

THE GREAT LIBERATOR

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BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed.”
John 8:36.*

BLESSED is that word “free,” and blessed is he who spends himself to make men so. You did well to crowd your streets and to welcome with your joyous acclamations the man who has broken the yoke from off the neck of the oppressed. Many sons of Italy have done valiantly, but he excels them all and deserves the love of all the good and brave. Political slavery is an intolerable evil. To live, to think, to act, to speak at the permission of another! Better have no life at all! To depend for my existence upon a despot’s will is death itself. Craven spirits may wear the dog collar which their master puts upon them and fawn at his feet for the bones of his table, but men who are worthy of the name had rather feed the vultures on the battlefield.

The burden of civil bondage is too heavy for bold spirits to bear with patience and therefore they fret and murmur beneath it. This murmuring the tyrant loves not and therefore he throws the sufferers into his dungeons and bids them wear out their days in captivity. Blessed is he who hurls down the despot, bursts the doors of his dungeons and gives true men their rights. We have never felt, and therefore we know not the bitterness of bondage. Our emancipators have gone to the world of spirits, bequeathing us an heirloom of liberty for which we should love their names and reverence their God.

If they could have lived on till now, how we should honor them! But as they are gone, we do well to applaud our illustrious guest as if we saw in him the spirit of all our glorious liberators worthily enshrined. Political liberty allows scope for so much of all that is good and ennobling and its opposite involves so much that is debasing, that the mightiest nation destitute of it is poor, indeed, and the poorest of all people, if they are but free, are truly rich. But, my Brethren, men may have political liberty to the very fullest extent and yet be slaves, for there is such a thing as *religious* bondage. He who cringes before a priest—he who dreads his anathema, or who creeps at his feet to receive his blessing—is an abject slave!

He may call himself a free man, but his soul is in vile bondage if superstition makes him wear the chain. To be afraid of the mutterings of a man like myself—to bow before a piece of wood or a yard of painted canvas—to reverence a morsel of bread or a rotten bone—this is mental slavery, indeed! They call the Negro a slave in the Southern Confederacy, but men who prostrate their reason before the throne of superstition are slaves through and through. To yield obedience to our Lord, to offer prayer to God Most High is perfect freedom! But to confess my heart out to a mortal with a shaven crown—to trust my family secrets and my wife’s character to the commands of a man who may be all the while wallowing in debauchery is worse than the worst form of serfdom.

I would sooner serve the most cruel Sultan who ever crushed humanity beneath his iron heel than bow before the Pope or any other priest of man’s making. The tyranny of priest-craft is the worst of ills. You may cut through the bonds of despots with a sword, but the sword of the Lord Himself is needed here. The Truth of God must file these fetters and the Holy Spirit must open these dungeons! You may escape from prison, but superstition hangs round a man and with its deadly influence keeps him ever in its dark and gloomy cell.

Skepticism, which proposes to snap the chains of superstition only supplants a blind belief with an unhallowed credulity and leaves the victim as oppressed as ever. Jesus the Son, alone, can make men truly free! Happy are they whom He has delivered from superstition. Blessed are our eyes that this day we see the light of Gospel liberty and are no longer immured in Popish darkness! Let us remember our privileges and bless God with a loud voice that the darkness is past and the true Light shines—since the name of Jesus, the preaching of His Word, and the power of His Truth have, in this respect, in a high degree—made our nation free!

Yet a man may be delivered from the bond of superstition and be still a serf, for he who is not ruled by a priest may still be controlled by the devil or by his own lusts which are much the same. Our carnal desires and inclinations are domineering lords enough, as those know who follow out their commands. A man may say, "I feel not supernatural terrors. I know no superstitious horrors," and then, folding his arms, he may boast that he is free. But he may all the while be a slave to his own evil heart. He may be grinding at the mill of avarice, rotting in the reeking dungeon of sensuality, dragged along by the chains of maddened anger, or borne down by the yoke of fashionable custom.

He is the free man who is master of himself through the Grace of God. He who serves his own passions is the slave of the worst of despots. Talk to me not of dark dungeons beneath the sea level! Speak not to me of pits in which men have been entombed and forgotten! Tell me not of heavy chains, nor even of racks and the consuming fire. The slave of sin and Satan, sooner or later, knows greater horrors than these—his doom is more terrible because it is *eternal*—and his slavery more hopeless because it is one into which he willingly commits himself.

