



## Dear Friends,

While I was preparing the sermon from James 1 for this coming Sunday, I was taken aback by this arresting statement in verse 25:

*But whoever looks into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it, they will be blessed in what they do.*

Why did this statement stand out? Because I tried to imagine how someone who is not a Christian would respond to the claim that “the perfect law ... gives freedom.” It seems counterintuitive that laws are liberating.

Recently, I was listening to a podcast about freedom. The presenters commented that in Western culture, freedom is valued above all else. It is valued more than virtue and happiness.

But what is freedom? Surely, we don't mean freedom in an absolute sense. We all recognize that people are not free to do whatever they please. The basis for a civil society where people can live peaceably and pursue fulfilling lives is the rule of law. While the law provides citizens with rights, it also imposes obligations on them toward others.

Let me illustrate. If drivers had complete freedom to drive however they please on the roads, it would be chaos. Road rules make it possible to move about freely without fear of taking your life into your own hands whenever you step into a vehicle.

So, I don't think anyone really thinks freedom is an absolute value. Most reasonable people accept that we need laws, rules and social norms to flourish as human beings. The real question is, what do we want freedom from, and for what purpose will we use that freedom.

For example, the sexual revolution “freed” Western culture from Christian sexual ethics and practices so that sex is no longer restricted to marriage between man and woman.

But there are now people pushing back against the notion that there are no rules when it comes to sexual activity between consenting adults. Chantal Heide advises women to follow the “no kissing for three months’ rule.”<sup>1</sup> Heide explains why she uses the rule:

*... because I really want to make sure I choose the right person and I don't know who someone is until I've known them for at least three months.”*

The 90 day rule is motivated by love. Heide is looking for someone to be loved by and to love. The rule frees her to find love.

This brings us back to the perfect law that gives freedom. When Jesus was asked what the greatest command is, he responded:

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself. (Mt 22:37-39)*

The goal of God's law is love. God's commands free us to love him and each other. That is why “the perfect law ... gives freedom.” Jesus set us free from a false kind of freedom. That kind of freedom is self-indulgent and self-promoting, usually at the expense of others. But the freedom that Christ gives is not to be used “to indulge the flesh.” Rather, you are to “serve one another in love.” (Gal 5:13). That is true freedom!

God Bless,  
Mark Adams

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mamamia.com.au/3-month-no-kissing-rule/>, accessed 10 May 2024