



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 8:30-38

"Free Indeed"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're turning to John chapter 8 for the Scripture reading. And today I'd like to read verse 30 through verse 36. John chapter 8, verse 30 through verse 36. In the 30th verse as the Lord Jesus continues his discourse on the Feast of the Tabernacles he says, or John writes,

"As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, (In the original text this is not quite the precise force. And really it would be better to translate it just simply, "believed him." And probably some of you in a more modern version have had that correction made. But the reference is to credence.) Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

This morning, as you can tell from looking at the bulletin, I have a scriptural title, since the title of the sermon is taken from the words of our Lord himself. Our subject this morning is "Free Indeed." What a wonderful word is the word free. And what an admirable man is he who spends himself to make men free.

All men, even animals desire freedom. There are, of course, different kinds of freedoms. And it's important that we understand the kind of freedom that the Lord Jesus offers. There is such a thing as political or civil freedom. Men think a lot about that today. They write a lot about it. They contend for it. And certainly it's a very desirable thing, because to live and to think and to act at the permission of the will of a despot and to fawn at his feet is something that is really only for craven spirits. Blessed is the man who opens the doors of the dungeons of the despots. And we are living in days in which that is of great significance. All Americans thrill to Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death." And down through the years we've always thought highly of men who've sought to bring freedom to their people. And like Washington, men like Garibaldi.

Today we have evidently some illustrations in men like Valenca in Poland and others as well. It's a great thing to have civil or political freedom. We Americans know the benefits and the values of it. But of course, a man may have civil freedom and political freedom and still be a slave. He may not have religious freedom. He may cringe before a priest. He may bow before a piece of wood. He may highly regard, even falsely regard a yard of canvas, as someone has put it. He may reverence a piece of bread in a religious ceremony. That's mental slavery, mental slavery of a religious kind. Oh to be free from superstition, religious superstition. To be able to look into the Scriptures and listen to the voice of God through the Scriptures and not be led astray by men who've layered the Bible with their traditions. How easy it is to do it.

We think of some religious organizations that have years, and years, and years of traditions. And then we think of some who have only a short time of traditions. It's very difficult for men to keep from building tradition and then laying it on top of the word of God. We're in danger of that in

Believers Chapel. It's easy when you say, "We don't have any traditions," to erect that kind of a tradition. And sometimes even that prevents us from seeing the truth of the word of God.

Well, it's great to have political freedom, and it's great to have religious freedom. But of course, a man can have political and religious freedom and still not have the true freedom. He can be free from superstition. He can be free from tyrants and still be a serf. He can be ruled by the devil, so Jesus said. To serve our lusts is the worst form of despotism. A slave of sin knows more horror than those who dwell in dungeons. What Jesus Christ offers, he says, is spiritual freedom.

The Apostle Paul thinks a great deal of that because he admonishes the Galatian Christians to stand fast in the liberty, in the freedom, with which Christ has freed you. In the epistle that he wrote to the Romans he said, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed us from the law of sin and death. Some freedoms, of course, are not good. Take an animal in a zoo. Even animals like freedom, and if you give them freedom you may give them something that is not good for them. Some animals that escape from the zoo discover the automobile, much to their evil. And then a fish, suppose you were to talk to a fish and you were to say, "I want to give you the freedom of the whole world. Why should you be confined to a lake or even an ocean? I'll give you the freedom of the whole world." And so you'll take them out of their water and put them out on the land and say, "The world is yours." Well, of course, we would know what would happen.

You see, we are made for a particular purpose, and men are made to be free in God. We are made in the image of God, and we are made ad dependent beings. And being dependent beings our freedom is only true freedom when we are dependent upon God. So spiritual freedom, what is it? It's the liberty to do as we please. Well, no period there, that's not liberty, that's slavery. To do as we please and that which is best for us, because by the grace of God we've been brought into relationship with Jesus Christ and love him. So it's the freedom that arises out of love for him to please him. That's true freedom. It's good for men to recognize the limits of their being and then to serve freely within that. Just like a fish loves to be in water not on the land. So we as believers in Jesus Christ will find our freedom when we are subject to him.

