

Lessons in Liberty

The Spirit of Liberty

Text: 2 Corinthians 3:17

“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

Introduction:

1. Liberty in Christ is related directly to morality – it is not a license to sin.
2. The cost of freedom in Christ is precious – it cost God His Son, it cost Jesus His life, and it costs man his total surrender.
3. Possessing liberty fills one with gratitude, resulting in abundant freewill offerings.
4. Because it is such a precious gift, freedom must be defended.

I. The Context

- A. The church at Corinth had become divided and divisive.
- B. Paul wrote to them rebuking their sins, reproofing their selfishness, and restoring their love. {*First Corinthians*}
- C. The book of Second Corinthians is a record of their repentance and Paul's encouragement of their faith.
- D. This epistle also served as a defense of Paul's apostleship due to the efforts to undermine his work by Judaizing teachers.
 1. These were men who wanted to obey the Gospel but also continue to keep the Law of Moses.
 2. They had great difficulty in accepting that the Old Law had been fulfilled and was no longer in force (cf. Matthew 5:17; Ephesians 2:14-17; Galatians 3:22-25; Hebrews 10:9).
- E. Thus, in chapter 3, Paul details the differences between the Old and New Testaments, showing that the Gospel is God's means of true freedom.

II. The Contrast

- A. 3:1-3 – Letters of Commendation
 1. Letters of recommendation were common in Paul's time.
 2. However, Paul did not need such a letter among the Corinthians because they knew him and his work closely.
 3. In fact, they were Paul's letter of commendation – their faith made know the work of Paul.
 4. They were letters of Christ, written with the Spirit of God upon the tablet of their hearts (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34).
- B. 3:4-18 – Lesson in Comparison
 1. This work was not done by Paul alone in his own strength, but his sufficiency came from God.
 - a. God inspired Paul to preach the Gospel.
 - b. God granted Paul miraculous power to confirm the Word.
 2. Thus, Paul was enabled to be a minister of the New Testament.
 3. Contrast # 1 – Death and Life (3:6)
 - a. The Old Law showed the consequence of sin – death.
 - b. Thus, it demonstrated the need for a Savior.

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- c. The New Law has a Savior and, therefore, provides life.
- 4. Contrast #2 – Fading and Enduring (3:7-16)
 - a. The Old Law was glorious for its purpose.
 - b. However, that glory was fleeting and fading.
 - i. Moses wore a veil over his face so the Israelites would not see the glory fade.
 - ii. That veil remained in place symbolically for those who refused to see the end of the Law of Moses.
 - c. It was to be replaced by the New Law, far excelling in glory.
- C. The Spirit of Liberty (3:17-18)
 - 1. When one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed, resulting in liberty.
 - 2. Freedom in speech (3:12)
 - a. Paul's sure knowledge of the truth gave him great hope.
 - b. Thus, he was not ashamed to "use great plainness of speech."
 - c. He was not ashamed to preach the truth about Jesus.
 - 3. Freedom in sight (3:13-14)
 - a. The Judaizers could not see the end of the Law.
 - b. They could not see Jesus as the Messiah.
 - c. They could not see Paul as a true apostle.
 - d. However, Paul could see clearly the glory of the Lord (3:18).
 - e. Furthermore, he could see how man could be changed into that same glory, by faithful obedience to the Gospel.
 - 4. Freedom in spirit (3:17)
 - a. Freedom from error
 - b. Freedom from sin
 - c. Freedom from guilt
 - d. Freedom from tradition
 - e. Freedom from condemnation
- D. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

III. The Connection

- A. The Holy Spirit is called God's "free spirit" (Psalm 51:12).
- B. The Holy Spirit inspired Jesus to proclaim liberty (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:17-21).
- C. The Holy Spirit revealed words that are life (John 6:63).
- D. The Holy Spirit gave a law that frees from sin and death (Romans 8:2).
- E. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:6).
- F. The Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son.
- G. The Holy Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Conclusion:

- 1. The Holy Spirit made know the Word of God by inspiration.
- 2. Wherever that Truth is revealed and received, true freedom will be found.