

“Freedom In Christ” Pt 2

Christian Liberty

Galatians 5:13-15

Dr. Bruce Bickel

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Bruce: Good morning, men!

Men: Good morning!

Bruce: Good to be with all of you. Let’s pray and ask the Lord to teach us today. Heavenly Father, we thank You for those opportunities that You give us to represent You and Your kingdom building process. Thank You, Father, that You do not expect us to use our own resources, but You give us the resources of Your own life, indwelling us by the Holy Spirit. So Father, we pray today as we look at Christian liberty that You once again would be pleased to open our eyes, that we might behold You for Christ’s sake. Amen and Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: I invite you to open your Scriptures, please, to Galatians chapter 5, beginning at verse 13 and reading through verse 16.

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. But through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Last time we were together, we talked about what Christian liberty is, what Christian freedom is, and what it is not. I’d like to review that with you for just a few moments. The definition I gave you before of what Christian freedom is is that it’s the release from the obligation of the ceremonial law. Christian liberty is being free from having to fulfill the legal code to please God and freedom from the frustration of not being able to keep an external set of rules. That’s essentially the definition that Paul gives us in Galatians five. Through Jesus Christ we have been set free from the tiresome and resenting performance of religious ritual. No longer are we bound by religious ritual because the law has been fulfilled in us through the Person and work of Christ.

In a positive sense, Christian liberty is freedom to operate by the internal working of the Holy Spirit, as opposed to obedience to an external set of rules. It’s by the internal working of the Holy Spirit.

It’s important to realize that the moral law of God, God’s moral law, has not been abandoned. It hasn’t changed, nor has our obligation to it. We are still bound to maintain obedience to the moral law of God because it has not changed. Just because the resources that God has given us have changed—it’s no longer ourselves and our resources; He now gives us the resources of His own life—we are still bound to maintain the moral code of God. And we do that through the internal work of the Holy Spirit. Yes, Brian?

Brian: When you say the moral law, do you mean—

Bruce: The Ten Commandments.

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Brian: Do you mean all ten?

Bruce: Pardon me?

Brian: Do you mean all ten?

Bruce: All ten and all the others you make up. All ten of them, yes.

Let me give you a Scripture for us to understand. Paul was saying that God’s ethical law has become internal. That’s what Paul is teaching us. That has become internal, because Christ has come to live inside the believer by the Holy Spirit. I call your attention to Romans chapter 8, verses 9-11. *“You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit which dwells in you.”*

Now what Paul is saying there is essentially this. Christ now dwells in us, and He fulfills the law because He accomplished the law Himself and because He dwells in us. We now fulfill it because of the Person and work of Christ. We have faith in Him—the law keeper as well as the law giver.

So Christian freedom is no longer a set of rules and regulations, but it’s the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit where God fulfills that through us in the Person and work of Christ. We’re not reacting to a code anymore. We are responding to a Person. And that Person is the Person of the Holy Spirit.

Now that’s what Christian liberty is. Let me tell you what Christian liberty is not so that we understand this in these passages. Look at verse 13.

Freedom in Christ is not indulging the flesh. “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. But through love serve one another.”

Christian liberty is not the opportunity to indulge the flesh, or to pursue our own worldly desires. In the Scripture the flesh is our fallen nature, the part of us that is prone to sin. It’s what Paul would call the old man in Colossians chapter 3 verse 9.

Now the word *occasion* is a very important word as I dwelt on it last time we were together. It’s in verse 13. The word *occasion*, as Paul writes, *“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an occasion or opportunity.”* That word is a military term meaning a base of operation. Paul is saying this. Just because you’re free in Christ, we are not to make our flesh, our sinful nature, the base of operation for the decisions we make in life. In other words, you’ve been set free. The Holy Spirit is within you. Now do not return to the flesh to have it become the base of operation. You don’t make your decisions based upon the flesh anymore. You make your decisions based upon the inner working of the Holy Spirit. That’s where we have Christian freedom and Christian liberty.

That’s a key phrase of understanding, that we don’t want to go back and return to the flesh and have that become our base of operation. It’s a good expression for us to understand.

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Now Paul’s caution is a valid one about returning back to our sinful nature as the base of operation, because Christian liberty is not a license to sin, but he says that it’s an opportunity to serve.

