

Our Liberty in Christ **1 Peter 2:15–16 (NKJV)**

15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

As I am sure that everyone knows Leviticus 25:10 is inscribed on the liberty bell.

In 1746, construction began on what would become Pennsylvania's state house. This was Colonial America's most prestigious public building at the time. In 1751, legislators commissioned a bell that would toll to celebrate important events or a call to gather.

On July 8, 1776, the Liberty Bell rang from the tower of Independence Hall, summoning the citizens of Philadelphia for the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence.

¹⁰ And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family.

Liberty has been a founding principle of this nation from its beginning.

Millions have fought to maintain that liberty and thousands have died.

It used to me that every school child learned of the famous statement of Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty or give me death."

But the liberty that is today touted as supreme is that of the immoral, the deviant who thinks themselves free to whatever they want.

But Jesus taught that that was not liberty but servitude.

John 8:31–36 (NKJV)

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." ³³ They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How *can* You say, 'You will be made free'?" ³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin." ³⁵ And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever. ³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

Someone may argue, "But, as Christians, are we not free?" Yes, we are free in Christ; but we must never use our freedom for ourselves. We must always use it for others. Sad to say, there are "religious racketeers" who prey on ignorant people and use "religion" to veil their evil actions. A true Christian submits himself to authority because he is first of all submitted to Christ. *Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 405.*

- I. Christians are the only people that are truly free.
 - A. We are free from the bondage of sin.
 - 1. Not that we do not sin but we are free not to sin.

- a. Romans 6:1-4 (NKJV)
 - (1) 1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- 2. The lost cannot stop sinning.
 - a. 2 Peter 2:14 (NKJV)
 - (1) ¹⁴ having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, *and are* accursed children.
 - 3. They are held captive.
 - a. By their own sinful nature.
 - b. By Satan
 - (1) 2 Timothy 2:26 (NKJV)
 - (a) ²⁶ and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.
 - c. By the world that wrongly influences them.
 - (1) 1 John 2:15 (NKJV)
 - (a) ¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
- B. But we are free because God has given us His own nature, the Holy Spirit to live in us and to overpower the desires of the flesh.
 - 1. 2 Corinthians 3:17 (NKJV)
 - a. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
- C. We have been set free because Christ has suffered and died in our place.
 - 1. John 8:31–32, 36 (NKJV)
 - a. ³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide

in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

b. ³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

2. We are only free because Christ has made us so, and at great cost. That places on us an obligation toward the One who bought us. *Derek Cleave, 1 Peter, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1999), 72.*

II. What is real freedom.

- A. Jesus Christ has invited us to enjoy the life of freedom. Only in Christ can we be truly free. When we know Him, we know truth personified and the truth will make us free (John 8:32). But, the freedom that comes from Jesus Christ is not to be used as “a cloak for vice” (v. 16)—an excuse for sin. As Paul wrote, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh” (Gal. 5:13). In fact, the freedom or liberty which comes from Christ cannot be used as an excuse for sin. As soon as we misuse it for those ends, we shall lose it and once again we are entangled with the slavery to sin. Authentic freedom is ours only when we walk in the Spirit; only when Jesus Christ is reigning as the Lord of our lives. *Paul A. Cedar and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude, vol. 34, The Preacher’s Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1984), 145.*
- B. Even the great Greek and Roman thinkers saw quite clearly that perfect freedom is, in fact, the product of perfect obedience. Seneca said: ‘No one is free who is the slave of his body’, and ‘Liberty consists in obeying God.’ *William Barclay, The Letters of James and Peter, 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 239.*
- C. We may put it this way. Christian freedom is always conditioned by Christian responsibility. Christian responsibility is always conditioned by Christian love. Christian love is the reflection of God’s love. And, therefore, Christian liberty can rightly be summed up in St Augustine’s memorable phrase: ‘Love God, and do what you like.’
Christians are free because they are the slaves of God. Christian freedom does not mean being free to do as we like; it means being free to do as we ought. *William Barclay, The Letters of James and Peter, 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 239–240.*
- D. . . . the freedom of which Paul wrote so eloquently, a freedom from sin, the law, and the world that released one, not to independence, but to the service of God. This was a freedom that was not the product of personal effort, but a gift of God’s Spirit (Gal. 5:1, 13; Rom. 6:22; 8:2; cf. Luke 4:18–21; John 8:32; 1 Cor. 7:22; 9:19; 2 Cor. 3:17; 2 Pet. 2:18–20). *Peter H. Davids, The First Epistle of Peter,*

The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 102.

