

IDOLATRY

Part 4

The Cause of Idolatry (The Misuse of Freedom)

INTRODUCTION

It would be accurate to say that it is impossible to enjoy liberty without maturity. It was Fredrick August von Hayek an Australian economist and philosopher who stated:

“Liberty and responsibility are inseparable.”

The church at Corinth was unaware that liberty could lead to idolatry. Their focus upon the knowledge of their freedom overshadowed the consequences of its misuse. The apostle warned them that “knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.” (1st Co. 8:1) Today we will consider how the misuse of the believer’s liberty can lead to idolatry.

I. GRACE BELIEVERS ENJOY FREEDOM IN CHRIST IN THIS DISPENSATION.

A. There are two words that define the freedom that believers enjoy.

1. Freedom is expressed by the word *exesti* -- ***that which is right; appropriate***. Cf. Matt. 12:2 (of plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath not lawful); Act 22:25 (used of the Romans attempting to beat Paul)
2. The word translated “freedom” (*eleutheria*) is used in Scripture ***to express the freedom from law that allows believers to make choices to do that which is well-pleasing to God.*** -- K.D.J.
 - a) Believers are called upon the basis of liberty. Gal. 5:13
 - b) There is liberty over the types of food to eat. 1st Co. 10:24-29
 - c) Liberty is produced by living by the Spirit. 2 Co. 3:17
 - d) Believers are to stand steadfast in it. Gal. 5:1

B. Israel did not enjoy freedom because of their bondage to the law.

1. The covenant they had with God produced bondage (*douleian* -- servitude to the sin nature) Gal. 4:24
2. The bondage included the necessity of circumcision. Gal. 2:4
3. They were servants to the sin nature. John 8:31-33

II. PAUL CAUTIONED BELIEVERS THAT MISUSED FREEDOM CAN LEAD TO IDOLATRY.

A. Paul warned the Galatians that freedom can be used as occasion for the flesh. Gal. 5:13

1. Believers were “called” to salvation as a result into liberty. cf. Rom. 8:28, 30; Eph. 4:1
2. The use of the word occasion is the Greek word *aformay* which is translated “**a starting point; opportunity**.” -- Strong’s lexicon cf. Rom. 7:8, 11 (the sin nature takes advantage of law to produce lust in a person)

B. Paul warned the Corinthians that the misuse of freedom can cause one to be brought under the authority of the thing with which is the object of their freedom. 1st Co. 6:12

1. “All things” is a term used in the context pertaining to behavior pertaining to the believer’s freedom in Christ.
2. Not everything that is lawful is beneficial.
 - a) “Not all things” -- *ou panta* --
 - b) The word “beneficial” is *sumpherei* (pres. Act. ind.) -- “**bears together for good and so worthwhile. Many things, harmless in themselves in the abstract, do harm to others in the concrete.**” -- A.T. Robertson “*sumpherei* is a compound term noting:
 - (1) *Sun* -- together
 - (2) *Phereo* -- carry, bear
 - (3) It is used prominently in Scripture of that which confers a benefit. Cf. John 11:50 (for one man to die for the whole nation); Acts 20:20 (Paul taught the Ephesians that which was); 1st Co. 12:7 (spiritual gifts seen as)
3. Paul places a premium on a believer not being brought under the power of the use of any freedom. Vs. 12
 - a) “Under” is the use of the Greek preposition *hupo* which notes to be under a thing.
 - b) “Power” is the word “*exousiazothsomai* (fut. Pass. ind.) -- which is from *exousiazō* -- **to have our exercise authority over**. Cf. Lk. 22:25 (of Gentile rulers over people); 1st Co. 7:4 (of a wife exercising authority over her body.

C. Paul warned the Corinthians that misuse of freedom does not lead to the edification of other saints. 1st Co. 10:23

1. Paul cautioned the Corinthians that the misuse of freedom does not “build up” -- *oikodomei* (pres. Act. ind.) -- is used in Scripture of **the actions by a spiritual believer that contributes to the nourishing and**

strengthening of another believer through the use of one's spiritual gift or through the teaching and encouragement from God's grace. --

K.D.J. Acts 20:32; 1st Thess. 5:11

2. Believers are seen as being a part of a spiritual building. 1st Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:21
3. The mutual actions of believers among themselves strengthen each stone in the building. Cf. Rom. 14:19; Eph. 4:29
4. Love among the brethren contributes to the edification of the saints. 1st Co. 8:1
5. Use of certain spiritual gifts contribute to the edification of the saints. 1st Co. 14:4

CONCLUSION