

Leashless

"What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?" (Romans 6:15-16, ESV)

Back in college in Kentucky, I was appointed Information Technology officer of the Student Government Association for several semesters. At the beginning of a certain semester, the elected officer to whom I reported told me she intended to "keep [me] on a short leash." Now, this figure of speech, a short leash, directly implies a trainer who treats another person as a dog—or, perhaps, some type of feral cat?—which requires a leash. This trainer feels it necessary to watch every movement of the pet, lest the pet wander off into trouble-making. At the time, I took offense at this figure of speech, though I never mentioned it back then: I simply constrained myself to look forward, er, forward, to the time when I could use incidents such as this as illustration material for articles.

Now, I'm not against leash laws for pets: These make for good neighbors, just like good fences. But for our application, consider that the Law of Moses was a type of leash law for Israel. Israel had known freedom, life without a leash, but Israel had sinned, causing trouble for themselves and others, thus God bound them under the Law, the leash. (cf. Jer. 7:22; Gal. 3:19) In the first century, many Jews became Christ's disciples, realizing that they were no longer under the leash. What did these men and women do? Some desired to be back under a leash: it was safe, it was familiar, so they became legalists who demanded that all disciples submit to a leash. Paul, and others, knew better. (Gal. 2:4; 5:1) They knew that one could never perfectly please the Master merely by being under a leash: one had to seek to please the Master from the heart. (Prov. 23:26) The leash wasn't meant to last forever.

On the other hand, some who were loosed from the leash didn't truly submit their hearts to the master and caused trouble. Just because one is off the leash doesn't mean they shouldn't listen to the words of the Master. As Peter said, "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God." (1 Pet. 2:16) Blessed is the one who uses her liberty to please the Master. Though we are not on a leash, we are bound to Yahweh our God and Jesus our Lord by stronger, invisible cords of love and truth which replace our former cords of death. (Prov. 18:4) We submit to God's precepts, his truth, from the heart. We seek to please him from the heart. (Eph. 6:6) No, it's no leash.

It's love.