

THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS

by

C. I. Scofield, D. D.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE DELIVERED LIFE

TEXT: **“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”** (John 8:36).

THE most widespread and universal of the delusions current among men is the notion that they are free. No imputation is more quickly, more vehemently resented than the imputation of slavery, of bondage. There are no free men. Millions, thank God, are in the process of emancipation, but none are yet completely emancipated.

Paul told the Roman chief captain that he was born free. In the limited sense in which he used the word it was true; Paul was born a Roman citizen. But in every other important sense the words were not true, as Paul would have been the first to admit.

Like all of us, Paul inherited chains. For centuries that mysterious force, heredity, had been silently, invisibly, preparing bonds for him—bonds for spirit, soul, body. Every soul born into the world is born into an invisible net which the centuries have been weaving for him. Its meshes are race predisposition, race habit, family habit, sin, formal religion, and, “they say.”

Think of the men to whom Christ was talking when He uttered the words of our text. **“We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man.”** They spoke honestly enough, as we do when we boast of our freedom, but at that moment they were in political, intellectual and religious bondage.

Politically, they were under bondage to an assortment of despots from Caesar down to Herod and Pilate. Morally, they were the slaves of race pride, of prejudice, of ignorance, of habit, of sin, of self-will. Religiously, they were the slaves of traditionalism, of bigotry, of formalism.

WE ARE SLAVES OF PARTY

Is our case better? Very slightly. Theoretically, we are free politically. Actually, we are the slaves of party, of the caucus, of the bosses. The very minute I give over into the hands of a convention the right to formulate my political creed I am no longer absolutely free. When I take my opinions, my convictions, concerning morals or religion second-hand from other men, whether they are men of today or men of the Reformation period, or of the early church councils, I am no longer free.

When I allow a habit to dominate my life, I am no longer free. When I allow pride or vanity, or ambition, or pleasure to control my life, I am the basest of slaves. The very fact that I do not, cannot, of myself, cease from sin proclaims me a slave. Jesus Christ came into a world of slaves.

CHRIST THE EMANCIPATOR

It is interesting to note that His first formal announcement of His mission on earth touched life at that very point. In the synagogue at Nazareth there was handed to Him the book of the Prophet Isaiah, and He found the place where it was written: **“The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach . . . deliverance to the captives.”**

He begins with our slavery to sin. And here He encounters an initial difficulty. The man whom He would set free is not only a slave, but a condemned slave. He is a slave, exposed for sale, but with a halter round his neck. Who will redeem him? Nay, rather, who can redeem him? Not his brother man, for he too is a slave with a halter round his own neck. “What is the price of this slave? of that one?” One price for all.

Whoever will redeem these slaves must die in their stead. And, obviously, only one who has never sinned, and who is himself perfectly free, can be accepted. Only one being has ever appeared who met these necessary conditions—Jesus Christ. And, to pay that price is the very business that brought Jesus Christ to this earth. At the cost of His own life, of His own unimaginable suffering, He pays the last demand of a holy law and redeems from death the slaves of sin.

Are they free from the curse of the law? Yes. From the habit of sin? No.

Then begin those great redemptive processes which work in the sphere of the inner life, the object of which is the transformation of character and complete deliverance from the dominion of sin.

THE PROCESS OF DELIVERANCE

It begins with the complete removal of fear. The believer is told that he is not under law, that is, a system of probation to see if he can work out a righteousness for himself, but under grace, that is, a system of divine inworking, which produces the very righteousness which the law required, but which man never achieved.

The believer is assured that Christ has given to him eternal life, and that he shall never perish; that nothing is able to pluck him out of the omnipotent hand which holds him; that He who began a good work in him will perfect it till the day of Christ. As for his sins; they are blotted out, cast behind God’s back, buried in the depths of the sea, forgiven and forgotten. And this is a necessary first work, for no man is really free who is under the bondage of fear.

Then grace imparts to the believer the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The nature that was open to every assault from without, and a slave to every vile impulse from within is now garrisoned by omnipotence. In the power of that indwelling One, the believer is made free from the monstrous necessity of sinning under which every unredeemed life groans. No Christian needs to sin. If he yields to solicitations from without, or the more subtle suggestions from within, it is because he deliberately or carelessly wills it so. The Spirit is there to break the power of sin.

