

J.C. Ryle:

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”--John 8:36

The subject before us today deserves our attention. It should ring in the ears of every person like the voice of a trumpet. We live in a land which is the very cradle of freedom. But are we ourselves free?

The question is one which demands special attention during the present state of public opinion. The minds of many are absorbed in politics. Yet there is a freedom, within the reach of all of us, which few, I am afraid, ever think of--a freedom independent of all political changes--a freedom which neither the prevailing government, nor the cleverest politician can bestow. This is the freedom about which I speak today. Do we know anything of it? Are we free?

In opening this subject, there are three points which I wish to present.

I. I will show, in the first place, “The excellence of freedom.”

II. I will show, in the second place, “The best and truest kind of freedom.”

III. I will show, in the last place, “The way in which the best kind of freedom may become your very own.”

Let no one think for a moment that this is going to be a political sermon. I am no politician: I have no politics but those of the Bible. The only party I care for is the Lord's side: show me where that is, and it shall have my support. The only election I am anxious about is the election of grace. My one desire is that sinners would make their own calling and election sure. The liberty I desire above all things to make known, and promote, is the glorious liberty of the children of God. The government I care to support is the government which is on the shoulder of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I want every knee to bow down before Christ, and every tongue to confess that He is Lord. I ask for your attention while I canvass these subjects. If you are not free, I want to guide you into true liberty. If you are free, I want you to know the full value of your freedom.

I. The first thing I want to show is “The excellence of freedom.”

On this point some may think it is needless to say anything: they assume that everyone knows the value of freedom, and that to dwell on it is merely a waste of time. I don't agree with such people at all. I believe that millions of our countrymen know nothing of the blessings which they enjoy in their own land: they have grown up from infancy to manhood in the midst of freedom. They don't have the slightest idea of the state of things in other countries: they are ignorant of the two worst kinds of tyranny--the crushing tyranny of a cruel military dictator, and the intolerant tyranny of an unreasoning mob. In short, many of us know nothing of the value of liberty, just because we have been born in the middle of it, and have never been without it for a moment.

I call on every one of you to remember that liberty is one of the greatest earthly blessings that we can have on this side of the grave.

1. We live in a land where our “bodies” are free.

So long as we don't hurt someone's body, or property, or character, no one can touch us: the poorest man's house is his castle.

2. We live in a land where our “actions” are free.

So long as we support ourselves, we are free to choose what we will do, where we will go, and how we will spend our time.

3. We live in land where our “consciences” are free.

So long as we are peaceful about our beliefs, and do not interfere with others, we are free to worship God as we please, and no one can compel us to take his way to heaven.

4. We live in a land where no foreigner rules over us.

Our laws are made and altered by people like ourselves, and our governors and leaders live among us, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

In short, we have every kind of freedom to an extent which no other nation on earth can equal. We have personal freedom, civil freedom, religious freedom, and national freedom. We have free bodies, free consciences, free speech, free thought, free action, free Bibles, a free press, and free homes. How vast is this list of privileges! How endless are the comforts which it contains! The full value of them perhaps can never be known. It was well said by the Jewish Rabbis of long ago, "If the sea were ink and the world parchment, it would never serve to describe the praises of liberty."

And yet, the desire for this freedom has been the most fertile cause of misery to nations in every age of the world.

What reader of the Bible can fail to remember the sorrows of the children of Israel, when they were slaves under Pharaoh in Egypt, or under the Philistines in Canaan? What student of history needs to be reminded of the misery inflicted on the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Italy by the hands of foreign oppressors, or the Inquisition? Who, even in our own time, has not heard of that enormous fountain of wretchedness, the slavery of the Negro race? Certainly no misery is so great as the misery of slavery.

To win and preserve freedom has been the aim of many national struggles which have flooded the earth with blood. Liberty has been the cause in which scores of Greeks, and Romans, and Germans, and Poles, and Swiss, and Englishmen, and Americans have willingly laid down their lives. No price has been thought too great to pay in order that nations might be free.

