

## —Understanding the Christian’s Freedom in Christ—

### *Lesson 12–Question 3*

*If a believer is under the moral law as a rule of duty, is his freedom in Christ infringed?*

- I. Is it an infringement of our Christian freedom to be tied to the performance of duty? No.
  - A. The end goal of our redemption and freedom in Christ was that we might serve God in holiness, Tit 2.11-14; Lk 1.68-75; Eph 2.8-10.
  - B. Christ has not redeemed us from the duty to obey God, but from a slavish and fearful spirit in the pursuit of it, 2Tim 1.7; Mt 25.24-25. Christ redeemed us from our slavery in sin to give us a spirit of liberty and sonship unto obedience, Rom 8.1-4.
  - C. When the Spirit of God moves upon us (e.g. on the Lord’s Day), it’s a good time to spread the sails and open the door, Ex 20.24; 25.22; 29.42. In fact, it’s a sin to throw water on the motions of the Spirit in our hearts, 1Th 5.19; Acts 7.51.
  - D. It’s good to follow the promptings of the Spirit to duty but we mustn’t wait for the Spirit to move us, WCF 16.3; Phil 2.12; Heb 6.11-12; 1Pet 2.11-12; 2Pet 1.5-11. We already know our duty, 2Pet 1.3-4; Eph 2.10, and God commands that we obey Him, Jn 14.15; 1Jn 2.4.
    1. Does this mean we must sometimes do our duty without both a heart for it and a heart in it? Yes. And such duty, though hard on our part, will please God because we offered it up to Him, despite both hell and high water which stood in our way.
    2. And, therefore, we’ll often find in God’s kindness that though we brought a dead heart to the duty, our heart was warmed and quickened in the doing of it, Ps 13, because the Lord loves to meet us in His way and bless our faithfulness, 1Cor 15.58. Therefore, though we can’t bring the Spirit to us, we can commit to put ourselves in His ways, and wait upon Him, for those who wait on the Lord will not be disappointed, Jn 5.2-3; Isa 40.31.
    3. Therefore, let us give ourselves heartily and faithfully to our duty, knowing that by God’s grace, we’ll make headway against sin, find fresh supplies of grace, and overcome the world.
    4. In sum, we’re to obey God’s commands and lament before Him that our hearts are so backward and sinful that we can’t find the love to do it, the desire for it, and happiness in it. The Lord will receive our duty as pleasing in His sight and graciously work on our hearts, Ezk 36.25-27.
- II. Four ways the believer is free from duty in Christ.
  - A. We’re free from duty as a hired task, as if we were day-laborers in the ways of God who had to earn every blessing. All we have from God is a free gift which Christ has purchased for us, Isa 53.4-6; Rom 3.23-25; Eph 1.3-10; 2Cor 4.7; Js 1.17; 2Pet 1.2-4.
  - B. We’re free from duty as a trade, as if we were working for the love of the gain we get from it. As Christians, we obey God because we love His ways (Ps 119.14, 32) and that He might be glorified in us (1Cor 10.31), even though we see no gain coming to us by it. The work itself is reward and wages enough, 1Jn 2.4-6.
  - C. We’re free from a spirit of slavery in our duty, as if we obeyed to avoid God’s wrath. As Christians, we obey God even if there’s no punishment for the omission of it. Our greatest joy in duty is finding communion and fellowship with God in it, Ps 42.1-2; 63.1-4.
  - D. We’re free from duty on legal terms, as if our obedience merits good here and glory hereafter. Christians find joy in duty, not because of what God may graciously grant upon the doing of it, but because of the communion found with God in it, 1Jn 1.6-7.
- III. Nine differences between legal obedience and gospel (evangelical) obedience.
  - A. A legal spirit goes about duty to get rewards or out of a fear of punishment. The godly walk in the way of duty to enjoy communion with God.

- B. A legal spirit finds duty in itself a burden, but the godly find it a delight. A legal spirit finds nothing in his duty but the duty, and so it's tedious; but the godly find God, Christ, and the sweetness of divine fellowship, and so it's a joy.
  - C. A legal spirit obeys out of a sense of external precept, but the godly obey out of a sense of internal principle. A legal spirit has convictions and so obeys as if by force, but a godly man is converted and obeys naturally and freely. The one is constrained and compelled, while the other is inclined. The one may very well hate his duty and would love to do otherwise, while the other loves his duty and would not do otherwise. The one is dragged by a millstone, the other is empowered by grace as a pilot in the heart, steering him in the way.
  - D. The one looks for satisfaction in the duty, but the other is never satisfied with it unless he finds Christ in it, by it, and beyond it (e.g., the means of grace).
  - E. The one contents himself with the show, but the other looks for the substance. He comes to see God, enjoy God, talk with and God. The one goes to duty merely to pacify his conscience, but the other goes to inform and enlighten his conscience.
  - F. The one performs his duty to live by it as a self-righteousness before God, but the other looks away from his duties and rests upon the righteousness of God alone for his justification before God. A Christian lives by duty, but not in or upon duty, Gal 2.15-16, 20. He looks for everything from Christ alone, Rom 10.4.
  - G. The one does things coldly, the other does his duty fervently—and laments to God when he can't.
  - H. The one does his duty as a means to an end, but the other does his duties as part of his happiness, as a piece of his sanctification and glory.
  - I. The one does his duty because he has to, the other because he wants to. The one cries out, "The good I have no desire to do, I do; and the evil I desire to do, I dare not do," while the other cries out, "The good that I desire to do, I can't do; and the evil I desire not to do, I do."
- IV. Thus, the believer obeys because he delights in duty.
- A. The reason a godly man gives himself to duty is not so much because God commands it, but because there is in him a living principle of Christ's own holiness that loves to obey, loves the duty itself, and is able to find joy and satisfaction in God in the duty. The law of God is inscribed on his heart. He has a new nature inclined to walk in it. It's as natural for him to obey as it is for a fish to swim and a bird to fly.
  - B. Therefore the godly don't obey merely because it's commanded. They obey from a principle which God's implanted in their hearts that agrees with the command. The command is their outward rule, but grace is their inward principle so that the command and grace answer each other, Ps 40.8; cp. Js 1.14.
  - C. "The freeness of the Christian consists in this, that he obeys the commands of God, not only because God has commanded them, but out of principles of love and delight, and because he has within his heart a nature agreeable to the things commanded."