

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday evening 2 October 1927

John 8 v 36

"If the Son therefore shall make you free  
ye shall be free indeed"

The Son in the text is the Lord Jesus Christ who spoke in the text of this morning and said "If ye believe not that I am He ye shall die in your sins". Here He speaks of Himself as the Son and as having authority to make captives free. If He is the equal of His Father in the Godhead we must enquire into the reason of His subordination to His Father. He is equal with His Father in the Godhead, of the same nature, equal in all respects; that whatever is proper to God, Jesus Christ possesses. But in the covenant of grace He is subject to His Father. In His mediatorial character, He is subject to His Father. He is a Son in His own house and has authority committed to Him to give life to whomsoever He will and to liberate captives and set them free from the bondage in which they are. This is the position of the I AM, Jesus Christ. He said "Before Abraham was I AM". May we be enabled to hold that fast, never let that go, that the Man Christ Jesus is the God Man, that He answers to the word, the name given to Him, Immanuel, God with us, and certain it is that every time you see Him by faith, get a glimpse of His eternal Deity in your own nature, you will worship Him. In the covenant of grace He took the position of servant and His Father calls attention to Him in that position - "Behold My servant whom I uphold, Mine Elect in whom My soul delighteth". In that position God says to Him - "Thou art My salvation to the ends of the earth". In that position His Father gave Him grace for His church, life to give to them and sent Him to speak the words which He had heard His Father speak in the counsel of peace in eternity. In that position He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. In that position He made Himself responsible for the safety, the salvation of His people. If the Lord should help us to realise this as being absolutely consistent with His eternal Sonship and Deity, with His equality with the Father, it would be a real help to us in some times of temptation concerning Him. Hold, as God may help you,

these two doctrines, the first, the eternal Deity of Christ, that is the Person of the Son of God having our nature; second, that this Person, Almighty God, became incarnate and took on Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh. This is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And the Father having, as we are told in this gospel, committed to His Son as His servant, all authority and power and judgment, He exercises the same in both the church and the world. And though men despise Him, though kings abhor Him, and though all nations hate Him, and though they are gathered together today against Him, the Lamb as He is on a white horse, there are a few people with Him and these are called and faithful and chosen. There is a battle. Men are against Christ, and woe to them Christ is against them, and if that be true of any person here, that Christ is against him, better for him never to have been born. O sinner, you do not know what your position is; if you are against Christ, Christ is against you, and can you stand when He arises and is angry? Will you be able to stand when He uses His two-edged sword, the awful word that goeth out of His mouth? But seeing that men, all men are in a terrible bondage, how can the Son make any man free? If it be true of us, as the children of Adam, who fell in him, that we are in bondage - bondage to the law; it wont let us go of itself without some compensation: bondage to sin which the law will never break and we cannot break - how can the Son make us free. The law must be maintained in its honour, must be, and Christ, being God, necessarily hates sin, and must punish it. The answer to that important question is that His Father imputed the sin of the Church to His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Son willingly took that burden on Himself, received the imputation of sin put on Him by His righteous, holy Father, and being made sin it was necessary that He should make an end of sin. If He did not, Himself would never be free from the burden, nor could the church be liberated from her captivity. Think of this, it is no dry doctrine, dear friends. In it is involved salvation, holiness, righteousness, acceptance with God and eternal blessedness. The imputation of sin to Christ is a fundamental. It is a doctrine of the Bible. It underlies all right hopes, all true fleeing from the wrath to come, all escape from that wrath. It underlies everything that is holy and acceptable to God. This involves the cross. It means that the wrath, the curse, the punishment due to us, if we be the Lord's people, came to Him, fell on

Him, slew Him. It means that He, who eternally dwelt in the bosom of His Father, suffered the hiding of His Father's face. Very solemn, and the consideration of it sinner, if it be given to you to consider it, will make you amazed, bring hatred to sin, and desire for holiness and to live near the Lord.