The greatest liberty in the world in my mind is freedom to be free from self-centered indulgence. True Christian freedom is to be free from slavery to self and to be an aggressive responder to what the Lord is doing around you.

You’ve heard me say this so many times. Jesus was an aggressive responder to what the Lord was doing around Him. In John 5 and John 8 Jesus says, “I do nothing on My own initiative. I only do those things that I see My Father doing and that I hear My Father telling me.”

One of the best things you and I can do, men, is this. We must ask ourselves the question. What is God doing around me, and then we become aggressive responders to that. You see, that’s how the Holy Spirit works in us. We become aggressive responders to what we see the Lord doing around us.

Also Christian liberty is not the opportunity to injure other people. Look at verse 13-15. He says in verse 13 that the command is to love and serve one another. Our freedom is not the license to harm or wound another brother or sister, but rather in a supreme act of kindness to serve him or her.

Christian liberty is also not ignoring the law. We don’t ignore the law. Freedom in Christ is not the freedom to ignore the law. It is the freedom to fulfill the law because Christ has fulfilled it within us, and we trust Him to do that.

The moral law of God has not changed. It’s just that the base of operation has gone inside. It used to be outside, but now it has gone inside. We are given that type of love the moment God was pleased to grant us saving faith.

Look at Romans 5:5. *“And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit whom God has given us.”*

Men, I want to pause here for a minute. I want to thank Ted for what he did the last two weeks.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: And his wonderful exhortation on the fear of God. I want to play that out for a minute.

Learning should not stop at knowledge, because knowledge can only inform, but knowledge cannot transform. Knowledge informs but it doesn’t transform. It is the application of knowledge that transforms. That’s why learning should not stop at knowledge. Knowledge should lead to living, and living should lead to loving. That’s what Paul is teaching us. Christian liberty now gives us the freedom to serve one another because we’ve been set free from the external obligation of doing a set of rules and regulations. And now we have the freedom to serve one another because of the inner working of the Holy Spirit. Learning should not stop at knowledge. Learning should lead to living. And living should lead to loving.

And remember this. Knowledge can only inform. It does not transform. If knowledge could transform then Satan would be in heaven, because he knows more about knowledge than we do. If knowledge could transform then Judas would be in heaven, because he

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knew more about things than we do. But you see, knowledge cannot transform. Knowledge can only inform.

And that means that the important question is this. What am I going to do about what I’ve just learned? You see, that’s the most important question you can ask after you hear a message like Ted’s, or after you read a study, or read a book or hear a sermon, ask yourself this question. What am I going to do about what I’ve just learned?

Now Ted gave us some terrific insights and terrific applications of what it means to fear God. Now I don’t want to lose the opportunity. I want to ask you all this question. What are you going to do about what you heard Ted say?

Participant: Fear the Lord.

Bruce: What are you going to do about it?

Participant: Apply it.

Bruce: How are you going to apply it? Yes, wisdom defined Biblically is this: the application of knowledge. Wisdom is the application of knowledge. Ted gave you some knowledge. That will inform you of certain things. But it’s not going to transform you until you apply that knowledge into your life. So men, what are you going to do about what Ted taught us last week about fearing God? Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom is the application of knowledge. What are you going to do about it? I want to hear some answers.

Participant: C’mon!

Bruce: It’s important that we do this, men! You don’t just walk out of here because you’ve gained knowledge. Knowledge only informs; it doesn’t transform a bit. It’s only when you apply the truth. Yes, Dick?

Dick: Through sharing.

Bruce: Share what, please?

Dick: Ted’s lesson about what we’ve learned, and try it on some other folks, like in this room.

Bruce: You give it away. When God gives you a truth, the best thing we can do is give it away. You remember that our definition of ministry is this: giving away to someone else what God has given you. Give it away. But practically speaking, it’s got to go one step lower, down to us. What are you going to do about fearing God? How is that going to change your life? If it’s going to transform your life, you’ve got to apply the wisdom that Ted gave us. Yes, Brian?

