

Liberty Vs. Independence

Christian Freedom

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I did not get to speak on the Fourth of July. It was not my lot, but I have something that kind of dovetails with the Fourth of July a little bit better than the 18th of July. It is two weeks late, but I hope you can apply it to the subject. We are going to be speaking about liberty today—liberty and independence.

Around the Fourth of July holiday we hear more about independence and liberty than at any time of the year. I know this message will go to other places than America, but to Americans the Fourth of July *is* "Independence Day." We have great big fireworks celebrations and cookouts, you name it. Anything that has to do with celebration, we do it here in America on the Fourth of July. It is a big holiday. "Independence Day" we call it—the day we commemorate our formal separation from Great Britain in 1776 to become a free and independent nation. Many of our founding documents and memorials that we put up, because of our founding them, share the words of *freedom, liberty, and independence* in great amount. Even the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia bears the inscription quoting Leviticus 25:10—"Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto the inhabitants thereof."

In our everyday speech we use *liberty* and *independence* as synonyms. Most of us have not even thought about whether there would even be a difference between the words *liberty* and *independence*. In many ways they are indeed synonymous, but not completely; otherwise I would not have a reason for giving this sermon. There is a difference there, and it is a difference that we can see most easily if we break the words down into their root meaning.

Liberty derives from the Latin word *liber*, and that means free, unbound, unconfined, not hampered. Let us contrast this with independence.

Independence is formed by combining the word of the prefix *in*, which means *not*, a negative, with the Latin root *dependere*—*in dependere*.

Independere means literally *to hang from*. So obviously *in* *dependere* would

mean ***not*** to hang from. Now similar to *dependere* is the word *pendant*. You know what a pendant is. If you have a necklace, the pendant is the thing that hangs on the necklace, whether it is a jewel setting or a charm of some sort. So a thing is independent if it does not hang from a common fixture, like a necklace. The pendant that is not hanging on the necklace is *independent*.

Modern slang uses the words *hang with*, to mean you are friends with, or that you associate with, or that you do things with a certain group of people. "I hang with my pals on the block." Well, if one is independent, he does not hang with those pals. He hangs by himself. He is a loner. He is independent. He does not hang with other people. So an independent person is not dependent on others. He does not rely on others, he is not influenced by others, he is not subject to others—he is independent. He does not hang with us. For this definition of independence, synonyms are: autonomous, individualistic, and non-aligned. We hear about non-aligned churches, non-aligned people. Continuing with the synonyms we have: self-determining, self-reliance, self-sufficient, self-supporting, sovereign, unconnected, uncontrolled. Notice if you will how often the word *self* turns up in those synonyms.

It is important to understand my angle here in this sermon. That in the Bible, particularly the *New King James* and the *King James* versions, the Bible uses the word *free*, *freedom*, *liberty*, *freeman*, and *freewoman* many times. It never once, not even one time, uses the term *independent* or *independence*. This should tell you something about my angle here.

Today we want to look at the ideas of "Liberty versus Independence," and what we will see is that we can greatly rejoice in being at liberty in God and in Christ, but that we do not ever, ever, ever want to be independent. You *never* want to be independent. I am speaking spiritually.

So what sort of liberty do we have as Christians? All the Protestants ever seem to talk about is "our freedom from that old law." "We want to be free from law." "We want to be uncontrolled by that law." "We want to be unrestrained by that law." I really wish that they would read their Bible with understanding, because Scripture never says that once. It says something that

seems to sound like it at first glance, but if they read it in context they would see that it does not say that in the least, not even in the same verse does it say that.

So what have we been freed from? Let us first turn to Romans 7, verse 6. We are going to be looking at the things we have been freed from.

Romans 7:6 But now we have been delivered from the law, . . .

That sounds like what the Protestants say they think it says, but let us read on.