I would for a few moments dwell on this; the importance of it must be my reason. The imputation of sin means the suffering that Christ endured. "Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself". But what goes on, what is there in that connection? This - "He endured the cross, despising the shame". That is what the Son of God had to endure. The cross means the curse. Christ was made a curse for us, as it is written "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree". Your sins, people of God, nailed Him there. They pierced His side, they broke His heart, they caused His Father to desert Him; they kindled a fire in His holy soul; they made Him cry out - "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me". He was bound, my friends. They bound Him and they took Him, personally they took Him into the Judgment Hall. They took away His judgment in the day of His humiliation. They took Him to the cross, they nailed Him there. All this was because sin was imputed to Him. The only way of escape from the wrath to come for us is this, that Jesus suffered the punishment due to us; received the curse that we should have received but for His interposing His precious blood. And when He said - "It is finished", then the sin of the land was removed in that one day. No sin was left on the church, no speck, no spot, no fault of any sort or kind was left on the church for the Father to find fault with her. She was just made as pure as He is pure, as righteous as He is righteous, as acceptable to His Father as He, their Saviour, is righteous and acceptable. They stand on the same ground, are embraced with the same arms of love, abide in the same position and condition before God. They are absolved from all their sins. They are free from the law; they are not liable to the curse; they are just free people, heavenly men in Him; spotless, pure and acceptable in Him. O dear friends, if the Holy Spirit should be pleased to bring this mercy to our hearts it will fill us with peace and honour and glory and make us supremely happy.

Now this is the doctrine of freedom, and I pray that God would

help us very seriously and prayerfully to consider it, consider the doctrine of freedom. Freedom from sin; therefore from the law and its curse. But when we come to our own personal cases, the matter stands differently. There is a difference between the doctrine of the salvation of the church and the experimental acquaintance with that doctrine. But that doctrine must come into the conscience, into the soul. That which terminated in God, which satisfied Him everlastingly, must terminate in our consciences and satisfy us there, and a wonderful thought it is that a person conscious, when quickened and enlightened by the Spirit, finds no rest in anything, any person, any work, any prayer, any tear, any repentance, any evidences. No rest in anything until the atonement, in which the Father rests, comes into his conscience.

But now let me speak a little, as enabled, of our bondage. We are bound, in the first place, to and by the law of God. We are all of us servants. We are obliged by the law, we are bound by it to Almighty God, as His subjects. It is not, whether you will have it or not. There it is in your nature. The Gentiles which have not the law in the form in which the Jews received it, these show the work of the law written in their hearts, the meanwhile either accusing or else excusing them. Dear friends, there we are just simply bound by God's holy, just, spiritual law, to Himself. You owe allegiance to Him. Every man owes God that allegiance which is natural and which is legal, and it is clear, it must be clear to every one of you, that a subject is not at liberty to absolve himself from his subjection, his obedience to the law. 'Tis so naturally. We, as English people, are not at liberty to break the law or to say we wont have anything to do with it; we wont obey it. We are bound to do it and we have no legal right and no power or authority to absolve the union that is between us and the constitution of this land. So spiritually, that is according to the moral constitution of our nature and the law of God in us, we are bound to Him. Consider thy position sinner, consider it. Consider the law which is in your nature. Consider the language and testimony of your own conscience at times. If there were no law of uprightness, there would be no theft. If there were no law of purity, there would be no uncleanness. If there were no law commanding obedience, there could be no disobedience. You are just bound by the law, and your conscience tells you so, does it not? Does

it not sometimes disturb you even for a minute? Does it not say to you, you are a sinner? But sin is the transgression of the law. You are bound, every man is bound to God by the law; every man. And secondly we are bound by the chains of our sins; tyrants of sin. O sins are tyrants; they hold us; they are strong cords which we cannot snap or break or cut. They are habits, never to be broken by ourselves. Currents of thought which if we wish to stem or dam we are not able to. They are like floods sometimes. A flood of evil thoughts will come, a flood of unbelief will all but submerge you at times. Men are bound by sin. The yoke of our transgressions is laid on us and, as with respect to the law, so with respect to our position and condition and state, we have no power to break sin and we have no right to absolve ourselves from sin. There is a legality attaching to sin. It is done under and done against a law. There is a legal position that you occupy by nature. Do you consider it? Do you consider your position before God, as a subject? Do you consider your condition and state as a sinner? Here then we have these two things, not to say, to mention even, except one word in passing, that we are very, very much subject to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. We do not know naturally, have no thought of bondage to that false god, but there it is. Those Jews who were contending with Christ heard His teaching, and it is said, as He spoke these words, His teaching in this chapter recorded, many believed on Him. There seems to have been a conviction in their minds that the Speaker and the Teacher was really the Person He declared Himself to be and they believed that He had come from God. He that sent Me is with Me. The Father hath not left Me alone, for I do always those things that please Him. As He spoke those words many believed on Him, quickly professed to be His disciples. Then He said to them, as believing 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". This was His teaching as they were believers. If ye continue in My teaching, if you keep My word, that will manifest you as being My disciples indeed and the truth which I teach you shall make you free from the errors which you have been held by. This touched them, offended them. They had not entered into the truth spiritually, nor spiritually believed on Him and so they answered Him - "We be Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man. How sayest Thou ye shall be made free". Nature

