

**The Gospel of John (74);
“The hour has come” (2)**

Introduction:

The last time that we were examining this Gospel of John, we were considering John 12:20-36. It speaks of Jesus soon to be “lifted up”, which refers to His being glorified, being inaugurated as the promised and enthroned Messianic King. This lifting up of Jesus is not to be understood to be only of His resurrection and ascension into heaven to be seated as the promised King over Israel, the inaugurated kingdom of God. But rather, the glorification of Jesus Christ began to take place in His suffering and dying upon His cross that lead to having been seated on the right hand of God the Father. Jesus being lifted up speaks first of His cross, but also of His resurrection from the dead and ascension to the throne of God. Today we will consider further the meaning and implications of His glorification upon His cross.

Let us again read **John 12:20-36**.

²⁰Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. ²¹Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

²³But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

²⁷“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify Your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.”

²⁹Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to Him.”

³⁰Jesus answered and said, “This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³²And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” ³³This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

³⁴The people answered Him, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

³⁵Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. ³⁶While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

When we began to consider this episode last time, we gave much attention to the inclusion of Gentiles into the kingdom of God through the death of Jesus Christ upon His cross. We read in verses 20 through 22 that certain Greeks (Gentiles) desired to see and speak with Jesus. But our Lord had been sent principally to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, not Gentiles. Because of God’s covenant relationship through Moses with the nation of Israel, The Gentile nations had been excluded from any hope of salvation (apart from a Gentile becoming somewhat a Jew as a proselyte). Gentiles had been excluded from God’s promises. But that was about to be remedied through the death of Christ. A great change in God’s dealings with His world occurred when Jesus died on His cross. Gentiles were afterward granted free access to receive salvation in Jesus Christ, in the same way as the Jews, that is through faith in the

Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote of this in Ephesians 2:11ff when he was addressing the church at Ephesus, a church comprised largely of Gentile Christians. He wrote:

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹²that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. (Eph. 2:11-18)

In the Mosaic covenant God had set apart the Jews of the nation of Israel as His people. In doing so God had barred Gentiles from coming to know God covenantally as the Jews had known Him. But because the Jews had broken that Mosaic covenant, showing themselves to be guilty sinners as the Gentiles, God through His mercy and grace was free and just to extend mercy to both Jews and Gentiles, since there was no longer any distinction between them.

Notice in the words we read above that Paul declared to Gentile Christians, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13). He was declaring that the death of Christ on His cross was what had secured their blessed state of coming to God through Jesus Christ. This is exactly what our Lord Jesus was declaring in John 12:23ff, when He had heard that certain Greeks wished to see Him.

²³But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

The Greeks (Gentiles) wished to see Jesus, but before He could receive them fully into His kingdom, Jesus had to die to bring a full end to the Mosaic covenant that had kept them distinguished and distanced from the Jews. Through His inauguration of a new covenant centered in His shed blood, all people everywhere could become citizens of the Kingdom of God through faith in and submission to its King, Jesus Christ.

Now we had proposed an outline to address this passage. Here it is once again:

1. The desire and request of “the Greeks” (12:20, 21)
2. Jesus speaks of the necessity of His cross in order to inaugurate and advance His kingdom (12:22-26)
3. Jesus’ appeal for help from His Father to endure His cross (12:27, 28)
4. The Father purposed to glorify Jesus before the people through His cross (12:29-33)
5. Jesus exhorts those Jews who heard Him to believe that which they had been taught and had witnessed regarding Him (12:34-36).

We had begun to work through this outline, but we only covered the first 1½ of the 5 points. And so, before we move on to the third, let us say something more regarding our Lord’s words in **verses 24 through 26**.

II. Jesus speaks of the necessity of His cross in order to inaugurate and advance His kingdom (12:23-26) (continued)

After Jesus first declared that His time to be glorified had arrived (v. 23), He taught that the same principle that governed His life, should govern everyone's life, in fact, it must govern the life of one who desires to have eternal life. Jesus said,

²⁴Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

In verse 24 we see that Jesus *first* stated the principle which directed Him to His cross. *Secondly*, in verse 25 He applied this principle universally to all people everywhere. And then *thirdly*, in verse 26 Jesus appealed to His disciples to apply this principle in the way that they lived for Him. Let us consider these matters and their implications for us.

1. The principle that directed Jesus in His life (12:24).

Jesus said in **verse 24**, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.”* Our Lord had just declared that His “hour had come” (v. 20). This was His reaction and response to certain Greeks (non-Jews) who wished to see Him. In order for Jesus to bring in a great harvest of souls, even “much grain”, He would have to die.

