

If The Son,
Therefore, Make You
Free, Ye Shall Be
Free Indeed

(John 8:36)

Donald Cargill

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THEREFORE, MAKE
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FREE INDEED**

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P.O. Box 59084

Norwalk, CA 90652 USA

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this is published through the world, "Whosoever will, let him come" and receive this freedom from sin, and that freely. And

2. Despair not then to get your bonds loosed, were they never so strong. It is true some souls have made themselves as sure of hell as the wit of men and devils possibly can do. We know not what paction or correspondence you may have had with devils, besides that natural possession they have of you. If ye be like one who hath made sure an inheritance to another, and that other hath displeased him, and yet he cannot get it back again, being made sure unto him before—there is in this case, doubtless, nothing but the wisdom of heaven, the power of omnipotency with God's infinite love that can revoke or recall it. So were there bonds never so many, and the possession of devils never so sure, yet, if you are for freedom, despair not; for we say this, that it is in the power of God to overcome all these, and it shall be His glory to loose us, the faster we are bound in sin. And

Lastly, Let us betake ourselves unto Him, and let us consider what we would have. Sure, the great desire and petition of your souls should be for freedom. Begin first with sin. When ye begin there, it is well; for he that begins with sin need not be afraid of wrath. Wrath hath not power but for sin; and where we are freed from sin we are freed from challenges of conscience. There are no such challenges but where sin reigns; and where sin reigns not it is like an old bond cancelled, the power of which is taken away.

N.B.—It would appear from these words, after laying down the general heads—"Now we shall speak a word to these, at least to some of them"—that he had deferred the third or last head unto another occasion.

SERMON I I.*

"If the Son, therefore, make you free, ye shall be free indeed."—
John viii. 36.

CHRIST'S freedom is the greatest of privileges, and it is in the best of hands. I say, it is the greatest of benefits, and it is in the best of hands. He hath purchased it at a dear rate, that sets forth its preciousness; and He bestows it freely, and that shows His graciousness. We may say this one word, and what needs more? As it were, He is set over this matter; that is, He is the lover of man; for so the Scripture styles Him "ΦΙΛΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΣ." I say He is set over this matter, as the lover of man. It was certainly a great joy to Jacob, and to Benjamin his son, to hear that Joseph was set over the land of Egypt. They knew there was nothing under his hand that his bowels would refuse. There are some that know the compassions of Christ to be so great that their cry unto Him shall never be in vain. Oh, that either the excellency of the benefit, or the graciousness of the Giver, could stir us up to be in earnest about it! for we may say, that if the mouth were opened, and the heart loosed, if this were never so little, that attainment would go on to a perfect liberty from God, so that from the graciousness of God we should attain unto the highest degree of this benefit.

But being directly led unto this text of Scripture, what is the great intent of it? It is to show that this power of making free is solely in the hand of Jesus Christ.

Now there are these things we have to speak unto:—

I. That men may attain unto freedom again.

II. That this freedom is to be obtained by Jesus Christ.

III. That this freedom by Jesus Christ is a freedom indeed. Other freedoms compared to this are nothing but slavery and bondage.

Now we shall speak a word to these, at least to some of them.

And

I. That men may attain to freedom. Man is thrust down, and now very low, and he owes this to himself. But that which we would observe is this:—

That though he is brought down very low, yet his case is not a desperate case, but he may be restored and raised up again, even unto the freedom of Jesus Christ. But that we may clear up this a little, there are:—

1. Some insensible of the want of this freedom, so as to obtain

* This sermon was preached at Quarrel-holes, December, 1678.

it. It is not in their heart. So they want both power and desire to make themselves free, but they abide in this case, until the great thraldom of bondage come upon them, and then they must abide therein for ever.

2. There are others with whom the Lord deals another way, to make them sensible of their thraldom and slavery to sin. Hard crosses and conditions come with their bondage and thraldom; and these working together (through divine grace) beget a longing desire in them to attain unto this freedom from a body of sin and death. But

First, If it be inquired what freedom is this, we shall not dwell long upon it. In a word, man may be made free of all that sin has subjected him to. We shall not speak much further, as to what degree this freedom of Christ may amount to. Whatever would have been the freedom of man in innocence, we may venture to say, that this shall be no less; yea, it shall be greater; for it is now purchased by the blood of Christ Himself, that is infinite in merit. So it must be a greater freedom than that which would have been the purchase of man's innocence.

