

Legalism, Carnality and Christian Liberty

Legalism – A rigid conformity to religious tradition, at the expense of its substance. Usually associated with strict adherence to a set of works, it seeks to justify itself rather than rely upon God for justification.

It was for legalism that Jesus sharply rebuked the Pharisees. He pointed out that although they had a form of worship on the outside, that inside the heart, they were corrupt.

Matt 23:27-28 - 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the **outside appear beautiful**, but **inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness**. 28 "Even so you too **outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness**. NAS

Mark 7:14-15 - 14 And after He called the multitude to Him again, He began saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: 15 there **is nothing outside the man which going into him can defile him**; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. NAS

In the time of Christ, legalism was usually associated with a strict adherence to the ceremonial law, although there were many teachings that were added to the law, merely the teachings of men, which made pomp and show of their religion. These outward displays Jesus referred to again and again, pointing to the true reality of true religion, which dealt with the disposition of the heart before God.

Matt 6:16 - 16 "And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they **neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men**. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. NAS

Mark 7:5-9 - 5 And the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk **according to the tradition of the elders**, but eat their bread with impure hands?" 6 And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, *'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. 7'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'* 8 "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." 9 He was also saying to them, "You **nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition**. NAS

Legalism can be a deceptive tool used by Satan to deceive people into thinking that they please God by their devout efforts in religion. But God has stated over and over again in His Word that the religion that He honors is that which proceeds from the heart. People will do all kinds of things, and develop elaborate schemes of ceremony and ritual in order to make a show of religion, when all the while God is searching the heart and mind for its motives and intentions. No matter how hard we try to please God through our efforts, the chasm between God and man cannot be crossed by human works. God's standard of righteousness is too high for people to obtain, they therefore fall short every time. God is Holy, without sin, being saved from sin is humanly unachievable, as Jesus so aptly put it,

Matt 19:26 - "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

The only acceptable merit that pleases God is the sinless life that Christ lived. It alone has the power to justify a sinner before God. Only Christ could pay the penalty for sin which a Holy God demands, and so the old, old story, Jesus died for your sins, even the sins of the whole world.

2 Cor 5:21 - 21 God made **him who had no sin to be sin for us**, so that **in him we might become the righteousness of God**. NIV

And so, apart from the teachings of men, even the keeping of God's law cannot justify a person before God. Law observance is thus both futile and fatal. It is impossible for sinful people, imparted a sinful nature from birth (Rom 5:12), to keep the law perfectly (Gal 3:10-12). Paul states this truth again and again in his letters. Although Paul speaks of the law being holy and good (Rom 7:7,12,14), he also speaks of its inability to deliver from

sin and that it was a temporary measure until the coming of Christ (Rom 8:3; Gal 3:21 b-22). The law of God is the power of sin. The purpose of the law was to expose us as sinners.

1 Cor 15:56-58 - 56 The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law**; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. NAS

It was given to make us conscious of sin.

Rom 3:19-20 - 19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. NIV

It stands opposed to us.

Col 2:13-14 - 13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the **certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us**; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. NAS

Therefore, legalism, or strict adherence to any religious system or set of rules, cannot justify oneself before God. This is the great good news of the gospel. Only in Jesus Christ can we be saved.

John 14:6 - 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; **no one comes to the Father, but through Me.** NAS

Legalism is empty. Only through faith in Christ can we be justified before God.

Gal 2:16 - 16 nevertheless knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. NAS

Rom 3:21-24 - 21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 **This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.** There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and **are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.** NIV

The true worship of God is that which resides in the heart by faith in Christ, and in that secret place it honors God day and night.

Christianity is not some set of rules by which people govern their life to be acceptable to God, but rather a living relationship that people possess with God through Christ that motivates us to please Him. We love Him because He first loved us. It is a relationship of love, and this is the motivation to keep oneself from sin and shame. We desire to please Christ because having believed upon Him, we have been born again by the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, and He is zealous to keep us holy and pure.

