

# *The Bible Standard*

**F R E E D O M**



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# The Glorious Liberty of the Children of God

— Romans 8: 21 —

**GLORIOUS LIBERTY!** How many of us can recall our childish joy in bursting from the discipline of the classroom into the freedom of the school yard, permitted a precious 15 minutes or so to expend our physical energy in playground games, escaping for a while the pressures of learning lessons often hard to grasp? We seemed almost wild with delight, and in retrospect can commend the wisdom of our teachers, who recognized the immense value of this activity, for the health of the body and of the mind.

Our parents, too, during the long school vacations, sent us off with packed lunches, to play our games or seek our adventures, not always too inquisitive as to what we were up to. That freedom was exquisite, though, regrettably, times have changed and childhood is not as carefree or innocent as formerly. Nonetheless, children are free spirits, born with an immense natural curiosity and capacity to absorb information, and so much can be learned — painlessly — in the school of life during those formative years.

## Children Appreciate Discipline

Like all children, we were rebellious at times, but were somehow aware that our liberty was conditional upon our observing certain rules, and flouting those rules would bring a deserved punishment. Many of us learned in our youth that discipline was a Biblical concept, and its proper exercise was vitally important in preparing us to take our place in the grown-up world. Even unbelievers did not often neglect this parental responsibility. At times, perhaps, the discipline became too repressive, and the more timid children were inhibited in their development. But if we are parents and grandparents now, we can better understand the serious challenges of parenthood.



## Forbid them not

“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he . . . said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the the kingdom of God” (Mark 10: 13, 14). Amazing thought! *Of such is the kingdom of God.* What truth was Jesus impressing upon His hearers? Surely it was that the simplicity, honesty, and trustfulness of a little child are qualities necessary in all who would become children of the Heavenly Father — a beautiful concept.

Again: “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18: 3). St. Paul also exhorts us: “In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults” (1 Cor. 14: 20, *New International Version*). Sadly, it is rare to meet in this world a man or woman whose character combines the wisdom of maturity with the simplicity of childhood, and alas, innocence once lost is hard to recapture.

## We are Saved by Hope

Solomon in his inspired wisdom said, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29: 18). We who once as little children viewed life with a sense of wonder have to revive the vision. What is that vision? It is something akin to Abraham’s ideal of “a city . . . whose builder and maker is God . . . a better country” (Heb. 11: 10, 16). We are saved by this hope of the Kingdom of God come to earth, His will done among all men. God’s oath-bound promise to bless the world was the hope set before the Church as an anchor of the soul, and in due time all will enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8: 21; Heb. 6: 13–19).

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“Lift up a standard for the people” — Isa. 62: 10

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# JUSTICE FOR THE PEOPLE

*“He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor”*

— Psalm 72: 4 —

**LIBERTY! EMANCIPATION! HUMAN RIGHTS!** We are daily bombarded from all sections of the media with cries of outrage, appeals for justice, demands for personal rights — real or imagined, and evidence of the genuine distress of victims of human greed, selfishness, and prejudice. So the world is in big trouble, and while those of us who have the mind of Christ may be comforted in taking the longer view, focusing on “a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,” we cannot turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the very real suffering of a world at enmity with itself and heading for a fall (2 Pet. 3: 10-13).

As Christians looking for a Kingdom that is not of this (evil) world, we may each ask ourselves, “Do I have to be personally involved in the world’s traumas? Am I expected to give my time, my energy, and my resources to prop up a doomed order of affairs? Of what use would that be, anyway? And since God has promised to bless all families of the earth in due time, would it not be impatient of me to try and get things moving myself?”

## *That Helpless Feeling*

Such questions may cause us much heart-searching. Touched with a feeling of the world’s infirmities, of course we want to see the hungry fed and the sick healed, the oppressed relieved and the environment protected. But what can we do about it? Should we for example, befriend today’s counterpart of the publicans and sinners of our Lord’s day, as He did, and try to rescue them from their corrupt lifestyle? Some do make their life’s mission the practical work of doing good among the “down-and-outs,” hoping to heal the broken hearted and to set at liberty those that are bruised (Luke 4: 18). Is this also our responsibility?

The seeking of justice for the people has historically been a major work among Christians, and many battles have been fought and won. Yet the problems are increasingly formidable, and the challenge to change the world proves a far greater one than we can handle. The enemy is too powerful. As the Apostle Paul says: “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6: 12).

