

Emmaus Essentials
The London Baptist Confession of 1689
Chapter 21: Of Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience
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Chapter Outline taken from *ST 535 Baptist Symbolics Chapter Outlines* by Dr. Renihan

Introduction

John Owen - this is the second principle of the Reformation

Calvin - emphasized relation between Christ's death and the Christian's liberty - freedom was not merely granted. It was purchased.

Dangers on the right and left - antinomianism, legalism

I. Christian Liberty Defined Para 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 rigour and curse of the law, and in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin, from the evil of afflictions, the fear and sting of death, the victory of the grave, and ever-lasting 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 for the substance of them; but under the New Testament the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of a 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."

(Galatians 3:13; Galatians 1:4; Acts 26:18; Romans 8:3; Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Romans 8:15; Luke 1:73-75; 1 John 4:18; Galatians 3:9, 14; John 7:38, 39; Hebrews 10:19-21)

A. The Basis: Christ's Purchase

B. It consists of (negatively - freedom from that which had power over us):

1. Freedom from:

- a) The guilt of sin (LBC 6.3)
- b) The wrath of God (LBC 6.3, 32.2)
- c) The rigor and curse of the law (LBC 7.2)

2. Deliverance from:

- a) The world
- b) The Devil
- c) The flesh

(1) Each of these no longer have power

3. Deliverance from the *evil* of afflictions

- a) "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." (Genesis 50:20, ESV)
- b) "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28, ESV)

4. (Moving from lesser to greater) Deliverance from fear and sting of death

- a) "When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:54–57, ESV)

5. Victory over the grave and everlasting damnation

C. It consists of (positively):

1. Free access to God

- a) "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God," (Hebrews 10:19–21, ESV)

2. Obedience from a child-like love

D. D. All believers have enjoyed this privilege

1. Believers under the law

- a) "so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." (Galatians 3:14, ESV)

(1) Did OT believers have access to God, for example? Indeed!

2. More so under the gospel in terms of:

- a) Freedom from the ceremonial law
- b) Greater boldness of access to God's throne

(1) All of our access is through Christ, just as it was for the OT believers

(2) The OT believers were governed by outward forms

- c) Fuller communications of the Spirit.

(1) The Holy Spirit has always been active, but for we who live in the New Covenant, the Spirit's work is fuller.

Key Scripture Texts

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—” (Galatians 3:13, ESV)

“who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,” (Galatians 1:4, ESV)

“to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” (Acts 26:18, ESV)

“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,” (Romans 8:3, ESV)

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28, ESV)

“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:54–57, ESV)

“when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.” (2 Thessalonians 1:10, ESV)

“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”” (Romans 8:15, ESV)

“the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.” (Luke 1:73–75, ESV)

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.” (1 John 4:18, ESV)

“So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.” (Galatians 3:9, ESV)

“so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.” (Galatians 3:14, ESV)

“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ”” (John 7:38, ESV)

“Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:39, ESV)

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God,” (Hebrews 10:19–21, ESV)

II. The Boundaries of Christian Liberty - Para 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 not contained in it. So that to believe such doctrines, or obey such commands out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also.”

(James 4:12; Romans 14:4; Acts 4:19, 29; 1 Corinthians 7:23; Matthew 15:9; Colossians 2:20, 22, 23; 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 1:24)

A. God alone is Lord, thus the conscience is free (we must look to God)

1. Free from the doctrines of men
2. Free from the commands of men
 - a) Contrary to the Word
 - b) Or not contained in it
 - (1) Violation against Christian liberty made by Pope and his Bishops in 17th century
 - (2) The Puritans are against *religious* impositions

B. Liberty of conscience is destroyed by:

1. Believing human doctrines
 - a) Human doctrines are those that claim to be matters of faith and religion, but not drawn from scripture
 - b) “in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ” (Matthew 15:9, ESV)
2. Or obeying human commands
 - a) Religious authority not from scripture
 - (1) Very important warning to those in Christian ministry - what we say must be from the scriptures and not based upon personal preference or cultural norms
 - (a) I am careful when giving advice
 - (b) I’m much more bold in proclaiming God’s revealed truth

C. Liberty of conscience is also destroyed by:

1. Requiring an implicit faith
 - a) “You must do what we say because we know what’s best - trust us/trust me...”
2. Requiring absolute and blind obedience

a) Unquestioning, unreasoning obedience

Key Scripture Texts

“There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?” (James 4:12, ESV)

“Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.” (Romans 14:4, ESV)

“But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge,” (Acts 4:19, ESV)

“And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,” (Acts 4:29, ESV)

“You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men.” (1 Corinthians 7:23, ESV)

“in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ” (Matthew 15:9, ESV)

“If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—” (Colossians 2:20, ESV)

“(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?” (Colossians 2:22, ESV)

“These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.” (Colossians 2:23, ESV)

“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.” (1 Corinthians 3:5, ESV)

“Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.” (2 Corinthians 1:24, ESV)

III. The Perversion of Christian Liberty - Para 3

“They who upon pretence of Christian liberty do practice any sin, or cherish any sinful lust, as they do thereby pervert the main design of the grace of the gospel to their own destruction, so they wholly destroy the end of Christian liberty, which is, that being delivered out of the hands of all our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our lives.”

(Romans 6:1, 2; Galatians 5:13; 2 Peter 2:18, 21)

A. Sinning under pretense (here the danger of Christian liberty is addressed - licentiousness)

1. Brings personal destruction
2. Destroys Christian Liberty

- a) "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." (Galatians 5:13, ESV)

B. The goal of Christian Liberty

1. Deliverance from the hands of our enemies
2. So that we might serve the Lord
 - a) True liberty is not license to sin - it is freedom to serve the Lord from the heart

Key Scripture Texts

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:1-2, ESV)

"For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." (Galatians 5:13, ESV)

"For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error." (2 Peter 2:18, ESV)

"For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them." (2 Peter 2:21, ESV)

Conclusion

No antinomianism

No neonomianism