- E. 1 Corinthians 7:22 (NKJV)
 - 1. 22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave.
- F. Romans 6:22 (NKJV)
 - 1. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

III. Freedom misused is not real freedom.

- A. Galatians 5:13 (NKJV)
 - 1. For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
- B. 2 Peter 2:19 (NKJV)
 - 1. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.
- C. Liberty misused is like a mighty river flooding its banks and bringing terrible destruction upon all in its path. Liberty used as service is like a mighty river flowing within its banks bringing life and refreshment to all who drink of its waters. *Paul A. Cedar and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude, vol. 34, The Preacher's Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1984), 145.*
- D. Christian freedom does not mean that anything goes; believers are not free to do whatever they want or to use their freedom as a cover-up for evil. In other words, believers must not hide behind their freedom in Christ in order to sin. We cannot use freedom and forgiveness as a cloaking device for self-indulgence, adultery, or poor spending habits. Christ is our leader, and serving him provides our limits. *Bruce B. Barton, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Pub., 1995), 69.*
- E. None the less, Christians do not have freedom to do wrong! Though free in a greater way than anyone apart from Christ can ever be, Christians are still in another sense servants of God or 'slaves of God', for they owe him their whole lives and their entire beings. True freedom, true ability to choose and do what one really wants to do, comes paradoxically in entire submission to God as his obedient servants (cf. Jas 1:25; 1 John 5:3). *Wayne A. Grudem, 1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 17, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 129.*

IV. We are the Servants of God. but as bondservants of God v-16

A. Galatians 5:13 (NKJV)

1. For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

B. The service of God is “perfect freedom” (*cui servire est regnare*), the freedom to do what you ought rather than what you like. Old institutions must be submitted to not as a bondage to men but as ordinances of God. *G. W. Blenkin, ed., The First Epistle General of Peter, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 58.*

C. To voluntarily serve others in the name of Christ and for no other motive, puts a question mark in the mind of the pagan. It is contrary to the attitude of the world which often has an ulterior and selfish motive. *Derek Cleave, 1 Peter, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1999), 71.*

D. The paradox of submission and liberty is brought out by Peter’s description of believers as servants (douloi, bondslaves) of God. Complete submission in perfect obedience to their Master results in complete freedom of spirit: “whose service is perfect freedom,” as the church collect puts it. *Norman Hillyer, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 79.*

Christians understand and stand up for freedom.

As a matter of fact, Christianity has always been the friend and promoter of liberty. Its influence emancipated the slaves throughout the Roman empire; and all the civil freedom which we enjoy, and which there is in the world, can be traced to the influence of the Christian religion. To spread the gospel in its purity everywhere would be to break every yoke of oppression and bondage, and to make men everywhere free. It is the essential right of every man who is a Christian to be a freeman—to be free to worship God; to read the Bible; to enjoy the avails of his own labour; to train up his children in the way in which he shall deem best; to form his own plans of life, and to pursue his own ends, provided only that he does not interfere with the equal rights of others—and every system which prevents this, whether it be that of civil government, of ecclesiastical law, or of domestic slavery, is contrary to the religion of the Saviour. *Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament: James to Jude, ed. Robert Frew (London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885), 147.*

Romans 8:21 (NKJV)

²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Psalms 119:45 (NKJV)

⁴⁵ And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts.

Romans 8:2 (NKJV)

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Luke 4:18–21 (NKJV)

18 “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” 20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Submission to authority does not eliminate freedom from the believer’s life. Perhaps this concern prompted Peter to speak to the subject of freedom. The freedom of the New Testament is not political freedom but spiritual freedom. The great freedoms of the Christian life are: (1) freedom from the ruling power of sin in our lives; (2) freedom from guilt because our sins have been forgiven by God; and (3) freedom from the impossible obligation of attempting to earn favor with God through perfect obedience. *David Walls and Max Anders, I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude, vol. 11, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 34.*

“Freedom.” Martin Luther explained the concept freedom in his characteristic pithy style: “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” The Christian is free from enslavement that promotes evil; instead he uses his freedom to serve his God and to love his fellow man. The more he demonstrates his willingness to serve, the more he experiences true freedom (compare James 1:25; 2:12). *Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude, vol. 16, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 101–102.*