

—Understanding the Christian’s Freedom in Christ—

Lesson 16 – Concluding Applications

- I. The miserable bondage of unbelievers
 - A. You’re still in bondage to sin, delivered up to all evils, spiritual, temporal, and eternal.
 1. You’re under the command of every lust. Every sin is a tyrant in your soul, Jn 8.34. You’re the slave of sin, Rom 6.20. You’ve sold yourself out to sin, 1Kgs 21.25. You’re not only passively content to be a slave of sin but are actively bringing yourself into greater and greater bondage every day as if you were bent on damning yourself. Your disobedience to God is not forced, but free, voluntary, and with delight.
 2. It’s a soul slavery. The slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt and the galley slaves in the ships of mercenaries are miserable, but theirs is a physical slavery. Your slavery is beyond comparison, for it’s a soul slavery. This is the finishing stroke of God’s judgment, when He gives a man up to the dominion of his sins, Rom 1.24-25; Rev 22.11.
 3. It’s a senseless slavery, a slavery you’re not conscious of, chains you can’t see, a burden you can’t feel. Better to have a wounded and troubled conscience than a seared and dead conscience, Pr 23.25.
 4. It’s an active slavery. All your strength, health, and estate will be spent in the service of sin. You’ll endure pain and suffer loss to satisfy your lusts, Jer 8.4-7.
 5. It’s a willing slavery. You’re not being forced to say yes to your sins. You do it willingly. Even when its price breaks your heart, you’ll go and do it all over again, because you count your slavery as freedom. When Christ is preached to you as a Saviour, you reject Him and choose your slavery over Him, Lk 13.34.
 6. It’s a bondage from which you can’t deliver yourself and from which none of your friends can ransom you. None but Christ can ransom a man’s soul. None but Christ’s blood can set a man free. None but Christ is stronger than the strong man that possess your soul. But Christ is the very one you mock, push away, hold at arm’s length, and reject. Your condition is hopeless and helpless without Christ, Eph 2.13.
 - B. You’re still in bondage to Satan. He’s God’s jailor, holding precious souls down under brazen bars and behind iron gates. Satan is cruel, malicious, evil, hateful, spiteful, and delights in your misery and suffering. Whatever freedom he gives you to mill about and enjoy life, he holds you by your lusts and can make you heel when he pleases. Whatever freedom he gives you in your religious craze, freedom to hear, read, pray, and even preach, as long as you’re a slave of your sins, you’re a slave of him.
 1. It’s a cruel, merciless, universal bondage. No part of you is free. Your judgment, will, affections, mind, and conscience are all in chains, all blinded by darkness, deceived by lies, and enslaved to Satan.
 2. Whatever actions of a free man you do, you do none of it as a free man. You pray as a slave, not as a son. You weep as a slave, not as a free man. You act more from fear of the rod, than for hatred of sin and love of God.
 - C. You’re still in bondage to the law of God. Its curse and rigor are over you. Its penalties and condemnation are over you.
 1. One day the law will take the curse to pieces, as it were, and show you what lies within the curse of an infinite God and His infinite wrath. And all eternity will not be enough to cross even the threshold of the doorway into its infinite depths.
 2. This curse lies on all your blessings, all your happiness, all your mercies, and all your silver and gold. Where Christ’s people are blessed even in their afflictions, you are cursed even in your blessings. As there is a blessing hidden in the worst of things for a believer, so there’s a curse hidden even in the best of things for you.
 3. Yours is a curse that neither angels nor men are able to bear, and yet God will enable you to bear it—and for all eternity. After millions and millions of years under it, you’ll be no closer to the end of it than when you first began, because it’s inexhaustibly infinite.

4. The law holds you with ironclad rigor, not pleased with your best efforts or with your good intentions or with your sacrifices or with your tears. It demands your perfect, exact, and entire obedience or it curses you, storing up more divine wrath against you every minute of every day. And nothing you do can appease it, satisfy it, or annul it. It will make you pay every penny—or hold you under its curse for all eternity.
 5. And the law won't give you an ounce of help or strength. It knows nothing of mercy. It has no place for repentance, apologies, or forgiveness. It won't allow a proxy, a surety, or a mediator. You're all alone. You're on your own to find help. And even if you could do better, nothing you can do can undo the evil you've already done, the least of which holds you to an eternal condemnation in hell.
- D. *The fact that a man can sit under the preaching of Christ and ignore it is the only proof we need of the reality and great misery of this natural bondage.* But let a man only lift up his eyes in his sin and cry to God for mercy on his lost soul, and the Stronger One will instantly come and set him free.
- II. The duty incumbent upon believers
- A. Stand fast in your Christian freedom.
1. Christ has entrusted us with two things that we're to hold fast: *our Christian faith*, Jude 3, and *our Christian liberty*, Gal 5.1. Our Christian freedom was dearly bought, mercifully revealed, freely bestowed, and fully conveyed unto us by the Spirit of Christ. So let us hold it fast. *How do we do this?*
 - a) Refuse to look to the law for justification and refuse to fear the law's condemnation. It's a hard lesson to live above the law and yet to walk according to the law. But *this is the lesson a Christian has to learn: to walk according to the law in regard to duty, but to live above it in regard to comfort, neither expecting favor from the law in regard to your obedience nor fearing harsh treatment from the law in regard to your failings.*
 - b) Let the law come in to remind you of sin and if you fall into sin, but don't suffer it to arrest you and drag you into the court to be tried and judged for your sins.
 - c) *Let us learn to walk in the law as a rule of sanctification, Eph 2.10; Js 2.17, and yet to live upon Christ and the promises in regard to our justification, Rom 3.24; 5.1.* God's Word is not now, "Do this and live," but "Believe on Christ and you shall be saved." *Walk in the duties of the law, but with a gospel spirit, giving the law its honor as a good rule and Christ His glory as a complete Saviour.*
- B. Stand fast in your Christian freedom against men's opinions. Don't allow anyone to be Lord of your conscience but Christ Himself, who is Lord of your soul and life.
1. Don't give yourself up to the opinion of men, however holy and learned they are. Rather, test all things by the truth and bring all things back to the Word of God, Acts 17.11; 1Jn 4.1-6. Even the best may be mistaken. *We're to esteem holy and learned men, because their faith and practice are most probably true; but we're not to tie our boat to their ship or pin our faith on their sleeves.* We're to have none as Master of our conscience but Christ, Mt 23.9-10.
- C. Don't abuse your Christian freedom.
1. We abuse it, when in the use of it, we cause grief to others, 1Cor 8.7-13; Rom 14.13-19; Gal 5.13. Liberty was purchased for the comfort of ourselves, not for the afflicting of others.
 2. We abuse it when we use it to give ourselves allowances that God never gave. Christian liberty is a liberty bound by laws and rules. When we throw these off, we're not Christ's freedmen; we're ungodly libertines.
 3. We abuse it when we make void the law of God and think our Christian liberty gives us an exemption from Christian duty. *Christian freedom is not a freedom from service to Christ and His laws, but a freedom in service to Christ and His laws.*
 4. We abuse it when we give too much freedom to ourselves in lawful things. It's an easy thing to run from the lawful use of a thing to the unlawful abuse of it.
 5. We abuse it when we use it undutifully, denying obedience to lawful authority in lawful things upon the pretense of Christian freedom, 1Pet 2.16.
 6. We abuse it when we refuse to be tied to anything but what our spirits incline us to.