Romans 7:6 . . . having died to what we were held by so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

Is that not interesting. They pulled it right out of context. If they had read the next ten or so words, they would have found out that though they have died to the law, all that is done is delivered them so that they could keep it *more* strictly in the Spirit, and not just in the letter. They seem to glaze over that last bit here. This has to really be seen in context with the three or four chapters *before* Romans 7, because you remember way back in chapter 3 he begins to talk about justification and righteousness, and then he goes on after more explanation. By the time you get to chapter 6 he is talking about baptism and what baptism does. And then here in chapter 7 he starts bringing in the law. Well how does the law fit in with our being baptized and actually dying in Christ, and then being raised? How does the law fit in?

So that is what he is talking about here, but we cannot forget that he is been talking about justification and righteousness and baptism and all these other very important ideas to true Christianity. What Paul means here is that we are justified before God by faith in the sacrifice of Christ, rather than by any amount of lawkeeping. We are not justified by keeping the law. That is not what it was made for. But we have died in baptism. In Romans 6, verses 3 and 4 it says we died in Christ, and then we were raised to newness of life in Him. What we died to was all that old sin.

Remember, here in the beginning of chapter 7, Paul brings out the analogy of when a person is married to another, and when one of them dies, the death

frees the other from that marriage covenant. The bond is broken because of death, and so Paul blends this analogy in with how we fit with the law. That old way of doing things that we were bound to has been broken, and we are now freed from that obligation under that old system, and now we have a greater system, a better system to live under—not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit.

We have not been freed from the law *per se*, we have been freed from the *penalty* of that law. Is that not what justification does? When we are justified, what happens is the legal maneuver happens where Christ's righteousness is substituted for our own unrighteousness. So what God does, He sees Christ there in His substitutionary sacrifice, goes before us and covers us so that in God's sight the penalty has been paid. He died so that we may have a chance at this new life and opportunity for salvation. The way was cleared so that we can have access to God and be able to keep the law in its spirit, and therefore learn the way that brings on the character of God upon us.

I did not really want to get into it all that much in depth, but I just wanted you to see that we have not been freed from the law. We have been freed from that penalty. We have been freed from trying to have to *earn* our salvation through any sort of works. It is not our works. Just in the past several months there was the sermon series on *God's Workmanship* all based on Ephesians 2:8-10, where it is very clear that we have been saved by grace through faith. For what reason? To be God's workmanship so that we can do good works properly. Let us turn there and read those scriptures.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. [How could it be clearer than that?] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

So what has happened is we have been freed from having to try to earn our salvation, but on the other hand, in a kind of a paradox, it sets us up so that we can do it properly this time, and do good works as God has created us to do.

Let us go to Galatians 3 and see another thing we have been freed from. This is very similar to what we just read in Romans 7.

Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree").

What we have here is that we have been freed from the *curse* of the law, i.e., the death penalty. That is what the curse of the law is. If the law exacted its full justice, we would be dead. We would merit that death penalty, but Christ made Himself a curse for us. He is the One that took upon Himself the penalty. If you want to just put in the word *penalty* instead of *curse*, it works better. He made Himself the *penalty* in our stead. Now we are free from that penalty. We do not merit the second death anymore, because He paid it for us. The books are cleared, and now we have newness of life. "Christ has purchased us from the penalty of the law, having become a penalty over us." He's the One that stands *over* us so that the penalty will not go into effect on us. It took effect on Him. That was very clear. Christ's righteousness substitutes for us, and thus God removes the death penalty, the curse. That is what we have been freed from.

Now we will go to Hebrews 2 to another thing we have been freed from. This is interesting.

Hebrews 2:14-15 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

What we have been released from, or delivered from, or freed from, is the fear of death. Now I do not know if you still fear death, but a Christian should have it as a goal to where he need not fear death, because Christ did something for us where we do not need to fear it anymore, and He did it by dying for us, and maybe more importantly, by rising from the dead. Death no longer holds us. Death is not a boogie man to us. It is not that "great unknown" anymore, because we know that God, through Christ, has the power over death—right through the grave is where we are going to go, so

why should we fear? It is just one stopping point on real life, back to the beginning of real life, because our hope is the resurrection from the dead, and what does it say?

