

Liberty:who Gets It and How?

by George Cutting

The sermon explores the necessity of recognizing our need for deliverance and finding true liberty in Christ amidst struggles with sin and self-effort.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5, John 3:6, John 8:32, Romans 3:25, Romans 4:25, Romans 6:11, Romans 7:18, Romans 8:1-2, 2 Corinthians 4:10, 1 Peter 2:24, 1 John 1:7, 1 John 4:17

Topics: "Spiritual Freedom", "Gods Forgiveness"

Description

George Cutting preaches about the process of recognizing our need for God's forgiveness and deliverance, emphasizing the importance of feeling a sense of helplessness and need before experiencing true freedom in Christ. He illustrates this with the story of the prodigal son and a bird trapped in a room, highlighting the necessity of acknowledging our sins and inadequacies before God. Cutting categorizes believers into three classes: the uninstructed, the enlightened but complacent, and the consciously needy, urging them to seek true deliverance and liberty in Christ. He discusses the three solemn discoveries every converted person makes: the realization of personal sins, inherent sinfulness, and the struggle between desiring good but doing wrong, emphasizing the need for faith in Jesus' sacrifice for forgiveness and righteousness.

Transcript

It is ever God's way to produce a sense of need in the soul before He meets it. No sinner gets the forgiveness of his sins, for example, until, as a self-condemned offender, he is brought to feel the need of it.

It was not enough for the prodigal to be needy and hungry; before he was induced to take a single step homeward, the cry had to be wrung out of him, "I perish with hunger." And so with a new-born soul thirsting for liberty; he must not only be brought to wish for it, but be reduced to the sense of absolute helplessness, before, by the power of another, he is really and experimentally set free.

Take an illustration. A little bird attempts to build his nest in your chimney and, finding himself unable to ascend, comes down, all blackened, into your sitting-room. At once, he discovers two sets of eyes upon him--your own and the cat's; and his little bosom throbs again with fear. You see his real enemy--the cat--and long that he may escape unhurt, and with your own hand you act as his deliverer, by throwing open the door which leads to liberty. He does not understand, however, that you are no enemy, but a true friend, and begins to rush here and there in great fright, seeking, in frantic haste, a way of escape. From

the window to the mantel-piece he quickly dashes; then, with a stunning bump, he is back once more at the window; and it is not until he can positively do no more, and sinks down through weariness and disappointment, that he sees what before he had not noticed, viz., the wide-open door, and free access to it. Another moment he is outside, and enjoying full liberty. (In that the bird, however, had enjoyed a life of liberty before, the illustration falls short.)

Now, undelivered believers may be divided into three classes:

1. The uninstructed class. These know next to nothing of what the Word of God says about this subject, though they may have felt something of the exercises that lead to it.
2. The enlightened class. These could possibly explain, in a very orthodox way, the terms of this deliverance, and are yet in such a sleepy, self-satisfied moral state that they are quite content with knowing the letter of it, while thoroughly destitute of its power. It is one thing to be told, by those who have experimentally learnt it, that by throwing your head back, keeping your hands beneath the surface, and lying quietly on your back in the water, your body will float, and quite another thing to find yourself, in ten fathoms deep, putting it into practice. We may think we know all about it as we stand on the bank. But in the water, we must either trust its buoyancy, lie still, and float; or, for want of confidence, vainly struggle, and sink.
3. The consciously needy class; and how great their number! Some of these have, perhaps, for long years been in perplexity. How often have they struggled and sunk, to use our figure. They have buffeted with grave difficulties as to their personal state before God, until they have become a daily puzzle even to themselves; and earnestly--oh, how earnestly!--do they long to see their way out of it.

It is for the help of such that these few pages are written. Oh that the Lord, in His rich and precious grace, would be pleased to bless it to them!

THREE SOLEMN DISCOVERIES

There are three great soul-affecting discoveries which every truly converted person is sure to make sooner or later: (1) that he has committed sins and offences against a holy God; (2) that not only has he done evil things, but that he is thoroughly sinful in himself; and (3) that, with true desires to do the right thing, he constantly finds himself doing the wrong, and often does the worst when he means the best. To put it more briefly--He is guilty in what he has done; he is sinful in what he is; he is helpless in what he feels he ought to do--a slave of sin.