The champions of freedom in every age have been rightly esteemed among the greatest benefactors of mankind. Such names as Moses and Gideon in Jewish history, such names as the Spartan Leonidas, the Roman Horatius, the German Martin Luther, the Swedish Gustavus Vasa, the Swiss William Tell, the Scotch Robert Bruce and John Knox, the English Alfred and Hampden and the Puritans, the American George Washington, are deservedly preserved in history, and will never be forgotten. To be the mother of many patriots is the highest praise of a nation.

The enemies of freedom in every age have been rightly regarded as the parasites and irritations of their times. Such names as Pharaoh in Egypt, Dionysius at Syracuse, Nero at Rome, Charles IX in France, bloody Mary in England, are names which will never be rescued from disgrace. The public opinion of mankind will never cease to condemn them, on the one ground that they would not let people be free.

But why should I dwell on these things? Time and space would fail me if I were to attempt to say ten percent of what might be said in praise of freedom. What are the chronicles of history but a long record of conflicts between the friends and foes of liberty? Where is the nation on the earth that has attained greatness, and left its mark on the world, without freedom? Which are the countries on the face of the globe at this very moment which are making the most progress in trade, in arts, in sciences, in civilization, in philosophy, in morals, in social happiness? Precisely those countries in which there is the greatest amount of true freedom.

Which are the countries today where there is the greatest amount of internal misery, where we hear continually of secret plots, and murmuring, and discontent, and attempts on life and property? Precisely those countries where freedom does not exist or exists only in name--where men and women are treated as slaves, and are not allowed to think and act for themselves. No wonder that a mighty Transatlantic Statesman declared on a great occasion to his assembled countrymen, "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I do not know what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" [Patrick Henry, an American Statesman of the 18th century].

Let us beware of "underestimating" the liberty we enjoy in this country of ours.

I am sure there is need of this warning. There is, perhaps, no country on earth where there is so much grumbling and fault-finding as there is here. Men look at the alleged evils which they see around them, and exaggerate both their number and their intensity. They refuse to look at the countless blessings and privileges which surround us, or underrate the advantages of them. They forget that comparison should be applied to everything. With our faults and defects there is at this hour no country on earth where there is so much liberty and happiness for all classes, as there is here. They forget that as long as human nature is corrupt, it is vain to expect perfection here below. No laws or government whatever can possibly prevent a certain amount of abuses and corruptions.

Once more then, I say, let us beware of undervaluing our liberty, and running eagerly after every one who proposes sweeping changes.

Changes are not always improvements. The old shoes may have some holes and defects, but the new shoes may pinch so much that we can't walk at all. No doubt we might have better laws and government than we have: but I am quite sure we might just as easily have worse. Today there is no country on the face of the earth where there is so much care taken of the life, and health, and property, and character, and personal liberty of the average citizen, as there is in our country. Those who want to have more liberty, would soon find, if they visit other countries, that there is no country on earth where there is so much real liberty as our own.

But while I command people not to undervalue our liberty, so also on the other hand I charge them not to "overvalue" it. Never forget that earthly slavery is not the only slavery, and earthly freedom not the only freedom.

What will it profit you to be a citizen of a free country, so long as your soul is not free?

What is the good of living in a free land like ours, with free thought, free speech, free action, free conscience, so long as you are a slave to sin, and a captive to the devil? Yes: there are tyrants whom no eye can see, as real and destructive as Pharaoh or Nero! There are chains

which no hands can touch, as true and heavy and soul-withering as ever crushed the limbs of a slave! It is these tyrants whom I want you to remember today. It is these chains from which I want you to be free. By all means value your earthly liberty, but do not overvalue it. Look higher, further than any earthly freedom. In the highest sense let us ensure that "we are free indeed."