Well, the Lord Jesus has some very, very important words that have to do with this. And remember, he's continuing to speak on the Feast of the Tabernacles. There are gathered around him Jewish people and others who are listening. He's engaging in conversations and some confrontations. He's talked about the true Messiah just recently in the preceding context. And now he will unfold the terrible nature of human unbelief. We read in verse 31, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."

Now, I think it is important for us to stop for just a moment and say a word about the addressees of this message. John calls them, "the Jews which believed him." Now, there are three aspects to faith which we must distinguish. The first is right here, to believe him. The Authorized Version has "believe on him," but I commented in the Scripture reading that that "on" is probably not the best way to render the thought expressed by the verb here. It's better simply to say, "Believed him." That's the first aspect of faith, believing Christ, or giving credence to Jesus Christ. Well back in the 5th chapter in the 24th verse the Lord Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation and is passed from death unto life."

Now, that is important, to believe Christ, to believe him is to give credence to him, to think that he tells the truth, that when he speaks he's speaking that which is truth, to accept his words. If we don't accept a person's words we are in effect saying they are not telling the truth. We're saying they're liars. And so the Jewish people John describes here as those who believed him, they gave credence to him. Now, no man can expect to advance in the Christian faith who does not give credence to the word of God. Credence to the things our Lord says, credence to the things the apostles say, credence to the things that the prophets and others have spoken that are now found in the word of God. Christianity without a creed is a dream. There are people who think that creeds are bad. That's their creed. So we have to have a creed. There's no way to escape a creed. The important thing is to have a good creed.

Now, I know you think well Believers Chapel doesn't have any creed. Oh yes we do. We do have a creed. Mr. Prier will tell you about it, because you know at the seminary here there is a course that the men take in which they are often told by the professor, since it's a course on church government or relating to church government they will say, "Now, as you go to a local church in the city of Dallas, what we want you to do is to go to one of the officers or to the church office and ask for a statement of the constitution, and also a copy of the doctrinal statement of the church and then analyze it, and criticize it, and write a paper on it." And so occasionally we have men in the Chapel who attend the seminary and they will come and say, "May we have a copy of the church constitution and a copy of the doctrinal statement, because we need it for a course that we're taking at the seminary." I never do say anything but just, "See Mr. Prier." And the reason I do is because I know he loves to have a student come and do that. And I don't want to take the joy away from him. I would love it to do it the way he does it, but he does it so ingenuously that it's just a wonderful thing to see. And if I possibly can I get off about fifteen to twenty feet away and watch the student as he approaches Mr. Prier, because he doesn't have any idea about what's going to happen. [Laughter]

So he comes to Mr. Prier and he says, "Mr. Prier, we've been told that you would be able to give us a copy of the church constitution and of the doctrinal statement." Now, if you watch Mr. Prier he often has his Bible like this under his arm. And so he will say, "Oh well, yes." [Laughter] And then there'll be a smile on his face, because he loves to do that. He likes to see the way the student reacts when he's given the Bible as the doctrinal statement and as the creed of Believers Chapel. Incidentally the reason that he does that is because, of course, we have no written creed which we've forged out, nor do we have doctrinal statement that we've forged out. We don't even have a church constitution that we have by consultation agreed upon. The reason for this is that in the beginning the elders thought that they wanted to be flexible. And so consequently rather than have a creed, which tends unfortunately to become frozen and impossible to change, the elders thought in the beginning it would be nice just to have the Bible. And therefore whatever we believed and whatever we did would also be subject to the Scriptures and therefore subject to change. That's

very difficult to carry out, and I know some people will say, "Well, I don't know that they've carried it out so well." Perhaps no, but it's not a bad idea. There's nothing wrong with a creed, nothing wrong with making a creed, nothing wrong with another church making a creed, nothing wrong in having a doctrinal statement small or large. The only thing about a doctrinal statement that is bad is if it is immutable. In other words, creeds are wonderful to make providing we keep on making them. That's very important to keep on making them as we are subject to the word of God and are given additional enlightenment.

