

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

BEING PLAIN PAPERS
ON THE DAILY DUTIES, EXPERIENCE, DANGERS, AND
PRIVILEGES OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS.

BY

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IX.

FREEDOM.

“If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”—

JOHN viii. 36.

THE subject before our eyes deserves a thousand thoughts. It should ring in the ears of Englishmen and Scotchmen 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 at the present state of public opinion in Great Britain. The minds of many are wholly absorbed in politics. Yet there is a freedom, within the reach of all, which few, I am afraid, ever think of,—a freedom independent of all political changes,—a freedom which neither Queen, Lords and Commons, nor the cleverest popular leaders can bestow. This is the freedom about which I write this day. Do we know anything of it? Are we free?

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

I. I will show, in the first place, *the general 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 own.*

Let no reader think for a moment that this is going to be a political paper. 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 very anxious about is the election of grace. My one desire is, that sinners should make their own calling and election sure.—The liberty I desire above all things to make known, and further, 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 Saviour Jesus Christ. Before Christ I want every knee to bow, and every tongue to confess that He is Lord. I ask 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 have to show is *the general excellence of freedom*.

On this point some readers may think it needless to say anything: they imagine that all men know the value of freedom, and that to dwell on it is mere waste of time. I do not agree with such people at all. I believe that myriads of Englishmen know nothing of the blessings which they enjoy in their own land. They have grown up from infancy to manhood in the midst of free institutions. They have not the least idea of the state of things in other countries. They are ignorant alike of those two worst forms of tyranny,—the crushing tyranny of a cruel military despot, and the intolerant tyranny of an unreasoning mob. In short, many Englishmen know nothing of the value of liberty, just because they have been born in the middle of it, and have never been for a moment without it.

I call then on every one who reads this paper to remember that liberty is one of the greatest temporal blessings that man can have on this side the grave. We live in a land where our *bodies* are free. So long as we hurt nobody's person, or property, or character, no one can touch us. The poorest man's house is his castle.—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.—We live in a land where our *consciences* are free. So long as we hold quietly on our own way, and do not interfere with others, we are free to worship God as we please, and no man can compel us to take his way to heaven. We live in a land where no foreigner rules over us. Our laws are made and altered by Englishmen like ourselves, and our Governors dwell by our side, 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 the comforts which it contains! The full value of them can never perhaps be known. Well said the Jewish Rabbins in ancient days: "If the sea were ink and the world parchment, it would never serve to describe the praises of liberty."

The want of 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 bondmen under Pharaoh in Egypt, or under Philistines in Canaan? What student of history needs to be reminded of the woes inflicted on the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Italy by the hand 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? No misery certainly is so great as the misery of slavery.

To win and preserve freedom has been the aim of many national struggles which have deluged the earth with blood. Liberty has been the cause in which myriads 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 justly 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 embalmed 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 pests and nuisances 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 a tenth part of what might be said in praise of freedom. What are the annals of history but a long record of conflicts between the friends and foes of liberty? Where is the nation upon earth that has ever 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 at this very day where 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 are treated as serfs and 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 know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!”¹

Let us beware of *undervaluing* the liberty we enjoy in this country of ours, as Englishmen. 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 in England. Men look at the fancied 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 all 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 in England. 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 quantity of abuses and corruptions. Once more then, I say, let us beware of undervaluing English 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 cannot walk at all. No doubt we might have better laws and government than we have: but I am quite sure we might easily have worse. At this very day there is no country on the face of the globe where there is so much care taken of the life, and health, and property, and character, and personal liberty of the meanest inhabitant, as there is in England. Those who want to have more liberty, would soon find, if they crossed the seas, that there is no country on earth where there is so much real liberty as our own.²

¹ To prevent mistakes, I think it well to say that the man I refer to is Patrick Henry, an American Statesman of the last century.

² The following weighty passage, from the pen of the judicious Hooker, is commended to the attention of all in the present day. It is the opening passage of the first book of his “Ecclesiastical Polity.”

“He that goeth about to persuade a multitude that they are not so well governed as they ought to be, shall never want attentive and favourable hearers, because they know the manifold defects whereunto every kind of regiment or government is subject; but the secret lets and difficulties, which in public proceedings are innumerable and inevitable, they have not ordinarily the judgment to consider. And because such as openly reprove disorders of States are taken for principal friends to the common benefit of all, and for men that carry singular freedom of mind, under this fair and plausible colour whatsoever they utter passeth for good and current. That which is wanting in the weight of their speech is supplied by the aptness of men’s minds to accept and believe it. Whereas, on the other side, if we maintain things that are established, we have not only to strive with a number of heavy prejudices, deeply rooted in the breasts of men, who think that herein we serve the times, and speak in favour of the present state, because

But while I bid men not undervalue English liberty, so also on the other hand I charge them not to *overvalue* it. Never forget that temporal slavery is not the only slavery, and temporal freedom not the only freedom. What shall it profit you to be a citizen of a free country, so long as your soul is not free? What is the use of living in a free land like England, 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 an African! It is these tyrants whom I want you this day to remember. It is these chains from which I want you to be free. Value by all means your English liberty, but do not overvalue it. Look higher, further than any temporal freedom. In the highest sense let us take care that “we are free.”

