

## Scriptures and Doctrine :: A Dialogue Between Antinomian and His Holy Friend

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A DIALOGUE BETWEEN AN ANTINOMIAN AND HIS FRIEND

By

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The Works of John Wesley

Volume 10 -- Chapters 15 and 16

Antinomian -- Well met, my friend. I am glad to see you. I am sorry to hear that you have changed your religion.

Friend -- Changed my religion! I do not know what you mean.

Ant.-- You once believed, we are saved by faith.

Friend -- Undoubtedly; and so I do still.

Ant. -- Do you believe, then, that the "whole work of man's salvation was accomplished by Jesus Christ on the cross?"

Friend -- I believe, that, by that one offering, he made a full satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

Ant.--But do you believe that "Christ's blood and our sins went away together?"

Friend --To say the truth, I do not understand it.

Ant.-- NO! Why, did not Christ, "when he was upon the cross, take away, put an end to, blot out, and utterly destroy all our sins?"

Friend -- Did he then heal the wound before it was made, and put an end to our sins before they had a beginning? This is so palpable an absurdity, that I don't see how you can swallow it.

Ant.--I thought you would come to your "carnal reasoning." What has faith to do with reasoning ?

Friend -- Do you ever read the Bible? Does not God himself say to sinners, "Come now and let us reason together, (Isa \_1:18)?" Does not our Lord reason continually; with the Scribes and Pharisees; St. Peter with the Jews; (Act\_2:14) and St. Paul with both the Jews and the Gentiles? Nay, is not the far greater part of his Epistles, both to the Romans and to the Galatians, and the far greatest part of that to the Hebrews, one entire train of reasoning?

Ant. -- You may do what you please, but I do not reason but believe.

Friend -- Now, I believe and reason too: for I find no inconsistency. And I would just as soon put out my eyes to secure my faith as lay aside my reason.

Ant.--But do not men abuse their reason continually?" Therefore it is best to have nothing to do with it.

Friend -- So, now you are doing the very thing you condemn! You are reasoning against reasoning. And no wonder; for it is impossible. Without reasoning, to prove or to disprove anything.

Ant. But can you disprove the facts? Do not men abuse their reason continually?

Friend -- They do. The fact I do not deny. But I deny the inference drawn from it, for if we must lay aside whatever men abuse continually, we must lay aside the Bible; yes, and food and drink too.

Ant.-- Well, but come to the point. In what do you trust for salvation?

Friend -- In the merits of Christ alone, which are mine if I truly believe that he loved me, and gave himself for me.

Ant.-- If! So you make salvation conditional!

Friend -- And do not you? Else you make God a liar: For his express words are, "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned." What is this but to say, "If, you believe, (there is the condition) you shall be saved".

Ant.--But I do not like that word condition.

Friend -- Then find a better, and we will lay it aside.

Ant.--However, I insist upon it, "nothing else but faith is required" in order to justification and salvation.

Friend -- What do you mean by "nothing else is required"?

Ant.-- I mean, "there is but one duty, which is that of believing. One must do nothing, but quietly attend the voice of the Lord. The gates of heaven are shut upon workers, and open to believers. If we do nothing for heaven, we do as much as God requires."

Friend -- Do you really mean, we are to do nothing, in order to present or final salvation, but "only believe?"

Ant.-- Did I not tell you so? "To believe certainly, that Christ suffered death for us," is enough, we want no more. We are justified by our submitting in our judgments to the truth of God's grace in Christ Jesus. It is not necessary that a man do any works, that he be justified and saved. God does not require you to do anything, that you may be saved or justified. The law sets you to work, but the gospel binds you to do nothing at all. Nay, the works not only are not required, but forbidden. God forbids us to work for justification. And when the Apostle Paul presses men to believe, it is as much as if he had forbidden them to work;"

Friend -- Let Paul speak for himself. In the twenty sixth chapter of Acts. He relates how our Lord sent him "to open the eyes of the Gentiles,-- that they might receive remission of sins," (Act\_26:17-18,) "Whereupon," saith he, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; but showed-- to the Gentiles, that they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." So far was he from "bidding them not to work," while he was "pressing them to believe."

Ant.-- You are got to your carnal reasoning again.

