

## **CHRISTIAN FREEDOM.**

It is said that, after the emancipation of American slaves, when millions who had for years been subject to the master's law and whip, were suddenly given the right to control their own affairs, it was almost impossible to get the majority of them to do anything. In their degraded condition liberty meant license; and had it not been for their fear of everlasting torment, there is no telling what extremes might have been reached. Since then, experience has been a valuable educator to many of these freed-men. Many of them have learned that they must master themselves, control their desires and weaknesses, and overcome their sloth; and that they must really be both master and slave. Experience is slowly teaching them that sloth brings hunger and nakedness and disrespect, and that diligence and sobriety bring honor and comforts and respect and a higher order of pleasure; and that now they must not only be their own masters, but also their own slaves.

So, too, it requires a large degree of experience, which is one sort of education, to enable our weak fallen natures, so long the slaves of that severe master, Sin, to use the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free.

If we were perfect beings as Adam was, in God's likeness, we should probably with present experience, find no such difficulty, but only pleasure and real advantage from fullest liberty. But alas! such is not our case; we are painfully conscious of our imperfections and downward tendencies; we find that as a knowledge of God's plan comes to us, the very freedom it brings becomes a snare to many. As they get the truth, and through it freedom from the superstitions and fears of error, wherewith Sin had bound us as slaves, the first tendency with many is apt to be toward spiritual lethargy and idleness, or into slavery to politics or business.

When the task-master, the law, is gone and can disturb us no longer, because we are "not under law but under grace" (favor), we are in serious danger, even while joyfully singing, –

"Free from the law, oh, happy condition,  
Jesus hath died and there is remission."

But, a greater responsibility rests unto us, in some respects, by reason of this liberty. To be "under grace" leaves room for our wills to act; to use this "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." Our liberty is a liberty to act; to co-operate with our Lord and Redeemer in overcoming our former master, Sin.

The fuller and clearer our apprehension of God's love, and of the length and breadth of his full salvation, the fuller will be our joy and our appreciation of "this liberty wherewith Christ hath made us *free*." The more we learn of the particulars of our emancipation, the greater and grander we find our liberty to be, and the more our joy, the greater is our responsibility. "Brethren, ye have been invited to liberty only use not liberty for an occasion to [serve] the flesh, but by love serve one another." – Gal. 5:13.

The American freedmen found many of their former masters willing to take advantage of their weaknesses and ignorance, to get them into their debt in advance; so that they would be compelled to serve them virtually as before. So, those whom Christ makes free, find their old **[R1065 : page 4]** master, Sin, even while admitting their freedom, ready to take advantage of their weaknesses and to make them serve him virtually as before; even while they are conscious of their emancipation. Those who are thus overcome are really slaves again, except in name.

What safe course, then, can such weak and inexperienced freedmen pursue? becomes a most important question to us all.

There is but one safe course. Because imperfect, we are unfit for self-control and incapable of using liberty to our own real advantage; hence we must *really* become slaves again. It becomes a question only as to whose slave. Left to itself, the question would soon solve itself; we would gradually become re-enslaved to Sin, with merely the name of being free, but without any of its advantages. There is only one other Master besides Sin, and that is Christ; and unlike Sin, he never enslaves any; all of his household are *voluntary servants*, and he treats them as "brethren." Though all such must be as obedient to his will as though they were the veriest slaves, yet he binds none; he compels none to stay, or to serve him. In a word, all his servants are voluntary slaves. His household is really a school where he is sole Master, using his authority for the benefit, education and development of his faithful ones.

The only safe course for those made free – justified by Christ – is this: –

Go to Christ at once, tell him of our joy and thankfulness for freedom; and of our realization of our own imperfections which incapacitate us for self control; and of our fear lest our former master by cunning devices might bring us into bondage; and pledging unqualified submission to him as his servants, ask that he take us under his control; – to teach us, to chastise us, and to make use of our time and talents, in whatever way he pleases.

But we query –

(1) Would not this complete surrender deprive us of liberty?

