

# The Liberty of God's Children

*“The creature itself  
also shall be  
delivered from the  
bondage of  
corruption into the  
glorious liberty of  
the children  
of God.”*  
—*Romans 8:21*

**One of the outstanding** characteristics of the last several centuries has been the almost universal clamor for “liberty” throughout the world. This urge to be free traces its early roots to the dissemination of knowledge made possible by the inven-

tion of the printing press nearly six centuries ago. As the masses of the people gradually became enlightened, they were unwilling to remain in bondage to overlords, whether economic, hereditary, or ecclesiastical. This march toward liberty accelerated when the early reformers started to protest against the state-church system and break away from the restraining cords of its edicts.

This was only the beginning. The rise of America and the coming to it of men and women in whose hearts the flame of liberty had begun to glow, gave hope and courage. It added zeal to the promoters of liberty everywhere. America was looked upon as

the “land of the free.” However, not all, even here, were free. As the United States grew in population and land area, millions of indigenous peoples were forced out of their productive, native lands and moved to designated “reservations,” most of which were in undesirable locations. In addition, there were millions of enslaved persons in the United States prior to the Civil War. Abraham Lincoln realized that so long as this “trading” in human souls continued, the United States had no right to be called a haven of refuge for the lovers of liberty.

### **Proper Liberty Only Relative**

All right-thinking people rejoice in the measure of progress the world has made in getting free from the shackles which throughout the ages held all but a favored few in bondage to state, church, kings, and potentates. At the same time, the mere idea of being “free” is not in itself a goal which, when reached, results in human happiness and the stability of a world order. It is all right to be inspired by the slogan, “Give me liberty, or give me death.” However, those who insist that they must be free to think and act just as they prefer, with no restraints whatsoever, are sadly mistaken in reaching such a conclusion.

Freedom, then, can be only relative. People may be free to drive their automobiles. The highways are there for their use. People are free to drive at certain speeds because the law has designated a maximum safe speed allowed on the highway. This and other laws governing the use of motor vehicles are made for the protection of all the people who utilize this form of transportation. If drivers insist

on being free to speed excessively, to drive on the wrong side of the road, or to ignore other traffic laws, they put in jeopardy their own safety and lives as well as those of others.

Turn in any direction, and we find ourselves hedged about by restrictions. We cannot be free to do as we please even in our own homes. There are certain unwritten laws governing home life. To disobey these would mean the breaking up of the home, which sadly happens all too often. When we analyze the situation, we find that the whole creation of God is subject to laws. Even the inanimate works of creation are not "free." The countless billions of heavenly bodies which comprise the universe are governed by physical laws. If it were not so, there would be cataclysmic destruction. Even such a small life form as a flower develops into something of beauty only because the plant which bears it conforms to the laws by which it lives and functions.

The foregoing examples, together with many others, serve as a reminder to us that the blessings of true liberty only exist when based upon the limitations and supervision of divine law. Thus, it is essential to recognize that there must of necessity be certain curbs on liberty if we are to find our own proper place in the plans and purposes of God. The great clamor for liberty which has been heralded throughout the world is in many respects bearing bitter fruit. It has resulted in a spirit of individualism which is wrecking homes and destroying society. It is leading in the direction of chaos and lawlessness.

The Bible tells us that we are living in the prophetic "time of the end," in which, according to God's plan, there has come a great increase of knowledge.

This knowledge, as we have seen, has awakened the people to a realization of the bondage in which they had been held, and has created the desire in them to be free. However, such a desire has led many to believe they should be free from all restraints entirely. This is resulting in a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” (Dan. 12:1-4) It was essential that the world’s reverence for unjust, manmade cords of bondage should be broken in preparation for the acceptance and obedience to the laws of Christ’s coming kingdom. At the same time, it is being demonstrated that no human being can be absolutely “free” to do as he or she pleases and continue to live in peace and happiness.

### **Subject to Divine Law**

The human race has experienced six thousand years of suffering and death because of the disobedience of our first parents to the law of God. Just as the orderly functioning of all the inanimate things of creation is dependent upon obedience to divine law, so is the well-being of God’s human creatures. The stars can express no choice in the matter. They must obey. It is not so with man. Our first parents were created with free will, and set before them was the choice of obeying or of disobeying divine law. They were told that disobedience would result in death, but despite this they chose to disobey. Consequently, the penalty of death fell upon them and all their progeny. They exercised their freedom, but it brought death.—Gen. 2:15-17; 3:9-19

In Romans 1:21-25 the Apostle Paul gives us a comprehensive picture of the terrible conditions

into which uncurbed freedom from the restraints of God's laws had led the people even in his day. The sinful condition of the world today is merely a further extension of this picture. Much of the human race does as it pleases, or tries to, but the cup nearly all overflows with bitterness. If we merely glance at the experiences of a race that has tried to exist without the restraining influences of God's laws, it should be sufficient to convince us that such a course will not work. There is no true way of happiness except God's way, which is the recognition of his right, as Creator and Life-giver, to be the sovereign Ruler of our lives.