Jesus had taught His disciples on several occasions that His death would be the culmination of His ministry; it was the determined destiny of His life to die. Actually there are three recorded incidents when the Lord Jesus made this quite clear to His disciples prior to their arrival to Jerusalem and the final week of His ministry.

The *first* occasion was immediately after Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16). This occurred in the upper regions of Galilee--Caesarea Philippi. After the Lord Jesus pronounced Peter as “blessed”, for the Father had revealed this truth to Him, Jesus spoke explicitly of His coming death at Jerusalem. We read of our Lord's response to His disciples in **Matthew 16:20-21**.

²⁰Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

²¹From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

The *second* occasion is recorded in the next chapter of Matthew. Jesus and His disciples were still in the region of Galilee on this occasion. We read in **Matthew 17:22**, “Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, ‘The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.’”

On the *third* occasion that Jesus spoke directly to His disciples of His death that would take place at Jerusalem was toward the end of His ministry when He and His disciples were on their final journey to Jerusalem. We read in **Luke 18:31-332**,

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. ³²For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. ³³They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”

These were the three occasions when our Lord spoke directly and clearly to His disciples regarding His suffering and death on His cross. But there were many other occasions in which Jesus had intimated

of His death, but that the disciples did not receive or understand until after His resurrection from the dead. Then, being taught by the risen Lord Jesus and being illuminated by the Holy Spirit they saw that His death on His cross was the primary goal and purpose of His earthly life and ministry. Here is a description of our Lord's many allusions to His death and then of His change to more direct teaching of the matter after Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Not till an advanced period in His public ministry—not, in fact, till it was drawing to a close—did Jesus speak plain, unmistakable terms of His *death*. The solemn event was foreknown by Him from the first; and He betrayed His consciousness of what was awaiting Him by a variety of occasional allusions. These earlier utterances, however, were all couched in mystic language. They were of the nature of riddles, whose meaning became clear after the event, but which before, none could, or at least did, read. Jesus spake now of a temple, which, if destroyed, He should raise again in three days¹; at another time of lifting up the Son of man, like unto that of the brazen serpent in the wilderness²; and on yet other occasions, of a sad separation of the bridegroom from the children of the bridechamber³, of the giving of His flesh for the life of the world⁴, and for a sign like that of the prophet Jonah, which should be given in His own person to an evil and adulterous generation.⁵

At length, after the conversation in Caesarea Philippi, Jesus changed His style of speaking on the subject of His sufferings, substituting for dark, hidden allusions, plain, literal, matter-of-fact statements. This change was naturally adapted to the altered circumstances in which He was placed...

Before the disciples were established in the doctrine of Christ's person, the doctrine of the cross might have scared them away altogether. Premature preaching of a Christ to be crucified might have made them unbelievers in the *fundamental* truth that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. Therefore, in consideration of their weakness, Jesus maintained a certain reserve respecting His sufferings, till their faith in Him as the Christ should have become sufficiently rooted to stand the strain of the storm soon to be raised by a most unwelcome, and incomprehensible announcement. Only after hearing Peter's confession was He satisfied that the strength necessary for enduring the trial had been attained.⁶

The fact of His dying was before Jesus throughout His entire ministry. He stated that this is what drove Him. He said in verse 27 of our passage, "But for this purpose (to die) I came to this hour." And when we consider this statement, we may recall that whenever our Lord declared that His hour had not yet come⁷, He was in effect pointing to this time when He would finally declare, "The hour has come" (12:23). Jesus came in order to die. This is what the Father had sent Him to do. This is what He was committed to do.

But it was necessary for His death to occur, for again, He said in **verse 24**, "***Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.***"

¹ John 2:19

² John 2:14

³ Matthew 9:15

⁴ John 6

⁵ Matthew 16:4

⁶ A. B. Bruce, **The Training of the Twelve** (Kregel Publications, 1971), pp. 173f.

