

THE FRIEND OF FREEDOM¹

By Paul Penno Jr.

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All over the world people are talking about it. It is like the discovery of a whole new world. It is something our elders hardly dared to think would be possible. The people are awakening from many centuries of sleep to discover that God in Christ forgave the world at the cross. Now they want to catch up in one generation, like a released inmate from a correctional facility.

To catch up is a good thing. No one can stamp out the desire for freedom, because it is something implanted in the human heart by the Creator Himself. The people are now learning that God gives the gift of freedom to all: and that He gave the gift to humanity long ago. Freedom is man's birthright.

God has always believed in freedom. The apostle says, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17). As long ago as 1500 years before Christ, the Lord spake unto Moses in Mount Sinai, saying, "Proclaim *liberty* throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" (Lev. 25:10). In Jeremiah's days this liberty was proclaimed anew. "This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the Lord to proclaim liberty" to all the slaves that the Hebrew people were holding of their brethren. (See Jer. 34:8.) When Jesus began His ministry, He announced that the purpose of His coming was "to set at *liberty* them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18). His

teachings eventually resulted in the complete abolition of slavery in the Roman Empire.

What God has in store for us is something far more wonderful than mere civil liberty. "The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the *glorious liberty* of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21).

Who is the enemy of true liberty? Although God gave us freedom as our original birthright. Satan has taken it from us through leading us into evil. The nations lost their God-given freedom centuries, milleniums ago when the knowledge of God's truth died out in darkness. Ignorance brought disease, superstition, spiritualism, poverty, hunger, warfare.

Satan has never believed in freedom, nor has he ever granted it to any of his captives. He has sought to rule by fear, and terrorism. He is afraid of freedom, afraid to let all choose as they like, for he knows that if they understood *all* the truth, they would throw off the yoke of his bondage and accept the "glorious liberty" of the sons of God. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," said Jesus (John 8:32). Satan knows this and that is why he hates the truth.

Who is the Friend of true liberty? Our great nation has taken as its national hymn one which speaks of God as the "Author of liberty." There is nothing despotic or unfair about Him. He has granted us liberty to accept or reject Him, and He even left His Son in the hands of wicked men to be murdered by them. This shows that God is not afraid to trust Himself to the free choice of His subjects. No greater liberty could God give than this!

¹ Luke 4:17-21. 75, 108 Amazing Grace.

What is true freedom? Some people imagine that freedom is license to steal, lie, and even murder their fellow-men. But there is a world of difference between *freedom*, which brings peace for all, and *anarchy*, which brings chaos and ruin for all. Anarchy is throwing off law and order and responsibility.

Have you learned to drive a car? If so, you remember how difficult it was to master all the controls that start, guide, and stop the vehicle. But the most difficult car is as easy to drive as a bicycle compared to the work of piloting Boeing jet.

Don't push the wrong button, or you may start the plane off and take to the skies before you are ready! Remember, he who flies must know how to land successfully.

Freedom is like a giant airplane. He who sits in the pilot's seat must obey just and righteous law and know how to rule himself, or he may plunge his plane and all his passengers into disaster.

Think a moment. You now have freedom to drive your car or motorcycle on the public roads, and you can go anywhere you please. When you travel, you always drive on the proper side, and the cars coming in the opposite direction also drive on their proper side, so each of you passes the other on his own side of the road without collision. Suppose that the other drivers coming from the opposite direction should suddenly shout "Freedom" and claim the right to drive on any side of the road which they pleased. You can imagine the horrible accidents which would follow immediately. Blood would be everywhere. The roads would cease to be highways

of freedom, and would be scenes of utter chaos. This would be the result of *anarchy* on the highways. If the government of your country were to abolish all highway traffic laws, you would never dare to travel anywhere.

It is clear that true freedom is found in submission to just and righteous law. God's law is declared to be the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). It is also clear that the man who chooses to submit to that "law of liberty" will be free indeed. "I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts" (Ps. 119:45).

To hate God's law is to hate freedom. If someone walked down the highway shouting, "All traffic laws are abolished! Drive on any side of the road you please! Freedom!" the people would know he was a fool, and the police would rightly lock him up. As soon as someone begins to find fault with God's "perfect law of liberty" we may likewise know that he is himself either a fool, or is in bondage to the enemy of God.

In fact, this is the test by which we may know if God has sent a man, or if Satan has sent him. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God" (John 3:34). Those who say that the law of God is abolished cannot be sent of God, for Jesus Himself said. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.

5:18, 19).

Every human being upon the face of the earth must choose between the “glorious liberty” of the sons of God in obedience to God’s perfect “law of liberty”, or the bondage of obedience to the evil rule of Satan. “Know ye not 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?” (Rom. 6:16).

