

1 Cor 10:23-33

Sec 2. “God alone is Lord of the conscience, & hath left it free from the doctrines & commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship...”

A. What does it mean that “God alone is Lord of the conscience”?

1. Only God has the right to rule our conscience

- a. “Conscience” - can be defined as one’s an inner thought life that guides one’s behavior.
- b. It is absolutely necessary that God & His Word trains & directs your conscience. That is what it means for “God alone [to be] Lord” of your conscience.
 - 1) Our conscience will never be in perfect agreement with God & His word until we are one day perfected in holiness
 - 2) **Hebrews 12:23** describes heaven as being a blessed gathering of **“myriads of angels”** in the presence of God along with **“the spirits of the righteous made perfect.”** Only such saints who have gone before us have a perfect conscience.
 - 3) While we are here on earth, we will always need our conscience trained. Only, God has the right to do that.

2. For God to be the Lord over your conscience, your innermost motives & heart’s desires must be “Free from the doctrines & commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship.”

- a. “Days of holy obligation” not given in Scripture are such “doctrines & commandments of men.” If you read the 4th commandment, the Lord’s Day is the only such day of holy duty.
- b. You can tell if something is a doctrine or command of men if it is “contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship.”

1) → turn to **1 Cor 10:23-30**

- a) An example of someone making an extra biblical command of men would be to say Christians are outright forbidden from eating in the home of a Hindu.
 - b) **“why is my freedom judged by another’s conscience?”** It should be judged by God by God alone.
- 2) Luther: “To act against conscience is neither right nor safe.” Was he right?
- Consider an excerpt from Sproul’s booklet *How Should I Live in This World?*¹

B. There is great freedom when we allow God to be Lord over our conscience rather than men.

1. It is difficult & even impossible to please all men.
2. Ultimately, you have One who you must focus on pleasing. When He tells you how to think or act, you can rest in that. When God tells you what to do or how to live, there is freedom in that you can disregard the suggestions of others who might try to bind your conscience in some other way.

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/is-it-a-sin-to-act-against-your-conscience/#:~:text=Martin%20Luther%20said%2C%20%E2%80%9Cto%20act%20against%20conscience%20is,we%20have%20a%20dilemma%20of%20the%20double-jeopardy%20sort.>

Sec 2 goes on to say “...So that, to believe such doctrines [of men], or to obey such commands [of men], out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: & the requiring of an implicit faith, & an absolute & blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, & reason also.”

A. “Implicit faith is the medieval (and Romanist) doctrine that the Christian believes whatever the (Roman) church believes even if one does not know it personally.”² Another definition could be faith without biblical foundation. Such “faith” is not true faith at all because it is founded upon a false or wrong foundation.

1. Do not believe someone who says, “Just believe it because I say so.”

a. That is implicit, unfounded faith. Such faith can be based upon:

1) unfounded tradition

2) Upon one’s trust in a mere man or in a cult of personalities

b. If a preacher or fellow Christian encourages you, “Believe it because God’s Word says so,” that is biblical faith.

2. Scripture itself through Paul tells us not to take a mere man’s word— even an apostle’s— without seeing it line-up with Scripture. The synagogue in Berea included Jews who were “**more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so**” (Acts 17:11).

B. Rom 3:4 “let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar.”

Sec 3. “They who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, do practice any sin, or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty, which is, that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness & righteousness before him, all the days of our life.”

A. → Turn to Rev 2:18-22.

B. There are numerous warnings for Christians not to fall into the sin of letting the “pretense of Christian liberty” be an influence to practice or cherish sin:

1. Gal 5:13 “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh...*”

2. 1 Pet 2:16 “Act as free men, & do not use your freedom as a covering for evil [KJV cloak of maliciousness] but *use it as bondslaves of God.*”

C. Jn 8:36 “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” This glorious passage can be expounded by these wonderful words from the closing of sec 3: “being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might [are enabled to] serve the Lord without fear, in holiness & righteousness before him, all the days of our life.”

² <https://heidelblog.net/2013/02/implicit-faith-and-the-cult-of-personality/>