Little wonder that many who yearn to change the world, and inevitably fail, become disillusioned and discouraged. We know that putting on the whole armor of God is a sure personal protection, which helps us fight our individual battles against evil. But we nevertheless weep for the groaning world, under the oppression of slavery to the taskmasters of sin and death, for the abolition of this slavery seems beyond the reach of human accomplishment. Thank God we have a Savior who cannot fail!

## *These Things Shall Be!*

These things shall be: a loftier race  
Than e’er the world hath known shall rise,  
With flame of freedom in their souls  
And light of knowledge in their eyes.  
They shall be gentle, brave and strong  
To spill no drop of blood, but dare  
All that may plant man’s lordship firm  
On earth and fire and sea and air.  
Nation with nation, land with land,  
Unarmed shall live as comrades free;  
In every heart and brain shall throb  
The pulse of one fraternity.  
Man shall love man with heart as pure  
And fervent as the angel throng  
That stands before the Throne of God  
And chants His praise in tuneful song.  
New arts shall bloom of loftier mould,  
And mightier music thrill the skies,  
And every life shall be a song,  
When all the earth is Paradise.

*J.A. Symonds (1840–1893)*

## **THE FLAME OF FREEDOM**

The hymn writer’s vision is based on the Bible theme of Restitution. Man was not created to be a slave to sin and to draw for all eternity its miserable wage of death. Jesus came to release the world — even those yet unbelieving — from that terrible doom: “I am come that they might have life” (John 10: 10). He knew how universal the effects of His own crucifixion would be. “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die” (John 12: 32, 33). The drawing of all men is yet future, though the symbol of the cross is universally recognized. And as the Apostle Paul expresses it: “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6: 23).

The yearning for freedom has fired the imagination and stirred the blood of countless generations. Prayers have ascended, reforms have been attempted, wars have been fought, and lives laid down in the cause of freedom. God’s Kingdom, come down to earth, is the Christian ideal, though it may seem to many no more than an impossible dream. But would Jesus have asked us to pray for the impossible? And if we fail to pray, or pray without expecting an answer, will that Kingdom never come? God forbid! He assures us that “The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come” (Hab. 2: 3). We are not

given the dates of God's appointed times and seasons until they are due to be understood (Acts 1: 7). But we are permitted, now and then, to recognize the signs of the times — perhaps to see a dream come true, or an abuse of liberty exposed and abolished.

### HUMAN RIGHTS

The restless murmurings of rebellion, growing ever louder during the past two centuries, reached a crescendo after two world wars sickened the collective conscience of Christendom. The grossest acts of man's inhumanity to man can no longer be hidden from the various watchdog organizations, foremost of which is the United Nations (U.N.). Formed in 1945 by 51 countries, the U.N. has created detailed guidelines for the fostering of international peace, security, and co-operation. Today it boasts a membership of 191 states.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a charter of civil and political rights drawn up by the United Nations in 1948. They include the right to life, liberty, education, and equality before the law; to freedom of movement, religion, association, and information; and to a nationality. The related Covenants are complex and are not legally binding except in those states which have ratified them. Violations are monitored by such organizations as Amnesty International.

Not necessarily regarded as a Christian initiative, though doubtless having Biblical roots, the Human Rights movement has been espoused by an ever-increasing number of pressure groups. They have a diversity of causes, some having no legal basis, but a powerful moral force, with others of somewhat dubious validity. Thus we have such movements as:

- Women's Liberation
- Animal Rights
- Freedom of Thought, Opinion, and Speech
- Homosexual Rights
- The Right of Peaceful Protest
- The Right to Privacy
- Anti-Discrimination Rights
- The Protection of Property
- Internet Liberty Campaign
- The Rights of the Disabled
- The Rights of Asylum Seekers

— and many more.

In our day these movements help in fulfilling our Lord's words that, "there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known" (Luke 12: 2).

### LET MY PEOPLE GO!

From the Pharaoh of ancient Egypt to the Saddam Hussein of the 21st century, tyrants have arisen who have oppressed the people and denied them their just rights. It is often difficult to understand the strange power that a mortal man can wield over his fellow men, so that he is inexplicably tolerated and feared.

#### The Action in Iraq

Following the successful US-inspired campaign to topple Iraq's dictatorship, the declared intention being to free the nation from oppression and remove the threat of destructive weapons, the world is wondering what kind of government will arise in its place.

