

—Understanding the Christian’s Freedom in Christ—
Lesson 13–Question 4
Can Christ’s freedmen sin themselves into bondage again?

- I. There are two kinds of bondage to distinguish.
 - A. Universal bondage is the estate or condition of bondage in which a man is in bondage to *sin* as a slave, Tit 3.3; Rom 6.20; Jn 8.34; 2Pet 2.19, to *Satan* as a prisoner, Eph 2.2; Jn 8.41, 44; 2Tim 2.26, and to the *law of God* as an accursed and condemned criminal, Gal 3.9-11.
 - B. Partial bondage is a bondage of sorts in which a man’s comforts and obedience are affected, Gal 5.1, 7-10. He’s not a slave, but he’s lost the comforts of his sonship, and he’s not a rebel, but his disobedience is rebellious.
- II. Christ’s freedmen will never again sin themselves into an estate of bondage. They can never again become Satan’s slave, Mt 16.18; Col 1.13-14; Rom 5.1-2.
 - A. Sin may prevail in us to exercise a tyranny, but it can never obtain the sovereignty again, Rom 6.14; Jer 31.37.
 - B. A believer may be carried captive by the sins of his own heart, Rom 7.23, but he can never become the willing servant of sin, Jer 32.40. He can never be all-in again, Gal 5.17; Eph 2.22; Phil 1.6.
 - C. Satan may get the advantage over a believer, but he’ll never again be a willing servant, Rom 16.20.
 - D. The law can never again condemn a believer for his sins, because he’s not under law but under grace, Rom 6.14.
- III. Though the freedmen of Christ can’t sin themselves into an estate of bondage, yet they may sin themselves into a partial bondage. This appears in two particular cases.
 - A. In the case of their comfort.
 1. We see this in David’s case, Ps 32.3-4; 51.8, 12. If believers do the works of darkness, then they’ll find themselves walking in darkness, Ps 66.16-20.
 2. Though the promises of God are absolute, the promises of peace and comfort are largely conditional because they’re tied to the ups and downs of our obedience. It’s not that our obedience has any meriting power to procure peace. But this is the way in which God bestows His peace and comfort to us, namely, in the way of communion and fellowship with Him. If we walk in the ways of disobedience, the Lord withdraws His peace and comfort in order to draw us back to Himself, Ps 50.23; 51.10-12; 32.3-4; Jn 14.15-16, 21; Gal 6.16.
 3. Believers may sin themselves into bondage by sin but not into the bondage of sin, Isa 59.1-2; Rom 6.14.
 4. Though a believer may never sin away grace, yet he may sin away the evidence, sense, and comfort of grace, Jn 6.37; Lam 3.40; Hos 6.1. He cannot sin away his pardon, but if he walks in sin, he can sin away the sense and comfort of it because sin unrepented of brings guilt, fears, and troubles, Ps 31.9-10, 14; 38.3-8, 15-22. Bolton, “The Spirit of God is a tender and delicate Spirit. If we grieve Him, He will grieve us. If we will not follow His counsel and commands, we shall lose the comforts and joys that He brings us,” Isa 57.14-21.
 5. This teaches us that we must distinguish between the foundation of our peace with God and the enjoyment of it.
 - a) The foundation of our peace is not in us at all but in Christ. It’s not in our holiness but in His righteousness. It’s not in our walking but in His blood and suffering. He is the whole of our peace and in Him we have peace with God because He is Himself our peace, Jn 16.33; Rom 5.1-2; Eph 2.13-14.
 - b) But the flourishing and well-being of our peace depends upon the exercise of our graces and our obedient walk with God. It’s a peace purchased by Christ’s obedience, but it must be cherished and the enjoyment of it preserved by our own obedience.
 - B. In the case of their obedience.
 1. If we continue in sin, we’ll lose that joy, freedom, and cheerfulness in our obedience to God that we had before and find ourselves going on in our duties to God with a heavy and sad spirit, Ps 51.8, 12. We’ll find a weariness and irksomeness in the things that we used to enjoy.

2. Bolton, “Though sin cannot bring a godly man into the state of a slave, yet it may disable him from serving fully as a son.” “He dares not but pray, and yet he finds little heart in prayer.... His soul drives heavily in the ways of obedience. He now goes to duty as a sick man to his food.... Thus it befalls many of the saints in their relapses into sin.”