GRACE AND THE INSPIRATION OF NEW RELATIONSHIP

Then grace puts the renewed life under the stimulus and inspiration of great relationships. The believer is not merely a pardoned criminal, he is a child and son of God; and that by a new birth which is as actual in the sphere of the spiritual as his natural birth was in the sphere of the physical. He is a son of God, not by some far-off fact of creation, but by the immediate and personal fact of a divine begetting. He no longer traces his descent from God through Adam, but is, as Adam was, a son of God with no intervening ancestor.

This, the believer is told, brings him into the wonderful privileges of access to the Father, and of fellowship with Him. Christ is not ashamed to call him **“brother”**; he is raised to joint heirship with Christ in all things, and is to share the power and glory of Christ in the coming kingdom.

Grace confers upon the believer the great offices of priest and king.

As priest he is set free from the ancient formalism in the worship of God **“entering into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,”** and offering, without regard to time or place, **“spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ.”**

His worship, freed from ceremonialism, is a son’s adoration of a Father who is infinite in holiness and benevolence and power, but who is nonetheless a Father because He is God. And this office of priest carries of necessity the privilege of intercession. The believer-priest prays for those outside the family of God who do not pray for themselves. He, like Christ, is the daysman and remembrancer before his Father of the unbelieving world.

Grace tells the believer that he is as vitally united to Christ as the members of his own body are united to him. **“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”** **“He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit.”**

WHAT TRUE FREEDOM IS

But Christian freedom is not anarchy, which is the mere riot of self-will, but it is to be so joined to God the Father; so vitally one with Christ the Son; so yielded to the gentle sway of the Holy Spirit, that the human will is blended into the divine will, and so made one with the absolutely free and sovereign will of God Himself. God does as He wills, but God always wills to do that which is at once absolutely right and absolutely benevolent.

And in all this there is no subversion of the believer’s individuality, but the lifting of that individuality to the divine level of a passionate love of all that is lovely.

It is obedience, but obedience under the new covenant, where the law is written in the heart, like mother-love. A mother finds her highest joy in obedience to that imperative born into her deepest being with the birth of her child.

No truly honest man feels the constraint of the laws against theft. He is not honest because of something printed in a statute book, but because of something printed on his heart. He would still be honest if the statute were repealed. And therefore he is perfectly free. Without that interior work no external thing done to a man makes or can make him free. Executive clemency extended to a convicted criminal does not make him a free man. He is still the slave of his criminal desires. But if he falls in love with honesty and uprightness and integrity, then he is free. All this transformation grace works in the redeemed heart.

THE NEW IDEAL OF LIFE

Then grace works transformingly by the power of new and exalted ideals. The whole conception of life is changed. Under the old bondage life was conceived of as a possession which man might rightly use for himself; under the new ideal, life is precious because it may be used for the blessing of others.

The new man in Christ has accepted as the new ideal of his new life Christ's law of sacrifice. He heartily adopts Christ's formula:

- **“The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”;**
- **“He that will save his life shall lose it, but he that will lose his life for my sake, shall find it”;**
- **“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”**

Such an ideal, heartily accepted, under the conviction that so only may life be nobly lived, works of itself toward disenthralment from the old slavery of self. Pursued, though with many a failure, and with steps which often halt, such an ideal is a transformation.

The man who accepts it has issued to the universe his declaration of independence. He is free from the old appeals and solicitations which had power over him because they seemed to promise something toward the old monstrous ministry to the god self. No longer desiring self-exaltation or self-pleasing, the bribe has ceased to appeal. Its presentment only causes pain to the heart that has fallen in love with humility.

THE VISION OF ETERNITY

Then grace allures and charms with the vision of eternal things. Paul divides all things into two categories, things seen and things unseen, and he declares that the seen things have the fatal defect of being temporary, while the unseen things have the infinite value of eternal endurance.

Believing this, the new man in Christ sits lightly to things seen.

They become the mere incidents of life, not its substance.

Of this world's goods he may have much, and he is glad because they can be used to enrich other lives; or he may gather little, and he is glad because he has not the responsibility of the right use of great possessions. His true inheritance is in heaven. And in and through all this the Son has made him free.

Walking in the Spirit, the Lord's freeman has but to heed the exhortation, "**Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.**"

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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