

A Fresh Look at Christian Liberty #6

Christian Liberty

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Bible Text: Luke 1:74-75; Romans 12:1

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Change of Voice:

Now, may I encourage you to turn with me in your Bibles to the gospel according to Luke and chapter one? Did Time permit, I would love to read the entirety of chapter one and half of chapter two, but that would not be the part of wisdom. The time may come when our Bibles are taken from us and we will meet in hovels and in secret and we would welcome anyone to read two chapters of the Word of God. One good baptism of blood, my brethren, and all this dittyism and all this let's play games in our churches will be swept away and God's true people will hunger and thirst for every word they can receive from the living God.

But here, then, as I read a portion of chapter one beginning at verse 57 and we will sketch in the setting of that when we get into the exposition, but we pick up the reading at verse 57 of Luke chapter one.

Now Elisabeth's time was fulfilled that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and her kinsfolk heard that the Lord had magnified his mercy towards her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him Zacharias, after the name of the father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, blessing God. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea. And all that heard them laid them up in their heart, saying, What then shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him.

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; For he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people, And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of his servant David (As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old), Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To show mercy towards, our fathers, And to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he spake unto Abraham our father, To grant unto us that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies Should serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him all our days. Yea and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High: For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people In the remission of their sins, Because of the tender mercy of our God, Whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us, To shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death; To guide our feet into the way of peace. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.¹

“Give me liberty or give me death.”

Those famous words of the fiery statesman and patriot and orator Patrick Henry were the words that galvanized many to seek liberty from the British crown leading to what we now call the revolutionary war or our war of independence.

At the head of the three words were the watchwords of the French Revolution is the word liberty. Some years ago when some of us were actually alive, Martin Luther King, Jr. stood amidst thousands in Washington, DC and concluded his now famous speech, “I have a dream,” with these words. “Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, we shall be free at last.”

Well, whatever our sentiments or convictions may be regarding the freedom desired and sought in the words of Patrick Henry, in the slogan of the French Revolution or in the language of Martin Luther King, it is clear that men passionately desire that freedom and liberty in the political and in the social realm reflected in the words that I have quoted to you. And yet any words seeking liberty, proclaiming liberty pale into relative insignificance before the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who addressing that theme of liberty said these words.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind, To set at liberty them that are bruised.²

¹ Luke 1:57-80.

² Luke 4:18.

Here our Lord Jesus in his opening sermon in his home town of Nazareth made claim by quoting from the prophet Isaiah that central to his mission as the anointed Messiah was the proclamation of release to captives and liberty to the bruised. Therefore, wherever the biblical record of the ministry, of the person and the work of Jesus Christ is taken seriously, wherever it is proclaimed accurately and faithfully, the theme of Christian liberty is bound to come into the cross hairs of the focus of our thinking and of our spiritual experience. And in the light of that, I have embarked upon a series of sermons which I have entitled, "A Fresh Look at the Doctrine of Christian Liberty."

And I asserted in that opening study, this is study number six, that we are utterly incapacitated. We are totally without the stuff of making accurate judgments about the things we normally associate with the doctrine of Christian liberty, that is, the adiaphora, things indifferent. What shall I do and not do? Where shall I go and not go? What shall I eat or drink or not eat or drink? With respect to things neither clearly commanded nor forbidden by the Word of God, I say we are in no position to think accurately about those issues until we back up and come to grips with two massive blocks of biblical data that form the foundation of accurate thinking about that particular subset of Christian liberty. And I have set before you those two massive blocks of biblical data. We considered, first of all, the nature of our real bondage and slavery in Adam. All of us by nature are born slaves. We love as slaves and until Jesus Christ himself opens the prison house, we are enslaved, whether we feel our chains, whether we recognize our chains, whether we acknowledge the prison in which we are bound, the Scripture tells us in Adam every one of us is a slave. We are by nature the real slaves of sin. We are the real slaves of the world. We are the real slaves of the devil. We are the real slave of the idol of self and we are real slaves to the fear of death.

Each one of those assertions was established by expounding specific, explicit statements from the Word of God.

