

GOSPEL LIBERTY VS. FREE WILL

by Nelson Turner

KJV John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

KJV John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

“Salvation considered as derived from any power in man is the germinating principle of all errors and perversions.” (J. H. Merle D’Aubigne, Preface to The History of the Great Reformation in the Sixteenth Century.)

True religion has as its source none other but the God that created the heavens and the earth. Righteousness, purity, holiness, and happiness cannot have as their source in whole or in part, anything from the corrupt, fallen, ruined and depraved creature of man. Man is shown in scripture to have a heart that imagines only evil continually and is desperately wicked. He is represented as being incapable of performing any spiritual good by his own means, and in fine, is said to be “altogether vanity.” Thus Christ declared that it was he who made men free, not themselves, and that those he makes free are free indeed. Free not in pretence, but in fact. Free not in name only, but in truth. Free not of themselves, but of God. Freed not by their own power, but by the power of God working in them to do his will, which becomes their will. Delivered by a strength not proceeding from within themselves, but by the might and outstretched arm of one who is “mighty to save” and “will do all his pleasure.” “The just shall live by faith,” and the faith by which the justified live is “not of themselves, It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.” Freed from the chains of sin, self, and Satan, the Christian alone possesses anything remotely resembling a “free will” in the spiritual sense, for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (2 Cor. 3:17) This is the opening of the prison to them that are bound, the preaching of good tidings to the meek, the binding up of the brokenhearted, and the proclaiming of liberty to the captives. (Isaiah 61:1) This is the true gospel of Jesus Christ. This gospel when preached goes forth in power, accomplishing that which God pleases, prospering in the thing whereto he sends it. “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God,” so the word of God communicates and creates faith in those to whom God sends it, and they are “willing in the day of his power,” (Psalm 110:3) not the hour of their power. Therefore the very willing to be cleansed and free from sin derives not from within man but by an unction from heaven. The faith given by God to believe in the propitiating death, the burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ excludes any boasting on man’s part, it being the work of God. Therefore the Christian Bible doctrine is that God alone is worthy of praise, and that his work alone has merit. “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” (Revelation 5:13)

Those that depart from “the faith once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3) were prophesied of long ago, and have a spiritual forefather in Cain. They “depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils” and “by good words and fair speeches deceive the heart of the simple,” preaching that “gain is godliness.” These apostates are “reprobate concerning the faith” and bring in “damnable heresies” that are a denial of the Lord that bought them. They are reprobate concerning “the faith.” The faith they do not pass muster on is the saving, sanctifying, and justifying faith of the very Son of God, who is called, “The Author and Finisher of our faith.” (Hebrews 13:8) Jesus Christ said plainly that believing on Him was not a work of man, but a work of God wrought in man. Those that come to God “must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6) “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” (John 6:29) We see then that believing in and upon Christ is uniquely a work attributed to God, and is not a work born of the will or flesh of man. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14) “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.” (Isaiah 7:9) Those that do not believe these and the other words of Christ and God’s prophets as given in the Bible will never be rooted, grounded and settled “in the faith.” In a very real sense they are “children in whom is no faith.” (Deut. 32:20) Faith in the word of God is faith in Christ himself. Unbelief in the

word of God is a denial of Christ. While we must readily acknowledge that a new Christian (one who has believed on Jesus Christ and his work in redemption, one who is “born again” by “the spirit”) may not know, understand or believe these truths concerning the work of God, it should be said that those that steadfastly deny the power of God and proclaim the power of man are none of his. “Without faith it is impossible to please” God and those in such condition are “unto every good work reprobate.”