Friend -- Carnal reasoning, I perceive, is a cant term, which you use when you don't know what else to say. But I am not through with this instance yet. Did St. Paul, indeed, preach to those Heathens according to the instructions given him from heaven, or not?

Ant.-- Without doubt, he did; otherwise he would have been "disobedient to the heavenly vision."

Friend -- How say you then that a minister ought to preach nothing but "Believe, believe?" and, that to tell men of doing anything, is "preaching the law?" Do not you herein condemn, not only the great apostle, but also Him that sent and commanded him "thus to preach?"

Ant.-- Why, surely, you would not have us to be "under the law!"

Friend -- I fear you do not know what that expression means; St. Paul uses it thrice in his Epistle to the Romans. five times in that to the Galatians, and in one passage of his former epistle to the Corinthians; where he declares in what sense he was himself "under the law," and what sense he was not. "Unto them that are under the law," (that still adhere to the whole Jewish dispensation,) "I became as under the law," (I conformed to the Jewish ceremonies,) "that I might gain them that are under the law: But unto them that are without the law: Being," meantime, "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ," 1Co\_9:20-21.

Ant.-- But does not St. Paul say to the believers Rome "Ye are not under the law but under grace?"

Friend -- He does; and his meaning is, "Ye are not under the Jewish, but the gracious Christian, dispensation:" As also in the next verse, where he says, "We are not under the law, but under grace."

Ant. -- But what does he mean, when he says to the Galatians, "Before faith came, we were kept under the law?"

Friend -- Doubtless he means, we were kept under the Jewish dispensation, till we believed in Christ. (Gal\_3:19.) And so we read in the next chapter, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made under the law," (the Jewish dispensation,) "to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;" (Gal\_4:5;) might serve God, without fear, in righteousness and holiness, with a free, loving, child-like spirit.

Ant. -- You cannot persuade me to this; I know better. The law of works (the moral law, as you call it) is nothing to me. "From any demand of the law, no man is obliged to go one step, to give away one farthing, to eat, or omit one morsel For what did our Lord do with the law? He abolished it."

Friend -- However, ought not we, after we believe in him, to obey all the commandments of Christ?

Ant. -- Obey! law! works! commandments! O What "legalness is in your spirit!" So, I suppose, "your comforts vanish away when you are not assured that you obey all Christ's commandments!" On the contrary, "a spiritual man beholdeth justifying grace in believing, without his obedience to commands for external worship and good works."

Friend -- But how does this agree with numberless texts of Scripture? In particular, with those words of our Lord, "Think not that I am come to destroy" (or abolish) "the law: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." (Mat\_5:17, &c.)

Ant. -- I tell you plainly, I will not reason.

Friend -- That is as much as to say, "I will not be convinced: I love darkness rather than light."

Ant. -- No; it is you that are in darkness. I was so till a few weeks since. But now my eyes are opened. I see my liberty now. Now I am free. I was in bondage long enough.

Friend -- What are you free from?

Ant. -- From sin, and hell, and the devil, and the law.

Friend -- You put the law of God in goodly company. But how came you to be free from the law?

Ant. -- Christ made me free from it.

Friend -- What! From his own law? Pray, where is that written?

Ant. -- Here, Gal\_3:13 : "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

Friend -- What is this to the purpose? This tells me, that "Christ hath redeemed us" (all that believe) "from the curse," or punishment, justly due to our past transgressions of God's law. But it speaks not a word of redeeming us from the law, any more than from love or heaven. But what do you mean by bondage?

Ant. -- Why, the being bound to keep the law.

Friend -- You have no tittle of Scripture for this. Bondage to fear and bondage to sin are mentioned there; and bondage to the ceremonial law of Moses: But, according to your sense of the word, all the angels in heaven are in bondage.

Ant. -- Well, I am not bound. St. Paul himself says to believers, "Why are ye subject to ordinances?" (Col\_2:20.)

Friend -- True; that is, why are you Christian believers subject to Jewish ordinances? Such as those which are mentioned in the very next verse, "Touch not, taste not, handle not."

Ant. -- Nay, that is not all. I say, "Outward things do nothing avail to salvation." This is plain; for "if love to God, and love

to our neighbor, and relieving the poor, be altogether unprofitable and unavailable either to justification or salvation; then these outward works, in submitting to outward ordinances, are much less available."

Friend -- Do you speak of the ordinances of Christ?