Perhaps there are those present who claim liberty for themselves and say that they are able to control their passions and have never given away to impure desires. Yes, a man may get as far as that in a modified sense and yet not be free. Perhaps I address those who, knowing the right, have struggled for it against the wrong. You have reformed yourselves from follies into which you had fallen. You have, by diligence, brought the flesh somewhat under control in its outward manifestations of sin, and now your life is moral, your conduct is respectable, your reputation high. Still, for all that it may be that you are conscious that you are not free.

Your old sins haunt you, your former corruptions perplex you. You have not found peace for you have not obtained *forgiveness*. You have buried your sins beneath the earth for years, but conscience has given them a resurrection and the ghosts of your past transgressions haunt you. You can scarcely sleep at night because of the recollection of the wrath of God which you deserve. And by day there is a gall put into your sweetest draughts because you know that you have sinned against Heaven and that Heaven must visit with vengeance your transgression. You have not yet come to the full liberty of the children of God, as you will do if you cast yourselves into the hands of Jesus who looses the captives.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed"—free as the mere political liberator cannot make you—free as he cannot make you who merely delivers you from superstition! Free as reformation cannot make you. Free as God alone can make you by His free Spirit. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed."

Now this morning may the Lord give His servant help from on high while I try to talk with you. To those who feel today their slavery, my message may be profitable. Our first point is that to those who are the bond slaves of Satan, liberty is possible. The text would not mock us with a dream—it says, "If the Son therefore shall make you free." All who are slaves shall not be set free, but there is the possibility of liberty implied in the text. Blessed "if." It is like the prison window through the stony wall—it lets in enough sunshine for us to read the word, "hope." "If the Son therefore shall make you free."

Secondly, there is a false freedom. You see that in the text—"You shall be free, indeed." There were some who professed to be free, but were not so. The Greek is, "You shall be free really," for there are some who are free only in the name and in the shadow of freedom, but who are not free as to the substance. Then thirdly, real freedom must come to us from the Son, that glorious Son of God, who, being free and giving Himself to us, gives us freedom. And then we shall close by putting a few personal questions as to whether the Son has made us free, or whether we still remain slaves.

I. First then, dear Friends, our text rings a sweet silver bell of hope in the ear of those who are imprisoned by their sin. FREEDOM IS POSSIBLE—the word "if" implies it. The Son of God can make the prisoner free. No matter who you are, nor what you are, nor how many years you may have remained the slaves of Satan—the Son, the glorious Liberator—can make you free. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by Him."

Perhaps that which weighs upon you most heavily is a sense of your past guilt. "I have offended God—I have offended often, willfully, atrociously, with many aggravations. On such-and-such a day I offended Him in the foulest manner and with deliberation. On other days I have run greedily in a course of vice. Nothing has restrained me from disobedience and nothing has impelled me to the service of God. All that His Word says against me I deserve. And every threat which His Book utters is justly due to me and may well be fulfilled. Is there a possibility that I can escape from guilt? Can so foul a sinner as I am be made clean? I know that the leopard cannot lose its spots, nor the Ethiopian change his skin by his own efforts. Is there a Divine power which can take away my spots and change my nature?"

Sinner, there is! No sin which you have committed need shut you out of Heaven. However damnable your iniquities may have been, there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared. You may have gone to the very verge of perdition, but the arm of God's Grace is long enough to reach you. You may sit today with your tongue padlocked with blasphemy, your hands fast bound by acts of atrocious violence, your heart fettered with corruption, your feet chained fast to the Satanic blocks of unbelief—your whole self locked up in the bondage of corruption—but there is One so mighty to save that He can set even you, free! “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.”

“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” In the matter of guilt, then, there is the possibility of freedom. “But can I be freed from the punishment of sin?” says another. “God is just: He must punish sin. It is not possible that the Judge of all the earth should allow such a rebel as I am to escape. Shall I go Scot free? Shall I have the same reward with the perfectly righteous? After years of unbelief am I still to be treated as though I had always been a willing and loving child? This is not just—I must be punished.”

Sinner, there is no need that you should be cast into Hell. No, you shall not be, if your trust is placed in the blood shed on Calvary. There is an imperative need that sin should be punished, but there is no need that it should be punished in *your* person. The stern laws of Justice demand that sin should meet with satisfaction, but there is no Law which demands that it should receive satisfaction from *you*, for if you believe, Christ has given satisfaction for you. If you trust Jesus Christ to save you, be assured that Christ was punished in your place, and suffered the whole of Divine wrath, so that there is no fear of your being cast into Hell.