Will sanity prevail, and in the interests of social and economic survival, cause the varied factions to pocket their differences and work together towards recovery? Has the

current Anglo-American military regime in Iraq enough influence to establish a Western-style democracy willing to work for world peace? Or will the traditional hostilities between Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites remain an impediment to progress? And will Iraq remain a threat to Israel's survival?

Neighboring Arab nations — Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Iran, and Kuwait — are all controlled by autocratic monarchies or other restrictive regimes, none of which

would welcome a lively Western-supported democratic presence in Iraq, posing a serious threat to their own status quo.

In such conditions, experts are not optimistic that now the war is won, peace can also be assured. The removal of one oppressive regime leaves the way open for another to rise, and some fear that a Shiite Islamic fundamentalist theocracy might emerge which would control every aspect of life for its subjects, and severely restrict the newly gained human rights of peoples in minority groups. The small Christian community would feel threatened in such a case.

The outrage of many, and the misgivings of most, as to military intervention in the affairs of totalitarian states, exposes a deep distrust of political leaders in general, even those democratically elected. Motives are questioned, accusations are voiced as to vested interests and secret agendas, and a general attitude of frustration is apparent. People have grown cynical and have forgotten how to hope. Only Bible believers know that, like the Pharaoh of the Exodus, Satan is hardening his heart as he sees the imminent deliverance of the people under his despotic control since Eden. *Let my people go!*

\* \* \*

# The Perfect Law of Liberty

*“He that fixes his view on the perfect law, that of liberty, and abides in it,  
being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work,  
he shall be blessed in his doing”*

— James 1: 25, Darby —

**LIFT UP YOUR HEADS!** Our Lord Jesus, speaking of the distress of the nations at the time of the end — all too evident in our own day — gave us also a reason to rejoice: “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21: 28). What was the significance of Jesus’ message? He was surely telling us that the painful death throes of Satan’s oppressive regime are also the birth-pangs of a new order, for the kingdoms of this world are soon to become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Your redemption draweth nigh!* You will soon be free!

Are we then captives? Are we subject to powers that limit our freedom, direct our thinking, control our activities, and altogether rule our lives? This is sadly true for the great majority of the human race, and even we who have the light of the gospel of Christ are to some extent fettered by the faults and limitations of our fallen flesh under the Adamic curse, and are necessarily subject also to the powers that be, in this imperfect world.

Attending worship in His hometown of Nazareth, Jesus read from Isaiah’s prophecy (Luke 4: 16-19):

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.*

Jesus closed the book, and one can imagine the buzz of expectation as the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. He told them: “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4: 20, 21).

## Fulfilled This Day?

Yes — by that time our Lord Jesus had already been *anointed* to the work of redeeming mankind. Even at His birth, some had seen in prospect the deliverance of Israel and of the whole world. The just and devout Simeon saw the babe as the bringer of salvation, “A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” And Anna the prophetess spoke of Him to “all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2: 32, 38).

But the full outworking of redemption is not a matter of a few short years. It is not a mere payment of the price for sin, followed quickly by the release of all mankind from the

sentence of death. Freedom too soon bestowed on the unready may be a dangerous endowment. Even in today’s imperfect social order, some attempt is made towards the rehabilitation of prisoners, to fit them for the responsibilities of life outside the prison gates.

Release from custody gives what is known in philosophical terms as *negative freedom*. Mastery over self, the power to choose and accomplish one’s course in life, is defined as *positive freedom*. It was this positive freedom that our first parents, Adam and Eve, possessed until Satan, the great seducer, betrayed their trust and took them captive, and with them by genetic inheritance, their entire progeny.

It is not only release from captivity, but the positive restoration of perfect free will that God has promised. We have His assurance through the Apostle Paul that all creation — every member of the human family — shall be rescued from their present subjection to Satan, the god of *this* world, to rejoice in glorious liberty as children of the God who, at the dawn of human history, breathed into them the breath of life (2 Cor. 4: 4; Rom. 8: 21).

## WHEN WILT THOU SAVE THE PEOPLE?

A hymn by Ebenezer Elliot begins with these words of longing, based on Psa. 115: 13: “He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great.” When? The answer is that many are already saved. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2: 8).

Saved through faith! And that faith is *counted* as righteousness, making us — though actually still imperfect — acceptable to God, and He adopts us, as it were, as his children and heirs. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage . . . but the Spirit of adoption” (Rom. 8: 15). The Son has made us free, and we are free indeed as to our heart’s intentions and desires. We are reckoned as being under that “perfect law of liberty” which may be summed up as the law of love, which works no ill to a neighbor and no ingratitude or irreverence to God, but is holy and just and good.

