

## RESOLVING DIFFERENCES AND DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND SATANIC LIBERTY

The Bible warns us in *Proverbs 18:19* : “A brother offended *is harder to be won* than a strong city: And *their contentions are* like the bars of a castle”. How about it Christian? Do you know of a brother or sister in Christ who has ought against you, but you refuse to go to them in an attempt at reconciliation? How about it pastor or teacher? In the years since becoming a Christian, and in your role as a pastor or teacher, how many times have you heard a sermon preached, or a lesson taught, on *Matthew 5:22-24*? Have you ever preached or taught on *Matthew 5:22-24*? I have never heard a lesson taught, or a sermon preached, from *Matthew 5:22-24* in the context of resolving conflicts in interpersonal relationships among Christians or church members. However, I have heard *Matthew 18:15-17* used in that context numerous times. I would ask, why the disparity in preaching? That is not to say that *Matthew 5:22-24* has not been preached on, or taught on. That just means that it is so rarely preached on, or taught on, in that context that I have not heard it in my 34 years of being saved. In the last eight to ten years of my ministry, I have put much emphasis on the need of the party that knows his brother or sister has been offended, or has ought against them, for him or her to go to the offended party and attempt a reconciliation even if he or she believes they have done no wrong. Here is what *Matthew 5:22-24* states:

<sup>22</sup> But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. <sup>23</sup> Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; <sup>24</sup> Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. *Matthew 5:22–24*

*Matthew 5:22–24* is written as an instruction and/or warning for those who know that their brother or sister has ought against them and who are either ignorant of Christ’s requirement that they attempt a reconciliation or who refuse to attempt a reconciliation because of their pride. For the one who has knowledge that a brother or sister has ought against them, there are no conditions set as to which party is right or wrong. In other words, you are under an obligation to God to go to the party that has ought against you even if you have done no wrong. If you refuse to go “because you have done no wrong”, then you put yourself in the wrong because you are opposing *Matthew 5:22–24* . When you do that, sin has multiplied itself. Here is what *Matthew 18:15-17* says:

<sup>15</sup> Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. <sup>17</sup> And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. *Matthew 18:15–17*

*Matthew 18:15–17* teaches that the offended party is to go to the person who has offended them or

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sinned against them and attempt a private reconciliation. I submit that *Matthew 5:22-24* is a higher standard than *Matthew 18:15-17*. In fact, putting *Matthew 5:22-24* into practice heads off many of the problems that have to be dealt with under the requirements of *Matthew 18:15-17*. Issues that are never talked about amongst ourselves will never be resolved. Issues that are never discussed with the intent to resolve them will put death in the pot that will seethe until it boils over into intense divisions. We always talk about the pride of the offender, but we never seem to get around to the pride of the offended or the pride of the one who has not been offended or who claims to not have been offended when he or she actually has. Scripturally, neither the offender or the offended can take the high ground. In either case, those who refuse to go to their brother or sister who they know has ought against them is guilty of sin.

Turn in your Bibles to *1 Corinthians 11:16-34*:

<sup>16</sup> But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God. <sup>17</sup> Now in this that I declare *unto you* I praise *you* not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. <sup>18</sup> For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. <sup>19</sup> For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. <sup>20</sup> When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord's supper. <sup>21</sup> For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. <sup>22</sup> What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not. <sup>23</sup> For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: <sup>24</sup> And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. <sup>25</sup> After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. <sup>26</sup> For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. <sup>27</sup> Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. <sup>29</sup> For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. <sup>30</sup> For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. <sup>31</sup> For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. <sup>33</sup> Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. <sup>34</sup> And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come. *1 Corinthians 11:16-34*

According to *1 Corinthians 11:16-18*, a church that has a contentious atmosphere in it that has

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created divisions in the church should not hold the LORD'S Supper if no attempt has been made to resolve or reconcile those conflicts and divisions. That is why most pastors who are led of the Holy Ghost will offer a time of reconciliation prior to offering the elements of the LORD'S Supper. If a saved individual knows another Christian has sinned against him and he will not go to that individual in an attempt at reconciliation, then he should not partake of the LORD'S Supper. If an individual has been wronged by another Christian, or perceives they have been wronged by another Christian, and will not go to the person or persons who has wronged them in an attempt to bring about reconciliation, then that individual should not partake of the LORD'S Supper.

