

# FREEDOM FROM SIN:

WHAT IS IT?



by GEO. C.

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It has often been pointed out, that there is a vast difference between a sinful nature, and the sinful acts which spring from it, and that the remedy for the latter, as presented in Scripture, is not the same as for the former. Let us suppose a case by way of illustration. A man of wealth owns a dog, which is constantly biting those who come near it. It is an old favourite. He would fain not part with it, and tries his best to cure it. One neighbour after another gets bitten, and heavy damages have to be paid. Is it not plain, that, if he spent his whole fortune in paying

penalties, it would not cure the dog? The only thing to do, is to own the truth that the case is past remedy, and put an end to the dog's life.

Now when we speak of *freedom from sin*, though we do not refer to evil acts, but to an evil nature, it must be distinctly understood that we do not mean to teach that the Christian ever gets free in this world, from the *presence* of indwelling sin. On the contrary, we make bold to say, at the very start, that such an expression as 'Cleansed from the last remains of sin,' in the sense that indwelling sin has been totally removed, is nothing less than a gigantic, self-deceptive blunder.

## **God's Word and Man's Opinions.**

One line of Scripture is worth more than all the religious arguments in the world, with all the so-called experiences of those who deny it, or overlook it, put together. When God speaks let every creature keep silence ;

and, by the apostle John, He *has* spoken on the subject—distinctly spoken. Mark well what He says. The language is very simple and un-mistakeable. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,” 1 John 1 : 8. There are only two words in the verse of more than one syllable—“*deceive ourselves*” : and we ask the reader to consider well this divine statement. How, think you, does ‘cleansed from the last remains of sin’ look beside it?

The saddest part of all is, that not only are such souls *deceived*, but that, in order to prove to themselves that they are not, they fall into the subtle snare of paring down the truth of what sin really is, limiting it very often to that which comes out in open act—to some open breach of the Ten Commandments — thereby confounding sin with transgression.

But in this they only betray the shallowness of their acquaintance with their own hearts. Who that

knows himself, has not discovered in how many hateful ways sin will creep in? For example, May there not be every appearance of brotherly fellowship, with jealousy and envy hidden in the heart? May not active, harmonious co-operation in Christian service meet the eye of ~~man~~, and the spirit of emulation—~~we~~ *first*—be under the eye of God? Then take one of the most common, most hateful of sins—pride. May it not assume the most pious exterior? Why, you may preach against it, and at the bottom be proud that you have preached so well. You may pray against it, and the next moment, perhaps, be proud that you have prayed so humbly. Or you may even be too proud to be *thought* proud.

And is all this to be counted as nothing because there has been no outward breach of the moral law? Scripture says, “A proud look is an abomination to the Lord.” “The

thought of foolishness is sin.” Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. “Sin is lawlessness”: it is the assertion of *my own will*, instead of absolute submission to the Lord’s. And we must remember that our *wills* may as determinedly assert themselves in a religious, as in an irreligious way.

## Two Aspects of Freedom from Sin.

There are two ways of looking at *freedom from sin*: one as relating to the present, the other to the future.

*Experimental* freedom may be ours now.

*Absolute and bodily* freedom will never be ours till we have left the wilderness and reached the “rest.”

By the first we are set free from the *power* of sin; by the second from its actual *presence*.

There can be no such thing as sinless perfection, in the sense of being free from the *presence* of indwelling sin, until, by Christ’s shout of power, our bodies of humiliation are trans-

formed to the **likeness** of His own body of glory.

There are **three things** necessary to the present **enjoyment** of freedom from sin—

1. A judicial act.
2. Moral exercise.
3. The reckoning of faith.

The first is on God's side, the other two are on ours.

But, enquires one, what is the **difference** between 'moral exercise' and a 'judicial act'?

The following illustration may perhaps suggest an answer.

Two poachers, we will suppose, are busy at their unlawful practices in some well-stocked plantation. When half the night has worn away, and several head of game are in their huge pockets, the conscience of one of the men suddenly smites him. 'We are doing wrong,' he says. 'I am miser-

able. Let us stop this illegal work, leave our game where the gamekeepers will be most likely to find it in the morning, and hasten home.'

His companion has not the slightest sympathy with such a proposal. He is determined at all cost to proceed. In the heat of their dispute the keepers approach, and both are taken into custody.

