

2 Corinthians 3:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Analysis

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. This verse is theologically dense. **The Lord is that Spirit** (Greek *ho kyrios to pneuma estin, o κύριος τὸ πνεῦμα ἔστιν*) does not collapse Christ and the Spirit into one person (that would be modalism) but identifies the "Lord" of Exodus 34:34 (to whose presence Moses came unveiled) with the Holy Spirit who now unveils hearts. Paul sees the Spirit as the active presence of the risen Christ—where the Spirit is, Christ is.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (Greek *hou de to pneuma kyriou, eleutheria, οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία*). The term *eleutheria* (ἐλευθερία, "freedom" or "liberty") contrasts with the bondage of the old covenant (Galatians 4:24-26; 5:1). The Spirit liberates from:

1. the veil of spiritual blindness
2. the law's condemnation
3. sin's enslaving power
4. fear and shame.

This liberty is not license but the freedom to become what we were created to be—image-bearers of God transformed into Christ's likeness (verse 18).

Historical Context

The concept of spiritual freedom was central to Paul's gospel, especially when addressing the Galatian and Corinthian churches threatened by Judaizers who wanted to impose Mosaic law on Gentile believers. Greco-Roman culture also valued liberty (*libertas* in Latin), but understood it politically and socially. Paul spiritualizes and universalizes the concept: true freedom is not freedom from authority but freedom in Christ to fulfill God's purposes. The indwelling Spirit is the source and sustainer of this liberty, transforming believers from within rather than constraining them from without.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How have you experienced the Spirit's liberating work in areas where you once felt enslaved to sin, fear, or legalism?
2. What does "liberty" in the Spirit look like practically in your daily life, and how does it differ from mere license or lawlessness?
3. In what areas might you still be living under bondage (law, fear, shame) rather than embracing the freedom available in Christ?

Interlinear Text

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|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|--------------|------------|-------|
| ό | δὲ | κυρίου | τὸ | πνεῦμα | ἐστιν· | οὗ | δὲ | τὸ |
| G3588 | Now | of the Lord | G3588 | that Spirit | is | where | Now | G3588 |
| G1161 | | G2962 | | G4151 | G2076 | G3757 | G1161 | |
| πνεῦμα | κυρίου | ἐκεῖ | ἐλευθερία | | | | | |
| that Spirit | of the Lord | is there | is liberty | | | | | |
| G4151 | G2962 | G1563 | G1657 | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Romans 8:2 (Spirit): For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

John 8:32 (Parallel theme): And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Galatians 5:13 (Parallel theme): For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Galatians 4:6 (Spirit): And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Galatians 5:1 (Parallel theme): Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

2 Timothy 1:7 (Spirit): For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

John 6:63 (Spirit): It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Psalms 51:12 (Spirit): Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:6 (Spirit): Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

1 Corinthians 15:45 (Spirit): And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.