

—Understanding the Christian’s Liberty in Christ—

Lesson 3—The Parts of Christian Freedom, Continued

The Parts

- I. Freedom in its negative aspects.
 - A. Freedom from Satan.
 - B. Freedom from sin.
 - C. Freedom from the law. Scripture is clear that Christ has freed us from the law, Rom 6.14; 7.6; Gal 2.19; 5.18. But it’s important that we consider what this means. We’re freed from the ceremonial law, which was a yoke neither we nor our fathers were able to bear, Acts 15.10, but this is only a small part of our freedom.
 1. Freedom from the law as a covenant, Rom 7.1-6; Gal 2.19. This means we’re freed from the law as that from which *life* might be expected on the condition of our obedience.
 - a) The law can be considered as a *rule* and as a *covenant*.
 - (1) When we read that the law is still in force for believers, it’s referring to it as a *rule of life* and not as a covenant for life.
 - (2) When we read that the law is abrogated and that we’re freed from it as believers, it’s referring to it as a *covenant for life* and not as a rule of life.
 - b) We were all born under the law as a *covenant*. It could never give us life, because we were born under it as guilty sinners deserving of death, Rom 5.12; Gal 3.21-22; Ps 51.3. But now that we’re freed from it by Christ, Rom 6.14, it can’t inflict death on us because we’re dead to it and it’s dead to us.
 - (1) As long as the law rules over us and we’re in subjection to it (like a wife to her husband), it has dominion over us, and—though in vain—we’ll look for righteousness and life through obedience to it, Rom 7.1-6. But once God graciously brings the law to us with an enlightening, convincing, accusing, condemning power, we see that we can expect nothing from it but death, nothing from it as a covenant for life, and then, and only then, we turn from it to look for life by Christ alone, Rom 7.9-12, 24-25.
 - (2) So it’s not until the law is dead to us and we to it (a work of converting grace), that we expect nothing from it and turn to Christ, Gal 2.19. The law must slay and condemn us before we’ll expect nothing from it in the way of a covenant for life and turn instead to Christ for life. Those dead to the law live by another, Rom 7.6; Gal 3.22-25.
 - c) Thus Christ frees us from the law as a covenant for life.
 2. Freedom from the curses of the law, Rom 8.1; Gal 3.13; Col 2.14.
 - a) The law requires two things of those who are under it:
 - (1) either they must *obey* its precepts—which is impossible now since all men are sinners, Gal 3.22, or they must *bear* the penalties due for their transgressions—which is impossible since all men are finite;
 - (2) either they must obey the commands or suffer the curses;
 - (3) either they must do God’s will or suffer God’s will in the forfeiture of soul and body.
 - (4) This is the sad dilemma of *all unbelievers* because they’re still under the law as a covenant, Jn 3.18, 36; Rom 5.12; 3.10-18; Ps 51.3. [See *Backdrop for a Glorious Gospel, William Strong on the Covenant of Works* by Thomas Parr.]
 - b) But believers are freed from the law as a covenant of life and death and therefore freed from the curses of the law. The law has nothing to do with them as regards their eternal state and condition, Rom 6.14; 5.1; 8.1.
 - (1) If they were still under the law as a covenant, condemnation would be their inescapable condition, because though the law is unable to save them from their sin, it is able and cannot but condemn them, Gal 3.10.