If you believe, you cannot be punished, for there is no charge against you—your sins having been laid on Christ. And there can be no punishment exacted from you, for Christ has already discharged the whole. God's justice cannot demand two executions for the same offense. O, let not the flames of Hell alarm you, Sinner! Let not Satan provoke you to despair by thoughts of the worm that never dies and of the fire that never can be quenched. You need not go there—there is a possibility of deliverance for you. And though your heart says, “Never, never, shall I escape,” trust not your heart! God is greater than your heart and knows all things.

Believe His testimony and fly to the great Deliverer for liberty! Freedom, then, from punishment is possible through Christ. I think I hear one say, “Ah, but if I were saved from past sin and from all the punishment of it, yet still I should submit to the power of sin again. I have a wolf within my heart hungering after sin which will not be satisfied, though it is glutted with evil. The insatiable horseleech of my lust ever cries, ‘Give, give!’ Can I be delivered from it? I have been bound with many resolutions, but sin, like Samson, has snapped them as though they were but green twigs. I have been shut up in many professions, as though I was now, once and for all, a prisoner to morality. But I have taken up posts and bars and every other restraint which kept me in and I have gone back to my old uncleanness. Can I, can I be saved from all these propensities, and all this inbred corruption?”

My dear Friend, there is a hope for you that you may be. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that same blood by which sin is *pardoned* enables man to *overcome* sin. They in Heaven washed their robes and made them white in His blood. But they have another note in their song—they overcame through the blood of the Lamb. Not only were they delivered from guilt, but from the *power of sin*. I do not tell you that in this life Christ Himself will make you perfectly free from indwelling sin—there will always be some corruption left in you to struggle with—some Canaanite still in the land to exercise your faith and to teach you the value of a Savior. But the neck of sin shall be under your foot—God shall lead captive the great Adonibezek of your lust and you shall cut off his thumbs so that he cannot handle weapons of war.

If the enemy cannot be destroyed, at least his head shall be broken and he shall never have reigning power over you—you shall be free from sin, to live no longer in it. Oh, that blessed word “if”! How it sparkles! It may seem but a little star—may it herald the dawning of the Sun of Righteousness within you—“If the Son therefore shall make you free.”

“Oh,” says one, “that is a great ‘if,’ indeed. It cannot be! My guilt pardoned, my punishment remitted, and my nature changed? How can it be?” Dear Friend, it *may* be, and I trust it *will* be this morning, for this “if” comforts the preacher with a hope of success in delivering the Word. And may it give some hope to the hearers, that perhaps you may be made free yourselves. But I think I hear another exclaim, “Sir, I am in bondage through fear of death. Go where I may, enjoying no assurance of acceptance in Christ, I am afraid to die. I know that I must one of these days close these eyes in the slumbers of the grave, but oh, it is a dread thought to me that I must stand before my God and pass the solemn test. I

cannot look into the sepulcher without feeling that it is a cold, damp place. I cannot think of eternity without remembering the terrors which cluster round it to a sinner, ‘where their worm dies not and where their fire is not quenched.’ ”

Ah, but my dear Friend, if the Son makes you free, He will deliver you from the fear of death. When sin is pardoned then the Law is satisfied and when the Law is satisfied then death becomes a *friend*. The strength of sin is the Law—the Law is fulfilled—the strength of sin is broken. The sting of death is sin—sin is pardoned—death has a sting no longer. If you believe in Christ you shall never die in that sense in which you dread death. You shall fall asleep but you shall never die. That death of which you think is not the Christian’s portion—it belongs to the *ungodly*. In it you shall have no share, if you trust the Savior. Borne on angels’ wings to Heaven—up from calamity, imperfection, temptation and trial shall you mount—flitting with the wings of a dove far above the clouds of sorrow! Leaving this dusky globe behind you, you shall enter into the splendors of immortality. You shall not die, but wake out of this dying world into a life of Glory!

Come, Soul! If you trust in Christ, this “if” shall be no if, but a *certainty* today—the Son shall make you free, indeed. I do not think I can bring out the full value of this liberty by merely speaking of the evils which we are delivered from. You know, Brethren, freedom consists not only in a negative but in a positive—we are not only free *from*, but we are free *to*. We hear of persons receiving the freedom of a city. This implies that certain privileges are bestowed. Now, “if the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed,” in the sense of privilege—you shall be free to call yourself God’s child. You shall be free to say, “Abba, Father,” without rebuke. You shall be free to claim the protection of that Father’s House and the provision of His bounty. You shall be free to come to His knees with all your trials and tell Him all your griefs.

