

“FOR FREEDOM”: THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY
(GALATIANS 5:1)

I. Another Beloved Child of the Reformation

- A. The five key doctrines that the Reformation recovered are...
1. “Scripture Alone” (Dt 4:2; Prov 30:6)
 2. “Grace Alone” (Eph 2:8)
 3. “Christ Alone” (1 Tim 2:5-6; Heb 8:1)
 4. “Faith Alone” (Rom 3:25; Gal 2:15)
 5. “Glory to God Alone” (Rom 11:36)
- B. Christian freedom is another important doctrine of the Reformation.
- C. Christian freedom is one of the least taught doctrines because...
1. The emphasis in Scripture is on God’s lordship, not man’s freedom.
 2. We fear the abuse of freedom in a self-obsessed age.
- D. But the doctrine of Christian freedom must still be taught because...
1. It is the word of God.
 2. It is an article of our Reformed Faith (see WCF XX).
 3. It will be lost if we don’t guard it.
 4. Conclusion: An important part of our discipleship is to learn the practice of Christian freedom.

II. For Freedom Christ Has Set Us Free (Gal 5:1a)

- A. Christ Jesus has set us free (5:1a).
1. Christ has set us free
 2. The reason Christ set us free is “for freedom.”
- B. What has Christ freed us from?
1. The clues begin in 1:4: Christ delivered us from “the present evil age.”
 2. The first use of “freedom” is in 2:4.
 - a. Some false brothers were trying to “spy out our *freedom* that we have in Christ Jesus.”
 - b. Freedom is from circumcision in particular, but law observance in general.
 3. No one will be justified by doing the works of the law (2:16).

4. All who rely on the law for justification are cursed (3:10).
—because the law curses all who fail to keep it!
5. So why did God give the law in the first place?
—To imprison sinners until Christ comes (3:19, 23-24)!
6. Christ redeemed those “under the law” unto adoption as sons (4:4-5).
7. Only those who are in Christ are true children of Abraham (4:21-26).
8. Conclusion: **Christ freed us from the law of God, not as a revelation of God’s righteousness, but as a means of attaining acceptance from God!**

III. Stand Firm, Resist Enslavement (Gal 5:1b-c)

Now that our Lord Jesus Christ has freed us from the law of God (as a means of attaining justification) and its curses on our disobedience, we must stand firmly in our freedom and not allow ourselves to be re-enslaved. In short, we must diligently practice and safeguard our Christian freedom.

How do we practice and safeguard our Christian freedom?

- A. We come to God as his children, not as slaves seeking to appease him (Rom 8:15).
1. Do we delight in prayer, worship, prayer, Scripture?
 2. If not, perhaps we still have a slave mentality, a “justified-by-works” outlook.
- B. We refuse to do things simply to please people (cf. Eph 6:6).
1. We can say “no” to others without fear.
 2. How others choose to respond is *their* responsibility.
- C. We embrace our fellow Christians as fellow children of God.
—even those who seem to value unusual things and behave differently.
- D. We adopt a generous, “live and let live” posture toward one another.
1. We require of others only what God asks of them.
—Beyond that, others can say “no” to us without fear of punishment.
 2. We are slow to criticize, but quick to encourage (Mt 7:1-2; 1 Cor 14:12).
 3. We allow others the freedom to hold their opinion on matters that the church courts have not decided.
 4. We bear with one another’s weaknesses (Eph 4:32).

*Freedom is not easily gained—but it is so easily lost.
So hold on to your freedom in Christ!*

**WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH CHAPTER 20:
OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY, AND LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE**

1. The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law; and, in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin; from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation; as also, in their free access to God, and their yielding obedience unto him, not out of slavish fear, but a childlike love and willing mind. All which were common also to believers under the law. But, under the new testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was subjected; and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of.

2. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

3. They who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, do practice any sin, or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty, which is, that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

4. And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another, they who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And, for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity (whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation), or to the power of godliness; or, such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church, they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against, by the censures of the church.

