

The Christian's Four Freedoms

*“There is therefore
now no
condemnation to
them which are in
Christ Jesus, who
walk not after the
flesh, but after the
Spirit. For the law
of the Spirit of life
in Christ Jesus
hath made me free
from the law of sin
and death.”*

—*Romans 8:1,2*

THE BIBLE DISCLOSES

four main things from which the true child of God, the disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, is said to be delivered now, before his change into the likeness of his Lord in glory. The first in importance is his deliverance or “liberation” (*Diaglott*) from the condemnation of sin and death as disclosed by this statement of Apostle Paul. It

will be noticed that this statement of the apostle does not indicate that we, as followers of Christ, are freed from the effects of sin and death, but rather from “the law of sin and death.” There can be no question that in using this language the apostle was referring primarily to the Law given to Israel at Mt. Sinai—for in the third and fourth verses he continues, “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the

likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [by a sacrifice for sin, *Margin*], condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

In the seventh chapter of Romans, verses 6 and 7, Paul writes, “Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust [desire], except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” He further goes on to show that the Law which was unto life, he found to be unto death. In other words, that Law which was designed to show how life might be gained, he found to be the means by which he stood condemned before God.

“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” thus opening a way of escape from the condemnation resting upon all humanity—Jew and Gentile alike. (chap. 5:8) Counter to that Law which further emphasized the inability of mankind to escape the penalty of sin—death—Paul declares there is now in evidence another law which he calls “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” This law, as the apostle so forcefully indicates, is operative only in them who are in Christ Jesus. These follow in the way of suffering and sacrifice because of their love for righteousness and truth, even as Jesus did, that they might also share in the glory promised to the faithful.—Ps. 45:6,7; Heb. 1:8,9

Few of those who have named the name of Christ, and even some of those who have been enlightened

as to the plan and purpose of God with respect to the church and humanity, have fully realized what is comprehended in this liberation from the condemnation of sin and death through the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” Only the consecrated child of God has this realization. No longer is he subservient to the power and influence of sin. Rather, he is fully committed to the righteousness and truth of God. Having the advocacy of Christ’s righteousness, and standing in the imputation of his meritorious sacrifice, the way of the flesh in its selfish pursuits—even though some of them may be laudable enough from their standpoint—no longer controls his motives and interests. Hence the words of his Lord and Master have a deeper and more realistic significance to him, when he reads, “It is the spirit that quickeneth [maketh alive]; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:63) Therefore the Word of God through his beloved Son, Jesus, becomes his meat and drink, his sustenance, and the antidote for sin and its poisonous results—death.

CLEANSSED FROM ALL SIN

The Apostle John writes (I John 1:7), “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” “From *all sin*”—can such be the case? Yes, Jesus’ blood cleanses us from all sin due to the weakness and depravity of the flesh on account of the original transgression, but not from willful, deliberate sin against light and knowledge. Such sin has to be expiated as indicated in the scriptural testimony of instances of that kind.

Even in cases where willful or partially willful sin has been committed, and such sin is recognized for what it is and deeply regretted and consequent amends made, it is not held against the perpetrator. However, suffering and loss may be entailed as a consequence in order that the lesson may be deeply impressed. Such was the case with Paul for his persecution of the early disciples, and it is well that we take cognizance of this principle in connection with God's dealing with us. Other instances of this character might be cited, such as David, a man said to have been after God's own heart.—I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22

If our sin has been more or less willful, we can take consolation in the fact that we recognize it as such, and with the determination thenceforth to resolve that we shall not be overtaken again. It is only when we treat with indifference such lapses and failures that our condition of heart may become calloused, with serious consequences to our spiritual lives and interests. If, though, we have a tender conscience, it is a hopeful sign indeed, and the experience under the guidance and power of the Lord may prove to be a strengthening of character and fortitude realizable in no other way.

This should not be construed to mean that willfulness in any degree on our part is commendable, nor that God looks upon it with sympathy and favor. Some personalities are inclined to be of a willful disposition, and such are likely to be strong, determined characters. Such was Paul. It required more than an ordinary experience to make him see his mistaken zeal. Likewise, that may be true of others of the Lord's people. God

alone knows what is best suited to produce the desired results.

