

Liberalism

Objectives

To understand the Post-Modernist view of liberalism and how it conflicts with the Christian view

References

Holy Scripture

Scriptural Verse

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (**Matthew 18:6**)

Lesson Outlines

Liberalism emphasizes individual rights and equality of opportunity. Different forms of liberalism may propose very different policies, but they are generally united by their support for a number of principles, including extensive freedom of thought and speech, limitations on the power of governments, the rule of law, the free exchange of ideas, a market or mixed economy, and a transparent system of government.

Liberalism rejected many foundational assumptions that dominated earlier theories of government, such as the Divine Right of Kings, hereditary status, and established religion. Social progressivism, the belief that traditions do not carry any inherent value and social practices ought to be continuously adjusted for the greater benefit of humanity, is a common component of liberal ideology.

Liberals have typically maintained that humans are naturally in ‘a *State of perfect Freedom* to order their Actions...as they think fit...without asking leave, or depending on the Will of any other Man’ (Locke, 1960 [1689]: 287).

An example would be Larry Flynt, a pornographer who made a fortune taking pictures of nude women and children and selling it. In other circles he is known as the champion and hero of free speech and First Amendment Rights. He fought hard to keep his pornography in bookstores and magazine racks using the belief that he is exercising his right to free speech. "We're the strongest country in the world today only because we are the freest country in the world today, and I don't want any American, anywhere, to ever forget that that strength lies in our principle to be free. And I'll continue this fight. And people will accuse me of continuing it in the name of pornography. I continue it in the name of freedom."

Do you think Larry Flynt has the right (under the First Amendment) to publish pornography?

Christian View

A fundamental principle in Christianity is the life of a community as Christians together make up the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can see this in the early church – Acts 2: 42-47 and Acts 4:32-35

So what are the characteristics of the true Christian life?

Sharing of possessions, worshipping together, there was unity not strife, they were all happy. In the Church of Rome, there were two groups of believers, the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews strictly adhered to abstaining from meat because they were worried that they would inadvertently eat pork and therefore become defiled. The Gentiles ate all sorts of food believing that God had created all animals and all were pure.

Romans 14: 1-4

We see in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are some that are weak in the faith who still adhere to certain practices and rituals believing that they are of utmost importance and others that are stronger. The responsibility of the strong is to accept the weak as they are and not to enter into needless arguments over nonessential teachings and doctrines. Both groups should not judge one another according to superficial matters because God has accepted all.

Romans 14: 12-23

St. Paul also states that if my brother sees me eating meat and then decides that he wants to eat it but does so with a guilty conscience then he is sinning and I have caused that person to sin. So we see that even if my action is acceptable in God's eyes, if it causes my brother to stumble then I should refrain from doing it, because this is the law of love. Then he takes it up another notch, not only should I not be a hindrance to my brother's spiritual growth but I should build him up in the faith.

Romans 15:6

Again the purpose of this is to maintain unity in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 18:6-7

Our Lord clearly warns us against us being the reason behind losing a soul that our Lord Jesus Christ died for.

Conclusion

The definition of freedom from the Christian perspective is that I can do what I want as long as I am always conscious of how my actions affect those around me, because more important than exercising my freedom is fulfilling the law of love that God has called us to. The world is grappling with the definition of freedom because it is trying to address it from the standpoint that each individual is responsible for themselves and for their own actions but the truth is I am also to a certain extent responsible of those around me.

Activities/Discussion Points

1. What sort of actions have you done that you have found to be an offense to others?
2. To what extent should I restrain my behavior for another person's sake?