

FREE MEN

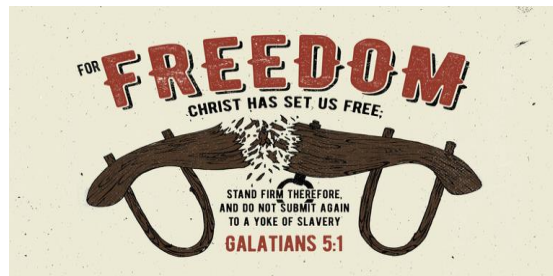


Free Men 2 by Cynthia Christine

Whenever there is authentic revival, whenever there is a move of the Spirit in the Body of Christ, a battle with legalism will arise to confuse it, and drain it of life.

We can see legalism in other people, in other places, and in other churches, but we are often blind to forms of legalism that have trickled into our own lives.

The apostle Paul dealt with legalism with great power in his letter to the Galatians. And this powerful message is summed up in Galatians 5:1



One way in which legalism is infecting the Body of Christ is through the distortion and misuse of the concept of "submission." Wives are to submit to their husbands. Believers are to submit to one another in the fear of God. We are to submit to authority inside the church and outside. We are to bring this spirit of lawlessness and rebellion, which is not only abroad in the world but stirring very actively in our own hearts, into subjection to Jesus Christ by submitting to him and every authority who stands under him.

In the kingdom of Heaven there is always order---from the top right down to the bottom:

The glorious creatures that stand before the throne gladly submit to the Holy God.

The elders gladly fall on their faces and cast their crowns before the ever living One.

Every one standing on that sea of glass freely submits to God.

We see in our Lord's ministry that he constantly submitted to the will of the Father.

"I do nothing of myself."

"I do only those things which please him."

"It is my meat and drink to do the will of him who sent me."

If we are truly walking in the will of God, we will submit to the Lord Jesus in exactly the same way as he submits to the will of the Father.

We do it with joy and without reservation.

Misguided Submission



We need to be sure that when we submit, that we truly are submitting to Jesus.

There is a danger that we turn the act of submission itself into a virtue. It is possible to be so caught up in submitting that we forget to pay attention to who we're submitting to.

If we submit to a false prophet, we are held accountable, because our Lord warns us to beware of false prophets and explains how to spot them.

If we submit to the yoke of slavery of legalism, there are wolves ready to move in and take advantage of any tender, submissive sheep.

They are just waiting to get their hands on people who submit indiscriminately to any "authority" that comes along. They do it so subtly that the sheep think they're serving the kingdom by submitting to the "guidance" of these wolves.

"We have gained so much by submitting." (to those things which the wolves have added to Jesus Christ).

"We have advanced far beyond where we once were in our simple walk with Jesus."

When our walk with Jesus is no longer simple, and clear, direct, chances are we are no longer walking with Jesus—chances are, we have begun to fall under the yoke of bondage to a spiritual tyrant who is dominating our lives with religious legalism.

Paul took the gospel to the province of Galatia. Through him, Jesus Christ was presented with great power as crucified for our sins. People came to faith, and the confirmation of their faith was that the Holy Spirit fell upon them. Miracles began to occur in the churches in Galatia, confirming the presence of God among them.

A church emerged that was marked by God's living presence.

Here was an authentic manifestation of the Body of Christ.

Soon after Paul left, a group of men arrived who began to pervert this holy thing. These men taught the people to submit to things in addition to Jesus Christ---things that had no connection with Jesus—circumcision, special days, months, seasons that had to be observed---requirements Paul never taught, new rules, new disciplines. As soon as Paul got wind of this, he wrote a letter with strong words of warning:

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who has called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel—not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached you, let him be accursed."

Galatians 1:6-8

What these false teachers did was very simple—they took the principle of submission, which the people of Galatia understood, and switched the object.

—they substituted themselves and their "beautiful teachings" in place of Jesus Christ.

It could even be that things started "going even better" in this church. People still talked about Jesus, still spoke of the Holy Spirit, perhaps the crowds were even growing, but Paul saw the danger. He could see that these people were coming under a yoke of slavery heavier than they had ever known.

When the principle of submission is detached from Jesus, and used by a man or woman, or "leadership group" "who presume to put themselves in the place of Jesus, impressive things often happen—things that look wonderful to the natural eye—you go there and you can just "feel the power", and you're staggered by the numbers, and you say to yourself, "The blessing of God is on this place."

But as you allow yourself to be drawn into this phenomenon, you soon find that you are being asked to submit to what Paul calls "another gospel".

You are being brought into bondage to things that Jesus Christ never commanded.

These movements produce men and women who are happy and productive only as long as they can drink in the atmosphere of the cult. Take them out of the cult and put them in the real world, make them stand on their own two feet among real people with real problems, and they fall apart. It turns out that these people are not the joyful, victorious saints that they appear to be. Beneath their uniform smile and their hollow “Praise the Lords”, they are spiritual robots, manipulated puppets.

Jesus Christ does not produce such men and women.

Jesus does not produce robots.

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”



“If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away (the bondage is gone) and all things have become new.”

“If you continue in my word then you are my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”

A Time to Submit and A Time to Refuse

“But because of false brethren secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage, to them we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved to you.”

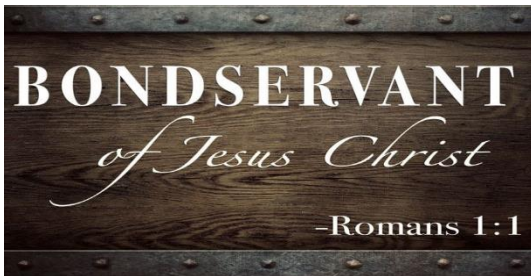
Galatians 2:4-5

Note well:

there is a time to submit, and there is a time to refuse to submit. And we'd better know which is which.

