

“THE LIBERTY OF THE SONS OF GOD”

(Discourse below by R. L. Robie, 1914 Convention Report, Page 64.)

Text: Rom. 8:21 (R.V.) “Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory [glorious liberty] of the children of God.” Our text brings to our attention three important points; viz.: 1st, The bondage of corruption. 2nd, The deliverance therefrom. 3rd, The glorious liberty of the children of God. We can only speak briefly of each of these.

1st. *The bondage of corruption.* What a comprehensive statement is this, of the awful fact that by Adam’s disobedience the whole human race was plunged into condemnation and death. (Rom. 5:12, 18; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22.) How fully this has been exemplified in all the ages of the past. Note in the *Antediluvian Age*—Gen. 6:5, 11, 12. God saw that the thoughts of men were evil and that continually and violence filled the earth, and *in mercy* God took them all away (except Noah and his family) by the flood. Also in the *Patriarchal Age*—the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah became very great, and *in mercy* (as God saw good) He took them away by liberal fire. (Gen. 18:20; Ezek. 16:49, 50; Matt. 11:23, 24.) How in mercy? By hindering them from such terrible degeneracy that even restitution blessings would have no hope for them. Again in the *Jewish Age*—how has this bondage of corruption wrought its devastating work. (Psa. 51:5; 14:2, 3; Isa. 1:5, 6.) Born in sin—shapen in iniquity—none righteous, no, not one. A mass of corruption from head to foot. And in the *Gospel Age*—just a little further fallen into sin, until they are past all hope and without God in the world. (Rom. 3:10, 18, 23; Eph. 2:1, 2, 12.)

This is a terrible picture, but even this is not the worst, for this is only our heredity—and we each individually made the bad matter much worse by *our own willful sinfulness*. (Psa. 58:3.) How vividly we can recall the youthful perversity of our own hearts. Under such terrible conditions, how can anyone become a Christian, or get any blessing whatsoever?

2nd. *The deliverance therefrom.* It is only possible through the development of the gracious plan of God, for human salvation; first of all for the *Church* during this Gospel Age, *only*, and through them, for *all the world* during the Millennial Age. The important question then arises—Who constitute the Church? Manifestly not the membership of all the various denominations, nor of any one of them, for we recall Luke 12:32: *A Little Flock* while these are counted by many millions. The Church are the called-out ones—drawn by the Holy Spirit of God. (John 6:44.) But how can such a marvelous change of character be accomplished? Let us note the steps:

1st. God does not deal *with sinners*, but is angry with the wicked every day. Psalm 7:11—When their fear cometh He shall laugh at them. Psalm 2:4; 37:12, 13; Prov. 1:25-28, and will not hear their cry, John 9:31. Therefore, the all-important start from sin toward righteousness is,

2nd. A *genuine repentance* for sin—a real, godly sorrow, 2 Cor. 7:10, which leads,

3rd. To a *true conversion*—turning away from sin to the service of righteousness—doing right to the full extent of ability. Matt. 18:3; 3:8—Honest, truthful, moral, just. But all *these* do not make one a Christian. Repentance and conversion need to be well demonstrated by,

4th. *Restitution*—a making right to the extent of ability, all the wrongs of the past taking back the slanders previously uttered—correcting the injury so far as possible—paying back the unjust gains to the party wronged; as Zacchaeus (Luke 19:8) who restored fourfold. Next will come,

5th. An earnest, genuine *seeking after God*. (Psa. 27:8; 51:17.) Jesus gave us a beautiful parable clearly illustrating this attitude of heart—seeking after God. The prayers of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:10-14; Matt. 6:5). But still more forcible is the story of Cornelius, Acts 10—(a) He was a devout man, (b), feared God, with all his house, (c), gave much alms to the people, (d), prayed to God always, (Vs.2) and yet he was *not saved* (Acts 11:14). What did Cornelius need next?

6th. The *knowledge* of how to attain justification by a personal faith in Jesus Christ, as the only means of salvation. (John 14:6; Acts 4:12.) But Cornelius was a *Gentile*, and the Gospel had been preached exclusively to the Jews. (Matt. 10:5, 6.) Another important point often overlooked is the fact that Jesus did not preach even to the Jews in a way to convert them all, but just for the few true-hearted ones (Matt. 13:10-16), and all the rest were mercifully blinded—not to increase their responsibility and condemnation. And even after Jesus' death the Gospel had been preached only to the Jews for three and a half years, but now had come the time for a change of dispensation, and so God graciously regarded the devout prayers of Cornelius (Acts 10:4), and sent him, by a vision, directions how to proceed. God also graciously prepared Peter, asleep on the house-top, by a vision, to go to Cornelius with his message of grace. (Acts 10:9-20.)