Now, though both might receive the same judicial sentence, one man had *morally* cleared himself of further participation in this unlawful work. In the purpose of his own mind, by his self-condemnation, by his expressed desire to restore as far as possible the stolen game, he proves himself morally clear. And although, according to human government, he has to bear the full penalty of breaking the law, he accepts it without a murmur. Then when the judicial sentence has been carried out; that is, when his term of imprisonment has expired, he is as free, in the eye



of the law, that is, as free *judicially*, as if he had never offended.

The other, though paying the penalty of his guilt, is not *morally* free. The first opportunity that presents itself he will be off poaching again. There is no inward work with him, nothing but outward restraint. So he naturally returns to his evil practices, like the dog to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. While, with the other, what he has passed through morally and judicially has its own peculiar effect upon him *practically*.

The *moral* exercise we refer to in the Christian is the result of the action of the word of God by the Spirit in his soul, which causes him to be as thoroughly wishful to get rid of the evil he experiences *in* himself, as once he was to be clear of the sins done *by* himself. He can say, Although "sin in the flesh" *has not done with me*; although if not watchful and

dependent I may again give place to its evil workings ; yet, according to every wish and purpose of my moral being, *I have done with it*. Indeed, if *wishing* to get rid of it would sever my connection with it, I should part company with it *instantly* and FOR EVER.

He is now ready to profit by God's *judicial* act. And, oh, what a relief it is to find that the very thing he *wished* to get rid of in himself, that is "sin in the flesh," God *has* condemned at the cross ; that its judgment has already been accomplished ! " God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. 8 : 3.

He learns that, on God's side, the judgment of this evil root has already been put into execution on the cross, that the One in whom he now lives before God has already " died to sin " after being " made sin " for him. He has reached the point of JUDICIAL

**FREEDOM.** "He that is dead is freed or justified from sin," Rom. 6 : 7.

This judicial act at the cross is gladly accepted by faith, and he *reckons* himself to be "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus," Col. 3 : 3, Rom. 6 : 11.

Do you not see, that without the *moral exercise* he would not seek his freedom ; and without God's *judicial act* he could not obtain it ; that both are absolutely necessary to his freedom practically ?

It is not that his sinful nature has been uprooted, nor that it has been made better ; but that, in God's sight, the sword of judgment has severed him as a child of God from all that he was as a child of Adam. God has "condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. 8 : 3. So that in point of fact, though the evil root is still there, "it is no more *I* that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me," Rom. 7 : 17. To use a scripture figure, it is no more a relation of his, than Ishmael was counted a

son of Abraham after Isaac had come upon the scene, and there had been the full determination on the part of Sarah and Abraham to cast out the bondmaid's son, Genesis 21 : 10-12.

In Genesis 22, where we have the record of the offering of Isaac upon the altar, it is very significant that God should, three times over, call him his "*only son*." And still more remarkable, when the incident is again recorded in the New Testament, and Isaac said to have been received from the dead as in a figure, that he should be called "his *only begotten son*," Heb. 11 : 17. When, in point of fact, Ishmael was not only alive at the time, but lived on for nearly 100 years after.

How was this? We are told that Ishmael was the figure of that which is "born after the flesh" (Gal. 4 : 23), and when Isaac comes upon the scene, he who was eventually to be the figure of one risen from the dead, God no more reckons Ishmael as having part

with Isaac, than as if he had never existed. He is absolutely and completely ignored. So with the flesh in those who have, through Christ's death, died to sin. It is no more reckoned as being part of their new status before God than as if it had never existed at all. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit," Rom. 8 : 9.

Now though, as to our new spiritual status before God, we are not in the flesh, we are not the less responsible to say *no* to all that is of it. And we shall get a bad conscience if we practically allow its activities. But it is one thing for a virtuous woman to be tied in marriage to a bad man, and another thing to know (if such a thing were possible) that because she has died to her relationship with him, she is now free to regard him, though still in the same house with her, as only a *temporary lodger* ; to know that he has no claim whatever upon her, and that when she removes to her new resi-

dence she will leave him behind for ever.

Now, for us, this latter event—our departure to be with Christ in a glorified state—will bring us into *actual* freedom, freedom from the very *existence* of sin within us. Nor, till then, shall we ever be free in the absolute sense of the word, from indwelling sin.

### **Coming Short Experimentally.**

There are two great classes of believers who have had to say to the question of freedom from sin, and yet have come short of that which might be theirs experimentally.

