

THE FREEDOM OF CHRIST'S BOND-SERVANTS.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."
– John 8:36. "For the slave, being called by the Lord, is the Lord's freedman; in like manner, the freeman, being called, is Christ's bond-servant." – 1 Cor. 7:22.

THE love of freedom is inherent in all of God's intelligent creatures. And under certain limitations it was manifestly the divine purpose that all enjoy liberty, the limitations in every case being those of righteousness: of respect for and submission to divine law, and mutual love and respect for the rights and liberties of fellow-creatures. Within these metes and bounds, and within these only, is the rightful exercise of individual liberty.

But many have very different ideas of freedom from this, and are anxious to cast off all restraints of God and man and to pursue a selfish course untrammelled and without regard to either their obligations to God or the rights of their fellow-men. Such ideas of freedom lead only to riot, anarchy and destruction. And those who hold them look upon all the wholesome restraints of law and order as infringements of their rights and consider themselves in bondage under them. This is the rapidly growing sentiment all over the world to-day among the masses of men. And this is what makes the outlook for the future so ominous, threatening the utter wreck of the present social order in world-wide anarchy.

The reason for all this is that men have neither perfect hearts nor perfect heads. Having imperfect hearts, which do not love God supremely nor their neighbors as themselves, each is selfishly grabbing after all the advantages and privileges he can get without regard to the interests of his neighbor. And having also imperfect heads, they seem unable to reason correctly and to judge rightly between self and the

neighbor. In fact, the whole human family is mentally unbalanced and morally deformed. We cannot therefore expect that, without superhuman aid, they will reach correct conclusions and learn to deal righteously.

Among men there are many grades of intellectual ability: some are broad minded, and, reaching out, can compass many conditions and their operations and foresee the ultimate results; while others are by inheritance narrow minded and can only view present circumstances apart from their general bearings and relationships. Then again, some minds are deep, able to probe and solve intricate problems with accuracy; while others are shallow, merely skimming the surface of great questions, not seeing nor seeking foundation principles. The broad and deep minds are but few, while the narrow and shallow are far more general; consequently, men are very far apart in their ideas and conclusions on every subject, and generally far astray from sound judgment. These things are, however, a part of our undesirable inheritance through sin, which polluted the fountain of our being, and left the entire race in this deranged condition.

Our only help under these circumstances is in God, who will give us the spirit – disposition – of a sound mind, if, in his appointed way, we **[R1737 : page 372]** come to him for it. (2 Tim. 1:7.) In his Word he lays down certain principles to guide us in judgment (Psa. 25:9) and help us to right conclusions. He tells us first that as a race we have fallen from our original perfection through the sin of our first progenitor, and that in consequence we are imperfect and unworthy of eternal life; but that through Christ he has redeemed us, so that if we repent of our sins and believe on him, we may now have eternal life, being made free from the condemnation which passed upon all men through Adam.

Thus we are made free from condemnation to death; and not only so, but now it is also our privilege to be liberated, through Christ, from the bondage and tyranny of Sin. As a hard task-master, Sin is driving

all men to deeper degradation and death, and Christ undertakes to loose his fetters from all those who submit themselves to him for this purpose.

Dearly as we may love liberty, there is no man that actually possesses it now; for as the result of the fall all men became the slaves of Sin, and, to a great extent, the tools of Satan; and never, until the promised restitution of all things is completed, will men enjoy the precious boon of liberty in its full sense. This is one of the elements of the gospel – that Christ is to bring liberty to the captives of sin and death, and to let all the oppressed go *free*. – Isa. 61:1.

