

Sunday Evening, February 12, 2023
Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience
WCF XX, Rom. 14; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Tim. 2:15

WCF XX - Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience

1. The liberty which Christ purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, from the condemning wrath of God, and from the curse of the moral law. Furthermore, it consists in their being delivered from this present evil age, from bondage to Satan and dominion of sin, from the evil of afflictions, from the sting of death, from the victory of the grave, and from everlasting damnation. It consists also in their free access to God, and in yielding obedience to him, not out of slavish fear, but out of a childlike love and willing mind. All of these were common to believers also under the law. Under the new testament, however, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged: they are free from the yoke of the ceremonial law to which the Jewish church was subjected; they have greater boldness of access to the throne of grace; and they experience in greater measure the gifts of God's free Spirit that believers under the law ordinarily partook of.

2. God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are—in anything—contrary to his Word, or which—in matters of faith or worship—are in addition to it. Therefore, anyone who believes such doctrines or obeys such commands out of conscience betrays true liberty of conscience. The requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, destroys both liberty of conscience and reason.

3. Those who, on the pretext of Christian liberty, practice any sin or cherish any evil desire destroy the purpose of Christian liberty. This purpose is that, having been delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we may serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

I. The Freedoms of Christian Liberty SECT 1

A. Believers Have Freedom from:

1. Freedom Now from the Guilt from Sin Titus 2:14; Gal. 3:13
2. Freedom Now from the Wrath of God 1 Thess. 1:10; Eph. 1:7; Rom. 8:1
3. Freedom Now from the Bondage to Sin and the Powers of Darkness
Rom. 6:14, 22; Gal. 1:4; Col. 1:13
4. Freedom Ultimately from the Sting of Death and the Grave
Jn. 11:25, 26; Jn. 5:24; 1 Thess. 1:10

B. Believers Have Freedom for Certain Privileges:

1. Greater Access to God Through the Son Eph. 3:12; Heb. 4:16; Heb. 10:19; 1 Jn. 5:14
2. Greater Fellowship with God Through the Spirit
Jn. 7:39; Joel 2:28, 29; Isa. 44:3; 2 Cor. 3:8; Rom. 14:4, 14

II. The Source of Christian Liberty SECT 2A

1. There Is Only One Law-giver Jas. 4:12; Rom. 14:4
2. The Power to Be Law-giver Is Given to No One Else
Rom. 14:4, 9; 10; Isa. 45:22–23; Rom. 14:12, 13; Gal. 5:1

III. The Guide for Christian Liberty SECT 2 2 Tim. 3:16–17

1. We Are Never to Obey Anything *Contrary* to God’s Word Acts 5:29
2. We Are Never—in Areas of Faith and Worship—to Obey Anything *in Addition to the Word*
Lk. 22:25; 2 Cor. 1:24; Ac. 17:10–11; 1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:15

Quotes

“We must now discuss Christian freedom. He who proposes to summarize gospel teaching ought by no means to omit an explanation of this topic. For it is a thing of prime necessity, and apart from a knowledge of it consciences dare undertake almost nothing without doubting; they hesitate and recoil from many things; they constantly waver and are afraid. But freedom is especially an appendage of justification and is of no little avail in understanding its power.”
John Calvin, *The Institutes*

“The finality of Scripture if it has any meaning, demands that those who profess commitment to Christ and the church in its collective capacity, direct all thought, activity, and objective by this Word as the revelation to us of God’s mind and will.”
John Murray

“Nothing can be rightfully imposed on the consciences of men as truth or duty which is not taught directly or by necessary implication in the Holy Scripture.”
Hodge

“It is important to master the law of God. One of the great benefits of mastering the law is to know not only what we are not allowed to do but also where God has left us free, so that we can discern the difference between the law of God and the rules of men.”
R C Sproul

There is an old adage: “‘Half the bad theology in the world is due to suppressed perspiration.’ It is the result of not really making the effort, taking the time, and exercising the necessary disciplines to try to grapple with what God is really saying in the pages of Scripture.”
Sinclair Ferguson

“Unless evangelicals recover their confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture, their claim that Scripture alone is authoritative will remain empty. It will remain a charade.”
David Wells

“The 20TH century has seen a more widespread and enduring defection from historic Christianity in the English-speaking world than has been witnessed in any period since the Reformation. This defection has occurred through the removal of the foundation to all Christian teaching, namely that the words of Scripture are so given by God that the teaching they contain is entirely trustworthy and authoritative. The Bible stands supreme above all human wisdom and religious tradition. It alone is the Book which God has given for the salvation of men. If therefore the Scripture loses its true place in the church nothing remains certain.”
John Elias

“It was, indeed, out of infinite love, mercy, and compassion, that God would at all reveal his mind and will unto sinners. He might forever have locked up the treasures of his wisdom and prudence, wherein he abounds towards us in his Word, in his own eternal breast. He might have left all the sons of men unto that woeful darkness, whereinto by sin they had cast themselves, and kept them, with the angels who sinned before them, under the chains and power of it, unto the judgment of the great day. But from infinite love he condescended to reveal himself and his will unto us.”
John Owen

Cambridge Declaration, August 20, 1996, *Sola Scriptura*:

“We reaffirm the inerrant Scripture to be the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured. We deny that any creed, council, or individual may bind a Christian’s conscience, that the Holy Spirit speaks independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation.”