Does this mean we make no mistakes? Does the law of liberty eliminate from our characters the faults and failings, the fears and doubts that belong to the impaired human nature — the old self we seek to overcome? Alas no! Beginning with the Apostles and the other early disciples, the experience of God’s people has been a lifelong battle to

overcome the forces of evil, within and without. We know that we cannot right the wrongs of the world at the present time. That is a Kingdom work. But preparation for service in that Kingdom is our present concern. It is a voluntary discipline. There is no compulsion. Yet liberty has its own laws, and the blessings of liberty are dependent on the wholehearted acceptance and practice of those laws.

Do we desire to change the world? We surely do! Then where do we begin? G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936), renowned English journalist and author of many Christian works, once replied to a newspaper whose editor had asked for thoughts on what was wrong with the world. He wrote: "Dear Sir, I am. Yours faithfully."

### Lord, Change Me!

The weight of personal sin has broken the hearts of its victims since Eden. What grief Mother Eve endured when her firstborn took his brother's life! How David wept in prayer and despair at his own wrongdoing! John Bunyan styled himself "the chief of sinners" when writing of God's abounding grace, and in *Pilgrim's Progress* he pictured our release from the guilt of sin, as Christian's burden rolled away. Even the masterful Apostle Paul found the subduing of the old selfish nature a bitter fight: "What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7: 15, 24).

Paul spoke also of fightings without, and fears within. Fears? *We are not exempt*. How can we be touched by a feeling of the world's infirmities unless we experience the same? While Scripture and reason ask the question: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" even though the answer is evident, we are nevertheless often deeply afraid (Rom. 8: 31).

The old nature reasserts itself, and revives our many fears: of people, of danger, of loneliness, of ostracism; fear of the future; of pain, sickness, poverty, death; loss of love and esteem, exposure of our sins; fears of the disapproval of a just God, and of failure at the end to merit eternal life.

Such misgivings are the common experience of all of us who wish to be *changed* — transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12: 2). And by this means we are made the more deeply aware of the crying needs of a world that also needs to be changed. There is a great future work to be done, when we shall share with our Lord in bringing blessings to all families of the earth, and this present world is our training ground.

### THE WORK OF REHABILITATION

This will not be accomplished without the co-operation of the discharged prisoners. Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all, and it is God's will that all men and women shall come to understand this truth (1 Tim. 2: 4-6). In the grave, of course, there is no knowledge, but released from that

darkest of prison cells to become citizens of the Kingdom of Christ, all will have a full, fair opportunity to come into harmony with His righteous rulership.

Though the Kingdom is to continue for all eternity, the Bible clearly shows that there will be a probationary period at its beginning, during which the rehabilitation processes will be accomplished, Christ and the saints having already been appointed, and *anointed*, to do that work (Isa. 9: 7; Dan. 7: 22; 1 Cor. 6: 2). "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (Isa. 32: 1).

Judgment is not solely the passing of a sentence, but in the Biblical sense includes also instruction, counsel, testing, and correction. The right to eternal life must be conditioned upon a genuine heart-conformity to the principles of right living. As Jesus expressed the matter: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . and . . . thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22: 37, 39). "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matt. 7: 12). This is sometimes described as the "Golden Rule."

### Human Rights Restored

Human rights will during that Kingdom be fully defined, restored, and understood. From one standpoint, we have no intrinsic rights as such. It is only as the Creator bestows on all His gracious gift of life and its associated life-rights, and restores men and women to his own image and likeness, that we shall count and treasure such blessed rights as extensions of His own.

He will restore the right to life itself — the privilege of perfect existence in harmony with the Divine law — and its associated *life-rights* — the privileges of a perfect environment, life-sustaining foods, pure air and water, and a beautiful home (Isa. 65: 21, 22). Fellowship with God will be fully regained, and it will be recognized universally that all that was lost in Adam is restored through the redemptive work of Christ.

And the conditions of this perfect life? The keynote is harmony with the Divine law of love and liberty — not an irksome stricture imposed by an awesome majesty, but a welcome into the aching arms of a Father who loves us and yearns for our own loving response as children who strayed, but are now reconciled. Christ has made us free!

*He that fixes his view on the perfect law, that of liberty, and abides in it, being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, he shall be blessed in his doing.*

\* \* \*

## The Pilgrim's Progress

John Bunyan (1628-1688)

Now I saw in my Dream, that the highway up which Christian was to go, was fenced on either side with a Wall, and that Wall is called Salvation. Up this way therefore did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back.