remains nature. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh", and their belief in Him was born of the flesh, evidently. They were not spiritual; they had not entered into His teachings, so they said, we were never in bondage. Jesus answered them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin". A searching word this. Are you living in the commission of any sin? You are the servant of that sin. Is pride your master? You are serving pride. Is the world ruling in you? You are the servant of the god of this world. Is uncleanness in you predominant? Then you are the servant of that sin. Is covetousness in you prevailing? Then you are an idolator. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin". "Know ye not" said Paul to the Romans "that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness". God give you to think of it. God give you to believe the truth, that you are a servant of sin, O poor sinner, and the servant abideth not in the house for ever. There comes a termination to his abiding in the house, that is, he must die. What a solemn thing to die in sin, to die a servant of sin, just to go out of this world and to appear in the presence of God as having served sin. The language of your servitude was this, as it affected your relationship to God - "Depart from me; I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." Now He says, this servitude of yours in this life ends, but punishment begins. Punishment begins, righteous punishment; just, holy punishment begins, never to end. But the Son abideth ever. O what a mercy, ever living after the power of an endless life, and with authority to make some free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Now a few words here. If we are convinced of sin, if we feel the power of it, if we find ourselves driven by it, and unable to liberate ourselves, we need one to do for us that great thing that is here named. "If the Son shall make you free". Free, first of all, from the law. I must keep this before you for the law is a great master. It is a great master, inexorable in all its commandments. Just and holy, it never asks at your hands what you were not, before the fall, capable of rendering. Now it says, you are my captive, and Jesus comes and says "Loose him and let him go". I have given thee all that thou asked, I have rendered the obedience due, I have paid the debt this prisoner owed; loose him. That is, to the law, let go your hold of

him. You have nothing more to say to him. You have said all to Me that you could say to him. The Son makes us free from the law. Paul beautifully, clearly, powerfully teaches this in the Romans, for he there says "that is dead wherein ye were held", that is the law; it is dead, and so the person to whom it is dead is free from it as in the figure used, the Apostle says, a woman which has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he liveth and if, while he liveth, she is married to another man, she is an adulteress, but if her husband is dead she is free from that law so that she is no adulteress though she be married to another man. Are you dead to the law? Is the law dead to you? Has it killed you? Has its sword pierced you? Has its awful sentence terrified you, and made you say, I am a dead creature before God? Has it arraigned you before God and brought you in guilty in every particular? Then Jesus comes and by His death that law is dead to the soul. "That being dead wherein ye were held". O what a blessed death that is. And now the Son makes the sinner free. He passes under the rod and enters into the bond of the covenant. The law is dead in him and to him and the gospel lives in him. The Son sets him free from that law.

And secondly the Son makes the sinner free from his sins. Free from his sins in three particulars. Notice them. First, free from sin in its condemning power. Sin brings guilt; guilt is followed by death. Guilt always comes where sin has been committed and guilt is followed by death, and when Jesus sets the sinner free by pardon then he is free from the legal power and condemnation due to his sins. He is free, honourably free, legally free and as it is written "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin" So the sinner for the moment is able to do it. Oh he says, sin is forgiven, the conscience is purified. Of all the sweet things known by saints this side of heaven, free forgiveness is one of the sweetest. A full forgiveness spoken on the heart, the conscience satisfied with the atonement of Christ. The sinner realising his acceptance with God is free from his sins. Now sinner, do not hurry into this. No man can hurry into it really. If you are feeling sin on your conscience take this course as the Spirit may help you. Confess, confess, confess it. Speak to Him of your bondage, and of your desires to be liberated and there is One in heaven who can and will make you free. It is terrible to think you have got what God has not given to you, but "the blood of Jesus Christ

His Son cleanseth us from all sin". Is there any position to be imagined more desirable and more blessed, more lovely than this, a sinner forgiven all his trespasses, as it is written "Having forgiven you all trespasses". I am glad the Lord uses the word "trespasses" in the Scripture so frequently because the word is a very instructive word, and it appeals to those who are under conviction. To trespass is, of course, to just step over a boundary. When a man has a field and he puts up a board at the gate or by the hedge "Trespassers will be prosecuted", that is they may not go over the gate or break through the hedge without breaking the law. Have not we trespassed? The Lord speaks of trespasses as being a thick cloud. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions". You have gone over, stepped over, every boundary that God put in the law and in your nature and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all these trespasses. Having forgiven; having blotted out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us and contrary to us, nailing it to His cross. Now that is liberty, that is gospel liberty. When the law has nothing to say against you, when you can realise in some measure what Hart says

Behold, a change indeed  
Justice is now for me

Justice that condemns you, curses you in the law, stands on your side. How honourable is the position of a sinner, a forgiven sinner. How beautiful and lovely is the Saviour in the eyes of a forgiven sinner. Well, that is one sense in which Jesus makes His people free.