Then for two weeks we had the joy of considering together the wonderful, the real freedom and liberty that is ours in Christ. Whenever Christ is embraced as Savior and as Lord, whenever by the Holy Spirit we are given that ability to lay hold of the offered Christ there is a liberty that God grants to every single one who is placed under Adam and into Christ and we have the joy of just tracking out the nature of that liberty and we saw from the Scriptures that in Christ we are free from the condemning power of the law of God. We are free from the sin provoking influence of the law of God. We are free from the slavery to sin, free from the slavery to the devil, free from the slavery to the world, free from the slavery of the idol of self, free from any obligation to the mosaic law covenant, free from the tyranny of man made doctrines, rules and regulations and, blessed be God as we saw at our communion time last Lord's Day evening, we are free from the tyranny of the fear of death.

So when Jesus said in John 8:36, whom the Son makes free is free indeed, that is the freedom Christ brings to every single one of those who are united to him by faith.

Now then this raises a very basic and important question. And the question is this. Why has he set us free? What is the goal of this freedom? To put it in some visual conceptualization, when we stand with all of our chains at our feet snapped by the power of Christ in his redemptive grace, when we see the prison door opened and we ask the question: Why have my chains been taken off from me, what lies outside the open door of the prison? For what purpose has Christ set me free? That is a very crucial question and again I say, until we have come to grips with the Bible's answer to that question, we are in no position to take up the issues shall I see this movie or shall I not? Shall I go to this place or shall I not? Shall I drink this?

We are not ready to even begin to consider those questions until we have come to answer from the Scriptures the more fundamental question: What is the goal for which Christ has set me free?

With his real, nine fold freedom, why in the world has he burst my chains? Why has he thrown open the prison door for me? And so we are going to consider this morning and then, God willing, again next Lord's Day morning and then probably one or two more Lord's Day mornings some pivotal text which very clearly answer that question.

This morning we look at the text and, again, we will look at it next Lord's Day morning, as well, in Luke chapter one where the question is answered in verses 74 and 75.

The salvation that delivers us out of the hand of our enemies, Luke 1:74, here is the goal: that we should serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

There is a very clear statement. Why has he delivered us from the hand of our enemies? To change the imagery, why has he broken our chains? It is to this end. That we should serve him and serve him with this four fold qualification: without fear, in the realm of holiness and righteousness before him, that is, before his face and to do it all of our days.

Now before we plunge in and seek to open up this text, consider with me for a few moments the context in which these words come to us, the setting in which they come to us.

Most of you are aware of the fact that from the close of the Old Testament, the book of Malachi until we pick up our New Testaments and we read the events surrounding the conception here of John and then of our Lord Jesus, there were 400 years called the silent years. No prophet appeared in Israel to speak the Word of God. God seemed to have just taken his hand off and there was no prophet announcing the message of God. There was a tremendous backlog like a dam of prophetic utterances throughout the whole Old Testament telling God's people that in God's time God would send his Messiah, his Redeemer who would deliver his people, who would bring salvation to the Gentiles. He would bring deliverance to the nations. And now here in Luke chapter one and two—that is why I said I wish I could read both chapters—it is as though God says, "Now, I have been silent for 400 years. I have been gathering to myself a faithful remnant of people

like the ones recorded in these chapters who in the midst of all of the moral decadence of the Roman Empire, amidst all of the spiritual decadence in Israel, God had a remnant of people who knew him, who loved him, who served him with all their hearts and they were marked by this. They were waiting for the redemption of God, waiting for God to fulfill those marvelous promises, waiting for God to open up the sluice gates of that huge dam of Old Testament prophecy and begin to break in in the sending of Messiah and bringing the promised deliverance to his people.

Well, here in chapter one it is as though the bells begin to ring and the whistles blow and God is breaking in now after 400 years of silence. And here in this first chapter we read the account of how God sends an angel to an old man serving as a priest in the temple and he has got an old wife named Elizabeth and they are both so old that though they have had no children and obviously from the passage had prayed that God would give them children, they have long since given up hope. She is beyond the period of bearing children. Most likely he is as well, but this old man is doing his duty in the temple, serving God as a priest and an angel comes to him and the angel tells him that he and his wife are going to have a child.

Verse 13 of chapter one.

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: because thy supplication is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.³

And then the angel begins to say things to this old priest that resonate with him, that at last God is breaking in to space, time history in his mighty redemptive activity because this little boy that his old wife is going to bear will have the unique identity of being the forerunner of Messiah.