He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a Cross, and a little below in the bottom, a Sepulchre. So I saw in my Dream, that just as Christian came up with the Cross, his Burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the Sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death. Then he stood still awhile to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him, that the sight of the Cross should thus ease him of his Burden. He looked therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. Now as he stood looking and weeping, behold three Shining Ones came to him and saluted him with Peace be to thee; so the first said to him, Thy sins be forgiven: the second stript him of his Rags, and clothed him with Change of Raiment; the third also set a mark in his forehead, and gave him a Roll with a Seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the Celestial Gate. So they went their way.

*Who's this? the Pilgrim. How! 'tis very true,  
Old things are past away, all's become new.  
Strange! he's another man, upon my word,  
They be fine Feathers that make a fine Bird.*

Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing,

*Thus far did I come laden with my sin;  
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in  
Till I came hither: What a place is this!  
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?  
Must here the Burden fall from off my back?  
Must here the strings that bound it to me crack?  
Blest Cross! blest Sepulchre! blest rather be  
The Man that there was put to shame for me.*



### of interest . . .

The world was a different place when the Geneva Refugee Convention was first drafted in 1951. Western Europe was still struggling to cope with the aftermath of the Second World War and the many millions it had uprooted. The Western powers quickly adapted the Convention's definition of a refugee — "A person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution." Over the years the definition has been adjusted to eliminate geographical and time limitations written into the original Convention, but the rise of the economic migrant makes it difficult to differentiate between genuine refugees fleeing persecution and those seeking a better economic life abroad.

Due to new types of internal conflicts erupting in countries the world's refugee population has increased. In 2001, the world's refugees totaled 21.1 million — a far cry from the 2.1 million of 1951. For much of the past two decades Iran and Pakistan have been perhaps the most generous hosts in the world, sheltering around two million Afghans and Iraqis with very little outside help.

Protection of refugees involves legal assistance and physical protection; as well as provisions for basic life-saving aid such as food, clean water, shelter and medical care. Protection also includes finding durable solutions for refugees. This usually involves one of three main approaches: repatriation to their original homes; integration in first-asylum states; or resettlement to a third country. Repatriation is the preferred solution. Over the past two decades, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has helped at least 25 million people go home successfully, to places like Guatemala, Namibia, Mozambique, Cambodia, Kosovo and many other countries. Millions more have rebuilt their lives in first-asylum states or in nearby regions. Now that Afghans are returning, Palestinians are the largest refugee population in the world today, numbering 3.7 million dispersed in Jordan, Gaza, West Bank, Syria, and Lebanon. — *British Broadcasting Corporation*



## GLORIOUS LIBERTY FOR MANKIND COMING

**Q** What will be the nature of the glorious liberty into which the whole creation is to come, when the sons of God are manifested (Rom. 8: 19, 21)?

**A** Rom. 8: 19, 21 reads, "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. . . . Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Many other versions of the Bible translate the word *creature* by the word *creation* instead, making these verses more understandable.

St. Paul indicates the nature of this liberty by contrasting it in verse 21 with "the bondage of corruption," that is, death, with all its concomitants of pain, sickness, and sorrow. For 6,000 years it has proven to be a terrible bondage, one from which mankind has been unable to escape on its own. However, the Lord Jesus came to ransom Father Adam and through him all of Adam's children — the whole creation, the entire world of mankind (1 Tim. 2: 6). As a result, Jesus has obtained the right to purchase the world of mankind with His own precious blood, to open the tomb, and to release all from every cord of bondage.

### Resurrection For Mankind — A Return to Perfection

Acts 24: 15 records St. Paul's words, "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" — a lifting up to perfection. Jesus further declares, "I . . . have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1: 18). Keys symbolize the right, authority, and power to open or close, and Jesus will unlock and open the graves and release the prisoners. The word *hell* in this verse comes from the Greek word *hades*, and means the grave — the unconscious condition of death.

To release men from the bondage of death means to restore them to the original perfection that Adam possessed before he sinned. He was a perfect man "crowned . . . with glory and honour" (Psa. 8: 5). Because of sin, he and his entire race became enslaved in "the bondage of corruption" due to the just sentence of God's perfect law. By His atone-

ment sacrifice, Jesus will remove the sin of the world (John 1: 29). This deliverance from the bondage of corruption was the theme of Jesus' preaching, not only as indicated by His recorded words, but as prophesied beforehand: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isa. 61: 1).