The first class are those who have really reached the necessary point of *moral* exercise, but have not yet grasped by faith the truth of how they are *judicially* free; that is, how they are free by God's judicial act from what, as a matter of fact, still exists within them.

The second class, and by far the less

enviable one, are those who, though clear enough about the judicial side, have never been in the moral condition to profit by it. Thus their knowledge is only a dead letter to them, or worse. To talk to such people about freedom from sin is time wasted. "Wherefore," said Solomon, "is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" Prov. 17 : 16.

In not a few cases the practical condition of souls belonging to this class is most deplorable. They know all about the *doctrine*, but they have never learnt *themselves*. They are hard and self-satisfied, and seem to have little thirst for a life of holy, secret separation to God, though often peculiarly jealous that *exteriors* should be critically correct. They can coldly pity the doctrinal ignorance of many in the first class, though, in point of fact, those they criticise are spiritually a thousand times better off than themselves. If one such soul

should read these pages, our earnest prayer is, that he may speedily be brought to see himself as God sees him, and thus be made conscious of his true state before Him. See to it that your knowledge of mere doctrine is not your heaviest condemnation in the end. Better, far better, be ignorant and honest, than well instructed and heartless.

We shall now endeavour to help thirsty seeking souls of the first class to see the ground of holy liberty, and then make a few remarks on holy living.

### **Grace, the only Ground of Freedom**

There is one precious word that lies at the very threshold of the gate of liberty, and paves the whole of the Christian pathway thenceforward to the gates of glory—it is the word GRACE.

“ Sin shall not have dominion over you : *for ye are not under the law, but*



*under grace,”* Romans 6 : 14. It is, therefore, certain that there is *no liberty under law.*

In Galatians 4 : 22-31 ; 5 : 1 the great principles of LAW and GRACE are set before us—principles as distinct as *bondage* is distinct from *liberty* ; for bondage is linked with one, and liberty with the other. These verses plainly show that you cannot stand before God on *both* these grounds at one time ; one or the other must be relinquished. You must either take your stand entirely upon your own merits under law, or entirely upon the merits of Another under grace. “The son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” The law will not bend to your weakness nor atone for your wickedness. You must meet its full demands, or bear without abatement, its withering curse. How, then, could the law give liberty? Nay, it “gendereth to bondage” ; its yoke is “the yoke of bondage.”

There is an important difference between the way this subject is presented to us in the Roman, and in the Galatian epistles. The man whose exercises are described in Romans 7 is groaning under the bitter bondage of the law. He has never known liberty, is an entire stranger to it. Nay, you could hardly furnish a picture of more abject, utter slavery than is presented here. He longs to do what he has no power to perform; he hates the thing he is constantly doing.

With the Galatians the case was different. They had, through grace, been given to taste something of the sweetness of gospel liberty. They had "*received the Spirit*" of liberty. They had been brought into the relationship to which liberty rightly belongs—the relationship of sons. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father," Gal. 4 : 6. "If the Son therefore shall make you

free, ye shall be FREE INDEED," John 8 : 36.

But, alas ! after knowing the freedom of grace, these Galatians were foolishly turning back to the fetters of the law. Hence the apostle's withering censure, "Who hath bewitched you ? " and his earnest charge, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ *hath* made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage," Gal. 5 : 1.

It cannot be too well remembered that in order to be "under law" it is not necessary to make a formal repetition of the ten commandments once a week, or make public confession that this is your code of practice. Every person who judges of his acceptance before God by what he finds in his own state of soul is practically under law.

Let us consider this more closely. The law told man what *he ought to be for God*. So that the moment I say, God cannot accept me because I am

not what I ought to be, I am practically on the ground of law. On such ground I cannot but be wretched. Nay the more sincere I am, the keener will be my anguish, for the greater will be my disappointment. I expected to make myself good enough for God to accept me, and have only got worse and worse.

But while the law told me what I ought to be for God, and that I come short of the glory of God, even at my very best, grace tells me what God has been for me at my very worst. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." How this comes out in righteous boldness in the epistle to the Romans! The very person who, in the light of God's presence, says, '*There is no good thing in me,*' that is in my flesh; can say with equal certainty, '*There is no condemnation for me,*' "in Christ." More than this, God is causing the worst things in our earthly path to work together for our heavenly good. So that the

believer can say, 'Though no good thing do I deserve, yet no good thing will He withhold. If He gives me to see no good here, I can with confidence turn my heart away and say, It is all good there. God has found everything in Christ, and everything *I want I have in Christ also.*'

It makes all the difference whether I judge of what God will be to me by what I have been for Him, or judge what He will be for me according to the revelation He has made of Himself in Christ. Turn to the book of Judges for a beautiful illustration of this.