The Holy Spirit, remember, is still teaching. And therefore, we should be subject to change always if the Scriptures indicate it. So it's perfectly all right to have a creed. To give credence to the Bible is significant. Of course, it's important to have the authority of the word of God behind that which we believe. A creed alone, however, is insufficient; a man may yield allegiance to a creed and not really have allegiance to the things of which the creed speaks. The Westminster Confession of faith is a noble creed, but there are many people who are in churches that subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith that do not believe the things that are in that creed. One of the evidences of this is the fact that historically many of the churches that have had that creed have now decided that they want to add to that creed, and they have other creeds which also are part of their faith now, but there are differences of opinion between them. So obviously they don't hold to the Westminster Confession of Faith as the creed. It's not enough to have a creed; one must have the reality behind the creed, of course. That's one aspect of faith.

The second of faith, which is found in the New Testament is believing on Christ. That specific expression is found, I don't think it's found in the Gospel of John, but it's found in Paul. To believe on Christ is to rely upon him, to have a reliance upon him and his saving work. For example, if we have, by the grace of God, come to see that we are under divine condemnation and that Jesus Christ has offered the sacrifice for sinners, and has made available for sinners the merits of his finished work. To rely upon him and no longer rely upon the church or religious ordinances or good works or education or culture of any of these things for salvation, but to rely simply on Christ is to

believe on him, to rest on him, to rely upon him and his merits for our salvation. Now, that's a magnificent thought. I think it's a saving idea if it's carried out truly as the Scriptures speak of it. Our Lord is the foundation, and we hang upon something high and firm and reliable. Like Wesley's line in his hymn, "Other refuge have I none, helps my helpless soul on Thee." That's the faith of believing on Christ.

John is well known for a third aspect of faith. He uses an expression that is not often used in the New Testament elsewhere. He speaks about believing in Christ. In fact, to translate the expression starkly, literally, it's to believe into Christ. That is to believe in him in the sense of motion toward him and then union with him. That probably is the highest expression of faith in the New Testament. And the idea is to believe in him into union with him who is our representative, and to be identified with him for time and for eternity. Well, if we may say the first is good, it's good to believe, it's good to believe, to have credence, to give credence to Christ. If we may say the second is better, to rely on him, this is the best, because it leads to the relationship of "In Christ" expressive of the union in him.

Now, the Lord Jesus says to the Jews which believed him. One gains the impression as he reads through this context that though they believed him, that is though they gave credence to him, their faith was not genuine. I'm not sure about this. I wouldn't want to risk my life on it. But the 33rd verse says, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" It's obvious they don't understand much about the words of our Lord. And most of the students of the Gospel of John have suggested that the faith that they had was not a genuine saving faith.

But our Lord goes on to talk about the axioms that arise out of this address that he gives. He says that "If," verse 31, "ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." In other words, obedience or abiding in his word is the evidence of or the proof for discipleship. If you continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. Notice, he does not say, "If you continue in my word continually obey then you will become my disciples." No, he's not saying we become a

disciple by obedience. The idea itself is semi-Pelagian. But what he is really saying is that if you do continue in my word, if you abide in my word, later on he will say that those who abide in his word are those who keep his word. And those who keep his word do abide in word. Then "you are my disciples." In other words, what he is saying is that obedience evidences discipleship.