Pastors who try to deal with conflict from the pulpit without having first applied the requirements of *Matthew 5:22-24* and *Matthew 18:15-17* are not led of the Holy Ghost to do so. The reason I say that is because the Holy Ghost will not do anything contrary to his Word. In ongoing conflict, if a pastor tries to publicly correct an individual from the pulpit without having fulfilled the requirements of *Matthew 5:22-24* and *Matthew 18:15-17*, then that pastor sins against God, his congregation, and the individuals he is trying to correct. There is a reason that God commands us to go to individuals privately **TWICE** before taking the matter public. Again, the Bible warns us in *Proverbs 18:19* : “A brother offended *is harder to be won* than a strong city: And *their contentions are like the bars of a castle*”. It is one thing to offend an individual privately and yet another to offend an individual publicly if you have not dealt with them privately according to the requirements of *Matthew 5:22-24* and *Matthew 18:15-17*. If you attempt an in your face public correction without having **FIRST** dealt with an individual privately, then all you are going to do is create a contentious rebel. Though that rebel bears their sin, you are responsible for having created the situation that led to their sin. If you have not **SCRIPTURALLY** dealt with them privately before you go public, then you commit an act of spiritual treachery against the individual and an act of spiritual cowardice against God. We all know those pastors who preach to individuals publicly without calling them out by name. Everyone in the congregation knows who he is preaching to, but that pastor does not have the spiritual backbone to deal with them privately by exhausting **ALL** the requirements of *Matthew 5:22-24* and *Matthew 18:15-17* before he goes public. A pastor who will not deal with individual conflict and sin privately before going public is abusing pastoral authority. Public rebuke on something that should have first been handled in private begs for open conflict in the church. It doubles down on actual or perceived injustices and offenses.

You will notice that I have put much emphasis on **BOTH** *Matthew 5:22-24* and *Matthew 18:15-17* in this brief presentation because they deal with two different sides of conflicts in personal relationships. They deal with the offender and the offended. In every conflict you have the potential to run into four different types of people. Those are (1) the person who is offended, (2) the person who is the offender, (3) the person who has offended and does not realize it, and (4) the person who is wrongfully accused of an offense. That is why every conflict that arises must be dealt with according to **BOTH** *Matthew 5:22-24* and *Matthew 18:15-17* simultaneously. That way both the offender and the offended are dealt with at the same time. To not deal with both the offender and the offended is to open yourself up to being accused of practicing partiality. If you judge righteous judgement, you will find yourself applying both *Matthew 5:22-24* and *Matthew 18:15-17* to every conflict simultaneously.

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I would remind pastors and congregations that it is never wise to mock a brother or sister based upon their personal preferences that do not violate scriptural rules and precepts. The exercise of personal preferences that are not sin should never be used as justification for breaking fellowship with an individual or publicly or privately rebuking or mocking that individual for their preferences. God the Holy Ghost dealt with this issue of personal preferences quite forcefully in *Romans 14* where we read the following:

<sup>1</sup> Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations. <sup>2</sup> For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. <sup>3</sup> Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. <sup>4</sup> Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. <sup>5</sup> One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. <sup>6</sup> He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. <sup>7</sup> For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. <sup>8</sup> For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. <sup>9</sup> For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. <sup>10</sup> But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. <sup>11</sup> For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. <sup>12</sup> So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. <sup>13</sup> Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way. <sup>14</sup> I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean. <sup>15</sup> But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup> Let not then your good be evil spoken of: <sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. <sup>18</sup> For he that in these things serveth Christ *is* acceptable to God, and approved of men. <sup>19</sup> Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. <sup>20</sup> For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure; but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence. <sup>21</sup> *It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. <sup>22</sup> Hast thou faith? have *it* to thyself before God. Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. <sup>23</sup> And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin. *Romans 14*

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Then we have *1 Corinthians 6:5–8* which reads as follows:

<sup>5</sup> I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? <sup>6</sup> But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. <sup>7</sup> Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather *suffer yourselves to be defrauded*? <sup>8</sup> Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that *your brethren*. *1 Corinthians 6:5–8*