We are told (Judges 13:8-23) that the angel of the Lord, whose name was "Wonderful," came down from heaven to bring to Manoah and his wife a communication from God.

When the sacrifice was offered, and the flame of the altar was carrying up the sweet savour of that burnt-offering and meat-offering to God,

we read that the angel "ascended" with it.

Have we not in this little event the picture of another and infinitely greater one? Is it not a picture of the blessed mission and work of the Lord Jesus Christ? He came down to the earth to make a communication from God to man. And when His gracious mission was fulfilled, and His sin-atoning work finished, He went up again to heaven—went up in all the sweet savour of that precious sacrifice. He could say, Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." What next? Why, the Holy Ghost then comes down from that glorified One, and brings us word that not only has God accepted the work of Christ, but that He now accepts every believer according to all the sweet savour of that sacrifice as HE estimates it. Oh, what grace is this!

But to return to our figure. Manoa

exclaims to his wife when all was over, "We shall surely die . . . we have seen God." Not so, responds his wife. "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these." Notice how very differently they reason. He reasons from themselves to God—upward; she from God to themselves—downward. Just as the law said, "*Thou* shalt love"; while He by whom grace came said, "*God* so loved." One tells what man *should be*; the other what God *is*, and that in the face of all that man *has been*. It was as though Manoah's wife had said, 'There are two good reasons why we shall not be cut off in judgment. First, if God kill us, He must do violence to His own acceptance of the sacrifice at our hands. Secondly, in such an event, what is to become of His

own promise that we shall have a son? To accept the sacrifice is God's side of the matter. He has done it, and given full proof of it. To accept His word is ours. And shall we not do it, gladly do it, dismissing at once our dishonouring doubts and fears? This surely is our wisdom, for it honours God.'

So with us. We can say, God has accepted the spotless Sacrifice. He has glorified the once forsaken Substitute, and it is ours to accept God's testimony concerning Him. If the Sacrifice satisfies God, His testimony to that effect shall satisfy us. This is how faith reasons. This is her solid resting-place.

### **Freedom from Self-Disappointment.**

There is no disappointment as we contemplate Christ. If you *are* sometimes disappointed, it is because you are looking at yourself, and



reasoning from yourself to God upward, searching into your own heart to find some good reason why He should bless you, and troubled because you cannot find it; instead of gazing upon Christ, and saying, 'He is all that *God* would have Him to be, all that *I* would have Him to be, and God accepts me in Him.'

I look at Christ, and I say, 'SATISFIED.' If I expect from self, that is from what I am in the flesh, I must say, 'DISAPPOINTED'; for God has declared that there is no good thing there.

The believer ought to be able to look at the evil nature in himself without either being in bondage about its badness, or exercising the smallest effort to make it one bit better than he finds it. He detests it and distrusts it. He knows that God does not expect him to take up and improve what, at the cross, He Himself has utterly condemned and laid aside for ever. He knows

that he now stands before God in the life of Another, and that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Romans 8:1. What a wonderful statement! Let us more closely consider its import.

### Freedom from Sin's Condemnation.

It is not merely that God will not condemn us, though surely that is true, but there is no such thing as condemnation for us. When the red heifer was slain for a sin-offering her blood was sprinkled seven times before the tabernacle—the place where Jehovah dwelt—while the whole of her carcase was consumed to ashes outside the camp. Now in the blood we see the answer for what we have done—our sins; and in the *burning* of the victim we see the entire end, in judgment, of that with which the victim was identified—the "body of

sin.” There was nothing more for the fire to do, that is, when it had consumed the victim to ashes. It had then done its all. You cannot burn ashes. They testify that the fire has found its end.

Now, the blessed Lamb of God not only identified Himself with the guilty things we had done, not only did He “bear our sins in His own body on the tree,” but He was “made sin” [a sin-offering] for us, and that which happened to Him under the consuming judgment of God happened for us in God’s account. In His blessed person God “condemned” substitutionally that which never existed in Him personally — “sin in the flesh.”