The first difficulty is met when we find that the blessed Son of God has been "delivered for our offences," and "raised again for our justification," Rom. 4:25; that He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree," 1 Peter 2:24; "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness in respect of the passing by the sins done aforetime, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," Rom. 3:25,26. Yes, it is because "He was wounded for our transgressions," and "bruised for our iniquities;" because "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him;" that "with His stripes we are healed," Isaiah 53:5. "The blood of Jesus Christ," God's Son, "cleanseth us from all (or every) sin," 1 John 1:7.

Faith can sing--

"'Tis finished!" cried His suffering soul,

And I my title see;

I was the guilty sinner,

But Jesus died for me."

Thus does His precious blood give us righteous peace about our sins. God is well satisfied, and the believer stands clear. But there is more in it than being cleared by the blood of Christ. God is now righteously free to express to any poor returning prodigal, confessing his sins, all the pent-up love of His large and tender heart. The father "ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." And if the prodigal cannot enter into the depth and enormity of his sin against such a God, there is One who has done it fully. Yes, Jesus has felt about our sins as they ought to be felt about. He has fully confessed them, and voluntarily borne their full penalty. His loving heart was "straitened" till it was "accomplished." Oh, what a circle of love the repentant sinner is brought into! Grace, grace, ALL GRACE! How hateful sin becomes in the light of it!

The next two discoveries are of a different character, and are often beset with far deeper exercises. They involve our having to face all kinds of contradictory experience in ourselves.

Let us then carefully consider the various struggles in this

EXPERIMENTAL CONFLICT

It is helpful to see, in the latter part of Romans 7, that the experimental struggles and difficulties which characterize the undelivered soul are carefully mapped out, and this by one who has been brought out of them into the full liberty of the grace of God. You will find that the one in this conflict has his eye turned in two directions--outward upon God's just claims, the law giving the measure of this, whereby he finds what he ought to be for God; and inward upon himself, whereby he finds what he really is. God is not known in the activities of His precious grace. The renewed soul, while owning the righteous claims of God, finds itself totally incapable of meeting them. Satan harasses, and the soul is launched into a sea of misery.

Now, this kind of self-examination and legal exercise brings with it two serious disappointments. These we hope to consider. But before speaking of this matter, it may be as well to take into consideration the source of all disappointments. We must remember that there can be no disappointment without expectation; these two are as closely bound together as the light of day is with the sun-rising. For example, a friend asks, "Did you receive a letter from the Sandwich Islands this morning?" You answer, "No." "Were you disappointed when the postman passed your door without leaving one?" "No, I was not disappointed, because I did not expect one." Exactly. Now, had there been even a little expectation, there would have been a little disappointment; and similarly, great expectations precede great disappointments; but when there is no expectation there can be no disappointment.

DISAPPOINTMENT NO. 1

"I expected," says the poor, tried soul, "that the new birth would put everything right within me, and that what was meant by an inward change (which I really hoped I had experienced) was my evil nature being changed into a good and holy one; and now to find evil still within, as bad or even worse than before! How alarming! Can I be real? Was my conversion genuine? or my profession then and since only a hollow sham?" Such questioning as this, in an earnest soul thoroughly desirous of being right with God, is no light matter. God is holy. "The law is spiritual," he says, "and I hoped that I was spiritual too, but I find that I am carnal, sold under sin." How depressing! How disappointing!

Now, what is the secret of this first disappointment? The cause is twofold; a wrong thought of the true character of our fallen nature, and a mistaken idea as to what is really brought about by the new birth.

An illustration from the Old Testament may help us. You will call to mind, no doubt, that first incident in the history of Samson, in the Book of Judges; how that as he journeyed to the land of the Philistines, and drew near to the vineyard of Timnath, a young lion came out, and roared at him, and that Samson caught him, and rent him as though he had been a kid, leaving him dead by the wayside.