(2) Would it not put us completely under the control of a master, whose every wish such an agreement would bind us to consult and obey?

(3) Is not all slavery detestible?

(4) Is such a slavery reasonable? [R1066 : page 4]

We answer (1), Yes, it would deprive us of liberty in one sense; in that we could not abide in his service, draw his pay, and have the blessings which his household enjoy, without full submission to his will regardless of our own. But this would not interfere with our freedom in that it would be our own voluntary act, and in that we should not be bound by Christ to continue in his service. We retain the *liberty* to leave, even after we accept the *privilege* to enter this service. It is a privilege, not a compulsion; a voluntary enslavement.

(2) Yes, full submission is required of the entire household; all are required to obey whether they see fully the wisdom of the rules or not; as they obey, they are made more and more to see the justice and wisdom of their Master's rulings. But surely we need not fear to fully submit to such a master. He takes advantage of our confidence, not to injure and enslave, but to bless us and protect us from our former master and enemy Sin. We can surely trust him who died to secure for us freedom from the service of Sin, and from his wages, death; – who purchased for us life and liberty. Ah, yes, this one is interested in us, and is benevolent, wise and powerful – our tried friend.

"One there is above all others  
Well deserves the name of friend.  
His is love beyond a brother's,  
Costly, free, and knows no end.

"Which of all our friends to save us  
Could or would have shed his blood?  
But this Savior died to have us  
Freed from Sin – restored to God."

(3) Slavery to sin, is detestible and galling indeed; *enforced* slavery of any sort is always dishonorable, both to master and slave. But the voluntary slavery of love, subjecting itself to righteousness and wisdom and submitting every talent and moment to

the direction of this Master, is grandly noble, and, moreover, the very essence of wisdom.

A mother's love and service and slavery to her family, is but an imperfect illustration of this love-slavery; and yet it is justly regarded with respect and veneration.

(4) Our weakness and inability to rule ourselves, and to protect ourselves against being again entrapped, by our old master, Sin, shows us that the only reasonable course for us to follow, is to submit ourselves to the one interested in our welfare, who will raise us up and strengthen us. It would be the part of wisdom to thus submit to Christ if our reason were none other than a selfish one, – that thus we might escape the other, the cruel master, Sin, whose wages are suffering and death.

But there is another and a weighty reason why we should volunteer to enter the service of Christ, – namely gratitude. When we realize that all we have and are is of and through him, that all our liberty is his gift purchased with his own self-denying sacrifice, gratitude of the commonest sort demands that we not only thank him, but also that we show our appreciation by using our redeemed lives to his glory, in his grand and honorable service.

Seeing human weakness, and the crafty deceptions of Satan, Paul urged some of our fellow-freedmen, in his day, saying: As ye have yielded your members – servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, even so, now yielded your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." (Rom. 6:19.) And again he says, "Being made free from Sin, and become [bond] servants [slaves] to God, ye have your fruits unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." (Verse 22.) And again he says: "I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies [in his service] living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service." – Rom. 12:1.

So, then, the only safe course for any of the justified, lies in consecration; *i.e.*, in a voluntary and full surrender to Christ. All others really become re-enslaved to Sin, even though they may despise the service. Others, knowing not how to use their liberty and not having full divine direction, are in some respect worse off than if still in ignorance and bound by superstition; for otherwise, their release becomes a fresh source of temptation, the more difficult, yea impossible, for such to restrain. Hence *self-control* is dangerous to a fallen imperfect being, though good and proper for the perfect. Hence the necessity that all who realize freedom through Christ's pardon, should submit themselves to their Redeemer's control.

Indeed we may herein see the wisdom of God's course in *permitting* mighty systems to bind the fallen race, with chains of ignorance and superstition, until the present time; when, the selection of the church, the Body of Christ, being about complete, full knowledge as well as full power to control, will be established in the earth; after the now rising and designed tempest (Dan. 12:1) shall have swept away present systems and broken their chains.

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