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Christ the Emancipator.

BY REV. CHARLES H. PARKHURST, D.D.

THIS condensed sermon, by Rev. Dr. C. H. Parkhurst, whose name is in every home as the leader of the Purity Crusade in New York, will be widely read as an interesting and characteristic discourse.



REV. CHARLES H. PARKHURST, D.D.

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

Christ the Emancipator! Escape into wider liberty through divine enfranchisement! That, then, is our matter—a matter worthy of the best thought we can give to it, and worthy of the largest inspiration that the Holy Ghost can endue us withal.

Our address is not to any particular class of auditors, as though those who believed in Christ were freemen, and all other slaves. We are none of us free. There is not an unshackled man or woman among us. And to become free is the grand

purpose of all living; is now, perhaps always will be. Not only ought this to be the purpose toward which we strive, it is the purpose toward which we strive, however mistaken and queer the ways by which we try sometimes to compass our purpose. There is not a man of us, in the vigorous sense of the word, but feels himself hampered, shut in, wound about with some visible or invisible bond of limitation, that is all the time holding us back from the wider area out upon which we should certainly move were those limitations somehow to be struck off. We have not gotten out on to that area, but we know it is there all the same, and the presentiment of it is wondrously at work in us. There is a dash of the prophetic in every born soul, that makes us almost participant in what has not come yet. Everything in all this great world that is alive is seeking to overstep its frontiers. We are plucked at by the unreached. Voices are borne in upon us from regions we have neither seen nor mapped. This is part of what life means. It is the hunger to be wider and higher, longer and deeper. It is an instinct bodded in the nature of things. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Present conditions are always shell, which the meat on the inside is perpetually trying to get on to the outside of. You can call it corn, or thought, or purpose, or religion, or spirit, it is all over and all around. It is the metre that life of every sort and description is written in. The tree punches a hole in its bark and hangs out a new bud. The city blasts out the rocks in its suburban area and plants down a new boulevard. The man worth a million takes pains to invest it so that it will become fifteen hundred thousand. Perhaps he could not tell you why; perhaps he does not know why. Neither does the tree know why it buds, but it buds, and everything wants to.

Now this impulse we have to reckon with. Clearly God intends something by it. It would not be around everywhere, and always at work unless the Creator of all things and the Author of all life had had a distinct and generous purpose which this impulse was implanted to subserve. The best way now in which we can state this and be true to experience, observation, and Bible, is to say that in its innermost genius this restless craving that we are so mightily charged withal, is but the human spirit, born with an instinct of freedom, chafing against the fetters of nature and circumstance by which it is enthralled.

God in His humanised revelation is the power by which we are to meet the pinch of our limitations and crush and shatter their grip upon us. Says the Holy Word, "Christ came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly." Let more of the life of God into our swelling spirits, and the limitations have got to give way. Christ in us makes us great, and Christ in us more and more makes us greater and greater, and there is no wall encompassing us so adamant—be it wall of habit, or of idea, or of interest, or of purpose, or whatever else—but will weaken and crack and crumble and open a wide and unhorizoned area to the north and south and east and west, if there is going on within us this continued growth and out thrust of an energy that is from God. And there is nothing in this that even smatters of the impracticable or the transcendental. Why, how do you educate your own child to bear life's brunt and to burst the bonds that his feebleness and ignorance and animal passions bind about

him and rivet upon him? How do you go about to rend the meshes and pluck out the rivets? How, but by so entering into him with the fullness of your own strong and abundant life, that the very pressure and expansion of your life within him shall wrench the rivets out of him and tear the knotted cords off of him? The very gist of all education is in that. It is personal, it is baptismal, it is inspirational. It isn't precept, it is blood that does it. And just what you, a big father, are to your little boy, shattering his limitations because your spirit infused into him makes something too immense to be contained on the inside of those limitations, just that the great Father in Christ is to us little men and women, straining, cracking, and then pulverizing our limitations, which may be tough enough to fasten us in, but have to give way when the Spirit of the Almighty begins to beatir himself inside of them. That is the philosophy of enfranchisement. That is the art of freedom. Not outside blows struck upon our chains, but a spirit inside, made so divinely big and virile, that the bonds break and the links pull apart, and the prisoner stands forth a free man.