So if that son is the forerunner of Messiah, the Messiah must be running not too far behind. The forerunner goes before running to announce what is coming behind. And so God announces to this man that he is going to be a poppa and oh, Elizabeth his wife is going to be a mamma and that child born is going to be the forerunner of Messiah. And so he goes back home at the end of his course and, wonder of wonders, God quickens her womb, quickens his reproductive faculties and by means of ordinary marital intimacy, quickened supernaturally by God, they have this special child.

But now before that child is born, Elizabeth is really beginning to get close to the wobbling stage, for we read in chapter one and verse 26, in the sixth month. So when she is six months pregnant a special angel by the name of Gabriel comes not to Jerusalem, to the temple, but up in Nazareth to a young virgin, a peasant virgin girl by the name of Mary. And he makes an even more amazing announcement of the birth of a child. But this time it is not the birth of the forerunner of Messiah or another prophet, but the birth of one who will be called Son of God, one who will fulfill all the promises given to David and through the prophets. In other words, the angel announces that this virgin is

³ Luke 1:13.

going to be mother than none other than God's Messiah, the Son of God who will sit upon David's throne to dispense the sure mercies of David to his people and to the Gentiles. And God makes it very plain that in this case there will be no normal martial intimacy leading to conception, but that God the Holy Spirit himself will impregnate this virgin.

And then, subsequently, these two ladies who are cousins, they meet and they have a wonderful hallelujah time and praise to God. And then we read another three months has passed and then where we picked up our reading this morning in chapter one and in verse 57, Elizabeth has her baby boy.

Well, being good, loyal Jews, keeping the kosher laws and all the ceremonial laws, they were commanded on the eighth day to take their son and have him circumcised. So they are in the process of doing that and that is the time when they would give him a name. And ordinarily they would have passed on poppa's name and poppa says no. Momma says no. Momma says no first of all. And apparently people believed that maybe there was a little family spat over this. So let's ask poppa, too.

Well God has struck him dumb because of his unbelief, so he writes out on a tablet, "His name is John." And people are amazed and then in that setting—and I have given you this background, because this is what gives it tremendous significance. Look at verse 67. In that setting where God has been breaking in to space time history with this amazing act of redemptive activity, the forerunner is now born, the one would bear Messiah is some three months pregnant. We read these words.

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying,⁴

And when he opens up his mouth to prophesy, the prophecy comes out in the form of praise go God.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; For he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people⁵

He sees in what God is doing that God is coming in redemptive grace and mercy. God is coming to fulfill all of his promises to send a Redeemer and he is raising up this Redeemer according to all the prophetic utterances, verse 70.

(As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old),⁶

And what will this redemption do? Verse 71. It will effect salvation from our enemies and from the and of all that hate us. It will be the manifestation of mercy to the fathers. It

⁴ Luke 1:67.

⁵ Luke 1:68.

⁶ Luke 1:70.

will be the fulfillment of God's previous covenantal promises and now this is what this redemption will effect in the heart of all who experience it, to grant that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies should serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

You see how significant this is? Here is all this activity in which in the language of Paul in Galatians in the fullness of the times God is sending forth his Son. The forerunner is promised. He is born and Messiah is now in Mary's womb and he will be born and the great end of all of this redemption that is the fulfillment of the covenant of Abraham, the promises made through the prophets. What is the great end of it? The very one who would stand in Nazareth and say, "I have come to proclaim liberty. I have come to set the captives free." What is the goal of that liberty and that freedom? Here it is. That we should serve him, that we should serve him without fear, that we should serve him in holiness and righteousness, that we should serve him living before his face and we should serve him all our days. That is the goal of the liberty that Messiah will bring to all who embrace him in Israel and among the nations.

Now, you see how important it is to take the time to see the setting of those words? This is not some secondary issue. Central to all of God's activity in bringing the Savior into the world is this purpose, that he might have a people to serve him, a people to serve him in this four fold context without fear, in holiness and righteousness, before his very face and do it all their days.

