

The Perfect Law of Liberty

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In James' epistle to Christians scattered throughout the world, he mentioned something that should be of particular interest to us: "*the perfect law of liberty*" (James 1:25). Prophets such as Isaiah prophesied of this new Law (Isaiah 2:2-3), and other Scriptures refer to this same Law as "the law of Christ," "the law to Christ," and the "law of faith" (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21; Romans 3:27). James wrote that we should not only "*look into*" this perfect Law of liberty, but that we should "*continue therein.*" If we are to continue in this Law, certainly we should understand what this Law is.

PERFECT - The word "perfect" is most often used in the Scriptures to mean "complete" (see such passages as Matthew 19:21 and 1 Corinthians 13:10). No person on earth has ever been absolutely perfect other than the Lord, yet the Scriptures say that we can be perfect (complete): "*That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Timothy 3:17). James not only used the word "perfect" in reference to the Law of liberty; he also used this word in two other verses of his epistle when referring to the fact that we can be perfect (complete): "*But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*" (James 1:4); "*For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body*" (James 3:2). So what makes this perfect Law of liberty perfect? Jesus fulfilled the old Law and gave us the perfect, complete "Gospel Law" of Christ: "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*" (Matthew 5:17-18).

LAW - the word "law" is defined as "the collection of rules imposed by authority;" therefore, James implied that there are rules that God, the supreme authority, has set forth that we must follow. Other Scriptures teach us that all nations are subject to Christ's authority, and we must obey the New Testament Scriptures to be saved: "*And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you...*" (Matthew 28:18-20 ASV; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:8).

OF LIBERTY - Obviously this perfect Law can set us free from something, but what? Paul told us that this new Law sets us free from the condemnation that we deserve because of our sins: "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death*" (Romans 8:1, 2). This perfect Law of liberty sets us free from the law of sin and death. The law of sin and death means that when we sin, we deserve to die: "*For the wages of sin is death...*" (Romans 6:23). This new Law not only sets us free from condemnation; it also sets us free from the Law of the Old Testament (see Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 7:12, 8:13, 10:9).

When reading of this perfect Law of liberty, and how we are to continue therein, may we remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:31, 32).

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