Now, there are a good many sorts of limitation that confine us and of walls that immure us, and we want this expansive Spirit of God in us in order to pry them off their foundations and so let us out into the open. In the first place, the life of Christ within us bursts the bonds of the imprisoning years. We think in terms of years, and that is a thing we ought to be getting over. As we move along, we are conscious of the "threescore and ten" as of a wall impenetrable and insurmountable, beyond which it is not to be permitted to us to browse. And this consciousness of life's contractedness operates continually to tether our plans, to enervate our interests. If we are more animal than we are spiritual, then the controlling consideration with us will be our mortality; if we are more spiritual than we are animal, then the governing consideration with us will be our immortality. "Christ in us, the hope of glory," is the way the Bible puts it. Immortal, and with a consciousness of immortality, because the spirit in us is made too big and urgent for the stakes with which the body has picketed us to be able to withstand the strain inwardly put upon them. That is the real secret of all our assured confidence in immortality. "The truth shall make you free," said Christ, "and I am the Truth," said He. There is a principle involved here that we cannot state too frequently, nor reiterate too emphatically, in these days when so much of religious mind is struggling toward larger enfranchisement. To greater or less degree, every thinking man is a slave to his own convictions and conceptions. It is next door to impossible to have an idea and not been entangled and handicapped by it. And the truer the idea, and the more the man who thinks it believes in that idea, the more likely it is that he will never get beyond that idea. Statements of the truth are not truth; they are only pictures that we make of the movement of a mind that is feeling after the truth. This is not a protest against conservative statements of doctrine one whit more than it is a protest against radical statements of doctrine.

The entrance of His Spirit into us enlarges us to the rending of the old shackles of indurated opinion that we have either put upon ourselves or had put on us, and so lets us out into a wider reach of truth and into a broader sweep of prospect. That is all perfectly illustrated in the case of Saul on his way to becoming Paul. Saul was an old fossilized Jew. His theological views, that at one time we may suppose to have been young and tender and plastic, had chilled and dried and hardened into so much doctrinal petrification. Anything like new, enlarged and progressive thought we may suppose to have been arrested. The convictions he had already acquired lay in the way of more acquisitions of the same kind. His mind bounded back as from a wall, from the casing of opinion in which during all those years he had been slowly immuring himself. He was in that particular like a river which will sometimes dam its own flow by the very material which it has itself deposited. And yet when once the power of Christ had come upon him and the Spirit of Christ, who is the Truth, had become a swelling reservoir within him, the embankment gave way, and the new accumulation from out the sky broke forth over wide areas of new theological fertility, the inward divine replenishment, like the deepened currents of vegetable sap in the spring, punctured the bark and let itself out all over Paul in fresh theological buds. And wherever there is a fresh increment of the Christ-Spirit made over to a Christian thinker that is to be counted as a certain issue. No human mind with Christ alive in it is going to be able to keep still. The tree that grows fast by the river of the water of life yields its fruit every month, says the Apocalypse. We all of us need an experience of Christian truth, and the thing that we have to remember is that there is no experience of truth apart from a widening and progressive apprehension of the truth. To have the truth touch us and to have it make our minds tingle, we must get into some new reach of the truth, and meet it on a side where it is not worn. That explains the remark that even Christians are sometimes heard to make. When they say that they take no pleasure in reading the Bible. It is astonishing how quickly a truth brightens when we brighten, and how the prospect broadens when fresh light has been poured into our own eye. The Spirit of Truth within us tracks the truth to its undetected hiding places, and Christ is that Spirit of Truth, which is the identical thing that St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." We have to be human in order to know the human, and just as much we have to be divine in order to know the Divine. Christ in us is the lens through which the thing of God become evident and open to us. And the more of Christ there is in us, the wider the range of our eye, the more superbly complete the liberty of our thought.