

The Abuse of Lady Liberty – I Peter 2:13-17

I. Introduction:

- A. The Statue of Liberty stands on a rock in New York Harbor.
1. Tens of thousands of immigrants have passed it before disembarking at Ellis Island and entering the U.S.
 2. That statue, sometimes called "*Lady Liberty*," is about half as tall as Seattle's Space Needle.
 3. Green in color from her oxidized copper, she stands on a beige-colored pedestal.
 4. She was a gift from the people of France, recognizing the liberties which this country gives to its people.
 5. Of course, "*liberty*" is a synonym for "*freedom*," something which has been a part of the fabric of this country.
 6. But today, "*liberty*" is something which is much abused.
- B. Let's say that the people of New York wake up one Monday morning to find that Lady Liberty has been painted in the rainbow colors of the LGBT movement.
1. Does anyone have the liberty to misuse Lady Liberty to promote their personal philosophy like that?
 2. Those people would probably be arrested, slapped on the wrist, honored in the media and then released.
 3. However, the fact remains, no one has the unbridled freedom to misuse their liberty on Lady Liberty.
 - a. Yes, anyone can buy paint of any color they wish. We all have that freedom.
 - b. But we can't steal that paint. There are rules.
 - c. We don't have liberty to steal, apparently unless the police have recently shot and killed someone.
 4. Anyone can pay their \$24.00 and ferry out to Liberty Island. We are all free to do that.
 - a. But we can't hijack a car and demand a stranger to drive us to New York, so we can catch that ferry.
 5. And no one but authorized personnel can remain over night on the island after the last ferry leaves.
 6. Peoples' freedom stops when they try to use Lady Liberty to advertize their agenda, no matter what it is.
 7. It would not be right, nor would it glorify the Lord, for someone to drape a huge Christian flag over the Statue of Liberty or to plaster her face with pages from the King James Version of the Bible.
- C. The misuse of liberty is mentioned often enough in God's Word that it must have been an early problem.
1. **Galatians 5:13** – "*Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use NOT liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*"
 2. **I Corinthians 10:23** – "*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.*"
 3. **I Corinthians 8:9** – "*Take heed lest by any means this liberty of your become a stumbling block to them that are weak.*"
- D. To one degree or other, the abuse of Christian liberty has, from the beginning, been a problem in God's churches.
1. There have **Pharisees** who have tried to rob people of their liberties, and there has also been the **reverse**.
 2. In the early years of this country there were accusations and false accusations involving "*anti-nomianism*."
 3. The Christian's relationship to the Old Testament law has been a theological hot potato from time to time.
 4. Some have taken Paul's words in **Romans 6** out of context – "*Ye are not under the law, but under grace.*"
 5. They have said, "*We are not under law but under grace, and therefore we don't need to apply the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy to our lives.*" Someone might even extend that to the Ten Commandments.
 6. But those people need to also quote the next verse: "*What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*"
 7. It is by God's law that we define sin, and sin is something which the Christian is bound to avoid.
 8. As Paul went on to say in **chapter 7** – "*the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*"
- E. Here in our text, Peter, in the midst of telling us to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man, adds:
1. "*It is the will of God that you, as a Christian, should strive to silence the ignorance of Godless, foolish men,*"
 2. "*As free (men)... not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*"
 3. I hope that we all can understand what the apostle is saying.