But what we would speak to, is, that this freedom frees from all the bondage and burden that sin hath cast upon man whether in soul or body; whether it be to that which belongs to the whole person soul and body, or to the several parts of the person soul and body separated. And

1. There are these three things that the soul enslaved to sin, is subjected unto, viz.:(1.) Deprivation, (2.) Slavery, and (3.) Imprisonment. And

(1.) As to its deprivation, it is much deprived of the sense of God. What is the soul of man like? It is like a rich heir, that some have so taken in that they have scarcely left him anything except the title. We have the name of men of strength, wisdom, virtue. But there is nothing left save the name of these. If we take and sift man to the bottom, you will find nothing of that excellency that should answer that name or character in him. But if we consider particularly his deprivations, or what we are deprived of, we may say the best of men is but like a reed shaken with the wind, or a blasted stalk of corn, that stands up but has nothing but chaff. It appears somewhat until it is in your hand, and then you will find the grain is gone. So it is with man in this state of thraldom. Sin has deprived him of all true excellency and illumination. There is neither light, life, true wisdom, nor any perfection now in the soul of man, so that its deprivation is wonderfully great—so great that nothing is left him that may be really helpful to him. But all he hath is infirmities, or what tends more to trouble him, than to rid him out of these entanglements. A

(2.) Thing sin hath subjected us to is to the slavery of lusts. Woe

those just men made perfect—that royal assembly of the Church of the first-born! But

1st, What does Jesus Christ for this freedom? Why, He hath paid down the ransom for it, and consigned it over to the Father's hand. His obedience and sufferings are the ransom which was consigned over to the Father, so that now whosoever will may go and receive sufficiently of that ransom that was weighed and paid down for this liberation. Thus we see where it is. It is in the Father's hand, and the sufferings of Christ were a sealing of it over accordingly.

2ndly, As Christ has paid the ransom, and consigned it over, so He has procured the bestowing of the Spirit on us. It is by the Spirit that man's bonds of captivity are loosed, for it is the Spirit that begets us anew, man is begotten again by the Spirit. It is through the Spirit we are made free, even the Spirit of Christ—not merely the Spirit because He proceeds from Him, but because He is given in consequence of His blood-shedding, His death, and sufferings.

3rdly, The power of bestowing this freedom is delivered, by the common consent of the council of heaven, unto Jesus Christ, the second person of the glorious Trinity. "For if the Son make you free, ye are free indeed." It is true He bought it not as a man buys a place to bury himself in; but He bought this power and authority at a dear rate, even "by being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," to the end that heaven might be free unto us, and to "give eternal life unto as many as believe in his name."

4thly, As He hath purchased this power, so He is ready to give liberty freely to everyone that comes unto Him for it, for He is interested in all our concernments. There is a greater willingness and readiness in Him to give it than there is in us to seek or ask it of Him. Although He may let us ask a while, yet His heart is still at His mouth, if we may use the expression, He hath so great compassion on us. If any of you come with a supplication to Him, He says, "What is your suit, and what is your petition, and what is your request?" Why, say ye, it is even to be freed from all these lusts or idols, and from that devil, who is ever seeking whom he may deceive and devour.

Use.—This says or speaks forth unto us:—

1. An encouragement to all who set about this work. Ye have a throne to go unto where your supplications shall be heard. He hath not shut His door against you; supplications shall be welcome here. It is sometimes the case in Commonwealths that heralds are appointed to proclaim liberty to all who will come and make themselves free. Christ shows Himself ready to accept of all that come. There is an open proclamation in the Gospel; the law is given out for having a Commonwealth erected in heaven; and

threatened with slavery, stabbed himself with that word * "I cannot serve Them." A word proper for every Christian's heart is, "I cannot serve any but God the Creator, and God the Redeemer, whom I am bound upon the account of creation and redemption to serve."

