

'RULES, PROMISES, AND THE FREEDOM WE ACTUALLY NEED' # 5

Rules are funny things! Most would agree that society needs rules in order for communities to live together, but we don't necessarily agree or like all the rules. Perhaps it's just me, but I think most people have an odd relationship with rules in general; very sure that everyone else should strictly keep them, but have a slightly more fluid approach to keeping them themselves. Lawyers and others make their living challenging the interpretation of rules.

Where do you stand when it comes to rules of the religion you follow? Is your relationship with fellow church members impacted when they interpret rules differently from your understanding?

Read Galatians 3:15-22 and Romans 7:7-12

Paul's writings here are particularly dense and reading The Message translation might prove helpful. We need to bear in mind, as we read both passages, that the basic issue Paul is addressing was of great importance to the early church. Paul is addressing the converts from a Jewish heritage (like himself), which for generations had been taught that the exact following of the rules of the Law (The Torah – the first 5 books of the Old Testament) brought the righteousness that God expected of them. These converts struggled to lay down their previous practises, hoping they could continue to work hard observing the Law within Christianity. They and their religious leaders had failed to understand from God's prophets that this intense focus on the following of the rules was not what God intended (by the giving of the Law), and that a new way was to be opened (see Jeremiah 31:31-34). That new way was opened through the life/death and resurrection of Jesus, and subsequent acceptance of Jesus as Lord.

'Rules are not necessarily sacred, principles are.' (Franklin D Roosevelt). *How would you describe the difference between rules and principles?*

Do you think God's promises can be included within the discussion so far, or are they a separate issue entirely? Discuss.

The point we must start from when considering God's rules is that God loves us, and as our loving Father, would not instigate anything that was not in our best interests. The concept of following rules in the Bible is not just about obeying mandates; it's about understanding the heart behind those rules and living them out in our lives. Scripture guides us to cultivate a spirit of obedience that reflects our love for God and our neighbours, and enhances our relationship with God. **"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."** (Galatians 5:1)

We hear the demand for 'freedom' from every street corner right across the world. As a Christian, do you feel free?

God wants us to embrace the freedom found in following Jesus. In this freedom we are freed from sin, **"You have been set free from sin and have become slaves of righteousness"** (Romans 6:19)

freed from fear, **"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."** (Isaiah 41:10)

freed from worry, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7)
gain freedom to love, “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your
freedom to indulge in the sinful nature, rather, serve one another in love.” (Galatians 5:13)
find freedom in truth, “I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought your precepts.” (Psalm
119:45)

Being set free is not just a one-time event; it is an ongoing journey that we experience every
day as we walk with Jesus, being liberated from sin, fear, and worry, discovering the beauty
of love and truth.

Lent Course Reflections week 1 Sharing in Worship & Sharing in Prayer

What stood out to you from the reflections this past week?

Did you try any of the suggested challenges? If so, what did you notice?

Prayer: *Lord, may we live your life, act with your power, love with your love, and go on
growing into your likeness. Amen.* (Jamie Wallace)