

Christian Liberty

"WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, THERE IS LIBERTY"

Of all bondage and slavery in the world, there is none more horrible than the bondage of sin. Tell me of Israel in Egypt preparing their tale of bricks unsupplied with straw; tell me of the slave beneath the lash of his cruel task-master, and I confess it is a bondage fearful to be borne; but there is one far worse -- the bondage of a convinced sinner when he is brought to feel the burden of his guilt; the bondage of a man when once his sins are baying him, like hounds about a weary stag; the bondage of a man when the burden of his sin is on his shoulder -- a burden too heavy for his soul to bear -- a burden which will sink him forever in the depths of everlasting torment, unless he doth escape from it.

Methinks I see such a person. He hath ne'er a smile upon his face; dark clouds hath gathered on his brow; his songs are groans; his smiles are tears; and when he seems most happy, hot drops of grief roll in burning shower, scalding furrows on his cheek. Ask him what he is, and he tells you he is "a wretch undone." Ask him how he is, and he confesses that he is "misery incarnate." Ask him what he shall be, and he says, "he shall be lost in flames forever, and there is no hope." Behold him alone in his retirement: when he lays his head on his pillow, up he starts again: at night he dreams of torment, and by day he almost feels that of which he dreamed. Such is the poor convinced sinner under bondage. I speak to those who understand it. You have passed through that gloomy Slough of Despond; you have gone through that dark vale of penitence: you have been made to drink the bitter cup of repentance: and I know you will say, "Amen" when I declare that of all bondage this is the most painful -- the bondage of the law, the bondage of corruption. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me" from it? But the Christian is free; he can smile now, though he wept before; he can rejoice now, whereas he lamented. "There is," he says "no sin upon my conscience now; there is no crime upon my breast; I need not walk through the earth fearful of every shadow, and afraid of every man I meet, for sin is washed away; my spirit is no more guilty; it is pure, it is holy; there no longer resteth the frown of God upon me; but my Father smiles: I see his eyes -- they are glancing love: I hear his voice -- it is full of sweetness. I am forgiven, I am forgiven, I am forgiven! All hail, thou breaker of fetters! Glorious Jesus! ... "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" from the bondage of sin.

Charles H. Spurgeon

STAND FAST IN LIBERTY

The greatest preacher and defender of sound doctrine apart from Christ Himself was most likely the apostle Paul. None could charge him with compromise, none could call his message unclear, and none could accuse him of giving anyone a false hope. But as one who earnestly contended for the faith of God's elect, he stood firmly in defense of the liberty of those in Christ and their total deliverance from all bondage. His admonition to all true believers rings loud and clear today. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal. 5:1) He knew that all whom the Son had made free were free indeed, He knew that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. There had come to the Galatians those who, though zealous, had by their preaching brought these people under the spirit of bondage and fear. They no doubt preached Christ and all the particulars concerning salvation by grace but there was a subtle spirit of legalism and works woven into their message. It produced in the hearers a feeling of fear and great heaviness of heart due to the unbearable yoke that was always being laid upon them. Paul, knowing full well that false professors and religionists always wrest the scriptures to their own destruction, was not hindered in encouraging those in Christ to untangle themselves from this yoke of legalistic bondage and to rejoice in their liberty in Christ. The message he preached to them was the same message of God's grace and full salvation accomplished solely by the merits and blood of Christ and that was good news. Those who were trusting in Him went away rejoicing! The gospel is our "emancipation proclamation" and the joy in our Lord Jesus Christ strengthens, liberates and lifts us. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." When those who truly believe on and confess Christ hear His gospel they breathe the fresh breath of freedom; but when they hear something else they feel stifled under the tightness of the yoke. "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" The truth is that those in Christ are "Free from the law, O happy condition! Jesus hath bled, and there is remission." Stand fast!

Pastor Gary Shepard