II. The second thing 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 have it. No power on earth can prevent a man or woman having 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 having this liberty. And, once our own, nothing can take it away. Men may torture us, banish us, hang us, behead us, burn us, but they can never tear from us true freedom. The poorest may have it no less than the richest: the most unlearned may have it as well as the most learned, and the weakest as well as the strongest. Laws cannot deprive us of it: Pope’s bulls cannot rob us of it. Once our own, 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 man? Who has got it at this moment to bestow? I ask my readers to give me their attention, and I will supply a plain answer to these questions.

The true freedom I speak of is spiritual freedom,—freedom of soul. It is the freedom which Christ bestows, without money and without price, on all true Christians. Those whom the Son makes free are free indeed: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (2 Cor. iii. 17.) Let men talk what they please of the comparative freedom of monarchies and republics; let them struggle, if they will, for universal liberty, fraternity, and equality: we never know the highest style of liberty till we are

we either hold or seek preferment; but also to bear such reception as minds so averted beforehand usually take against that which they are loth should be poured into them.”

enrolled citizens of the kingdom of God. We are ignorant of the best kind of freedom if we are not Christ's freemen.

Christ's freemen are free from the *guilt of sin*. That heavy burden of unforgiven transgressions, 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 to their old sins, however black and many, and say,—“Ye cannot condemn me.” They can look back on long years of carelessness and worldliness and say,—“Who shall lay anything to my charge?” This is true liberty. This is to be free.

Christ's freemen are free from the *power of sin*. It no longer rules and reigns in their hearts, and carries them before it like a flood. Through the power of Christ's Spirit they mortify the deeds of their bodies, and crucify their flesh with its affections and lust. 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 vex, but does not overcome them: they are no longer the bondslaves of lusts and appetites, and passions, and tempers. Over all these things they are more than conquerors, through Him that loved them. This is true liberty. This is to be free.

Christ's freemen are free from the *slavish fear of God*. They no longer look at Him with dread and alarm, as an offended Maker; they no longer hate Him, and get away from Him, like Adam 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 feel that anger is passed away. They feel that when God the Father looks down upon them, He sees them in Christ, and unworthy as they are in themselves, is well-pleased. This is true liberty. This is to be free.

Christ's freemen 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 alike indifferent to his favour or his enmity, his smile or his frown. They look away from man who can be seen, to Christ who is not seen, and having the favour of Christ, they care little for the blame 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 free.

Christ's freemen are free from the *fear of death*. They no longer look forward to it with silent dismay, as a horrible thing which they do not care to think of. Through Christ they can look this last enemy calmly in

the face, and say,—“Thou canst not harm me.” They can look forward to all that comes after death,—decay, resurrection, judgment, and eternity,—and yet not feel cast down. They can stand by the side of an open grave, and say, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” They can lay them down on their death-beds, and say, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” (Ps. xxiii. 4.) “Not a hair of my head shall perish.” This is true liberty. This is to be free.

Best of all, Christ’s freemen are *free for ever*. Once enrolled in the list of heavenly citizens, their names shall never be struck off. Once presented with the freedom of Christ’s kingdom, they shall possess it for evermore. The highest privileges of this world’s freedom can only endure for a life-time; the freest citizen on earth must submit at length to die, and lose his franchise forever: but the franchise of Christ’s people is eternal. They carry it down to the grave, and it lives still. They will rise again with it at the last day, and enjoy the privileges of it for evermore. This is true liberty. This is to be 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 freedom, 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 it needed mighty power to release them out of his hands. But, blessed be God, there was grace enough, and power enough ready 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 on the cross. He redeemed them from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for them. (Gal. iii. 13.) He paid all their debt in His own person, by allowing the chastisement of their peace to be laid on Him. (Isaiah liii. 5.) He satisfied every possible demand of the law against them, by fulfilling its righteousness to the uttermost. He cleared them from every imputation of sin, by becoming sin for them. (2 Cor. v. 21.) He fought their battle with the devil, and triumphed over him on the cross. As their Champion, He spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly 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 meets completely the justice of God, and provides completely redemption for man.

