

## **Sweet Freedom in Christ!**

‡ **Not a single “Guilty!” verdict (vv.1-4)**

‡ **A lively way to walk (vv.5-10)**

In the name of Jesus, who won our freedom from sin, death and hell, dearly redeemed believers:

Perhaps it is because my Uncle Jim had polio that an article about a Minneapolis woman in an iron lung caught my eye. She has one of only about 40 iron lungs still operating in the US, but is very afraid because the company is no longer servicing them. They want everyone to switch to respirators, but she is afraid of the bacteria such a device could force into her lungs. None of us whose lungs enjoy fresh air day in and day out can begin to feel her anguish. She has been lulled to sleep for fifty-five years in this metal tube with a motor and a leather diaphragm that raises and lowers the air pressure to expand and contract her lungs. She weighs only seventy pounds. But what saddened me most was her favorite saying from the great American poet Walt Whitman: “Accept nothing that insults your soul.”

This is not meant as a judgment on Marilyn Rogers whom I don’t know. Only God knows those who are His. She could be a believer in Jesus with a bad reporter who knew what he would write no matter what she said. My wish for her and all of us here is that we might be free from fear and released from the iron grip of sin and Satan on our souls. My wish for everyone is **Sweet Freedom in Christ!**

‡ **Not a single “Guilty!” verdict (vv.1-4)**

Walt Whitman was a very religious man. He knew his Bible. But his mother belonged to the Society of Friends. And Quakers do not accept what the Lord’s Apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write in earlier chapters of this letter to the Romans. Walt Whitman wanted to inaugurate a religion that would help all religions get along as friends. For him that meant the Bible’s message of law and gospel, sin and grace would not do. The world’s religions do not accept the total depravity of man. Each one just offers another way for man to save himself or denies he needs saving at all.

But that is exactly what we all need to accept before we can enjoy the warm friendship that the just and holy God holds out for us today. For example, if you bought a powerful luxury automobile that always ran across your yard and into your house when you tried to brake, would you keep it? If your cute little puppy grew into a vicious dog that mauled your children, would you keep it, give it to a neighbor, or at least have it put to sleep? In anger you might do like most farmers and rangers and put a bullet through its head the first time it snarled at you. We cannot begin to feel God’s anguish when His perfect creation was snarled by our first parents. How heartbroken God was when their first son Cain killed their second son Abel. When death and destruction stormed into God’s world with such violence, He had no choice but to destroy it with water in the Flood. What frustration for God to look at all the people and see not one that would seek Him or love Him as He loves us. Not one could save us from ourselves.

How many times have you thanked God for the air you breathe or the fact that you can? Most of us have never known a summer like the late 1940’s and early ‘50’s when every parent’s nightmare was their child complaining of a bad headache, massive muscle aches, and within hours, full body paralysis and death. No wonder they rang the church bells throughout the land in 1954, when Dr. Jonas Salk announced successful trials of his new polio vaccine. Yet can you remember thanking God for the eradication of this and so many other diseases in our land? Or do you and I get out of bed complaining of minor muscle aches even though our eyes still see, our hearts still beat, our lung can breathe? Ungrateful sinners everyone one of us! This alone gives God reason to crumple us up and just start over.

But instead of giving in to hurt and anger for us trashing His friendship, God gives us grace, His undeserved love through the perfect life and innocent death of His own dear Son in our place.

***“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”*** Sin and death gripped us like an iron lung that would not let us breathe or go out and dance the way we wanted. And we could not escape no matter how hard we tried, no matter what medical technology invented. Even the commands of God only made us more helpless to help ourselves. ***“For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.”*** God got to the heart of the problem not by giving us a respirator, but by giving us new lungs with a new heart and the fresh air of His dear Holy Spirit to breathe in and out His holy Word and life-giving sacraments. This Good News most everyone likes to hear, especially those of us who believe it. But we Christians are a bit naïve when we fail to see the flipside, the part that makes everyone angry who does not repent of his sin. By crucifying Jesus, God actually ***“condemned sin in sinful man....”*** Every little white lie, every greedy glance, every lustful thought, every selfish attitude – all these sins are ***condemned*** by the fact that it took the blood of God’s own Son to wash them all away.

But don’t hold on to the vicious dog and keep the runaway car! God ***“condemned sin in sinful man in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.”*** God wants us to walk about in freedom with fresh, clean air deep in our souls. So He took on Himself all the demands of His law summarized in the Ten Commandments. After Jesus had lived a perfect life in our place, He died an innocent death in our place to set us free from the death grip of our *sinful nature* and give us **Sweet Freedom in Christ!** When Jesus rose again, God’s message was simple: **Not a single “Guilty!” verdict** remains. Now we have...

### ✠ **A lively way to walk (vv.5-10)**

My Uncle Jim has not taken a step since he was thirteen. Polio put him on crutches all the years I was growing up, and now in a wheelchair. But I’ve never heard him complain. He knows it’s only temporary. God has promised that in the new heaven and the new earth ***“there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*** (Revelation 21:4) With all the effects of sin gone from God’s creation, we will all be walking and leaping and praising God, skipping like calves in a spring green pasture. What our bodies will do then, our souls are doing now. Trusting in Jesus as his Savior, my uncle too has **A lively way to walk**. God has given **Sweet Freedom in Christ!**

Yet every Christian is always a walking battle zone. While the new nature, the born-again New Man, wants to please God, there is still the old sinful nature warring against everything godly and good. You can watch where it leads whenever desperate housewives entice selfish men. Their secret intimacy never satisfies and eventually dies for someone more beautiful or handsome. Old age and death finally catch up, if not sooner at the barrel of a gun. Without Christ ***“the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”*** Quite simply, ***“the mind of sinful man is death,”*** not only for this body, but eternally for body and soul in a superhuman torture chamber designed for the devil and his angels which God never wanted for humans.

This is why He sent His Son to free us for **A lively way to walk**. Now our ***“mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.”*** ***“You...are not controlled by the sinful nature but by the [Holy] Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.”*** This is not our *righteousness* but the other *righteousness*, which comes *from God* and is received *by faith*. (Romans 3:21) Now the rest of our lives becomes a thankful adventure trying to live up to what we have already attained by faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and precious Savior. **Sweet Freedom in Christ!** where **Not a single “Guilty!” verdict** remains truly is **A lively way to walk**. Christ puts a spring in your step, hope in your heart and compassion for those who really need it. This new life force of the Spirit give us every reason and all the power to pray for and share God’s forgiveness with every precious blood bought soul His gift of **Sweet Freedom in Christ**. Every breath you take is a precious gift of God. Use each one wisely for Jesus’ sake. Amen.