To add one word more: we can hardly have right views of our freedom, when we lie under the power of so many things. We speak not only of lusts and idols, but of these things we are in subjection unto. We speak not of these things as trifles. Although they be but as trifles to some of you, yet they are the indications of bondage; for if ye cast not off the lesser, ye cannot cast off the greater. But wherever the freedom goes, it makes a fair way before it. I will cast off this and the other thing. "I will," says the believer, "be in subjection unto nothing that is sinful, and will not be under the power of anything that is unlawful; yea, under subjection unto nothing, though lawful, but unto God only, and His divine laws." We say this, and we say it before God, we preach it to you this day. Take one of these two, either freedom to heaven, or conviction to hell with you. And remember that it is declared by a minister of the gospel, that you might obtain freedom in Christ. There are none that hear me this day, but one of these two they shall take with them. And this offer of freedom to those that reject it shall be a torment upon their conscience in hell to all eternity. Alas! will such a one say, "I might have been made free from hell and wrath. It was told me, and pressed on me; but I have rejected it unto my eternal ruin."

II. The second thing was this, that freedom is to be obtained by Jesus Christ. Here every word is more joyful than another—that the power of this freedom and liberation is in the hands of Jesus Christ. And whose hands would you have it in? He is on our side. It is true, He is Mediator; yet He stands wholly for man. Therefore this is the joy, that man has freedom and that this freedom is in the hands of Jesus Christ. We may say that the hope of freedom in Him is better than the fruition of freedom in ourselves. How soon did Adam lose freedom when in his own hand. And yet the poor believer, who has not the strength Adam once had, shall keep this freedom to eternity. But to clear up this point a little, let us see what Jesus Christ does for this freedom. And

1. What He has done for procuring freedom to lost man.
2. How He brings us to the right hand of God, where we may obtain the perfection of this freedom. Oh, to be free and amongst

* The like is related of Cato, who cast himself unto the sea at Ulltha rather than be brought to slavery.—Clark's "Examples."

unto lusts! Everything is become a master to man in his fallen estate. What is it that overgrows him not, and holds him not under slavery and lust so that he is not his own man, nor his own master, nor the servant of God? In this, and this only, would man be his own master, in being God's servant and so master over all his lusts and affections in the soul. Ah! it must be a great fall, to fall from such a freedom into such a slavery.

(3.) Consider that the soul of man is thrust into prison; and what is the body which is now an habitation for the soul? Is it not a prison? Have we not shut up the soul so that it hath neither endowment nor capacity to comprehend anything, like a prisoner that gets not light, food, or clothing; for the soul is shut up in prison until the body be restored unto the gloriousness of the Son of God. And

2. What is the body of man by sin subjected unto? Why, it is subjected unto all infirmities, sickness, pain and maladies of every kind. We shall not say that all these infirmities meet in one person, but if all the infirmities of the body through the world were gathered together, strange spectacles of strange diseases and maladies would be seen, and all these we are subjected unto by reason of sin.

3. Sin has subjected the whole person, soul and body, unto the wrath of God, so that man hath no more freedom from wrath nor suspension from that great debt, but so long as it pleaseth God in His infinite goodness to allow him. So that while under that thralldom sin has put us into, the Lord may call us in a moment unto that perpetual prison that sin has subjected us unto.

And lastly, we may add this, that notwithstanding all this, man may attain unto freedom. Yea, notwithstanding all these mortgages which are innumerable, for man, in all his ways, hath acted a part to his own soul, like a man that sought to set enough upon his inheritances when he saw it would unavoidably go away. We may say this of the mortgage of souls, it is so great that there is none that will plead an interest to redeem them, for the soul is not worthy of redemption; and we may say that there is nothing left that is precious in the soul but its immortality, and it is that which makes it precious, otherwise nothing would be precious to it. And as it is mortgaged, so the mortgages are many; for every sin makes new bonds, and a new addition to the rope by which we are holden. It is true we think we have few ropes about us, but ere we break them ye will find them innumerable. For as many as our sins are, so many are our bonds; and ye know a three-fold cord is not easily broken. And yet, notwithstanding the number and greatness of our bonds, there were hope if there were strength within. But our weakness is as great as our bondage is. And yet, after all, man may attain unto his freedom from under the bondage and slavery of sin.

We shall only speak a short word of Use unto this point. The joyful tidings of the gospel have brought to light, and proclaimed that men may yet attain unto freedom, and, therefore, let every man set his heart upon this.

