

SERMON VIII

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY NO LICENTIOUS DOCTRINE

Tobias Crisp

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." {Jn.8:36}

Our Saviour here gives a hint to his Apostles, that they should not look to fare better than their Master. He speaks of hard usage in the world; for he came into it to fulfill a gracious and glorious ministry, bringing from the bosom of his Father the great and unsearchable love the Father had from everlasting in his thoughts towards his own dear ones; and so he takes all opportunities and advantages to publish the glad tidings of salvation to the sons of men; yet met he with much opposition. But although Christ knew full well that there were many Cavillers that laid snares to trap him in his words, and that they frequented the common assemblies where he preached, to catch something from him, whereby they might have a cause at least to upbraid him, and bring him into danger; I say, although Christ knew there were in all such assemblies some Scribes and Pharisees, and such like, yet for all this, when opportunity offered, he was graciously pleased to use much freedom of speech to them; and though some were carping and caviling at his words and his person, yet some there were to whom the glad tidings of salvation did belong, who by his ministry received them, and so were comforted. It seems it fell out thus with Christ, in the two former chapters, and this out of which I have taken my text; for in these he was graciously pleased to hold forth the light of the glad tidings of salvation, wherein he used, as I said before, much freedom and boldness of speech, which occasioned the adversaries of the Gospel to vent their poison, and spit the venom of their malice against him. He could no sooner speak a word of grace, but presently they were upon the back of him.

These three chapters contain in them nothing else but a continued dispute between Christ and his enemies, intermingled with most admirable, sweet, and gracious expressions of him to his own people. In verse 30, after a large dispute and discourse, the Holy Ghost is pleased to tell us that many did believe in Christ, upon the words that he had spoken. Here you see a gracious effect upon some, that Christ knew before hand; upon which he took encouragement, notwithstanding all the adversaries' opposition, to be bold in speaking; and perceiving that his Gospel took effect upon some, nay, many of the people, he turns his discourse from these carpers, with whom he had so long disputed before, and begins to frame his speech to the capacity and condition of the new converts and believers; therefore, in verse 31, 32, our Saviour delivers himself to them in this manner; "If ye continue in my word," saith he, "then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Now, although it be apparent that Christ directs this speech of his to the new believers, yet in verse 36 the cavilers carp and cavil, whether wittingly or ignorantly I cannot say; they must needs have Christ to speak this passage unto them; and they presently, in a hot and captious way, reply to him; whereas he had said that they should be free, and the truth should make them free; that is, as many of them as did believe; they presently retorted upon him, why? "We are Abraham's seed, we were never in bondage;" how can we be made free? They might have held their tongues, Christ never meant them, he never spake to them; and though they said, "they were never in bondage," in bondage they were, and in bondage like to be. However, Christ did not speak to them, but to believers; yet they will not leave him so, they will have a fling at him, therefore he answers their objection again. In the 33rd verse, they made use of this argument to assert their freedom; said they, "we be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made

free?" What, doth he talk of making us free? He takes off this recoil with a two-edged sword. There is a double answer to the argument they make use of. First, therefore, Christ shows what the liberty is and wherein it stands, that he speaks of. Secondly, he shows that their plea is not good, for their being Abraham's seed was not a plea sufficient for their freedom.

First, Christ shows what true freedom is, that he thus speaks of; it is namely this "abiding in the house forever."

Secondly, he shows that to be Abraham's seed is not enough to make them free; for the answer of Christ is thus; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin; and the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever;" {vs.34,35;} as much as to say, Suppose you are Abraham's seed, yet if you commit sin, for all this you are servants, you are in bondage to sin; and, as long as you are, you have no liberty. All freedom consists in this especially, that Christ speaks of, that to the free indeed there will be an abiding in the house forever. The Apostle, {Gal.4:21-31,} illustrates to us the nature of this freedom that Christ speaks of in this place, and indeed, sets forth the substance of it; "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" You that desire to be under the Law, what saith it? The Law speaks thus {saith he;} "Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman." These are a mystery; Agar signifies Mount-Sinai, in Arabia, which genders unto bondage. Now, Agar was the mother of Ishmael, but the seed of the promise is from above. The conclusion is this, saith the Apostle, "cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman;" but he that is free, is in the inheritance forever; the bond-woman, and her son, must not abide in the house forever, they must be cast out. Christ alludes to this, of Abraham's casting out of Ishmael; as much as to say, there may be those of the seed of Abraham, as Ishmael was, yet be cast out, being not the seed of the promise; they may be the seed of Abraham, but being the servants of sin, there is no abiding for them.

Now our Saviour having repelled and answered their arguments, he comes, in the words of my text, to show the rise and fountain from whence this freedom which he speaks of, springs, or takes its first beginning; "if the Son therefore make you free then are you free indeed."