Well, that is the context. Now the remainder of the time this morning we are going not open up the first of two headings as I try to unpack this text today and, God willing, next week. We are going to look at the goal of our liberty in Christ identified. And next week, God willing, the goal of our liberty in Christ qualified. The goal of our liberty in Christ identified and then the goal of our liberty in Christ qualified.

First of all, then, the goal of our liberty in Christ identified. Here is what the text says, if we should serve him. Now get the connection of the flow of thought. Up in verse 68:

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; For he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people,⁷

And what is that redemption? Verse 71.

Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;⁸

And then verse 74.

To grant unto us that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies ...⁹

⁷ Luke 1:68.

⁸ Luke 1:71.

⁹ Luke 1:74.

It is a redemption to bring salvation or deliverance from our enemies to this end that having been delivered from the hand of our enemies we should serve him.

Now, what do these words mean? If we are delivered to serve him, then we better sure enough understand what does it mean to serve him. Fair enough? If that is the whole end of his redemption to have a people to serve him, we had better understand what it means to serve him.

The verb to serve has a very special significance and meaning. It is not the verb, διακονεω (dee-ak-on-eh'-o) which means to serve, to minister. Jesus said:

If any man serve me, let him follow me;¹⁰

That is the word he uses, διακονεω (dee-ak-on-eh'-o). It is often used to describe service. We get the words deacon from it, to serve as a deacon, to serve. The other words we have already encountered is δουλοω (doo-lo'-o). That means to serve as a bond slave.

No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other;¹¹

Often translated in the New Testament to serve. However, we do not have that verb used here. We do not have διακονεω (dee-ak-on-eh'-o). We do not have δουλοω (doo-lo'-o), but we have the verb λατρευω (lat-ryoo'-o). If you were transliterating, L A T R E U O with a long O, λατρευω (lat-ryoo'-o). And this word without exception always has the idea of service rendered to the deity, whether a false deity or the true God. It always has the significance of service rendered to the deity.

Look at Acts seven and verse 42 where Stephen is preaching and speaking of the wilderness generation. This is what God says.

But God turned, and gave them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, Did ye offer unto me slain beasts and sacrifices Forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?¹²

Did you offer unto me slain beasts? No. What were you doing? You were offering these things, worshipping these false gods, verse 43.

And ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of the god Rephan, The figures which ye made to worship them:¹³

It is also the word used in Matthew 4:10.

¹⁰ John 12:26.

¹¹ Mathew 6:24.

¹² Acts 7:42.

¹³ Acts 7:43.

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.¹⁴

And because the word always means service offered to or presented unto the deity you will find it translated alternatively through the New Testament as serve or worship. And it is hard at times to know what is the right way to translate it.

For example, in Philippians 3:3.

...for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.¹⁵

There is our word λατρευω (lat-ryoo'-o). We are the true circumcision who worship. Some translations put who serve God. Is it service rendered unto God or worship more particularly? It is hard to tell because the word itself always means service rendered to the deity.

Paul could say in Romans 1:9:

...whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son,¹⁶

So is it serve or is it worship? And it has been very interesting to try to track down what the commentators do with its usage in various places and some of them just throw their hands up and say, "It is one of those words where God, perhaps, is given a very specific purpose or has a purpose in his ambiguity and in its inclusiveness. We are not to think of it as service of any kind διακονεω (dee-ak-on-eh'-o), or even λατρευω (lat-ryoo'-o), but service that is always connected with the concept of presenting that service to God or carrying out that service in the presence of God. And when that is so then it merges from mere service into worship. And so at times it is compelling in the context of translated as worship.

Now if that is the sense of the word, then, if we are to know why the Redeemer has come, what is the end of that redemption that sets us free? When he comes and snaps our chains, throws open the prison door and we say, "Lord, Jesus, why have you broken my chains? Why have you opened the prison door?" his answer to us is, "That you may serve me, that is, that you may live a life in which all that you are and all that you do is one continuous unbroken act of worship rendered unto me. You don't just go to church on Sunday to worship. You don't just come to the table in the evening for family worship. You don't just get in the morning to have your devotions and worship. I set you free that your whole life will be an offering of worship and service unto me."

For if we think of primarily as service, it is service that is never detached from the consciousness I am rendering it unto God. Whether I am serving another in Christian love, whether I am reaching out in self denying sacrificial service in the interest of

¹⁴ Matthew 4:10.