You shall be free to plead His promises and to receive the fulfillment of them, too. You shall be free to sit at His table, not as a servant is permitted sometimes to sit down when the feast is over to eat the leftovers, but you shall sit there as a well-beloved son, to eat the fatted calf while your Father with you, eats, drinks and is merry. You shall be free to enter into the Church on earth, the mother of us all. Free to all her ordinances. Free to share in all those gifts which Christ has given to his spouse. And when you die, you shall be free to enter into the rest which remains for the people of God. Free to partake of the New Jerusalem which is above. Free to use her harps of gold and to her streets of joy. Free to feast in her great banquet which lasts forever. Free access to the heart of God, to the throne of Christ and to the blessedness of eternity!

Oh, how good it is to think that there is a possibility of a freedom to such privileges as these and a possibility of it to the vilest of the vile! For some who were grossly guilty, some who had gone far astray have nevertheless enjoyed the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Peace. Look at Paul! No man enters more into the mystery of the Gospel than he. He had freedom to do so—he could comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge and yet it is he, it is he who once foamed out threats, who sucked the blood of the saints! It is he who dyed his hands up to the very elbows in murderous gore. It is he who hated Christ! It is he who was a persecutor and injurious and yet is he free from evil and he is free to all the privileges of the chosen of God!

And why not you? And why not *you*? Woman, tottering and trembling, why should not, why should not the Son make you free? Man, tossed about with many doubts, why should not the great Liberator appear to you? Can there be a reason why not? You have not read the rolls of predestination and discovered that your name has been left out. It has not been revealed that for you there is no Atonement, but it is revealed to you that whoever believes on Him is not condemned. And this is the testimony which comes to you—O that you would receive it!—“He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.” O that you would be bold and trust Christ this morning and the “if” which is in our text shall become a blessed certainty to you! So then there is a possibility for freedom. We will pause awhile and then warn you against false freedom.

II. BEWARE OF FALSE LIBERTY. Every good thing is imitated by Satan who is the master of counterfeits and therefore, liberty—a word fit to be used in Heaven and almost too good for fallen earth—has been used for the very basest of purposes and men have misnamed the devil’s offspring by this angelic title. We have in spiritual matters things called liberty which are not liberty. There is Antinomian liberty—God deliver us from that! A man says, “I am not under the Law of God, therefore I will live as I like.” A most blessed Truth of God followed by a most atrocious inference.

The Christian is *not* under the Law, but under Grace—that is a very precious fact—it is much better to serve God because we *love* Him, than because we are *afraid* of His wrath. To be under the Law is to give God the service of a slave

who fears the lash. But to be under Grace is to serve God out of pure love to Him. Oh, to be a child and to give the obedience of a child and not the homage of a serf! But the Antinomian says, "I am not under the Law, therefore will I live and fulfill my own lusts and pleasures."

Paul says of those who argue thus, their damnation is just. We have had the pain of knowing some who have said, "I am God's elect—Christ shed His blood for me—I shall never perish!" And then they have gone to the ale-house, they have sung the drunkard's song and have even used the drunkard's oath. What is this, dear Friends, but a strong delusion to believe a lie? They who can do this must surely have been some time in Satan's oven, to be baked so hard. Why, these must have had their consciences taken out of them! Are they not turned to something worse than brutes? The dog does not say, "My master feeds me and he will not destroy me, but is fond of me, therefore will I snarl at him or rend him"?

Even the ass does not say, "My master gives me fodder, therefore will I dash my heels into his face." The ox knows its owner and the ass his master's crib, but these men only know God to provoke Him and they profess that His love to them gives them a liberty to rebel against His will! God deliver you from any such freedom as this! Be not legalists, but love the Law of God and in it make your delight. Abhor all idea of being saved *by* good works, but O, be as *full of* good works as if you were to be saved by them!

