

## BONDAGE OF THE CREATURE.

There is an aspect of redemption which many Christians overlook, and which is important to a right understanding of the Gospel of the resurrection. That gospel is the glad tidings to the human race that the life of man, which in this world has been so weighted with evil as to sink into the mire of sin and death, is to be delivered from this bondage to corruption, through resurrection. There are numerous passages of Scripture in which this present world or *cosmos* is viewed as a hostile kingdom, which is to be reckoned with for this long and degrading captivity of its highest creature – man. It harbors those hostile forces which Scripture designates by such titles as "Prince of the Power of the Air," "Rulers of the World-Darkness," "The Enemy," which have power over the bodies and souls of men, and to whose malign energy not only diseased cravings of the mind but diseases of the body are due. The power of death is ascribed to the arch adversary, the devil. In an important sense, therefore, these enemies share in the responsibility for human wickedness. And they have been radically dealt with in the redemption of the race effected by the Son of Man. He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and "him that hath the power of death." – Heb. 2:14.

The redemption of the human race would be therefore incomplete were not all mankind to be rescued from the evil conditions under which they have been brought in the present system of the world. They are *by nature* children of wrath (Eph. 2:3). It is often affirmed that this downward drag is effectually resisted in the case of every man by the Spirit of God striving in all, and that on the platform of this present world all have a fair chance for eternal life. But the facts do not bear out the assertion. How many of the vast and varied multitudes of the race succeed in this conflict, and by patient [R1082 : page 4] continuance in well-doing win life eternal? What sort of a chance is that in which almost everybody fails? And Scripture teaches that but

few enter along this way into life. "There is none righteous, no, not one." Indeed, if eternal life consists, as Jesus declares (John 17:3), in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, then how can there be a trial for eternal life where Christ is not known? Therefore He gave Himself a ransom for all, in order that, set free from the evil conditions of their life in this present world, men may have the opportunity to know Him in the world to come.

This is not their second probation. They never had a first.

[It is the second probation for the race as a whole, though not as *individuals*. In the first trial or probation the entire race was represented by one man – father Adam. In that trial or probation all failed, and all was lost. It was to secure a second probation to all (this time an individual trial) that Christ died. By paying our death-penalty, he settled for all the disastrous consequences of failure in the first trial. Thus a *second trial* (to prove worthiness or unworthiness of everlasting life) is *assured to all* – to each. And as knowledge and freedom of will are essential to trial, it is written concerning the Millennial age, that then "the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth," and then, "whosoever will may take of the water of life freely." Then the ransom and its value will be testified to all, with full opportunity for each to avail himself of its benefits, and by hearty obedience to make them *everlasting* blessings. – EDITOR.]

They were born into this world under condemnation. Only those who are here tested under the gospel of Christ may be said to be now under probation for eternal life. The emancipation then of the human race from under the yoke of this system is to be through death and resurrection. And this deliverance is connected with that of the system itself (Romans 8:19-23). The enemies who have defiled this heritage of creation, and debased its appointed heir, must be dealt with and cast out. "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John 12:31). We see thus why Jesus immediately

adds, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

The casting out of the prince of this world would be the deliverance of those held captive by him. The prison doors of death were to be opened for all. Their resurrection will be their emancipation not only from bondage in death, but from the yoke of Satan. On the platform of the life to come they will be free to serve God and to choose life. The freedom of the will, about which men now harp so much, will only then be fully realized. Most men are not now free to choose the right. They are born slaves – slaves to natural appetites and natural laws, which drag them all the other way. This reckoning by God with man's natural enemies would fall short of its object unless man himself were lifted on to this high vantage ground above them. An incomplete and unworthy result would be this redemption of creation from the bondage of corruption, with the vast mass of men – God's highest creatures – left crushed in the mire. Therefore He has provided to deliver them by raising them from the dead. Indeed, the redemption of the creature is in order to provide them a proper platform on which to work out their destiny. If they fail under these, their failure must be final.

But salvation attained now, when such a battle is required and such yielding up of self on God's altar, will be a far grander thing than salvation in the world to come. The church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven – these are to be God's kings and priests through all the ages. Courage, then, Christian, for this wrestling with principalities and powers! We are passing through the very forms of trial which shall fit us to reign with Christ. In some form, we too must bear the burden of the world's evil, and feel the stress of conflict with the power of darkness; in order that through victory over the world we may take part with Christ in the world's deliverance. This discipline of life through which we are daily passing has a wondrous meaning for us if our eyes were only opened to perceive it. Under this our Father's training, we should learn to rejoice in the Lord always, and in

everything to give thanks, casting all our care upon Him, for He careth for us.

– *L. C. Baker.*