After a time, we read, Samson paid the Philistines a second visit, and passing by the same place, he turned to see the carcass of this young lion, when, to his surprise, he found that life had entered the dead beast--another kind of life--and that something had thereby been produced which all the lions in the world could not have produced. You will know what I refer to. A swarm of bees had entered the dead carcass, and deposited honey there.

Now to apply this figure. When a man is born again, a new life is produced in him by the Spirit of God through the instrumentality of the Word received by faith--a life and nature as distinct from the old as the nature of the bee was distinct from that of the lion; nay, as distinct as the fallen human nature is distinct from the divine; for we are made "partakers of the divine nature." Moreover, the old is no more improved by the impartation of the new than the lion's carcass was by the entrance of the bees, or the deposit of the honey. Hear the Word of the Lord to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (the old man, which is corrupt); "and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," John 3:6.

The mistaken notion in the minds of many professing Christians as to this is a fruitful source both of mischief and of misery--mischief for the unconverted and indifferent; misery for those born of the Spirit, and really in earnest. Endless pains are bestowed upon the improvement of the dead lion (to use our figure); i.e., upon bettering man in the flesh; and every kind of moral disinfectant resorted to to

make him more bearable in decent and religious society; but the lion is the same lion still, adorn him as you will.

On the other hand, who can estimate the misery which has resulted in honest, newborn souls from the mistaken idea that the new birth either improves the flesh, or gets rid of its presence? It does neither; and hence the experimental discovery of its unimproved existence is most distressing. They are not prepared to find old tastes coming up again, and are shocked to find, after their first joy, perhaps, has abated, that their old habits are re-asserting themselves with increased power. Again and again, they are tripped up; deeper and deeper grows their inward distress, until they discover that the source of all the mischief is "the flesh" within ever lusting against the Spirit, and that conversion has not removed or changed it in any sense. Hence the discovery recorded in Romans 7:20, "If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." That is, there is the "I" in connection with the newborn life which hates the inward evil, and deplores its workings; and there is also the evil nature--indwelling sin.

"But how is it," says the troubled soul, "that I can't make myself any better?" I try hard enough to be different, but it is fruitless, disappointing work, and I am often ready to give all up in despair. I know that the flesh still lusts within me, and that every trace of evil in me springs from it; but still I feel I must have goodness for God, and how can this be if I can't in some way overcome the badness of the flesh?" This is the language of thousands of perplexed believers. Let us, by the Spirit's help, seek to meet their difficulty.

First, then, we must learn that God is not expecting to improve man in the flesh, or looking for goodness in him of any kind. "The carnal mind" (or "mind of the flesh," as it really is), is now declared to be "enmity against God" (enmity itself); "it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh CANNOT please God;" Romans 8:7,8. Take a New Testament illustration. The "fig-tree" was a picture of the nation of Israel; i.e., of man under the most favorable circumstances, man under God's own culture. When the Lord came to the fig-tree, and found no fruit thereon, He pronounced this solemn sentence upon it, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever," Matt. 21:19. Passing by the same road the day following, the disciples found it "withered away," "dried up from the roots," Mark 11:20. Now, who would expect to get fruit from it after that? What would you have thought of the disciples commencing some new method of pruning and cultivating that tree, with the hope of getting fruit from it after all? Oh, but they knew better; they knew that the tree was hopelessly gone, and that they must look to some other tree for fruit, or figs they would never see again. So with man, as man, even at his best. The end of all hope in him came, when at Calvary he crucified the Son of God, and refused the grace He brought. But God has found another "tree," One that "bringeth forth His fruit in His season," and whose "leaf shall not wither." That ever fair, ever fruitful One, is Christ.

Yes, God has Christ before His eye, and finds all His pleasure in connection with Him. He would have us to learn, therefore, that He has set man aside, as in the flesh, and begun a new order, an entirely new race, in Christ, the last Adam, as its Head, and those who live through Him. This, however, we are very slow to learn, and consequently have often to be brought through the bitterest experiences before we are made willing to submit to the fact that

"No good in creatures can be found,

All, all is found in Thee."

