

November 3, 2024

The View

“Sirs, we wish to see Jesus.” – John 12:21

Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God’s word, including respecting its silence. We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly “headquarters.” The five elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don’t understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God’s word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

*Please fill out a visitor’s card and put it in the collection plate when it is passed.
We do not solicit donations from visitors. See page 4 for more information.*

Schedule

The Lord’s Day

9:30 AM Bible Classes

Auditorium: I Corinthians

Young Adult Class (room 12)

“Acts, Sharing Our Faith”

Room 13/14: “Encounters with Jesus”

10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today: David Posey

“Would We Elect Jesus?”

John 18:33-37

Livestream at 9:30 & 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>

Bible Class: 5:00 PM @ the Building

Praying the Psalms (Auditorium)

Additional Classes

High School Class, 5 PM on Sundays @ David & Christie Posey’s home

Young people monthly meeting (middle school): contact David Sanderson

david.r.sanderson@intel.com

or Seth Reagan (sethreagan@gmail.com)

There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members. Check with David Posey or one of the other elders if you would like to join one of those classes.

2nd Saturday Men’s Bible Study: 7 to 8 AM

Bel Air Market on Bidwell in Folsom. “Iron sharpens iron” (Proverbs 27:17). Mentoring (Titus 2:1-6).

Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Same classes as Sunday at 9:30

Articles published in the View reflect only the thoughts and opinions of the author alone, not necessarily the editor, the elders or any member of the church at Folsom.

Christian “Liberty”

...do we have freedom to do whatever is not specifically condemned in scripture?

Paul told Timothy to “handle accurately the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15) and Peter warns those who would speak of spiritual matters to “speak as the very utterance of God” (I Peter 4:11). When we say “the Bible says...” we are, in essence, saying “God says...” We should give thought to how we speak.

The Bible term, “liberty,” seems to get a lot of play these days but sometimes not as “the very utterance of God.”

The word has been hijacked to support behavior of activities that are at the very least “questionable” – things like drinking alcohol, wearing immodest clothing... and things like these. One preacher put “coarse language” on his list of “liberties” even though Ephesians 4:29 clearly prohibits that kind of speech.

According to this same preacher, the term “Christian liberty” has come to mean “the freedom from God to do whatever you wish in any matter the Bible does not address...”

This explanation is not just simple, it’s simplistic and shallow. If you define Christian liberty as freedom to do anything the Bible does not specifically address, then you open the door to all kinds of immoral behavior.

But my point is not to sort through all these so-called “gray areas” but simply to ask one question: when the New Testament writers used the term “liberty” (or “freedom”) did they ever envision that would as justifying morally questionable actions? Is that what Paul and the other writers had in mind when they penned the Greek word, *elutheria* (“liberty”)? Let’s see.

Elutheria is used a total of 11 times in the New Testament; the root word is “free” (*eluthero*). How is the word used? *Eluthero* is used twice in Romans 6 (vv. 18, 22) to describe our freedom from sin. It says nothing about freedom to “do what we want.” In Romans 8:2, the word describes our freedom from law; but what “law”? The law of sin and death. Regardless of whether you view that “law” as the Mosaic law or

as a *system* of law, it is not discussing “doing whatever we wish in those areas the Bible does not address” (see I Corinthians 9:21). In Romans 6:20, Paul says “when you were slaves to sin

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you were free in regard to righteousness.” Still, there is no license to do as we please in that verse.

The word “liberty” is the same Greek word, *elutheria*.