II. The second thing that I have to show is "the truest and best kind of freedom."

The freedom I speak of is a freedom that is within the reach of every child of Adam who is willing to receive it. No power on earth can prevent a man or woman from receiving it, if they have but the will to receive it. Tyrants may threaten and cast in prison, but nothing they can do can stop a person from receiving this liberty. And, once it is ours, nothing can take it away. Men may torture us, banish us, hang us, behead us, burn us, but they can never take from us true freedom. The poorest may have it along with the richest: the most uneducated may have it as well as the most educated, and the weakest as well as the strongest. Laws cannot deprive us of it: The Roman Catholic Church cannot rob us of it. Once it is ours, it is an everlasting possession.

Now, what is this glorious freedom? Where is it to be found? What is it like? Who has obtained it for us? Who has got it at this moment to bestow? I ask you to give me your attention, and I will supply a simple answer to these questions.

The true freedom I speak of is spiritual freedom--freedom of the soul. It is the freedom which Christ bestows freely on all true Christians.

Those whom the Son makes free are free indeed, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." (2 Corinthians 3:17). Let men say what they please about the comparative freedom of monarchies, republics, and democracies; let them struggle, if they will, for universal freedom, brotherhood, and equality: but we will never know the highest form of freedom until we are enrolled as citizens in the kingdom of God. We are ignorant of the best kind of freedom if we have not been set free by Christ.

Those set free by Christ are free from the "guilt of sin."

That heavy burden of unforgiven sin, which lies so heavy on many consciences, no longer presses them down. Christ's blood has cleansed it all away. They feel pardoned, reconciled, justified, and accepted in God's sight. They can look back on their old sins, however vile and many, and say, "You cannot condemn me." They can look back on long years of carelessness and worldliness and say, "Who can hold me accountable for anything in my past?" This is true liberty. This is to be truly free.

Those set free by Christ are free from the "power of sin."

Sin no longer rules and reigns in their hearts, and overtakes them like a flood. Through the power of Christ's Spirit they restrain the deeds of their bodies, and crucify their flesh with its affections and lusts. Through His

grace working in them they get the victory over their evil inclinations. The flesh may fight, but it does not conquer them; the devil may tempt and harass, but does not overcome them: they are no longer the slave of lusts and passion, and obsession, and moods. In all these things they are more than conquerors through Him who loved them. This is true liberty. This is to be truly free.

Those set free by Christ are free from the “cringing fear of God.”

They no longer look at Him with dread and apprehension, as an offended Maker; they no longer hate Him, and hide from Him, like Adam did among the trees of the garden; they no longer tremble at the thought of His judgment. Through the Spirit of adoption which Christ has given them, they look on God as a reconciled Father, and rejoice in the thought of His love. They no longer feel His anger. They feel that when God the Father looks down on them, He sees them in Christ, and unworthy as they are in themselves, is well-pleased. This is true liberty. This is to be truly free.

Those set free by Christ are free from the “fear of man.”

They are no longer afraid of man's opinions, or care much what man thinks of them; they are also indifferent to his favor or hatred, his smile or his frown. They look away from man who can be seen, to Christ who is not seen, and having the favor of Christ, they care little for the condemnation of man. “The fear of man” was once a snare to them. They trembled at the thought of what man would say, or think, or do: they dared not run counter to the fashions and customs of those around them; they shrank from the idea of standing alone. But the snare is now broken and they are delivered. This is true liberty. This is to be truly free.

Those set free by Christ are free from the “fear of death.”

Christians no longer look forward to death with silent dismay, as a horrible thing which they don't like to think about. Through Christ they can look this last enemy calmly in the face, and say, “You cannot harm me.” They can look forward to all that comes after death--decay, resurrection, judgment, and eternity--and yet not be the least concerned. They can stand by the side of an open grave, and say, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” They can lay down on their deathbeds, and say, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” “Not a hair of my head will perish.” This is true liberty. This is to be truly free.

Best of all, those set free by Christ are “free forever.”

Once enrolled in the list of heavenly citizens, their names shall never be erased. Once presented with the freedom of Christ's kingdom, they will possess it eternally. The highest privileges of this world's freedom can only endure for a lifetime; the freest citizen on earth must submit eventually to death, and lose his privilege forever: but the privilege of Christ's people is eternal. They carry it down to the grave, and it still lives; they will rise again with it at the last day, and enjoy the privileges of it forevermore. This is true liberty. This is to be truly free.