Let us look well at this glorious plan of redemption, and take heed that we understand it. Ignorance on this point is one great secret of faint hopes, little comfort, and ceaseless doubts in the minds of Christians. Too many are content with a vague idea that Christ will somehow save sinners: but how or why they cannot tell. I protest against this ignorance. Let us set fully before our eyes the doctrine of Christ's vicarious death and substitution, and rest our souls upon it. Let us grasp firmly the mighty truth, that Christ on the cross, stood in the place of His people, died for His people, suffered for His people, was counted a curse and sin for His people, paid the debts of His people, made satisfaction for His people, became the surety and representative of His people, and in this way procured His people's freedom. Let us understand this clearly, and then we shall see what a mighty privilege it is to be made free by Christ.

This is the freedom which, above all other, 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 cast down. 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 shall outlive the solid world.

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

III. I have now to 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 mistakes which prevail 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 whom Christ effectually makes free?" and for want of knowledge of the answer, they sit still in their chains. I ask every reader to give me his 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 wherewith Christ makes people free, unless you understand how you yourself may have an interest in it.

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

We are not made Christ's freemen by baptism. Myriads are every year brought to the font, and solemnly baptized in the name of the Trinity, who serve sin like slaves, and neglect Christ all their days. Wretched indeed is that man's state of soul who can give no better evidence of his citizenship of heaven than the mere naked fact of his baptism!

We are not made Christ's freemen by mere membership of Christ's Church. There are Companies and Corporations whose members are entitled to vast privileges, without any respect to their personal character, if their names are only on the list of members. The kingdom of Christ is not a corporation of this kind. The grand test of belonging to it is personal character.

Let these things sink down 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, ought neither of them to be lightly esteemed.—All I contend for is the absolute necessity of not being content either with 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 become Christ's freemen than that of simply believing. It is by faith, simple faith in Him as our Saviour and Redeemer, that men's souls are made free. It is by receiving Christ, trusting Christ, committing ourselves to Christ, reposing our whole weight on Christ,—it is by this, and by no other plan, that spiritual liberty is made our own. Mighty as are the privileges which Christ's freemen 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 believeth in Christ is not condemned,—is justified, is born again, is an heir of God, and hath everlasting life.

The truth before us is one of priceless importance. Let us cling to it firmly, and never let it go. If you desire peace of conscience, if you want inward rest and consolation, stir not an inch off the ground that faith is

the grand 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.

No doctrine like this to suit the ignorant and unlearned! Visit the poorest and humblest cottager, who knows nothing of theology, and cannot even repeat the creed. 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 learned in the land,—freedom from guilt, freedom from the devil, freedom from condemnation, freedom from hell. And then tell him plainly, boldly, broadly, unreservedly, that this freedom may be all his own, if he will but trust in Christ and believe.

No doctrine like this to suit the sick and dying! Go to the bedside of the vilest sinner, when death is coming nigh, and tell him lovingly that there is a hope even for him, if he can receive it. Tell him that Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of them; tell him that Christ has done all, paid 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 freed at once from all his guilt, if he will only believe. Yes, say to him, in the words of Scripture, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” (Rom. x. 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. Waste not your time in speculations whether you are elect, and converted, and a vessel of grace. Stand not poring over the unprofitable question whether Christ died for you or not. That is a point of which no one ever made any question in the Bible. Settle your thoughts on this one simple inquiry,—“Do I really trust in Christ, as a humble sinner? Do I cast myself on Him? Do I believe?”—Look not to anything else. Look at this alone. Fear not to rest your soul on plain texts and promises of Scripture. If you believe, you are free.

(1) And now as I bring this paper to a conclusion, let me affectionately press upon every reader the inquiry which grows naturally out of the whole subject. Let me ask everyone a plain question: “Are you free?”

I know not who or what you are into whose hands this paper has fallen. But this I do know, there never was an age when the inquiry I press upon you was more thoroughly needed. Political liberty, civil liberty, commercial liberty, liberty of speech, liberty of the press,—all these, and

a hundred other kindred subjects, are swallowing up men's attention. Few, very few, find time to think of spiritual liberty. 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 spirits, slaves of lust, slaves of ambition, slaves of political party, slaves of money, slaves of gambling, slaves of fashion, or slaves of temper! You may not see their chains with the naked eye, and they themselves may boast of their liberty: but for all that they are thoroughly slaves. Whether men like to hear it or not, the gambler and the drunkard, the covetous and the passionate, the glutton and the sensualist, are not free, but slaves. They are bound hand and foot by the devil. "He that committeth sin is the servant of sin." (Rom. viii. 34.) He that boasts of liberty, while he is enslaved by lusts and passions, is going down to hell with a lie in his right hand.

