

“The Lord has made you free; you are free indeed.”

You are free from sin, death, and the power of the devil.¹
You are free to be His in this life and the next.

What does this mean?

The traditional dismissal: “**Go in peace. Serve the Lord.**” – implies the gospel is gift and task.²

But the truth of the gospel is better expressed in this end-of-service dismissal:³

Pastor: **The Lord has made you free; you are free indeed.**

People: **Thanks be to God!**

Christian freedom does not mean “anything goes” (antinomianism). At the same time Christians do not possess eternal laws to live by (nomism).

Rather, Christian freedom means we are free⁴ to be involved in life, using common reason and the sword to restrain evil, as Gerhard Forde points out:

“The line between this world and the next is drawn by God’s grace. This establishes the world as a place under the law in which man can live, work, and hope.... Hope in the world to come creates the faith and patience to live in this world; it gives this world back to us by relieving us of the burden of our restless quests. Freedom from the world makes us free for it....

“This is what it means to say that whereas the kingdom to come is a kingdom of grace the kingdom of this world is a kingdom of law.... **Law belongs to earth, not to heaven. It is natural, not supernatural....**

“That is why Luther did not speak of law as something static and unchangeable. **Laws will and must change in their form as the times demand.** Luther, for instance, refused to grant eternal status even to the laws of Moses. They are strictly ‘natural,’ he said, not unlike the common law of any nation. Men on this earth **simply don’t have access to eternal laws.** But men do have the gift of reason and the accumulated wisdom of the ages as well as the Bible. Here is the task for man’s reason and created gifts. Once cured of religious and mythological ambitions, they can be put to work as they ought: taking care of men. For in the final analysis, all man’s vocations are to be enlisted in the battle against the devil.”⁵

¹ Small Catechism IV:1, *Book of Concord*, Tappert edition, p. 348-9.

² *Gabe/Aufgabe*

³ “The glorious freedom of the children of God” (Romans 8:21). “If the Son has made you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

⁴ “The Christian is a perfectly free lord of all subject to one, and a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all” (*Luther’s Works* 31:344).

⁵ Gerhard Forde, *Where God Meets Man* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972) 110-11; emphasis added.