Jesus' message was illustrated by His miracles, by which He manifested forth His future glory — the work of healing, restoring, and liberating from pain, sorrow, and death into the liberty of perfect manhood. This liberty was enjoyed by Adam while yet a son of God before he became a sinner. The freedom from death and trouble that mankind shall be restored to is the same glorious liberty common to the sons of God on every plane of being — those sons of the angelic nature, and those sons of the Divine nature (Job 38: 7; 1 John 3: 2; 2 Pet. 1: 4).

### Full Deliverance an Individual Matter

Though the human creation shall be delivered from the bondage of Adamic death there is no guarantee that all will go on to attain the full extent of that liberty. Experience will then teach mankind the value of liberty, yet every individual will be able to fall back into bondage again by deliberate, wilful, sin. This second bondage is called the Second Death, from which there can be no deliverance (Rev. 20: 14, 15).

The time for the salvation of the world from the bondage of corruption was not at Jesus' first presence. At that time He merely preached "liberty to the captives" and the opening of "the prison" doors, though He laid the groundwork for deliverance by giving His life as the Ransom sacrifice for all.

When reproved by the self-righteous Pharisees (who were zealous for the Sabbath, but ignorant of its real significance) for healing a woman on the Sabbath day, Jesus responded, "Ought not this woman, . . . whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 13: 16). He did release her from her special infirmity, but not from the curse of



death. She was subject still to the Adamic consequences, and the little release which Jesus granted her was merely an illustration of the full and complete release that He will yet grant in the “times of restitution of all things” — the great antitypical seventh day, or Sabbath, of which He is the Lord (Acts 3: 19-21).

The time for the removal of “the bondage of corruption” from humanity, which will permit the obedient to enter into the glorious perfection of Eden, is stated in Rom. 8: 19 — at “the manifestation of the sons of God.” These sons of God are the special elect class selected during the Christian Age, as the Body of Christ. In due time, this Christ class — Jesus, the Head, and the Church, His Body — will exercise their power in the liberating, restoring, and perfecting of the human family to the full freedom of children of God, secured for them by the Ransom. This liberty will be attained by all willing to accept it, by the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ and His Church. This is the goal of His Kingdom reign — to bless all the families of the earth (Gen. 12: 3; Gal. 3: 8).

### IS THERE ANY HOPE FOR SODOM?

**Q** Is there any hope of a resurrection and entering life for the people of Sodom?

**A** There are many Scriptures proving that the only hope for the salvation of any member of the human family is in the name of Jesus Christ.

- There is only one name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved (Acts 4: 12).
- Jesus, the Son of God, is “the way, the truth, and the life” and no man can come to the Father, but by Him (John 14: 6).
- He “by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2: 9).
- Only by faith in His Ransom sacrifice can anyone gain everlasting life (1 John 5: 11, 12).
- He “gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Tim. 2: 6).
- He is “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1: 9).
- He “will draw all men” unto Him (John 12: 32).
- He is the great Seed of Abraham who will “justify the heathen through faith,” and in whom all the families and nations of the earth shall be blessed (Gal. 3: 8, 16; Gen. 12: 3; 22: 18).

These promises also include the people of Sodom, and Jesus specifies them particularly in Matt. 11: 23, 24 and Luke 10: 12. Here he shows that their judgment or trial for life is yet future: “I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee” (Matt. 11: 24). Jesus explains that the people of Capernaum had sinned against greater

light than the people of Sodom, yet both peoples had hope for a future trial.

God promised that the people of Sodom are to be restored “to their former estate” (Ezek. 16: 48-63; see v. 55). This will take place during Jesus’ Second Presence, in “the times of restitution of all things,” when all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Acts 3: 19-21; 15: 15-17).

### IS MAN A FREE MORAL AGENT?

**Q** Has man been a free moral agent since the Adamic fall?

**A** There are two ways of viewing this subject, and the answers accordingly would be opposites.

(1) If by “free moral agent,” *freedom of will* in respect to moral questions is meant, we would answer, Yes. Undoubtedly, most people are free to *will* as they may please on moral questions, though they may not be able to carry out this *will* in all affairs of life by reason of the weakness of their flesh, or by circumstances and conditions of others with whom they are in contact. Thus the Apostle Paul says, “To *will* is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom. 7: 18).