Ant. -- I do. "They bring in the most dangerous kind of Popery, and pervert the pure gospel of Christ, who persuade men, that if they do not submit to the ordinances of the Lord Jesus, he will not confess them before the Father." And I affirm, "it is better not to practice outward ordinances at all, than to practice them on these gospel-destroying principles, to the ruining of our souls."

Friend -- What scripture do you produce for this?

Ant. -- I wish you would not build so much upon the letter: It is your letter-learning too, that makes you talk of inherent righteousness.

Friend -- Do you say then, a believer has no inherent righteousness?

Ant. -- That I do. I say, "God will save us to the utmost, without any righteousness or holiness of our own." To look for inherent righteousness, "is to deny the Spirit, and trample under foot the blood of the covenant. Believers have not any inherent righteousness in them. Our righteousness of Christ."

Friend -- Now, I believe that Christ by his Spirit works righteousness in all those to whom faith is imputed for righteousness.

Ant. -- "By no means; all our righteousness is in Christ. is wholly imputed, not inherent. We are always righteous in Christ, but never righteous in ourselves."

Friend -- Is not, then, every believer righteous or holy?

Ant. -- Doubtless, but he is holy in Christ, not in himself.

Friend -- Does he not live a holy life; and is he not holy of heart?

Ant. -- Most certainly.

Friend -- Is he not, by plain consequence, holy in himself?

Ant. -- No, no, in Christ only; not holy in himself: He has no holiness at all in himself.

Friend -- Has he not in him the love of God, and of his neighbor; yea, the whole image of God?

Ant. -- He has. But this is not gospel holiness.

Friend -- What vain jangling is this! You cavil at the name, while you allow the whole thing I contend for. You allow, a believer is holy both in heart and life. This is all I mean by inherent righteousness or holiness.

Ant. -- But I tell you, this is not gospel holiness. Gospel holiness is faith.

Friend -- Stand to this, and you still give up the whole cause. For, on your supposition, I argue thus: --Faith is holiness or righteousness: But faith is in every believer: Therefore, holiness or righteousness is in every believer.

Ant. -- Alas, alas! I pity you. Take my word for it, you are in utter darkness. You know nothing yet of true faith; nothing at all about it.

Friend -- Will you then be so kind as to explain it to me?

Ant. -- I will. I will make it as clear as the sun. I will show you the very marrow of thy doctrine which "I recommend, with all my heart, to all, as the most wholesome doctrine of Jesus Christ.

"Many think they know it, when they have but crude, carnal, undigested notions of it. And they imagine we rest contented with such a faith as theirs; namely, that Christ has died to ward off the wrath of God, to purchase his favor, and, as an effect of that, to obtain certain inherent qualities and dispositions, to make us meet for the kingdom of heaven. Was this our faith, it would be requisite to seek after this sort of sanctification, and not to be at rest, without we felt something of it. But, on the contrary, we believe that the blood shed upon the cross has put away and blotted out all our sins, and that then there was an everlasting righteousness brought in: By believing which, our hearts and consciences are made as perfectly clean as though we had never sinned. In this consists true purity of soul, and not in habitual qualities. And who so are thus made pure and perfect are delivered from the dominion of sin. They do also bear forth the fruits of righteousness, not in order to become more holy, but because they are perfectly holy, through faith. It is true, we have still the vile, sinful body, which continually disposes the mind to evil. But the blood of Jesus makes us free from sin, and, as it were, destroys the connection."

Friend -- Of all the accounts I have ever yet heard, this is the most "crude and undigested." But let us go over it step by step. You first described what you judge a false faith, viz., "A faith that Christ hath died, to ward off" (or appease) "the wrath of God, and to purchase his favor;" (suppose, for me, a lost sinner;) "and as an effect of that," (of god's favor bought with the blood of Christ,) "to obtain" for me "certain inherent qualities and dispositions, to make me meet for the kingdom of heaven." Now, how do you prove this to be false faith?

Ant. -- Easily enough: for men "are obliged to support it by frames, feelings, and works."

Friend -- And did not you allow, just now, that whoever has true faith is "holy both of heart and life?" That he has in him "the love of God and of his neighbor; yea, the whole image of God?"

Ant. -- I did. And what then?