To fully emancipate all the slaves of Sin and Death is a work which will require the full thousand years of Christ's promised reign on earth; and the blessings of that emancipation will therefore not be fully realized until the thousand years are finished, when sin and Satan will be destroyed, never again to mar the face of God's fair creation. Then men can again be entrusted fully with the precious boon of liberty; and the liberty of one will not infringe upon the liberties of another. The perfect freedom of the entire race necessitates such restraints upon each individual of the race as brotherly love would dictate; and such restraint every man will impose upon himself when he has regained the original likeness of God, for God is love; and then it may also be truly said that man is love. And when man is love, it is God's purpose to give him fullest liberty to act out every impulse of his loving nature. And **[R1738 : page 372]** since "love worketh no ill to its neighbor," but delights itself rather in deeds of kindness and benevolence, this glorious liberty will fill the earth with peace and joy. And since love also delights in rendering honor to whom honor is due, and adoration to whom adoration, and praise to whom praise, and gratitude to whom gratitude, such will be the attitude of all men toward Jehovah, the giver of every good and perfect gift, and toward our Lord Jesus, whose self-sacrificing love became the channel for Jehovah's grace toward us, even while we were yet sinners.

Thus earth will be filled with the music of according hearts; and heaven and earth will be in perfect harmony when love, which is the fulfilling of the law of God, reigns supreme in every heart. Then the natural impulse of every heart will be to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and the neighbor as itself. This supreme love to God, even beyond the love of self, is entirely presumable when we consider that the elements of reverence and adoration must enter so largely into the love that is centered upon such a glorious object – glorious in his personality, glorious in his character, glorious in his wisdom, glorious in his power, and glorious in his benevolence and love and grace.

"Oh! what beauty
Beams in his all-glorious face."

Then indeed, and not till then, will the whole human race enjoy fullest liberty: a thing which will be simply impossible until then. Now, liberty to one class of men brings slavery to another; and the striving of classes, of nations and of individuals in the past, to throw off the yoke of bondage which the selfishness of others imposed upon them, has resulted occasionally to such classes and nations in a measure of release from the hand of tyranny; but *individual liberty* is still unrealized. Though the world has made some progress in this direction, so that limited monarchies have displaced the absolute, tyrannical monarchies of former ages, and republican forms of government have in some notable instances superseded these, yet [R1738 : page 373] Sin, as a hard master, still rules the world. Even under this republican government – the most free and liberal civil institution in the world – witness the party strifes and animosities, and the tyranny of class rule, and hear how the cry of the oppressed individuals comes up and enters into the ears of the Lord of armies. The whole world is oppressed under the hard taskmaster, Sin, who rules everywhere. He takes his seat in legislative halls, in executive mansions, in all political, financial and social counsels, and even in the solemn assemblies of

God's professed children; and everywhere his tyranny is felt and his subjects suffer.

This tyrant, Sin, must be routed, before the world can ever enjoy the boon of liberty – of liberty to appropriate, manage, rule and enjoy their God-given possessions in the earth.

While the actual freedom or liberty of the sons of God is not yet enjoyed by any, the inheritance of it being lost by the fall, a few have regained their *title* to that inheritance through faith in Christ, who purchased it with his own precious blood for all who will accept it as the free gift of God's grace, through faith in him. And these few have, by faith, passed from death unto life (John 5:24; 1 John 3:14), and are now, therefore, *reckoned free* – free from sin and its condemnation, death, the righteousness of Christ being imputed to them by faith. Thus they hold a *sure title* to this glorious liberty, which all the sons of God will possess when fully restored to the divine likeness. Those who have this title the Apostle Paul urges to hold it fast, saying, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." – Gal. 5:1.

This exhortation can mean nothing more nor less than to hold on, by faith, to our justification – our *title* to life through Christ our Redeemer. This he was urging the Galatian Church to do, the exhortation being prompted by the efforts of some Judaizing teachers to bring them again under the bondage of the Law Covenant. – Gal. 3:1.

But while the full liberty of the sons of God is not yet ours, except by faith, let us consider what measure of that liberty is ours now. While in Christ we are *reckoned* of God as free from sin, and while we are therefore free from condemnation – justified – yet actually we realize the law of sin still working in our members, so that while our purpose and effort are to be perfect, the law of sin working in our members makes us realize continually that our actual liberty as sons of God is

not yet possessed. And in this painful realization even we who have the firstfruits of the spirit, do groan being burdened. – Rom. 8:23.