1 John 3:3- And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him **purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

1 John 3:9 - 9 **No one who is born of God practices sin**, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. NAS

The true Christian does not make a practice of sin continually because he has been born again by the Holy Spirit. His ministry to us is one of purifying and perfecting. He zealously drives us on to the image of Christ. And Christ is the One who ultimately keeps us from the power of sin in our lives.

1 John 5:18 - 18 We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; **the one who was born of God keeps him safe**, and the evil one cannot harm him. NIV

Legalism, Carnality and Christian Liberty

Galatians 5:24 - 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. NIV

Carnality

When we are saved, God does a divine work in us whereby we are born again. We are given a new nature, the nature of God, and the Holy Spirit comes to reside in us. We are washed, we are cleansed, and declared righteous by God. But because we still live in the mortal body, we struggle with the carnal self, the flesh, our old nature. The word "flesh" in the King James is translated "sinful nature" in the NIV and speaks of our carnal self, the unregenerate nature we had before being born again. We are in a process of being sanctified and purified. God therefore works in the circumstances of our lives, seeking our willing obedience and submission to His sovereign authority in our lives. We are in a process where we *were completely carnal* and fleshly, but now *are being changed* day by day into the image of Christ, holy and pure. But God has given us some degree of free choice whereby we can either obey or disobey His wisdom and guidance for us. This struggle between the flesh and the spirit is referred to as spiritual warfare. We obtain victory as we willingly submit to the guidance and correction of our loving God, and come to live in His peace, under His sovereign rule. Here Paul refers to the Corinthians as carnal, reproving them for their immaturity. Paul goes on to exhort the Corinthians to repent of their carnality, to bear fruit acceptable to God, and to make choices that honor and glorify Him. "Whatever you do" he says, "do it all to the Glory of God." (1 Cor 10:31)

1 Cor 3:1-4 - 3:1 And I, brethren, **could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.** 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still **carnal.** For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? NKJV

CARNAL - Sensual, worldly, non-spiritual; relating to or given to the crude desires and appetites of the FLESH or body. The apostle Paul contrasts "spiritual people"-that is, those who are under the control of the Holy Spirit-with those who are "carnal"-those under the control of the flesh (1 Cor 3:1-4; Rom 8:5-7). The word carnal is usually reserved in the New Testament to describe worldly Christians.

(from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

1 Cor 6:9-11 - 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 **And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. NAS

Here Paul speaks of God's displeasure with the wicked, and calls them to obedience, stating that they have been washed, declared righteous and made holy. Therefore they should honor God with their bodies.

We must understand that in our flesh, that is our carnal self, our sinful nature, we are totally depraved. We are naturally bent toward evil, and need to die daily to our flesh in order to walk in the Spirit and please God. The old carnal self must be put to death by our willing choice. In Christ we have this power, and live in the new life He has placed in our heart.

Col 3:5-10 - 5 Therefore consider the **members of your earthly body as dead** to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is **on account of**

these things that the wrath of God will come, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 **But now you also,** put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, **since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,** 10 and **have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him**

We have *“laid aside the old self”* and have *“put on the new self who is being renewed.”* Christians are no longer to live in carnality but are to press on to holiness, virtue and purity. When we heard the Gospel, the first words we heard were “Repent”, or “turn from your evil ways” and receive the forgiveness of God that is in Christ. We learned that God is holy and punishes wickedness and that we should turn from it and be saved. How then can we live in it any longer. We are not to be sensual, worldly, following our lusts and evil desires but are rather to please God in all we say and do.

Eph 4:17-24 - 17 This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that **you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk,** in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But **you did not learn Christ in this way.** 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, **you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,** 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and **put on the new self,** which in the **likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.** NAS

Christians have been saved from sin and its bondage. We are freed from the power that sin possesses over us and we are no longer enslaved to it. We have an exceeding great power over any sin that would come between us and God. We have exchanged our anger for kindness, and our envy for blessing. We no longer live following the futile imaginations of our own mind, but we follow Jesus, clothing ourselves with His thoughts and actions.