The words I have read to you are an hypothetical proposition, or a conclusion stated upon a supposition and contain in them these particulars. First, the grace itself held out, and that is freedom. "If the Son make you free." Secondly, the original, or the cause of it; that is, the Son's making them so, "If the Son make you free." Thirdly, the quality of it, what kind of freedom it is; it is not a shadowy, or empty, useless freedom, but a substantial one, "then are you free indeed." This hypothetical proposition reduced into a categorical conclusion is no more but this, they that the Son makes free, are free indeed.

Only there is one thing observable from the argument of Christ in this place that will add a word to this proposition. These Jews, that did dispute with Christ, they pretended that there was no way to full freedom, but by being born of Abraham; so their being the seed of Abraham gives them a complete freedom; now Christ takes them upon advantage; he will suppose with them in their sense, that if freedom were to be had by any outward privilege, it should be, by being Abraham's seed; if, therefore Abraham's freedom be no freedom, as indeed it is not, then there can be none, but by one that is above Abraham. Now, saith Christ, the Son shall make you free; as much as to say, Abraham, the freest person in the world, cannot make you free, much less can any other but the Son. So then, the proposition is this, that they alone are indeed free, who have their freedom from the Son of God; I say, they alone are free indeed, who are made free only by Christ; none in the world, nothing in the world can make free, but the Son of God.

Now, that we may suck, and be satisfied, at the breasts of consolation, {for there is the sincere milk of the word in it,} let us take briefly into our consideration these few particulars.

First, what the freedom is whereof Christ speaks in this place.

Secondly, how Christ makes free.

And if time shall serve; thirdly, who they are, that are thus made free by Christ.

I will begin with the first. What this freedom is whereof Christ speaks in this place. For clearing whereof, note, first, that freedom and liberty are terms of one and the same signification. It is all one to say that the Son makes free, or that the Son gives liberty. Both the Greek and the Latin are promiscuously translated, either free, or men at liberty. It is true, I confess, this word liberty, hath gotten an ill name in the world, partly through the abuse of liberty, and partly through the malignity of some spirits, that strike even at the heart of Christ, through the sides of those that are Christ's; laying reproachful, ignominious and shameful names upon them of libertinism. Now, because liberty and freedom are thus brought into reproach and disgrace, the true freedom, which Christ hath purchased and given, requires some clearing, lest it perish and be lost in the rubbish of corrupt liberty; and so the people of God be jeered out of that which is their greatest portion.

I am ashamed to speak it, I would there were not occasion, that which is the very life and the sole comfort of the members of Christ Jesus, becomes such a reproach, through the malignity of the enemies of the Gospel of Christ, that the very believers themselves are almost ashamed to go under the name of that which is their greatest glory. To be called a Libertine is the most glorious title under heaven; take it for one that is truly free by Christ. To be made free by Christ, in proper construction, is no other but this, to be made a libertine by Christ; I do not say, to be made a libertine in the corrupt sense of it, but to be one in the true and proper sense of it. It is true indeed that Christ doth not give liberty unto licentiousness of life and conversation; of which we shall speak more by and by; but a real and true liberty Christ hath purchased, and given to all his members.

That we may the better understand therefore what this freedom is that Christ hath purchased and bestows upon believers; and thereby, save it from the reproach of corrupt and licentious liberty; understand, beloved, that there is a threefold liberty. First: Moral or civil. Secondly: Sensual and corrupt. Thirdly: Spiritual and divine.

First, Moral and civil liberty is that which these Jews speak of, {misinterpreting the sense of Christ} such as you used to have in your cities; when a man hath served out his time, he is a freeman, he hath the freedom of the city, he hath liberty to trade in it; so Paul understood liberty, when he spoke with the centurion; the centurion said that he bought it with a great deal of money; but saith Paul, I was so born; I was born a Roman. {Acts 22:28} But of this liberty Christ speaks not here.

Secondly, there is a corrupt liberty that the Apostle speaks of in Galatians 5:13, for there he tells us thus, that "ye have been called unto liberty;" but, saith he, "only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." A licentious liberty is nothing else but this, namely, when men turn the grace of God into wantonness, and abusing the Gospel of Christ, continue in sin, that grace might abound. Unto which the Apostle affixes abhorrence; God forbid, saith he, that any man should make use of such a liberty as this. I am confident of it, and affirm boldly, there is not one man made free by Christ, that makes it his rule, namely, to be bold to commit sin with greediness, because of the redemption that is in the blood of Christ; but that Christ who hath redeemed from sin and wrath, hath also redeemed from a vain conversation; and there shall not be a making use of the grace of God, as emboldening and encouraging to break out into licentiousness. All that have this freedom purchased by Christ for them, have also the power of God in them, which keeps them that they break not out licentiously; the seed of God abides in them, that they cannot sin, as in I John 3:9, that is, they cannot sin after this fashion.¹

