

## Our Declaration of Dependence: Freedom in Christ

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Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis, July 7, 2005

It is important to teach Christian morality within the realm of the freedom that was won for us by Christ's death on the Cross, and the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the life and mission of the Church (i.e., Galatians 5.1, "It is for freedom Christ has set you free"), and always in the context of using your freedom in the framework of bringing God glory and advancing Christ's Kingdom. Along with some critical texts on freedom in the Epistles, I believe we can equip others to live for Christ and his Kingdom by emphasizing the "6-8-10" principles of 1 Corinthians, and apply them to all moral issues.

1. 1 Cor. 6.9-11 - Christianity is about transformation in Christ; no amount of excuses will get a person into the Kingdom.
2. 1 Cor. 6.12a - We are free in Christ, but not everything one does is edifying or helpful.
3. 1 Cor. 6.12b - We are free in Christ, but anything that is addictive and exercising control over you is counter to Christ and his Kingdom.
4. 1 Cor. 8.7-13 - We are free in Christ, but we ought never to flaunt our freedom, especially in the face of Christians whose conscience would be marred and who would stumble if they see us doing something they find offensive.
5. 1 Cor. 10.23 - We are free in Christ; all things are lawful for us, but neither is everything helpful, nor does doing everything build oneself up.
6. 1 Cor. 10.24 - We are free in Christ, and ought to use our freedom to love our brothers and sisters in Christ, and nurture them for others' well being (cf. Gal. 5.13)



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7. 1 Cor. 10.31 - We are free in Christ, and given that freedom in order that we might glorify God in all that we do, whether we eat or drink, or anything else.
8. 1 Cor. 10.32-33 - We are free in Christ, and ought to use our freedom in order to do what we can to give no offense to people in the world or the Church, but do what we do in order to influence them to know and love Christ, i.e., that they might be saved.

In addition to these principles, I believe we ought also to emphasize the following principles:

- 1 Pet. 2.16 - We ought to live free in Christ as servants of God, but never seek to use our freedom as a cover-up for evil.
- John 8.31-32 - We show ourselves to be disciples of Christ as we abide and continue in his word, and in so doing we come to know the truth, and the truth sets us free in him.
- Gal. 5.13 - We as brothers and sisters in Christ were called to be free, yet not using our freedom as a license to indulge our sinful natures; rather, we are called to be free in order to serve one another in love.

This focus on freedom, in my mind, places all things that we say to adults or teens in context. Often, the way in which we disciple many new Christians is through a rigorous taxonomy (listing) of different vices and moral ills, and this can, at times, not only give them the sense that Christianity is an anti-act religion (a religion of simply not doing things), and/or a faith overly concerned with not sinning. Actually, the moral focus in Christianity is on freedom, a freedom won at high price, a freedom to love God and advance the Kingdom, a freedom to live a surrendered life before the Lord. The moral responsibility

of urban Christians is to live free in Jesus Christ, to live free unto God's glory, and to not use their freedom from the law as a license for sin.

The core of the teaching, then, is to focus on the freedom won for us through Christ's death and resurrection, and our union with him. We are now set free from the law, the principle of sin and death, the condemnation and guilt of our own sin, and the conviction of the law on us. We serve God now out of gratitude and thankfulness, and the moral impulse is living free in Christ. Yet, we do not use our freedom to be wiseguys or knuckle-heads, but to glorify God and love others. This is the context that we address the thorny issues of homosexuality, abortion, and other social ills. Those who engage in such acts feign freedom, but, lacking a knowledge of God in Christ, they are merely following their own internal predispositions, which are not informed either by God's moral will or his love.

Freedom in Christ is a banner call to live holy and joyously as urban disciples. This freedom will enable them to see how creative they can be as Christians in the midst of so-called "free" living which only leads to bondage, shame, and remorse.