Now, that's a very important thing. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples." That raises questions about those who don't continue in his word. Then he also says, "Obedience produces freedom." He says in verse 32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." So obedience produces freedom, but it produces freedom by saving truth. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

What kind of truth is he talking about? Is he talking about philosophical truth? That's highly unlikely. Is he talking about scientific truth? That's highly unlikely. He's talking about saving truth. He's probably talking about spiritual truth. Now, of course, ultimately all truth is in God. Ultimately we shall see that the philosophers who are seeking a rationale of this universe in all of its aspects both in the physical world and in the mental and moral world, those who seek a rationale of the universe, seek to understand it, haven't arrived at the truth yet. They're still seeking the truth. Good philosophers will tell you that. Bad philosophers may suggest to you that they have arrived. Good scientists know too that they have not reached the secret of the physical universe. All truth is in God, and ultimately we shall see that the truth is in God and philosophy shall ultimately find its truth in Christ and science shall find its truth in Christ.

But our Lord is not speaking about that. He's not saying if you know the truth you'll be delivered from error; the error of modern philosophy, some modern philosophy, not all philosophy is wrong, of course. He's not saying if you know the truth you'll be delivered from scientific error. He's saying if you know the truth you will have spiritual freedom. And ultimately you'll come to understand the universe.

Now, the Jews, not understanding a whole lot of what he's saying, evidently, say, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." Now, they know that this is not the



political sphere of things under discussion, because they've been slaves of many nations. They were slaves of the Egyptians. They were in bondage to the Assyrians. They were in bondage to the Babylonians. They were in bondage to the Medo-Persians. They were in bondage to the Grecians. And now they're in bondage to the Grecians and now they're in bondage to the Romans right at this very moment. When they say, "We be Abraham's seed and we're never in bondage to any man." They're not talking about social freedom either. Because the Jews, while not exposed to slavery quite as much as the Gentiles have been in the ancient world, were nevertheless slaves. And they had been sold and freed just like Gentiles. They were bought and sold. So they couldn't say, "We be Abraham's seed and we be never in bondage to any man," because they were in bondage to men.

What they're speaking about is religious freedom. They're talking about spiritual freedom. They're claiming to be spiritually free. "We're Abrahams' seed and we were never in bondage to any man, and how is it that you are saying you shall be free? We are already free." You know, one thing about the Jewish people of the day is very interesting, because it reminds me a lot of some of us in Believers Chapel. I include myself, just as well as you. You see, the Jews believed that they had word. They believed that they had the truth, and they had good reason for thinking that they did have the truth, because it's clear that they were specially marked out for divine blessing. After all, in the midst of the Gentile world, God reached down and touched one man. His name was Abraham. And he called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and he said, "Abraham, I'm going to do something for you." He gave him some magnificent promises. He said, "I'm going to give you a land. I'm going to make your name great. And furthermore, all the families of the earth are going to be blessed in you. And then of course the word of God had unfolded and that "in you" was developed. Various other promises were added to the Abrahamic promises. Kings shall come out of you, it was said. And then certain facts about the place from which the king would come are unfolded. Many other additions were made to the great Messianic promises. It's no wonder that Israel began to develop the conception of being special among the nations. They were special. They were the object of divine election.

Now, you know the failure of people who believe in divine election often lies here. Not in their faith, that's of course what they should believe, but in the fact that they often don't realize the consequences of being in a special relationship to God. The Jews loved Amos 3:2, "You only have I known of all the nations on the earth." Think of that. God saying through Amos to Israel, "You only have I known of all the nations on the earth." Now, he knew of the existence of all the other nations. He's the omniscient God. But there's a special sense in which no other nation exists before God. "You only have I known of all the nations on the earth." There's a sense in which that's still true. We look out today and who's in the front of the news? It's that same nation. They're still with us. Where are the Babylonians? Where are the Assyrians? Where are the Parthians? But Israel is there. They are like the Gulf Stream in the midst of the Atlantic Ocean, always distinct, always marked out. It's a people that shall dwell alone, a Gentile false prophet said.

