

Rooted - March 7th - Free - Troy Knight

Key Scriptures:

Colossians 2:11-23 NLT

Start reading

Colossians 2:11 - 23 NLT

11 When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. **12** For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. **13** You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. **14** He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. **15** In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross. **16** So don’t let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. **17** For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. **18** Don’t let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, **19** and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it. **20** You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, **21** “Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!”? **22** Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. **23** These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires.

TALK IT OVER

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Has your pre-Christian experience or present experience ever involved rules and/or list keeping? Why do so many people cling to lists for salvation? For sanctification?

Start thinking. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- **Read Colossians 2:11-12.** What was the significance of physical circumcision for a Jew? What point was Paul making with the idea of spiritual circumcision?
- **Read Colossians 2:13-15.** Pastor Troy mentioned the theological idea of “imputed righteousness.” What does this mean and how does it apply to our lives?
- How did Jesus disarm the spiritual powers and authorities in our lives?
- **Read Colossians 2:16-19.** What false teaching do you think Paul was addressing in these verses? Have you ever been condemned for eating or drinking or disobeying some law that other Christians deemed right? What’s the difference between holding each other accountable and being legalistic?
- **Read Colossians 2:20-23.** Discuss the following statement, “But they provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires.” What does conquer our evil desires? How do we keep from falling back into rules-based Christianity and walk in the freedom of Christ?

Start sharing. Choose a question to create openness.

- What, if any, is the difference between a ‘guardrail’ and a rule? Could the distinction between the two be important? Do you need to set any new guardrails or to repair some old ones?
- Pastor Troy said, “Do not use your liberty as a license for sin.” Have you ever witnessed the mishandling of someone’s freedom in Christ? If you have time, discuss what freedom in Christ looks like in the areas of alcohol, entertainment, social media, or tobacco. In other words, how do we enjoy the blessings of God without causing ourselves or others to sin?
- Pastor Troy closed his message by challenging us to take our next step. Share with your group which one of these, if any, applies to you.
 - Find freedom and forgiveness in Christ through salvation
 - Find freedom from a list by repenting of it and putting it down
 - Find freedom from sin by getting help with an addiction

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Commit this week to seek God and pray that He will reveal any list keeping you are doing and help you to instead trust God by faith.

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- God, help me to find true freedom in you by truly learning what it is to trust in You. If there are things in my life that are keeping me from truly trusting you and showing who You are to others through my life reveal these things to me. - Amen

Start digging. For further study.

- Read the 2nd page and discuss it.

Question: "What is Christian freedom?"

Answer: The Bible states emphatically in Galatians 5:1 that believers are free in Christ: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1). Before Jesus died on a cross, God's people lived under a detailed system of laws that served as a moral compass to guide their lives. The Law, while powerless to grant salvation or produce true freedom, nevertheless pointed the way to Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:19–24). Through His sacrificial death, Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law, setting believers free from the law of sin and death. God's laws are now written in our hearts through the Spirit of God, and we are free to follow and serve Christ in ways that please and glorify Him (Romans 8:2–8). In a nutshell, this is the definition of Christian freedom.

An important aspect of Christian freedom is our responsibility not to return to living under the Law. The apostle Paul compared this to slavery: "Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1). Continuing to live under the Law after salvation is merely a legalistic form of religion. We cannot earn righteousness through the Law; rather, the Law's purpose was to define our sin and show our need of a Savior. Christian freedom involves living not under the burdensome obligations of the Law but under God's grace: "For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

In Christ, we are free from the Law's oppressive system, we are free from the penalty of sin, and we are free from the power of sin. Christian freedom is not a license to sin. We are free in Christ but not free to live however we want, indulging the flesh: "For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13, NLT). Believers aren't free to sin, but free to live holy lives in Christ.

Christian freedom is one of the many paradoxes of the Christian faith. True freedom means willingly becoming a slave to Christ, and this happens through relationship with Him (Colossians 2:16–17). In Romans 6, Paul explains that, when a believer accepts Christ, he or she is baptized by the Spirit into Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. At that moment, the believer ceases to be a slave to sin and becomes a servant of righteousness: "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17–18, ESV).

Only Christians know true freedom: "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). But what does Christian freedom look like in a practical sense? What are we free to do and not do? What can we watch on TV? What can we eat and drink? What can we wear to the beach? What about smoking and drinking? Are there limits to Christian freedom?

In 1 Corinthians 10, the apostle Paul gives a practical illustration of Christian freedom: "'Everything is permissible'—but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible'—but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others" (1 Corinthians 10:23–24, NIV84).

In writing to the church in Corinth, Paul mentions members who were attending meals in pagan temples, just as they had done before receiving Christ. They felt free to continue participating because they thought these festivals were merely a normal part of the social culture. They didn't see their actions as pagan worship.

Paul laid out several warnings, reminding the Corinthians of Israel's dangerous flirtation with idolatry in the Old Testament. Then he handled the practical concern of eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols.

"Everything is permissible," the Corinthians were saying. True, Paul says; Christians have a great deal of freedom in Christ. However, not everything is beneficial or constructive. Our freedom in Christ must be balanced by a desire to build up and benefit others. When deciding how to exercise our Christian freedom, we ought to seek the good of others before our own good.

In Judaism, restrictions were placed on purchasing meats in the market. Jews could only buy and eat kosher meats. Paul said believers were free in Christ to buy and eat any meat (1 Corinthians 10:25–26). However, if the issue of meat sacrificed to idols came up, believers were to follow a higher law. Love is what limits Christian freedom.

A little later in the chapter, Paul wrote about eating meat as a guest in someone's home. Christians are free to eat whatever they are served without questions of conscience (1 Corinthians 10:27). But, if someone brings up that the meat has been offered to an idol, it is better not to eat it for the sake of the person who raised the issue of conscience (verse 28). While believers have freedom to eat the meat, they are compelled to consider what's best for those who are observing their behavior.

Romans 14:1–13 raises a key determiner in understanding the limits of Christian freedom. In the passage, Paul again brings up the issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols and also observing certain holy days. Some of the believers felt freedom in Christ in these areas while others did not. Their differing perspectives were causing quarrels and disunity. Paul emphasized that unity and love in the body of Christ are more important than anyone's personal convictions or Christian liberty: "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister" (Romans 14:13).

Essentially, Paul's message to the New Testament believers and to us today is this: even if we believe we are right and have Christian freedom in an area, if our actions will cause another brother or sister to stumble in his or her faith, we are to refrain out of love.

Paul spoke again of the matter in 1 Corinthians 8:7–9: "Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak."

The issue in New Testament times was eating meat offered to idols; today there are other "gray areas" that arise in our Christian walk. Romans 14:1 calls these "disputable matters," areas where the Bible does not give clear-cut guidelines on whether a behavior is sin. When we are faced with gray areas, we can rely on two guiding principles to regulate our Christian freedom: let love for others compel us not to cause anyone to stumble, and let our desire to glorify God be our all-encompassing motive (1 Corinthians 10:31).