

Freedom vs Moral Duty | Versus #2

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Every Christian lives with the same dilemma when it comes to their actions: just how free are we? Are we to strictly keep the laws of God, or are we free to do as we please?

Thankfully, we aren't the first people to have this problem. In the book of Galatians, Paul helped the Galatian church work through this age old issue. They had grown up with a freedom that formed through their pagan roots. But now as Christians they were trying to determine if they had to follow the Jewish law. Paul offered them this truth to resolve the issue:

Galatians 5:1 *So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.*

This passage offers the key to understanding the relationship between freedom and what God requires of us.

You can't really be moral without freedom in Christ

Many people, especially many religious people, try to live by their morality. This inevitably turns to legalism. Legalism refers to an obsession with following the rules, particularly religious rules. Legalists tend to focus on actions, but neglect their attitude and inner life. Jesus condemned this sort of thinking in [Matthew 5:21-28](#). Jesus revealed that God cares about our actions *and* our thoughts, attitude and motives. If your ambition is just to be moral, then you will always fail because you'll never be good enough.

You can't be truly free without moral duty

Reading [Galatians 5:1](#), you might think that you can do whatever you want. When Paul talks about freedom, some people have taken this to mean that God's will doesn't really matter. Just do whatever makes you happy. But this isn't what Paul meant. Jesus makes it clear that he didn't come to end the law, but fulfill it.

Matthew 5:17 *I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose.*

It's important for us to follow God's commands for our lives because God is doing something great in every one of his people. He's making us more like Jesus. Without God's moral code, we are far from God's desire for our lives.

Moral duty and freedom on their own both deny the gospel of Jesus

Look again at the words of [Galatians 5:1](#). Paul doesn't want the Galatians to be in slavery again. Formerly, the Galatians were slaves to paganism. It looked like they were free, but they were really lost in a world of sin. However, if the Galatians turn to legalism they will be slaves again. This shows us the danger of both moral duty and freedom. If we make moral duty our goal, we deny our need for Jesus to save us and trust in our legalistic practices. If we just emphasize freedom, then we don't understand how much we need God to rescue us.

Both moral duty and freedom together reflect God's desire for us

God wants us to experience the wonderful freedom he has in store for us, and he wants us to live according to his desires for our lives. In Christ, we have both moral duty and freedom. We find this promise in Ezekiel.

***Ezekiel 36:26-27** And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.*

When Jesus becomes your savior, God gives you a new heart. This heart enables you to follow the law of God. But you don't follow it because you want to make God love you. Instead, you begin to realize how much God really does love you. As a result, you want to follow him each day.

Discussion Questions:

1. *Watch the video together or invite someone to summarize the topic.*
2. *What is your initial reaction to this video? Do you disagree with any of it? What jumped out at you?*
3. *Give an example of a Christian who misuses their freedom.*
4. *Give an example of a Christian who is moral to the point of being a legalist.*
5. *Which area are you more likely to misuse: freedom or moral duty. Give some examples.*
6. *Read [Matthew 5:21-22](#). How does Jesus reinterpret what it means to follow God's law?*
7. *Read [Matthew 5:17](#). How did Jesus come to fulfill the law?*
8. *Read [Galatians 5:1](#). How can the wrong kind of freedom enslave us? What kind of freedom does God want us to have?*
9. *Read [Ezekiel 36:26-27](#). According to these verses, what does God promise to give us? What is the outcome of these gifts?*
10. *How should freedom and moral duty go together in the life of the Christian?*
11. *Write a personal action step based on this conversation.*