Does anyone ask how and in what way Christ has obtained these mighty privileges for His people? You have a right to ask the question, and it is one that can never be answered too clearly. Give me your attention, and I will show you by what means Christ has made His people free.

The freedom of Christ's people has been procured, like all other freedoms, at a mighty cost and by a mighty sacrifice.

Great was the bondage in which they were naturally held, and great was the price necessary to be paid to set them free: mighty was the enemy who claimed them as his captives, and mighty power was needed to release them out of his hands. But, blessed be God, there was enough grace, and enough power available in Jesus Christ. He provided to the uttermost everything that was required to set His people free. The price that Christ paid for His people was nothing less than His own lifeblood. He became their Substitute, and suffered for their sins at the cross: He redeemed them from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for them. (Galatians 3:13) He paid all their debt in His own person, by allowing the punishment that would bring them peace to be laid on Him. (Isaiah 53:5) He satisfied every possible demand of the law against them, by fulfilling its righteousness to the uttermost. He cleared them from every accusation of sin, by becoming sin for them. (2 Corinthians 5:21) He fought their battle with the devil, and triumphed over him on the cross. As their Champion, He disarmed the powers and authorities, and made a public spectacle of them on Calvary. In a word, Christ having given Himself for us, has purchased the full right of redemption for us. Nothing can touch those to whom He gives freedom:

their debts are paid, and paid a thousand times over; their sins are atoned for by a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement. A Divine Substitute's death completely meets the justice of

God, and provides complete redemption for man.

Let us take a good look at this glorious plan of redemption, and be careful that we understand it. Ignorance on this point is the one great cause of faint hopes, little comfort, and ceaseless doubts in the minds of many Christians. Too many are content with a vague idea that Christ will somehow save sinners: but how or why they don't have a clue. I protest against this ignorance. Let us set fully before our eyes the doctrine of Christ dying in our place--His substituted death, and rest our souls on it. Let us hold on firmly to the mighty truth, that Christ on the cross:

Christ on the cross: Stood in the place of His people

Christ on the cross: Died for His people

Christ on the cross: Suffered for His people

Christ on the cross: Was counted a curse and sin for His people

Christ on the cross: Paid the debts of His People

Christ on the cross: Made restitution for His people

Christ on the cross: Became the guarantee of His people

Christ on the cross: Became the representative of His people

And in this way Christ procured His people's freedom. Let us understand this clearly, and then we will see what a mighty privilege it is to be made free by Christ.

This is freedom which, above all others is worth having.

We can never value it too highly: there is no danger of overvaluing it. All other freedom is an unsatisfying thing at the best, and a poor uncertain possession at any time. Christ's freedom alone can never be overthrown. It is secured by a covenant ordered in all things and sure: its foundations are laid in the eternal councils of God, and no foreign enemy can overthrow them. They are cemented and secured by the blood of the Son of God Himself, and can never be destroyed. The freedom of nations often lasts no longer than a few centuries: the freedom which Christ gives to any one of His people is a freedom that will outlive this material universe.

This is the truest, highest kind of freedom. This is the freedom which in a changing, dying world, I want men and women to possess.

III. I will now show, in the last place, "the way in which the best kind of freedom is made our own."

This is a point of vast importance, on account of the many mistaken ideas which exist about it. Thousands, perhaps, will allow that there is such a thing as spiritual freedom, and that Christ alone has purchased it for us: but when they come to the application of redemption, they go astray. They cannot answer the question, "Who are those that Christ truly sets free?" And because they are lacking in any real knowledge about the answer, they sit still in their chains. I ask every one of you to give me your attention once more, and I will try to throw a little light on the subject. Useless indeed is the redemption which Christ has obtained, unless you know how the fruit of that redemption can become your own. In vain have you read of the freedom by which Christ makes people free, unless you understand how you yourself may have an interest in it.

