

Blueprints for Belief

Laying the Theological Foundations for Constructing Your Faith

Westminster Confession of Faith 20.1-4 – Christian Liberty

- Christians are free from the guilt of sin, God’s condemning wrath, and the curse of the law through Christ.
 - *Romans 8:1* – “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- This liberty grants free, joyful access to God, producing willing obedience rather than fearful servitude.
 - *Romans 8:15* – “You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption...”
- “God alone is Lord of the conscience.”
 - *James 4:12* – “There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy.”
- Human commands that contradict or go beyond God’s Word may not be imposed as necessary for faith or worship.
 - *Colossians 2:20-23* – “Why... do you submit to regulations— ‘Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch’... according to human precepts and teachings? 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.”
- Christian liberty must not be used as an excuse for sin.
 - *1 Peter 2:16* – “Live as people who are free... not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil.”
- True liberty always promotes holiness and obedience to God.
 - *James 1:25* – “But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres ... he will be blessed in his doing.”
- Christian liberty does not free believers from obedience to lawful civil or church authority.
 - *Romans 13:1* – “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities...”

Discussion Questions

1. When Christians disagree over non-essential matters (e.g., alcohol use, worship style, schooling choices, political engagement), how can we honor *God as Lord of the conscience* while still pursuing unity and love within the church?
2. In what ways might we use “Christian freedom” to excuse attitudes or behaviors that Scripture calls sin?
3. How should Christians respond when civil or church authorities make decisions we disagree with but that do not require us to sin—and what does faithful submission look like in those moments?

Westminster Confession of Faith – Chapter 20

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.