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## The Perfect Freedom.

BY THE LATE PRINCIPAL JOHN CAIRD, D. D., LL. D.

### PART II.



ND yet, dignified and praiseworthy though it be, it is still a character which falls far short of Christ's ideal. For the state of mind which our Lord contemplates as the realization of perfect spiritual free-

dom is reached only when duty has ceased to be a thing of deliberate self-denial, and has become itself the sweetness and the joy of life. Christ declares that it is possible for a man to attain to such a temper and frame of spirit, that doing the will of God shall be to him a kind of self-indulgence, the expression of an irresistible inward impulse, the gratification of the deepest passion of his soul. His moral life will no longer have the character of obedience, even to a Master whose authority his reason recognizes, but that of the unconscious service rendered to One who has touched our hearts and captivated our affections, and awakened in us a devotion that binds us to His service by an imperious yet sweet and joyous enthralment. The man who rises to this spiritual elevation of nature may still be a creature of appetites and passions, of sensuous impulses and desires; but, according to Christ's conception, under the all-dominating force of a new and more potent affection, there will be no longer any painful or protracted struggle with these. Do not we know how work loses its irksomeness when a strong passion urges us to do it? We know that even an intense earthly passion or desire taking possession of our nature will give us an easy and almost unfeigned supremacy over other desires, which otherwise it would be hard to conquer—that ambition, or love of fame or honor, for instance, will quell sensuality, indolence, the love of money, or pleasure and personal indulgence; or again, that ardent love or patriotism, taking deep hold of a human spirit, will bear down before it, without the sense of effort, all other and meaner impulses, and make it no hardship to sacrifice self, to undergo pain and toil and danger and disaster, for its object. And so, what Christ contemplates is the awakening of a new and commanding principle within the breast—a love to Him who is the supreme ideal of all that is divinely fair and holy and good, more entrancing, conferring a superiority to self more magnanimous, more enabling, more sustaining, more capable of rousing those who are swayed by it to labor and sacrifice and endurance, that have lost all their severity and become transmuted into sweetness, than any earthly principle or passion by which the spirit of man can be impelled.

Alas! as we depict this exalted ideal of human goodness, how far, how very far short of it, are we constrained to confess, is the life which most of us are living. To very many of us religion is a thing which has its source in our fears, our interests, our hereditary traditions, our social convictions, at best our intellectual convictions. How seldom has it gone deeper than all that, to entrench itself in our affections, to become that for which such expressions as these are no longer exaggerations: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart;" "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Nevertheless, as Christian men and women, it is this we should aim at; with nothing short of this should we be content. For as all things are a bondage to us till our hearts be in them, as our work in life, our profession, our calling, our social duties and relations, the very ties of home and kindred are a drag upon us, if our heart be not in them; so our religion can then only cease to be a yoke upon our necks, a heavy, servile task work, when our whole nature, mind, heart, soul, the convictions of our reason, the witness of our conscience, the constraining force of our affections—go with it. For then only in us shall our Lord's saying be fulfilled, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

### A Felt Want.

The great want of the age is men; men who are not for sale; men who are sound from core to circumference, true to the heart's core; men who fear the Lord and hate covetousness; men whose consciences are as steady as the needle to the pole; men who can tell the truth and look the devil and the world in the eye; men who have courage without wriggling for it; men in whom the current of everlasting life runs still and deep and strong; men careful of God's honor and men's applause; men who will not fail or be discouraged till judgment be set in the earth; men who know their message and tell it; men who know their place and fill it; men who mind their own business; men who will not lie; men who are not too lazy to work nor too proud, nor too poor; men who are willing to eat what they have paid for; men who know whom they have believed; men whose feet are on the Everlasting Rock; men who are strong with the divine strength, wise with the wisdom that cometh from above, and loving with the love of Christ—men of God.

