

Christian Liberty

by James Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and enjoying the liberty that we have in Christ Jesus, which comprises freedom from sin, Satan, and the world.

Scripture: John 8:32, John 8:36, Romans 6:18, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 5:1, Galatians 5:13, 1 Peter 2:16

Topics: "Christian Freedom", "Spiritual Liberty"

Description

James Smith preaches about the liberty we have in Christ Jesus, emphasizing that true freedom can only be found through Divine intervention as no man can free himself. He explains that in Christ, believers are liberated from sin, Satan, and the world, and have the privilege to approach God directly, appropriate His promises, and enjoy all Gospel privileges. Smith highlights that this holy and honorable liberty is perfect in its kind, urging believers not to abuse it but to use it to serve one another in love.

Transcript

"The liberty that we have in Christ Jesus" Galatians 2:4

No man by nature is free. He may boast of the freedom of his will, but it is biased by evil principles which rule his heart. He may talk loudly of his independence--but he is the slave of habit, custom, and depraved passions. The Jews were in bondage under the law, and the Gentiles were in bondage without the law.

Man had liberty once--but he lost it, he wilfully sinned it away; and now sin and Satan have dominion over the whole human race. Freedom there is not, freedom there cannot be--without Divine interference. No man can free himself, and what is most surprising, no one naturally desires to do so. Men talk of liberty--but only the Christian understands and enjoys it. Jesus came "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who were bound;" and he has given us the comforting assurance, that if the Son shall make us free--we shall be free, indeed!

Satan is the great enemy of liberty; he tries, by all means, to keep souls in bondage, and to entangle again those who have been set free. Now, as it is the privilege of the Lord's people to enjoy freedom, and as many of them do walk at liberty--let us consider briefly the Apostle's words, "The liberty that we have in Christ Jesus."

First, The Connection. We were in Adam by nature; we are in Christ by grace. Once afar off; we are now made nigh. Once without Christ; we are now in union with him. Jesus has a kingdom in which he presides, over which he reigns--and we are subjects of that kingdom. For God, in the marvelous displays of his grace, has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; so that we are no longer strangers and foreigners--but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God.

Jesus RULES in us by his Spirit, over us by his precepts, and for us by his providence. Jesus is a Master, and we are his servants. We are not only subjects in his kingdom--but servants in his employment. He has hired us, and we have consented to serve him. We eat at his table, reside in his house, and labor in his vineyard. He supplies us now, finds us work for the whole day, and will settle with us in the evening.

Not only so--but Jesus has a family, and we are members of his household. We are his children; he loves us with paternal kindness.

Jesus is also a head, and we are the members of his body. Our union with him is vital, close, and eternal--for we are members of his body. The arm in nature is not more one with the head, than we are one with Christ.

As the vine and the branches form one tree, and as the members and the head form one natural body--so Christ and his people are one spiritual body, the object of Jehovah's highest love. Yes, as believers in Jesus, we are all one in him, alike united to him, alike beloved by him, and alike designed to glorify him.

As one with Christ, we own him--we publicly acknowledging our faith in him, love to him, and dependence upon him. We obey him, taking his word for our rule; we do his will from the heart. We love him, not as we would, for if we loved up to the full extent of our ability, we would wish for larger powers and more vigorous affections, that we might love him more. We receive from him, out of his fulness flows all our supplies; and from him we receive grace to do, to suffer, and to glorify God. We profess his name, observe his precepts, love his person, and live upon his fulness! Being in Christ Jesus, we have--

Secondly, A Glorious Privilege. "The liberty that we have in Christ Jesus." Our liberty differs from all other liberty. Some boast of liberty, while they themselves are the servants of corruption; but we being made free from sin, become the servants of righteousness, and have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

The liberty which we have in Christ Jesus--comprises a freedom from SIN. Freedom from sin, as a charge--which may be perferred and substantiated against us to condemn us, for there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Our liberty comprises a freedom from sin--as a tyrant--which once held us in its grasp, and ruled us with an iron rod.