Walk in holiness as if your own walking would make you enter into Heaven and then rest on Christ, knowing that nothing of your own can ever open the gate of the Celestial City. Eschew and abhor anything like Antinomianism. Do not be afraid of high doctrine. Men sometimes mislabel good sound Calvinism as Antinomianism. Do not be afraid of that—do not be alarmed at the ugly word Antinomianism if it does not exist! But the thing itself—flee from it as from a serpent! Shake off the venomous beast into the fire as Paul did the viper which he found among the firewood. When you are gathering up the doctrines of Grace to cheer and comfort you, this deadly viper gets into the midst and when the fire begins to burn, he comes out of the heat and fastens upon you. Shake him off into the fire of Divine Love and there let the monster be consumed!

My Brethren, if we are loved of God with an everlasting love and are no more under the Law but free from its curse, let us serve God with all our heart's gratitude to Him. Let us say, "I am Your servant. I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid—You have loosed my bonds." Let the loosing of our bonds be an argument for service. Then again, Beloved, there is another kind of freedom of which we must all be aware—it is a notional professional freedom. "Free? Yes, certainly we are. We are the people of God," say some. Not that they have ever passed from death unto life. Not that vital godliness is a matter they understand.

No. "We always went to Church, or Chapel. We have never stopped going in our lives. We are the most regular of religious people and we were baptized, and we go to the sacrament and what is there that we do not do? Who convicts us of any sin? If we are not going to the Celestial City, who can be? Surely, surely, we enjoy much of the things of God! We sit in God's House and we feel a pleasure when we listen to the Truth of God. Sacred song bears us on high as well as other men. We sit as God's people sit and we hear as God's people hear—surely we are free!"

Ah, but dear Friends, a man may *think* himself free and still be a slave. You know there are many in this world who dream themselves to be what they are not. And you have a faculty of dreaming in the same manner. Christ must have come to you and shown you your slavery and broken your heart on account of it, or else you are *not* free. And you must have looked to the wounds of Jesus as the only gates of your escape and have seen in His hands the only power which could snap your fetters or else, though you have professed and re-professed, you are as much slaves of Satan as though you were in the Pit itself!

Beware, I pray you, of hereditary religion! A man cannot hand down his godliness as he does his goods. And I cannot receive Grace as I may receive lands, or gold, or silver. "You must be born again." There must be the going up out of Egypt, the leaving the flesh pots and the brick kilns, and advancing through the Red Sea of Atonement into the wilderness and afterwards into the promised rest. Have you passed from death unto life? If not, beware of having a mere notional, professional liberty!

There are many, too, who have the liberty of natural self-righteousness and of the power of the flesh. They have fanciful, unfounded hopes of Heaven. They have never wronged anybody. They have never done any mischief in the world. They are amiable. They are generous to the poor. They are this, they are that, they are the other! Therefore they feel themselves to be free. They never feel their own inability. They can always pray alike and always sing alike. They have no

changes. They are not emptied from vessel to vessel. Their confidence never wavers. They believe themselves all right and abide in their confidence.

They do not stop to examine—their delusion is too strong and their comfort is much too precious for them to wish to mar it by looking to its foundation—so they go on, on, on—sound asleep till one of these days, falling over the awful precipice of ruin, they will wake up where waking will be too late! We know there are some such. They are in God's House, but they are not God's sons! You remember the case of Ishmael. It is to that which our Lord seems to allude here. Ishmael was a son of Abraham according to the flesh, but he never was free. His mother being a bondwoman, he was a slave.

He might call himself Abraham's son if he could, but being only after the flesh he was still a slave, for it was not in the power of Abraham, in the power of the flesh, to beget anything but bondage. And Ishmael at his best was still the son of the bondwoman. Yet you see he sits at the table, he eats and drinks just as merrily as the child of the promise. No, in some things he is stronger than Isaac—he has the advantage of age and I dare say plumes himself on being heir. “Ah,” says he, “I am the elder one of the family.” At last he mocked Isaac—when the boys were at their sports he was violent towards his younger brother, even as many Pharisees are very cruel to true Believers.

What came of it? Why, “the servant abides not in the house forever, but the son abides forever,” and so the day came in which Sarah said, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son,” and away went Ishmael. He might cling to his father and say, “I am your son.” “You must go, Sir, you are a slave. You were born after the flesh and therefore you take from your mother your state and condition and not from your father. Your mother was a bond slave and so are you and you must go. The privileges of the children's house are not for you. You must go into the wilderness. You cannot abide here.” But Isaac, though feeble and tempted and tried and vexed, is never sent out of his father's house—never—he abides forever.