Thirdly, there is a spiritual liberty; for of corrupt licentiousness Christ speaks not in the text neither; but of a spiritual freedom; and that it may be clear, he speaks of a spiritual freedom here, you may plainly perceive by the words going before; for whereas these Pharisees affirmed they were not in bondage; Christ proves they were, thus; "they were the servants of sin," {saith he,} "and he that is the servant of sin, abides not in the house for ever;" as much as to say, the bondage here, was

¹ {Note: This paragraph as well as a multitude of others, show that the Doctor was no friend to licentiousness, and what a madness it is to charge so worthy a person with holding licentious principles. Gill.}

such, as consisted in being under sin; so then, Christ here means a bondage and slavery under sin; the freedom, therefore, opposite to this, must needs be a spiritual freedom.

Now it will be worth our while to enquire, first, into the nature; and, secondly, into the quality of this spiritual freedom, that Christ brings with him to his own people.

First, for the nature of this freedom. The philosophers have a rule that is of very good use, for clearing of divine truths; "contraries illustrate each other." Freedom will be most clearly, or at least more clearly apparent unto us, by considering the contrary to freedom. The contrary to freedom is bondage; if we know what the bondage is that Christ speaks of, we shall better know what the freedom is.

We will awhile consider what bondage Christ speaks of here, to which he opposeth freedom, as I said before. The bondage he speaks of is a bondage under sin. Let us briefly consider what this is. This stands in these two things. First, an obligation unto, and under the curse of the Law, by reason of its transgression; and secondly, in the privation of all comfort and contentment, by reason of the same transgression.

First, I say, an obligation unto, and under the curse of the Law, by reason of transgressing it, that is the first part of bondage under sin. A person is then properly and truly under bondage, when by reason of his transgression, he can make no escape from under the curse of the Law, but must lie down to it, and be under the torment of it, as a bond-slave, even as a slave in the Turks galleys; though this man in his slavery, works ever so hard; {for of that he shall not want, work enough he shall have;} yet, if at any time he shall chance to slip or fall, whether it be through omission, or through mere infirmity and weakness, and want of strength; all his hard labour is nothing at all considered; but, when he fails in that insupportable bondage and task, he hath his stripes and blows. This, I say, is the true state of bondage, when there is cruelty and rigor, without any regard to the impossibility to go under the task; the load and blows are laid on with weight; no crying, no promises, no excuses, no pleas, though ever so reasonable, can be heard; but, as there is a fault committed, there must be stripes inflicted. So it is with a person in spiritual bondage; a man is then under the curse of the Law, by reason of his transgression, when doing what he can, {suppose as it should be,} yet, if he fail but in one thing, that which he doth is not regarded nor considered; neither is his ability to do no more, taken notice of; but, still as he slips, so the Law lays on stripes.

There are two things mainly to be considered that do mightily embitter the condition of a bondman who is under the curse of the Law because of his transgression. The first is this, the threatenings and menacings of the curse, incessantly following one upon the neck of another, with loud out-cries of bitterness against this soul transgressing. It is with a person in bondage to sin, under the curse of the Law for it, as it was with Job in respect of the afflictions that were upon him; one comes and brings him word that his oxen were taken away; he had no sooner done but another comes and tells him his sheep were lost; and, no sooner had he delivered his message, but another comes and tells him his camels were stolen; and no sooner had he done, but one comes and tells him his sons and daughters were slain; so one after another the messengers came thick upon him. It is just so with persons in bondage under the Law; it comes and threatens this curse; then it comes and threatens a second; and, no sooner is that ended, but it comes and threatens a third, crying out continually, Cursed, cursed, cursed, cursed. If the ears of the people were open to hear as much as the Law speaks, they would hear nothing else but a clang of curses belonging to him that is under it. As for instance, a man under the bondage of the Law for sin can hear nothing but this, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." {Gal.3:10} Beloved, there is no man, but in some respect or other, every act that he doth, hath some infirmity and failing in it; and, in that regard, the Law speaks, "Cursed art thou, for thou hast not continued in all things that are written in the Law to do them." Thou canst no sooner pass from this act to another, but as soon as thou dost perform that second act, for the failings in it, the Law cries again; "Cursed art thou, for thou hast not continued in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them." So look into Romans 2, where there is a continued peeling out the Law to those that

are in bondage under it; "tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;" {vs.9;} saving, that in Romans 3:19, the Apostle tells us that this cursedness, this tribulation and anguish is pronounced by the Law only upon them that are under it; so then, it is without question that to them that are under it, tribulation, and anguish, and wrath, and vengeance, do belong.