In our text Paul speaks of the "bondage of corruption," which is a reference to the captivity of sin and death. Those who are under a prison sentence are certainly not free, and the Scriptures depict death as a prison house into which all mankind is being herded because of sin. (Ps. 102:19,20; Isa. 42:22) The race is corrupted and dying, thus entering the prison of death. The way that leads thereto is likened to a "broad" road which ends in destruction. (Matt. 7:13) It is a downhill path, slippery with the devastating results of sin. On it the people have no real freedom except to slide ever onward toward their destination of death.

Only God can set free those who are thus in bondage to sin. His plan, through Christ, calls for the great emancipation of the race from the prison house of sin and death. (Isa. 42:6,7; 49:8-10; Heb. 2:14,15) This will take place upon the establishment of Christ's kingdom. Then, through the process of "restitution," all people will be restored to perfect human life, provided they accept the gift of God

through Christ and obey divine law. (Acts 3:20,21) We can even now rejoice in this glorious hope, that mankind will be set free from its own false sense of liberty and given life on the basis of obedience to the Creator.

In advance of these marvelous blessings which are to come to the entire world of mankind, God is even now offering the opportunity of repentance and obedience to those who hear the Gospel. Paul speaks of these as being “justified by faith,” and says that upon the basis of this faith relationship they enjoy “peace with God.” (Rom. 5:1) Paul explains further that the objective of this present restoration to harmony with God is that we may “have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”—vs. 2

This glorious “hope,” the Scriptures reveal, is that of joint heirship with Christ in his kingdom, which is to bring freedom from sin and death to all mankind. This is the glorious hope of the sons of God during the present age. Paul writes, “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—Rom. 8:17

What this means is that if our eyes are enlightened to see the plan of God, we are invited upon the basis of faith in Christ to surrender ourselves fully to do his will. (Ps. 143:10,11) It is God’s will that we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, inspired by the hope that if we are faithful in this walk, we will have the privilege in the first resurrection of living and reigning with him in his kingdom. (Rev. 20:6) It is a return to the status of favor with God through the full surrender of our individual wills to do his will.

When one sees the privilege of renouncing his own will to do God's will, the question may arise, "What is God's will?" It is important that we find the proper answer to this question. Millions have thought they were doing God's will, when in reality they have been blindly following the dictates of some earthly leader, whether of politics, religion, or society. Rather, the only way to life and true happiness is that we surrender our wills to do the will of God. When the ways of mankind conflict with the laws of God, we should heed the words of the Apostle Peter and the other apostles when they stated, "We ought to obey God rather than men."—Acts 5:29

### **Taking Christ's Yoke**

Jesus, the Prince of Life, did this. He bound himself to do the will of his Heavenly Father and invited his followers to do the same themselves. He said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shalt find rest unto your souls." (Matt. 11:29) From this we see that Jesus was not absolutely free to do as he might wish. He wore a "yoke," and he invited his followers to wear the same yoke.

What was the "yoke" that the Master wore? It was his covenant to do the will of his Father in heaven. It was prophetically written of Jesus, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Ps. 40:7,8; Heb. 10:7-9) This prophecy reveals that the will of God for Jesus had been written in the "book," that is, in the Old Testament. Jesus voluntarily bound himself to do whatever had been recorded concerning his part in God's plan. It had been written, for

example, that he was to be “brought as a lamb to the slaughter,” also that “as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,” so he would not protest against being put to death.—Isa. 53:7

Jesus surrendered his will to his Heavenly Father so completely he could say that the words he spoke and the work he did were not his, but the Father’s. (John 3:34; 5:30; 6:38; 14:10) On one occasion, Jesus said, “I and my Father are one.” (John 10:30) This oneness was because Jesus’s life had been given over wholly to doing his Father’s will. Thus, we see that Jesus was free to do what the Father wanted him to do. The will of God was his yoke and that which he invited his followers to share with him.

There is not true happiness, and no hope of everlasting life for anyone, apart from this full surrender to God’s will. The doing of this is a matter of obedience to the directives of the Word of God. It was in the Word of God that Jesus found the divine will for him expressed. It is in that Word that we also will learn what God wants us to do and to be. When we give ourselves fully to do God’s will, the spirit of that consecration will impel us to “search the scriptures,” to study them, in order that we might show ourselves “approved unto God.”—John 5:39; II Tim. 2:15

## **An Easy Yoke**

Jesus said of the yoke which he invited us to share with him, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:30) By contrast, the pathway of absolute liberty is in reality a most difficult one to follow. It means that one’s own desires alone will guide them. Each is responsible for the course taken

and for the outcome of decisions made. Such a course involves the assuming of tremendous responsibility, a burden which not many are willing to assume.