- (a) Romans 8:21 refers to the “liberty” that the children of God will realize at the second coming of Jesus.
- (b) I Corinthians 10:29 refers to eating meats sacrificed to idols (Christians in the first century had freedom to eat that meat unless it offended their consciences).
- (c) II Corinthians 3:17 speaks of the freedom from the law of Moses.
- (d) Galatians 2:4 also speaks of freedom from the ordinances of the law of Moses, as does 5:1 (freedom from the ordinance of circumcision).
- (e) Galatians 5:13, Paul criticizes those who would employ their freedom in Christ to serve the desires of the flesh. That actually says the opposite of what some brethren are saying.
- (f) James 1:25 speaks of the “law of liberty,” but hardly to condone actions that the Bible does not address. Can you imagine James saying this “law of liberty” frees the Christian to curse? In fact, he says if you don’t bridle your tongue, your religion is vain.
- (g) The same James says that even if we keep the whole law but stumble in one point, we will be accountable for all the law (2:10). He says, “speak and act as those who will be judged under the law of liberty” (2:12). Is that saying we have freedom to do whatever we wish if the Bible has not directly addressed it?
- (h) I Peter 2:16 – “do not use your freedom as a cover up for evil.” Peter

says the opposite of what some brethren are saying.

None of these texts support the idea that we are free to engage in any and every activity that is not specifically addressed in the Bible.

The last verse of the eleven in which the word “freedom” is specifically used is found in II Peter 2:19. Let’s look at this a little more closely, in context. Here’s how I Peter 2:18-20 reads:

For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. (ESV)

This text uses the terminology our “libertarian” brethren are looking for – “freedom” – but, in context, it hardly justifies engaging in practices that are, at best, questionable. Is there anything here that suggests that Peter was “OK” with doing anything that the Bible did not specifically address? In his first letter he says,

For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. *I Peter 4:3*

So, is there endorsement for questionable behavior in any of the passages that use the terms “free,” “freedom” or “liberty”? No. In those cases, “Christian liberty” is being used in a way the New Testament writers never intended and when we use it that way, we are not speaking as “the very utterances of God.”

Instead of using “liberty” as an excuse to engage in actions that are questionable, let’s focus on the tremendous blessing that is “liberty in

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Robert F. Turner on use of the contribution

Question: “I find specific authority to use the collection for helping needy saints and supporting preachers, but where is the authority to use such funds for properties (buildings, books, communion service, etc.)?” — PT

Reply:

If the querist means to say that we must have *specific* authority for all we do, he might try finding such for *having* the building, books, and communion service in the first place.

“Go” authorizes locomotion; it does not “specify” the *means* of locomotion. In the absence of a limiting specific or prohibitions, “Go” is all the authority we need to walk, ride a mule, swim, fly, or use other means of getting from one place to another. This is what is often called *generic*, or *general*, authority. It is not true to say we have “no authority to fly,” although it is certainly true to say we have “no *specific* authority” to fly. Means of locomotion are inherent in the generic authority to “go.”

Now “go” can only authorize that which is subordinate to this category, i.e., locomotion. It does not, for example, authorize “teach,” for teach is a coordinate; a differing category, and one of equal rank with locomotion. It is illogical to contend that “go” authorizes methods of teaching, caring, or organization — it can only authorize that which is inherent in its meaning, and which is subordinate to or within its bounds. If this is not so, words have no real meaning, and are of no use whatsoever in setting forth the will of God.

But the querist may have in mind some current contentions regarding the pooled funds of the saints; as if we had to have a specific example of the collecting of funds for every single item for which funds are spent. (I do not know of anyone who has gone this far — yet — but this is the logical end of their contentions.)

When the church in Corinth sent assistance to the needy saints in Jerusalem, we are given information concerning the means by which they put together this fund. (1 Cor. 16:1f.) Some details for pooling a fund and putting it at the disposition of the apostles, is found in Acts 4:34f. But, as the querist acknowledges, the early church supported preachers (see Phil. 4:15), and no specific details are given as to how they brought together this fund. The thing itself is authorized — but authority for making the collection necessary for this is generic. In the absence of specific authority, surely we are not amiss in using the example of 1 Cor. 16: for the bringing together of funds to do whatever the saints are authorized to do collectively.

The saints are authorized to assemble, and subordinate to assembly is a place of assembly. They are authorized to sing — but you may object, “They do not have to use books; they could memorize the songs.” Yes, — if you could find specific authority for memorizing songs. Don’t we see that the principle of generic authority is essential to interpretation and compliance with God’s will? Then let us study and understand the principle, and learn to use it wisely.

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From *Plain Talk*