

Communications.

THE LIBERTY OF CHRIST.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."—John, viii., 36.

To illustrate the whole meaning of these words of our Lord would require us to consider the 35th verse, "And the servant, (or household slave,) abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth ever." Taken in connection with these words, there is a double figure in those of the 36th verse. They imply not only deliverance from the bondage of sin, but that title to a permanent enjoyment of all the blessings of the house and inheritance of the living God, of which the unbelieving Jews were deprived by their giving themselves up to the servitude of sin. Even in the visible Church of God to which they still belonged, they sank themselves to such a station as exposed to the danger of being cast out of its pale for ever, as slaves in a house, who have not the portion of sons or freemen:—He whom the Son made free should be raised to a permanent participation in all the rights of the family of God. At present, however, we purpose confining ourselves to the idea presented by its connection with the 34th verse—freedom from the slavery of sin,—a blessed freedom, which "whoso tastes can be enslaved no more,"—it is the glorious liberty of the children of God. In what does it consist?

We do not see that the bondage of the condemnation of the law is referred to in the 34th verse, because the *habitual commission* of sin appears to be spoken of, and it is not the habitual commission of sin, so much as the *offending in one point*, which makes a man the subject of the condemning sentence of the law. The slavery, as we saw in a previous paper,* is that of sin's moral dominion. The liberty, which Christ bestows, corresponds—it is *deliverance* from sin's moral dominion. It supposes, indeed, also freedom from condemnation as previously necessary, but the other is that which appears to be in view in this verse. From this dominion the Gospel brings a blessed and effectual freedom, and brings it with such victorious and resistless power, that the most degraded slave of sin is rescued and made to exult in his liberty.

It does this by giving its mortal wound to the enslaving principle in the soul, i. e. the love of sin; and by implanting new and purer affections,—the love of God, and of Jesus the Saviour of men, and of all that is holy and excellent for His sake. But this liberty will be better understood by our considering, first, as the verse directs us to do, the *Author* of it, and, then, the *manner* in which He effects it.

Hear then, O sinners of mankind, and rejoice! The power of God is seen in your deliverance; yea, God himself, manifest in the flesh, has interposed. The Son of God, who, as Mediator and Intercessor for the church, is the Son in God's own house, sets the captives free by His redeeming power; for in this work of love He has proved himself "mighty to save." This work of His was no human enterprise; it originated with God; it bears all the marks of Divine wisdom, and power, and greatness enstamped upon it. It infinitely transcends all that human sagacity ever conceived for conquering the depraved passions of the heart of man. It is of a totally different nature from all human expedients for the promotion of virtue. It is found by experience to have a living and creative energy so powerful, that the moral transformation which it produces may be described as a new creation, the *regeneration* or new birth of the soul, which becomes, through grace, its subject. How, then, does the Great Redeemer of men effect this work?

I. First of all, He became an atonement for ruined man. He made satisfaction to the justice of the Almighty Governor, in order that the penalty of death might be removed from the sinner. Dwelling himself in uncreated light, He did not disdain a descent to this world of darkness and of sin. He passed the

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