- (2) Christ has freed believers from the curses of the law by bearing the curse for them, Gal 3.13. This means the law cannot now pass sentence upon a believer. It cannot condemn him. Believers are not to be tried in the court of that law because Christ has satisfied that law to the full for them, Rom 7.24-25; Rev 20.11-15.
- (3) Even though believers fall into sin, still the law can't curse a believer because he's no longer under the law as a covenant for life and death and is therefore freed from its curses, Col 2.13-15. The moral law as a covenant has been nailed to the cross with its curses and therefore is forever silenced toward believers. All its *precepts* have been *fulfilled* by Christ *for them* and all its *curses* have been *borne* by Christ *for them*.
 - (a) *A Debtor to Mercy Alone*, A. Toplady, 1st stanza: "The terrors of law and of God with me can have nothing to do; my Savior's obedience and blood hide all my transgressions from view."
 - (b) Thus it can be said of believers that *there's now no law against them* (Gal 5.23), for as there's no law to justify them, Gal 2.16, so there's no law to condemn them, Rom 3.31; 8.1.
- c) Five reasons why the law can't condemn the believer, Rom 8.31-34.
 - (1) The law as a covenant has no power to condemn believers because, despite their sins, they're hidden in Christ's satisfaction, which has silenced the law for them.
 - (2) The believer is no longer under the law as a covenant for life and death but is now under a new covenant for life and death, a covenant of grace.
 - (3) The believer is not subject to the law anymore, Rom 7.6. He's under its guidance, but not its curses; under its precepts (though not legally), but not its penalties.
 - (4) Christ was condemned in his place so that he might be freed, Gal 3.13. The law may condemn and call out sin in the believer, but it can't condemn a believer for his sin.
 - (5) The believer has appealed from the court of law to the court of mercy, Lk 18.13; Rom 7.24, has found mercy in Christ and has now "gone home justified" (Lk 18.14; Gal 2.19).
 - (a) This is why it's necessary to first be condemned and sentenced (by converting conviction) in the court of the law, because a sinner can't and won't appeal to the court of mercy for life in Christ until he sees he's completely out of options and utterly condemned and cursed in the court of the law.
 - (b) Some make their appeal to Christ in the court of mercy only partially or formally, like the Pharisee in the temple, Lk 18.9-14, and go away still condemned. Some appeal to mercy for temporary relief from conviction but not for a whole salvation and go away still condemned. Christ will only accept those who appeal to Him for all, for both grace and mercy, for both justification and sanctification, for both happiness and holiness—but none can do this except those who are humbled and condemned by the law. We can only appeal to Christ after we've been found guilty and condemned by Moses, Gal 3.22-26. We'll never look for life from mercy until we're convinced it can't be had by justice (i.e. by our own works).
 - (c) And when we make our appeal to mercy in Christ, we're put out of the law's reach. The law can't take hold of us for condemnation anymore, because we've fled to Christ, as to a City of Refuge, and taken sanctuary in Him. If the law threatens us with condemnation, we appeal to the condemnation of Christ, 2Cor 5.21; Rom 8.1; if the law threatens us with curses, we appeal to the curse of Christ, Gal 3.13.
3. Freedom from the accusations of the law, Rom 8.33.
 - a) Satan is the accuser of the brethren and ready to lay things to our charge, Rev 12.10. It's true of him what the soldier said to Joab in 2Sam 18.12-13, he knows what God forbids and if we do it, at his instigation, he'll be the first to accuse us to God. He is the first tempter to draw us into sin and then the first accuser to accuse us to God for sinning. But Satan cannot condemn.

The issues of life and death are not in his hand, nor will his accusations against us before God take effect, Zeph 3.1-4.

- b) Wicked men may accuse us, but this should drive us, as it did David, to prayer, for repentance where the accusations are true and for vindication where they're not, Pss 5-7.
- c) Our conscience itself may accuse us. If it accuses us according to the Word, then we must listen to it, because God speaks in it. But if it accuses us falsely, telling us things are sinful which are not, or reviving old charges which God has forgiven, we must rest in God, who is greater than our conscience.
- d) And the law may accuse us. If it speaks of sins repented of and pardoned, we're not to listen to it because we've been justified and forgiven. And if it accuses us of sins committed we're to refuse to be tried in its court, but instead return to the court of mercy, where we'll find not only greater sorrow for our sins but assurance of pardon and grace to "go and sin no more."
 - (1) In the case of unbelievers, the law's accusations result in sentencing and *condemnation* for sin because they're under it and under its curses.
 - (2) In the case of believers, the law's accusations result in conviction and *humiliation* for sin because they've found life and salvation in Christ and have come to abhor sin. This reveals an important distinction:
 - (a) Believers are not under the law's curses, but we are under its commands.
 - (b) We're not under it for judgment, but we are under it for conduct.
 - (c) When we transgress it as a rule for our conduct, it has an accusing power against us to show us where we've gone astray, but not a condemning power.
 - (d) There's no power left in the law against us but that which is for our good, our humiliation, our edification, and our growth in grace, Rom 7.12.
- e) Gal 3.17. If the law was given after the promise, it was either given as a covenant or a rule.
 - (1) It couldn't be given as a covenant because then God would've contradicted Himself in giving a covenant of grace to Abraham and then a covenant of works to his offspring.
 - (2) Therefore it had to have been given as a rule, to reveal to those justified by the promise, a rule of walking with God so that in all things we might please Him.
- f) Gal 4.1-5. There are two kinds of subjection to the law of God, that of a slave and that of a son. We're freed from the subjection of a slave, which was part of our bondage, but not from the subjection of a son, which is part of our freedom.

4. Freedom from the rigor of the law, Phil 3.9.

D. Freedom from obedience to men, Mt 23.8-10; 1Cor 7.23.

E. Freedom from death, 1Th 4.13.

F. Freedom from the grave, 1Cor 15.54-55; Job 19.25-27.

II. Freedom in its positive aspects, Jn 10.10.