Our liberty comprises a freedom from sin--as an object of love--which once attracted, allured, and ensnared us. So that we are freed from sin, that is, justified before God, liberated from the ruling power of corruption, and have our hearts set against sin, as that horrible thing which God hates.

The liberty which we have in Christ Jesus--is freedom from SATAN--as a cruel master, who once claimed us, possessed, and influenced us. But his yoke is broken, his authority over us is taken away, and we overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of our testimony.

The liberty which we have in Christ Jesus--is freedom from the WORLD--as it is made up of evil. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and sinful pride of life--once fascinated, charmed, and controlled us! We walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. We once swam with the stream, and was carried along by it; now we swim against it, and overcome it! And "this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."

The liberty which we have in Christ Jesus--comprehends an ACQUITTAL, by the Judge of all. Once we were criminals--but now we are just men. Once we were under guilt--but now we are guiltless. Once we were condemned--but now we are justified. For us all the claims of the law are met, all the demands of justice are paid, and we are pronounced righteous in open court.

We are liberated by the stern jailor. Once, like the jailor at Philippi, he thrust us into the inner prison, and made our feet fast in the stocks. He felt sure of us, and exulted over us; but a voice sounded in the prison, "Loose him and let him go!" and our fetters were knocked off; the door of the prison was thrown open, and we walked forth to enjoy freedom and peace. No officer will touch us now. No jailor will be allowed to lay hands on us again. Our debts are paid, the price given for our ransom is accepted, the warrants for our liberation have been received--and we were bidden to go free.

We are emancipated by the slaveholder. He has lost his right to us; he has been deprived of his power over us; he was obliged to consent to let us go free. "Slaves to Satan, heretofore, we shall now be slaves no more." The judge acquits us, the jailor liberates us, and the cruel slaveholder bids us go free!

The liberty which we have in Christ Jesus--is the liberty to approach God. We may now come before the Lord without fear. We can draw near to God without a human medium. We cannot come to God through Mary, or Peter, or pope, or priests--but through Christ alone; and by him we have boldness and access with confidence. We may approach God at any time, in any place, under any circumstances. We may ask him for all we need, yes, for all we desire. Prayer is never out of season. Every place is consecrated for this holy exercise. "I will," said the Apostle, "that men pray everywhere." Let us, therefore, draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.

We have the liberty to appropriate the promises of God--made to different people, and at different times; they are now all gathered into Christ, and as they are found in him--they may be appropriated by us. What a glorious heritage! What immense wealth! "All the promises of God are in him, yes, and in him, amen, to the glory of God by us."

Being in Jesus, married to Jesus--all the wealth of Jesus becomes ours. We, being one with him, come into possession of exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we may be made partakers of the Divine nature. All the promises of grace, and the promise of eternal glory; all the promises of spiritual blessings, and the promise that no temporal good thing shall be withheld from us, may be appropriated by us. We may claim them all, plead them all, and expect them to be fulfilled in our happy experience.

We have liberty to enjoy all Gospel privileges. Peace with God, and the hope of glory, are ours. Fellowship with the Father and his Son, with the communion of the Holy Spirit, are ours. There is no privilege, however great or lofty, however grand or glorious--but we have liberty to claim it, and seek the enjoyment of it.

We have liberty also to anticipate glory. We may by faith ascend Mount Clear, look across the river of death, see the bright green fields, the glorious city, with its walls of jasper, and streets of gold--and

anticipate our entrance into it, and possession of it.

Glory! what is comprehended in that one word--GLORY! All God has provided and prepared for his saints. All Jesus has procured and promised to his disciples.

Grace here--and glory hereafter, constitute our portion. They are ours, because we are Christ's.

