

God-centered, as all true worship should be" (172). Worship must be God-centered and God-honoring or it is not worship. Much of what passes for worship today is "common, cheap [and] trivial" (176). I appreciated the author's remarks about the tragic loss of the great hymns of the faith (180) and his further discussion of what kind of music is appropriate for a worship service (186f). He rightly insists that music is not simply a matter of taste and that worship music should be of the highest quality available (187).

In the final chapter, "Reforming Our Lives," Boice discusses five areas that evangelicals need renewal: an awareness of God's presence, repentance, orderly living, Christian community, and service (192f).

Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace was published by Crossway in 2001. Brad Anderson is the pastor of Liberty Baptist Church in Antigo, Wisconsin. He holds an M.Div. degree from Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary.

We Need Men of God Again

A. W. Tozer

The Church at this moment needs men, the right kind of men, bold men.

We languish for men who feel themselves expendable in the warfare of the soul, who cannot be frightened by threats of death because they have already died to the allurements of this world. Such men will be free from the compulsions that control weaker men. They will not be forced to do things by the squeeze of circumstances; their only compulsion will come from within—or from above.

This kind of freedom is necessary if we are to have [powerful preachers] in our pulpits again instead of mascots. These free men will serve God and mankind from motives too high to be understood by the rank and file of religious retainers who today shuttle in and out of the sanctuary. They will make no decisions out of fear, take no course out of a desire to please, accept no service for financial considerations, perform no religious act out of mere custom; nor will they allow themselves to be influenced by the love of publicity or the desire for reputation.

Much that the church—even the evangelical church—is doing these days she is doing because she is afraid not to. Ministerial associations take up projects for no higher reason than that they are being scared into it. Whatever their ear-to-the-ground, fear-inspired reconnoitering leads them to believe the world expects them to do they will be doing come next Monday morning with all kinds of

trumped-up zeal and show of godliness. The pressure of public opinion calls these prophets, not the voice of Jehovah.

The true church has never sounded out public expectations before launching her crusades. Her leaders heard from God and went ahead wholly independent of popular support or the lack of it. They knew their Lord's will and did it, and their people followed them—sometimes to triumph, oftener to insults and public persecution—and their sufficient reward was the satisfaction of being right in a wrong world.

Another characteristic of the true [man of God] has been love. The free man who has learned to hear God's voice and dared to obey it has felt the moral burden that broke the hearts of the Old Testament prophets, crushed the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ and wrung streams of tears from the eyes of the apostles.

The free man has never been a religious tyrant, nor has he sought to lord it over God's heritage. It is fear and lack of self-assurance that has led men to try to crush others under their feet. These have had some interest to protect, some position to secure, so they have demanded subjection from their followers as a guarantee of their own safety. But the free man—never; he has nothing to protect, no ambition to pursue and no enemy to fear. For that reason he is completely careless of his standing among men. If they follow him, well and good; if not, he loses nothing that he holds dear; but whether he is accepted or rejected he will go on loving his people with sincere devotion. And only death can silence his tender intercession for them.

Yes, if evangelical Christianity is to stay alive she must have men again, the right kind of men. She must repudiate the weaklings who dare not speak out, and she must seek in prayer and much humility the coming again of men of the stuff prophets and martyrs are made of. God will hear the cries of His people as He heard the cries of Israel in Egypt. And He will send deliverance by sending deliverers. It is His way among men.

And when the deliverers come . . . they will be men of God and men of courage. They will have God on their side because they will be careful to stay on God's side. They will be co-workers with Christ and instruments in the hand of the Holy Spirit.

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Liberty, Legalism, and Love: A Biblical Approach to Christian Liberty

Michael Riley

As a student at a broadly evangelical seminary, it is not uncommon that I find myself in discussions with other students debating the legitimacy of modern Fundamentalism, and more particularly the Fundamentalist emphasis on standards of personal holiness. While at times the shots taken at Fundamentalism are based on ridiculous caricatures, such as the long-rumored pink and blue sidewalks of Bob Jones University, some of the criticisms seem to have some merit. Isn't Fundamentalism legalistic? Doesn't it contradict our liberty in Christ? Why should I be limited by another believer's overly sensitive conscience? And so it becomes readily apparent that this idea of Christian liberty has come to dominate discussion of personal standards.

Christian liberty, however, is not a purely abstract concept; rather, it is drawn directly from concrete circumstances addressed by Paul. Therefore, to think biblically about the issue, we need to go back to the text of Scripture itself. In this case, Paul's most extended discussion about Christian liberty is 1 Corinthians 8–10, although he also takes up the subject in Romans 14–15 and Galatians 2. For brevity's sake, this article will concentrate on the Corinthian passage.