"You only have I known of all the nations on the earth." Isn't that a lovely thought? Divinely elected, entered into an intimate relationship, that's the meaning of the term known, a term that is used of the physical relationship. "You only," Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and brought forth Cain. Personal, intimate relationship of divine election. "You only." The only problem with that text is one ought to finish the text. It's a great thing, by the way, to believe in divine election. You know I think it's a pretty good idea. You know that the Chapel believes that it's a pretty good idea. The Bible teaches it from beginning to the end. There it is in the Bible on the pages of Scripture over and over again. Do you know what the rest of that text is? "You only have I known of all the nations on the earth. Therefore, "therefore, this is the terror of divine election, "therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." In other words, the special relationship brings special responsibility.

Oh listen, we in Believers Chapel have great responsibility before God. "You only have I known of all the nations Israel, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. You only have I elected among all of the individuals scattered over the face of the earth, church of Jesus Christ, therefore judgment shall begin at the house of God." That's a solemn thing. That's something to

really think about. Have you thought about it? Have you taken great joy in election and forgotten that it has introduced you into a relationship in which you are very, very close to a God who does not only laugh with joy, but judges in solemnity. "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" We attend Believers Chapel, we have the word. Yes, we do, but that brings responsibility.

Bishop Riles said in connection with this something I thought was very, very important. "The power of self-deception in the unconverted man is infinite. The Jews were not more unreasonable than many nowadays who say, "We're not dead in sin. We have grace. We have faith. We are regenerate. We have the Holy Spirit." While their lives show plainly that they're totally mistaken. Therefore, my dear friends in Believers Chapel, we have faith, we have grace, we have been regenerated, we have the Holy Spirit, we have the doctrines of divine election and all of the other great doctrines of the word of God. Is there reality in our lives? Can someone coming in here see a difference? Can they see that there's something extra? That's not asking too much. That's only asking what the Scriptures indicate is plainly so.

When a man believes in Jesus Christ there is the inevitable evidence, not necessarily seen by you and by me, but the inevitable evidence. You know, when a man is born physically there is the inevitable evidence. If we don't hear the cries of the infant introduced into our society, then we know something is wrong. There is sickness or something else. Jesus said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth," where it wishes to, in his words on the new birth. The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof and canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. There is the inevitable sound. We may not hear it, but it's there. So, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." Oh, the power of human self-deception. It is, as Bishop Riles said, infinite. And those of us who often think the preacher is not thinking about us, they're the very ones to whom the text speaks. That's a solemn thing isn't it? That makes me want to declare an intermission so we can all get down on our knees and pray that it may not be I.

Well, our Lord responds to that. He emphasizes three things, which I'll briefly mention. First of all, he says that there is a principle that characterizes sin, and it is bondage. He states, "Verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." Bond slave of sin, that's the worse of all bondages, to be in bondage to sin. Because once a man commits an act of sin, and we begin our lives by doing that, every other sin follows more easily after that, and all we do is forge further links in the chains that bind us spiritually.

John Calvin mentions this when he says, "The greater the mass of vices anyone is burdened under and buried under, the more fiercely and bombastically does he extol his free will. Isn't that interesting? The more we are burdened by sin, the more we are inclined to say we are free. Augustine, who was Calvin's teacher in so many things, has pointed out that slavery to sin is worse than other forms of slavery. After all at times a man's slave, worn out by the commands of an unfeeling master may find some rest by just running off. But how can you run off from yourself? That's where the slavery is, it's within. So where can the servant of sin flee? He carries his bondage with him wherever he goes. An evil conscious cannot flee from itself; it has no place to go to. It belongs to itself, himself. A man cannot withdraw from himself. The sin he commits is within himself, and the bondage is within himself. He committed sin in order to obtain some pleasure, and soon the pleasure passes but the pain is still there, no way to escape it. It's still there. Oh, there's nothing worse than that. What an evil bondage sin is.