I cannot remember exactly where it is. I believe it is in the Psalms where it says that the angels in heaven rejoice at the death of God's saints. As Darryl mentioned in his sermons on the exclusivity of the church, it is the end of their great tribulation, the tribulation that we go through just in life. That is something to be *happy* about, that the great tribulation of this physical life is over, and we have the hope of the resurrection lying before us, that when Christ returns we will meet Him in the air and we will ever be with the Lord. That is something to be happy about, not to fear. Now I know as human beings we are very fearful of death. It is a human reaction. We are not sure. We lack faith. We think of the pain that death is going to cause us and cause others who are close to us, and there is a normal amount of that I am sure God expects, but deep down, in the spirit, it should be just another hurdle.

I would like to read Hamlet's soliloquy that Shakespeare wrote in *Hamlet* when Hamlet was contemplating suicide. I think this picture describes the typical way that people look on death. This is very famous.

To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis the consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep; perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely
[*the proud man's contemptuous language, contemptuous treatment*]
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus [*his death*] make

With a bare bodkin [*dagger?*] who would fardels bear,
[*What he is saying here is, "Why put up with all these things that burden us down when we could take a dagger and end it all. Wouldn't that be so much nicer?"*]
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
[*We do not quite know what is beyond our death.*]
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry.
And lose the name of action.

What he basically said there at the end, if we do not understand the Shakespearean English, is that we think of doing things, and then the fear of death makes us turn into cowards, and those great things that we imagine that we could do are suddenly thrown in the trash bin, and we take a safer course.

Now Christ's death and resurrection has saved us from that. We can do these great things, these things that will please God, because we do not have a fear of death. That is how martyrs can stand in the burning of a stake, because they do not fear the death. They could do a great thing, that is, in faith to die for God and for the truth, because death holds nothing on them. They have the hope of the resurrection.

So this is a great thing we have been freed from—freed from the fear of death. We are no longer in bondage to that, and we are not in fear of our judgment really either, because we know we have assurance from God that if the blood of Christ covers us, and we have not forsaken His way, that we will rise again. God will judge in our favor and we will live and reign with Christ in His Kingdom. What *freedom* there is in that, that we are no longer held on a chain by the fear of death. We can just go right forward as hard as

we can. The righteous can be as bold as a lion, because we do not fear a physical death. We fear the *spiritual* death, the second death, but this is speaking about physical death. In a sense we do not fear the second death if we know we have covered all the bases.

Let us go to another one back in Romans, this time in chapter 6. This is one you have probably been thinking all along.

Romans 6:17-18 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

We have been freed from sin. Now these are all part and parcel of one another: free from the law, as far as trying to gain salvation by the law, all part and parcel with being freed from death, and being freed from the curse of the law, the penalty of the law, and now here freed from sin. We no longer have to obey sin's dictates. It does not tell us what to do anymore. The addictions of sin do not drive us to more, because sin has that insatiable quality where it *drives* to have more, but we have been freed from that. We now know of a better way, and our acceptance of Christ's sacrifice emancipated us from sin's dominion, so we have been freed from sin.

Romans 8:20-21 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

This is speaking possibly of all creation—everything that has been created, or some people have translated it as the individual creation. I am not going to weigh on one side or the other, but everything is looking forward to this glorious liberty of the children of God, and what the creation has been freed from is corruption. It has been delivered from the bondage of corruption. It could also be decay or ruin or degeneration. They all pretty much mean the same thing, and this could be once again a physical corruption. One of the prophecies about Christ said He would not be corrupted in the grave, His body would not see corruption. This has a bit to do with this. That was a physical corruption. Like I said, we can take this either physically or

spiritually, either as decay as in that prophecy, or in the sense of sin, because sin corrupts.

The context is speaking of resurrection in glory in God's Kingdom. The whole thing talks about the glory that shall be revealed in us. The whole creation is laboring and groaning for that time to come, and in between those two points, Paul says that the creation has been freed from the bondage of corruption in this liberty of the glory of the children of God. In I Corinthians 15:52 it says that "in a twinkling of an eye we will be raised incorruptible."