Brian: The thing I need reinforced for me is that if everything is for God’s glory, and we get a blessing from God, and we’re disposed to be rather selfish, and instead of selfishness giving it away, giving in service, taking those blessings from God, looking at everything I’m doing and asking will this glorify God, and in doing so how will it serve men? So just quickly, everything that I’m doing throughout the day ask, is this glorifying God and is this loving my neighbor? That’s just a real quick filter that I can use to make sure that is true in fearing the Lord throughout the day.

Bruce: Okay. Excellent. Somebody else. What are you going to do about it? Yes, please?

Participant: Allowing yourself to be humbled.

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Bruce: Allow yourself to be humbled. God will force you to be humble. *(Laughter)* He’ll do that. That’s absolutely right. Remember this. Humility is seeing that which is perfect and realizing that I can’t achieve it. What is perfect?

Men: Christ.

Bruce: The Person and work of Christ—His sinless perfection and perfect obedience. You cannot achieve that! I cannot achieve that. That’s what produces humility. Humility is the one character quality that when you think you’ve got it, you’ve lost it. *(Laughter)*

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It’s not thinking of yourself at all.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You see, when you fear God, it’s going to produce within you the work of the Holy Spirit which causes you to be humble. It’s going to make you humble. Because you have the right view of God, you’re going to be humble.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You see, that’s the application of what it means when Ted was teaching us about the fear of the Lord. So be humble. God will make us humble when we fear the Lord. Somebody else?

Participant: Over here, Bruce.

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: To balance what this gentleman just said, you think of everything that you do during the course of the day. And you remember that God is watching. God is keeping track of everything we do, think and say.

Bruce: Amen. Be aware of the thoughts that you have, because God knows them before you even speak them. What are you going to do about that? How are you going to transform your life by that, by your thoughts? You’ve got to think right before you act right. Yes, please?

First Participant: *(Unclear)*

Second Participant: Can you speak up, please?

Third Participant: You’ve got to speak up.

First Participant: Well I’m trying.

Bruce: Okay, I’ll come back to you. Somebody else? Sig?

Sig: To me, Bruce, it’s like being afraid of confrontation with someone I trust and know and love. I hate to use the analogy. Most of the time, it’s with my wife. *(Laughter)* But I need to remember that she does love me. So when something difficult comes or I’m afraid, I still need to deal with it, talk to her, you know, be present with her, as opposed to running and hiding, because my tendency is to run and hide. I don’t want to deal with it. But in the fear of the Lord I thought Ted was quite profound with the analogy Ted gave about the dog coming after the child barking, and it was his way of playing. But when the child ran away, the dog got more intense. But the idea was to turn around and go to God, to turn around and go to Him. That’s so counterintuitive. But I’ve got to trust that God is going to be there and care for me.

Bruce: Good, excellent. Yes, Don?

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Don: One thing this has done for me, Bruce, is that it’s transforming my prayer life. A lot of times it’s hard for me to pray for long periods of time because my mind starts to wander. And knowing the fear of the Lord and being aware of who I’m talking to is very helpful in terms of keeping me focused.

Bruce: Yes.

Don: And realizing that this God is not Someone to be trivialized with, Someone to just treat lightly. On the other hand, I know that He loves me. And that’s very, very helpful.

Bruce: There’s a tremendous balance between the terrors of the Lord. You see, most of the time, when people talk about the fear of the Lord, we talk about respect and dignity. That’s true. The thing I appreciate about Ted is that he talked about the other side of the coin—the terrors of the Lord. Do you fear God’s terrors? What is that going to do to your lives, men, when you think about God? God is terrible in the sense that He has the right to judge. He has the right to do whatever He does because He’s the sovereign Creator of the universe.

How does that affect your life? Doesn’t that affect the decisions you make? I fear, I worry! I’m afraid of the terrors of the Lord because it’s God who is dealing with my life. So don’t forget that side of the coin. And I appreciate Ted’s comment about that, because we need to understand that we’re dealing with the Creator of the universe, the sovereign Lord of the universe who controls every situation in our lives. And we should not take that with triviality, or treat that with meager efforts, because we’re dealing with a God who is fearful, a God who is terrible in the sense that He will bring down the terrors of the Lord. He will bring judgment when He does. We need to realize that.

At the same time He paid for your sin on the cross.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You see, there’s that beautiful balance between the terror of God and the love of God. We need to keep those things in proper balance. Yes?

