

The Law of the Believer Is Love

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"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. The entire law is summed up in a single command "Love your neighbour as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."(Galatians 5:13-15)

Living the Christian life is exciting if you understand the believer's law of life is love. Understanding that you have been set free to love and allowing love to rule and guide your life will bring unspeakable joy. As you see God doing marvelous things even in your difficulties, you will be glad that you are free from the struggle of keeping the law. God knows that by yourself, you do not have the ability to keep the law. He has provided the way for you to come to Him through Jesus Christ. Christ died to set you free from sin and through Christ, you are now free to love, obey and serve Him. You have this freedom because of God's love in you (Romans 5:5)

What is this freedom? In the Bible, it was used in the context of a slave and a master relationship. Slaves serve under taskmasters. Similarly, you were slaves to your old Adamic nature. Sin dominated and controlled you, like a taskmaster. Even if you wanted to, you could not break from the things that brought hatred, jealousy, anger and unrighteousness. Paul said, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (Romans 7:15 NIV). Why did he say this? Paul's reason was that he was "sold as a slave to sin." Similarly, sin ruled your life. But God has rescued you from this bondage. Jesus came and broke the power of sin over your life. You are no longer a slave to your Adamic nature that is sinful and wicked because you have been redeemed by Jesus. You can choose to be righteous rather than sinful. You are free through Christ who strengthens you.

God's love has set you free but you need to be careful how you use this freedom. Paul warned the Galatian Christians against using this freedom to do what they liked. "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use this liberty as an opportunity for the flesh..." (Galatians 5:13). This license is not a license to live after the flesh and commit greater sins. Freedom or liberty to sin is no freedom at all because it enslaves you to the devil, others or your own sinful nature. Liberty is not license to do anything you want. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Romans 6:1-2). Grace does not mean that you can continue to live in sin. Liberty is therefore not a license for the gratification of the flesh but to overcome sin and live righteously. Having tasted the love of God, your natural response is to love Him. And when you are motivated by love, you will use your freedom to serve others. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..." (Mark 10:45). That was exactly how Jesus lived. He served. When Jesus called Peter, note what he asked Peter. "Simon, Son of Jonah, do you love me?" He said to Him, 'yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My sheep' " (John 21:16). All that Jesus asked of Peter was, "Feed My sheep." May I challenge you in your living and serving to let the law of love motivate you. "Serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13 NIV). If what you do is for the sake of pleasing people, then it would not be long before you stop giving and serving. But if you obey, serve and give yourself to Jesus because you love Him, then you will not only continue to give but grow in giving. The believer's law of life is the love of God. You serve because you love Him. You can obey without love and you can serve without love. But you cannot love without obeying and serving.

It is the Holy Spirit dwelling in you who gives you the power to love. "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that was given to us" (Romans 5:5). It is this love that makes you please God. You have the freedom to overcome the flesh that unceasingly wages war against your better judgement. But God's grace is available. You can rise above your flesh. You no longer need to be subject to sin. If you use your liberty to do what you want, you will face this danger: "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the laws of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:6-8). Living a life to please yourself will bring eternal death/damnation. If you use your liberty under a love relationship, you can express your love, enjoy the grace of God and partake in God's nature and experience victory and success.

The Bible also says, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for us all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). The love of God becomes a constraining law because you love Jesus- there is a response in your heart to do what pleases Him, by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is why a believer's life is governed by love.

A lawyer once tested Jesus posing this question to Him, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments " " (Matthew 22:36-40 NIV). Jesus' reply is applicable to you too. You should understand that the law of love transcends all the laws given by the prophets. If you love God, you are obeying and fulfilling the law of God. Know that only the complete love of God can empower you to love rightly, God, your neighbour and yourself. "Love does no harm to a neighbour: Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10). "Owe no man anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8). The only debt that Christians owe and cannot pay is the price of sin. But God paid the price for the forgiveness of your sins for you. He wiped the slate clean. Therefore, as a born again believer and as long as you are alive, you have a debt- a debt to love God and your neighbour.

Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan in response to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" What made this Samaritan stand out above the rest? He was governed by the law of love. The Good Samaritan stopped by the wounded man, bandaged his wounds

and took him to an inn and took care of him. Why did he stop? Luke 10:33 says that "he had compassion." Love would not allow him to go by and do nothing. Love simply responds to the human need. He also went the second mile in love. He could have left the man to the innkeeper and let the innkeeper take over from there. How many of you would have done just that? But love does not draw boundaries or see limitations. Nothing is too much for love to do. Similarly, when you come into a relationship with God and have tasted His goodness, you will serve Him because you love and not because the Church says so or because people are watching.

Love is practical and is spelt out in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Love does not destroy. Paul warned, "If you keep biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other" (Galatians 5:15 NIV). This evokes a picture of wild animals. Wild animals attack one another. The loser becomes the dinner of the winner. Paul was warning the Christians to be beware, and not bite one another as it is self-destructive and they will be consumed. If you always criticize, condemn or abuse others, the Scriptures says, you will end up destroying yourself. If you have experienced God's love and continue to bite and devour, you do not need the judgement of God; you destroy yourself. "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21). Love for God must express itself in love for fellow believers. "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10). Do good to others when you have opportunity. Be especially responsive to your brothers and sisters in Christ.

The law of the life of the believer is to love. How? The Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our hearts. Everyday, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with God's love. Let love be the basis of your commitment to obey and serve Him. Let love compel you. Serve not because you have to but because you have been set free to serve and because God loves you.

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