And furthermore, my dear friends and my Christian brethren and sisters, a sin makes it easier to commit the next. And finally they become so easy it's the way of life. What a bondage. Jesus says, whoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. How truly he speaks. Alex McLaren, called the Monarch of the Pulpit, the great expositor has said, "It's a far commoner thing for a man never to have done some given evil, never to have gotten drunk, never to have stolen or the like, than to have done it only once." That's true. For once we do it, the next comes easier, and the next easier still. "Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin."

The second thing that Jesus says -- Oh by the way, there are people who say if you preach the corruption of the human heart, that's a gloomy kind of thing, what you ought to do is to give the gospel. No, no, it's true we ought to give the gospel, but oh how important it is that men come to see exactly the bondage that they are in. If a man is told that it's just part of human nature, and therefore something that we cannot do anything about, then of course he will have no desire to be free. But if we say to them that that is the divine judgment and that Jesus is offering freedom, how important it is that we preach the bondage of sin, the corruption of the human heart. It provides a gleam of hope, there is deliverance, as we shall see.

Now he says in the 35th verse, "The servant abideth not in the house for ever." A slave, after all, he may be sold. He may be freed. He may be traded to someone else. But he says, "The Son abideth ever." One is inclined to read that and say "a son." But he's not speaking about a son, that is a son who stays in the house of his father and mother, because he's a born son. That is true, but he really is talking about himself. He uses a term that is hardly ever used by John of believers. He's talking about Christ. He's saying he is the Son, and he abides always in the house of God. And because he abides always in the house of God, he is able to free us from the bondage of sin. You see, to be in Abraham's house, a man must have faith in heart as well as in the blood. The Jews said, "We are Abraham's seed."

Well, what did they mean by that? Why, they mean we are physical descendants of Abraham. But to be truly Abraham's seed, one must have the faith that Abraham had. The church is called the children of Abraham, not the children of Israel. Children of Abraham, because we have faith. That's very important. You see, it's not enough for you to have a father and a mother who believe. It's not enough for you children sitting in the audience to have believing parents. It's not enough to read the Bible around the breakfast table, because you too must have your own faith. A man cannot convey his faith to his children like he conveys his goods to them when he signs his will and dies. There's no way to do that. For, to be Abraham's seed one must not only as a Jewish man

have his blood coursing through the veins, but also have the faith of our father Abraham, which he had when he was in uncircumcision. Gentiles have that kind of faith too.

Do you remember the story of Ishmael and Isaac? Ishmael was Abraham's son too. Isaac was his son, but Isaac was a child of promise. "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." The time came when Ishmael began to persecute Isaac because law, Paul says, always persecutes grace. They don't like free people. Men who are legalists don't like to see a person who is not under the law. They like to put them under the law, put them in slavery. So Paul says there was a conflict in the home, and finally the time came when it was necessary to send Ishmael out. Remember, Sarah finally came to Abraham because Ishmael was persecuting Isaac. And she said, "Abe, send him away." And that didn't sit too well with Abraham, because he loved Ishmael. Ishmael was his firstborn. So he went to the Lord about it. And the Lord said, "Abraham, do what your wife says. Don't you know that's the thing to do?" [Laughter] Well, in this instance it was so. I remember Sarah called him lord. I've still to get Martha to call me that [Laughter] except with a jeering smile, "My lord." Well anyway, Abraham finally sent Ishmael away, because "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." You see, it's not enough to be a physical son; one must also be the spiritual son as well. So he says, "The servant abideth not in the house for ever." Ishmael was a slave. Isaac is *the* son, the son not of a bondwoman, but of a free woman, Sarah, Paul says. Ishmael was the son of the bondwoman, and so he must be cast out. Paul says cast out legalistic principles. Accept the grace principle, live by them.