Participant: Worry is the interest we pay on trouble before it happens, most of which never happens.

Bruce: Let’s have that again. *(Laughter)*

Participant: Worry is the interest we pay on trouble before it happens, most of which never happens.

Bruce: That’s true. Most of it will never happen. Why do we worry about something? That’s why you never ask the questions “what if?” or “how come?” God will give you the grace at the moment of application, not of contemplation. When you’re contemplating grace, you don’t need it. God will give it to you at the moment of application. So why do we worry? We worry about something. What’s she going to say when I do this? He will give you the grace at the moment she says it to you. That’s the moment of application. God’s grace is not given to us at the moment of contemplation but at the moment of application, when we need it. God’s grace is sufficient for all things. Yes, please?

Participant: I’m thinking about Deuteronomy, where the people heard the voice of God and trembled. And they said, “You go and talk to God and then come back and tell us what we’ll do, and we will do it.” And that pleased God.

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Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: You know, there was a trembling there.

Bruce: We need to tremble before God. Yes?

Participant: Going back to the outline, I think that when that thought enters your mind, be quick to take it captive. When you think of the reverence of God, then you're walking down, is it worth that temptation? We have freedom in Christ maybe to entertain that thought. Yet the reverence of who God is and what Ted was saying about it makes one stop dead in his tracks and not be sloppy, and try to walk down the straight road.

Bruce: Don't let it be an occasion to return to the flesh. That's what Paul is teaching us. Don't let it be an occasion to make your decisions based upon the fleshly nature that we have. Yes, sir?

Participant: The only thing done that will last is what is done for Christ.

Bruce: The only things that will last are the things done for Christ. Amen to that. We need to think that way. Yes, Jim?

Jim: It seems to me that the older you get, the easier it is to see the consequences of God's judgment on the things you do that are not right.

Participant: Right.

Bruce: That's correct. We begin to see the consequences. Men, there are consequences for the choices we make.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We need to fear God in the choices that we make. One of my greatest sins, which are many, is the sin of presumption. I presume too much on God's grace, because I'm saying this. Knowledge will transform me because I know so much, or at least I think I do. But knowledge doesn't transform; it only informs. And we have to apply that knowledge which we have. And again, wisdom is this: the application of knowledge.

And men, I want you to take seriously what Ted taught us the last two weeks and apply that to your lives. Ask yourself this question. What am I going to do about what I've just learned about fearing God, because fearing God is the beginning of wisdom. And if we want to be wise, then we've got to master the art and the discipline of fearing God in all that He is, not just in what we want Him to be. Yes, please?

Participant: Actively seeking the will of God constantly, because, as you say, the information is packaged with directions on it. But if we don't look at the directions and then follow them. Guess what?

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: We fall flat.

Bruce: Now Paul, writing in the book of Galatians, is the champion of freedom in Christ. He's the champion of Christian liberty. But he's also very, very wise in the practicality of the application of the freedom of Christ. And Paul knows this more than anybody else. Oftentimes the decisions we make are made in what I would call the gray areas of life, where there is no direct Scripture reference that says, "Do this" or "do that." What do we do about so many decisions where there is no clear Biblical evidence? What do we do?

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Paul gives us some tremendous instructions on how to do that to balance out our freedom in Christ, because Paul also teaches this. You’re free in Christ. But there are limitations to our freedom, and I want to talk about that for a minute because that may help us apply some of the things we’re learning as we fear God. Let’s turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 12.

“*All things are lawful for me. But not all things are helpful.*” It’s the word *beneficial* or *profitable* in your translations. All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable or helpful. Next he says this. “*All things are lawful for me. But I will not be enslaved by anything.*”

And then go to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 23. Here’s what he says in 10:23. “*All things are lawful. But not all things are helpful. All things are lawful. But not all things build up,*” or edify.

He gives us three principles of decision making so that we do not give an occasion to our sinful nature to be the basis of operation for our decision making to glorify God, because we fear Him. I would call these things *the principles of personal progress* in 1 Corinthians 6:12. “*All things are lawful. But not all things are helpful*”—profitable, beneficial. That’s the principle of personal progress.