¹⁵ Philippians 3:3.

¹⁶ Romans 1:9.

another, though the focus of what I am doing at the level of my immediate consciousness may meet the need of another, that which undergirds all that I do in serving is that I am seeking to render this act of service as an expression of my love and my gratitude to my God. That is what it means.

To state it most simply, this verse in Luke anticipates what Paul beautifully articulates in Romans 12 and verse one. Look at it.

Having laid out the full scope of God's amazing salvation in Jesus Christ in the opening 11 chapters of the book of Romans, Paul now turns and again asks the question: What are we to do in the light of all of this plethora of redemptive mercies, a salvation that settles accounts in the court of heaven, a salvation that breaks my chains, Romans six, a salvation that imparts to me the Holy Spirit as a down payment of a resurrected body and a completed salvation, Romans eight, a salvation in which God will accomplish his purpose in the nations, Romans nine to 11. What do I do as I stand aghast in the presence of this amazing salvation? Here is the answer.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God...¹⁷

These mercies manifested in your salvation in Christ.

...to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service.¹⁸

This is your spiritual service. This is your spiritual worship, that you in the light of God's mercies to you take the posture with joyful abandonment. Here, Lord, I give myself away. It is all that I can do. I present the totality of my redeemed humanity, not a dead sacrifice laid upon an altar, but a living sacrifice alive in Jesus Christ from the grave yard of my death in sin, my chains broken, the Spirit indwelling me giving me a foretaste of the completed salvation and a resurrected body. Oh, Lord, all that you have made me and all that you have given me in Christ, I give it back to you as much a giving as I would have placed an animal upon an altar. Take my hands off and say it is all God's. I have given it to God in sacrifice. I have no claims over it now. It is his. That is the imagery. You present yourself, a living sacrifice, holy, set apart from the world and sin and the idol of self, all the things from which God has freed us, holy, acceptable to God which is but your rational, reasonable, spiritual. Again, that word is a difficult word to translate. And the commentators go round and round and the linguists.

One thing is clear. It is not a carnal, it is not an external thing. It has to do with the mind, with the heart, with the spirit. It is a rational, not a carnal corporeal sacrifice and it is a sacrifice in the nature of *λατρευω* (lat-ryoo'-o), an offering up unto God. It is worship. It is service presented unto God as the very essence of who I am and how I live.

¹⁷ Romans 12:1.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Now you see why I say until you grasp this, you are in no position to talk about shall I see this movie or not? Is it my liberty to see it?

Whoa, whoa, wait a minute. Who do you say you are? Well, I say I am Christ's free man. Oh, you are? And if you are Christ's free man, let me ask. Are you contemplating that decision on what kind of bathing suit you should or shouldn't wear, what kind of move you should or shouldn't go to, what kind of drink you shouldn't not to... Are you contemplating that, out of the matrix of a cheerful, joyful, present awareness? I and all that I am and God's purchased possession and I am on that altar of rational λατρευω (lat-ryoo'-o). All of my life, every facet of it. It is not a matter of saying where can I find a corner that I can somehow cordon off from the eye of God and the smile of God and the will of God? No. I want no such corner in my life. I embrace from the heart the purpose for which he broke my chains. I embrace from the heart the purpose for which he threw the prison door open that I might λατρευω (lat-ryoo'-o), that I might serve him, that I might be in the totality of who I am and what I am, one perpetual offering unto God.

This has beautiful overtones with Old Testament motifs. Do you remember when Moses went into Pharaoh? He said, "Let my people go." To what end? That they may serve me in this mount, Exodus 3:12. And do you know what word is used in the Greek translation of that verse? Let my people go that they may λατρευω (lat-ryoo'-o), that they may worship me. Let them go. Redemption out of Egypt, breaking of the chains of Egyptian bondage. Why? That coming through the Red Sea as a nation they might worship, that they might serve, that the totality of life might be lived separated unto God. And as God is trying to teach that basic lesson in concrete ways, what does he do when he gives his law, the whole Mosaic law? I mean, God touches every single area of their life. He tells them what kind of fabric they can make a shirt out of. Momma goes to make an apron and she has got to remember what did God say about this? Oh, that is a no, no. God says...