Could that fierce judgment ever have to say to Him again? NEVER. He endured it fully; He exhausted it perfectly; and then rose above it triumphantly. Is there any condemnation to Him? Impossible. “He died unto sin once”: raised from

the dead He dieth no more. There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those that are *in Him*. If in Him, in whom we now live before God, judgment has already been executed, there could not possibly exist any condemnation for us. Nay, what is there left to condemn? The sprinkled blood (referring to the type) testifies that *sins* have been atoned for; the ashes, that the judgment which once rested upon the sinner has already been put into execution. What, then, is there left to condemn? If all that a holy God could condemn *has been* condemned; if the believer is now alive in Him who exhausted the condemnation, there is, there can be, no condemnation to him. He is for ever "beyond his doom" by the death and resurrection of Another.

Take another beautiful Old Testament figure. Before Noah left the ark, as you are aware, the dove was sent forth. The patriarch was like thousands of believers in the present

day — sheltered, but shut up. He well knew that the ark had stood between him and the storm, and that it had not allowed a single drop to reach him. He knew he was secure enough, but still he was not in full liberty, He was safe, but shut up.

At last the dove returned a second time with the olive leaf in her mouth. This made it manifest that the out-pouring judgment from the windows of heaven had ceased. The waters were assuaged. The judgment was over. That which was once buried beneath the waters of death was now appearing in living energy above them.

But God gave Noah yet another token. He put His bow in the cloud. This was to be a constantly recurring witness for coming centuries, that He would never again destroy the world by a flood.

Thus, if the dove witnessed that the *judgment was past*, the rainbow witnessed that there was *no more to come*.

Once more. When Noah came out of the ark he built an altar, and offered burnt-offerings upon it, and we read "the Lord smelled a sweet savour," Genesis 8 : 21. Now, the burnt-offering was in connection with the ACCEPTANCE of the offerer. The offerer laid his hands upon the head of the offering, and was accepted according to all the sweet savour of that offering before God. This we learn from Leviticus 1 : 4 : "*It* shall be accepted for him." Henceforward it was no question of what the offerer was, but of the offering. Therefore we read, "If *any* man of you bring an offering unto the Lord . . . *it* shall be accepted for *him*." Compare the "*any*" of verse 2 with the "*it*" of verse 4.

To apply these figures : the Holy Ghost has come from heaven to bear witness to us who believe, that not only is our judgment past, but that there is no more to come. Thank God this witness is as true as it is

blessed ; for if, for us, Christ's death exhausted the judgment due to sin, *our* judgment must necessarily be past ; and if we are now alive unto God in Him who rose above it, there is certainly no more judgment to come.

More than this, we stand in a place of unclouded favour before God. "*As He is so are we in this world,*" 1 John 4 : 17.

How blessedly, how triumphantly has God cleared the whole ground for us. Oh, to be more in the enjoyment of these redemption triumphs ! This is freedom indeed.

### **The Standard for Holy Living.**

To "walk in the Spirit" is the only right measure of holy living for the Christian.

Do you enquire, 'What is it to walk in the Spirit?' It is to walk in communion with God the Father, by the Holy Ghost, having Christ as my

one object. Nor am I left in this to the sentimental fancies of my own mind, nor to the fickleness of my own impulses, nor to the bias of my religious likes and dislikes. The word of God must necessarily be my only chart. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word," Psalm 119:9. Look at the martyr Stephen for a blessed pattern of it. What engaged the attention of this man of God, "full of faith and power," this man full of the Holy Ghost? Two things. *The word of God on earth, and the Christ of God in glory*, Acts 6 and 7.

Many Christians fall into the serious mistake of making the moral law their standard of holy living. This statement may startle some; but let us explain. The law never gave man an object outside himself; grace does. If I am trying to keep the law for salvation, whom is it for? Myself. Yes; self is my real object.



If, when I have once possessed salvation, I am trying to keep the law in order to *retain* it, what is my object? For whom do I want to retain it? For *myself*, to be sure. Then self is my object. On the other hand, grace puts a *new object* before the saved one, and the Holy Ghost supplies a *new spring of action* entirely. Self is displaced by Christ, and human efforts by the Spirit's activities. "He died for all, that they which live should *not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him* which died for them, and rose again," 2 Cor. 5:15. And to this order of living the previous verse states, "*The love of Christ constraineth us.*"

'But I thought,' says some reader, 'that though we are not under the law for justification, we are under it for holy living.' No. There is no lower standard of holiness than "walking in the Spirit," and on this point the word of God could not possibly be plainer, "*If ye be led of*

*the Spirit, ye are not under the law,"*  
Gal. 5 : 18.