Now it is a kind of death, a very torment to be under such continual menaces; to hear nothing but execrations; to hear nothing but curses and bitterness, nothing but indignation and wrath; Oh! What a hell is it upon earth, for a soul to receive this sentence! What bitterness is it for a malefactor that stands at the tribunal, to beat a judge, it may be, making a speech of two hours long to him, only reciting the extremity of the torment he shall endure for the crimes he hath committed! Every repetition or addition of torment, denounced and sentenced, is a kind of fiery dart, striking fresh and fresh, to the wounding of the heart. Whoever they are that are under the curse of the Law, by reason of sin, there is no voice speaks, or can be heard, by them, for the loudness of that voice, Cursed, cursed, cursed, every moment, every hour; nothing in the world but cursed.

Beloved, let me tell you, this concerns not only persons that live in all manner of licentiousness, as drunkenness, whoredom, the profanation of the Sabbath in the grossest measure; but, that I may speak plainly, this extends in a parallel line with them to the exactest, strictest, precisest person in their conversation, though the world is not able to say {as men use to say} to them, black is thine eye; nay, though thou seem to be spiritual in all thy performances; nay, and largely too, yet if thou be under the Law, in thy transgression, thou shalt hear from it, as many curses pronounced against thee, as all the profane wretches under heaven; the greatness of thy honesty and uprightness, whether in religion, or in matters of commerce and dealings with men, thy honest conversation, I say, hath the loud clangs of curses sounding in thy ears. Suppose thou art a man diligently attending the gates of the house of God, given much to prayer, fasting, mourning and weeping; yea, to great liberality, thou givest all thy goods to the poor, &c.; yet, I say, for all this thou mayest be under the curse of the Law that will pick a quarrel in the best of these performances; it will say, thus and thus, in this and that thou hast "not continued in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do then;" concerning this, thou art under the curse of it as well as another.

Secondly, there are not only menacings and threatenings as fearful knell in thine ears from the Law, while thou art in bondage under it; but also there is no more with it than a word and a blow. The Lord doth not deal with men in this case, as he deals with his own people, holding his rod before them to give them warning for an escape; but presently upon the transgression, the threatening is put in execution speedily without mercy, laying on the back of the transgressor, terrifying and racking the soul! Oh, the soul that is awakened, that hears the menaces and feels the scourges of the Law! Oh, what torments and anguish, what tribulation and bitterness must continually affright it! This, I say, is the commission of the Law, to spare neither high nor low, rich or poor. Nay, I will go further, holy or unholy, in respect of the practice of holiness, can exempt himself from the curse of the Law. It is true, as the Apostle saith, the Law speaks life; "Do this and live;" but poor comfort is it, because it first requires such doings as are impossible to be attained; just as if a man should be condemned to die at the bar, with this promise; take all England, and remove it upon thy shoulders into the West Indies, and then thou shalt be saved from this death.² The judge had as good say nothing, for the thing is impossible to be done. The Law indeed, says, "Do this and live;" but where is the man that can do it, by continuing in all things without failing in one tittle thereof? He that continueth in the whole Law, and fails but in one point, is guilty of all; therefore, till you come to that perfection of fulfilling it, that you fail not in one tittle, never dream of the life that it holds out to you. If you have failed in one

²{Note: Mr. Anthony Burgess, in his *Vindiciae Legis*, pg. 14, represents this passage as a decrying of the Law; but what decrying of the Law is this, to observe the true nature and language of it, requiring that which it is impossible for fallen man to do; he himself instances in the Gospel, by way of reply, bidding a man believe a thing impossible to man's power, he observes; and is not this as much a decrying of the Gospel? Indeed, there is this difference, the Gospel not only encourages to believe, but it is often accompanied with the power of God, enabling men to believe, whereas the Law is never attended with such power as to enable men to fulfill it; but this, he says, is extraneous to the matter in hand; but wherein it is so, is not said. See Lancaster's *Vindication of the Gospel*. Gill.}

point, all you have done is raveled out unto the end again; all your labour is lost; you are as much under the curse as if you had done nothing at all. {Rom.3:19}