7th. But do all who *hear the Word* of life get full blessing from it? Ah, no; many hear, but not to heed. It produces no appreciable good effect in life or character. Therefore,

8th. The Word must be *received* into good and honest hearts—must be *accepted* and *believed* sincerely. But *even this* does not make one a Christian; for Rom. 5:1 gives a summing up of the matter thus far, “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” [Comment: Rom. 5:1 does not apply fully until after full consecration and spirit begetting.] By the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus, our past sins are reckonedly covered, and we have *peace*. [Comment—see previous comment.] We are counted as back on the plane of human perfection where Adam was before he sinned—but was Adam a Christian? Surely not—he knew nothing of the grace in Jesus Christ.

But now let us consider Jesus himself. When born in the manger in Bethlehem, Jesus was *just a human being*—no more, no less. (John 3:6.) He was born of a fleshly woman, therefore *was flesh*. This agrees with John 1:14, “The Word was *made flesh*,” and with Phil. 2:6-8, “was made in the likeness of men.” Further than this, Jesus was *perfect* as a man (Heb. 7:26) “Holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.” (1 Pet. 2:22.) “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,” (2 Cor. 5:21) and so Jesus grew up entirely free from every taint of sin, and yet, until He was thirty years of age, *Jesus himself was not a Christian!* What is it, then, *to be a Christian?* *Christ means anointed*, and how did Jesus receive His anointing? He had seen in the Scriptures that He had a mission upon earth different from any other child ever born, and so He waited until He became a man, under the Jewish law, at thirty years of age. He then came and *offered himself* in the spirit of Psa. 40:7, 8, as a sacrifice for Adam (and all the race in him) to go down into death. As on the day of atonement the bullock was presented for sacrifice, Lev. 16:6, 11, so,

9th. Jesus *presented himself*—that was all He could do. But as the bullock must be *accepted*, so with Jesus.

10th. How do we know that God accepted Jesus as a sacrifice? We have *three* remarkable proofs—Matt. 3:16, 17. (1) The *voice* from Heaven saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (2) The *Heavens* were opened to Him—spiritual things were made plain to His understanding. (3) The visible (outward) manifestation of the Holy Spirit *like a dove* resting upon Him. We understand that these proofs were especially for the benefit of John the Baptist, in order that he might be a credible witness to the Messiah, and so the next day (John 1:29), John pointed out “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” But was that *all* there was of it? By no means.

11th. There was the *inward begetting* of Jesus to the new spiritual (divine) nature. Here Jesus was anointed. Here Jesus was *Christed*. Here *Jesus*, became *Jesus Christ*. Here Jesus became a Christian—the *first Member* of the *New Creation*. From that moment Jesus, as a man, was counted as sacrificed, His life to be actually laid down in God’s due time, and what would God be doing with Jesus Christ from that time on? He would be developing in Him the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23)—would be *perfecting* the New Creature (Heb. 2:10) and *teaching* Him obedience, (Heb. 5:8, 9)—and *testing* Him in all points (Heb. 4:15). Thus for 3½ years Jesus demonstrated His loyalty to the Father, even unto death, and finished His sacrifice on Calvary—John 19:30—the ransom price for Adam (and all the race.).

12th. After three days, *God raised Him from the dead*, not a *human* being, but a *spirit being*—whom He then *highly exalted* far above angels, principalities and powers. (Acts 2:24, 32, 33; 3:15; 5:31; Phil. 2:9-11), and made Him partaker of the Divine Nature (Rev. 1:8, 18; 3:21), and seated Him upon His Throne. Therefore, to become true sons of God, we must pass through the various steps up to a complete *consecration* (Rom. 12:1), the complete surrender of all that we have, or hope for, to be joint-sacrificers with Jesus

even unto death. Then, when accepted of the Father and begotten of the Holy Spirit, we really start in the Christian race for the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, and in due time we shall be “glorified together with Him.” (Rom. 8:17, 18.)

When fully in the race for the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, we, for the first time in our lives, have *true liberty*—freedom from the bondage of corruption, and the author of this bondage, the adversary, “That wicked one toucheth him not.” We have freedom to cultivate all the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit, and to be filled with the joy, peace, comfort and blessing that these give—a present possession of priceless value, with the promise of “joys beyond compare,” in the early future at the fruition of our hopes. Freedom from the worry and fret of the world, even in the discharge of the necessary worldly cares—a “rest that remaineth to the people of God”—a “peace that floweth like a river,” and that nothing can disturb. (Psalm 119:165.) Freedom to serve the Truth and brethren, even to the laying down of our lives. How glorious is such a liberty!

Still another grandly important part of my subject, but of which I have not time to speak today, is that of the sons of God on the earthly plane, to be developed during the Millennial Age. Suffice it to say, however, that the liberty of the glory (the glorious liberty) of the sons of God, is the liberty of the Truth. (John 8:32) “Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free”—then shall ye be free indeed.