To adequately understand Paul's discussion of liberty, we must first understand something of the cultural context that the Corinthians faced. What was so significant about the eating of meat? The issue was not clean and unclean foods as established by the Old Testament; rather, it was the acceptability of meat that had been offered to idols in pagan temples. This meat would be available for purchase and eating both in the temple itself and in the markets of Corinth. Objecting to eating idol meat would not only complicate one's grocery shopping, but it would also have

a serious impact on one's social life. Feasts in the temple were an important part of Corinthian social life. Archeologists have discovered ancient invitations for wedding feasts at the temple of this or that god. Those of us who have wrestled with the decision to attend a family function at a Roman Catholic Church can sympathize with the strife that refusing to attend a temple ceremony could have caused.

This issue apparently raised no little strife in the Corinthian church, because it was one of the many issues about which the church specifically asked for Paul's counsel. If you read the book of 1 Corinthians carefully, you will note that Paul is addressing a laundry list of problems, brought to his attention in a letter from the Corinthians themselves. He will frequently start a new topic by saying, "Now

Activities that we claim to be within the bounds of our liberty must be those whose moral value is not found in themselves.

concerning..." (see, for instance, the questions regarding marital relations in chapter 7) and offer some quotations from the Corinthians. Note that in our passage, in 8.1, the expression, "we all have knowledge" is likely a quotation from the Corinthians (as the NIV rightly interprets).

So this issue had added to the divisions that were already threatening the Corinthian assembly. On the one hand were those saved from a life of idolatry, for whom the thought of eating meat offered to idols seemed nothing less than a betrayal of the Lord who bought them. On the other hand were those who, recognizing that the meat was simply meat and the idol simply a chunk of stone, felt free to partake of the idol meat. Further, those who believed that they had liberty to eat believed

that they were glorifying God by reveling in the freedom from the law provided by Christ. It is not difficult to see how a situation like this could quickly escalate into discord and infighting in the Corinthian church.

In seeking to apply this text to today, we must realize that a legitimate issue of Christian liberty is one in which the activity itself is neutral. This seems natural enough. No Christian could seriously argue that Christian liberty is the liberty that we have in Christ to sin freely. However, the sticky point is this: who gets to decide whether the debated activity is amoral? Certainly, the weaker brother (those who refused to eat) did not consider the eating of the meat to be an issue of neutrality. It is easy enough for the strong brother to claim that the meat is neutral; he feels free to take it or leave. It is the weaker brother who believes that Christians are not so free to take it. While it is valuable to recognize the criteria of neutrality, such recognition alone will not resolve the disputes over liberty. The issue might be clarified if we realize that the weaker brother did not object to the eating of meat *per se*, but the eating of meat that had been offered to idols. This is a significant distinction. Even the weaker brother recognized that in itself, the eating of meat was not an immoral activity. Rather, the eating of meat took on moral value only when connected to the pagan rites. I believe that this is highly significant in the application of Christian liberty principles in our lives today. To be strictly faithful to the text, the activities that we claim to be within the bounds of our liberty must be activities whose moral value is not found in themselves, but is assigned to them through their associations. I believe that a faithful reading of Paul's argument here would exclude many of those things for which Christians appeal to the notion of liberty to defend; things which primarily are in the realm of entertainment. The morality of music and movies can be determined from their content. I will, however, concede that Paul's discussion of liberty has a secondary application to these issues, an application that I will address later in this article.

In seeking to apply Paul's teaching on Christian liberty in our lives, we are faced with two opposed dangers. The first is libertinism; that is, an overemphasis on liberty such that one begins to excuse that which is genuinely sinful. It is in this way that many people tend to abuse 1 Corinthians 9.21, in which Paul says that to win those without the Law, he became as one without the Law. But notice especially his qualification of that statement. Although Paul recognized that he was free from the

bondage of the Jewish Law, he never viewed himself as entirely lawless; he speaks of being under the law of Christ. Paul's attitude here is simply an application of his words to the Romans: the grace of God that we have through Christ does not give us the license to sin.

On the other hand, Paul also was strongly aware of the dangers of legalism, and made an issue of his liberty with those whose position seemed to give place for self-righteousness. It is on this error that Galatians 2 is the most relevant passage. Here we find Paul confronting Peter's lack of backbone in standing up to those who insisted that even New Testament believers must obey the Old Testament law. Paul could not tolerate any suggestion that a believer's righteous standing before God was based on that believer's own works of righteousness. Note here that legalism is not merely an insistence on standards of conduct in the life of a believer. Rather, legalism is the belief that good works earn merit with God. If we recognize this distinction, we will realize that legalism is an attack on the very nature of the gospel, and we will understand why Paul confronted Peter's compromise so forcefully.