Yet further, beloved, the bondage under the Law not only stands in the cursings of it, and in the presence of all evil thereby, but also in the privation of all comfort, that men might have under this torment; I say, a privation of all comfort; for there is not a word, not a tittle of comfort for the refreshment of a person under the Law, not a tittle of comfort in all the Law, from first to last. It is true, there was comfort intermingled in the promulgation of it, but the comfort is not from that properly so considered. As it contains in it a curse to the disobedient, so there is no comfort to any man that is under it, in respect of the curse it; I say, the Law is to such persons {as Micaiah was to Ahab} never speaking a word of good to them. But this is not all, for though the Law be never so rigid of itself, if it would allow and suffer others to speak a word of comfort, there were some good thing in it; but it keeps under, and shuts up, that there cannot be a word of comfort heard from any other. "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." {Gal.3:23} There you shall find that the Law is not only a terror of itself to those that are under it, but it is a most rigid, severe keeper, that there cannot come in the least glimmerings of light, and comfort elsewhere; for {saith the Apostle there, of persons being under the Law} they are shut up unto, or until the faith; for he calls the Law a school-master until Christ; so that Christ himself hath not a word of comfort for them while they are under the Law; when Christ speaks anything, presently saith the Law, this is not to you; this is for others that are exempted from my government, from my dominion; there is nothing of all this for you, you have nothing to do with it.³ I say, this is the condition of men that are kept under this bitterness of the Law, that as they transgress, the curse of it is their prison; persons kept in this estate, how do they put off the comforts of Christ from them? There is none of them belongs to me, saith such a soul; I have sinned, and all the judgments of Christ are pronounced against me, I must die. So long as you continue in this estate, the curses of the Law are as frequently pronounced against you, as there are transgressions in you. There will not be one comfort of Jesus Christ to give refreshment to your spirit; but so long as you still remain in this estate, that you will conclude you are under the curse, because of your transgressions, you will forsake all the mercies of the Gospel. This is, then, to be in bondage under the Law; namely, for a man so to have it tyrannize and domineer over him, as to make him believe that as often as he transgresses, he must expect the sentence of the curse of it to be fulfilled upon him.

Thirdly, they that are in bondage under the Law because of sin, as they are subject to this misery in respect of the privation of comfort; so the Law, it is true, asks work enough, more than any man under heaven can now perform; but will provide nothing in the world, wherewith to have things done. It requires the full tale of brick, but it gives no straw; it puts into no way where help may be had; it suffers no help to come in. Let me tell you, you that are under the curse of the Law, that is, have still the Law telling you that as you do fail, so you must have the curse; you shall find that when you do the will of God, it will exact the whole, the utmost tale of brick of you, and will give no help at all, though never so weak and unable. Get it as you can, do what you will, when the day is done, the Law requires that there be not a brick short. If you fail the least that can be in it, it is no matter, able or not able, you must have the lash, as well as those that have the greatest abilities in the world. It is a hard condition; I have opened it the more largely, that you may the better see the glory and happiness of that freedom Christ hath purchased for his people.

³ {Note: Mr. Burgess, in his *Vindiciae Legis*, pg. 14, cavils at this passage. He observes that by the Law, in Gal.3:23, is meant the scripture in general; which, if so, is true of the Law in particular; though not the whole scripture, but the Law part of it must certainly be intended, since part of the scripture, at least, is written for comfort; he urges, that the Apostle is speaking of the form of Moses's regimen, and of the fathers having no comfort by that means. Be it so; the same holds good of all other persons that are under the same spirit of bondage to the Law; he suggests that the Doctor in representing the Law as such a rigid keeper, that it will let none speak comfort to a man, excludes a mediator; it is certain that it does not direct to any, and whilst the soul is under the power of it, it will not suffer it to receive any comfort from Christ the Mediator, or from his Gospel, until this breaks in through the power of divine grace upon him, and delivers him from the bondage of the Law. Gill.}

I will in a word give you a touch, who the persons are that are in this bondage; and then I will come to set forth the freedom itself; and, I hope it will not be tedious to hear of the freedom, when you have heard of the extreme bitterness of this bondage. Who are under this bondage? I answer, as I said before, whoever you are, that will apply still to yourselves the sentence and curse of the Law, because of transgression; you that be still arguing and pleading, if I transgress, it is but justice, and I must expect to feel the smart of the rod. I say, you that will still maintain and establish the curse, as a necessary attendant upon transgression and disobedience, and take this to be your condition and your portion; you are the men that are under the Law, that are under the curse of it. I know, although you may think to wind yourselves out of the extremity of the curse, or from the rod of the Law, by your strictness and exactness, and grow up to perfection in your obedience; yet all your perfection of obedience shall not be able to except you from the lash, till you have attained to such, that hath not one jot or tittle of failing or deviation at all; for if you fail in one tittle, you are gone forever; for the Law, as it attends great faults, so it attends little failings too; and, if you give it power over you, when you commit great sins, it will take power to itself, to whip, to curse you for small sins too.