God is saying, "I am sticking my nose into every area of your life."

Every month a woman had to be sure she marked the calendar. If she forgot and said, "Well, I don't remember when things started and when they ended," everything she touched was unclean. People couldn't go and worship till they got...

I mean, God is... someone sees a nice pile of shrimp. Oh, boy, that looks good. Oh, whoa, God says, no, no. Shrimp is {?}. I am clean. Hey, that bird over there. I think that would look nice roasted. No, that is an unclean bird. Look at that big old fat Al. Well, oh, that is unclean.

Do you see what God was saying? Everywhere they turned God says, "I brought you out of Egypt to own you, every part of you."

Now thank God we are delivered from all of those things, but we are not delivered from the things to which they pointed. They pointed to the fact that to be redeemed by God and brought out of bondage is to the end that we might serve him and that every area of life,

every single thing we do and think and every place we go must all be considered in the light of what it is to render cheerful worship slash service unto God, 24/7, all of my life rendered as worship unto my God.

Now I want you to think with me for a bit. What was it like in the Garden of Eden before the fall? What was it like? God made the man. God made the woman. He made them in his own image with a capacity to commune with him, to fellowship with him. And he put this perfect with this perfect woman and remember you starry eyed engaged couples, that is the first and only ones. Ok? He put this perfect man and this perfect woman down in a perfect environment, surrounded them with perfect opportunity, for full development of all of their faculties. What was their life? It was one perpetual λατρευω (lat-ryoo'-o). It was service slash worship rendered to God.

Yes, God had marked out a special day for concentrated worship. But, you see, that was not to be separate from the totality of life. All of life was worship. All of life was lived before the face of God. And, as we will see, last, God willing, next week, that is the significance of this little phrase that we should live, we should serve him without fear in righteousness and holiness and before the face of him. That is what sin marred, because the first thing Adam and Eve do when they sin is they run from God's face. They want to hide from his presence.

But now restored in Christ this is our posture. And not only is it our posture in life, it is the very way heaven is described. And I want you to turn now to Revelation chapter 22 and verse three, just trying to explain the richness of these words, delivered from the hand of our enemies that we might serve him.

Revelation chapter 22 as John is getting this consummate description of the glory of the new heavens and the new earth we read this, verse one.

And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him;¹⁹

His bond slaves will render service as worship to him.

...and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads.²⁰

What is the occupation of heaven forever and ever in the immediate presence of God? It is rendering to God in perfection what we begin to render him now in regeneration and conversion. Mark it down. The life of heaven is not radically different from the life

¹⁹ Revelation 22:1-3.

²⁰ Revelation 22:4.

begun on earth. It is gloriously consummated and perfected but it doesn't begin there. It begins here and now when Jesus snaps the chains, when Jesus throws open the door and the free prisoner says, "Lord Jesus, I am yours to serve you. The whole of my life is yours. All of my talents, my mental capacities, my physical capacities, my stuff, my relationships. Lord, everything I am is yours. And I want it to be spent and used and exercised in the full corpus of its substance as worship unto you. Service unto you."

And those who begin to taste the sweetness and the blessed liberty of that here and now, they will experience the glory and the ecstasy of it there. But you ain't going to have it there if you ain't got it now.

The Bible nowhere teaches that death and the resurrection makes a radical change in the fundamental spiritual disposition of any person. Your wickedness, your bondage to sin will go with you into the intermediate state and into hell consummating your misery. If you are a true child of God, what God has done is called the first fruits. It is called the down payment. First fruits is same as the harvest. It is not fruit of a different kind. The harvest is more of the same kind. And, bless God, much more. But it is more of the same kind. The earnest money is money of the same kind. It is a down payment. You are not dealing in dollars and rupees. It is all rupees, all dollars, all shekels. Do you follow?

So you are going to have it there, the evidence will be you have got it now. Now do you see why, trying to pull all this together, why I have said we are in no position to talk about the specifics of, quote, Christian liberty. Oh, well, {?} liberty. Is it? Or is it a rattling of your chains? Much that does in the name of Christian liberty is a rattling of chains that have never been broken by a people that have got a polite Christianity that doesn't disrupt any of their passions, their appetites and their love of the world. And I see too much of it in our ranks. Clamoring to push every liberty to the limits. Where, pray God are the men and women, boys and girls, who are saying, "I want to push to the limit what it is to be a living sacrifice. Every aspect of my life under the worshipful pouring out of my affection and my energies and my powers to my Savior.