Now, let us make some application. *1 Corinthians 6:5–8* is where we end up if we do not apply the principles of *Matthew 5:22–24* and *Matthew 18:15–17* **FIRST**. There should never come an occasion when brothers and sisters in Christ end up in secular courts. The apostle Paul says that we would be better off to take the wrong and suffer fraud rather than ending up in secular court. In other words, there comes a time when we should swallow the injustice and move on. That is not an easy thing especially when you have been the victim of an extreme injustice. I know because I have personally been there twice. One of those situations did not heal itself because of any action by the victimizers. There was zero interest on the victimizer's part in restoring the relationship. There was even a threat of legal action which brought to mind Paul's agonizing plea to the Galatians when he said: "<sup>16</sup> Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth" (*Galatians 4:16*)? It took some gut wrenching actions on my part in refusing to accept a permanent schism that I knew was not God's will. There were too many good years in the relationship to allow the Devil to permanently destroy the relationship and plant seeds of acrimony. There was a deep seated reluctance in me to come to the point where I could forgive them. That had to be done in my mind and my heart before the process of restoration could begin. I had to take every imitative to restore the relationship, but eventually things worked out. I Praise the LORD for it!

Some of what we will briefly look at in the next few minutes deal with issues of Christian liberty and some of them deal with a falsely assumed Christian liberty rooted in ignorance. As a Christian, you do not have the liberty to sin, but you do have the liberty NOT to sin.

Many years ago, I had a young couple in my Sunday School class who strongly advocated against Christians eating pork. I told them that while I believed they might be healthier if they did not eat pork, they could not prohibit a Christian from eating pork or make not eating pork a condition of fellowship because it was a matter of Christian liberty. I referred them to *Acts 10:13–28* and *Romans 14:1–23*. In *Acts 10:13–28*, God told Peter not to call that unclean which God had cleansed. *Romans 14* states that you cannot condemn a person based upon what foods they do or do not eat. *Romans 14* also states that you cannot condemn a person based upon what day or days they choose to celebrate. *Romans 14* also states that you cannot condemn a person based upon whether they will or will not eat pork (that which is considered unclean by the Jews). What that means is that the Jewish food laws cannot be forced upon any Christian including converted Jews and Gentiles. The conclusion is that *Romans 14* is talking about Christian liberty. God puts limitations on Christian liberty in *1 Corinthians 8:4–13*, *1 Corinthians 10:23–31*, *Galatians 5:13*, and *1 Peter 2:16* which state:

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<sup>4</sup> As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* none other God but one. <sup>5</sup> For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) <sup>6</sup> But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him. <sup>7</sup> **Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.** <sup>8</sup> **But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.** <sup>9</sup> **But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.** <sup>10</sup> For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; <sup>11</sup> And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? <sup>12</sup> But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. <sup>13</sup> Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend. *1 Corinthians 8:4–13*

<sup>23</sup> All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. <sup>24</sup> Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth*. <sup>25</sup> Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, *that* eat, asking no question for conscience sake: <sup>26</sup> For the earth *is* the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. <sup>27</sup> If any of them that believe not bid you *to a feast*, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. <sup>28</sup> **But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:** <sup>29</sup> Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another *man's* conscience? <sup>30</sup> For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? <sup>31</sup> Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. *1 Corinthians 10:23–31*

<sup>13</sup> For, 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*

<sup>16</sup> As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. *1 Peter 2:16*

There are two points to be taken in all this. They are: (1) If something is not specifically condemned and judged as sin in the Scriptures, you better be very careful how you handle it; and (2) If something is perceived as sin, even though it is not sin, Wisdom dictates that you refrain from it

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because if you do not, you can cause your weaker brother or sister to sin. Both of these place the greater burden upon the stronger Christian, and well it should. *1 Corinthians 8:4-13*, *1 Corinthians 10:23-31*, *Galatians 5:13*, and *1 Peter 2:16* all contrast true Christian liberty with liberty that produces carnality and maliciousness. A Satanic liberty that produces carnality and maliciousness is obviously not of God. There is a group today who grew up in the Independent Baptist movement that calls themselves “recovering fundamentalists” that use a deceptive Satanic bondage that they call liberty to deny every restraint that the Bible puts on their conduct. It breeds a carnality that has nothing but malicious contempt for any standard of holiness and separation that is declared to be necessary by the Bible. It mocks the “old time way”. The Holy Ghost said this in *Jeremiah 6:15-17*:

