

# Gamma 13

## Study 9

1 Peter 2:13-25

Questions

**1. What is the normal societal concept of freedom? What is the problem with such an understanding? Compare this to the biblical concept of freedom as in v 16 we are asked to live as free people and yet on the other hand we are servants of Christ isn't this a contradiction?**

The normal societal concept of freedom is a negative one in which one is unrestrained and free from any restrictions having all the available choices in his hand.

The obvious problem with this notion of freedom is that no one in the entire world is completely free from restrictions.

- Their Greek philosopher Euripides himself said "No one is truly free, they are a slave to wealth, fortune, the law or other people restraining from acting according to their will"

Paul tells us in Romans 6:20-22 that we are either slaves to sin or to righteousness. There is no in between neutral ground in our world which is why in Exodus 19 the first commandment is to have no other gods...because if they did not worship the one true God they will have to worship something else there is no in between neutral freedom.

So freedom in the normal sense is untenable

The crucial verse is 1 Peter 2:16 (ESV) Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

The believer now freed from the slavery to sin is now free to worship God and obey Him as the new Master. The Christian concept of freedom is accepting the authority of the Creator. There is no in between state where a Christian is neither a slave to sin or to God.

Now that a believer is a servant of God he is free in a sense from the all constraints of society, its norms and its authority because for him there is only one over riding authority and he has found true freedom there.

Yet on the other hand the Christian is not free in the normal secular sense because he is asked to use his freedom and freely submit to human authority instead. Hence there is no contradiction

## **2. What then is the Christian concept of freedom? And how does this concept consistent with living under authority in society?**

The Christian concept of freedom is found in submission to real authority which can only be found in God. Made in the image of God only He can determine which actions and restrictions are truly liberating and beneficial to us.

True freedom is not finding a set of rules to be cast aside but obeying a new set of rules and restrictions placed upon us by the Creator who designed us. Thus obedience to these restrictions will be “liberating” or promote human flourishing. . Freedom is finding these liberating restrictions

Take for example, the bird flying through the air spots fishes frolicking in the sea below and thinks to himself “Now wouldn’t that be nice for me to be free to swim and frolic with them under the sea?” He dives in and the heavy water soaks up his feathers, he drowns because he was never designed to swim, his design was to fly. But he wanted to be free?

Take for example a man who is given by his doctor a strict diet after his heart attack. He finds the diet too restricting and impinges on his personal freedom. He decides he must be free of the diet and eats Char Kway Teow every day with Bah Kut The for good measure. Three months down the line he is back with another heart attack and is hooked up to oxygen lines and intravenous drip. He is much less free now even by his own definition of freedom.

Hence in fact the diet was ironically his liberating restrictions, he would have found true freedom in accepting these restrictions.

This concept is consistent with living under authority in society simply because God had designed how society would work. We will find freedom in submission

## **3. What are the various reason Peter tells slaves to endure unjust or harsh treatment from their Masters? Would that not perpetuate or promote injustice which is contradictory to Christian character? How does this help us in the work place today?**

**Why do we need to be servants of God to serve others?**

**Can you share with each other your practical experiences with difficult bosses in the work place and how this teaching might apply understanding that we are not slaves but employees in today’s situation**

One of the most important features of our work life is the fact that we often work in response to the one in authority. There is a work and reward system where work is contingent with reward. When this breaks down then the worker will not work. In the ancient world up to a third of Greco-Roman society would comprise of slaves where there is no work -reward system. The slave belonged to their masters who did as they pleased with them and the slave had to obey regardless of the way they were rewarded or even treated. The treatment of slaves were more often than not unjust.

Once a person became a believer the new spiritual reality cut through this horizontal contingent relationship between slave and master. The slave had a new master which was God. From now on, it would be God who would reward him and remunerate his efforts, it would be God who would treat him fairly and God who would reward the slave in eternity.

Hence the motivation to serve would now be taken from the master and transferred to God. The relationship between the slave or worker to God is based on grace and motivated by love. The slave loves God because he has received grace beyond his wildest dreams and is happy to accept the restrictions in life that come with loving God which is in this case continuing to serve his earthly master notwithstanding any harsh treatment.

All relationships have restrictions it is the motivations behind the relationship that make the restrictions bearable.

Take for example a man in love with his new girlfriend who insists he pick her up from work every day even though he has to drive an hour out of his way. Surely this is an onerous restriction and yet he gladly does it and even feels good about it because he is thinking about her while he is driving there and there is heightened anticipation and joy.

The same applies to believers who are able to accept the restrictions that come with serving others simply because of their accountability and love towards God their Saviour.

The other reasons why we can endure the harsh realities of unfair bosses and cruel work conditions like the slaves could was the example given by Jesus

*1 Peter 2:19-21 (ESV) For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps*

Jesus endured being treated badly despite being the most perfect person on earth.

*1 Peter 2:22-23 (ESV) He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

Jesus committed his sufferings and injustices to God the Father understanding that retaliation was under the prerogative of the Almighty Judge of all and that his endurance was part of his faith in the sovereign power and prerogative of the Judge. There would be justice one day not just now and His endurance would be testimony to the faith in that eternal Judge. To retaliate would be an indictment against that faith.

Further more retaliation or returning evil for evil would cause us to sin which the precise reason Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice to save us from. Hence taking

matters in to our own hands in our relationships with human masters would and sinning would betray the very purpose of His great sacrifice

*1 Peter 2:24-25 (ESV) He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

We don't have to retaliate simply because our debts have been totally paid, there is no more outstanding issues between God and us. Our spiritual accounts are full and overflowing with the credit earned for us by Him. We just have to trust ourselves to Him who guards our souls.

**4. Why must we be subject to every human institution of authority? See also Romans 13:1-4, Yet how does verse 16 "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God" set out limits to our freedom and subjection?**

The Christian find freedom in liberating restrictions. They are free with respect to the authorities, and normally this freedom manifests itself in respect and loyalty, submission and honor. But they are not to use this freedom from human authorities as an excuse for living in chaos and insubordination. That kind of life will only hurt the church and will give ample justification to the persecuting powers that now threaten them

The reason for the submission is not based on the intrinsic worth of the person who wears the crown but the fact that it is God's authority that stands behind the crown so that is worthy of respect. Moreover, they have a job to do which is to maintain public order.

They are to live under the governing order as free people, not as its slaves, for they are slaves of God, not Caesar. Which means that there are also limits to that subjection to human authority that is when that authority conflicts with the ultimate authority which is God. Hence we are free to obey human authority as long as they are in line with God's authority.

**5. If the government legislated that gay marriage was perfectly legal and the couple came to the church to have the ceremony performed what would the church do? If the couple wanted to have a cake baked to celebrate with wedding and you were the baker would you do it? If the couple wanted to adopt a child and you were a social worker would you help them? Can you give examples of situations where this conflict will arise and how do Christians deal with it?**