Many people talk about “sin” but few really understand what it is. Often people have the idea that it is merely something God does not like. And as helpless slaves would avoid displeasing a cruel and tyrannical ruler, so they imagine they must avoid “sin” in order not to offend God, whilst all the time they really love it!

The Bible says that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). But sin is more than such an outward act. A man might in ignorance transgress and God not hold it against him. Sin is something deeper. The New English Bible gives a better translation of what John said: “Sin, in fact, is lawlessness.” That means that sin is hatred of God’s law, a desire to do away with it. Sin is really anarchy in God’s universe; and that is the reason it brings chaos and ruin. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Death is the most cruel bondage imaginable; therefore it is clear that sin is the very opposite of true liberty. It is the road of bondage.

When a person so transgresses in heart the law, he is “under the law,” in the same way that a man who transgressed the law of his land is “under the law” while locked up in jail. But the moment he

believes in Christ, he finds his liberty. This is made plain as follows: “But Scripture has declared the whole world to be prisoners in subjection to sin, so that faith in Jesus Christ may be the ground on which the promised blessing is given, and given to those who have such faith. Before this faith came, we were close prisoners in the custody of the law, pending the revelation of faith. Thus the law was a kind of tutor in charge of us until Christ should come, when we should be justified through faith; and now that faith has come, the tutor’s charge is at an end” (Gal. 3:22-25, New English Bible).

To be “prisoners in subjection to sin” is the same thing as to be “prisoners in the custody of law” or “under the law.” It is our *disobedience* to God’s law, and *not obedience*, that makes us prisoners. Obedience cannot make us prisoners. The curse comes on the one who “continueth not” in obedience to the law; and the blessing comes on him who obeys the same commandments (see Gal. 3:10; Deut. 11:26-28). The man who has not yet known faith is “shut up” in a prison house. He may not have literal chains of iron around his wrists and his legs, but he is verily “shut up” to a bondage in his soul. He knows no real joy or freedom. He is convicted in his inmost soul of being a transgressor of the “law of liberty,” and therefore he is a slave. He carries his prison about with him, walking with sad heart and downcast eyes. Fear grips his heart night and day. The thought of death is a terror to him. This is what it means to be “under the law.”

HOW FREEDOM IS OBTAINED

Before faith came we were *all* in this same prison-

house. When did this faith come? Jesus brought it to us when He came “to preach deliverance to the captives.

. . . to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18). Faith comes to you *this very moment, if you will believe*. Though you have been in prison, you were only “shut up unto the faith which should *afterwards* be revealed” (Gal. 3:23). Now that you have faith, you are no longer “under the law,” but are now “under grace.” Your fetters are broken asunder, and you sing the triumphant song: “O Lord, truly I am thy servant. . . . Thou hast loosed my bonds” (Ps. 116: 16). Now you “walk at liberty” with a happy, singing heart. The condemnation is all gone. It is taken by Christ, who bears the burden of your sin and bondage in His own body, on the tree. He *sells Himself* to be a slave, that you might go free (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24).

Christ effected a legal justification for “all men” by His sacrifice on the cross. If we say that His sacrifice only made a provision of grace for all, this is the essence of antinomianism because we can’t have grace without a legal foundation for it. God’s holy law has been transgressed by the sinner; grace cannot now be extended to him unless the just demands of that broken law are first satisfied in his behalf. Why is this?

First, let us define “grace.” Ellen White says it is “unmerited favor.”² Only sinners can receive it, not sinless beings such as the unfallen angels.³ Why?

² FE 457; 6T 268; COL 394; TMK 366, etc..

³ *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 10; *In Heavenly Places*, p. 34.

Only sinners have broken God’s law. Grace was never understood until after the fall.⁴ Grace therefore is directly related to God’s broken law.

The common anti-law, evangelical, idea is that God doesn’t mind if we have broken His law; He can simply overlook our sin, be merciful, pardon us cheaply, and by His sovereign authority He can forget about His broken law. It’s not important. The idea of grace without that law being upheld and satisfied is the teaching of the popular churches. What does His grace accomplish for “all men”? They are “justified by His grace” (Titus 3:7). Therefore, if we tell someone that he can be justified without that law being satisfied by a legal justification, we are teaching anti-law-ism whether we realize it or not.

Here is the reason why grace requires justification: “The righteousness of God without law is manifested, . . . even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Rom. 3:21-25).

The original verb translated “have sinned” means “all sinned,” that is, at some given point in time. We all sinned “in Adam,” when he sinned. The phrase

⁴ GAG, p. 10.

“being justified” relates the justification to the time when “all sinned.” Therefore this passage is parallel with Romans 5:12-18 which tells us that what Adam did to bring condemnation upon the human race Christ reversed by bringing justification upon the human race: “If through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many . . . By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” And Paul goes on to say in the same passage that “grace did much more abound” by the fact that this “justification of life” has been given to “all men” (vs. 20).