I think that is the real idea here, at least that we should take personally, that we have been freed from the degeneration of sin that causes ultimately destruction and death. What we do have to look forward to is the glory of the liberty that we will have as God's sons and daughters in His Kingdom. Was that not a good trade, trading the corruption of sin that leads to death, which then leads to the corruption of the body, and eventually the second death, versus the liberty that we will have, the freedom we will have when God gives us His glory? We will be kings and priests and we will be able to do anything we please, and what we please is defined by God's character. In doing God's will for ever and ever there will joy and happiness that will never end. So we have been freed from corruption.

Let us go to Galatians 4 and we will see another one. We will start in verse 3.

Galatians 4:3-9 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father! Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

We have been freed from those weak and beggarly elements of this world it says. Colossians chapter 2, verse 20 says basically the same thing. We have been freed from the bondage of the elements of this world.

Colossians 2:20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations.

We have been freed from the bondage to the elements of this world. What he means here is the demonically inspired ways or philosophies of this world, the ideas, the zeitgeist, the way this world does things, and ultimately we have been freed from the spirits, the demons that are behind those philosophies and ways of doing things. They no longer have dominion over us, and Paul here is wrestling with people who wanted to go back to that sort of thing. He is telling them, "Look! This is such a deal. I can't understand why you want to go back and go the old way, because the rewards this way are so much better. It's the difference between being a slave and a son. Who wants to be a slave? You'd rather be a son who has all the freedoms from the master, and in time becomes heir of all that is in the master's house."

So now we are at liberty therefore to understand and to follow a different way, not the way that these demons in their philosophies urge and influence the rest of mankind to go. We have been freed from that. We can choose another way.

There are a few other foundational scriptures that help us understand Christian liberty. We will begin with the seminal scripture, the seminal section on liberty in the Bible. Turn to John 8, verses 31 through 36. What Jesus says here is the foundation for what Paul and others wrote about liberty in their letters.

John 8:31-36 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered Him, We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, You will be made free? Jesus answered them, Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever

commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

What He says here is when we have the truth and we follow it, not just knowing the truth, but following the truth, *we are free*. *Knowing* the truth, not just knowing it intellectually, this is *gnosko*, and the idea here in the word *know* is that we know it experientially. We know it by experience, and we know it by a relationship with it, and with God. If we know truth by reason of practicing it, by experiencing it, by doing it, it opens up to us the option of going God's way. See, before we did not have that option. We did not know the truth. We did not experience it, we did not know the rewards of it, but once we began to experience it, it started opening up our freedom.

Psalm 111:10 says, "A good understanding have all those who do His commandments." We know what is right by *doing* what God has commanded, and it opens up our understanding and it opens up our freedom. Everything opens up, and therefore we can act with great freedom. We can behave with great freedom, because we know the parameters within which we can operate.

Before we knew the truth, like I said, we only had one choice. We could go Satan's way of get, of selfishness, of vanity, lust, and greed, and nothing else. That was it. We did not have a choice. We did what we have been trained to do. But now we have the freedom to go that other way. We are free to choose to do what is right.

We see then that a person's freedom is determined by his conduct. If we live righteously according to God's character, we are free from all these different kinds of bondage—the bondage of death, the bondage of sin, the bondage of trying to justify ourselves by law, and all the other ones that I mentioned. We are free to avoid those things now. Jesus says in verse 36 that He has had a part in freeing us, and we know the truth, and then we are indeed really free. It is a very strong way of saying it, but if the Son makes you free, you are *really* free. It is the ultimate in freedom.

But if we sin habitually, He says here, that whoever practices sin—I am not talking about one sin, I am talking about sin as a way of life, as a habit—will

fall back into slavery. We become under bondage once more because of that addictive quality that sin has. It clamps down on us and we want to do more. We need to do more to satisfy the sin, the urges, the drive, the motivation. When we habitually sin we have a hard time doing what is right because our flesh is crying out for more satisfaction from the sin, and we are slaves.

So what does that mean, except that we have to keep on doing the truth, living the truth, practicing the truth to remain free, and if we have been covered by the blood of Christ and called into His church, then we can really be free. It is not something that we have been freed from forever, because it requires us to keep on living it to remain free. It is not "hocus-pocus" you are free, and you will never be in subjection again, but yes, you were free—now remain free during your behavior in doing what is right. We have a part in this too. But like we have seen here, there is a paradox that starts being set up when Christ frees us. We find that in Romans 6 again. I did not read this whole thing before, but I want to see it now.