It is imperative that we honor God with our lives.

Rom 13:11-14 - 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore **lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.** 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh** in regard to its lusts. NAS

What a repulsive thing a disobedient Christian is to both God and to men! Jesus said, *“So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.”* (Rev3:16) and the world says, “Why do I need Christ, you are no better than me.”

Hypocrisy is a very destructive thing, it turns people away from Christ denying the very hope it professes. The carnal Christian is a hypocrite, just like the legalist. Christians who live in carnality cause the unbeliever to blaspheme God.

Rom 2:24-25 - 24 For **“the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,”** just as it is written. NAS

True spirituality exists when you act according to the new self, having laid the old self aside, surrendering you will to the will of God. When you allow Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit to dominate your thinking, you respond in the manner which glorifies God. The carnal Christian lives his life according to the dictates of his own mind and will. He/she responds to life based on their experience rather than on the Word of God. (the following taken from the book-Christian Discipleship by Dr. Steve Collins)

Spiritual vs. Carnal

A spiritual believer relies on God’s power. A carnal believer relies on his own strength.

A spiritual believer is spiritually sensitive. A carnal believer is spiritually dull.

A spiritual believer has a fruitful life. A carnal believer rarely produces fruit in the Christian life.

A spiritual believer realizes his/her unworthiness. A carnal believer often doesn't realize that he/she is carnal.

A spiritual believer has victory over sin. A carnal believer lives in slavery to sin.

The Human Nature – Total Depravity

Job 15:14-16 - 14 "What is man, that he should be pure, Or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? 15 "Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones, And the heavens are not pure in His sight; 16 How much less one who is detestable and corrupt, Man, who drinks iniquity like water! NAS

(1) Our rebellion against God is total. Apart from the grace of God there is no delight in the holiness of God, and there is no glad submission to the sovereign authority of God.

Rom 3:9-12 - for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; 10 as it is written, "**There is none righteous, not even one**"; 11 There is none who understands, **There is none who seeks for God**; 12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless; **There is none who does good**, There is not even one. " NAS

Ps 51:55 - Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. NAS

Jer 17:9-10 - 9 **"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked**; Who can know it? 10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. NKJV

(2) In his total rebellion everything man does is sin.

Romans 14:23 - "**Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.**"

This is a radical indictment of all natural "virtue" that does not flow from a heart humbly relying on God's grace.

Isa 64:6 - 6 For **all of us have become like one who is unclean**, And **all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment**; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. NAS

(3) Man's inability to submit to God and do good is total.

Rom 8:7-8 - 7 the **sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so**. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature **cannot please God**. NIV

Rom 7:18 - 18 I know that **nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature**. For I have the desire to do what is good, **but I cannot carry it out**. NIV

Before regeneration, people have sinful minds. Being totally carnal and in the flesh, we have neither the desire to submit to God's authority nor the ability to do so. It is impossible for the carnal, unregenerate mind to please God because everything it does is based on its own human will and is not submitting any part of its life by faith. "Whatever is not from faith is sin"- Rom14:23.

(4) Our rebellion is totally deserving of eternal punishment.

Eph 2:1-3 - 2:1 And **you were dead in your trespasses and sins**, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and **were by nature children of wrath**, even as the rest. NAS

The reality of hell is God's clear indictment of the infiniteness of our guilt. If our corruption were not deserving of an eternal punishment God would be unjust to threaten us with a punishment so severe as eternal torment. But the Scriptures teach that God is just in condemning unbelievers to eternal hell (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9; Matthew 5:29f; 10:28; 13:49f; 18:8f; 25:46; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:10). Therefore, to the extent that hell is a total sentence of condemnation, to that extent must we think of ourselves as totally blameworthy apart from the saving grace of God.

(excerpts from Bethlehem Baptist Church website)

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Christian Liberty

How then do we as Christians discern what is pleasing or not pleasing to God in regard to our faith and practice? Which religious system or denomination should we join in order to be acceptable to God? How do we make decisions about what things we do are acceptable to God and which are not? In the following matters, or any matter, how do I know what I can and cannot do and still be pleasing to God?