We are like a man who has lost his way at night in some extensive slate-quarry. Finding himself in complete darkness, and totally unable to grope his way out (to say nothing of the peril of trying to do so without a light), he remembers, with thankfulness, that he has in his possession a box of matches, and sets to work at once to get a light. One by one they missfire. Still he has plenty left, and will go on trying more carefully for the future. More than half the matches have now been struck, and yet no light. He begins to fear they are damp or worthless; but surely, he thinks, one good match will be found among the number. So, with increased painstaking, he continues the striking. Eventually, the very last is reached. It is his only hope; and when he puts it to the test it is no better than the rest. It is all over now! Alas! alas! what can he do? He must give up his efforts, and throw away his box in despair. But no sooner has he done so, than he finds coming toward him, in the hand of another, the very thing he was trying to get by his own hand; viz., a light. What a welcome and timely discovery! The way out is now made clear.

As with this man so with us; we do not believe that there is no goodness to be got out of the flesh, and are therefore allowed to go on with our fruitless "trying" until, like the man in Romans 7, we are brought, by heart-breaking experience, to the humbling confession, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." And then it is that we find, to our joy, that what we could not find in ourselves for God, God has found in Christ for us, and that if we look there for what is "good," we shall never be disappointed.

What a relief, then, after all one's efforts to make the flesh better, to find that God cannot find a good thing in it, and does not expect me to do so. Never again, then, need I look for any good in myself; never again be disappointed at the discovery of any depth of evil.

DISAPPOINTMENT NO. 2

I know what is right, but have no power to do it. "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not," Rom. 7:18.

To see the right thing to do; to have a wish to do it, and yet so constantly to fail in the performance of it, is galling indeed. Nor is the bitterness diminished, but rather increased, when one sees in others a thorough contrast to one's own state. "They seem to have devotedness; they have evidently got the secret of power for a holy walk; but as for myself, there seems to be nothing but defeat and disappointment, do what I may."

We have seen that God has to show us what total bankrupts we are as to goodness, that we may find all we want--nay, more, all He Himself wants--in Christ. And He must next bring us to realize our perfect weakness that we may find our strength in Christ as well. "Apart from Me," saith the Lord, "ye can do nothing." On the other hand, Paul could say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (or "who gives me power"), Phil. 4:13. And when Paul had learned the lesson, he could even glory in his infirmities, and do it "gladly," because he knew that his weakness only made the more room for Christ's power, as he says, "That the power of Christ may rest upon me," 2 Cor. 12:9. He does not make me conscious of having power; but in the consciousness of my weakness, I avail myself of His power. "I take pleasure in infirmities . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong," v. 10.

The fact is that we are, when really put to the test, as powerless to keep ourselves, as a bit of thistle-down is unable to stand its ground before a driving northeast wind. Stand in the current and hold it if you will, but the instant you relax your hold it is gone. Yet how slow we are to learn this lesson!

What we naturally do, after a fall, is to resolve more solemnly to try the harder next time. But this is not the way of true power; and it is only when we find, through perhaps a sad series of crushing disappointments, that we really have no power of our own, that we submit to look to Him as our alone sufficiency. Peter could not, by any amount of effort, have walked on the water, even had it been ever so smooth. It was only with his eye upon his Master that he could do it.

A few years since, while the Royal Charlotte was being launched, a gentleman was standing by. Hundreds at the same time were crowding a small bridge to witness the event, when suddenly the bridge gave way, precipitating numbers of them into the water. Mr. S-- stood looking on, not offering to go to the rescue, though he was well known to be an expert swimmer.

"How is this, Mr. S--?" exclaimed one of the bystanders. "How is it that such a powerful swimmer as you are, and one so well able to save some of these people, can stand so calmly looking on?" "The time has not come yet," he replied; "I am waiting till some of them have done struggling." Then, pulling off his coat, he jumped in, and bravely rescued several.