(2) If by “free moral agent,” one who is not influenced or restricted by his environment is meant, the answer should unquestionably be, No. All are born in a certain measure of slavery to ignorance, superstition, and weakness (Psa. 51: 5). All *thus bound* may *seem* to have full liberty to do right as easily as to do wrong, but in reality do not, because of their own sinfulness and that of others who influence them, especially “the prince of this world” (John 14: 30; 2 Cor. 4: 4).

If all men had absolute *freedom* from the condemnation of the curse, the present age would be the time of the world’s trial. Such conditions do not prevail, for God has appointed a “day” (the coming Millennial Age) in which He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17: 31). The ignorance now enslaving mankind will then be dissipated before the Sun of Righteousness and unfavorable surroundings will be removed (Isa. 35: 8-10; 2 Pet. 3: 13). The blemishes of the flesh will be offset according to the gracious provisions of the New Covenant, under which the world’s trial will take place.

With the Church, whose trial or judgment has taken place during the Gospel Age, the case is somewhat similar (1 Pet. 4: 17). They have been justified by faith, their unintentional blemishes and weaknesses being offset by the merit of Christ’s sacrifice, and their knowledge being granted by the holy spirit through the Scriptures. Only such as are thus *made free by the Son* are free indeed — “free moral agents” (John 8: 36). The bulk of humanity will not be truly free until they reach perfection of body and mind.

\* \* \*

**GETTING DIVORCED** is very easy these days. Many couples see it as an easy option when the going gets tough. “If marriage does not work with this partner, try another one!” The pop idols in sports and entertainment lead the way in mocking the sanctity of marriage, and the world follows.

Sadly, some claim there is little difference between believers and unbelievers when it comes to the likelihood of a failed marriage. It is difficult to overcome the pressures of modern life and hold on to the contentment that should mark all our human relationships, and above all, the sacrament of marriage.

### **What is marriage?**

It is a covenant ordained by God, binding a man and a woman together “as long as they both shall live,” so that they are “one flesh” (Gen. 2: 24). The physical union and the bonding of heart and mind has a kind of mystical beauty that only a loving Creator could have designed, and it is aptly said that some marriages are “made in heaven.” Furthermore, from a broader viewpoint marriage has a fundamental role in maintaining the stability of the social order, providing a secure environment for the raising of children, setting standards of moral decency, and giving consideration to the needs of the extended family.

### **Choosing a marriage partner**

It seldom happens that young men and women make careful plans, consider all the possibilities, and draw up a short-list of their requirements in a marriage partner. Or even if they do, nature takes over, and they *fall in love*. Our Heavenly Father does not frown on this phenomenon, and it often seems such a glad surprise that He chooses for us the one whom we desire. Yet there are guidelines which we ignore at our peril. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3: 3); “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6: 14). We endanger our commitment to the Lord if we marry outside the faith, and divided loyalties can cause much grief in family life.

### **The public witness**

Is a *legal* marriage necessary? Exhorted to respect the powers that be, we must conform our conduct to what is considered proper in the eyes of the law, and bring no disrepute upon the faith (Rom. 13). Our Lord Jesus honored the institution of marriage and His first miracle was performed at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. A civil ceremony is legitimate for Christians, but far more desirable is the taking of vows before family and friends, in the presence of God. But if a civil contract is made, a church blessing service may follow the legal commitment, setting a seal upon the covenant relationship before a congregation of Christian witnesses.

### **Working at marriage**

Being “in love” doesn’t last. It may be the fuse — perhaps transitory — that sets alight a flame of love that burns bright a while, and then settles into a comfortable warmth. But over the years maybe the flicker dies down, interest fades, and a dullness sets in that robs a marriage of its first joy. It is so easy to let this happen! This is the danger time, when temptations to recapture love’s early excitement with a new partner threaten the stability of a marriage and the happiness of a family.

Matters may be even more serious if one or both have developed a critical attitude or a tendency to belittle the other. The early attractions must fade with passing years and be replaced with maturer binding influences. As Shakespeare observed:

*Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds.*

### **Christian couples have God on their side**

It may sound trite, but it is true, that couples who pray together stay together. Praying audibly, each in turn, can work wonders. It is hard to be dishonest or to conceal one’s real motives when talking with God, and a genuine plea for His forgiveness will, with His blessing, win also the forgiveness of an injured partner. Shared prayer can open the flood-gates and let the love come pouring through once more.

There is a place for humor. Laughter is a tonic in marriage — so long as we laugh not so much at one another as with one another. It is a good idea to set aside a regular private time to be alone together, to replenish those reserves of special friendship and strengthen the bonds that make man and woman complete only when in the company of the other, or — one might say — the other half!

