

## FREEDOM AS INTERPERSONAL

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Freedom means moving in accordance with reality. Freedom is not detachment from everything; that would be lostness. It means moving in conformity with what is there. The interpersonal connection lies in acknowledging the presence of God and other persons and in living with them instead of striving after an unreal individualism. Fulfillment comes from association; people must live in conformity with the fact that they are persons designed for relationship with persons. A certain amount of individual limitation is necessary to be free because other reality exists. Proper relationship to God sets the stage for proper relationship to everything else. Divine fellowship sets the stage for objective freedom.

Freedom applies to our relationship to the will of God (eschatological) and the existence of God (existential). We internalize God's "laws" in our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34) under the New Covenant. His values originate outside us, but we do not feel hemmed in and held down by them, because we internalize them. We feel impelled from within by what we have owned rather than compelled from outside by the will of Another. When we love the One who wills for us, his commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:3). When we internalize the word (Jeremiah 31), we personalize it (1 John 5:3; 2 Corinthians 3:2-6a).

Being free from law means being free from the perfection requirement in a works system (Galatians 3:1). Christ nailed the Law to the cross (Colossians 2:13-14), so to speak, not to eliminate expectancies, but to shift from a legal to an interpersonal grounding for them. Freedom from perfection frees us for better performance because the pressure to avoid every failure allows us to concentrate on succeeding. An athlete is more likely to hit the foul shot if the game does not depend on it; otherwise, even a good athlete more easily "chokes." It is a question now of acceptance by another person, not constant success in measuring up to some standard. As long as the heart endeavors to do, aspires to be, and wants to please, the difference between performance and perfection is "made up for" by the repentance-forgiveness process, by "understanding" on the other person's part. Releasing us from the necessity of perfection is liberating. We are free from the Law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

Freedom from perfection likewise means freedom from past sin and from the sense of guilt and rejection that goes with it (death). In an interpersonal system, the past is irrelevant to the present unless someone holds it against us or we do not change from it. But when by repentance we separate from our past sins, we affirm that we are no longer what such actions represent. By forgiveness God also removes our past from affecting the way he views us in present relationship. Even though we still remember that we have sinned against someone, our

conscience stops bothering us when that person no longer holds our failure against us. We can now forget about it. Release from guilt brings relief from conscience, and life begins again in fellowship.

Being free from law also means being free from abstract rules and regulations and committing instead to a Person's expectancy. "Works" are done to a standard; "faith" is done to a Person. Works are done to a result; faith is done toward another. The former feels dissociated from the other person; the latter stresses the personal association with the other's expectations. With that difference come freedom from an impersonal milieu and reconciliation into a personal association with its more natural kind, and greater degree, of motivation. Christ delivers us from the frustration of failure and liberates us to a new life that is life indeed (Romans 7:7-25).