Notice also that Paul could react differently to the very same issue depending on the attitude of the person with whom he was dealing. Paul may well abstain from meat to further the sanctification of the weaker brother, but if a person insists that abstaining from meat earns favor with God, Paul disagreed in the strongest terms. Thus, when we are dealing with a real issue of Christian liberty, we must consider whether the person who abstains is doing so on legitimate grounds of conscience, in which case we must be sensitive, or whether their abstinence is an attempt to be self-righteous, which demands that we defend the free offer of the gospel. Obviously, such a distinction is not always easy to make.

The key to determining our own actions when faced with debatable issues is this: we must do everything that we do for the sake of the gospel. And we must take "for the sake of the gospel" in the broadest possible way, referring to both the evangelism of the lost and the sanctification of the believers. Thus, my decisions on debatable issues must not be made in isolation from the people around me, both believers and unbelievers, with whom I must be a minister of the gospel. If my liberty is a cause for the weaker brother to stumble, because my ultimate goal is the progress of the gospel, I must be willing to curtail my liberty. Certainly, Paul is the chief example of this. He

vowed that he would not partake of any meat if it would hinder his ministry. However, if it becomes apparent that those to whom I minister have made abstinence from a legitimate activity a requirement for righteousness, it is my responsibility as one who values the righteousness that is only found in Christ to confront such legalism. The Fundamentalist answer to questions of Christian liberty should not be either

We must do everything we do for the sake of the gospel.

libertinism or legalism; rather, we should be guided by genuine love, which works for the Christlikeness of all those to whom it comes in contact.

What about those issues, like entertainment choices, that are not intrinsically amoral, but about which Christians are often sharply divided? While I do not believe that Paul is directly addressing such issues in the Christian liberty passages, there is a secondary application that can be made. Assume for the sake of argument that our entertainment choices are genuinely neutral. Even if this is the case, in light of the passage that we have just surveyed, we cannot argue from this that our entertainment choices can be made without considering the body of believers to which we belong. If issues of entertainment are causing strife in the body and hindering our ability to do the work of the gospel, we must forsake the lesser pleasures in favor of the greater rewards promised us for obedience to Christ. If our primary motivation is our own rights, we will chafe against such a teaching. However, if our chief priority in the cause of Christ, such sacrifices should seem like no real sacrifice at all.

Michael Riley holds an M.Div. degree from Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary and is currently a Ph.D. student in Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary.

A Review of Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace? By James Montgomery Boice

Brad Anderson

If you've never read anything by James Montgomery Boice, do yourself a favor and pick up this book. It's not too long (about 200 pages) and contains some thought-provoking

material. Boice, who died in June, 2000, was one of the few voices in evangelicalism calling the movement back to a more conservative position.

The book is divided into three parts: the current culture, Reformation doctrines that "shook the world" (7), and renewal. Boice decries the fact that evangelicalism is "seriously off-base today because it has abandoned its evangelical truth-heritage" (20). The author cites many examples of how evangelicalism has replaced the truth with entertainment, advertising and political influence. Evangelicals have succumbed to the spirit of modernity, namely, relativism and pragmatism (29). Evangelicalism has allowed itself to be squeezed into a worldly mold.

In chapter three—which begins the second part of the book, "Doctrines that Shook the World"—the author discusses *sola Scriptura* and seeks to relate the idea to the modern setting. The problem evangelicalism is struggling with is not the authority of Scripture but the sufficiency of it, i.e., whether worldly means are necessary to do God's work (66). He next discusses the importance of inerrancy and relates some interesting facts regarding how historical evidence supports the reliability of the Bible (70). He then takes up the issue of the sufficiency of Scripture and shows that the Bible itself claims to be sufficient for evangelism, sanctification, guidance and social reform (73f). I found his brief discussion on God's will helpful (82).

Solus Christus means that "Jesus is everything to us and for us in the gospel" (88). Evangelicalism has replaced Jesus with "whim and sentimentality" (89). Under *sola gracia*, Boice remarks about the true nature of grace and how modern evangelicals are corrupting it (107). *Sola fide*—justification by faith—is the "material principle" of the reformation (129). Evangelical churches are falling because of the loss of this doctrine (130).

In chapter seven Boice discusses *solus Deo gloria*. The church has largely lost its understanding of God's exalted nature, replacing it with entertainment and "success" (152). All the other *sola* affirmations point to the glory of God (158). The author rightly points out that if a believer can credit himself with responding to the gospel by his own unaided free will, he is incapable of glorifying God alone for his salvation (167).

Chapter eight begins the third part of the book, "The Shape of Renewal" (171). Boice again laments the corruptions of modern evangelical worship practices and asserts that the church needs to get back to "an older, better style that was thoughtful and genuinely