The Greek word here for *beneficial* or *helpful* is the word picture of taking a stick and throwing it into a stream. And it’s moving in the direction of the flow of the water. In other words, it’s going to be helpful to you when you’re moving in the right direction.

And Paul’s first principle of decision making in the gray areas of your life is this. All things are lawful. All things created by God are lawful. Now mankind has abused some of those created things of God. I understand that. But all things are lawful.

However, not all the freedoms that I have to make choices are going to be good for me. The issue is this. Do I understand what God is doing in my life so that when I make decisions they will be decisions that cooperate with the direction that He’s moving me in? Hence the idea of moving a stick into a stream and moving in that direction. Yes, Tom?

Tom: I like the following verse, 12:24, because that gives us the basis for doing that. “*Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.*”

Bruce: Amen.

Tom: So if it’s bothering other people, bingo! You give up yourself.

Bruce: We’ll deal with that as the third principle. We’ll look at that in a moment. Let’s stick with the first one—personal progress. Men, you’ve got a lot of freedom in Christ. But not all of the freedoms you have are going to be beneficial for you to make.

That means this. I’ve got the freedom to go see any movie I want. However, not every movie that I’m free to go see is going to be good for me. And I know that. So I’m not going to go and look at a certain kind of movie because it may stimulate within me things that are going to be irreverent toward God, because I fear Him. I’m not going to do that. I have the freedom to say yes. But I say, “Thanks, but no thanks.”

You can read any books you want that are lawful. Books are lawful. But not every book you read is going to be beneficial to you. What books do you choose to read? What magazines do you choose to read? What movies do you see? What TV shows do you watch? What music do you listen to? All of it is lawful. However, you’ve got to know

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yourself well enough to know that some of these things that are lawful for me to decide to do are going to give an occasion for me to revert back into the flesh and to have my base of operation in my sinful nature because it may stimulate within me certain things that are not going to be good, because I fear God.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: You see, in the gray areas there may not be some Scripture definition, or direct instruction from the Scriptures. So what do you do? You have to go back and say, “Is this going to help me and benefit my moving in the direction that God wants me to go? It’s the principle of personal progress. Yes?”

Participant: When you were saying what you were saying, I was just thinking. So where is the line? Whenever a book that we’re going to read is sinful, or a movie that we’re going to watch is sinful, so when you’re saying what you’re saying about having freedom and that everything is lawful, you’re not saying that something that we know is sinful or contrary to God, we don’t want to partake of that.

Bruce: That’s right. That’s why you don’t do it, because it is sinful. And it would stimulate within you things that are not healthy for your personal progress. You have to know yourselves well enough to know, men. That’s what I’m saying. You can’t come up with a Scripture that says, “Read this. Read that. See this. See that.” You can’t do that. You’ve got to know yourself well enough to know that you should avoid that because it is sinful. I should avoid that because it’s going to stimulate within me things that are not going to help me in my personal progress of Christian growth. It’s the principle of personal progress. It’s the gray areas of life.

What house should you buy? It doesn’t make any difference! What car should you drive? It doesn’t make any difference! But if you can’t buy that house to help you in your personal progress in fulfilling the Lord’s will in your life, then don’t buy it. Yes, sir?

Participant: In Mark 9:24 it says, “*Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.*”

Bruce: Amen. Yes, Ted?

Ted: Do you think that by saying what you just said, are you in a sense saying that there is this huge insistence in many preaching circles that we always receive the will of God? But are you saying there is some statement that is vain in the sense that you say that God doesn’t care what house we buy? It’s based on a bigger principle.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Ted: The agony is not over what house we should buy, but how that fits into the flow of God’s—

Bruce: How are you going to use that house? Am I going to use it for God’s glory? Am I going to use it for the fact of helping me grow in Christ and grow in grace? That’s what I’m saying. I’m saying that these are some of the gray areas.

Ted: I think that’s a good illustration, because I know folks who sometimes buy very large houses thinking, “I’m going to use this for God’s glory.” But it strikes me maybe as ostentatious. So I mean we can always justify whatever. I’m going to get this Cadillac because it’s going to be for God’s glory, or whatever. I know it’s easy for me to judge along these lines.