I will come to discover what the freedom is, from the bondage Christ speaks of here; I say, this freedom is from all this bondage under sin and the Law. First, Christ exempts men and discharges them, and acquits them from all the menaces, and threatenings, and all the bitter language that the Law pronounces against the transgressors of it. Mark well what I say, for every person made free by Christ, is freed and exempted, that the Law cannot, must not pronounce one curse against him; there is not one of all the curses in it, that belongs to such a man that is made free by Christ. This seems strange, that the Law should not dare to pronounce the curse, where sin is committed; but not so strange as true; the free-men of Christ, when they transgress the Law, as in all things they sin, yet when they sin, there is no curse, no menaces, no threatenings of the Law to be executed upon them. Should I come to instance, peradventure I should give offence to some; I would not willingly give offence to any; but the truth, as it is in Jesus, must not be concealed for fear of the anger of those that are enemies unto Christ. Let me therefore tell you, suppose a member of Christ, a free-man of his should happen to fall, not only by a failing or a slip, but also by a gross failing, a heavy failing; nay, a scandalous falling into sin.⁴ Christ making a person free, disannuls, frustrates and makes void every curse and sentence that is in the Law, that is against such a transgressor; {Gal.3:13;} that this member of Christ is no more under the curse when he hath transgressed, than he was before he transgressed.⁵ Thus I say, Christ has conveyed him beyond the reach of the curse; it concerns him no more than if he had not transgressed. For the illustration of this I beseech you to consider one thing, it is familiar to you, and the case is the same with Christ's free-men; suppose there are two men, equally guilty of felony and murder, both of them come to their arraignment; one of them hath his discharge or pardon from the king, having received satisfaction in his behalf; the other hath received no discharge at all. The judge goes on to pronounce the sentence according to the Law; thou shalt go from hence to the place from whence thou camest, and from thence to the place of execution there to be hanged; now mark, these are two men equal in transgression; and therefore in themselves equally deserving the same sentence of execution; when the judge pronounces the justice of the Law upon the one transgressor, he hath not his discharge, he lies under the sentence; but the other hath his discharge, and therefore the judge speaks not a word of this sentence to him; {Jn.8:36, Rom.8:1 & 10:4;} I say again, the judge dares not speak a word of this sort to him; and when the man that is pardoned hears the sentence, he may hear it as the doom of his fellow; but he hears nothing of it concerning himself; so it is with the free-man of Christ, he may fall into the same sin that a reprobate

⁴ {Note: Through ignorance, weakness of the flesh, and the power of Satan's temptations. Gill.}

⁵ {Note: Sin often separates between God and his own people with respect to communion, but never with respect to union to him or interest in him; for he knew what they would be when he set his love upon them; his love broke through all the corruptions of nature and sins of life in their conversion; and appears to continue the same from the strong expressions of his grace to them, notwithstanding all their backslidings. Now this does not suppose that God loves sin, nor does it give any encouragement to it; for though it cannot separate from interest in God, yet it often does from the enjoyment of him. Gill.}

falls into, {as Noah was once drunk, David did once commit adultery and murder,} but as this man is the free-man of Christ, the curse cannot attack him; though the Law say to the reprobate, that hath not freedom by Christ, thou shalt certainly be damned for this; yet the Law cannot say one word of this to him that is a free-man, though he commit the same fault, and be guilty of the same punishment; and the ground of all this is, that Christ hath made him free from it. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." {Rom.8:2}

Therefore, let me tell you in a word; if you be free-men of Christ, you may esteem all the curses of the Law, as no more concerning you than the laws of England concern Spain, or the laws of Turkey an Englishman, with whom they have nothing to do.⁶ I do not say that the Law is absolutely abolished, but it is abolished in respect of the curse of it, to every person that is a free-man of Christ; so though such a man sin, the Law hath no more to say to him than if he had not sinned. Beloved, Christ is a Sanctuary, he is a privileged place to every one of his free-men; the Law is not able to serve, or rather it is disabled from serving an arrest warrant upon the person that is walking in Christ, and keeps himself within those bounds. He that continues in Christ's word is his disciple indeed, and the truth shall make him free. {Jn.8:30,31} If you abide in Christ, and keep in Christ, no sergeant of the Law dares come in to serve a writ; no accusation of the Law can come in against you. Look what the Apostle triumphing saith; "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." {Rom.8:33,34} Mark well I pray you, Paul doth not say, that the elect never transgress; he confesses that there is transgression; but that which he triumphs in is, that though they transgress, there is nothing to be laid to their charge; no curse can come against them, nor be executed upon them; there is no tossing them in jail for their transgression.

Secondly, the free-man of Christ, as he is exempted from the curse and rod of the Law, that is become a muzzle-bound dog, he may pass and repass without the least snap, without the least bite of it; yea, though he fall, yet it cannot come at him to hurt him. {Mic.7:8} So, in the second place, the free-man of Christ is let loose to enjoy the free Spirit, as David calls it, {in Psalm 51,} or the comforting Spirit, as Christ calls it, {in John 14:26.} I say, this freedom consists in this, to have free society, and free discourse with the free Spirit of God, so that the free-man of Christ may hear all the gracious language provided in the rich thoughts of God for him; he may hear, and that with application to himself, that his iniquities are blotted out as a cloud; that God will remember his sins no more; that they are cast into the bottom of the sea; they are laid all upon Christ; that the Lamb of God took them all away; that the blood of Christ cleanseth him from all sins. It is a marvelous freedom indeed, to have this participation of communion with this free Spirit of Christ, to hear such comfortable language to raise up a drooping spirit, to satisfy a languishing soul.