This is the position of many. They are very good people in their way. They do their best, but what is their best? It is the offspring of the flesh. And that which is born of the flesh is flesh, Consequently their best endeavors only make them slaves in the house, not sons. Only he who is born by faith according to the promise is the free Isaac and abides in the house. The day will come when God will ask every member of the Christian Church and all who profess religion, “Are you children by faith in the promise or not?” And if you are only children according to the flesh He will send you back again into the wilderness—to eternal ruin you must go unless the Spirit of God has given you the spirit of freedom.

There was a custom, observed among the Greeks and Romans that when a man died, if he left slaves, they went as a heritage to the elder son and if the elder son said, “Some of these are my own Brethren, though they are slaves, I therefore pronounced them free,” they would be free. Emancipation was not always allowed in either Greek or Roman states—a man might not always set a slave free without giving a good reason. But it was always held to be a valid reason if the son, coming into a heritage of slaves, chose to set them free. No question was asked if the son made them free. The law did not step in.

So, dear Friends, if the Son shall make us free, we shall be free, indeed. If Jesus Christ, the great Heir according to the promise, the great Mediator whom God has created Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds—if He shall say to us who are as Ishmael, “I make you free,” then are we free, indeed! And neither Law, Justice, Heaven or Hell can bring any argument against us why we should not be free. But do beware of all imaginary freedoms and shun them as you would poison! And God give you Divine Grace to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God!

III. TRUE FREEDOM COMES TO US THROUGH HIM WHO IS, IN THE HIGHEST SENSE, “THE SON.” No man gets free except as he comes to Christ and takes Him to be his All in All. You may rivet on your fetters by going to the Law, to your own good works, to your willings and your praying and your doings, but you will never be free until you come to Christ. Mark you, Man, if you will come to Christ you shall be free this moment from every sort of bondage. But if you will go here and there, and try this and that and the other, you shall find all your trying will end in disappointment and you shall lie down in sorrow and in shame—for none but Jesus—none but Jesus—can make us free, indeed.

Real liberty comes from Him only. Let us think awhile of this real liberty. Remember it is a liberty righteously bestowed. Christ has a right to make men free. If I should set a slave free who belongs to his master, he might run for a time—but since I had not the power to give him a legal emancipation—he would be dragged back again. But the Son, who is heir of *all things*, has a right to make him free whom He wills to make free. The Law is on Christ's side. Christ has

such power in Heaven and earth committed to Him that if He says to the sinner, “You are free,” free he is before high Heaven.

Before God’s great bar you can plead the word of Jesus and you shall be delivered! Think, too, how dearly this freedom was purchased. Christ speaks it by His power, but He still *bought* it by His blood. He makes you free, Sinner, but it is by His own bonds. You go free because He bore your burden for you. See Him bear His agony—“Crushed beneath the millstone of the Law till all His head, His hair, His garments were bloody.” See Him yonder, dragged to Pilate’s hall, bound, whipped like a common felon, scourged like a murderer and dragged away by hellhounds through the streets. Look at Him fastened by those cruel fetters which went through His flesh to the accursed wood. See Him yielding up His liberty to the dungeon of death.

There the Mighty One sleeps in Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb. Dearly did He purchase with His own bondage the liberty which He so freely gives. But, though dearly purchased, let us take up that keynote—He freely *gives* it! Jesus asks *nothing* of us as a preparation for this liberty. He finds us sitting in sackcloth and ashes and bids us put on the beautiful array of freedom. He discovers us in a darkness which may be felt, sitting in the valley of the shadow of death and He brings the true Light in His hand and turns our midnight into blazing noon and all *without* our help, *without* our merit, and at *first* without our will.

Christ saves sinners just as they are! Christ died not for the righteous, but for the ungodly! His message is Grace, pure Grace, undiluted by a single condition or requisition which God might make of man. Just as you are, trust your soul with Christ and though there is in you no speck of anything that is good, He will save you and give you perfect liberty. Dearly has He bought it, but freely does He give it—even the faith by which we receive is the gift of God. It is a liberty which may be instantaneously received. The captive goes first through one door and then another and perhaps a hundred keys must grate in the wards of the lock before he feels the cool fresh air gladdening his brow.

But it is not so with the man who believes! The moment you believe, you are free! You may have been chained at a thousand points, but the instant you believe in Christ you are unfettered and free as the bird of the air. Not more free is the eagle which mounts to his rocky nest and afterwards outsoars the clouds—even he, the bird of God—is not more unfettered than the soul which Christ has delivered! Cut are the cords and in an instant you are clear of all and upward you mount to God! You may have come in here a slave and you may go out free!