Smoking – Drinking – Gambling – Gluttony - Movies/television/books – Clothing
- Piercing/tattoos - Make-up/jewelry - Music/art – Dancing - Women in
workplace - Church denominations/affiliation - Church attendance - Women in
leadership - Giving - Birth control

Guidelines for Faith and Practice

1. **The Word** – We have the revelation of God's will in His Word! *God's Word defines for us everything that we need to know in regard to our Christian lives.* If He has not addressed the matter directly, then He has addressed it indirectly by giving us principles by which we discern His mind and heart concerning a matter.
2 Peter 1:3 - 3 seeing that His divine power has **granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him** who called us by His own glory and excellence.
2. **What did Jesus do?** What did the apostles do? *Many matters are clearly defined by the practice of early Christians and the Lord himself.* Did Jesus drink or smoke? Did he dance, did he gamble, did he eat to excess? Did the early Christians tithe, did they use birth control, did they wear makeup, did they have women in leadership?
1 Cor 6:12-13 - 12 "**Everything is permissible for me"-but not everything is beneficial.** "Everything is permissible for me"-but I will not be mastered by anything. NIV
3. Do not compromise the **Fruit of the Spirit**. If what we do clearly violates our patience or self control, is it not obvious that it is not God's will? *Shall we violate our love for our brother to fulfill our flesh?* Are we serving one another in kindness and gentleness, or are we biting and devouring one another?
Gal 5:22-23 - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. **Against such things there is no law.** NIV
4. Remember that **legalism** is hypocritical. If what you do is only outward conformity to a list of do's and don't's, but in your heart you would rather do something else, that is legalism and displeasing to God. *The obedient Christian lovingly submits to God's will from the heart in gratitude.* It is motivated by a desire to please God in the heart.
1 John 5:3 -3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And **his commands are not burdensome.** NIV
5. Remember that we were saved from sin and its power over us. Jesus broke the chains of sin that once bound us, and sin no longer has dominion over us. Therefore, we can no longer live in a **carnal**, worldly, sinful manner. We must

separate ourselves from sin and be holy, just as Christ is holy. *A carnal Christian is immature in his/her faith and displeasing to God.*

Gal 5:24 - 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have **crucified the sinful nature** with its passions and desires. NIV

6. **Judging one another** – It is right and proper for Christians to judge sin in the church (1 Cor 5:12) and bring proper discipline to those who continue in it. *But we are not to judge one another on disputable matters, which are not clearly defined in scripture.* Each one of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

Rom 14:1,10 - 1 Accept him whose faith is weak, **without passing judgment on disputable matters.** 10 You, then, **why do you judge your brother?** Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. NIV

7. Never flaunt your freedom. We should always **be careful not to offend** our family in Christ by our practice. *When we are in the presence of other Christians, we are to be sensitive to their faith,* being careful not to cause an offense or do something that causes them to stumble in any way.

Rom 14:13,15, 20-21 - 13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind **not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.** 15 If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. **Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.** 20 All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. 21 **It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.** NIV

8. Do not use your Christian **freedom to cover up** your sinful desire. God will discipline a disobedient Christian, and there are definite consequences for sin. *Woe to the man who walks in sin and approves his behavior in his own mind!*

Gal 5:13 - 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. NIV

A list of important scriptures that address these matters:

Romans 14:1-15:7 - Colossians 2:16-23 - Galatians 5:1,13-26 - 1

Corinthians 6:9-20 - 1 Corinthians 8:4-13 - 1 Corinthians 10:23-33

You have no rights

It is important to realize that **as a Christian we possess no rights.** Before coming to Christ we were destitute, without hope and without God in the world (Eph 2:12). We were under the penalty of sin and awaiting the fearful judgment and wrath of God (Eph 2:3). But we were granted mercy, a pardon for our sins, we were crowned with life instead of sentenced to death, which we deserved. Lost in sin and hopeless, we were like a beggar, reaching out to take the free gift of a king. We therefore have no rights. Shall we now demand our right to eat or drink or be clothed or lie down in comfort? If it were not for the precious blood of Christ, we would be eternally separated from all that is pleasing, comforting and good.

