

6. Freedom and Grace: Living Gospel Values

The Good Life is to live a life of freedom based on Gospel values as expressed in the Beatitudes. We cannot do so without help from God. We need the grace of Christ's Spirit. Grace heals and perfects human nature. It enables us to keep God's commandments. It enables us to live a life for God and neighbor. Grace is not opposed to freedom, but frees us from evil and empowers us to do good and live a life of virtue. The Beatitudes provide the content of the New Law; the Spirit empowers us to live it by showering us with its manifold gifts.

I. Introduction: We Know God Both Naturally and Through Revelation; God Wishes to Enter into Friendship with Us; Friendship Has Three Marks, One of Which is Reciprocity; The Good Life Must Therefore Be a Free Life; We Must Freely Return God's Love

"If You Love Me, Keep my Commandments" (John 14:15); We Cannot Keep God's Commandments Because of Our Weak Human Nature; We Need Help, We Need Jesus, We Need Grace; Grace Heals and Perfects Nature; Grace Enables Us to Keep God's Commandments; Grace Enables Us to Live the Beatitudes; Grace Enables Us to Live Gospel Values;

II. Two Types of Freedom: Here We Will Look at Two Types of Freedom (Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 1995, p. 375):

Freedom of Indifference: The Origin of Voluntarism - Definition: The power to choose between contraries. Freedom resides in the will alone. Excludes natural inclinations. It is entire from the first moment. It is entire in each free choice. It has no need of virtue. Law appears as an external restraint. Freedom is locked within self-assertion. It creates a moral theory focused on obligation and law; its relationship to Scripture is limited.

Freedom for Excellence: The Origin of Virtue Ethics - Definition: The power to act freely with excellence and perfection. It is rooted in the natural inclinations to the good and true. It is bestowed in embryo at the beginning of the moral life and must be developed. It integrates actions in view of an end, which unites them interiorly and ensures continuity.

Virtue is a dynamic quality essential to freedom. Finality is a principal element of free action. Law is a necessary external aid to the development of freedom, together with the attraction to the true and good, which is a note of inner freedom.

Freedom is open to allowing all human powers to make their contribution to its action, and to collaboration with theirs for the common good and the growth of society. Its foundation is the attraction to the true and the good, and the desire for happiness, focusing on the virtues, and oriented to quality and perfection, lending itself to a relationship with all of Scripture.

The Three Stages of Freedom for Excellence (Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 359-370): Childhood: Discipline, Detachment, Purgation
Adolescence: Progress, Detachment/Attachment, Illumination, Adulthood:
Maturity, Attachment, Union;

III. Grace - Grace Perfects Nature: It Is Not Opposed to Freedom; It Presupposes Freedom for Excellence. It Frees Us from Evil and Empowers Us to Do Good. It Enables Us to Live a Virtuous Life. It Enables Us to Live a Life of Gospel Values.

The New Law: Hylomorphic Presentation - Matter/Form; Matter (Content): The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-22); Form: The Grace of the Holy Spirit (*Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 106, a. 1, resp).

What is Grace? Distinction: Uncreated (Objective) (Holy Spirit Himself)/Created Grace (Subjective) (The Life of the Spirit Within Us); Caution: The Reification of Grace: Grace Is NOT a Thing to Be Measured.

How Grace Works: Aristotelian Virtues: Acquired Virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance; Grace Transforms Nature: Theological Virtues: Infused Virtues of Faith, Hope, Love; "There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13); Cardinal Virtues: Infused Virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance; "For she teaches moderation and prudence, justice and fortitude, and nothing in life is more useful than these." (Wisdom 8:7); Gifts of the Spirit: Wisdom – Charity; Understanding – Faith; Counsel – Prudence; Knowledge – Faith; Fortitude – Fortitude; Piety – Justice; Fear of the Lord - Hope, Temperance

IV. Virtues, Gifts, and Beatitudes: Virtues, Gifts and Beatitudes: Beatitudes are Graced Actions (Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Spiritual Life*, 2 vols., 1938, part I, article IV); Charity - Wisdom - The Peacemakers; Faith - Understanding - The Clean of Heart; Prudence - Counsel - The Merciful; Faith - Knowledge - The Mourners; Fortitude - Fortitude - The Hungry and Thirsty for Justice; Justice - Piety - The Meek; Hope, Temperance - Fear of the Lord - The Poor in Spirit

Gift, Beatitude, Petition: Fear of the Lord, the Poor in Spirit, Hallowing God's Name; Piety, Humility, May God's Kingdom Come; Knowledge, Mourning, May God's Will Be Done; Fortitude, Hungering and Thirsting for Justice, Request for Daily Bread; Counsel, Mercy, Forgiveness; Understanding, Purity of heart, Avoidance of temptations; Wisdom, Peacemaking, Deliverance from Evil

The Specific Manifestation: Spiritual and Corporal Acts of Mercy 1. Corporal Acts of Mercy: To feed the hungry; To give drink to the thirsty; To clothe the naked; To harbor the harborless; To visit the sick; To ransom the captive; To bury the dead

Spiritual Acts of Mercy: To instruct the ignorant; To counsel the doubtful; To admonish sinners; To bear wrongs patiently; To forgive willingly; To comfort the afflicted; To pray for the living and the dead

Conclusion: Living Gospel Values - The Primary Gospel Value is Life in the Spirit This Life Manifest Itself Interiorly through the Infused Theological and Cardinal Virtues, and the Gifts of the Spirit. This Life Manifests Itself Exteriorly Through the Beatitudes and the Fruits of the Spirit. This Life Manifests Itself Specifically Through the Spiritual and Corporeal Acts of Mercy.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the difference between the freedom of indifference and the freedom for excellence?
2. What does it mean to say "grace perfects nature"?
3. What is the difference between a virtue and a gift of the Spirit?