God’s Grace can, in a moment, give you the condition of freedom and the nature of it. He can make you say, “Abba, Father,” with your whole heart, though up to this day you may have been of your father the devil, and his works you have done. In an instant is it worked! We are told in tropical lands that the sun seems to leap up from under the horizon and the dead of night is suddenly turned into the luster of day—so on a sudden does God’s Grace often dawn upon the darkness of sinful hearts. You have seen, perhaps, at times after showers of rain have fallen upon the earth, how land which seemed all dry and barren was suddenly covered with green grass, with here and there a lily full in bloom. And so a heart which has been like a desert, when once the shower of Jesus’ Grace falls on it, blossoms like the garden of the Lord and yields sweet perfume.

And that in a moment! You who have given yourselves up in despair—you who have written your own condemnation! You who have made a league with death and a covenant with Hell and said, “There is no hope, therefore will we go after our iniquities,” I charge you, hear me, when I declare that my Lord and Master, who has broken my chains and set *me* free, can break yours, too—and that with one blow! Mark, that if this is done, it is done *forever*. When Christ sets free, no chains can bind again. Let the Master say to me, “Captive, I have delivered you,” and it is done!

Come on, come on, you Fiends of the Pit! Mightier is He who is for us than all they who are against us. Come on, come on, temptations of the world—but if the Lord is on our side, whom shall we fear? If He is our defense, who shall be our destruction? Come on, come on, you foul corruptions, come on you machinations and temptations of my own deceitful heart—but He who has begun the good work in me will carry it on and perfect it to the end.

Gather, gather, gather all your hosts together, you who are the foes of God and the enemies of man, and come at once with concentrated fury and with hellish might against my spirit—but if God acquits—who is he that condemns? Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? The black stream of death shall never wash out the mark of Christian liberty! That skeleton monarch bears no yoke which he can put upon a Believer’s neck. We will shout victory when we are breast-deep amidst the last billows and grapple with the king upon the pale horse—we will

throw the rider and win the victory in the last struggle, according as it is written, “Thanks be unto God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Sparta and Greece refused to wear the yoke of Persia and broke the proud king’s pomp. But we are free in a nobler sense! We refuse the yoke of Satan and will overcome his power as Christ overcame it in the days gone by. Let those who will, bend and crouch at the foot of the world’s monarch! But as for those whom God has made free, they claim to think, to believe, to act, and to *be* as their Divine instinct commands them and the Spirit of God enables them—“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” “If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed.”

IV. And now we put round the QUESTION, are we free, then, this morning? Are we free? I will not answer it for *you*, nor need I just now answer for myself, but I would beseech you to make a searching enquiry into it. If you are free, then remember that you have changed your lodging place, for the slave and the son sleep not in the same room of the house. The things which satisfied you when a slave will not satisfy you NOW.

You wear a garment which a slave may never wear and you feel an instinct within which the slave can never feel. There is an Abba, Father, cry in you which was not there once. Is it so? Is it so? If you are free you lie not as you used to do. You go not to the slave’s work—you have not now to toil and sweat to earn the wages of sin which is death. But now, as a son serves his father, you do a son’s work and you expect to receive a son’s reward—for the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!

One thing I know, if you are free then you are thinking about setting others free. And if you have no zeal for the emancipation of other men you are a slave yourself. If you are free you hate all sorts of chains, all sorts of sin and you will never willingly put on the fetters again. You live each day crying unto Him who made you free at first, to hold you up that you fall not into the snare. If you are free, this is not the world for you! This is the land of slaves. This is the world of bondage. If you are free, your heart has gone to Heaven, the land of the free. If you are free today, your spirit is longing for the time when you shall see the great Liberator face to face!

If you are free, you will bide your time until He calls you. But when He says, “Friend, come up here,” you will fearlessly mount to the upper spheres—and death and sin shall be no hindrance to your advent to His Glory! I would we were all free! But if we are not, the next best thing I would is that those of us who are not free would fret under the fetter—for when the fetters are felt, they shall be broken! When the iron enters into the soul it shall be snapped. When you long for liberty you shall have it! When you seek for it as for hidden treasure and pant for it as the stag for the water brook, God will not deny you! “Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened. Ask and it shall be given you.”

God lead you to seek and knock and ask *now*, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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