As with those drowning ones so with us. We never really get out of this second disappointment until we find that struggling means sinking, and until, having done with it as utterly fruitless, we look for deliverance altogether in Another. Naturally we want to make self better, and get nothing but heart-sickening disappointment every time we try. And as for the law, while exposing the wrong and condemning us for it, it gives no more power to do what is right than does the lighthouse, which discovers to some exhausted boatman that in battling with adverse currents he has missed his way, but gives him no power of rowing his leaky, disabled boat to the wished-for harbor. His only chance now is in an outside deliverer. Not that

he gives up the thought of deliverance--he dare not do that; but for the first time he feels that it must come from another source. His hope is not in being himself made stronger, or better able to cope with the tidal currents, or of bringing to land in any way his fast-filling boat. No; but lighting his flaring signal of distress, he is soon out of his sinking craft and on board a rescuing steamer, no longer to trust to his own boat or his own strength for reaching the desired haven.

This is the point reached in Romans 7:24: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" It is not, "Who shall help me to deliver myself?" or, "Who shall help me to make myself better?" but, "Who shall deliver me from myself altogether?" And the answer is found in God Himself. "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Deliverance does not come through his battling for the victory, but by finding that he is in Christ, through whom before God he now lives; that he has died to sin, and is no longer in the flesh before Him. He now stands before God in the life of Another--Christ--and is victorious in the power of Him whose grace has placed him there.

The point of deliverance being in principle thus reached, we are then free, in the details of daily life, to put it into practice. We learn to look to the Lord in helpless dependence for everything; and in that happy confidence, of which the Spirit of God is the power, we find in Him our entire sufficiency.

Not long since, a man who had led a very dissipated course was converted. He had got the name among his comrades, of "Bull-dog Tom," because he kept and trained a number of fighting dogs. One day, he was met by a fellow-Christian, who enquired after his spiritual welfare; and in the course of their conversation, Tom made the following remark: "When I had a dog in training, I only allowed him a certain kind of food at certain times in the day. Sometimes, while walking with me, he would see a bone, and, of course, instantly make toward it. 'No!' I would say, firmly; and at once he would turn away his eye from the bone to look at me. Then he would slyly turn toward the bone again, until I once more spoke, and got his eye. And so I found in this way, that while he was looking at me, there was a power in me that kept him from the very thing which of all others a dog likes best. And thus it is with myself," he said. "If I would be kept from my old besetments, my only power is in looking to Him." Full well he knew that these old habits were far too strong for him to conquer in his own strength.

Of course, like other human illustrations, this one falls short; for, after all, there was nothing in the dog but the nature which loved the forbidden thing, unless it was the fear of consequences if he took it; whereas in every converted soul there is. He can say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man;" so that there is a nature which takes pleasure in doing His will, though he finds no power in himself to accomplish it. He is like lame Mephibosheth, who ardently wished to accompany his royal benefactor during his exile, but was robbed by Ziba of the means of doing so, 2 Samuel 19:26.

Let us now consider the question, How is this Deliverance brought about?

It may simplify the matter somewhat, perhaps, to put what is said under three headings; viz., learning from God; reckoning with God; yielding to God, Rom. 6:11,16.

1. LEARNING FROM GOD

We have seen that conversion neither improves nor removes the sinful flesh, and this at once suggests another question; viz., "How can such an evil thing escape the judgment of God?" There is but one answer. It cannot, and what is more, it has not escaped; for already has it had its condemnation. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful

flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

There is an immense difference between a criminal escaping, or even being forgiven, and his getting the full penalty of his wickedness. Now, sin in the flesh has not escaped. Its full judgment was awarded when He who knew no sin was made a sacrifice for sin on the cross. And thus, if God has already judged this evil thing in the death of Him who is now my life, then in God's account I am associated with Him in that judgment, and my life is in Him beyond it. The apostle can therefore write to the believers in Colosse, though he had never seen their faces, and say, "Ye are dead (or, "ye have died"), and your life is hid with Christ in God," Col. 3:3.