To know the difference here's what to keep in mind:

First, we are bond slaves of Jesus Christ and of no one else.



It is true that we have come into our freedom through submission,
but not indiscriminate submission,
not stupid submission,
not blind, unthinking submission--

- Submission to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world;
- Submission to him who shed his blood to atone for our sin.

We belong to him alone. He's our Lord.

Husband, wife, son, daughter, brothers, sisters, and our own lives, need to be removed from the throne of our hearts so that Jesus may reign there alone.

Every morning when we get up, we need to make sure that Jesus is still on the throne—that we haven't put our egos or even our loved ones there.



Free Man Cynthia Christine

Jesus alone reigns

- From the throne, the Lord Jesus shows us where to submit and where not to.
- From the throne, he gives us the wisdom and supplies the power that we need.
- From the throne, he anoints us with his Spirit and shows us which way to go.
- From the throne, he convicts us when we're lax and warns us when we're hardening our hearts.
- From the throne, he enables us to fit into the Body in the right way.

He fits us in with brothers and sisters, who not only comfort us, but irritate us, and misunderstand us, teaching us to walk with them in love through submission to the cross.

And our fitting in with the Body of Christ is always tied to our relationship to the Lord Jesus himself--

---a relationship with Jesus which is living, direct, personal, trusting, and obedient.

We are to be manipulated no man and we are to manipulate no man.

The second thing that will help us to know when to submit and when not to submit: We are never to allow any man or woman to manipulate us nor are we ever to manipulate anyone else.



In the Body of Christ we are set under authority. But authority in the Body is always conformed to the Spirit of Christ---

---and the Spirit of Jesus Christ never violates the human will.

If God wanted to disregard our wills, he would not have had to send his Son to the cross. He could have snapped his fingers and turned us into a race of sweet, smiling robots.

God wants sons and daughters. He's willing to run the risk, to create sons and daughters who are free, even if it means allowing multitudes of people to look right into the face of his Son and still choose hell.

God does not manipulate.

Satan is the one who manipulates.

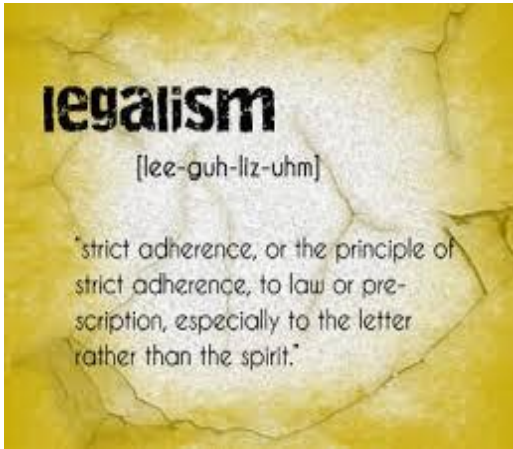
And when in our fellowships, we allow ourselves to be programmed by those above us in order that we may program those beneath us---even if we are all being programmed to praise the Lord, the thing is false—it's of Satan.

Which is what Satan was trying to do to Jesus in his wilderness temptation.

Satan was trying to program Jesus, but Jesus did not submit.

Every day of our lives, the evil one tries to program us, tries to inspire us to program other people. If you have a passion for programming, find yourself a computer, but leave the human race alone.

Our link with God is faith, not legalism.



The third thing we have to keep in mind in order to know when to submit and when not to, is that our connection to God is never maintained by legalism, only by faith in the Crucified and Risen Lord Jesus.

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus was publicly portrayed as crucified? Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending in the flesh? Did you experience so many things in vain?—if it really is in vain. Does he who supplies the Spirit in you and works miracles among you do so by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Galatians 3:1-5

If I believe in Jesus, I'm going to do what he says. I'm going to obey him.

People who say, "I believe. I believe," and never do what he says, only think they believe.

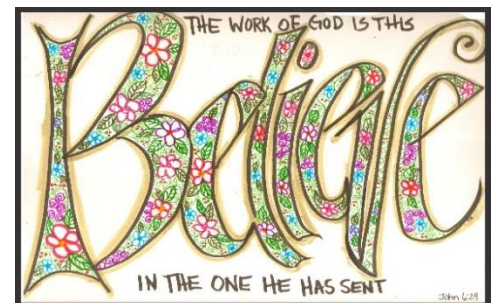
When I try to do good works, to perform those good things which believers are supposed to be doing---without having my mind, and my heart, and my eyes, and my ears on Jesus in faith---I am heading into bondage.

The evil one will send people my way to tell me exactly what will flood me with guilt—good, correct things, but the evil one never tells me where to get the power to do these things—he never points me to the cross. And the harder I try to obey the rules, the more tormented I become and the more enslaved I become to the rules and the people who lay those rules down.

“What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” the people asked Jesus. Jesus answered them, (and still answers) This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” John 6:28,29

His message:

“Believe in him whom he has sent. Look to me, trust me, walk with me, and I will guide you and give you all the power you need to do the Father’s will, And you will be slaves no more to any man or spirit or doctrine or rule. You will be free men and free women, doing the Father’s will, hastening the coming of my kingdom, fitting in with brothers and sisters, enduring persecution with a joy that will never leave you, in this world or the next.”



Prayer

Thank you Lord, that you have made us free men, that where your Spirit is there is freedom. Lord help us to continue to submit to you in that freedom. May we gladly cast off our crowns, enthroning you in our hearts, daily. Guide us in our submission. May we not enslave ourselves to any teaching, person, or manipulation that weakens the power of your cross. We believe in you, we look at you, trust in you, walk with you... together with our brothers and sisters. May we continue in your word, knowing the truth so deeply in our souls, that we are free to live in submission to you and only you with everlasting joy.

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