Now do not be alarmed, dear reader, about what we have been saying as to not being under the law. We are not fostering the lawless spirit of the age, nor granting to any one, much less the Christian, a licence to *break* the law. No, the very opposite. We heartily believe the teaching of God's word in Romans 8 : 4, which says that the righteous requirement of the law is "fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (New Translation.) Now we have seen (Gal. 5 : 18) that if we are led of the Spirit we are not under the law. So that it is as though the apostle had said, *The righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us who are* NOT UNDER THE LAW.

In order to make this a little plainer, let us take an illustration.

A man has a well of water near his house, and a splendid pump placed

over it. Although this pump is in itself a perfect piece of mechanism, he has for years never been able to get a drop of *good* water out of the well. Nay, the more he pumps the worse appears the water brought up.

One day a visitor in the locality, and an expert in such matters, tells the man that if he were to bore into a large rock close by he would get an ample supply of pure water. The experiment is tried, and after a few days' boring the expected spring is tapped, bringing forth a gushing stream of sparkling pure water.

Now do you think he will remove his pump from the bad well, and place it over that gushing stream? Certainly not. It is not that he has any fault to find with the pump. It is as good as ever it was. But he now gets from a new source, *without* the pump, what he could never get from the old source *by* the pump.

Now let us apply this simple figure,

“The law is not made for a righteous man,” 1 Tim. 1:9. In itself it is “holy, just, and good”; but when it was applied to man in the flesh, like the perfect pump applied to the polluted well, it only made manifest what was there.

What then was the requirement of the law?

Galatians 5:14 tells us: “All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt LOVE thy neighbour as thyself.” Yes, it *demand*ed love, but there came out perfect hatred; yea, hatred to the One who deserved nothing but love. “*They hated me without a cause.*” Yet these very people made their boast in the law. What a demonstration of the truth of the word, “The carnal mind is enmity against God.”

So much then for the *old* well, and the pump that made its polluted condition more and more apparent.

Let us now look at the other side. And what a refreshing contrast it is

to turn from the old to the *new*. But what, it may be asked, is the new spring? It is nothing less than the Spirit of God—the Spirit as life in the soul of a believer, John 4 : 14 ; John 20 : 22 ; Gal. 5 : 22–25.

And what do we get from this source?

Why, the first fruit produced by the Spirit is the very thing which the law demanded, but could not produce ; namely, LOVE. Compare Gal. 5 : 14 with 5 : 22.

Every one born of God *loves* (1 John 4 : 7, 8 ; 1 Cor. 13 : 1–3) ; but it is not love after a natural order at all. Man *naturally* loves because of what the object is. But that is not the way the Christian loves, at least it is not the only way. He loves not merely because of what he sees in *another* who is naturally amiable and attractive, but because of that which God has put into *him* ; that is, a new life—a life in the power of the Spirit.

God did not love us because of any merit in us to draw it out, but because of what was in Himself—because of what His own heart was. Our love, as Christians, is after the same order; it is *divine* in its character. So we read, “Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” 1 John 4:7. “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us,” 1 John 4:12. “We love Him, because He first loved us,” 1 John 4:19.

Thus we see that the love produced by God’s Spirit in us, is the very thing which the law demanded from us.

Henceforth we are exhorted to “walk in love”; that is, we are to allow the divine life—this life after a new creation order—to have, so to speak, its own way in us; we are to follow its divine instincts, and to find our happiness in its unhindered display. We are not to use our liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but *in*

LOVE *to serve one another*. The only thing that can now avail, says the apostle, is the "*faith which worketh by LOVE*," Gal. 5 : 6. In other words, the very thing which the law vainly demanded, grace has richly supplied. Thus the righteous requirement of the law will be fulfilled in us who are not under it—who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

What a blessed thing to be a Christian !

### **Dependence, not Effort, the Secret of Practical Freedom.**

A deadly serpent creeps into your house, and you are determined to deliver yourself from such a dangerous inmate. You strike him a sharp blow, but he still lives. 'Ah !' you say, 'I didn't strike him hard enough. Now I *will* give the death-blow.' No. Once more you are mistaken ; he soon recovers from the stroke. At last you use a more deadly weapon, deal

a heavier blow, and leave him dead at your feet.