The liberty we have in Christ is a HOLY liberty. Not a liberty to sin--but a freedom from sin. Liberty to walk with God, work for God, and aspire to the likeness of God. It is holy in its nature, and holy in its tendency. A man may have the notion of liberty in his head, and yet live in sin--but he cannot have the grace of liberty in his heart, and be the servant of corruption.

The liberty we have in Christ is an HONORABLE liberty; honorable to him who procured it at such tremendous cost, to him who conferred it so freely and lovingly upon us, and honorable to him who enjoys it. What a disgrace--to be the slave of passion, lust, and Satan! What an honor to be free from these, and to walk at liberty, walk with God, and walk in prospect of eternal glory!

The liberty we have in Christ is PERFECT liberty; perfect in its kind, though not perfect at present in its degree. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free--you shall be free, indeed." It is not freedom only in promise but in fact. We are free, and are exhorted to "stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

But we should be careful not to abuse our liberty, as the Apostle exhorts: "Brethren, you have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh--but by love to serve one another."

Reader, are you in Christ Jesus? This is an important inquiry.

If in Christ, you are blessed with all spiritual blessings; but if you are not in Christ, you have no proof that one single blessing belongs to you.

If you are in Christ, you are a new creature, as the Apostle says: "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and behold all things become new."

If you are in Christ, you are free from condemnation, and are saved from wrath through him. "For there is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh--but after the Spirit." If you are without Christ you are yet in your sins, and the wrath of God abides on you.

How solemn, how important, then, is the question, am I in Christ? Have I been cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, and am I grafted, contrary to nature, into the good olive tree, that I may partake of the sap and fatness thereof? Does Christ live in me? Is the life that I live in the flesh, a life of faith on the Son of God? O, the blessedness of being in Christ, tongue cannot speak it, nature cannot illustrate it, the heart of man can form no adequate conception of it! Holy Spirit, help me to examine and decide this solemn question, "Am I in Christ?"

Do you enjoy the liberty which we have in Christ Jesus? Many of the Lord's little ones are here entitled to liberty--but for lack of clearer views, or stronger faith--they do not enjoy it. It is their's by right--but not their's in possession. The child should not be willing to wear the servant's yoke. When the prodigal was about to ask his father to take him as one of his hired servants, as bad as he had been, he would not hear one word about it--but called to his servants to bring forth the best robe and put it on him, to put a ring on

his hand, and shoes on his feet. The fatted calf was killed, music and dancing followed, and all were merry! He took the son's place, wore the son's robe and ornaments, and enjoyed perfect liberty. Brethren, this is our privilege, let us not stop short of it--but seek grace that we may daily enjoy it. It is not our Father's wish that we should be gloomy and sad, nor that we should follow him in chains--but rather that we should rejoice in him, and sing aloud to his praise.

Are you sighing for the full perfection of your freedom? While here on earth, we shall always have some burden to carry, some cross to bear, some conflict to endure. Even the Apostle sighed and said, "We who are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." And again, not only does the whole creation groan and sigh, in consequence of sin, "but we ourselves, also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves do groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, namely, the redemption of our body." The primitive saints were looking for, and anticipating the coming of the Master, when the creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Then, "there shall be no more curse, neither sorrow nor crying; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads; and there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither bight of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever!"

O, glorious fact! O, happy state! O, joyful consummation! Then, then our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, will be perfected, and our happy state will be fixed for ever!

Sinner, the jubilee trumpet is now blown--and you may go free. The glorious Gospel proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. Believe in Jesus--and your debts are all paid. Believe in Jesus--and your prison door will fly open. Believe in Jesus--and your fetters will all fall off. Believe in Jesus--and Satan the infernal jailor will flee from you. Believe in Jesus--and justice will declare you free. Believe in Jesus--and you are justified, sanctified, and saved. Believe in Jesus--and life, eternal life, with all its glorious accompaniments, is yours. "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance; in your name shall they rejoice all the day long; and in your righteousness shall they be exalted."

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