Romans 6:15-18 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

There is the paradox, that though we were freed from sin, our freedom immediately turned into slavery of another sort.

Romans 6:19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, . . .

The idea here is lawlessness that leads to just absolute total lawlessness. It is an intensification. It is not just lawlessness, it is real bad lawlessness, where your whole life is lawless.

Romans 6:19 . . . so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

Or unto sanctification, or as I have seen in other translations, "perfecting holiness." "Present your members as slaves of righteousness for the purpose of perfecting holiness."

Romans 6:20-21 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free [unrestrained] in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? [What was the result of all those shameful things that you did before Christ freed you?] For the end of those things is death.

You merited the death penalty.

Romans 6:22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

See, the result of this freedom is holiness, sanctification, becoming perfect, and the end of course is eternal life. There is no comparison here which one is the better. Once we are set free, the paradox is that we are immediately made slaves again, but this time we are slaves of righteousness. We are God's slaves. We are His bondservants. We have gone from one bondage to the next, but we have gone from a bad bondage to a good bondage, where the bondage that we are now in has the great reward of actually making us not slaves anymore, but sons, heirs. During this time of coming to perfection, we are still slaves, but we are slaves of righteousness.

What is a slave? Well, this is the *doulos* term. It should really be *bondservant*. I like bondservant better than slave because it says something more than just the typical word *slave*. This is very important. A bondservant is one who *voluntarily* chooses to become a slave. Remember back in Colonial times people took an *indenture* in order to pay their way over to America. They became "indentured" servants. They agreed to be a slave, a servant, of a person who would pay their way to America for a certain amount of time. Usually this time was about seven years, and during those seven years they

would be working for this person, their master, and they would pay off their debt. Once that period was over, they were free to go and colonize the country.

Well, in a sense that is what we are. We are indentured servants, but our indenture never runs out until death, because after death, in the resurrection, we are raised with Christ. We are no longer bondslaves. The difference here is the word "voluntary." We have done it of our own freewill and have become God's slaves.

Now a slave is property of someone else, a master. The master tells his slaves where to go, what to do, and when to do it. The slave's life is devoted to serving the master's needs, whatever they happen to be. The master gives constant direction to the slave's life. The slave can do nothing of himself, because he is a slave. Did not Jesus say, "Of Myself I can do nothing"? Did He not also say that without Him we can do nothing? He is the Master now. When He was here on earth, He was the Master of His disciples, but He, in a major sense, was a slave of God. We probably never thought of it that way, but He only did what His Father commanded Him to do. It says that very plainly. As it says in Hebrews, He did everything like we have to do. Remember it says in Philippians 2 that He gave up everything to come in this human flesh, to be a servant. Well, that is what we are now. We had to abase ourselves to become His slaves.

Now, does the slave need the master? The answer is definitely *yes*. Maybe you have not thought of it this way. The master provides the slave's food, the clothing, the shelter—all the necessities of life. The master also provides the slave with training, with the tools to do his work. In short, a slave is totally *dependent* upon the master. A slave knows *nothing* of independence. The word has nothing to do with slavery.

Let us think. What happens if a slave should become independent of his master? Not free, independent? It is very interesting to think of it this way. Suddenly the slave loses all support. Remember, the master provides his food and his clothing, and shelter, and tools, and work, and training, but if the slave is suddenly independent of his master, he has none of those things. He is totally on his own. He has to provide everything for himself.

Well, you know, this happened in a major way after the American Civil War. Abraham Lincoln, in the year 1863, emancipated all the slaves in this country. Hundreds of thousands of former slaves suddenly had to fend for themselves. Thankfully there were people out there who were kind enough to help, but their independence brought on a whole new set of problems. They loved their freedom, and maybe rejoiced that they had it, but independence only brought them trouble. In many cases, even now, the blacks in America are still suffering from the independence that they received in 1863. Their support structure was totally ripped away. Now that does not say that that support structure was good, but slavery was an evil, was not something that was needed. On the other hand, their independence brought them a lot of grief and heartache.