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Bruce: That’s why you have to really trust the Holy Spirit, men. I can’t give you a list of dos and don’ts. That’s the Christian freedom we have. You’re no longer fulfilling the rules and expectations of an external law code of dos and don’ts. We now have freedom in Christ. That’s where you have to be trusting Christ and the Holy Spirit to move in your heart. What is God doing in my life? And how am I going to cooperate with Him in doing that? Yes, please?

Participant: So this whole topic that we’re talking about is something that just popped up on a news feed that I have that’s actually very revealing. The church is there. Iron sharpens iron. Sometimes you can see things in your brothers and sisters that you wouldn’t see in yourself, and vice versa.

There was an article about North Korean Christians that I read. And there are a lot of missionaries in North Korea working with Christians in that area. And they’re heavily praying for America because they feel like we’re money hungry.

Bruce: Mm-hmm.

Participant: They don’t pray for their own freedom. They don’t pray for the regimes that are opposed to them in the persecution they’re going through. The number one thing that they pray for is America because they feel like we’re money hungry.

Bruce: Amen to that. When I taught at the Reformed Presbyterian Seminary in China, as I taught on Christ in the Old Testament, the one thing they were praying for was persecution for the American church because they know that they need to sift the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats. We need to make the church more powerful.

You see, men, you and I need to make decisions. The key point that Paul is making is this. Don’t let your sinful nature, your propensity to sin, don’t let that be the base of operation for your decision making. He gives us an alternative by saying, “Look! You’ve got a lot of freedom in Christ. Don’t abuse it.” But you’ve got to realize this. While all things are lawful, make choices that are going to put you in a position to cooperate and move in the direction of what God is doing in your life.

Now just a classic example of me when I was in the service. I did not drink. I’m not a drinker. I would go to the Officers Club with my guys when I would come off the missions. We had the liberty to go to the Officers Club. I had the freedom to go to the Officers Club. So I went with them. But I chose not to drink. That’s just my choice. I had the freedom to go to the Officers Club. But I chose not to drink because it would not cooperate in my mind with what I felt God was doing with me in my life. And that was to be salt and light in front of those men. So therefore I didn’t do it. I had freedom. I had the freedom to say yes. But I said, “Thanks, but no thanks.”

You see, men, these are the gray areas that we need to understand. God provides for us through the work of the Holy Spirit the sense of His moving in your heart when you’re progressing and moving in the direction of what He is doing in your life. Yes, Dick?

Dick: Bruce, you taught on Daniel And you were coming back from the Midwest, back in this area and you had to make the change. And you made the decision to go to PNC and not to the Pentagon because you didn’t want compromise.

Bruce: Correct.

Dick: So, I mean, you practiced what you preached.

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Bruce: Well the illustration is what job should I take? God’s will is not a job.
(*Laughter*) People say, “I want God’s perfect will for my life.” Do you think it’s going to be something imperfect? (*Laughter*)

Participant: Good point.

Bruce: Everything He does is perfect! “I want His best.” Do you think that God is going to do something less than His best? That’s not the God of the Scripture. God’s will is not a job.

Now I’m going to make this statement. What job should you take? Well, it doesn’t make any difference. Now understand what I’m saying and what I’m not saying.

I’m saying this. The real issue is that He does not have a job specifically for you. He may lead you to that. Did He lead me to PNC? Yes. But it did not lead me to a job. It led me to a position of who I was where I was, doing what I was called to do.

So I had two choices. I had a choice to go and serve at the Pentagon in the department of the Navy, or go to PNC and work at a bank. I never worked at a bank before.

I sat and went through this drill. All things are lawful. I had two choices. One is a great resume builder. Whoa! Let me go to the Pentagon and work for the department of the Navy. Great resume builder! I could do anything I wanted after that.

The second thing was this. I’m not sure I’d do well in compromising situations. I have a better chance to be holy if I take work at PNC knowing nothing about banking. I’ve got a better chance of doing that than if I have to go to an environment where I’m going to be called to compromise my principles. So I chose PNC.

Now did God lead me to PNC? Absolutely! But it wasn’t to a job. It was to be who I was, where I was, in the job I had the freedom to pick. You see what I mean? That’s what I mean. Bob?

Bob: Bruce, do you recall in this instance the specifics where the Holy Spirit did in fact cause you to make this decision?

