



CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

A GFC DISTINCTIVE



CHRISTIAN LIBERTY MEANS THAT WE ARE FREE TO ENGAGE IN AN ACTIVITY AS LONG AS IT IS NOT FORBIDDEN IN THE BIBLE OR GOES AGAINST A BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE. WHILE A CHRISTIAN IS NEVER FREE TO SIN, HE IS FREE TO FOLLOW HIS CONSCIENCE IN AREAS THAT THE SCRIPTURE IS SILENT UPON. WE HOLD TO THIS DOCTRINE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

1. WE ARE COMMANDED NOT TO ADD ANYTHING TO THE BIBLE.

The first reason why we hold to this doctrine is because the Bible forbids us to do otherwise. The Scripture itself commands us not to add anything to the Word of God. The Book of First Corinthians has a lot to say about this subject because this is one of the reasons why the church at Corinth was fighting so much. It was happening because so many people in the church were substituting their own opinions for Scripture. Therefore, First Corinthians 4:6 says,

Now these things, brethren, I have ...applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against another.

The reason Paul writes this is because it is arrogant to go beyond the boundaries of Scripture. Contrary to what some believe, it is not okay to make up extra rules in the Christian life and force them upon everyone else.

It is not acceptable to put our opinions in the place of the Bible and expect other people to abide by them because it is prideful. Such a response will only create turmoil in the church because it will put one person against another.

Revelation 22:18 gives us a similar admonition when it says:

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book.

Now the Book of Revelation says that not only should we avoid adding to Scripture because it causes trouble in the church but we should also avoid it because it will bring judgment. God will hold us accountable if we try to make our own preferences the authority that other people live by so we need to stay away from that type of behaviour which brings us to the next point.

2. THE BIBLE IS SUFFICIENT

Another reason we hold to the doctrine of Christian liberty is because the Bible is sufficient. It tells us all that we need to know about life and Godliness as Second Timothy 3:16-17 says:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Several important lessons can be drawn from this passage. For example, it says that Scripture is “profitable” or “useful” which means that it is practical.

It is not just a doctrinal book but it is an applicational one as well because it relates to normal, everyday life. This passage also says that it is “profitable for teaching... so that the man of God may be adequate.” The word “adequate” refers to something that fulfills all of its proper functions which is what the Bible does. It teaches us how to live each moment for the glory of God.

Finally, verse 17 tells us that the Scripture can “equip us for every good work.” This means that it can get us ready for anything that God wants us to do in the following areas (this list is not exhaustive):

- parenting
- marriage
- family
- finances
- work
- diet
- clothing choices
- entertainment choices
- recreation choices

This is not to say that the Bible answers every question that we have concerning these things. The point is simply that, if you have the Bible, you do not need to go anywhere else for guidance regarding them. You do not have to follow a bunch of rules that someone else made up because the Word of God is all you need. Where it does not speak, there is liberty to act according to the dictates of your conscience which brings us to the final point.

III. JESUS IS LORD, NOT MAN

A final reason why we hold to the doctrine of Christian liberty is because Jesus is Lord, not man. He is the one that we will answer to above all else.

Romans 14:2-4 says:

One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls . . .

It is important to understand the setting for this passage because the Jews had very strict dietary laws. The Old Testament said that they could not eat certain things. Many of the pagan religions of the day had similar rules as well so that, when someone became a Christian in the First Century, they often still struggled with it. It was hard for them to accept Jesus' teaching that "all food was clean" (Mark 7:19). Therefore, out of consideration for others, Paul says that we should not despise a man who wrestled with his diet because "to his own master he stands or falls."

To put this in modern terms, this means that Jesus is the one that we will answer to when it comes to the grey areas of life that are not spelled out explicitly in the Bible. He is the one who will hold us accountable in regards to subjects that the Scriptures do not address because our greatest concern is that we please and honour Him. One author said that there are several questions that we need to ask ourselves in order to do this. Before we make a decision, we should consider:

- Would Jesus Himself do this?
- Is it something that Christ would partake in if He were in my shoes?
- Will it violate my conscience?
- Will it set a good example?

- Will it be spiritually profitable?
- Will it bring me into bondage?
- Will it cause me to sin?
- Will it cause someone else to sin?[1]

If you can answer all of these questions in the right way, then the Bible says that you have freedom to act according to your will. You do not have to let someone else be your master.

CONCLUSION

Christian liberty is important because, without it, the church would be fractured as everyone followed their own opinions. Therefore, it needs to be vigorously upheld in the Body of Christ.

Such a position takes great humility but it is possible to maintain it with the help of God. We will all stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ for the way that we live our lives. Therefore, we should be careful not to judge one another but instead we should strive to be “harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kind-hearted, and humble in spirit towards one another” (1 Peter 3:8) which is why this is a distinctive of our church.

If you have any questions about Christian liberty or anything else in this pamphlet, please let us know.



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[1] These questions are borrowed from John MacArthur's sermon "Making Decisions on Non-Moral Issues" preached on November 10, 1991 available at www.gty.org.