We are not born with the freedom in Christ.

The inhabitants of many a city enjoy privileges by virtue of their birthplace. Paul, who drew his first lifebreath at Tarsus in Cilicia, could say to the Roman Commander, "I was born free." But this is not the case with Adam's children, in regards to spiritual things. We are born slaves and servants of sin: we are by nature "children of wrath," and destitute of any claim to heaven.

We do not acquire freedom in Christ by baptism.

Every year many are solemnly baptized in the name of the Trinity, who serve sin like slaves, and neglect Christ all of their days. Wretched indeed is that person's state of soul who can give no better evidence of their citizenship of heaven than the mere naked fact of their baptism!

We do not acquire freedom in Christ by mere membership in a church.

There are companies and corporations whose members are entitled to vast privileges, without any respect to their personal character, if their names are simply on the list of members. The kingdom of Christ is not a corporation of this kind. The great test of belonging to it is personal character.

Let these things sink into our minds. Far be it from me to narrow the extent of Christ's redemption: the price He paid on the cross is sufficient for the whole world. Far be it from me to undervalue baptism or Church-membership: the ordinance which Christ appointed, and the Church which He maintains in the midst of a dark world, neither of them ought to be lightly esteemed. All I am contending is the absolute necessity of not being content with either baptism or Church-membership. If our religion stops short here it is unprofitable and unsatisfying. It needs something more than this to give us an interest in the redemption which Christ has purchased.

There is no other way to acquire freedom in Christ than that of simply believing.

It is by faith, simple faith in Him as our Savior and Redeemer, that men's souls are made free. It is by receiving Christ, trusting Christ, committing ourselves to Christ, placing our whole weight on Christ--it is by this, and by no other plan, that spiritual liberty is made our own. Mighty as the privileges are which those who are free in Christ possess, they all become a man's property in the day that he first believes. He may not yet know their full value, but they are all his own. He that believes in Christ is not condemned, rather he is justified, is born again, is an heir of God, and has everlasting life.

The truth before us is one of priceless importance. Let us cling to it and never let it go. If you desire peace of conscience, if you want inward rest and comfort, then lock on to the truth that faith is the great secret of an interest in Christ's redemption. Take the simplest view of faith: beware of confusing your mind by complicated ideas about it. Follow holiness as closely as you can: seek the fullest and clearest evidence of the inward work of the Spirit. But in the matter of an interest in Christ's redemption remember that faith stands alone. It is by believing, simply believing, that souls become free.

There is no more perfect doctrine than this to perfectly satisfy the ignorant and the unlearned!

Visit the poorest and humblest person who knows nothing of theology, tell him the story of the cross, and the good news about Jesus Christ, and His love to sinners; show him that there is freedom provided for him, as well as for the most educated in the land--freedom from guilt, freedom from the devil, freedom from condemnation, freedom from hell. And then tell him plainly, boldly, fully, unreservedly, that this freedom can be all his, if he will but trust Christ and believe.

There is no more perfect doctrine than this to perfectly satisfy the sick and dying!

Go to the bedside of the vilest sinner, when death is coming near, and tell him lovingly that there is a hope even for him, if he will receive it. Tell him that Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the worst of them; tell him that Christ has done it all, paid it all, performed all, purchased all that the soul of man can possibly need for salvation. And then assure him that he, even he, may be instantly freed from all his guilt, if he will only believe. Yes, say to him, in the words of Scripture, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)

Let us never forget that this is the point to which we must turn our own eyes, if we would know whether we have a saving interest in Christ's redemption. Do not waste your time in speculations whether you are elect, and converted, and a vessel of grace. Do not stand poring over the unprofitable question whether Christ died for you or not. Settle your thoughts on this one simple question, "Do I really trust in Christ, as a humble sinner? Do I throw myself at His feet? Do I believe?" Do not look to anything else. Look at this alone. Do not fear to rest your soul on clear passages and promises of Scripture. If you believe, you are truly free.

