

The Christian Life

- **New Section of WCF:** Law and Liberty, Worship and Church, Civil Government
- **Christian Liberty integral to Christian Life**
 - “Christians are alive when they believe the gospel and obey the law. They blossom when they understand their liberty” (Van Dixhoorn)
 - Danger of minimizing Christian duties
- **What *must* (ought) our neighbour do?**

The Christian Life

- **What *must* (ought) our neighbour do?**
 - Explicit command or prohibition?
 - Clear inference or deduction?
- **Every ethical, spiritual standard or obligation must flow from the Scripture**
- **Integral to Reformed Worship and Christian Citizenship**

Christian Liberty

- **Inward Spiritual Condition:** not dead, but alive; freed from the dominion of sin
- **Proper Relationship with God:** motivated no longer by slavish fear, but childlike love and willing obedience

Blessings of Liberty (20.1)

The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the Gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, and 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 child-like 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. (Note the preposition in postposition!)

Blessings of Liberty (20.1)

- **No difference in *basis* of salvation in OC vs NC**
 - All people saved by faith
 - Blessings purchased by Christ; these are not cheap!
- **Evil of Afflictions:** not affliction itself (cf. Psa 119:71)
- **Sting of Death:** not of the first death
- **Victory of the Grave:** **Heb. 2:14-15**, *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*

Blessings of Liberty (20.1)

- **Special liberties and blessings for NC believers**
- **Freedom from ceremonial Law**
- **Great boldness in approaching God**
- **Freer and fuller access to God in Christ:**
difference of degree, not of kind

Against Legalism (20.2)

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing 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.

Against Legalism (20.2)

- **God Alone is Lawgiver:** “hallmark” of Christian liberty
- **Liberating reality of God as Lord of Conscience**
 - Freed from doctrines and commandments of men
 - Freedom from commands against God’s word
 - Free in Christian faith and worship: Reformed Church stops where God stops speaking
 - More in Chapt 21, “Religious Worship...”

Against Legalism (20.2)

- **Only Perfect Rule: God’s Word**
 - No obligations to believe ANYTHING beside or contrary to God’s word
 - Scripture is complete and ACCESSIBLE for all people to judge controversies (Cf. 2 Tim 3.15-17)

Acts 17:11 *Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*

Against Legalism (20.2)

- **Only Perfect Rule: God's Word**
 - Resist even lawful authorities when they oppose the Lord of the Conscience (Cf. Acts 4.19-20)
- **Christian Faith is not implicit faith:**
 - personal, living, active faith
 - "What the church says or will say, I believe"
- **Man, Church May Not Bind the Conscience:**
only Christ the Lawgiver may *bind* the conscience

Against Antinomianism (20.3)

They who, upon pretence 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.

Against Antinomianism (20.3)

- **Liberty purchased by Christ:** is that a reason to disobey the King's word?
 - **Christian Liberty makes us free to obey God without hinderance Man's traditions or preferences**
- 1 Peter 2:16-17,** *Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*

Against Antinomianism (20.3)

- **Mutual Duties of Christians:** limits our liberty
 - Not to cause another Christian to stumble
 - Areas of ambiguity require prudence, discernment, patience, and **charity**
 - Liberty is no longer liberty when it infringes on the rights or peace of others

Power of State and Church (20.4)

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 pretence 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, and by the power of the civil magistrate.

Power of State and Church (20.4)

- **Authority of State Established by God:** “Good government and Christian liberty are mutually complementary” (CVD)
- **“Established authorities are conveyors of God’s authority insofar as authorities carry out law of God naturally or scripturally revealed and are to be obeyed as unto the Lord”**
(John Gerstner)

Power of State and Church (20.4)

- **State has right to compel obedience to just Laws**
 - Simply being a Christian does not exempt one from submission to the State
 - Must obey lawful commands
- **Exceptions: Violations of Natural Rights**
 - May claim civil rights, but not resist
 - Refuse to obey commands that violate natural rights (i.e. God's Law)

Power of State and Church (20.4)

- **God Established Church Authority**
 - Duty from God to discipline those who practice opinions contrary to scripture within Church (cf. I Cor 5, II Tim 3.5, 14, I Tim 6.4)
 - Scripture contains strong condemnation of those who foment trouble in the church!

Power of State and Church (20.4)

- **Censures of Magistrate *and* Church?**
 - May the magistrate punish ecclesiastical offenses?
 - Some offenses in Spiritual realm require referral to civil magistrate as well
 - The church is not a nation, but scattered among the nation
 - Magistrate ought not to enact laws contrary to Natural Law/Revelation or ignore violations of it