Friend -- Why, then you have abundantly confuted yourself: For you have allowed, that true faith not only cannot be supported, but cannot exist, no, not for one moment, without "certain inherent qualities and dispositions," (viz., the love of G

od and of all mankind,) "which makes us meet for the kingdom of heaven." You have allowed, that true faith cannot subsist without a holy frame of heart, a continuance in good works, and a feeling sense of God's love to me, a sinner.

Ant.- I hear you. Go on.

Friend -- You said next, "Was this our faith, it would be requisite to seek after this sort of sanctification." From your own words it appears, that this is your faith, if you have any true faith at all. See then that you "seek after this sort of sanctification," viz., the love of God and of your neighbor. For if you can be at rest, though you feel nothing of it, it is plain your heart is not clean, but hardened.

Ant. -- You may say what you please. You know no better.

Friend -- You went on: "On the contrary, we believe that the blood shed upon the cross has put away and blotted out all our sins." Why, who believes otherwise? If you mean only, that Christ then put away the punishment of all our sins, who believe in him; what a marvelous discovery is this! I pray, whom doth this arguing reprove?

Ant. -- It reproves you, who deny that "an everlasting righteousness was then brought in."

Friend -- I do not deny it; No more than you understand it. But I ask, in what sense was it "brought in?" What was it brought into? Was it then first brought into the world? You cannot say this, without saying that all who went out of the world before that hour were lost. Or was it brought into the souls of believers? Then believers have an inward or inherent righteousness. You had better, therefore, let this text alone. It will do no service at all to your cause.

Ant. -- I see plain you are as blind as a beetle still. I am afraid your head-knowledge will destroy you. Did not I tell you, "Our hearts and consciences are made perfectly clean by our believing; and that in this consists true purity of soul, and not in habitual qualities? Thus we are made perfectly holy." And though "the vile, sinful body continually disposes the mind to evil," yet "the blood of Christ makes us free from sin, and, as it were, destroys the connection."

Friend -- Destroys the connection of what? I doubt you have stumbled upon another word which you do not understand. But whether you understand yourself or no, it is sure I do not understand you. How can my mind at the same time it is "continually disposed to evil," be "free from sin, perfectly clean, perfectly holy?"

Ant. -- O the dullness of some men! I do not mean really holy, but holy by imputation. I told you plainly, the holiness of which we speak is not in us, but in Christ. "The fruits of the Spirit, (commonly called sanctification,) such as love, gentleness, longsuffering, goodness, meekness, temperance, neither make us holy before God, nor in our own consciences."

Friend -- I know these cannot atone for one sin. This is done by the blood of Christ alone: For the sake of which, God forgives, and works these in us by faith. Do I reach your meaning now?

Ant. -- No, no; I wonder at your ignorance. I mean, "we are not made good or holy by any inward qualities or dispositions: But being made pure and holy in our consciences, by believing in Christ, we bear forth, inwardly and outwardly, the fruits of holiness." Now, I hope, you understand me.

Friend -- I hope not. For, if I do, you talk as gross nonsense and contradiction as ever came out of the mouth of man.

Ant. -- How so?

Friend -- You say, "We are not made good or holy by any inward qualities or dispositions." No! are we not made good by inward goodness? (observe, we are not speaking of justification, but sanctification;) holy, by inward holiness? meek, by inward meekness? gentle, by inward gentleness? And are not all these, if they are anything at all, "inward qualities or dispositions?"

Again: Just after denying that we have any inward holiness, you say, "We are made holy in our consciences, and bear forth, inwardly and outwardly, the fruits of holiness." What heaps of self-contradiction are here!

Ant. -- You do not take me right. I mean, these inward dispositions "are not our holiness. For we are not more holy, if we have more love to God and man, nor less holy, if we have less."

Friend -- No! Does not a believer increase in holiness, as he increases in the love of God and man?

Ant. -- I say, No. "The very moment he is justified, he is wholly sanctified. And he is neither more nor less holy, from that hour, to the day of his death. Entire justification and entire sanctification are in the same instant. And neither of them is thence forth capable either of increase or decrease.

Friend -- I thought we were to grow in grace!

Ant. -- "We are so; but not in holiness. The moment we are justified, we are as pure in heart as ever we shall be. A new-born babe is as pure in heart as a father in Christ. There is no difference."