(1) And now as I bring this sermon to a conclusion, let me lovingly press on every one of you the question

which naturally grows out of the whole subject. Let me ask one simple question: “Are you truly free?”

I don't know who or what type of person you are. But this I do know, there never was an age when the question I press on you was more thoroughly needed. Political freedom, civil freedom, commercial freedom, freedom of the press--all these, and a hundred other worldly freedoms are swallowing up men's attention. Few, very few, find time to think of spiritual freedom. Many, too many, forget that no man is so thoroughly a slave, whatever his position, as the man who serves sin.

Yes! there are thousands in this country who are slaves of beer and alcohol, slaves of lust, slaves of ambition, slaves of political party, slaves of money, slaves of gambling, slaves of fashion, or slaves of moods and emotions!

You may not see their chains with the naked eye, and they themselves may boast of their freedom: but for all that they are thoroughly slaves. Whether men like to hear it or not, the gambler and the drunkard, the greedy and the passionate, the glutton and the addict, are not free, but slaves. They are tied hand and foot by the devil. “Everyone who sins is a slave of sin.” (John 8:34) He that boasts of freedom, while he is enslaved by lusts and passions, is going down to hell with a lie in his right hand.

Wake up and see these things, while health, and time, and life are granted to you. Don't let political struggles and party strife make you forget your precious soul. Take any side in politics you please, and honestly follow your conscientious convictions; but never, never forget that there is a freedom far higher and more lasting than any that politics can give you. Don't rest till liberty is your own. Don't rest till YOUR SOUL IS FREE.

(2) Do you feel and desire to be free? Do you find any longing within you for a higher, better freedom than this world can give--a freedom that will not die at your death, but will go with you beyond the grave? Then take the advice I give you today. Seek Christ, repent, believe, and be free.

Christ has a glorious liberty to bestow on all who humbly cry to Him for freedom. Christ can take burdens off your heart, and remove the chains off your inward man. “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36).

Freedom like this is the secret of true happiness.

No one goes through the world with such ease and contentment as those who are citizens of the heavenly city. Earth's burdens press lightly on their shoulders; earth's disappointments do not crush them down as they do others; earth's duties and anxieties do not drink up their spirit. In their darkest hours they have always this to fall back on, “I have something which makes me independent of this world: I am spiritually free.”

Freedom like this is the secret of being a good politician.

In every age those who are free in Christ have been the truest friends to law and order, and to measures for the benefit of all classes of mankind. Never, never let it be forgotten that the despised Puritans, two hundred years ago, did more for the cause of real liberty than all the governments which ever ruled this land. The root of the most genuine patriotism is always one of those whom Christ has made free.

(3) Are you spiritually free? Then rejoice, and be thankful for your freedom.

Don't worry about the scorn and contempt of man: you don't have any reason to be ashamed of your religion or your Master. He whose citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), who has God for his Father, and Christ for his Elder Brother, angels for his daily guards, and heaven itself for his home, is one that is well provided for. No change of laws can add to his greatness: no extension of right or privilege can raise him higher than he stands in God's sight. “The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance” (Psalm 16:6). Grace now, and the hope of glory hereafter, are more lasting privileges than the power of voting in countries.

Are you free? Then stand firm in your liberty, and don't be entangled again in the yoke of bondage.

-- Don't listen to those who by good words and fine speeches would draw you back to the Roman Catholic Church.

-- Beware of those who would try to persuade you that there is any mediator but the one Mediator, Christ Jesus.

- Beware of any one who would try to persuade you that there is any sacrifice but the one Sacrifice offered on Calvary.
- Beware of any one who would try to persuade you that there is any priest but the great High Priest Emmanuel.
- Beware of any one who would try to persuade you that there is any additions needed in worship but the savor of His name who was crucified.
- Beware of any one who would try to persuade you that there is any rule of faith and practice but God's Word.
- Beware of any one who would try to persuade you that there is any confessional but the throne of grace.
- Beware of any one who would try to persuade you that there is any effectual forgiveness but that which Christ bestows on the hearts of His believing people.
- Beware of any one who would try to persuade you that there is any purgatory [place where man is to pay for his sins] but the one fountain open for all sins, the blood of Christ, to be used only while we are alive.