Thirdly, the free-man of Christ hath this freedom that Christ doth all his work for him, as well as in him. He that is in bondage under the Law, as I told you before, must do everything himself, and that he doth, he must do perfectly; that is an insupportable thing, and heavy bondage for a man to have more laid upon him than his strength is able to bear. The free-man of Christ, considering that he is weak, poor, and unable to work, Christ doth all his work for him. In Isaiah 26:12, the Holy Ghost tells us that the Lord himself hath "wrought all our works in us;" and in the margin the words are rendered, "he hath done all our works for us." But, look in Romans 5:19, and you will plainly see this freedom of the free-men of Christ, that they stand righteous in the sight of God, by that which he hath done for them. Christ hath so wrought for them, that they are as righteous, as if they had done all in their own persons. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience

⁶ {Note: This passage is most grossly misrepresented by Mr. Burgess, in his *Vindiciae Legis*, pg.13, who quotes it thus, "a man under grace hath no more to do with the Law than an Englishman hath with the laws of Spain or Turkey;" whereas the Doctor's words and sense are, that Christ's free-men should esteem the curses of the Law, not the Law itself, as no more concerning them than the laws of England concern Spain, or those of Turkey an Englishman; and to prevent any mistake, lest it should be thought that they have nothing to do with the Law in any sense, being freed from the curses of it, he adds the words that follow, which most clearly show that he meant not an abolition of the Law in all respects, but in respect of the curse of it, and that to Christ's free-men only. Gill.}

of one shall many be made righteous." Look here, and you shall see that Christ doth all the work for his free-men, that they should do for themselves; as if a man were commanded to bring in a thousand bricks by such a day, or else to have the strapado; another man brings in all his bricks for him, while he doth not one for himself. What the other man doth for him is accepted as a full tale, even for this man, though he doth nothing himself. Even so it is with the free-men of Christ, he doth all for them that God requires of them to be done; and the righteousness of Christ stands in that manner theirs, as if they had done it themselves. "For by the obedience of one many are made righteous," not by obedience in their own person, but by the obedience of one man, Christ; even by the obedience of him alone, we stand thus righteous before God.

But some will say, by this it seems we take away all endeavors and employment from believers, the free-men of Christ. Doth Christ do everything for them? Do they stand righteous before God in respect of what he hath done for them? Then they may sit still; they may do what they list.

I answer, will you deny this, that we are righteous with and that we are righteous with God by the Righteousness of Christ alone? Or is it by our own righteousness? Then mark what the Apostle saith, "for they" {saith he, speaking of the Jews,} "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." {Rom.10:3,4} Either you must disclaim Christ's righteousness or you must disclaim your own; for, if the gift of God be of grace, then it is not of works, else work is no more work; and, if it be of works, it is no more of grace, otherwise grace is no more grace. {Rom.11:6}

But you will say further to me; {for, except a man be a mere Papist, I am sure he cannot deny but that the righteousness by which I stand righteous before God is the righteousness Christ doth for me, and not that I do for myself;} you will ask me, I say, doth not this take off all manner of obedience and all manner of holiness? I answer, and thus much I say, it takes them off from those ends which they aim at in their obedience; namely, the end which Christ's obedience served; as much as to say that our standing righteousness, by what Christ hath done for us, concerns us in point of justification, consolation and salvation. We have justification, our peace, our salvation, only by the righteousness that Christ hath done for us; but this doth not take away our obedience, nor our services in respect of those ends for which such are now required of believers. We have yet several ends for duties and obedience, namely, that they may glorify God and evidence our thankfulness, that they may be profitable to men, that they may be ordinances wherein to meet with God, to make good what he hath promised. So far we are called out to services and walking uprightly, sincerely, exactly, and strictly, according to the good pleasure of God; and, in regard of such ends, there is a gracious freedom that the free-men of Christ have by him; that is, so far forth as services and obedience is expected at the free-man's hand, for the ends that I have named, there is Christ, by his Spirit, present with those that are free-men, to help them in all such kind of services, so that "they become strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," to do the will of God. Mark what the Apostle speaks; "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." {Phil.4:13} Of myself {saith he} I am able to do nothing; but with Christ, and through him that strengthens me, I am able to do all things. He that is Christ's free-man hath always the strength of Christ present, answerable to that weight and burden of employment God calls him forth unto. "My grace {saith Christ} is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." {II Cor.12:9} As you are free-men of Christ, you may confidently rest upon it, that he "will never fail you, nor forsake you," for when he calls you forth into employments.