⁷ The Gospel writer had declared on a number of occasions that His hour had not yet come. Jesus had first told His mother at the wedding in Cana, Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? ***My hour has not yet come***" (2:4). In John 7, when His enemies sought to capture Him, John wrote, "Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, ***because His hour had not yet come***" (7:30). And in John 8:20, we read this summary statement regarding our Lord, "These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for ***His hour had not yet come.***"

If a grain of wheat be not put into the spoil, it will, indeed, not die, but it will then “itself remain alone” and produce nothing. So will the Son of man remain alone if He does not stoop to death on the cross. But if the grain falls into the earth, dies, and is consumed, it brings forth much fruit. So the Son of man, God’s incarnate Son, by dying will produce millions of children of God, fruit in most glorious abundance. “The death of Christ was the death of the most fertile grain of wheat” (Augustine). In the petition of these Greeks Jesus sees the great harvest that will go on and on as the product of the great Grain of Wheat (Himself) which fell in the earth.⁸

Jesus’ mission as the promised Messianic King of Israel did not conform to Jewish expectations. To them a king conquers through craft, cleverness, valor, and power. But Jesus would come into His reign through suffering and death. It seemed so incongruent, so unreasonable, and so futile to imagine such a thing. How could this be so? In setting forth this truth our Lord Jesus, as He customarily did, drew upon an illustration that is common in this world. A grain of wheat must go into the earth to die in order to bring forth life (germinate). And so, Jesus would need to die in order to bring life to all those who would be citizens of His everlasting Kingdom.

But throughout His earthly ministry, even on those occasions when He explicitly taught this truth to His disciples, His disciples resisted and even rejected His words. Do you recall Peter’s reaction and response when Jesus *first* drew from Peter his confession that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and then He told them that “He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day” (Matt. 16:21)? We read:

Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ***“Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”***

But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” (Matt. 16:22-23).

But then on the *second* occasion that Jesus forthrightly taught His disciples of His death at Jerusalem, we read of the reaction of the disciples, “And they were exceedingly sorrowful.” (Matt. 17:23). But the suggestion is that His disciples had not fully comprehended what He was teaching them. This is more clear to us on the *third* occasion that Jesus told His disciples of His fate in Jerusalem as recorded in the Gospel of Luke, when we read of the ignorance of the disciples to understand His words. Here is the account:

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. ³²For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. ³³They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”

³⁴***But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.*** (Luke 18:31-34)

This principle of Jesus denying Himself characterized His entire life. He was willing to obey His Father’s will in suffering and death as the pathway to His throne. He lived a life of denying Himself and His own will in order to serve others and do the will of His Father in heaven. But His disciples either did not understand what He meant, or they seemed to push it out of their thoughts.

⁸ R. C. H. Lenski, **The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel** (Augsburg Publishing, 1942), p. 862. Lenski included at the end of this paragraph: “The present tenses in the apodosis are timeless, as often in maxims, R. 1019.” What he meant by this is that R., being A. T. Robertson, indicated that the present tense verbs in the apodosis, the conclusion of the conditional sentence (“dies”, “produces”), indicates that this statement of Jesus is a maxim that is true at all times in every place.

But then Jesus further stated that...

2. This principle should govern all people in God's world (12:25).

Jesus said in **verse 25**, "*He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*" This is a great paradox, for people assume that only if you love your life supremely, only then will you will keep it or preserve it. The world and our own fallen thinking tells us, "If you seek what is best for you, placing yourself and your interests above all others' well-being and interests, you will do well." But this is actually the essential nature of sin. It in effect says, "I will do first and foremost what I want to do, what I prefer to do, and what I think will be best from me and mine." It is this insistence:

"I will be the lord of my life. And you and I will get along as long as you go along with my interests and concerns, otherwise, I walk."

The Lord Jesus declared that is the prescription of a loser: "*He who loves his life will lose it.*" In the one eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is place for only one Lord, one King, and it is not for you or me. But what is amazing, is that just as our Lord Jesus *hated* His life, that is, He recoiled and rejected any idea of being self-serving, insisting on His own way apart from the will of His Father, so it is that every one of His disciples, who orders his life as He did, will also one day share in His eternal reign. Jesus said, "*And he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*"

If you go through life insisting on having your way, because you have determined that you are the Lord of your own existence, you will be damned forever. "*He who loves his life will lose it.*" If you go through life, however, denying yourself in order to do the will of God, to please Him, this life of faith will give way to eternal life—"and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." It is not just counsel for the Christian, although it is certainly that, but this principle is true of all people everywhere on the face of God's earth.

The other Gospel writers affirmed this very central teaching of our Lord Jesus to His disciples. We read in the Gospel of **Matthew** this call to those who would be His disciples.

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?'" (Matt. 16:24-26)

Mark and **Luke** expressed our Lord's words similarly (Mark 8:34-37; Luke 9:23-25). Next Lord's Day, Lord willing, we will speak more directly of how our Lord's experience and His words expressed in our passage of John 12:20ff instructs us on how we are to follow our Master.