J. M. GADDY.

### Spurgeon's Abhorrence of Debt

To keep dirt, debt and the devil out of my cottage has been my greatest wish ever since I set up housekeeping; and although the last of the three has sometimes gotten in by the door or window, for the serpent will wriggle through the smallest crack, yet, thanks to a good wife, hard work, honesty and scrubbing brushes, the other two have not crossed the threshold. Debt is so degrading, that if I owed a man a penny, I would walk twenty miles in the depth of winter to pay him, sooner than feel that I was under an obligation. I should be as comfortable with peas in my shoes, or a hedgehog in my bed, or a snake up my back, as with bills hanging over my head at the grocer's, baker's and tailor's. Poverty is hard, but debt is horrible; a man might as well have a smoky house and scolding wife, which are said to be the two worst evils of our life. We may be poor, yet respectable, which John Ploughman and wife hope they are, and will be; but a man in debt cannot even respect himself, and he is sure to be talked about by his neighbors and that talk will not be much to his credit. Some persons appear to like to be owing money; but I would as soon be a cat up a chimney, with the fire alight, or a fox with hounds at my heels, or a hedgehog on pitchfork, or a mouse under an owl's claws. An honest man thinks a purse full of other people's money to be worse than an empty one; he cannot bear to eat other people's cheese, wear other people's shirts, and walk about in other people's shoes; neither will he be easy while his wife is decked out in the milliner's bonnets, and wears the draper's flannels.

### A Child's Love.

A poor drunkard had an only daughter, whom he abused shamefully, but she clung to him with undying affection. One day, when he awoke from slumber, after a debauch, and found her preparing breakfast for him and singing a child-

ish song, he turned to her, and, with a tone almost tender, said: "Millie, what makes you stay with me?" "Because you are my father, and I love you." "You love me!" repeated the wretched man. "You love me!" He looked at his bloated limbs, his soiled and ragged clothes. "Love me!" he still murmured. "Millie, what makes you love me? I am a poor drunkard; everybody else despises me, why don't you?" "Dear father," said the girl, with swimming eyes, "my mother taught me to love you, and every night she comes from heaven and stands by my little bed and says, 'Millie, don't leave your father; he will get away from that rum fiend some of these days, and then how happy you will be.'—Selected.

### The Moral Value of Good Temper.

A reader of Robert Louis Stevenson's "Letters" say they show how well he practised in everyday life the gospel of courage, of the high moral value of good temper, and of the crime of gloom and despondency. A fit of irritation was to him a thing to be ashamed of, and he apologized for being occasionally cast down by his ill health. One cannot fail to be struck by the buoyant and joyous note in Stevenson, whose whole life was a struggle with disease. By pure will power he prevented physical pain from mastering his spirit. He felt that a man's duty was to be cheery and hopeful, for the sake of others; and that it was a miserably poor thing to let one's own suffering shadow others' lives. Hence this heroic soul in weak body was a happiness-maker, both in his home circle and in that larger circle touched by his books. He cultivated good temper because he realized its moral value. When it comes to be recognized more generally, as it ought to be, that good temper is not only cultivatable but a Christian duty, and that one has no moral right to inflict gloom and despondency upon the home members or the community, we shall doubtless see a marked change for the better. Doubtless a sunny disposition is natural to some, and not to others; but all may acquire this, as well as any other virtue; and its possession is one of the strong commendations of one's religion. There is no reason why one member of the family—say the unselfish mother—should supply all the sunshine for the home.

### Growth of the Baptists.

In a recent issue of the *Independent* appear the statistics of the churches for the year 1899. The table is a valuable one for comparison. The Roman Catholics show the surprisingly small gain of 52,123. The Lutherans have increased in numbers 40,226. "The Church" (Episcopal) has the modest addition of 10,987 members, or one and one-half per cent. The Methodists (17 bodies) gain 33,051 members, while the Methodist Episcopal church shows a loss of some 4000.

The Baptists of all kinds (13 bodies) show an increase of 89,201, or about two per cent. But the regular Baptists (North and South) have increased over 260,000, while the colored Baptists have decreased over 175,000 in numbers. What is the reason of this great decrease among our colored brethren? The total number of Baptists, according to these statistics, is 4,443,628. Are we increasing in quality as rapidly as in quantity?

Esau wept because he lost the blessing, not because he had sold his birthright. Men mourn for the evil that sin brings, not for the sin that brings the evil.

The boards taken from nature and covered with gold, were fit for God's house. So sinners are prepared for Christ's Spiritual temple.—

D. L. Moody.

Broad is the road that leads to death.