Friend -- You do well to except against Scripture and reason. For till a man has done with them, he can never swallow them. I understand your doctrine now, far better than I like it. In the main, you are talking much and saying nothing; laboring, as if you had found out the most important truths, and such as none ever knew before. And what does all this come to at the last? A mere, empty "strife of words." All that is really uncommon in your doctrine is a heap of broad absurdities, in most of which you grossly contradict yourselves, as well as Scriptures and common sense. In the meantime, you boast and vapor, as if "ye were the men, and wisdom should die with you." I pray God to "humble you, and prove you, and show you what is in your hearts!"

Friend. -- Well met! You have had time to consider. What think you of our last conference.

Antinomian. -- I think, "the giving of scandalous names has no warrant from Scripture."

Friend. -- Scandalous names!

Ant. -- Yes; you called me Antinomian. But our Savior bids me not return railing for railing.

Friend. -- St. Peter does and that is all one. But how is that a scandalous name? I think it is properly your own; for it means, "one that speaks against the law," And this you did at that time very largely. But pray what would you have me call you?

Ant. -- "A Preacher of God's righteousness,"

Friend. -- What do you call me then?

Ant. -- "A Preacher of inherent righteousness."

Friend. -- That is, in opposition to God's righteousness. So you mean, a Preacher of such righteousness as is inconsistent with that righteousness of God which is by faith.

Ant. -- True; For, "I plainly perceive you know but one sort of righteousness, that is, the righteousness of inherent qualities, dispositions, and works. And this is the reason why the language of the Holy Ghost seems foolishness unto you; even because the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."

Friend. -- Are you absolutely sure that this is the reason why I do not think or speak as you do?

Ant. -- The thing speaks for itself; "Thou hast forgotten the Lord, and hast trusted on falsehood. Therefore, saith the Lord, "I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear."

Friend. -- Peremptory enough! (dogmatic) But you will not return railing for railing, so out of mere tenderness and respect you pronounce me a "natural man," and one who has forgotten the Lord and hath "trusted in falsehood!"

Ant.-- And so you are, if you do not believe in Christ. Pray let me ask you another question: Do you believe that "Christ hath appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself?"

Friend. -- I do.

Ant.-- But in what sense?

Friend. -- I believe he made, by that one oblation of himself, once offered, a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. And yet he hath not done all which was necessary for the absolute, infallible, inevitable "salvation of the whole world." if he had, the whole world would be saved; whereas, "he that believeth not shall be damned."

Ant. -- But is it not said, "He was wounded for our transgressions, and with his stripes we are healed?" And is he not the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world?"

Friend. -- Yes. But this does not prove that he "put an end to our sins before they had a beginning!"

Ant. -- O ignorance! Did not our sins begin in Adam?

Friend. -- Original sin did. But Christ will not put an end to this before the end of the world. And, as to actual, if I now feel anger at you in my heart, and it breaks out in reproachful words; to say Christ put an end to this before it had a beginning, is a glaring absurdity.

Ant. -- But I say, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. He hath made him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." And St. Peter says, "who his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree."

Friend. -- To what purpose do you heap all those scriptures together? to prove that Christ put an end to our sins before they had a beginning? If not, spare your labor; for they are quite foreign to the present question.

Ant. -- However, that is not foreign to the present question, which you said the other day; viz, that Christ has only redeemed us from the punishment due to our past transgressions.

Friend. -- I neither said so. nor thought so. You either carelessly or willfully misrepresent my words. On your quoting that text, "Christ hath redeemed us (all that believe) from the curse or punishment justly due to our past transgressions of God's law. But it speaks not a word of redeeming us from the law, any more than from love or heaven."

Ant. -- Past Transgressions! "then who must redeem us from. those which are to come, since there remains no more sacrifice for sin?"

Friend. -- The same Jesus Christ. by the same merit of that one sacrifice, then applied to the conscience when we believe, as you yourself have often asserted. But whatever punishment he redeems us from, that punishment supposes sin to precede; which must exist first, before there is any possibility of its being either punished or pardoned.

Ant. -- You have a strange way of talking. You say, "We are forgiven for the sake of the blood of Christ."

Friend--And do not you?

Ant. -- No; I say, "We have forgiveness in his blood, and not merely for the sake of it."

Friend. -- You are perfectly welcome to say so.

Ant. Enough of this. Let me ask you another question. Do affirm, that salvation is "conditional?"