1 Cor 6:19-20 - 19 Do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you,** whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. **Therefore honor God with your body.** NIV

Christian Liberty

The Boundaries of Freedom

1. What comes out of a man is what defiles him. For what is resident in the heart is the true essence of what a man or woman is. The motives and the intents of the heart is what is important to God, for He looks upon the heart.

Mark 7:14-15,18-23 - 14 And after He called the multitude to Him again, He began saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: 15 there **is nothing outside the man which going into him can defile him**; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. 18 And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? **Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him**; 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated? "(Thus He declared all foods clean.) 20 And He was saying, **"That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.** 21 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

Rev 2:23 - and all the churches will know that **I am He who searches the minds and hearts**; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. NAS

Rom 14:14 - 14 I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that **nothing is unclean in itself**; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. NAS

2. To those with a pure heart, and a clear conscience, everything they do is pure.

If all that we do comes from faith in Christ, and everything is done for the purpose of glorifying God, than it is well within the boundaries of freedom. Be careful then what you approve, that you seek God's mind and heart whether or not he is pleased.

In your _____, are you glorifying God?

Titus 1:15-16 - 15 **To the pure, all things are pure**; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. NAS

Rom 14:22 - 22 The faith that you have, *have as your own conviction before God.* **Happy is he who does not condemn himself by what he approves.** NAS

3. As Christians, we are not to be under the control of anything but God's Spirit. When something in our life begins to control us, we have violated the boundaries of freedom. Jesus is Lord and we shall have no other Gods before Him.

Do you have _____, or does _____ have you.

1 Cor 6:12-14 - 12 "Everything is permissible for me"-but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me" **-but I will not be mastered by anything.** 13 "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"-but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. NIV

4. Choices result in consequences, whether good or bad. When we as Christians decide to make choices, we must use the wisdom, which God freely grants, to do what is most beneficial to our neighbor and ourselves and pleasing to Christ, who is our Lord. He always has our best interest in mind, and He always instructs us which choice to make.

Prov 23:23 - 3 Buy truth, and do not sell it, **Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.** NAS

Prov 10:17 - 7 He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, But he who forsakes reproof goes astray.

Prov 2:6-9 - 6 For **the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.** 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, 8 Guarding the paths of justice, And He preserves the way of His godly ones. 9 **Then you will discern righteousness and justice And equity and every good course.** NAS

Rom 15:1-2 - 1 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. 2 **Let each of us please his neighbor for his good,** to his edification. NAS

5. Judgment on others is out of place if the matter is not clearly defined in scripture. Many of these "disputable matters" are to be a private matter between the individual and God. We have not the right to call unclean what God has called clean, nor judge our brother for whom Christ died.

Rom 14:22 - 22 So whatever you believe about these things **keep between yourself and God.**

Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. NIV

6. Christian freedom is a joyful and wonderful thing. If we have a heavy burden in our hearts, we need to examine ourselves, and pray to God, to know what the issue is. If we are convicted over sin, we must be quick to repent and change our ways. If something in

our walk is causing us to be unsettled, we need to seek the will of God. The burden of Christ is light, and His yoke is easy. In Him we find rest for our souls.

Matt 11:28-30 – 28 Come to me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and **I will give you rest.** 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 **For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.** NAS

7. God blesses those who obey him. Freedom in Christ comes by drawing near to God in prayer and meditation. It comes by internalizing the Word so that His thoughts become our thoughts. We must seek to know His heart, and allow Him to transform our hearts into His.

James 1:25 - 25 But the man **who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom,** and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, **but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.** NIV

The basic principles of the world

Col 2:6-23 - 6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through ***hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.***

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. 19 He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

20 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. 23 ***Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*** NIV

Rom 14:1-12 - 14:1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. 2 One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. 3 Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. 5 One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. 10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God." 12 So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. NAS