When faith has received from God this wondrous fact, the language of Romans 6:6 becomes consciously ours; we are entitled to count all that happened to Him as having happened to us--"Knowing this, that our old man is (or "has been") crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." This verse says nothing about our feeling it, though when the fact is learned from God by faith, we become morally affected by it, and know the blessed power of it. But it may be asked--What is meant by our "old man"? It is our entire standing as fallen children of Adam, our state as characterized by the flesh, and it is this which faith now sees, and which we now own, has come to an end in judgment before God at the cross; and deliverance is ours, experimentally, in consequence.

2. RECKONING WITH GOD

"Our old man," then, we have seen, has not escaped, was not forgiven (though our sins have been forgiven), but has been crucified--"crucified with Christ." I learn from the Word that this is the way God reckons, and what I have to do is to reckon with Him. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord," v. 11. There is no other life for me before God but the life of Christ. As in the Flood, all flesh was either in the waters of death and judgment outside the ark, or alive inside, so is it now. See John 12:31; Gen. 6:13. I am either alive to God (and that can only be in Christ) or I am alive in self under judgment. A soul must quit the ground of self to be clear of condemnation, and this he can only do as by faith he reckons with God.

But now comes a practical difficulty. Some troubled one may say, "How can I go and reckon myself dead to sin when I daily find the actual workings of the flesh within me? What shameful hypocrisy do I find in myself, what pride, what unworthy motives, what unclean thoughts! Yea, even in the attitude of prayer, what vain and unholy feelings will spring up within me! How, then, can I reckon myself to be dead unto sin?"

God does not ask us to feel that "our old man" is dead; for, as an actual fact, the flesh is still within us, and will be to the end of the story; but He does ask us to reckon with Him about it, and to remember that He counts it as having already had its judgment.

A story is told of an old Scotchman who might be seen reading his Bible, and that after a very interesting fashion, too; for while doing so, he would slowly run his finger along each line, saying, "I think Thy thoughts after Thee, O God." Now, here was a simple, bright specimen of faith. Consider it well, my reader. Faith gets God's thoughts, and thinks with Him; faith learns how He reckons, and reckons with Him; and does this even when appearances, or even experiences, may go dead against it. May like wisdom be ours!

Now, it is because God reckons us as dead with Christ that we are privileged to reckon ourselves as having died with Him.

After the prophet Daniel had been brought out of the den of lions by the very king whose unalterable law had put him in, he had nothing more to fear from that side. Let the accusers, if they will, repeat their charges against him. The king himself can now give a righteous answer, and Daniel be free to echo the same. "He has already been into the den, and having thus endured the full penalty, it is now behind his back forever." So also with the three Hebrew children; they could say, "We have been into the furnace at its hottest, in company with one like unto the Son of God; we have passed through it, and come out of it, and all that the fire did was to sever the cords that bound us."

Now, we repeat, it is not that we have been bodily into the judgment, but our blessed, adorable Substitute has, and God holds us as identified with Him there, and alive in Him at the other side of it; and here come in for us the reckonings of faith, Rom. 6. In other words, faith reckons that the judgment of death (like the fire) has severed the tie which bound me to my old self as a fallen child of Adam, and I live now before God in Christ beyond both death and judgment. If that old Christian who, in the writer's hearing, once said, "I dare not even tell myself how bad I am," had known this, she could have well afforded to face the worst about herself.

Mark well, then, that there is a double reckoning, and that both sides must go together: (1) that we are "dead to sin;" (2) that we are "alive to God in Christ Jesus."(N.T.)

Not only, therefore, are our sins gone on the cross, but our status as in the flesh too. We have lost our old position, and are now set before God in the life of Him who died for us. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death," Rom. 8:2. It is a new life, and a free life.

A distressed lady once remarked to the writer, "I'm so worried with what I find in myself that I often feel I should just like to jump out of my own skin into some one else's." So, making use of her figure, I replied, "That is exactly what I have done." Or, I might rather have said, what God's grace has done for me. Let me explain. I once saw a little salamander in a small aquarium belonging to some children in Ireland. A few days before my visit, they had been greatly interested in seeing him perform the feat of casting off his skin, and coming out in his bright scarlet new one. But, after all, you see, this little lizard had only got the same kind of skin over again--brighter looking and fresher, it is true, but still the same kind.