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

(2) Do you feel any desire to be free? Do you find any longing within you for a higher, better liberty than this world can give—a liberty that will not die at your death, but will go with you beyond the grave? Then take the advice I give you this day. 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 strike chains off your inward man. "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John viii. 36.)

Freedom like this is the secret of true happiness. None go through the world with such ease and content as those who are citizens of a heavenly country. Earth's burdens press lightly upon 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 sustaining thought 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 Christ's freemen 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 in England than all the Governments which ever ruled this land. No man ever made this country so feared and respected

as Oliver Cromwell. The root of the most genuine patriotism is to be one of those whom Christ has made free.

(3) Are you spiritually free? Then rejoice, and be thankful for your freedom. Care not for the scorn and contempt of man: you have no cause to be ashamed of your religion or your Master. He whose citizenship is in heaven (Phil. iii. 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 franchise can raise him higher than he stands in God's sight. "The lines are fallen to him in pleasant places, and he has a goodly heritage." (Psalm xvi. 6.) Grace now, and the hope of glory hereafter, are more lasting privileges than the power of voting for twenty boroughs or counties.

Are you free? Then stand fast in your liberty, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage. Listen not to those who by good words and fair speeches would draw you back to the Church of Rome. Beware of those who would fain persuade you that there is any mediator but the one Mediator, Christ Jesus,—any sacrifice but the one Sacrifice offered on Calvary,—any priest but the great High Priest Emmanuel,—any incense needed in worship but the savour of His name who was crucified,—any rule of faith and practice but God's Word,—any confessional but the throne of grace,—any effectual absolution but that which Christ bestows on the hearts of His believing people,—any purgatory but the one fountain open for all sins, the blood of Christ, to be only used while we are alive. On all these points stand fast, and be on your guard. Scores of misguided teachers are trying to rob Christians of Gospel liberty, and to bring back among us exploded superstitions. Resist them manfully, and do not give way for a moment. Remember what Romanism was in this country before the blessed Reformation. Remember at what mighty cost our martyred Reformers brought spiritual freedom to light by the Gospel. Stand fast for this freedom like a man, and labour to hand it down to your children, whole and unimpaired.

Are you free? Then think every day you live of the millions of your fellow-creatures who are yet bound hand and foot in spiritual darkness. Think of six hundred millions of heathens who never yet heard of Christ and salvation. Think of the poor homeless Jews, scattered and wandering over the face of the earth, because they have not yet received their Messiah. Think of the millions of Roman Catholics who are yet in captivity under the Pope, and know nothing of true liberty, light, and peace. Think of the myriads of your own fellow-countrymen in our great cities, who, without Sabbaths and without means of grace, are practically heathens, and whom the devil is continually leading captive at his will. Think of

them all, and feel for them. Think of them all, and often say 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 compassed sea and land to make proselytes,—that politicians have leagued and laboured night and day to obtain catholic emancipation and free trade,—that philanthropists have travailed in soul for years to procure the suppression of negro slavery,—and shall it appear at the same time that Christ’s freemen have done little to rescue men and women from hell? Forbid it, faith! Forbid it, charity! Surely if the children of this world are zealous to promote temporal freedom, the children of God ought to be much more zealous to promote spiritual freedom. Let the time past suffice us to have been selfish and indolent in this matter. For the rest of our days let us use every effort to promote spiritual emancipation. 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 on Christ, from the guilt and power of sin, we must surely feel every day that we are not free from its presence 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 infirmity, from sorrow and from pain. No, indeed! Where is the freeman of Christ on earth who is not often painfully reminded that we are not yet in heaven? We are yet in the body; we are yet travelling through the wilderness of this world: we are not at home. We have shed many tears already, and probably we shall have to shed many more; we have got yet within us a poor weak heart: we are yet liable to be assaulted by the devil. Our redemption is begun indeed, but it is not yet completed. We have redemption now in the root, but we have it not 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 returns of 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 Sabbaths and sacraments,—a few more preachings and prayings,—a few more, and the end will come! Our Master will come back again. The dead saints shall be raised. The living saints shall be changed. Then, and not till then, we shall be completely free. The liberty which we enjoyed by faith shall 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 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 draweth nigh. Our full salvation is nearer than when we believed. The signs of the times are strange, and demand every Christian's serious attention. The kingdoms of this world are in confusion: the powers of this world, both temporal and ecclesiastical, are everywhere reeling and shaken to their foundations. Happy, thrice 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!