

—Understanding the Christian’s Freedom in Christ—

Lesson 4—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.
 1. Freedom from the law as a covenant, Rom 7.1-6; Gal 2.19.
 2. Freedom from the curses of the law, Rom 8.1; Gal 3.13; Col 2.14.
 3. Freedom from the accusations of the law, Rom 8.33.
 4. Freedom from the rigor of the obedience of the law, Phil 3.9.
 - a) Believers are not freed from the law’s requirement of an exact obedience but from the rigor of obedience which the law required as a condition of salvation. What’s meant by this?
 - (1) First, the law commanded not only difficult things but also impossible things. It laid a yoke on us that we couldn’t bear and it would not, and could not, give us the least assistance toward obedience, cp. Lk 11.46. It commands, but gives neither grace nor strength for fulfillment, cp. Ex 5.10-11; Mt 27.4.
 - (a) But now under the gospel, all things are possible, not in ourselves, but in God who’s undertaken to work all our work in us and for us, Phil 2.13; Jn 15.5; 1Cor 15.10. The law still commands, but now the gospel gives what it commands. The gospel gives the Spirit of God and, with Him, grace upon grace, Tit 2.11-14; Eph 2.10.
 - (b) Indeed, the works of the gospel are greater than were ever expressed in the law, for now we are commanded to believe, to hope, to love, to desire, and to hate, none of which we can do without the Spirit’s sanctifying, gifting work, Phil 4.13.
 - (c) The law was a spiritual law (commanding the heart), but the gospel is the law of the Spirit (enabling the heart). For example, the command of Rom 6.12 is coupled with the promise of Rom 6.14 (cf. Phil 2.12-13). If we were still under the law we’d have no assistance to obey, but under the gospel, all strength is granted, Col 1.10-11.
 - (2) Secondly, the law required obedience in our own persons. But now we’re freed from this rigor and God will accept the obedience of another on our behalf, Ps 89.19-29.
 - (a) We owed the law a twofold debt: the debt of sin and the debt of service, and both have been transferred over to Christ and He has fulfilled all righteousness for us, both the obedience and the suffering, so that we can be said to be complete in Him, Col 2.10, though in ourselves we’re imperfect, Rom 7.18; 1Cor 15.10.
 - (3) Thirdly, the law required universal, actual, perpetual, and personal obedience so that if a man failed in one point, he was lost forever, Gal 3.10. No repentance, no tears, no prayers, no future amends would make up for the failure.
 - (a) But the gospel allows repentance and offers restoration. And because Christ’s perfect obedience has been imputed to us for our justification, instead of requiring universal *actual* obedience, God is pleased to accept universal *habitual* obedience, Ps 119.6, so that though we fall short in the deed itself, the Lord accepts the will for the deed. “In the gospel God accepts affections for actions, endeavors for performance, desire for ability. A Christian is made up of desires, mournings, thirsting, and bewailing: “O that my ways were directed! O miserable man that I am!” Here is gospel perfection: the sincerity of obedience.”

- (b) Adam lacked the will rather than the power, but believers lack the power rather than the will. We have the will to do, but lack the power to do it, Rom 7.18-25. “The failing of God’s people is more from want of power than want of will. And God has mercy for “can-nots” but none for “will-nots”. God can distinguish between weakness and wickedness. When we’re under the law, our weakness (our will-not) was our wickedness, and God hated it. But now under the gospel, our weakness is our can-not and therefore the Lord has compassion on us, Rom 7.24; Dt 32.36.”
- (4) Fourthly, the law enforced itself upon the conscience with threats and terrors; but now the gospel comes with wooing and love, Rom 12.1-3; Phil 2.13; 1Cor 15.10.
 - (a) The law urges obedience upon pain of eternal death, Dt 27.14-26; Gal 3.10, and enforces its demands by terror; but the gospel enforces by sweetness and love, Jn 14.15-16. All terror is gone because now love constrains, 2Cor 5.14.
 - (b) Love is an affection that refuses to be put off by duties or difficulties which come between it and the person loved. All the duties become easy and delightful for the love we have for the person commanding them. Love shortens time and facilitates labor, Gen 29.20; Mt 11.30.
 - (c) The Spirit of God implants the people of God with a spirit, not of fear or bondage, but of love. And this spirit is the spring of all their actions, making all their duties easy, 1Jn 5.3.
 - (d) Faith and love are the all of a Christian. He’s saved by faith and then works by love, Gal 5.6. Faith receives all from Christ and then love returns all to Christ.

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

- 1. To all superiors placed over us by God, we’re to be obedient in the outward man, so far as it doesn’t violate our obedience to Christ, but our souls and consciences are to have no master or lord but Christ, 1Pet 2.13-17; Lk 14.26.

E. Freedom from death, 1Th 4.13.

- 1. There are three kinds of death: spiritual death (the death of the soul in the body), natural death (the death of the body from the soul), and eternal death (the death of body and soul forever).
- 2. As regards natural death, while the believer must die a natural death, it’s the believer’s privilege that his dead body remains united to the Son of God because the believer is freed from death as a curse.
 - a) The nature of death is taken away and therefore the name is changed to a sleep, a sleep in Christ, a departing, a home-going, etc., 1Th 4.13. Death is the wicked man’s fear, but it is the godly man’s wish.
- 3. Also, the believer is freed from an ill-timed death. He won’t die until the right and best time, because He won’t die until God’s time, Ps 31.15. The wicked die like weeds, cut down by God at His pleasure, but the righteous are harvested like grain, only when fully ripe, only when their work is done, cut down to be carried to glory.

F. Freedom from the grave, 1Cor 15.54-55; Job 19.25-27. This is the believer’s consummate freedom, to be resurrected and live forever in glory with Christ, body and soul.

- 1. Though our bodies die and are consumed to dust, yet they will rise new, perfect, and glorious, 1Cor 15.44; Dan 12.3.
- 2. Though glorious, spiritual, and immortal, our bodies will be the very same which we had on earth. The resurrection is a resurrection of the body, as evidenced by Christ’s empty tomb.
- 3. The soul and body shall never be parted again for all eternity, for death shall be no more. When a believer dies, he is freed by death forever from death, so that after the reunion at the resurrection, there’ll never be another separation.

II. Freedom in its positive aspects, Jn 10.10.