Now, if the lady just referred to could really have done what she wished, all that could have been said to her would be, "Be sure you find a better, and remember that the whole of Adam's race cannot furnish you with one, for God has reviewed the whole, and pronounced that there is no difference."

But it is not with us as with the salamander; for though, by our death with Christ, we have got out of our old state, yet, instead of only getting into a better one after the first Adam type, we have come into a new one altogether; i.e., in the life of Christ risen. We are "alive to God in Christ Jesus." As another has put it, "Christ having died, we reckon ourselves dead, as though we had done so. He who has become our life, the true I, has died. I have died, have been crucified with Him, and, as a Christian, do not own the flesh to be any more alive at all. I speak of all that has happened to Christ as if it had happened to me, because He is become my life, and I live by Him. As a son (whose father has not only paid his debts, but made him partner) would speak of 'our capital, our connection,' because he is partner, though he brought nothing in, and all was done and acquired before he became partner; so we, in much truer, because living, association with the Son.

The great difficulty arises from not seeing that, while the evil principle still exists in us, it is no part of the Christian's new status before God. Until this has been learnt, the soul must, if honest, be constantly deploring that he is not what he ought to be; for in the state of his soul, he is still in connection with the flesh, and, as we have seen, that never can be what it ought to be, never be bettered. But when he is taught of the Spirit to look upon the flesh as having only to do with his former state (as the salamander might regard his cast-off skin), that death has severed the tie between the old and the new, and that he is set in a new position before God--alive in Christ BEYOND CONDEMNATION--what a relief it is! what a deliverance! May the comfort of it be yours, dear reader!

Let us now come to the third thing:

3. YIELDING TO GOD

In the history of David, in the first Book of Samuel, we are told that on one occasion, when pursuing the troop of Amalekites who had burned Ziklag, they found in the field a young Egyptian, abandoned three days before by his master, an Amalekite, because, as he said, "I fell sick." David's men brought him to their master, gave him food and drink, and thus saved his life. When David asked if he could conduct him to their retreating foes, he made entreaty that he might not be delivered into the hands of his old master. To this David consented, and henceforth the young man willingly yielded himself to the service of his deliverer.

This will serve to illustrate our present subject. The young Egyptian had before his mind two masters, the old and the new. The old master's service would have landed him in death but for the timely interference of the new. He owed his life to the new master, and nothing but death to the old. To which, then, should he now yield himself to serve and obey? Yield to his old master? Never! The

question was as quickly settled as it was proposed. Grace, kindness, and power were all on the side of the new master, and to his service he would gladly and instantly yield himself. In doing so, next to death itself, his greatest fear was being given up again into the power and service of the old, though both his fears were groundless.

Now, our old master was "sin," and to his service we once yielded ourselves as willing slaves, and the end of it was, as with the young Egyptian, death; "for the wages of sin is death." But a deliverer has come in out of pure grace, and has by the Lord Jesus Christ wrought deliverance. Thus I am set free, "free from sin" (Rom. 6:18); not in the sense, as pointed out elsewhere, of being free from its presence, as a horse is sometimes spoken of as being "free from vice;" but free from its dominion, as the young Egyptian was free from his old master. I am set free by death; am free in the life of Him who on my account once "died to sin." Being thus set at liberty, the question arises, "To which master shall I now yield myself?" And then how agreeably to the renewed heart comes the answer by the Spirit--"Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead," v. 13. Now, we do not yield to get freedom. This exhortation clearly supposes that we have got it. We yield because we are free, though only in yielding thus do we enjoy our true liberty; only thus have we "our fruit unto holiness," v. 22.

To God, then, we are debtors, and "not to the flesh, to live after the flesh;" for we are alive in the life of Christ, and not in our own; and this blessed position of being "alive" out of death is entirely of grace, and not of legal effort, and therefore He can add, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace," Rom. 6:13,14; 8:12. The claims of the law supposed that I had power to obey its commands, or that I thought I had; grace supposes that I have none at all, but teaches me, as in the life of

Another, now my life by the Spirit, to yield myself to God, thereby getting His victorious power in place of my own utter helplessness. "When I am weak, then am I strong."