But you that are under the Law, there is much required of you, and imposed upon you, but no help to be expected. You must do all by your own strength; the whole tale of brick shall be exacted of you, but no straw shall be given you. But you, that are free-men of Christ, he will help you; he will oil your wheels, fill your sails, and carry you upon eagles wings, that you shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint. {Is.40:31} So then, the free-men of Christ, having him and his Spirit for their life and strength, may go infinitely beyond the exactest legalist in the world in more cheerful obedience than they can perform. He that walks in his own strength can never steer his business so well and so

quickly, as he that hath the arms, the strength, and the principles of the great God of Heaven and Earth; as he that hath this great Supporter, this wise Director, this mighty Assister, to be continually by him. There is no burden, you shall bear, but, by this freedom you have him to put his own shoulder to it to bear it up.

It is wonderful to consider that Christ should groan under the burden that was laid upon him by his Father, when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And yet Paul and Silas should sing for joy, when their bodies were covered with gore blood by reason of stripes. How comes this to pass, was Paul stronger than Christ? If not, why was he so joyful, and Christ so sad? God withdrew himself from Christ, and therefore, he saith, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But the strength of Christ was present with Paul, that this very imprisonment was a palace and recreation to him; as Christ bare all the burdens for him. Oh; were you but the free-men of Christ, and did you but know it, every affliction would be but a flea-biting; for he would bear all your duties and burdens for you; he would stand under the greatest weight that can be laid upon you, and bear it off your backs; the greatest burden should never make you stoop, because there is a sufficient strength to bear it up. There may be a heavy burden laid upon the back of a child, and yet it may with ease go under it; because there is a greater strength that bears it up, it doth not lie upon the child. So long as Christ bears up your weight it shall be easy to you. You know there is a ceremony used among us for men to carry the corpse of their friends to the grave; for fashion's sake they go under the corpse; but there are bearers appointed that bear all the weight upon their shoulders; so Christ bears all for his free-men; and this is the freedom men have by him, that if they are to bear any burdens, he comes and bears all for them; and they go as easily under them, as if they had none upon them at all.

You shall find the free-men of Christ that they have also the constant attendance of the free Spirit of Christ waiting upon them. When Christ hath made any man free, he sends his Spirit from heaven, first to acquaint the soul with all that he hath done for him; and not to bring good news and be gone again; but, after the good news is brought; he waits and attends upon this free-man in all his journeys and travels to those mansions that Christ hath prepared for him; that so in the way, if he should faint, he would refresh him with the water of life to fetch it again; and, in case it grows weak and fails, the Spirit attends to administer cordials, to revive, and to renew the strength of this man again that thus fails; and, in case it grow weary, the Spirit is sent to take it up into his arms, into his bosom; in case the way is tedious, the Spirit is sent to take off the tediousness of the way with sweet discourse, telling him what things are laid up in fulness of pleasures and glory, telling him what welcome there will be at his coming home; when there are many byways in his way, that there may be no going out of the way, he will direct him, and lead him by the hand, and never leave him, till he hath delivered him up into the hands of Christ, and carried him unto mansions in glory. "For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." {Ps.48:14} "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." {Ps.73:24}

Lastly, in a word, to speak of who these free-men of Christ are. No man knows them, but only those that Christ takes out of bondage. Time will not give me leave to be large here; would you have any means how you may come to be the free-men of Christ? Know this, that there is no consideration in the business of Christ, for the making of men free, but only their bondage in which they are. The sum is this, beloved; in brief, Christ doth not look that you should come forth and meet him, to mediate, or intercede, or beg, or bring a price in your hands, that you may be his free-men; but he looks upon persons as they are bound up, as helpless, as unable to will or do anything; and, for his own compassion's sake, he takes up these, when they little dream, or think they ever shall be set at liberty.

But, you will say that all shall not be freed that are in bondage; how shall I then know, that I am one of the number of Christ's free-men? I answer, "he that believeth shall be saved;" for if the Lord give but to thy spirit, now truly to believe, thou art the very man for whom Christ was sent to proclaim liberty; I say, if thou canst believe and roll thyself upon him, cleave to him, and say, "I will not let thee go;" this is security enough; Christ was sent to deliver thee; "he that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast him out." I beseech you to consider; {the Lord God, in the abundant riches of his

grace, give closing spirits to some of you at this time;} you that think there must be a great deal of pains by your endeavors, and on your parts, to have this freedom; but Christ doth not look for your pains; he came to save those that could not tell which way to turn themselves. And if the Scripture be true, {as most certainly it is,} if thou believest that Christ is thine, if thou believe with all thy heart, thy sins are forgiven thee; {though the very believing itself doth not entitle you in this freedom;} but, if you would know, whether you have any part in this freedom or not, believing in the Lord Christ is a sufficient manifestation. Do but catch hold of him, to have thy deliverance by him, he must forsake himself, and deny his truth, if he cast or throw thee off.