Let us ever be mindful of the fact that all willful sins require expiation and are not forgiven in the sense of absolution, even though the grace and favor of the Lord may not be lost. Experience and the numerous instances recorded in the Scriptures remind us of this fact. We can be assured, however, that the chastening hand of the Lord is designed for our recovery and ultimate good if we are rightly exercised thereby, and do not repine nor resent it as inconsequential and unnecessary—for he is “longsuffering to us-ward [the believers], not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”—II Peter 3:9

FREEDOM FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD

The second thing from which the footstep follower of Christ is now said to be delivered is “this present evil world.” In his message to the churches of Galatia, Paul writes, “Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.” (Gal. 1:3,4) How can it be said that we are now delivered, or rescued (*Diaglott*), from this present evil world or age? We are still living in this present evil age, but from God’s standpoint, and from our own as New Creatures in Christ Jesus, we are no part of it. We are to have no part in its spirit, nor in its ways, schemes, and plans, no matter how appealing they might be made to appear and no matter how highly they may be regarded by the world and even by many church organizations. Our Lord and his apostles set

us the example in this respect. They entered not into the politics and social reforms of Israel, neither were they ordained by the Sanhedrin.

God has decreed that this present evil order and age shall come to an end, and due to human selfishness it is to be a calamitous end—a time of great tribulation. This old order can no longer stand in the light of the coming new day, the dawn of which we even now see, through the light of Christ's invisible presence. It is God's determinate counsel that nothing of Satan's degenerating and disintegrating order shall be carried over into the new dispensation of grace and truth. (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1-5) Hence, his people cannot afford to enlist their time and energy toward the perpetuation and extension of that which God has ordained shall soon end, and upon which his wrath is to be visited.—Isa. 13:9; 26:21; 34:8; Jer. 51:6; Zeph. 3:8; II Pet. 3:7,10,11

The secret of our triumph, our victory over this evil age, lies in the fact that Christ died for our sins and that he has called us out from the world and the worldly church organizations that we might not partake of its spirit of rivalry, vainglory, pride, ambition and selfishness. Our lives henceforth are to be controlled by God's Holy Spirit of love as contrasted with the self-interest and selfishness so predominant in the world.

Thus being governed by the Holy Spirit, we are privileged to escape much of the care, anxiety and tumult with which the closing scenes of these evil times abound. None of the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, the earthly rewards and enticements, could tempt the Master from the course outlined for him by his Heavenly Father—the course

that brought suffering and death upon him. Neither could any of earth's allurements distract nor deter his faithful apostles from thus following in his steps. This same attitude and determination should characterize every true follower of the Lamb—"whithersoever he goeth." (Rev. 14:4) Let the world count us fools for Christ's sake. What should this matter? What if we lose our earthly life with its interests and pleasures? We have a faith, a hope, a love that surmounts all these, and, if faithful to our trust, we have a more enduring and eternal estate awaiting us "beyond the veil." Let, then, the world ridicule us with remarks about our interests being but visionary, and our ideals a mere illusive hope. Let us continually ask ourselves whether we prefer the present unsatisfactory things of this old order to the inward sense of peace and joy which is the present heritage of every true child of God, along with the promise of a future of glory, honor and immortality—the divine nature. What, then, shall we fear? "What can man do unto us?"—Ps. 56:4,11; 118:6

OUR PRESENT ADVANTAGES

Let us remind ourselves, too, of the great enlightenment that has come to us as the result of our consecration to do God's will. We have learned to know our Heavenly Father in the true light of his character and purpose, not only for his chosen people now, but soon for all men. We have come to know something of his peace—the peace which passeth human understanding. (Phil. 4:6,7) We have been enabled to see the stately steppings of our God as they have been unfolding through

the pages of history and to realize that we are now witnessing the closing scenes in the drama of the ages.

We have been privileged to enjoy many advantages over those who have lived and fought the good fight of faith in past ages. We see, however, that these advantages have not always brought forth gratitude, and the desire to know and to do that which would be pleasing to the divine Creator. In the closing days of this present world, many now believe they will succeed without God. They see little or no need for his plan of redemption. They are sufficient unto themselves and think they can satisfactorily solve all their problems without alignment to his methods and ways.

Hence with all the present-day benefits of these closing days of a dying world order, we see more distress, more suffering, more confusion and fear than at any time in the world's history. How glad we should be that we have been called out of these perplexing conditions of "darkness into his marvelous light"—into the haven of the Heavenly Father's counsel and rest—that we may show forth his praises both now and forever.—I Pet. 2:9

FREED FROM THE POWER OF DARKNESS

The third thing from which the apostle declares we are delivered is the power—authority or dominion—of darkness. This statement is found in Colossians 1:12-14, and reads, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power [dominion, authority] of darkness and hath translated [caused a change

of sides, *Diaglott*] us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” In this statement, the power of darkness is contrasted with the light of the coming reign of righteousness of Christ’s kingdom. It is into this coming kingdom of righteousness we are now said to be “translated”—to be sided with—and for which we earnestly pray, “Thy kingdom come.”