A young miner in Yorkshire, who had recently been converted, was being closely watched one day by an overlooker in the pit, who stood unobserved at a little distance. This young collier was in difficulty. A little truck of coal had got off the rails at a point where the metals curved, and he was trying hard to get it on again. The overlooker noticed that when he lifted the truck on at one end, it jumped off again at the other. Then he would go round and lift once more, when off went the wheels from the opposite end! Now, the watchman knew what a violent tempered young man this collier had been, and how rash he had often been with his tongue, so he thought to himself, "I'm sure he'll break out directly." And break out he did, as we shall see.

Once more he went round the truck, and with more than usual care he was seen to lift the wheels on to the metals, when, lo! how wearying! how annoying! the other wheels immediately left the rails. And then it was that he "broke out"--but broke out with what, think you? He broke out singing--

"I need Thee every hour."

In the moment of need, he turned to Him whom he had learned to know as his sufficiency. How blessed! Oh that all our "outbreaks" in moments of trial were of this kind! What praise would redound to our blessed Lord! What joyful victories for us!

"As weaker than a bruised reed,

I cannot do without Thee,"

should be our constant cry, as in absolute weakness we cling to Him alone.

Another word as to this "yielding." There are many true, earnest souls today who are seeking what is called a "higher life." No doubt what they are really seeking is the deliverance we have been speaking of, but they hope to reach it by an act of entire consecration, thus beginning altogether at the wrong end. But look at Rom. 6:13 again. We are here exhorted to yield ourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead. In other words, we do not yield to get this blessing, but because, through grace, it is ours already. We hold ourselves to be such. On the other hand, we cannot have peace and joy by the Holy Spirit in our souls unless there is unreserved surrender to the Lord. It is thus that we prove "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God," Rom.12:2.

Thus must be the practical every-day exercise of our souls before God: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body," 2 Cor. 4:10 (N.T.). The more our souls are set upon this, the more shall we look forward with joy to the day when our very bodies shall be conformed like to His body of glory. Then we shall enjoy the "liberty of the glory of the children of God." But now He would have us enjoy the liberty of grace. And, oh, what liberty it is! Liberty to look at my sins in the light of His judgment throne, and know that I am justified from them all, and that the very One who will sit in judgment has done it. Liberty to look at all the evil of my corrupt Adam nature, and not only know that God expects no good thing from it, but that its condemnation has taken place once for all upon the cross. Liberty to reckon with God as to indwelling evil, and to regard it as having been condemned in the cross, and that my new standing before Him is in Christ; the old man, the flesh having no place before Him at all, save as a thing whose judgment is passed already. "There is therefore now NO

CONDEMNATION to them which are in Christ Jesus," Romans 8:1.

Liberty to look away from self for everything, knowing that all God could wish for in a man He finds in Christ, and that "as He is, so are we in this world," 1 John 4:17; John 14:20. Liberty to regard myself as entirely connected with the renewed nature, the old "I" no longer, but Christ my life, and the Holy Spirit the power of occupying my heart with Christ, in whom is all my expectation. Liberty to regard God no longer as a judge taking notice of what I am in myself, but as having put me in Christ's place as a son, so that by the spirit of adoption I cry, "Abba, Father;" and as finding His delight and joy in blessing me, and making me happy. Liberty to know that if the Son has made me free, I am free indeed; John 8:32-36. Liberty to look at the glory shining in the face of the Lord Jesus, and to be at home in that blessed place of holiness and love. Liberty to remember that every blessing comes to me through and in Christ in such unmerited grace that I need never henceforth search my own heart for a single reason why He should or should not bless me, either here or hereafter. Liberty to serve, in the constraint of loving gratitude, the blessed Deliverer Himself, and His beloved saints for His sake, until the return of His Son from heaven. This is liberty indeed, dear reader. Is it yours?

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