I hope you are applying these things spiritually, not just thinking about them in physical terms. The church has literally thousands of "independents" out there. I have heard a figure as high as thirty thousand. I do not know how accurate that is, but there seems to be many people who just totally dropped out of sight. Have they cut themselves off from all support? I do not know. Are they using their liberty as a cloak to hide their sins, sins like pride and distrust of God's will to the church, distrust in the ministry? I do not know. I hope not. Let us give them the benefit of the doubt and say they have not cut themselves off from God. Are they still missing out on something that God says is vital?

Go to Ephesians 4 to another well-known scripture. It seems we have been reading these verses every couple of weeks.

Ephesians 4:11-16 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint

supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Now what are the independents missing out on? The whole body is joined and knit together. The body of Christ is not composed of independent pieces that occasionally deign to cooperate with each other. Instead, the members of the body, though we are all individual members, we are all individuals, but the members of the body of Christ are interconnected so tightly that they work as one body. Listen to this paraphrase that I put together. Maybe I can make this a little more understandable.

"From whom [Christ] the entire body harmonized and solidified by what every part in connection to others fully supplies in the effective way where each does his share, causes the body to grow for the purpose of building itself up in love."

Does that bring out a few things maybe that you have not thought of? That paraphrase brings out a few things. For one to do an effective work, all the members of the body must be contributing to it. "According to the effective working by which every part does its share." What if some of those parts decide to do something else? At the very least it diminishes the effectiveness of that working. People who are independent will not, and cannot, participate in that effective work. Not only does it hurt them, it hurts all the others who decided that they want to be part of the effective work and are doing their share. So everybody loses.

So as brethren in God's church, we are dependent upon each other to do what God wants, *dependent* on each other, and this include groups. How can we grow as a church if everybody is not participating? They will eventually end up outside the body, because they are not growing with the rest of the body. Unity among members of the body comes from each part doing its share, every part supplying something to the whole. No person is insignificant. Every part does its share, and the share that we do has something to do with the joints. Every joint is joined and knit together. Every joint supplies something to the effective working. A joint is a connection between one part

and another part, and that connection is your relationship. The joint is what binds you and you, and then you and you, and then you and you and you, and *all* of us together!

It is not just the connection, the relationship, between one and another, it is the relationship between one and *everyone*, and everyone in God, because we are one body. We are all connected. Helmut Fraund did a very good article in the *Forerunner* a couple years back. I believe it was in 1995. It was called, "What Every Joint Supplies," and in it he speaks about the joints, that if each person is one-half of a joint, then with two people there is one joint; but among three people there are two joints; and among four people there are how many joints? Six? I cannot remember all the figures, but it goes up like exponentially as you add people, as you add each half of another joint. The same way, with just a very small number of people, there are thousands and thousands and thousands of joints—connections, relationships—between people.

Remember, we are the body of Christ, *and each connection supplies to the whole a necessary thing, a necessary energy for doing an effective work for God*. If we are a half of a joint, and we take ourselves out and become independent, how many joints does that break? How significant is the loss to the effectual working of the body? That is where unity occurs—each person in connection with each other person. What we have in the church of God right now is a whole bunch of loose joints, and they need tightening, and until they are tightened, there will not be unity in this church. Of course it begins with the basic bond between man and wife, and then parents and children, and then between members, and then between members and the ministry, and then between all of us and all the rest of us. You get what I mean. We start at home, till it works out to include the entire body of Christ, the church.

Colossians 3:12-14 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies [Listen to what he says to do here.], kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love[which is what?], which is the bond of perfection.

Love is the filling that glues these joints together. They were not showing this love and doing these other things—putting on tender mercies, being kind, being humble, being meek, being longsuffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

That is what we are striving to do. Let us go to 1st Corinthians 12. Some people complain that they are not in the body where they want to be.

I Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body.

It is not a bunch of independents. You may be an individual member, but you are *greatly* dependent on everyone else to form the one body of Christ.

I Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free.