But we have in Christ not only a Redeemer who paid our death penalty, but a Savior who in due time will *deliver* fully from every element of imperfection all who put their trust in him. The work of emancipation he will do for *the world* in the appointed times of the restitution of all things; and he will begin it at once with all those who then willingly and patiently submit themselves to his leading, acknowledging him as their Lord and King, as well as their Redeemer. In thus acknowledging Christ as Lord and King, both Christians now, and the world in the times of restitution, will, if fully loyal, render to him prompt and loving obedience, and that without questioning either his authority or his wisdom, in the full assurance of his loving purpose to finally and fully deliver from the terrible bondage to Sin, which has become so interwoven with the very fiber of our being that the process of emancipation must of necessity be long and painful.

In other words, before we can fully realize the actual liberty which God designed for all his sons, we must first become the willing servants of a new master, Christ, in order that he may accomplish our deliverance.

But although Christians are now, of their own free will and choice, under the authority of Christ, and their constant effort should be to bring every thought into captivity to his perfect will, even in this sort of bondage they are able to realize their freedom to the extent that they are able to partake of the spirit or mind of Christ; for, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Cor. 3:17.) In the same way, when a man is sick, he must give up his will and personal liberty to the physician [R1738 : page 374] who undertakes to restore his health. The physician may prescribe nauseous doses; he may forbid certain coveted articles of diet; or he may subject his patient to painful surgical operations: but to all this severe treatment the man *willingly* submits, in hope of regaining his health. He and the physician are of the same

mind, having the same object in view. Consequently, the patient does not feel that he is a slave forced under this treatment; but, having the same mind or spirit in the matter as the physician, he realizes his personal liberty. A child, on the contrary, unable to see the necessities of the case, and therefore unable to enter fully into the spirit of the physician and of the parents who must act for him, does not feel this liberty of his own will, but realizes that he is compelled to submit by those in authority over him. Such will be the case with the world, especially in the early experiences of the Millennial age. A difference will be that unless their wills are ultimately submitted restitution cures will never be granted. But with the consecrated children of God now, the case is more like that of the matured and intelligent patient.

Let us, then, while we willingly submit ourselves to Christ our Lord, partake largely of his spirit, and fully co-operate with him as a wise and skilled physician; and in so doing we will surely realize our liberty of mind as sons of God, even while we are undergoing the tedious and painful processes which are designed to accomplish our complete emancipation from the bondage of Sin.

"If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" – even now while our standing as free men in Christ is only a reckoned one. The freedom which we gain through Christ is (1) freedom from the condemnation of sin, and consequent access to God in whose favor is life eternal; (2) freedom from the bondage of fear concerning the future, and consequent rest and reliance upon him who has said, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee;" (3) and daily as we submit ourselves to Christ we come to realize more and more of a release from the hereditary bondage of Sin. One after another, under the treatment of the Great Physician, we find the symptoms of the old disease of Sin disappearing, and we rejoice to find it so.

We find healing for our unsound minds in the balm of divine counsel. We find unerring standards of judgment by which to measure our own; and from the unerring precepts of righteousness and truth we

drink in the spirit of a sound mind. And with this sound mind viewing all the experiences and conditions of life from the standpoint of the divine plan of the ages, we are enabled to weigh and properly estimate all present values and to count the good things of this present life as of no consequence in comparison to that for which we have covenanted to sacrifice them. We can even rejoice in tribulation for righteousness' sake.

But while we enjoy this blessed freedom in Christ, we are nevertheless under strictest bondage to Christ. As the Apostle Paul states it, we are bond-servants of Jesus Christ, and, like him, we glory in being so branded. (Gal. 6:17.) We realize that we are not our own, but that we are bought with a price, and that the consecration of our lives to him who purchased us is but a reasonable service.