Friend. -- I affirm, "He that believeth shall be saved and he that believeth not shall be damned." And can you or any other deny this? If not, why do you fight about a word? me merit of especially after all told you, "Find me a better, and I will lay it aside."

Ant. -- "Then this faith leaves you in the just the same state as it found you; that is, still having the condition to perform."

Friend. -- Not so; for faith itself is that condition.

Ant. -- Nay, "faith is only necessary in order to receive forgiveness of salvation; not to procure it by way of condition."

Friend. -- Enough, enough. You grant all that desire. If you allow that "faith is only necessary to receive forgiveness or salvation," this is the whole of what I mean by terming it a condition. A procuring or meritorious course is quite another

Ant. -- But you say that "faith is not true faith, unless it be furnished with love,"

Friend. -- Furnished with love! Where did you pick up that awkward phrase?. I never used it in my life. But I say you do not have true faith unless your faith "worketh by love;" and that though "I have all faith so that I could even remove mountains, yet if I have not love I am nothing.

Ant. -- Will you answer me one question more? Is not a believer free from the law?

Friend. -- He is free from the Jewish ceremonial law; that is, he does not, and need not, observe it. And he is freed from the curse of the moral law; but he is not free from observing it. He still walks according to this rule, and so much the more because God has written it own his heart.

Ant. -- But St. Paul says, "Christ is the end of the law for every one who believeth."

Friend. -- He is so. He put an end to the Mosaic dispensation, and established a better covenant, in virtue whereof "faith is counted for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Ant. -- But still "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse," are they not?

Friend. -- They are; as many as still seek to be justified by the works of the law; that is, by any works antecedent to, or independent on, faith in Christ.

Ant. -- But does not the apostle say farther, "Ye are become dead to the law?"

Friend. -- You are so, as to its condemning power, if you truly believe in Christ. For there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." But not as to its directing power; for you "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." You love him, and keep his commandments."

Ant. -- That is not all. I maintain, "a believer is entirely free from the law."

Friend. -- By what scripture do you prove that?

Ant. -- By Gal\_4:4-5 : God sent forth his Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law."

Friend. -- the plain meaning of this I mentioned before; "God sent forth his Son, made under the law," (the Jewish dispensation), to redeem them that were under the law , that we might receive the adoption of sons; might 'serve God without fear, in righteousness and holiness', with a free, a loving child-like spirit."

Ant. -- So you say, "Christ was made only under the Jewish dispensation, to redeem the Jews from that dispensation."

Friend. -- But I never affirmed, He was "made under it only to redeem the Jews from that dispensation ."

Ant. -- Was he made "under the moral law" at all?

Friend. -- No doubt he was. For the Jewish dispensation included the moral, as well as ceremonial, law.

Ant. -- Then the case is plain. "If he was under the moral law, we are redeemed from the moral law."

Friend. -- That does not follow. "He redeemed them that were under" this, as well as the ceremonial, "law." but from guilt, and sin, and hell." In other words, He redeemed them from the "condemnation of this law," not from "obedience to it." In this respect they are still, "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." (1Co\_9:21.)

Ant. -- "Under the law to Christ!" No. The Greek word is evvomos Xpizw, in a law to Christ; that is, the law of love had liberty".

Friend. -- Very True. This is the exact thing I mean. You have spoken the very thought of my heart .

Ant. -- It may be so. But "a believer is free from the law of commandments," call it moral, or what you please.

Friend. -- Do you mean only, that he obeys the law of Christ, by free choice, and not by constraint? that he keeps the commandments of God, out of love, not fear? If so, you may triumph without an opponent. But if you mean, he is free from obeying that law, then your liberty is a liberty to disobey God .

Ant. -- God forbid! It is "a liberty to walk in the Spirit, and not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Friend. -- Why, this is the very thing I am contending for. The very thing I daily assert is this , that Christian liberty is a liberty to obey God, and not to commit sin.

Ant. -- But how do understand those words of St. Paul , that Christ "blotted out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us. which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way?" Col\_2:14

Friend. -- I understand them of Jewish ordinances; which it is plain St. Paul himself did, by the inference he immediately draws: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink," (the ordinances touching these being "now taken out of the way,") "or in respect of an holy day," (once observed,) "or of the new moon, or of the" (Jewish) "Sabbaths."