<sup>15</sup> Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time *that* I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD. <sup>16</sup> **Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.** <sup>17</sup> Also I set watchmen over you, *saying*, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. *Jeremiah 6:15-17*

There is the “good way” and the “false way”. God said twice in *Psalms 119* that he hates every false way. There is no Godly liberty in any false way. The liberty that the “recovering fundamentalists” promote is a false way. It destroys all boundaries between true Biblical holiness and apostate and heretical worldliness. I would argue that it is an extreme form of antinomianism because it seeks to actively repudiate every Biblical standard of Christian conduct. When I use the word antinomianism, it is the theological term that describes the heresy that under the dispensation of grace that Christians are freed from the requirements of obeying God’s moral law. Antinomian literally means “against the law”.

Can I say that the “recovering fundamentalists” movement is the natural outcome of Independent Baptist churches whose pews were, and are, filled with faithless and Fatherless false professors who were led in unbelieving “sinners prayers”? They are lost and many of them are reprobates who have been made two fold more the child of hell. Antinomian churches have been leavened with the leprosy of false professions. The so-called “recovering fundamentalists” are “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (*Jude 4*). They promise liberty while they push their followers back into bondage. *2 Peter 2:9-22* describes this apostate group of recovering fundamentalists as follows:

<sup>9</sup> The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: <sup>10</sup> But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. <sup>11</sup> Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. <sup>12</sup> But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; <sup>13</sup>

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And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, *as* they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots *they are* and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; <sup>14</sup> Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: <sup>15</sup> **Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;** <sup>16</sup> But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. <sup>17</sup> These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. <sup>18</sup> For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. <sup>19</sup> **While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.** <sup>20</sup> For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. <sup>21</sup> For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. <sup>22</sup> But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. *2 Peter 2:9-22*

There is a parallel passage of scripture in *Jude 8-19*. *Jude 19* describes these apostates as “having not the spirit” whereas *2 Peter 2:1* describes them as “denying the LORD that bought them”. What both passages are saying is that these reprobates and apostates are not saved! They have gone past compromise and promote open rebellion against God and his Word. A much older companion movement to the “recovering fundamentalists” is the “free grace” movement. The “free grace” movement actively advocates against the necessity of repentance in salvation. They believe that a person can get saved and continue to live in open sin never showing any evidence of salvation. If a person never forsakes their sin following a profession of faith then the Spirit of God is not in them (*Jude 18-19*). If the Spirit of God is not in you, then you are none of his (*Romans 8:9*). Grace does not abound to an unsaved professor who never shows any evidence of Holy Ghost wrought repentance. Grace that grants license to sin is either Aholah or Aholibah. They are both wicked sisters. Our reply to the heresy and antinomianism of the “free grace” movement is *Romans 6:1-15* where the Bible responds as follows:

<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? <sup>3</sup> Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in

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newness of life. <sup>5</sup> For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection: <sup>6</sup> Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. <sup>7</sup> For he that is dead is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: <sup>9</sup> Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. <sup>11</sup> Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. <sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. <sup>13</sup> Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. <sup>14</sup> For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. <sup>15</sup> What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. *Romans 6:1-15*

The false liberty of “free grace” is really a continued bondage to sin. If a person is not saved, they do not have the liberty to depart from sin. True Christian liberty is our freedom in Christ to depart from iniquity. The apostle Paul put it this way: “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”(2 *Timothy 2:19*). If we belong to the LORD Jesus Christ, we are allowed (LET), or given the liberty, to depart from iniquity. If we do not belong to the LORD Jesus Christ, then we are not allowed (LET), or given the liberty, to depart from iniquity because we are still in bondage to our sin. Liberty is not license to sin. Liberty is the freedom not to sin.