My friends, that is Christianity. This other stuff, it is bogus. And it will kill any semblance of vital religion in his place in 25 years. And it will put you in a sad state when you stand in the presence of God. The one who has had his chains broken, his disposition is that of the apostle Paul, having seen the risen Christ what is the first cry from his transformed heart? Lord, what will you have me to do? It is all over Lord. From here on in my life is one continuous act of worship and service to you so that when you read a text like this right in the middle of Paul's extensive treatment of aspects of Christian liberty, you don't burp and you don't squirm.

1 Corinthians 10:31:

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.²¹

²¹ 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Do all as an act of worship unto God. So when you are asking the question: Should I or should I not go here? Take this. Eat this. Smell this. Associate with this person, that person. The great concern is not to say what is wrong with it. Frankly, that sickens me.

Well, what is wrong with it? You see, that is not the question a freed slave asks. He doesn't ask the question: What is wrong with it. Well, what is wrong? Until you can prove it is wrong, I am going to use my...

My friend, no true Christian talks that way. You don't ask what is wrong with it. Why were my chains broken? Why was the prison opened? That I might push to the limits my liberties and get as close to, quote, what is wrong and ... No.

My question is: Oh, Lord, who has released me, broken my chains, opened the prison house, how can I best express to you what it is to serve you as worship? And, oh Lord, if this does not promote that kind of service, I don't want it, Lord, no matter how much my flesh might enjoy it, no matter how much half baked, half converted people say it is ok, it is all right, it is your liberty.

You say, not for me. It is not what is wrong with it. It is in my liberty, but rather does it contribute to a life of worship and service and service that is worship?

Let me say a word in closing to your children and young people who having been brought up under the sound of the gospel and God has kept you from any kind of wild and stupid and foolish throwing over of the yoke of your parents restraints and instruction. You struggle all the time with is all this mine internally. Have I made it my own or is it just... Am I just propped up by mom and dad's teaching and mom and dad's restraints and the church's instruction and my natural circle of associations in the church and in the school and in the home schooling movement? Is it really mine?

I want to tell you something, kids. One of the best ways to answer that question is this. Can I say, "Lord Jesus, you have broken my chains, you have thrown the prison door open and there is no question what I want to do with my freedom. Lord Jesus, I am only eight years old, Lord Jesus, I am only 10, Lord Jesus I am only 12, I am only... but, Lord Jesus, you know, as much as you know all things, Lord Jesus, you know as much as I can know anything about myself I want to live a life that is one expression of worshipful service to you"?

My dear young person, child, you can say that, you didn't get there by nature. Jesus has broken your chains and he has thrown open the door. Walk out and rejoice and serve him.

Don't struggle with, well, I don't know if I... forget where and when and how and the particulars. Some people they have such a vivid memory. When Christ came to them and broke their chains, they can still hear the rattle of the chains falling off their hands and feet. Their conversion was dramatic. You didn't even hear a {?}. But if you can say sitting here this morning the passion of my heart is that I might live to him who died for me, somebody in there done broke your chains. And I know the only one who can do it.

He done it. And you thank him and live to the hilt what it is to be Christ's free man, free woman, free boy, free girl.

I want to close with a story that came to my ears decades ago. I haven't thought of it for a long, long time and I went over with my wife this morning. She thought it would be good to resurrect it. She was with me. We were somewhere in Pennsylvania way back, longer than I would like to remember, can't remember. And we had the privilege of listening to an Indonesian pastor. His English was broken. But that man knew God. He hadn't been talking five, 10 minutes but anyone with any discernment sitting there said, "The Holy Spirit is on this man." And we shall never forget an illustration that he used.

