

“All Things Are Lawful for Me”

Presented by Gregg Harris

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Key Text: 1 Cor. 6:12 Key Word: “lawful”

1 Cor. 6:12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

The Christians in Corinth are still a mess.

1 Cor. 6:7-8 Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? 8 No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! 9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

- **The glaring lack of love among the Christians in Corinth by suing one another in court before unbelievers was a display of unrighteousness not unlike that of unbelievers.**

So, Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that practicing such unrighteousness is what is bringing the wrath of God upon unbelievers and keeping them from “inheriting God's kingdom.”

We saw that their unrighteous behavior does not necessarily mean they were not saved.

- **As Christians we are in a battle with our own fleshly desires. We lose some battles, but we will not lose the war, because Jesus gives us victory over “this body of death.”**

Rom. 7:24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? **25** I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. **8:1**

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. **2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.**

By “walking according to the Spirit” we are free from the condemnation that comes to those who try to justify themselves under God’s law.

God has made a way for sinners to be saved.

- **Rom. 3:21** But now a righteousness from God, **apart from law**, has been made known... 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.
- **Any deviation from the glorious display of God's will is sin.**
- **All have sinned and therefore all "fall short of His glory."**
- **But, because all have sinned, God is able to forgive anyone based on *Christ's righteousness*, rather than their own.**
- **That is what it means when Paul writes in Rom. 10:4 "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."**

Today, when we sin, God, as our Heavenly Father, disciplines us as His beloved children without having to condemn us forever.

The Apostle John speaks clearly to this.

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, He is **faithful and just** to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. **2:1** My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, **we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**

● **Since “all have sinned” all can be offered the same mercy.**

1 John 3:10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not **practice righteousness** is not of God, nor is he who does not **love** his brother.

Those who do not “practice righteousness” are yet to be saved and as such they cannot inherit the kingdom of God in any sense.

This brings us to today's passage.

1 Cor. 6:12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

- **Paul is careful not to pull the Corinthian Christians back under the law of sin and death while still pushing back against their various kinds of unrighteous behavior.**
- **The issue here is no longer a matter of keeping God's law, but rather of using liberty from the law as one should.**

Our liberty, under the Lordship of Christ, has put an end to the law for *righteousness* sake, but **NOT for *goodness* sake.**

1 Tim. 1:8 But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, 9 knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless...

This passage is so important that it requires some context.

We must use the law “lawfully.”

1 Tim. 1: 5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, 6 from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, 7 desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

1 Tim. 1:8 But **we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, 9 knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless** and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10 for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is **any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,** 11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

The law is intended to suppress all of this unrighteous behavior.

The law is a tutor to bring us to Christ.

Gal. 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. 22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 **Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.** 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 6 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Having come to Christ, we are no longer under the law.

Paul comes back to this again and again.

1 Cor. 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. 24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

- **Just because something is “not against the law” does not make it right or helpful in accomplishing God's purposes.**

1 Cor. 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God.** 32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

We are free to live for the glory of God by loving one another. We are free to bring unbelievers to salvation. But we are not free to rudely go about offending others by using our liberty selfishly.

Just as all things are lawful for me, all foods are also pure and none are “unclean.”

Mark 7:19 For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”) NIV

Rom. 14:20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food (i.e. by eating whatever you like). All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense (i.e. eats while knowingly offending others). 21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. 22 **Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God.** Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

We are free to live for the glory of God by loving others, not to offend others by flaunting our liberty to do whatever we want.

Our liberty is freedom from bondage to the law as a means of righteousness.

Gal. 2:4 And this occurred because of false brethren (i.e the Judaizers) secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage (i.e. under the Law of Moses)), 5 to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Gal. 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage (i.e. with the Jewish law). ...6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love [avails everything].

Again, we are free to love and build one another up in Christ.

Even though we are free from the law,
our liberty is never to be used selfishly.

Gal. 5:13 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. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! (e.g. by suing one another in court.)

Gal. 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

As elsewhere, Paul fights to keep Christians from slipping back under the law by exhorting us to instead “be led by the Spirit.”

Our liberty is never to be used to
indulge ourselves in unrighteousness.

Gal. 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is **no law.** ²⁴ And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Walking in the Spirit is the gospel alternative to obeying a law.

Paul's battle with the Judaizers over the abolishment of the law as a means of achieving righteousness before God was so central to the gospel that he was even willing to call out Peter.

Gal. 2:11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all,

What Paul says next to the Apostle Peter marks one of the most courageous moments in all of church history.

“If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? 15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. 17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! 18 For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19 For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

How often do we quote verse 20 entirely out of context?!

Paul lost this battle at the end of his life.

2Tim. 4:1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

2Tim. 4:6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

What Paul writes next are some of the saddest words in history.

2Tim. 4:9 Be diligent to come to me quickly; I 0 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. I 1 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. I 2 And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. I 3 Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments. I 4 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. I 5 You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. I 6 At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. I 7 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. I 8 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

Paul was vindicated in 70AD when the Jewish temple was destroyed.

Let us use our liberty to walk in the Spirit.

Rom. 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Gal. 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

1 Cor. 6:12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

1 Cor. 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.

When we are walking according to the Spirit we will be free to be helpful in building one another up in Christ.

And so, I plead with you:

- **2Cor. 13:5** Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.
- **Look closely at yourself to see if Christ is truly in you by faith through the Holy Spirit. Look for evidence of God's grace in your life.**
- **Repent of all of the sins in your past and present.**
- **Respond to Paul's exhortation to "walk in the Spirit."**
- **Let the Holy Spirit lead you into a new life of love.**
- **Don't allow yourself to be pulled back into the bondage of keeping God's law for righteousness sake.**

Let Us Respond to God!

Heb. 3:15 “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...”

- **Let your Elders play their proper part in your Christian life.**

James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Let us pray for one another, and pray with one another in response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit through God’s Word.