Now, don't imagine that you can practically deal with the tendencies of your evil nature in this way. Every new victory will give you new power. But never imagine that you can, by persistent effort, get 'a once for all' victory over the workings of indwelling sin. Nothing will keep you, in each and every temptation, but absolute dependence on God, absolute distrust of self. And this will be true of every step from the moment you know yourself *judicially* clear of sin's condemnation and dominion, through what Christ accomplished at His first coming, until you are absolutely and bodily clear, because in perfect conformity to Himself in glory at His second coming.

The whole secret of present deliverance from sin's dominion lies in that word "GRACE."

God's activity of grace, through the death of His Son, cleared the



ground, as we have seen, of all that existed on the *world's* side of the cross to our condemnation, while the operation and indwelling of the Spirit of grace introduces us to all that lies on the *resurrection* side of it, to our everlasting blessing.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS.

Let us in conclusion briefly sum up what has been before us. We have seen that there are three great features of our freedom from sin.

1. From its penalty—judicially.
2. From its power—practically.
3. From its presence—absolutely.

1. We have seen that in Christ's death God has severed the believer's connection with all that is of the first man—severed him for ever judicially from "sin in the flesh"; and though it still remains within him, it has no part in the new "I." We have seen, that because we are now alive before

God in Him who exhausted sin's condemnation on the cross, there could not possibly remain any condemnation for us ; that before God, such a thing no more exists for us, than a second flood existed for Noah, when he came forth from the ark, and stood beside his altar a divinely favoured worshipper, with the rainbow in the heavens over his head.

2. We have seen how we are set free from its *power*. When, through bitterness of inward exercise under law, we have morally reached the point where we are brought to see that there is no remedy for the flesh, and no deliverance from it but in DEATH ; when we find that all our earnest struggles to get rid of it are useless, as all the pious efforts to improve it are worthless ; when we learn that God is neither expecting any good thing from it, nor asking us to bring a good thing out of it ; when we see that while the law demanded what we could never produce, and brought

us into bondage, grace brings to us, without a merit on our part, and as the free gift of God, all that *Christ* is worthy of, then sin's dominion is over ; we are no longer under law, but under grace.

The tree of Calvary, where an end was made to the flesh as before God, is the " tree " which makes the bitter waters sweet. Exodus 15 : 24. But we must taste the bitterness of the waters *without* the tree, before we learn their sweetness by its means. We have seen that Abraham went through that " very grievous " struggle of parting with Ishmael before he learned from God's own lips that Isaac was reckoned as his *only begotten son*, and that the son of the bondwoman—" born after the flesh "—had no more place in Abraham's house than if he had never existed, although, as a matter of fact, he survived Abraham nearly fifty years.

As to any expectation from the flesh, as to any confidence in it, or

any sympathy with it, we have *done with it*, we are morally free from it. Should it ever act again, it can only be evil. But we shall not get distressed because we find we have not got rid of it, nor be miserably disappointed because we cannot improve it. No; our distress will be that we have grieved the heart of our God and Father by an allowance of that which He gave His blessed Son to deliver us from, by lightly gratifying that which He saw no remedy for save in the cross of Jesus.

Our distress will not be that we have failed to make the flesh better, as though *it* was part of our new status before God; but that we have failed to keep the sentence of death upon it, failed to keep it under the condemnation which, at the cross, *God* righteously passed upon it. We are responsible to judge it as those who have no relationship with it, and who are no longer debtors to it.

3. Thus are we set free to anticipate with rest and delight the coming again of Him to whose precious sacrifice and death we owe our all for eternity; to hail with gladness that blessed morning of promise, when we shall be as free from sin's *presence* as we are now free from its condemnation. Perfect and personal conformity to Christ in glory is our sure and certain hope; and is, for us, the only actual freedom from the last remains of sin that Scripture speaks about.

“ All taint of sin shall be removed,  
All evil done away;  
And we shall dwell with God's beloved  
Through God's eternal day.”

Till that day may a closer walk with God be ours. Not content with a mere *negative* Christianity, may our one individual desire be that “ CHRIST SHALL BE MAGNIFIED ” in our bodies, “ whether it be by life or by death,”  
Phil. I : 20.

GEO. CUTTING