Finally he says in the 36th verse, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." This is what he can do because he is the Son who abides forever. Do you remember when the Lord Jesus first gave his message in the synagogue in Nazareth? Do you remember what he said? Well he said the Spirit of God is upon him to do certain things, and he listed the things. He mentioned the things he was sent to do, and one of them was to set at liberty the bruised to give freedom. If the Son shall make you free, that is his task. You shall be free indeed. How does he do it? Well, strictly speaking our Lord doesn't say how he does it right in this particular text. Michael Ratner. Spurgeon calls this text the "text of the great liberator." And he is. "If the Son therefore

shall make you free." Freedom, can I be free from guilt? Yes, you can be free from guilt. Can I be free from the punishment that is due me because of my sin? Yes, you may be free. Can I be free as a Christian from the power of sin in my life? Yes, you may be free. If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed, really free. Can I be free of the fear of death itself? Yes, you may be free of the fear of death itself. If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed for he has taken the sting out of death, and death is no longer an enemy. It is the friend of the Christian in that it is the entrance into the presence of the Lord God. Freedom is possible. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Beware of false liberty. Beware of the kind of liberty that says, "We are special people. God has dealt specially with us." And then not have the reality in one's heart. Well he says, the issue is free indeed, actually free. We will change our domicile from the house of the bond slave and enter into the house of God as the sons of God. As we often sin, "My sin oh the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin not in part but the whole, is nailed to his cross, and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh my soul."

Let me close by just saying this, there's no football game this afternoon [laughter]. We're going to be on the radio; we need a couple of more minutes I'm sure. Oh the tragic ignorance of spiritual bondage. Never have we been in bondage, they said, and all the time they were encased on spiritual chains. The old Puritans spoke of people who heard the gospel Sunday after Sunday after Sunday as being gospel hardened. That's characteristic of the word of God and the preaching of the word and the people of God. The gospel is given out and over and over again when men refuse it, it becomes easier the next time to refuse, and easier still the next time. Until it's possible to sit in the presence of the preaching of the gospel and bribe our consciences, drug our consciences, and not even hear.

Ezekiel was once told by the Lord to go in spirit to the temple. And he went in spirit to the temple. Then he was told to go to a place where there was a hole in the wall, and to go look through that hole in the wall. And Ezekiel preached in a day when men had heard the message to Israel over

and over and over again down through the years. And he was shown an inner chamber on the walls of which were painted all the hideous idols of the heathen. And there in the presence of the foul shape stood the venerable priests and official dignitaries of Israel, the preachers of the day, the religious leaders of the day. And they had their senses in their hands and their back were to the oracle of God. Ezekiel, of course, was told this is the condition of Israel. I'd like to say to you that that is a picture of the condition of the human heart. It's possible on the outside to look like a temple but on the inside to be filled with all kinds of hideous idols and other abominable things in the sight of God. What a terrible thing it is to in the midst of the offer of freedom to have no sense of sin, no need of salvation, everything is shallow. We went to church again today.

Many years ago I was in a Bible conference, and there was an independent Baptist evangelist, a very good evangelist. In the midst of one of his messages, he always had a few cute stories. And I liked this one, because it seemed to speak so much to my experience at the time. He said there was a man in the Baptist church who went to the deacons and said he'd like to join the church. They said, "Tell us something about your experience." He said, "Well, I was sitting in my house the other day, and I saw a bug scratching on the screen of the door. And I thought, that's me, I ought to join the church." Well one of the other deacons said, "I don't think that we ought to bring a man into the church who has never felt anything more than he felt when he saw a bug scratching on a screen." And one of the other deacons said, "I move that we bring him in. He's felt more than a lot of us have felt." [Laughter]

Isn't it a terrible thing to be in bondage to sin and not know it? What a magnificent thing it is to be able to offer freedom, not civil free, not religious freedom, spiritual freedom in Jesus Christ. To be delivered from the chains of sin by the wonderful message of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that he has died for sin, died for sinners, and we may be free. Come to Christ. Recognize your condition of bondage. Flee to him. Have him snap the chains and give you freedom indeed. May God help you to come. What a magnificent thing it is, Lord, to reflect upon the words of our Lord, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."