

16. Learning the True Purpose of Liberty

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn what it means to be called to liberty. We have been set free from the bondage of the law and have been called to enjoy Christian liberty. Our topic today will focus on the true purpose of liberty. True liberty is not the freedom to sin. Instead, we will see that true liberty gives us the power to serve. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In Galatians 5:13, we read, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” The word that is translated “called” means *to call with a loud voice or to call a person by name*. Here, we see that every Christian has been called by name to liberty. The Lord has equipped every Christian with one or more spiritual gifts so that every Christian is able to serve the Lord effectively as we yield to the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 12:3 says, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” We want to help our children understand that God gives all spiritual gifts so we are not to boast but rather to serve in the power that the Holy Spirit gives as we yield to Him.

We also see that we are not to use this liberty as an opportunity to satisfy sinful desires. 2 Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Here, we see that the liberty that Christ has given us gives us the power to flee those things that are sinful and follow those things that bring glory to God. We are able to both flee and follow as we yield to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to give us His strength to flee the things that are sin and follow the things that are the result of having a pure heart.

We see that we have been given liberty so that we are able through love to serve one another. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Here, we see what makes it possible for us to serve one another in love. At the moment of salvation, every new Christian is given one or more spiritual gifts. We are to be stewards of those gifts and serve the Lord by serving one another. If we have a speaking gift, we are to speak the Word of God. If we have been given a serving gift, we are to serve with the ability that God supplies. We want to help our children understand that as we serve in the strength of the Lord, He gives us the privilege of bringing glory to Him.

Galatians 5:14 goes on to say, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Here, we see that love fulfills the law. We see that the Lord gives us the power to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. One day, a Pharisee asked Christ what was the great commandment. Christ answered in Matthew 22:37-40, “Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is

the first and great commandment. And *the* second *is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Christ said that these two commandments fulfill the entire Old Testament.

The night before Christ was crucified Christ gave the disciples a new commandment. John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Here, we see that Christ summarized the entire New Testament with one commandment. That commandment is to love one another as Christ has loved us. Since true liberty means that we are given the power so that by love we can serve one another, we see that the entire Bible is summarized by one word – Love.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, in Luke 10:25-37, we see that Christ was asked by a lawyer who is our neighbor. Christ told the parable of the Good Samaritan and then asked the lawyer a question. Luke 10:36-37 says, “‘So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?’ And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’” By giving this answer, Christ showed that our neighbor is any person that needs help. As a result, we see that as we yield to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit gives us His power to:

Love God with our whole heart, soul and mind.

Love our neighbor (any person in need) as we love ourselves.

Love other Christians in the same way that Christ loved us.

Paul also warned what will happen if we do not use our liberty to serve one another in love. Galatians 5:15 says, “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” Here, we see that misusing our liberty to satisfy the evil desires of the flesh will destroy both ourselves and others. The word translated “bite” means to *wound one another with words*. The word translated “devour” means to *make it a habit of wounding others with words*. The word translated “consume” speaks of the last act of swallowing down and speaks of the fact that we will *destroy one another with evil words*. John 10:10 says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” Here, we see that the process of “bite-devour-consume” actually destroys one another.

That means that those who destroy one another are actually doing the work of the devil. Galatians 5:19-21 says, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Those who practice the works of the flesh are following the devil and the works of the devil. The final result will be that they will share the judgment of the devil. John 16:11 says, “Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” The Holy Spirit convinces people of the fact that the devil has already been judged and this verse says that all those who continue to follow the devil will share in his judgment. We want to help our children learn

to clearly explain to others the consequences of following the devil.

In order to help our children learn to experience the liberty Christ has given us, we want to help them understand Galatians 5:16. That verse says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Here, we see the key that gives us the strength to carry out the true purpose of liberty. We see that we are to walk in the Spirit. A walk speaks of a continuous action. Nearly everything that we do in our daily activities involves walking at least a few steps. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Here, we see that God has prepared us to continue to walk through life doing the good works for which we have been prepared as Christians.

Those good works for which we have been prepared give us the opportunity to serve one another in love. Many Christians never see these opportunities to do good works as opportunities to serve others. That is why Galatians 6:9-10 says, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Here, we see that we are to look for opportunities to do good to all. If we do not see opportunities to do good, we can pray and ask the Lord to help us see the opportunities that He has prepared for us. We want to help our children learn to look for opportunities to do good. The word that is translated “good” speaks of those things that are excellent, upright and produce joy in others.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to ask the Lord to show them opportunities to do good and the strength to do that good, they will begin to experience more and more joy in their lives. As a result, they will see the Lord do more through their lives than they could ever imagine. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” As we help our children learn to depend on the power of the Lord to work through their lives, they will be amazed as they see what the Lord chooses to do through them. They will realize that the Lord has given them the liberty to do more than they could imagine because they are yielding their lives to the Holy Spirit.

We will also be filled with joy as we see the Lord answer our prayers. In the previous verses, Paul gives us an example of how to pray for our physical and spiritual children. Ephesians 3:16-19 tells what we can pray for our children, “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand the true purpose of our liberty in Christ.