What we have very briefly described in the last few minutes is a false liberty that God hates. Now, lets talk about some things that are falsely assumed to rest in the realm of true Bible believing Christian liberty.

There are certain things within the bounds of Christian liberty, though not sin in and of themselves, that can cause weaker Christians to sin. We talked about some of those when we briefly discussed *1 Corinthians 8:4-13* and *1 Corinthians 10:23-3*. If we are the stronger Christian, we are not to use our liberty in a manner that sets a stumblingblock before a weaker brother or sister . That is to say, if a weaker Christian considers something we are doing to be a sin, we are to cease from doing it even if it is not sin. That purer standard leads us to abstain from all appearance of evil. If the perception of our actions presents the appearance of evil to weaker Christians, we are to refrain from such actions. Perception is always worse than reality because it resides in speculation and a shortage of facts. Now, lets look at two areas where many well meaning Christians take liberties because of their ignorance.

I would remind our listeners and readers that there was sin and trespass offerings for the sins of ignorance identified in *Leviticus 4:13-35*, *Leviticus 5:14-19*, and *Numbers 15:22-29*. Before God, ignorance is no excuse or justification for sin because he made special provision for ignorance in the different sin offerings. In the dispensation of grace, the LORD Jesus Christ literally EMBODIES all

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of those offerings. Still, ignorance is no excuse. Ignorance is a lack of Biblical knowledge that leads to destruction.

You had better be very careful when you mock or rebuke someone for what you believe to be mere preferences rather than Bible based convictions. Quite frequently it happens that the person you are mocking for what appears to be preferences is more educated than you are concerning the devices that Satan uses to corrupt and profane the church of the living God. God is very jealous for his holiness, his holy things, and his sanctuary. God states the following in *Ezekiel 22:8* and *Ezekiel 22:26*:

<sup>8</sup> Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. *Ezekiel 22:8*

<sup>26</sup> Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. *Ezekiel 22:26*

At least four different times in the Old Testament God condemns those who “**defile**” and “**profane**” his sanctuary. So, how is it that modern day apostate Baptists profane holy things? How is it that modern day apostate Baptists put no difference between the holy and the profane; between the unclean and the clean? How is it that God is profaned among us Baptists? Many Baptists look upon Christmas and Easter celebrations as being events that fall under the umbrella of Christian liberty. Tragically, that is because they have not been properly taught. And if you try to preach and teach against the paganism of Christmas being brought into the sanctuary of a church, you will be mocked and scorned as being a Pharisee, a legalist and a cheap, stingy miserly tightwad. The Devil uses the grinch and the **familiar spirit** of “*the ghost of Christmas’s past*” to condemn Christians who reject the paganism associated with the hedonistic celebration of Christmas. I have seen the Devil use Independent Baptist pastors from the pulpit to condemn those who refuse to celebrate Christmas. In modern day Christianity, the pagan symbols, traditions, and pageantry associated with Christmas and Easter that enter the church go beyond profaning the holy things of God to abominating the holy things of God. I would remind us compromised Independent Baptists that the word “Christmas” literally means “Christ MASS”. It is a purely Roman Catholic invention that came forth from the crypts of Roman Catholic theology. The Roman Catholic Mass is a heretical daily re-sacrifice of the LORD Jesus Christ on the pagan altars of Roman Catholicism. Then we have the words “Pharisee” and “legalist”. They are the hammer that is used to crush the spiritual fingers (one at a time) of any who would stand against compromise. Pharisee and legalist are “Christian” curse words that apostate American Christians use to persecute Bible believing Christians. Many Independent Baptists and fundamentalists will denounce you as an heretic if you advocate for holding an Easter egg hunt on their premises during the Easter season, and rightfully so. Yet, they will allow the rankest forms of paganism in their sanctuaries and on their premises during the Christmas season. Why is there an inconsistency and double standard when it comes to the paganism of Christmas? Most Southern Baptist churches, and some Independent Baptist churches, hold wicked Easter egg hunts on their