He said that there was a situation, apparently known to him or came to his awareness where there was an area where someone kept turkeys, whether they had a turkey farm or just domesticated a few turkeys, I don't know. And that man found one day an eagle by the side of the road with a broken wing. It couldn't fly. And he took that eagle home and he set its wing and then he tethered that eagle to his turkey hard in his back yard with the turkeys. And he checked continually to see whether the wing were healing well when the day came when he was persuaded the wing was fully healed and it would take the stress of that eagle flying. So he unwrapped the healed, now healed wing, took off the tether from one of the legs of the eagle and then watched it. And the eagle just continued to wobble around among the turkeys. And this seemed strange. He was now free to fly. But we wobbled among the turkeys. So he went over and he gently picked up that eagle, held him up and as he thrust him upward he said—and this is where the Indonesian man's broken English came up—you no turkey, you eagle. Fly like an eagle.

Do you see the message? Child of God, if Christ has snapped your tethers, you no turkey, you eagle, fly. Live out your liberty in Christ to do what? To get as close as you can to the margins of worldliness and ethical compromise. No. To be as holy and as abandoned to Christ as the grace of God can make a man or woman in this life. That is what he has freed us for. That is what we are free for. Let the world say we are nuts. You go to church for three hours Sunday morning? Sure do. You look like you enjoy it. Sure do. And then you go back for another two hours? Sure do. And then you hang around and talk with this funny people for... Sure do. What do you do with your boring Sundays? You say, "I just have a rip roaring time worshipping God, fellowshiping with his people." People say, "No hope for that guy. He is crazy."

Not embarrassed, not ashamed {?} What? {?}

No, I enjoy worshipping God. And did you go here? Did you see this? That was a must see movie. No, I didn't see it? Didn't see it? And you don't say {?}.

You say, "No, my friend, I have got joys that movie couldn't give me if I watched it 100 times."

This guy is nuts. Yeah, that is right. I march to the beat of a different drum, unashamed. The world can't tell me what I need to be fulfilled. The world can't tell me what kind of

recreations I need to engage in to feel like I am with it. You mean, you are 70 years old and you don't play golf and you are not semi retired? No. Why not? I would be bored to death. I enjoy being a servant of God. I enjoy preaching my guts out. I enjoy ministering to God's people, entering into their burdens, entering into their joys, seeing God raise up another generation and seeing the young couples fall in love and get married and commit themselves to serve Christ. Call me a crazy old man. I don't care. I am a happy crazy old man.

You see, you have got none of that. Some of you sitting there, you have got a look on your face like you are sucking pickles that are sour and lemons in between, because you know this stuff is real and you are a stranger to it. But, oh, my friend, you don't need to remain a stranger. Jesus Christ is come in space, time history, preceded by the forerunner, John. And the Messiah has come to open the prison to them that are bound, to set at liberty the captives, to break your chains, to throw open the door that you might serve him. That is what you were made for. That is why you are never truly human till you are a Christian. That is what you were made for. You weren't made to save and serve your lusts and your passions and the world and the devil. You were made to serve God. Things work best when you use them for the purpose for which they were made.

You try to use your kitchen mixer to mix concrete and you get bad concrete and you end up with a bad mixer. It wasn't made to mix concrete. It was made to mix up eggs and cake batter, right?

You weren't made to serve the devil. You weren't made to serve the world. You weren't made to dance to its tune and march to its drum. You were made to march to God's drum. And he wants to free you to be what you were made to be.

Doesn't that make sense? And the wicked old devil comes and says, "Oh, God wants to make you a Christian because it is {?}"

No, you become eagle, no turkey. You fly.

The kingdom of God is not eating, drinking, but righteousness, peace and what joy in the Holy Ghost. Oh, my dear people, God help us to taste it. Oh taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man that trusts in him.

Let's pray.

Oh, our Father, what can we say? Blessed be your name. We echo the words of Zacharias spoken in prophetic inspiration. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel who has visited us with redemption that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve you without fear, serve you in righteousness, in holiness, serve before your face, serve you all our days. Oh, God, bless the preaching of your Word. Make it effectual to set some captives free this morning, to confirm your free men and women. Oh, Lord, help us all with renewed commitment to determine that we shall indeed be those living sacrifices who live out a life of reasonable worship service unto you. Deliver us from all

the petty concerns about piddling issues that have absolutely no relevance to a life that is lived unto you and consume us with fresh passion to live every moment of every day in your grace and to your glory and to the validation of the gospel which we profess tonight. Hear our prayers. Receive our thanks for your presence with us in Jesus' name. Amen.