As we consider the darkness of the past six thousand years with all its suffering, sin and death, we are reminded by this text of scripture of all the beauties of true holiness and righteousness of the new day. The Prophet Isaiah well said, “Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory [splendor] shall be seen upon thee [the Christ, head and body].”—Isa. 60:2

BLIND LEADERS OF THE BLIND

When Jesus was apprehended by the religious rulers of Israel, he used the expression, “the power of darkness.” (Luke 22:53) Additionally, the Apostle Paul writes, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.” (Eph. 6:12) It is often those who may at first appear to be serving the right and the truth, and generally recognized as representing law and order, who are the most flagrant violators of honesty, truth, and righteousness. It was so in the days of Jesus and his apostles, and it is true today. Often it is through deceit and fraud that world leaders wield power and influence over the people—and the people are either unable or unwilling to resist. Largely influenced by personal bias, prejudice, party spirit, and often

intimidated by threats of one kind and another, people often readily espouse the cause of those leading them into a state of irresponsibility and eventual chaos. Jesus said, concerning the sad state of affairs in his day, “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” (Matt. 15:14) Such is also the case today, with many falling into the “ditch” of despair and disillusionment.

The Prophet Isaiah also recounts such conditions, when he says, “As for my people, children [the immature in understanding] are their oppressors, and women rule over them.” Contrary to the divine arrangement, the churches, symbolically spoken of here as women, dictate what the people shall and shall not believe, setting aside individual faith and faithfulness and the spiritually guided conscience. Isaiah continues, “O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths. The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people.” (Isa. 3:12,13) Similarly, in Jeremiah 5:31, we read, “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?”

The Prophet Malachi shows that after the Lord makes up his jewel class—the little flock to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom—then they shall return, and discern between the true servants of God and the false. (Mal. 3:15-18) Meanwhile, however, the true follower of Christ, having espoused the cause of righteousness and truth—the Lord’s cause—is neither influenced nor cajoled into cooperation with these powers of darkness. Indeed, Paul tells us that their destruction is

inevitable and will occur as part of the bright shining of the Lord's presence.—II Thess. 2:7-12

FREED FROM EVERY EVIL WORK

The fourth and last thing from which we are now delivered is "from every evil work." This statement is found in Paul's last letter to Timothy, written shortly before his final appearance before Nero: "The Lord shall deliver me, from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (II Tim. 4:18) When the apostle wrote these words to Timothy, he had reason to believe his end was near at hand. He had carried the message of the Gospel of God's coming kingdom far and wide throughout the then-known world. Additionally, he had, to the best of his ability, endeavored to follow in the footsteps of his glorious Master, even though it entailed suffering and privation. He also had received some remarkable manifestations of the Lord's favor and blessing in the abundant revelations, the gifts of the Spirit, and even a glimpse of his glory.

The Lord had seen the great possibilities in Paul for spreading the Gospel message, being a man of strong, resolute character with a keen intellect. He knew Paul would not shrink from the things he would be called upon to suffer for his name's sake. Therefore, the apostle boldly faced suffering and trial for the interests of the Truth and those who would espouse it through his ministry. Nothing could swerve him from the course the Lord had outlined for him. No machinations of the Adversary and his blinded emissaries could influence him away from the course

of faith and faithfulness to God and his Son Jesus Christ.

It is not to be wondered, therefore, that he could write with such confident assurance that the Lord would deliver him from every evil work and preserve him unto his heavenly kingdom. We may not be privileged as was Paul to have such remarkable manifestations of our Lord's favor and blessing, nor to be used so extensively in his service. However, whether used much or but little, we, too, as God's devoted children, can have the same assurance of his protecting power and ultimate deliverance from every evil work or device that might be employed against us. To those who have God's Word and Spirit in their hearts and are yielding to his direction in their lives, the prophet gives the assurance, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD."—Isa. 54:17

Thus we, even in the midst of present-day distress and perplexity of nations, as faithful followers of Christ, surely can lift up our heads in praise and thanksgiving to the God of all grace and truth, for the clear unfolding of his purposes concerning us and all men. Having a consciousness of the divine presence through the testimony of his Word and the imbibing of its Spirit of holiness, we can have a realization of freedom from the condemnation of sin and death; freedom from the present evil world; freedom from the powers of darkness; and freedom from every evil work. ■