only begotten Son of God. This makes the cross very special to every Christian. The freedom Jesus won for us is a precious gift that is absolutely free to all of us—but it certainly wasn't free for him! What a great motivation for all Christians to use their freedom to serve Jesus and other people!

What Does This Mean?

1. In the matter of things neither commanded nor forbidden (adiaphora), it is evident that “What have we always done?” and “How much is permitted?” are inappropriate questions to ask. Both are extremes and take away freedom. **How so? What's wrong with each question? The first limits freedom by tradition; the second expands it beyond the good of our fellowman.** What is an appropriate question to ask?

What serves God best? What serves my fellow humans best? How can I serve God and others best? (cf. worship styles in home and world mission settings.)

Is there ever a time when must exercise my Christian freedom? Yes, when people are teaching that I don't have it. (e.g. Paul did not circumcise Titus, when the Jews demanded it to be saved, Gal. 2:3-5)

2. In the New Testament, God has given us freedom in the way we choose to worship him. Compare these two quotes from Martin Luther. How might we apply them when setting up a worship plan for our congregation?

“For the true unity of the church it is sufficient to agree on the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that everywhere human traditions or rites or ceremonies instituted by human beings be the same” (*The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000, p. 179).

“Once the people have learned the text well, then teach them to understand it, too, so that they know what it means. Take up again the form offered in these charts or some other short form that you may prefer. Then adhere to it without changing a single syllable, just as was stated above regarding the text” (Kolb-Wengert, p. 349).

On the one hand, we realize that strict requirements are not necessary. On the other hand, common forms promote unity and serve most people best.

3. Sometimes as we express our Christian freedom we do things in ways that are significantly different from what others may be accustomed to. What will Christians do if they wish to express their Christian freedom in a unique way? (e.g. staff ministers, contemporary music, procedure for HC,

Communication is key. Explain your rationale. Ask for advice and guidance from those who will be affected by your choices. Really listen.

4. Which do you think poses a greater threat to the church today? Legalism or Antinomianism? Define each: Legalism: defining our standing with God on the basis of God-given or man-made laws. This is prevalent, due to our opinio legis, (God will love us if we do...; we want people to do the right thing, etc.) Antinomianism: Since Jesus fulfilled the law for us, we can ignore it. (may lead to licentiousness, lawless behavior, license to sin) A threat to abuse grace. The solution: Preach clear law and gospel.

What This Means for Me

- Take a few moments to write a short statement expressing the way these truths shape what you believe and how you live.