It does not matter where you come from, which side of the tracks you came from, or what color your skin is.

I Corinthians 12:13 whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

There is another binding factor. We all have the same spirit, and it is the spirit of love, not of fear; the spirit of a sound mind.

I Corinthians 12:14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

Paul just has to reiterate that we are all individuals, but we make one body, and we are held together by this glue.

I Corinthians 12:18 But now God has set the members, . . .

Each one of them, each one in particular. He does not take a group and say "I want you to be a ligament on the knee." He said, "I want *you* to be one cell in this ligament on the knee." He put each one in the body just as He pleases. He called us, and He put us *exactly* where we are supposed to be. That does not mean that we may stay there all the time, because there is growth. Some people come into the church as normal members of the church, and suddenly, because they have grown, and it seem that they should be made, let us say, a deacon, then they have a different kind of function. But God has placed each person where He wants that person to be.

I Corinthians 12:19-27 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? [It just does not make sense.] But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. [It just does not work that way. Each part is necessary.] No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. [There is a need there for them.] And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it [What a loving God He is.], that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. [See how they are all acting as one? Not as independents, but as one.] Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

How much clearer does it have to be? Everyone of us is a gift to the church, because God set us where He wanted us, and He gave some to have different places, some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds and teachers; some pray, and some to have this gift and that gift, some to be hospitable, and some to be warm and kind and comforting to others, and some to just know what to say at the right time, and some who can write cards, and who can send email, and some who love to call on the phone, and

some to pick other members up, some who have money to help others who have not been able to make it, and some who can do this and some who can do that, and some who can fix leaks in your roof, and some who can fix plumbing problems when the time is necessary.

Of course these things are not spiritual, but they are help, and God put you where you are for a reason, because the body needs it, and He does not want you going off somewhere and not helping the body, and not being helped in return by the rest of the body. This is not something where we just give everything and never get anything in return. God is a loving God. "It's more blessed to give than to receive," but God tells all through His Scriptures that if we do what is right, He gives us *tons*. So there is this symbiotic relationship—us with the body, and the body with us, and we cannot survive alone, and that is why independence is so terrible (for lack of a better term).

This reminds me of Benjamin Franklin's famous words during the time of the Continental Congress when the Declaration of Independence was being drafted. You probably know this quote. "We must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately."

You see, in our freedom, we are dependent upon each other for support, for help in our common work, and if we all go our separate ways, our cause, that cause of independence in America, is ruined, and the cause will fail, and we will be picked off one by one by one by one by one by the Adversary.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

That is the power of unity. That is the power of the oneness of the body of Christ. What this says is that the independents are rejecting God's placement of them in the body. They are refusing to do their share of the work, they are refusing to share the load, and they resist work by which we are unified and solidified, and it is this work that results in growth.

In many ways being independent is just another manifestation of self—selfishness, self-centeredness. It is a way of telling God, "I'm going my own way, and I'm going to do what I want. I don't care what you do, God. I'm going to do my thing." It is the way of "get."

Galatians 5:13-15 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Those are strong words! We have been called to liberty, freedom; not to independence. Our liberty is rather a dependence on God for all things, and an interdependence with each other. Now Christian liberty reveals itself, as Paul says here, in doing good, and loving the brethren, especially in the household of faith.

In closing I will read to you from the article, "Liberty," Volume III, Page 500 of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Tittle. I just want you to listen to what he said how we can show our liberty.

How does this freedom come to realization in us? The decisive answer is in love. It is not in isolation but in life with others that the Christian attains to freedom. . . . [M]an finds his freedom as service rendered to God's righteousness. Taken out of himself by [Christ' redemptive sacrifice], in faith the man who is summoned thereto. . . . makes the transition from isolation to the practical yielding of his life to the divinely demanded righteousness of love of his neighbor. . . . Freedom, man's surrender to the will of God, his divinely accomplished transfer from separation to righteousness, is apprehended and declared in righteous work oriented to holiness. . . . This work can take varied forms. . . . Doing all kinds of good, Christians silence the ignorant lips of fools and show their freedom.

Let us use our liberty in the church of God!