Cain sought to come to God by the works of his hands, walking in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, supposing his un-ordained bloodless sacrifice should be accepted. He in a state of nature believed that he should be accepted based upon the merits of what he possessed and brought of his won will. By faith, Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice, trusting in God’s word and believing in the Lord. The man who came without blood murdered his brother and was of his father the Devil, one who could not comprehend that “to obey is better than sacrifice.” The man who came to God through faith was justified, and the man that came by means that proceeded forth from himself was condemned. Abel being “dead yet speaketh” whereas self-sufficient and self-trusting Cain is marked for all eternity as an example of wickedness and presumptuous self will. Cain believed he could achieve standing before God by climbing up some other way to heaven than by the merits of Christ. Cain believed he could gain recognition of his own through a work of the flesh. This is precisely the state of all unregenerate religious professors. They want to have some sort of claim on God through their works, thus making God their debtor. “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” (Romans 4:4) Therefore they betray unbelief in the statement of Christ to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” (2 Corinthians 12:9) Not being recipients of divine grace, they go about to establish their own righteousness, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” (Isaiah 57:20-21) Hence a condemned conscience causes them to proclaim their works as a means of salvation or as the ground of being maintained in salvation. Scripture is plain: Christ came to give “everlasting life,” that life being communicated by the work of God to his own people, and they are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Peter 1:5.

A church peopled with men that have any degree of trust or faith in their own power, ability, understanding, or wisdom in spiritual matters is not the church of Jesus Christ, but a synagogue of Satan. An organization (for that is what it is) that promotes man and his ability to choose to be saved, his power to be good, his power to “keep the commandments,” his power to come to God if he so chooses, and his power to resist God if he so chooses; this is the Church of Satan and not the Church of Jesus Christ. The church of Jesus Christ knows and confesses that God is above and they are beneath, that God is alone sovereign and that man is a helpless, destitute, spiritual and moral cripple incapable of making even one spiritually pleasing motion without the mere will and pleasure of God inciting that motion. This is the uniform testimony of every saint in both Testaments, the testimony of Jesus Christ in the Gospels, and the testimony of every true believer that ever lived. One who believes in Christ of necessity must believe in the doctrines of Christ. Christ never appeared on the earth in the flesh without his doctrines, nor does he now. Those that profess they know God must of necessity also know that God has declared he is the ruler of the heaven above and the earth below with all that therein is. Jesus Christ said of himself that the Father had given him power “over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many” as the Father has given him. This statement alone stands as the eternal testimony of the Everlasting God that the power to save and power to damn are in the hands of the Ancient of Days. This doctrine of Christ declares man to be a thing of nought, a powerless, hell-deserving creature that has neither the desire or ability to be anything else unless the Spirit of God move upon the face of his deep and dark existence. The doctrines of the depravity of man and the sovereignty of God were the two salient points of the preaching of Christ, his apostles, and the godly of both Testaments. Recognition of the truth of justification by faith alone sprang forth in the Reformation subsequent to knowledge of the complete depravity and ruined spiritual and moral condition of man, and the understanding that Christ alone can save. These tenets have all been denied by the crypto-Catholic Protestant preachers of this day, as the final work of the Counter Reformation under the Jesuit Order nears its completion. They betray the son of Man with a kiss, preaching Judas and al like him into heaven, while relegating true Christians into hell. This issue is the fulcrum upon which all other matters of faith and practice rest.

Luther said, "The desire to justify ourselves is the spring of all our distress of heart, but he who receives Christ as Saviour has peace, and not only peace, but purity of heart. All sanctification of the heart is the fruit of faith. For faith is in us a divine work which changes us, and gives us a new birth, emanating from God himself. It kills Adam in us; and through the Holy Spirit which it communicates, it gives us a new heart and makes us new men. It is not empty speculations, but by this practical method that we obtain a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ." "The point of dispute, then, is not, as has been commonly said, between liberty and slavery; it is between a liberty proceeding from man's nature, and a liberty that comes from God. The one party, who call themselves the advocates of liberty, say to man: "Thou has the power to do right, thou hast no need of more liberty!" the others, who have been styled the partisans of slavery, say to him the very reverse. "True liberty is what thou needest, and it is what God offers thee in the Gospel!" On the one side, they talk of liberty so as to perpetuate servitude; on the other, they proclaim to us our bondage that we may obtain liberty....The one party, congratulating man on his freedom, would, in effect, reconcile him to slavery; the other, showing how his fetter may be struck off, are the true advocates of liberty." (J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, Page 200, The History of the Great Reformation in the Sixteenth Century.)