On all these points stand firm, and be on your guard. Scores of misguided teachers are trying to rob Christians of Gospel liberty, and to bring back among us erroneous superstitions. Resist them completely, and do not give way for a moment. Remember what the Roman Catholic Church was before the blessed Reformation. Remember at what mighty cost our martyred Reformers brought spiritual freedom to light by the Gospel. Stand firm for this freedom like a man, and work hard to hand it down to your children, complete and unimpaired.

Are you free? Then think everyday you live, of the millions of your fellow-creatures who are yet bound hand and foot in spiritual darkness.

Think of the millions of heathens who have still never heard of Christ and salvation. Think of the Jews [also lost and condemned to Hell] who are still waiting for their Messiah. Think of the millions of Roman Catholics who are still in captivity under the Pope, and know nothing of true liberty, light, and peace. Think of the millions of your own countrymen in our great cities, who, without the influence of Christ, are in reality heathens, and who the devil is continually leading captive at his will. Think of them all, and feel for them. Think of them all, and say often to yourself--“What can I do for them? How can I help to set them free?”

What! Shall it be proclaimed at the last day:

- that Pharisees and Jesuits have traveled the sea and land to make proselytes?
- that politicians have united and labored night and day to obtain worldly freedom and free trade?
- that philanthropists have labored in their soul for years to procure suppression of Negro slavery?

And shall it appear at the same time that those set free in Christ have done little to rescue men and women from hell? God forbid! God forbid! Surely if the children of this world are zealous to promote earthly freedom, the children of God ought to be much more zealous to promote spiritual freedom. In the past, suffice it to say, we have been selfish and lazy in this matter. For the rest of our days let us use every effort to promote spiritual freedom. If we have tasted the blessings of freedom, let us spare no pains to make others free.

Are you free? Then look forward in faith and hope for good things yet to come.

Free as we are, if we believe in Christ, we must surely feel every day that we are not free from the presence of guilt, the power of sin, and the temptations of the devil. Redeemed as we are from the eternal consequences of the fall, we must often feel that we are not yet redeemed from sickness and weakness, from sorrow and from pain. No, indeed! Where are the free in Christ on earth who are not often painfully reminded that they are not yet in heaven? We are still in the body; we are still traveling through the wilderness of this world: we are not at home. We have shed many tears already, and probably we will have to shed many more; we still have within us a poor weak heart: we are still liable to be assaulted by the devil. Our redemption has surely begun, but it is not yet completed. We have redemption now in the root, but we do not have it in the flower.

But let us take courage: there are better days yet to come. Our great Redeemer and Liberator has gone before

us to prepare a place for His people, and when He comes again our redemption will be complete. The great jubilee year is yet to come:

- A few more Christmas and New Year's Days
- A few more meetings and partings
- A few more births and deaths
- A few more weddings and funerals
- A few more tears and struggles
- A few more sicknesses and pains
- A few more Sundays, Baptisms, and Lord Suppers
- A few more sermons and prayers
- A few more, and the end will come!

Our Master will come back again. The dead saints will be raised. The living saints will be changed. Then, and not till then will we be completely free. The liberty which we enjoyed by faith will be changed into the liberty of sight, and the freedom of hope into the freedom of certainty.

Come, then, and let us resolve to wait, and watch, and hope, and pray, and live like men and women who have something laid up for them in heaven. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Our King is not far off: our full redemption draws near. Our full salvation is nearer then when we first believed. The signs of the times are strange, and demand every Christian's serious attention. The kingdoms of this world are in confusion: everywhere the powers of this world are reeling and shaken to their foundations. Extremely happy are those who are citizens of Christ's eternal kingdom, and ready for anything that may come. Blessed indeed are those men and women who know and feel that they are free! Amen.