II. What does Peter mean when says we are *FREE*?

- A. Remember that when we were born, we came into the world as children of that world and of Satan.
1. We were born sinners; slaves to our depraved nature.
 2. In other words: as our parents were slaves, we were born slaves to sin and to do sinful things.
 3. We were not free.
 4. But God's saints are sinners who have been born again by the Word of God.
 5. Now we are redeemed sinners and children of the Lord.
 6. We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation and a peculiar people unto God.
 7. We are strangers and pilgrims in these United States, just passing through toward God's promised land.
 8. And this means that we have a certain degree of freedom which our neighbors don't possess.
- B. **BUT** there is no such thing as **absolute** freedom; **unrestricted** liberty to do anything we would like to do.
1. If everyone did everything they would like to do the result would be anarchy.
 2. **Anarchy** is the absence, or at least the non-application, of authority or government.
 3. It is related to **antinomianism** which is the absence, or non-application of law.
 4. Without law and governments to enforce them, nothing and no one would be safe.
 5. Anyone could walk into your house to take whatever they wanted, including the lives of your children.
 6. Your only protection would be to have **more power** – or more **gun powder** – than that intruder.
 7. Thankfully, there are laws and governments over us and it isn't necessary to turn our homes into arsenals.
 8. The point is: no one, including Christians, are free in sense that there are no laws or governments.
- C. Well then, **in what way** is the Christian a **free man** or free **woman**?
1. We saw this morning, *"there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."*
 2. As Christians we are free from condemnation because we are in Christ Jesus.
 3. And Paul says in the following verse, *"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin & death."* There is nothing forcing the Christian to sin; we are free from the law of sin.
 4. And that Christian has been delivered from the death penalty which his sins deserved.
 5. We possess *"the glorious liberty of the children of God."*
- D. Today, we in this country, have liberty to gather in buildings like this one & hear the preaching of God's Word.
1. It is a shame that many people who could so so, refuse to take advantage of this freedom.
 - a. They will have no reply or excuse when a dictatorial government takes that freedom from them.
 - b. They have already willingly relinquished it.
 2. We have freedom to pray to God wherever and whenever we choose – even in a public restaurant.
 3. We have liberty to *"come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*
 4. We have freedom to share the gospel with others, even though that fragile liberty is under attack.
 5. We have the freedom to drive across the state line to attend church and to fellowship with God's saints.
 6. We have liberty to take 10 or 15 percent of our income and give it to the Lord for His work.
 7. We have a great many religious liberties.

III. But still, we do **NOT** have **UNRESTRICTED** freedom.

- A. Peter, for example, tells us that we are not at liberty to be **malicious**.
1. To be malicious is to harbor malice toward someone; to act wickedly toward someone out of hatred.
 2. The word is translated *"malice"* in **verse 1**, and elsewhere, it is rendered *"wickedness."*
 3. It is also in several lists of sins which are not to be found among God's saints.
 4. **Ephesians 4:31** for example – *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ sake hath forgiven you."*

5. We do not have freedom to hate people or speak evil against them or even to be bitter toward them.
 6. But we do have freedom to forgive those who sin against us.
- B. We do not have liberty to say that the unconstitutional government calling itself “*the United States of America,*” or the “*State of Idaho*” has no authority over us, and therefore we can do whatever we think is appropriate.
1. We have **Peter’s** exhortations to “*submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord sake.*”
 2. We have **Paul’s** instruction to **Titus**, “*Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates (and) to be ready to every good work.*”
 3. We have **Christ’s** command, “*Render therefore unto Caesar (the king) the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things are God’s.*”
 4. **Solomon** said, “*I counsel thee to keep the king’s commandment, and this in regard of the oath of God.*”
 5. And then **Paul** clinches the nail in **Romans 13** – “*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*
 - a. *Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*
 - b. *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:*
 - c. *For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*”
- C. **Why** don’t Christians, as citizens of Heaven, have **absolute freedom** on earth? Because...

IV. As free men **WE** are the **SERVANTS** of **GOD**.

- A. We have here a paradox; a seemingly absurd or contradictory statement.
1. Peter says, live “*as free, & not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*”
 2. A paraphrase of that would be: “*Live as free men, but not using your freedom in some sinful way, because you are not absolutely free; you are bound to God as His bond slaves.*”
- B. Being born again, we are the people of God (**verse 10**); the Lord’s holy nation and peculiar people.
1. But salvation from sin was not designed to subvert the laws of **morality** – among other things.
 2. For example, fornication and adultery are the same despicable sins whether we are Christians or atheists.
 3. And Jehovah is a God of truth, and so He hates deceitfulness.
 4. When the Christian lies to someone – to himself or to God – he doesn’t endanger his soul to eternal damnation, but he does forfeit his fellowship with the holy God.
 5. The Christian is not under **less** obligation to attend the house of God as a Christian, in fact he is under more obligation.
 6. Jesus once said, “*The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.*”
 7. If the Son of God submitted to His Heavenly Father, then we are to be submissive to Him as His servants.
 8. And if Christ and to the federal government – for the Lord’s sake.
- C. Yes, you are free in many ways, but don’t use your freedom as a cloke for any kind of sin.
1. If you try remember that your use of liberty is no more substantial than Adam or Eve’s apron of fig leaves.
 2. God saw right through them, and the world is no more impressed with our apron of Christian liberty.
- D. The word “*servant*” (*doulos*) is used 127 times in the New Testament.
1. In addition to “*servant*” it is translated “*bond*” and “*bond men,*” indicating someone who is in a condition of enslavement – perhaps even willingly.
 2. Of course, the Christian is someone who has been saved – freed from death – eternal death.
 3. But he must realize that he **is** nothing and **has** nothing but what his Saviour has given him.