Bruce: I just gave it to you.

Bob: Do you recall any specifics?

Bruce: I just did. I sat down over a weekend and wrote down the pros and cons of these two jobs. The pros over here on the Pentagon job were about two pages. The pros over here at PNC were about half a paragraph. (*Laughter*) But they outweighed all the others because of this. I wasn’t going to give this one—the Pentagon job—the operation and basis for my choice. I felt that I would not be in a good environment to compromise. So I made my decision on that. I have to attribute that to the work of the Holy Spirit because of the process He took me through.

It’s a process, men. It’s not just a dot. You’re not looking for something that comes out in a cloud that says, “Take this job.” It’s a process of struggling and working out your salvation with fear and trembling. It’s a whole process. That’s how the Holy Spirit works.

And so you have to know yourself well enough to know in what environment you can cooperate with God and be beneficial. Yes, Dick?

Dick: Bruce, coming full circle for the guys in this room, the book mart that Sig has laid out has the six steps that you basically outlined in the Daniel lesson, which is good. Now I think there’s some reference to it.

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Bruce: Yes. Daniel is a good cross reference. Excellent. Somebody else?

Participant: Yes. What I was going to say is that you didn't go after passions. You didn't go after selfish desire. The Pentagon gig was your dream job.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: So you lived it out and opened it up again. Don't use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. You died to self to glorify God there. And that's a perfect application of dying to self. You didn't do your dream. You did what you knew would bring God more glory.

Bruce: And it became my dream.

Participant: That's right.

Bruce: What I thought was a dream wasn't.

Participant: Right.

Bruce: Through the process of trusting the Holy Spirit and making this principle decision—what is good for my personal growth and progress in doing what God wants me to do—this became my dream. Yes, Ted?

Ted: And in fact you did what you desired.

Bruce: Absolutely. I just didn't realize it at the time.

Ted: That's correct.

Bruce: I didn't realize it at the time because it took some time. There's great freedom in Christ, men

! But don't let that freedom be an opportunity to turn back to the base of operation of your sinful nature.

The second principle is this. I need to go through the rest of these. The second part of that verse is this.” ‘All things are lawful.’ But not all things will have authority over me.” That's the older translation. “Not all things will have authority over me.” Yes, sir?

Participant: “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. And God is faithful, and will with the temptation provide a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*”

Bruce: Amen. Thank you. This is *the principle of authority*. All things are lawful, but they will have no authority over me.

Now I'm going to make another statement. I want to explain what I'm saying and what I'm not saying. It is my conviction that you cannot be Christ-centered and career-minded at the same time.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That doesn't mean you don't have a career. Yes, you have a career. But the career is not the decision making process which you go through. It is your Christ-centeredness in your understanding that I have one authority in my life, and that is the Person and work of Christ. I'm going to take that attitude to my career. But the career doesn't shape my decision making. The control of Christ in my life determines my decision making and I take that into my career, that I have the freedom to choose. I chose to go to PNC and not to the Pentagon. I'm going to take the authority of Christ into that environment and become who I am where I am.

“Freedom In Christ” Pt 2

You can't be Christ-centered and career-minded at the same time. But you can have a career. You just want to make sure that you take Christ into that career.

You've got the freedom to play golf. You've got the freedom to play paddle ball. You have the freedom to do whatever you want in those areas of recreation. But you can't let that recreation become your authority and dictate your time and violate your family responsibilities.

So you have a lot of freedom, men, to do a lot of things. I love to fly! I wish I could fly. But I can't anymore. And there was a time when I thought, “Well, if I could just go fly again—“ That would become abusive. That almost became an authority, a controlling element of my life, because I'd love to go do it!

Why don't I go rent a plane and spend all my money in doing it? I've got the freedom to do that. But would it become an authority in my life and dictate my decision making process? Don't let it become an opportunity to return back to that sinful nature and make those decisions the basis of my operation. Who is your only authority?

Participant: Christ.

Bruce: Christ alone. You take that to your job, men. That's why you understand this. Romans 13: “All authority is given by God.” That's why you have the freedom when you go to work to realize this: that God is bigger than my boss.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: God is bigger than my boss. She may be a twit! (*Laughter*) She may not know as much as I do, or he may not know as much as I do. But I understand this. He or she has a divine appointment in my life because God has permitted them to be my authority. And my authority is Christ and therefore that dictates my response to him or her.