### **When a marriage comes to grief**

It happens. Such a calamity is one of life’s greatest trials, especially for the Christian man and woman. Some come to faith in Christ, being already married to an unbeliever, and a wedge may be driven between them. But even couples who are both deeply consecrated to the will of God are subject to human frailty, and find no alternative to separation. The world “shrugs its shoulders,” but the victims learn bitter lessons. How often we wish that our life’s history could be rewritten, that we could reverse the mistakes we made, and undo the hurt to ourselves and others! By the mercy of God, and within the precepts of Divine law, may we be blessed, and granted the chance to reflect in our lives that mystical union between Christ and His Bride.

\* \* \*

## Whom God Hath Joined

*Thoughts on  
Christian Marriage*



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*At-a-glance*

**France:** August 1-3

**Germany:** *Velbert*, June 7-9; *Alteiningen*, October 17-19

**Nigeria:** *Umunkiri*, June 27-29; *Danfodio Road Primary School, Aba*, Abia State, November 28-30

**Poland:** *Rzeszow*, July 12-14; *Krakow*, July 15-17; *Lodz*, July 18-20; *Bydgoszcz*, July 21-23

**United Kingdom:** *Hyde*, England, August 1-3

**United States:** *Philadelphia Area*, July 3-6; *Ohio*, August 15-17; *Illinois*, October 3-5; *Oklahoma*, November 7-9

*Details*

#### United States

*Philadelphia Area (Lionville)*, July 3-6 (Thursday-Sunday)

*Site:* *The Inn at Chester Springs* (formerly known as *Best Western*), Route 100 (south of route 113), Lionville, PA 19353; telephone: (610) 363-1100 *Rates and Reservations:* For 1-4 people, \$71.00 plus \$5.68 tax. ***Please make your reservations for all four nights through our office; and make your check payable to LHMM.*** Our address is 1156 Saint Matthew's Road, Chester Springs, PA 19425-2700; telephone: (610) 827-7665

*Athens, Ohio*, August 15-17 (Friday-Sunday)

*Site:* Ohio University Inn, 331 Richland Ave., Athens, Ohio 45701; telephone (740-593-6661). *Rate and Reservations:* \$77.00 per room plus 12.25% tax. Reservations must be received by July 14, 2003.

### SERVICES BY VISITING MINISTERS

**The General Editor, Bernard W. Hedman**

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-6

**Associate General Editor, John Davis**

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-6; Hyde, England Convention, August 1-3

**Carl W. Seebald**

Chicago, Illinois, June 21, 22; Minneapolis, August 2, 3

**Ralph Herzig**

Springfield, Massachusetts, June 1; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-6

**Richard Blaine**

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-6

#### Robert Herzig

Springfield, Massachusetts, August 3; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-6

**Jan Wojnar**

Pittsfield, Massachusetts, June 8; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-6; Boston, Massachusetts, August 24

**John Detzler**

Ukraine, June 28-30; Germany, July 5-6; Rzeszow, Poland, July 12-14; Krakow, Poland, July 15-17; Lodz, Poland, July 18-20; Bydgoszcz, Poland, July 21-23; France Convention, August 1-3

**Leon Snyder**

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-6; Chicago, August 9, 10

**Tom Cimbura**

Muskegon, Michigan, July 19; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-6; Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 20

**Don Lewis**

*June:* Lethbridge/Taber, Alberta, Canada, 13; Calgary, Alberta, Canada, 14, 15; Osoyoos, B.C., Canada, 17; Seattle, Washington, 21, 22; Eugene, Oregon, 23; Spokane, Washington, 25; Moscow, Idaho, 26; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-6

**James Shaw**

Independence, Kansas, June 29

**Marek Piotrowski**

Seattle, Washington, July 26, 27

**Evangelists' Services**

**Robert Branconnier**, New York City, June 15; Chicago, Illinois, July 19, 20; Pittsfield, Massachusetts, August 10; Norfolk, Virginia, August 23, 24; Colorado, August 30, 31

**Jon Hanning**, Louisville, Kentucky, July 19; Cincinnati, Ohio, July 20

**Harry Hammer**, Minneapolis, June 7, 8; West Frankfort, Illinois, July 19, 20

**Dan Herzig**, Boston, Massachusetts, June 22; New Haven, Connecticut, August 17

**Harold Solomon**, Colorado, August 17

**Robert Steenrod**, Beechgrove, Tennessee, June 15; N. Canton, Ohio, August 24

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