3. Jesus appealed to His disciples to apply this principle in living for Him (12:26).

Jesus declared in **verse 26** to all who were or would become His disciples, "*If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.*"

All true Christians are *disciples* of Jesus Christ. All true disciples of Jesus Christ are *servants* of Jesus Christ. All true servants of Jesus Christ are *followers* of Jesus Christ. But more specifically, what is a servant of Jesus Christ? It sets forth the Christian as a *slave* of Jesus Christ.

Now there are many various words that set forth the nature of our relationship with God in Christ. We are, of course, *children* of our heavenly Father (cf. John 1:12). As such we are also set forth as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, who is the firstborn (eldest) Son within the family of God (cf. James 4:11). When we think of ourselves as the children of God, we may anticipate a blessed state of glory as

His children when we pass into His presence (cf. Rom. 8:21). All Christians are *citizens* of the Kingdom of God. As Christians were also called *priests* and *kings* (cf. Rev. 1:6), as well as *ambassadors* (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20). Every Christian, every (true) local Christian church, as well as the entire universal church is a *temple*, in which the Holy Spirit dwells and God manifests His presence. There are many terms that the Holy Scriptures use to convey to us the nature and blessedness of knowing God through Jesus Christ. But when we speak of the nature of our Christian devotion to Jesus Christ, the Bible frequently refers to as *servants*, or even better, *slaves* of Jesus Christ.

There is a book available entitled *Slave of Christ*.⁹ The subtitle of this book is, *A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ*. The author, **Murray Harris**, wrote of this metaphor in the New Testament. After first setting forth certain negative features that are commonly associated with slavery, he wrote this of its use in the New Testament when it describes Christians as slaves (servants) of Jesus Christ:

In its description of figurative slavery to Christ, the New Testament has eradicated those negative features that attached to the notion of slavery, so that the metaphor has become a wholly positive image depicting the believer's exclusive devotion to the Lord Christ. As used of all Christian believers, the term *doulos* (Greek for "slave") is not partially sweet and partially sour, but totally sweet.¹⁰

John MacArthur also wrote a book on this theme, which is entitled, *Slave; The Hidden Truth about Your Identity in Christ*.¹¹ He wrote of this important metaphor that depicts the true Christian:

Time and time again throughout the pages of Scripture, believers are referred to as *slaves of God* and *slaves of Christ*. In fact, whereas the outside world called them "Christians," the earliest believers repeatedly referred to themselves in the New Testament as the Lord's slaves. For them, the two ideas were synonymous. To be a Christian was to be a slave of Jesus Christ.¹²

Actually the written Word of God depicts every human being as a slave. But as a slave, every individual is either a slave to sin, which is his master, or he is a slave to Jesus Christ, who is his Lord. There is no other category. Every human being who has ever lived in this word has been a slave. Paul wrote of this quite clearly and forthrightly in Romans 6.

¹⁶Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves *slaves* to obey, you are that one's *slaves* whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

¹⁷But God be thanked that though you were *slaves of sin*, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸And having been set free from sin, you became *slaves of righteousness*. ¹⁹I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as *slaves of uncleanness*, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as *slaves of righteousness* for holiness.

²⁰For when you were *slaves of sin*, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²²But now having been set free from sin, and *having become slaves of God*, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. (Rom. 6:16-22)

⁹ Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ; A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ*. (Intervarsity Press, 1999), 224 pp.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 142.

¹¹ John MacArthur, *Slave; The Hidden Truth about Your Identity in Christ* (Thomas Nelson, 2010), pp. 227. Interestingly, in MacArthur's preface he indicated that this rather ignored or forgotten metaphor of the Christian as a slave was brought to his mind while on a plane reading Harris' book listed above.

¹² Ibid, pp. 12f.

You are either a slave of sin—it is your master, or you are a slave of God, Jesus Christ is your Master. The servitude to sin results in death and damnation. Servitude to Christ, to serve righteousness, a life of faithful obedience to Jesus Christ, results in everlasting life. Of course our slavery to Jesus Christ is a pleasant, voluntary submission to Him as our Master. And so Jesus says to us,

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹**Take My yoke upon you** and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰**For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**” (Matt. 11:28-30)

Sin is a hard taskmaster. Jesus Christ is a pleasant Master to serve. It is joy and peace serving Him. It is hard and difficult in serving self, in serving sin.

