



THE FOUR LAWS OF LIBERTY

The first law, the perfect Law of Liberty, is the normal *modus vivendi* (way of life) for Christians living in this age. Christ's death on the cross has set us free from bondage to the Mosaic Law, to sin, and to Satan.

The Law of Liberty (Galatians 5:1)

The Law of Liberty is applied *toward yourself* so you can live life to the fullest and enjoy all of God's creation. It benefits you.

- a. The Law of Liberty says you're free to do anything not prohibited in the Bible or contrary to God's character. Keep in mind that prohibitions against drunkenness (Eph. 5:18), for instance, may be generalized to include any substance abuse not mentioned in Scripture such as doing drugs.
- b. Liberty is not license—you're not free to sin (Romans 6:15; Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16). You're not free to live any way you want or do anything you please; there are commands in the New Testament that must be obeyed.
- c. There are times when you have to fight to defend your freedom (Galatians 5:1). There are always a few legalists around who would like to take your freedom away. Freedom of any kind needs protecting. The more freedom you lose the more control others gain over your life. You become a slave to their will.
- d. Don't let your liberty be a stumbling-block for the weak (1 Corinthians 8:9). Note the balance here: liberty must be defended on the one hand and sacrificed on the other. At times your liberty must be restrained for the sake of others. Such self-restraint should be done willingly out of love for a weaker brother. There's a big difference between willingly giving up things you're free to do in love and being bullied into giving up things you're free to do to please someone else.

Christian liberty is a "right" (1 Cor. 9:4, 5, 6) but there are times when you should set aside your rights for the sake of others (1 Cor. 9:12). "All things are lawful" but not always expedient (1 Cor 10:23). Your wisdom will help you apply these principles to experience.

Now, there are three laws that supersede the perfect Law of Liberty:

The Law of Expediency (1 Corinthians 9:19–23)

The Law of Expediency is applied *toward unbelievers* to win them to Christ. It benefits the lost. It's becoming all things to all men to win some (1 Cor. 9:19–23). It's willingly giving up your freedom to establish a rapport with unbelievers to witness to them. For example, Paul had Timothy circumcised to win Jews (Acts 16:3). You may choose, for instance, to eat fish on Friday instead of steak to witness to Catholics.

The Law of Love (1 Corinthians 8:9–13)

The Law of Love is applied *toward weak believers* to keep them from stumbling. It benefits weak believers. It's willingly giving up things you're free to do to keep from hurting the spiritual life of weaker brothers.

Don't exercise your liberty at someone else's expense. A failure to apply the Law of Love when the occasion demands is a sin against the weaker brother and against Christ (1 Cor. 8:12). To know in advance that your liberty will hurt another Christian and to do it anyway is a sin—a failure to apply the Law of Love.

The Law of Supreme Sacrifice (1 Corinthians 7:25–35)

The Law of Supreme Sacrifice is applied *toward God*. It benefits the Almighty. It's willingly giving up something you're free to do for God's sake—to be more productive in the Christian life. Your sacrifice advances the cause of Christ even more. For example, Paul had a right to get married (1 Cor. 9:5) but he never did: he wanted to spend all his time serving the Lord instead of dividing his time between the Lord and a wife (1 Cor. 7:25–35).