We might notice these three things:—(1.) There are some that have already obtained this freedom. (2.) There are others that have missed it and it is gone. (3.) There are some whose freedom is only in the bud begun. (4.) There are some that are just labouring about their freedom. And lastly: There are some who utterly neglect it. Now a word to each of these:—

1. There are some who have obtained this freedom, and are gone, and there are no bonds on them. Now they may serve to encourage the rest. If we could hear that company from heaven who have escaped these fetters, they are now (as it were) looking back and crying, "Courage!" to those behind. "We were as far down and under bondage as ye once, but now we are free. There is nothing but the earth detains our bodies; and we have their resurrection promised, and we have the resurrection of the body of Christ for a pledge—the human nature of Christ in heaven for a pledge, and the promise of God for our security in that."

2. There are some who have missed it; and if they were to return back they would again miss it. They are gone, and hell makes no change upon the nature of man. We speak not this as if God would excuse any that are in it, or yet diminish aught of their torment. But still conscience is laying it home to their doct, that the want of freedom was owing to their own unwillingness. Whatever was in the decree of God which was not made known to them till they found it made out; yet they had the same offers as the elect had who are now in glory, and they rejected them.

3. There are some that have their freedom begun, and it is now going on to perfection; and there are two things we would say to these. And

(1.) The quicker ye are, it will be the better for you; for the quicker the easier. They that are slothful in this will have double work of it, for a Christian by his diligence one day and slackness another, gets the former day's work to do over again; for by every day's slackness Satan brings you a step back again, and corruption gathers strength according to your negligence. Therefore be quick, and remember it is the everlasting freedom of the soul that you are now exercised about.

(2.) Be encouraged in this work, although there be but small beginnings; yet if you have gained any ground there is hope. We may say that there is not a freedom in the least degree but it is a pledge or earnest of a total freedom. Is there a freedom from one sin, one lust, one evil abstinence being accompanied with want

of affection? (for these two must not be separated) then it is promising like. It is a gracious freedom. If the one hand be loosed, it is a sure pledge of the perfection of freedom.

4. There are others, again, that have just begun to taste their liberty, and it is much to raise their hearts to any courage, or expectation of ever obtaining it. We would say this word to them, that they should be like Abraham, who did not consider the deadness of Sarah's womb, nor his own weakness. What considered he then? He considered the power of God, that He that promised was also able to do it. But we say unto poor men and women that are begun to seek after their freedom, that they should be encouraged from these considerations. They should encourage themselves from the greatness, the power, and infiniteness of mercy in Him. There is nothing able to withstand the strength and mighty power of God; for He hath given a proof of it. The bonds of death were not able to hold the Son of God. So the devil's bonds shall not be able to keep a believer, if the Lord once set to His hand to rescue him. And

Lastly, There are some who are utterly neglecting this freedom. We may say this word to such: that the longer they neglect it, the devil is the more busy and industrious in binding of them; for if ye are not loosing, he is binding, and so it goes always on. Alas! how fast are many of you thus bound! and ere long, I am afraid, they shall be a triumph to devils that shall get such power over them, as to cut off their hair, bind them in chains, and put out their eyes. They will thus be made a public triumph and derision unto all the devils in hell. We would count him unwise who had a Burgess-right in a city, and yet would not show it, nor take out his Burgess ticket, though he knows not what occasion he might have for it. But oh, the madness of man who still neglects this freedom of a higher kind! But to address ourselves to all in general, that find anything of this slavery and bondage (ah! how few find it!) we are in love with our bonds; for there is too much sensuality amongst us. Hence a lustful eye has been a greater burden to some than poverty has been to others.

Again, poverty hath been a greater burden to some, than a covetous eye has been to others; yea, than all the lusts that lodge in the heart of man. But, some are never at rest, unless when they find the yoke of Satan bound over them. There are these two things we would say to such:—

1. They must first break the womb of nature. These who do this, need not despair of obtaining the freedom that comes after. Oh, if we were once out of the womb of corrupt nature, there would be nothing too hard for us!

2. As ye must break the womb of nature, so ye must refuse subjection to every sin. It was a generous word of a noble Spartan, who when he was taken prisoner by the enemy, and being