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premises on Easter Sunday. In many Christian homes and Independent Baptist congregations, Christmas is unwittingly set up as an idol from the third week in November through January 1<sup>ST</sup> of every year. I once heard an Independent Baptist pastor mock some folks from the pulpit because they did not want to celebrate Christmas because he said they were too cheap to celebrate Christmas. These compromised mockers and scoffers consider themselves to be the stronger Christians because they worship the ignorance that is in them. God has a charge for them. Just because you do not know something does not necessarily make it untrue. Contrived ignorance has a steep price. *Hosea 4:6* says:

<sup>6</sup> My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. *Hosea 4:6*

While many Independent Baptist pastors will not allow Easter egg hunts on their church premises, they promote an abundance of Christmas decorations during the Christmas season not realizing the paganism they are promoting. They are unwittingly promoting idolatry and the Babylonian religious system. Sadly, most of our Independent Baptist pastors have not educated themselves on the pagan connections of the pageantry and symbols associated with Christmas. In the case of uneducated Christians who lack knowledge in the matters of Christmas and Easter, ignorance is no excuse. Again, God said my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (*2 Timothy 2:15*). The almost universal popularity of the Christmas season in pagan America should run up a red flag for a Christian. The principles of *Luke 6:26* can be applied to festivities as well as false prophets.

This issue is not new for me. I have sit under Independent Baptist pastors for years who prohibited Christmas decorations in the sanctuary and prohibited Easter egg hunts on church grounds. I have heard Independent Baptist pastors preach against Easter egg hunts only to have their adult children go home immediately following the Easter service and lead egg hunts for their children. I used to teach and preach against Christmas decorations being displayed in the foyers and sanctuaries of Baptist churches. In recent years, I have not had a platform to do so. When given the opportunity to preach or teach, the Holy Ghost has not given me the liberty or prodded me to teach or preach against the idolatry associated with Christmas and Easter. There were more critical issues to deal with such as hell and salvation. In the past, I have walked out of Baptist churches that had Christmas trees set up in their foyers and sanctuaries. If I were the pastor of a church, I would prohibit Christmas decorations in the church not because those decorations might offend someone (and they do, but who cares!?!), but because they unwittingly promote idolatry. If you have the pride an arrogance to think that you are the stronger Christian because you are okay with Christmas decorations in the sanctuary, then you ought to be strong enough to apply the principles and commandments of *1 Corinthians 8:4-13* and *1 Corinthians 10:23-31* in manner that ensures that any Christian brother or sister is not offended by your scripturally unregulated liberty! It is a commandment and not an option. You are not better than they are. You just have peer pressure and

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ignorance on your side.

Christian liberty ceases where heresy and paganism begin. In Alexander Hislop's book "The Two Babylons" he identifies five specific Roman Catholic festivals that have polluted the church. Those five are Christmas Day, Lady Day, Easter, the Nativity of Saint John, and the Feast of the Assumption. Of those five pagan festivals, two of them have taken hold of apostate Baptist churches in 20<sup>TH</sup> and 21<sup>ST</sup> century America. Before the 20<sup>TH</sup> and 21<sup>ST</sup> century apostasy and heresy in America churches, Baptist pastors would have had a conniption fit if someone merely suggested that a Christmas tree or decoration should be placed in the sanctuary of a church. So, what has changed? You guessed it. God has not changed. Apostate Baptists have removed the ancient landmark. Apostate Baptist have not just stumbled in their ways from the ancient paths (Jeremiah 18:15). They have leapt into compromise and apostasy. Satan is having his way in our compromised and apostate churches. Now lets look at some of the pagan traditions that are associated with Christmas.

First off, we are not against celebrating the birth of the LORD Jesus Christ. However, we are opposed to celebrating the birth of Christ on the very day that the ancient pagan idolaters celebrate the birth of their pagan male false gods. The Bible does not directly state when the LORD Jesus Christ was born. I think we can prove from the Biblical record and the facts of secular history that the LORD Jesus Christ was not born on December 25. We believe he was conceived of the Holy Ghost on or about December 25 and that he was born on or about September 29. There are many places in Christian theological literature where that is also proved. One of those sources is in Chapter 3 of Alexander Hislop's work "The Two Babylons". We also see it documented in Appendix 179 of E. W. Bullinger's work "The Companion Bible".