I don't use as the base of operation to say that I've got to get even because she just shafted me. Nope. Can't do that, because Christ is my authority and I take that to my job.

Now that becomes the authority of how you treat her. And I understand that. She has the divine appointment in my life. And my job is to make her look good. That's not being a brown-noser. It's understanding this. Christ is my authority, and I'm taking that to my work every day.

It's the freedom, men, that you have in Christ, not to respond the way that the world treats you. And you don't respond with what they stimulate within you. You respond because of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Friends, there's freedom in that. I had the freedom to go to work every day. But this particular manager of mine was destroying what I built. I didn't like that! I had to say, “Lord, help me! I've got to make her look good! That's all I've got to do because You're my authority. She's not.” He is!

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Yes, Bill?

Bill: I hear many Christians today say that we have to make a choice between the lesser of two evils. The verse that Dale just quoted seems to fly in the face of that. Can you comment on that?

Bruce: I agree. (*Laughter*)

Participant: Bruce?

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Bruce: Yes, Brian?

Brian: To hit on what you just said, you said that you can have a career, but not be career-minded. So saying that in an alternate way is to make sure that you’re keeping God first, wife second, kids third, self last.

Bruce: Yes. Priorities. Exactly right. Career-minded versus Christ-centered. The real issue is being Christ-centered. And I take that into my career, and that helps me make my career decisions to keep things in their proper balance.

Brian: So if you have an opportunity to go on extra business trips and earn extra money, and you know that’s going to impact your ability to serve the church or your ability to serve the family, the answer is that I choose the church and family over that—

Bruce: Trust the Holy Spirit to lead you in that direction to help you make that decision. It’s a process, guys. It’s not an instantaneous cloud-covered sign coming down out of the heavens saying, “Do this. Do that.” It’s not that at all. It’s working your salvation out with fear and trembling. And you struggle. You pray to the Holy Spirit. You fear God. You pray fervently. You look at the Scripture and say, “Lord God, be in my decision making. I’ve got to keep Christ the center authority in my life.”

How do I make those decisions? That’s what Paul is talking about. There’s great freedom. But there are limitations to it. The limitations are based upon this. Do I really fear the Lord? Do I fear God? That’s the basis of it.

Now there’s one more. That’s in 1 Corinthians 10:23. “*All things are lawful. But not all things edify.*” Now the word *edify* means to build up, to encourage. That means I do have a responsibility to my other brothers and sisters in Christ.

It does not mean that I become a slave to their expectations. I’m not saying that. But I am saying this. In the decisions that I make I’ve got to consider the maturity of the people who will observe the decisions that I make. If it’s a younger brother or sister, I might make a decision that is going to be something that is not going to be offensive or a hindrance to them. I want to make a decision that’s going to be edifying to them.

Again, you’re not becoming a slave to their expectations. That’s not what I’m saying. All I’m saying is to look at what you just said, Tom. 10:24: “*Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.*”

So in making a decision, how is this going to impact the body of Christ? Is it going to be an encouragement?

You see, men, Paul gives us great freedom in Christ. He’s the champion of liberty and freedom in Christ. But he is also very practical and says this. There are certain limitations. And those limitations are based upon what Ted taught us last week, of how significantly and how intimately we really fear God. When we fear God, it’s going to be easier to make these decisions, because you will not use it as an occasion to go back and have your sinful nature as the base of operation. May God prevent us from doing that.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: It’s the principle of personal progress, the principle of personal authority, and the principle of personal relationships—three great principles Paul gives us in how to make decisions in the gray areas of life because we have freedom in Christ. May it be so for His glory.

“Freedom In Christ” Pt 2

Let’s pray. Father God, it’s overwhelming that you even reveal yourself to us, let alone send us Your Holy Spirit to guide us as our Comforter and our Paraclete. Father, we pray that we would seek Your guidance as we make these decisions. And do not let us use our sinful nature or our proclivity to sin and choose the system of this world as the means of the base of operation for our decisions. And Father, most of all, give us a healthy fear of God. And may it be so for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)