4. And therefore, the true Christian is willing to surrender himself to the Lord; to be His servant; to do His will.
 5. The bonds around our ankles are fabricated with the highly comfortable material of divine love.
 6. In one of Jesus' appeals to the lost He clarified the context of salvation.
 - a. He said, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*
 - b. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*
 7. Christ's yoke is indeed easy and light, but it is a yoke nevertheless and it binds us to our Saviour.
- E. How should the servant or slave of God live?
1. He should live in exuberant love to the Saviour, responding to the privilege he has been given to serve Him.
 2. It goes without saying, he should be willing to do whatever his Master wants him to do.
 3. He must also love all those whom his Master loves, and serve all those whom his Master saves.
 4. *"Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" – Galatians 5:13.*
 5. The Christian must be humble, pliable, teachable, industrious and diligent.
 6. He should be *"on call"* at all times. (Remember, I'm not talking about just the pastor, but all of us.)
 7. And if the Master tells us to submit to every ordinance of man, then as free men we are obligated to submit, doing it for God's sake and for His glory.
 8. We also serve the Lord for the sake of our testimony before the eyes of the unbelieving people around us.
- F. I will probably return to *I Corinthians 7* in a future lesson, but in case I don't, let me read it to you in the context of tonight's message.
1. **Verse 20** – *"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called."*
 - a. Stay in whatever social situation you are in when the Lord calls you to salvation.
 - b. Are you married to a lost person? You are not at liberty to divorce him or her.
 - c. Are you a teenager in a heathen home? You can't just leave and run out.
 2. *"Art thou called being a servant (or slave)? Care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather."*
 3. *"For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant."*
 4. No matter what social state we are in, as Christians we are both free and at the same time enslaved to Christ – willingly enslaved.
- G. **Romans 6** sheds considerable light on this subject of freedom versus slavery. Please turn there.
1. *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?"*
 - a. *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"*
 - b. So here is the theme of the chapter. Serve God not sin.
 2. Now skip down to **verse 11** – *"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*
 - a. *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*
 - b. *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, & your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*
 - c. *For sin shall not have **DOMINION** over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*
 - d. *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*
 - e. *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his **SERVANTS** ye are to whom ye **OBEY**; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"*
 3. *But God be thanked, that ye were the **SERVANTS of sin**, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made **FREE** from sin, ye became the **SERVANTS of righteousness.***

4. *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members **SERVANTS** to **uncleanness** and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members **SERVANTS** to righteousness unto holiness.*
- a. *For when ye were the **servants of SIN**, ye were **free from RIGHTEOUSNESS**.*
 - b. *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.*
 - c. *But now being made **FREE from sin**, and become **servants to GOD**, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*
 - d. *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

H. As God's people, redeemed by Christ's blood, we are free men and women.

1. We are **free to love** and **serve** our Saviour as His bond slaves.
2. And we are **free to do all** those things which **He has commanded us**.
3. Peter tells us: that includes submitting ourselves to every ordinance of man, whether it be to the president as supreme or unto governors who may or may not be faithful in punishing evildoers and praising them that do well.

I. Yes, we are free.

1. We are free to obey the laws of human governments, but we are servants of Christ, so we obey for His sake and for His glory.
2. Laying underneath everything done in our lives should be the desire to please our Saviour.
3. It should not be our goal to be known as good American citizens or even good neighbors.
4. The opinions of others should not be our highest concern.
5. As Christians, it should be the Lord's praise that we primarily seek.