A few brief comments here on Easter egg hunts should be sufficient. The Easter eggs that innocent children hunt under the leadership of wilfully deceived adults are the symbols of the sexual promiscuity and sexual perversions associated with the worship of the vilest of ancient male gods and female goddesses. They are specifically connected to Astarte and Ishtar, but examples of them by other names abound in all pagan religious systems. Even the custom of Lent is pulled into apostate Christianity from the Babylonian Mysteries. The pagan Easter celebrations have no place in Bible believing Christianity. They are a blasphemous abomination to God that came straight out of the pits of hell. That Easter was already being celebrated by the pagans during the time of the apostles is clear from *Acts 12:1-4* where the King James translators uniquely and wisely translated the Greek word pascha as Easter instead of passover to the chagrin of all other Bible translations. The key to the translation is the "days of unleavened bread" in *verse 3*.

It is not our intent here to cover every detail given in Hislop's book concerning the pure paganism of the worlds celebrations of Easter and Christ-MASS. Our intent is to shock you into reading Hislop's entire book titled "The Two Babylons". If you do not have the time to read the entire book, we would encourage at the very least to read pages 91-113 that discuss Christmas and Easter. Hislop's book is still available as a hard copy, but it is also available as a PDF from many sources including: <https://archive.org/search?query=%22The+Two+Babylons%22&tab=all> .

If your bringing Christmas decorations into the sanctuary of the church offends a Christian whom you perceive to be weaker than you, or who considers it to be sin, then why will you not apply the principles of *1 Corinthians 8:4-13* and *1 Corinthians 10:23-31* and bear the limitation that his or her

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perceived weakness puts upon your perceived liberty? *1 Corinthians 8:12* says that when you fail to apply the principles of *1 Corinthians 8:4-13* in your relationships with those you perceive to be weaker Christians, then you sin against that weaker Christian! Those are not my words. Those are the words of the Bible! The apostle Paul said in *Romans 15:1*: “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves”! We repeat *1 Corinthians 6:5–8* which states the following:

<sup>5</sup> I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? <sup>6</sup> But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. <sup>7</sup> Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather *suffer yourselves to be defrauded*? <sup>8</sup> Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that *your brethren*. *1 Corinthians 6:5–8*

So big boy or big girl why will ye not suffer the perceived weakness of your brother or sister in Christ? Maybe, just maybe, you are not as scripturally strong as you need to be. In the context the word “suffer” means to allow with prejudice or reservation. For many years now, I have suffered the display of Christmas decorations in Independent Baptist churches. It is an offense to God the Holy Ghost that is in me. I have seen Independent Baptist churches who will bring every form of Christmas decoration into the sanctuary of their churches and then refuse to sing Christmas hymns! What is wrong with that? Is not that a bit odd? There is a time of ignorance that God winks at, but when that ignorance is removed through preaching and teaching, God commands us to repent from the worship of unknown gods. For some of us, our unknown gods are Christmas pageantry and celebrations and Easter egg hunts. God does not give us the liberty to bring these pagan festivities into the sanctuary of his church. We suggest that you listen to the following sermons by Pastor James Knox of Bible Baptist Church, Deland, Florida:

James Knox: The Santa Claus Sermon 2025: Length = 59 Minutes, 45 Seconds: This sermon was preached in the midst of Brother James Knox’s battle with cancer. Here is the link:

<https://earnestlycontendingforthefaitth.com/SermonsAndAudio/JamesKnox/JamesKnoxTheSantaClausSermon2025.mp3>

James Knox: Old Saint Nick: Length = 1 Hour, 28 Minutes, 6 Seconds: This sermon has the same subject as The Santa Claus Sermon 2025. It has more detail in it and at times is quite humorous. Here is the link:

<https://earnestlycontendingforthefaitth.com/SermonsAndAudio/JamesKnox/JamesKnoxOldSaintNick.mp3>

James Knox: The Birth Date Of Jesus: Length = 54 Minutes, 5 Seconds: This sermon uses secular

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history and the Biblical Record to prove that the LORD Jesus Christ was not born on December 25.  
Here is the link:

<https://earnestlycontendingforthefaitth.com/SermonsAndAudio/JamesKnox/JamesKnoxTheBirthDateOfJesus.mp3>