Ant. -- But how could the "hand-writing" of these "ordinances be said to be "against us," or to be "contrary to us"?

Friend. -- I will not insist on the criticism of those who render the words, "over against us," as alluding to the "hand-writing on the wall" which appeared to King Belshazzar. The words of St. Peter suffice, which will bear no dispute, who, speaking of these same ordinances, calls them "a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear."

Ant. -- You must then understand those words of our Lord, of the moral law alone: "Think not that I am come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass till all be fulfilled."

Friend. -- The former evasion will do you no service with regard to this clause For the word "all" in this does not refer to the law, but to heaven and earth and "all things" therein: The original sentence running thus: Ews av wavla yentai, Nor in

deed is the word *yentai* well rendered by the ambiguous word "fulfilled," which would easily induce an English reader to suppose it was the same word that was rendered so just before; it should rather be translated accomplished, finished, or done; as they will be in the great and terrible day of the Lord, when the "earth and the heavens shall flee from his face, and there shall be no place found for them."

Ant. -- But why did you say, my account of sanctification was crude and indigested?

Friend. -- Let me hear it again. If it be better digested than it was, I shall rejoice.

Ant. -- "Our minds are either defiled and impure, or pure and holy. The question is, Which way is a defiled and impure mind to be made a good one?" You saw, "By love meekness., gentleness." I say, By believing in Christ. By this, my conscience becomes purged and cleaned, as though I had not committed sin. And such a purged conscience bears forth the fruit of love, meekness, gentleness, &c. It is therefore absurd to say, "we are made good by goodness, meek by meekness, or gentle by gentleness. We are only denominated from the fruits of the Spirit.

Friend. -- You have mended the matter a little, and not much, for. 1. "The question," say you, "is, Which way is a defiled and impure mind, to be made a good one?" Nothing less. The present question between you and me is this, and no other, Has a believer any goodness in him at all? any love. or meekness, or gentleness? 2. You say, An impure mind is made good by goodness, &c. I say, By believing on Christ." This is mere playing on words. If the question stood thus, "Which way is an evil mine to be made good?" You are conscious that I would make the very same reply.--by believing in Jesus Christ." 3. "By this my conscience becomes purged and clean, as though I had not committed sin. For you run away from the question, notwithstanding that express caution, "Observe, we are not speaking of justification, but sanctification. 4. "And such a purged conscience bears forth the fruit of love, meekness, or gentleness in him.

Ant. -- Then how dare you affirm, that a believer in Christ "is not really holy?"

Friend. -- You have forgotten yourself. I affirm that he is. If you affirm so too, our dispute is at an end. For if he is really holy, then he is inwardly or inherently holy. and if you grant this, you may express it as you please. I have no leisure for strife of words.

Ant. -- But why will not you cut off any occasion of such strife, by speaking as I do?.

Friend. -- I cannot in good conscience speak in the way that you do; and that for several plain reasons: (Even setting aside that main consideration, whether the things you speak are right or wrong: 1. Because it is a confused way of speaking, so that unless a man has both a clear apprehension. and a large measure of patience. He will hardly find out any consistent meaning in what you say. 2. Because it is an unsure way of speaking. For you seem to mean what you do not. 3. Because it is an unscriptural way of speaking; The Scriptures both of the old and new Testament speaking. frequently and expressly, both of holiness, of good works, of the law and the commandments of God, as expressly and frequently to the full, as of believing in Jesus Christ. Because by experience I find, it is a dangerous way of speaking. and that, both to the speaker and to the hearers: To the speakers, as it has a peculiar tendency to puff him up, to engender pride; to make him exalt himself, (under the pretense of exalting the grace of God,) and despise others: To the hearers, as it keeps many who are before our eyes from ever awaking out of the sleep of death; as it throws others again into that fatal slumber who were just beginning to awake; as it stops many in the midst of their Christian course, and turns others clear out of the way; yea, and plunges not a few into all the wretchedness of unclean living. In consideration of this, I the more earnestly desire, when I speak of this head in particular, to "speak as the oracles of God;" to express scriptural sense in scriptural words; in every phrase I use, to keep as close as I can to "the law and the testimony;" being convinced there are no words so fit to express the things of God, as those which "holy men of old spake as there were moved by the Spirit of God."

London, August 24, 1745

John Wesley THE END

I love John Wesley :-)