With few exceptions, therefore, people are guided more or less by the opinions and preferences of others. To this extent they are doing the will of others and can blame them when things go wrong. In the field of religion, for example, most people would rather help to pay their share of the minister's salary. They would rather let him do their thinking than to be especially concerned themselves as to what is right and wrong in matters of faith and practice. This is a surrender, not to God, but to one who, it is supposed, represents divine authority. This is not true devotion to the Heavenly Father. It is devotion to those who claim to be servants of God.

Such a course does not follow the example of Jesus. He did not devote himself to the scribes and Pharisees of his day. His consecration was to God. He not only did not choose his own way in life, but, renouncing his own will entirely, also covenanted to do God's will. (John 4:34) His only responsibilities were to carry out what he agreed to do and to restrain his own liberty when necessary to do so. The yoke Jesus thus assumed was easy, for the whole responsibility of his eternal destiny was placed in the hands of his Heavenly Father. Jesus needed only to be concerned over faithfulness in doing that which the Word outlined for him to do. The responsibility for the outcome was not his.

This thought is illuminated by Jesus's prayer on the cross. With almost his last breath he cried to his Father, saying, "Into thy hands I commend my

spirit,” my life. (Luke 23:46) Jesus had been doing this for the entire period of his earthly ministry. Throughout that period of faithful, sacrificial service, his spirit, his life, was committed to God. Now, when the flame of his earthly existence was about to be snuffed out, he was still glad for his Father to direct the issue.

It was this complete abandonment to the will of God, and to the outcome of doing that will, that made Jesus’s yoke easy. This same spirit of full dedication, full surrender to the divine will, is likewise an easy yoke for us, if we are properly motivated as Jesus was. The entire world is weary with the endless struggle of existence. Life is a challenge and is becoming more complex every day as the problems of today’s world lead to increasing chaos and instability. Under present conditions, only a full surrender to the doing of God’s will provides an escape.

## **Peace and Glory**

From the standpoint of rewards, there are two important considerations which Paul presents to those whose wills are surrendered in consecration to God. One pertains to the present, and the other to the future. The present reward is peace. The Apostle Paul wrote, “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 4:7

Having God’s peace does not mean the end of all life’s challenges and difficulties. It does mean, however, that we endeavor to meet these experiences in God’s way and according to his will. At the same time, we should remain conscious of the fact that

we are in tune with the Creator, no longer being alienated from him through wicked and rebellious works. (Col. 1:21) We thus are able to enjoy God's peace, that peace which is his because there is no question concerning the ultimate outcome of all his purposes. Jesus enjoyed this wonderful peace of heart and mind, and said to his consecrated followers, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." (John 14:27) This peace of God and of Christ is a part of the present inheritance of those who are fully devoted to the doing of the divine will.

There is a future prospect also, the hope that Paul states of "glory and honour and immortality." (Rom. 2:7) Peter similarly wrote, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." (II Peter 1:4) To the same class of faithful disciples Jesus said, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."—Rev. 3:21

These are wonderful hopes and prospects. The fully consecrated and accepted of God are begotten by his Holy Spirit to be his children. They enjoy freedom from the bondage of sin and death. (Rom. 8:2) They are free to do God's will, free to lay down their lives in his service. They have cast all their burdens upon God who cares for them. (I Pet. 5:7) While they labor and suffer in the divine service, they rejoice in the hope of sharing in the larger service of the next age, when in the kingdom of Christ, they will reign with him for the blessing of all the families of the earth.—Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8

It is for this glorious future work of blessing that the entire world is unknowingly waiting. “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together,” waiting for the “manifestation of the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:22,19) These sons of God are Jesus and his faithful footstep followers of the present age. They are the promised “seed of Abraham” through whom all mankind is to be blessed with peace and health and lasting life.—Heb. 2:16; Gal. 3:16,29

The reward of these “sons of God” will be heavenly and spiritual. Through God’s kingdom arrangement they will manifest divine power and glory for the healing and blessing of the world. The life to be given to the remainder of mankind will be earthly, the restoration of “that which was lost” because of Adam’s rebellion against divine law. (Matt. 18:11) The kingdom period is described by Peter as “times of restitution.” (Acts 3:20,21) As the hope of life now for the consecrated is dependent upon full surrender to God’s sovereign will, the same will be true then for resurrected mankind. All who thus serve God with “one consent” will “inherit the kingdom prepared for [them] from the foundation of the world,” the earthly dominion given to Adam, once lost, but now restored.—Zeph. 3:9; Matt. 25:34 ■

## **OBITUARIES**

*The following brethren have recently finished their Christian course. We wish to express our sincere sympathy to their family and friends in the loss of these dear ones.*

**Sister Christiane Nowak, France—March 1. Age, 88**