And the second is this, the pollution of it. Sin is a filthy thing, a filthy thing. The Lord uses the word so I shall use it. "From all your filthiness will I cleanse you". Bad thoughts, evil; thoughts of God, unbelieving thoughts, rebellious thoughts, hard thoughts against Him, these coming into the heart, rising, prevailing, spreading like a flood over the whole mind; these are pollution itself, and He says I will cleanse you from your filthiness. This is sanctification, blessed sanctification and how is this done? Christ is made sanctification to His people. They stand spotless, they stand holy and without blame before Him in love. What a position. How honourable is this position. They are made free from the pollution of sin.

Thirdly, they are made free from the dominion of sin in them, in their own hearts. "Sin" - this is a beautiful promise - "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law" - that provokes sin and seems even to strengthen it; ye are not under that law - "but under grace"; that gives liberty, and what a liberty it is. O when, perhaps for days, you have been under the power of some sin - say some awful feeling that you do not want to pray - and Jesus comes and removes that by the melting gospel of His grace and you get this feeling in the place of that - I love Him and I love to get near Him when I am permitted and I would wish to keep near Him all my days that I might learn His secrets and walk in His fear, and walk up and down in His Name. Every sin in our nature seeks to win you, and Jesus wont allow it; permits it sometimes, just for a little, but He wont allow the dominion of sin to continue - Ye are not the servants of sin but the servants of righteousness. "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine unto which ye were delivered." That is the beautiful reading in the margin. The text is this - "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you", but the proper reading is in the margin "unto which you were delivered" - the figure of molten metal. There it is in the ladle just drawn from the furnace, but it has got to take a shape, a shape designed, and it must take it. But how? It is poured into the mould. No thanks to the metal that it took that shape; it was poured into the mould. And so a sinner is poured into the gospel, and the gospel into him and he takes the shape of the gospel and the shape of the gospel is likeness to the Lord Jesus to which the sinner is predestinated. Here then, in these three things, in this life the sinner gets liberty from, and he owes it to the Son. He owes it to the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And what then? Why, he is like the Son. He takes on him by divine gift and impartation, the image of the Lord Jesus unto which he was predestinated. "As He is so are we". By occasions not to be forgotten, this comes into a sinner's experience. Do you get near Him sometimes? That is liberty. Do you love Him. That is freedom from your enmity. Do you cleave to Him? That is given to a sinner, not by the law, but the Lord Jesus. Do you feel holy? That is a gift, that is freedom. Do you receive the gospel? That is freedom and all comes from the Lord Jesus. Well might one write, and well may we sing, when we get the mercy

Raise thy downcast eyes and see  
Numbers do His throne surround  
These were sinners once like thee  
But have full salvation found

O Christ has this blessing to give. It is one of the blessed things He received to give to men, yea to the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them. "If the Son shall make you free". Are you free? Am I free? Did Jesus ever come and say, take away all those grave clothes, loose him and let him go. Let not the smell of the grave or corruption be on him. Loose him from all; let him go. Have you had it? Some may say we wish we could get it. Well, you wait on Him. Christ has blessings to impart; wait on Him. Ask Him for the blessing of liberty. It is a great blessing, a great blessing. No grave clothes, just the man at liberty, walking up and down in Christ's Name as the promised Name. "I will strengthen them in the Name of the Lord and they shall walk up and down in His Name". And for the moment questions are removed by being answered. Doubts are solved, the sinner is satisfied. What shall we say then? Honours rest on the Liberator; honours rest on Jesus Christ. Glory and praise, majesty and power, riches and blessing, honour and glory, be given to Him by our souls, for we owe all the liberty, all the freedom, all the hopes, all the life, all the sweetness that we have in our souls, we owe to Him. "If the Son shall make you free". May I go to Him? What a question. Here is a leper; he warns everybody off from coming to him because he is a leper; he cries "Unclean, unclean". Here comes the Priest and the man's heart moves, and he cries "Lord if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean". Thou canst give me liberty, Thou canst deliver me from all the plagues of Egypt. Thou canst take all the reproach of famine away from me, and this loathsome disease also. So, my friends, He gives even liberty to pray. "If the Son shall make you free" you will be free then, and God will approve of it. The Spirit will approve of it for He brings it in the power of it. And the Trinity therefore looks with pleasure and with approval on the man walking free from the law, free from guilt, free from pollution, free from the dominion of sin. I say the Trinity looks with pleasure on this man. May He so look on us.