Now there is a sense in which Jesus Christ purchased us from slavery to sin and we were set free. There is a prophecy of the coming Messiah that He would set the captives free. We read in Isaiah 61:1 that when He came He would “proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *those who are bound.*” And the Lord Jesus commencing His ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth declared that this prophecy was being fulfilled that day (Cf. Luke 4:17-21). But upon being set free, we willingly chose to indenture ourselves to our Savior. The very word *redeem* or *redemption* carries the idea of being purchased out of slavery. We had sold ourselves under slavery to sin and Satan. We were his possessions and his servants when we were living according to our own wills. The reason that we had become his slaves is because we had become debtors to God when we had broken His law. We owed Him retribution for His honor having been denied him and for having stolen from him His possessions by right of creation, that is ourselves. And because we had nothing for which we could repay Him for our offenses, we were sold into slavery as debtors sold into the slave market. Christ through His death satisfied the debt we owed God's holy justice. Our sins having been paid for, we were set free from sin's penalty and power. And with what cost did He purchase us? It was with the purchase price of His own life—paid for in blood.

But then we voluntarily indenture ourselves to our Master, Jesus Christ. We are as that slave in the Old Testament who, when given a choice of departing from his master or remaining his slave, he chose to continue his servitude. Here is **Exodus 21:2-6**.

²If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. ³If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he *comes in* married, then his wife shall go out with him. ⁴If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. ⁵But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ ⁶then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.¹³

Charles Spurgeon once gave a sermon entitled, “Freedom at Once and For Ever.” What stimulated his message was the news of Brazil in 1888 as the last nation in the western world to abolish slavery. He opened his message in a way that we could probably apply today to much of the internet:

I do not know whether you generally read the daily newspaper. I think we might get up a “Society for the Suppression of Useless knowledge.” A great deal that appears in the newspapers amounts only to that, and much time is wasted thereon; but sometimes we get a gem amongst the news, and to my mind there was a gem contained in a Reuter's telegram, from Rio Janeiro, May 10th: — “The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies has voted the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery in Brazil.” My heart rejoiced as I read that paragraph. I hope it does not mean that this vote

can be defeated in some other Chamber, or the abolition be prevented by some other power; but if it means that slavery is to be immediately and unconditionally abolished in Brazil, I call upon you all to thank God, and rejoice in his name. Wherever slavery exists, it is an awful curse; and the abolition of it is an unspeakable blessing.

All free men should praise God, and especially those whom Christ has made free, for they are “free indeed.”¹⁴

But in his application, Spurgeon pressed upon His hearers that if any were there enslaved to sin, they could be immediately set free by Jesus Christ.

So the proclamation which I have to make to-night concerns *immediate liberation*. You have been the slave of sin long enough; you need not be sin’s slave any longer. Christ has not come to work out for you a deliverance which will take hours, days, weeks, or months, to complete; he has come to knock your fetters off with a single stroke, and to set you free at once. If his gracious power is manifested in this assembly, the former slave of sin will go out of the Tabernacle door free; not half-free, with one or two of his fetters broken, but there shall be for him immediate liberty. It does not take any time to work in the human heart the great change which is called regeneration. There may be a great many things going before it, and coming after it, which take up much time; but to pass from death to life is the work of an instant. It must be so. If a man is dead, and he is made alive, there can be no interval between the state of death and the state of life. There must be a second in which the transition takes place. When a blind man’s eyes are opened, it may be that he does not see for some time very clearly; but there is an instant in which the first beam of light enters the eye, and falls upon the retina, and in which the eye becomes conscious of the power of light. So, in a moment, while I am speaking, the Lord can save you. In an instant, ye slaves of sin and Satan, he can make you free! It is the immediate abolition of slavery that I have to proclaim to you.¹⁵

But again, upon being set free, we desire to be with this One who has done so much for us, who expended His life’s blood to redeem us from our slavery to sin with all its misery and fearful destiny. We are desirous to follow Jesus as the demoniac of Gadara who had been so long enslaved to demons but then set free by Jesus. We read that when Jesus was getting into the boat to depart from that region, then “he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him” (Mark 5:18). This is the heart’s desire of the Christian. Our Lord denied that to him on that occasion, but here in John 12:26 our Lord promises that all His servants. The Lord declared the wonderful privilege and benefit that He bestows on His servants. Again He said, “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, *there My servant will be also.*” We will be with Him.

And if that were not enough, He adds this promise: “*If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.*” What? Honor conferred upon a slave? Yes, even by God the Father Himself. On the Day of Judgment the Lord Jesus will reward His faithful “servants”, or slaves. In the parable of the talents, Jesus said that on that Day He will be as the Master of His household, who calls His servants forward to give an accounting of their stewardship. We all desire and look forward to hear His words, “Well done, good and faithful servant (slave); you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matt. 25:21).

“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God,
be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (1 Timothy 1:17)

¹⁴ Charles Spurgeon, **The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit**, vol. 40 (Pilgrim Publications, 1975), p. 349.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 350.