

THE LAW OF CHRIST

TEXT: I CORINTHIANS 10:23-33

INTRODUCTION:

1. In the Old Testament, the Jews were under the law of Moses, but today, Christians are living in a new dispensation. John 1:17 says, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."
2. As New Testament Christians, we are governed by "the law of Christ" (cf. Galatians 6:2), not the law of Moses.
3. The law of Christ is different from the law of Moses. Galatians 5:14 says, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."
4. James calls this "the royal law," and says in James 2:8, "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well."
5. James 1:25 refers to "the perfect law of liberty."
6. Romans 8:2 calls this "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."
7. The law of Christ is the law of love. *The Scofield Study Bible* describes our text (I Corinthians 10:23-33) as, "The law of love in relation to eating and drinking," and compares it to Romans 14, which deals with the same subject.
8. First Corinthians 8 also deals with this important subject (cf. 8:13).
9. Our Christian liberty is limited by our love for others.
10. Four times, the apostle Paul says, "All things are lawful for me" (10:23; cf. 6:12).
11. Paul is not saying that "all things are lawful" in an absolute sense. For example, it is not lawful to commit adultery or to rob a bank.
12. Paul is referring here to matters of moral indifference. There are certain things which may be permissible but we should avoid them if it creates a stumbling block for others (cf. 8:9; Romans 14:12-15).

I. THE LAW OF CHRIST IS BASED UPON LOVE FOR OTHERS

1. The apostle Paul was free to do certain things which were not expressly forbidden. However, Paul recognized that "all things are not expedient," and "all things edify not" (10:23).
2. Rather than insisting upon our rights or our liberty, we should consider how our behavior affects others (10:24; cf. Scofield margin).

3. The word “wealth” is in italics. It would include his comfort, his well-being, his happiness, or his salvation (cf. 10:33).
4. Romans 14:7 says, “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.”
5. If we really love our neighbor, we will not want to offend him. “Give none offence...” (10:32).
6. Philippians 2:3, 4 says, “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

II. THE LAW OF CHRIST DEMANDS A TENDER CONSCIENCE

1. The word “conscience” is found in verses 27, 28, 29, and 30.
2. Regarding meat “sold in the shambles” (meat market), in verse 25, Paul told the Christians in Corinth to “ask no question for conscience sake.”
3. Everything we eat comes from God. Psalm 24:1 says, “The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (cf. I Cor. 10:26, 28).
4. This means that the meat did not come from the pagan priests or from their false gods or from devils, etc. It came from God.
5. First Timothy 4:4, 5 says, “For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”
6. The Lord said to Peter, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common” (Acts 10:15; 11:9). “Common” means, “defiled, polluted, unclean.”
7. A Christian can eat meat that has been offered to idols without violating his conscience. If he is invited to an unbeliever's house for dinner, he shouldn't ask any questions about the meat (10:27). That would be bad manners.
8. However, there may be other guest at the dinner, and one of the other guests might say, “This is offered in sacrifice unto idols” (10:28). In that case Paul says not to eat “for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake.”
9. If a Christian were to insist on eating the meat (on the basis of Christian liberty), he could cause other believers to stumble (10:29, 30). This would be contrary to the law of Christ – “love thy neighbour as thyself.”
10. It is interesting that twice Paul quotes Psalm 24:1, and he applies it differently in both cases. In verse 28, the emphasis is on the Lordship of Christ.

11. God is not glorified when we cause other believers to stumble (10:31).

III. THE LAW OF CHRIST AND THE GLORY OF GOD (10:31)

1. If what we are doing cannot be done to “the glory of God,” then we shouldn’t do it.
2. There are many questionable things that Christians are unsure about – for example, television viewing and entertainment choices.
3. Some would also include drinking and smoking though to me they are not questionable. First Corinthians 6:19 says, “know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.”
4. Proverbs 20:1 says, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”
5. In any case, if something cannot be done to “the glory of God,” then we should avoid it.
6. M.R. DeHaan said, “The question is not one of legality at all, but, What can I do to please Him who hath redeemed me by His grace? I serve Him, not because I fear punishment if I don’t obey, or I lose my salvation, but I serve Him because He has so wonderfully saved me and given me eternal life.”
7. Paul was more concerned with seeing souls saved (10:33). This is what brings glory to God (10:31).
8. Albert Barnes said Paul’s “object was to save souls. Anything that would promote that object was proper; anything which would hinder it, though in itself it might not be strictly unlawful, was in his view improper. This is a simple rule, and might be easily applied by all. If a man has his heart on the conversion of men and the salvation of the world, it will go far to regulate his conduct in reference to many things concerning which there may be no exact and positive law. It will do much to regulate his dress; his style of living; his expenses; his entertainments; his mode of intercourse with the world. He may not be able to fix his finger on any positive law, and to say that this or that article of dress is improper; that this or that piece of furniture is absolutely forbidden; or that this or that manner of life is contrary to any explicit law of Jehovah; but he may see that it will interfere with his great and main purpose, to do good on the widest scale possible; and therefore, to him it will be inexpedient and improper. Such a grand leading purpose is a much better guide to direct a man's life than would be exact positive statutes to regulate everything, even if such minute statutes were possible.”

9. Therefore, the law of Christ is far greater than the law of Moses. This is what Paul means in Galatian 5:4, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”

CONCLUSION:

1. To summarize: “All things are lawful for me” (10:23), but...
2. Is it edifying (10:23)? Does it build you up spiritually? Does it advance the cause of Christ?
3. Does it offend other Christians (10:27-29)?
4. Does it bring glory to God (10:31)?
5. Does it help me to win others to Christ (10:33)?