Thus the justification and the grace are linked together, and cannot be separated: “The law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace” (Rom. 4:15, 16). Do you see it? The “wrath of the law” must be satisfied before there can be grace. When someone is “under the law” he cannot be “under grace” (Rom. 6:14). Paul goes on to explain that we cannot be under grace unless first “God has sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). Thus when Christ satisfied the broken law by His sacrificial death, by necessity He effected a legal justification for all men. Otherwise we could not even live so as to have another trial.

That broken law is satisfied only by the righteousness of Christ. The law cannot be satisfied by a righteousness that is effected instead of us, but only to us. In other words, Christ must enter the

corporate stream of fallen mankind, and fully identify with us. This does not deny the substitutionary aspect of Christ’s sacrifice. It defines it more clearly.

When that “wrath” of the law was poured upon Christ in the sinner’s behalf, He has “tasted death for every man.” Upon Him was laid “the iniquity of us all.” Unless we recognize this truth, we lapse into cheap grace, even while declaiming against it. It was “by the grace of God [that Christ] should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:9).

This is very expensive grace. If all Christ endured was the “rest” which we call death, that is, a sweet sleep as a brief relief, then it necessarily becomes cheap grace. But if He endured the equivalent of the second death, the complete pouring “out of His soul unto death,” the real thing, the giving of Himself unto eternity, going to hell in our behalf, then it is extremely expensive grace. This truth is practical godliness, for it motivates the human heart to do what nothing else can do—to live “henceforth” not for self, but for Him. It’s a tragedy that our brethren oppose it so strenuously.

There is evidence that Ellen White agrees. She says that it is Christ’s death that gives efficiency to His grace.⁵ In other words, there could be no grace apart from His death. This grace was so expensive that it is impossible to “measure” what it cost Heaven to give it Grace was paid for by a price impossible to measure.⁶ Again, that grace is

⁵ *That I May Know Him*, p. 69.

⁶ *In Heavenly Places*, p. 220.

inseparable from law.⁷ She says it's a "deception" to speak of grace without the law being satisfied. If one seeks to establish grace apart from a legal justification, they are unwittingly falling into this trap that Ellen White speaks of:

"It is the sophistry of Satan that the death of Christ brought in grace to take the place of the law. . . . That precious grace offered to men through a Saviour's blood establishes the law of God. Since the full of man, God's moral government and His grace are inseparable. They go hand in hand through all dispensations."⁸

If Ellen White says that grace releases from condemnation,⁹ and Paul says that the legal justification effected at the cross releases from condemnation (Rom. 5:18), then the two truths must go together. This is why I conclude therefore that the grace manifested through the cross is founded upon the legal justification effected there.

To be "under grace" (Rom. 6:14) is to be under the constraint of the love of Christ. You know how happy you feel toward someone who has done a very kind deed for you; you look around for something you can do to help him because of that warm, glowing feeling of gratitude which wells up in your heart. You can't resist it—it is as much a part of our human nature as this love of freedom.

⁷ *Faith I Live By*, p. 89.

⁸ *Faith and Works*, p. 30.

⁹ "The gospel of Christ is the Good News of grace, or favor, by which man may be released from the condemnation of sin and enabled to render obedience to the law of God." *Mind, Character Personality*, Vol. 2, p. 563.

So it is with the one who has known himself delivered from this "prison house." He longs to show his gratitude to his Deliverer. Henceforth he lives a life of obedience to God's law, not because he is trying to keep it through fear or because he hopes for a reward there-by or trembles because its demands are *imposed upon* him by force. A free man, he lives his life of obedience because of gratitude imposed upon him *by grace*, constrained by love. True faith immediately produces happy obedience from the heart. And so it is that sin is vanquished in your life. Gone are old habits that dragged you down continually and brought you into captivity. Henceforth "sin shall no longer be your master, because you are no longer under law, but under the grace of God. . . . Emancipated from sin, (you) have become slaves of righteousness (to use words that suit your human weakness) I mean, as you once yielded your bodies to the service of impurity and lawlessness, making for moral anarchy, so now you must yield them to the service of righteousness, making for a holy life" (Rom. 6:14, 18, 19, New English Bible).

Have you found your freedom? When you love right, you have certainly found your freedom. You must be the servant of *something*—either of righteousness or of evil. Righteousness is liberty; thus the "servant" of righteousness obeys the law of God from his heart in his gratitude. He walks "at liberty."

Now he can look any man in the eye with confidence. His shame is gone. He is a "prince," a free citizen in God's great universe. The "moral anarchy"

which was the sin of his heart is replaced by the “glorious liberty” of the sons of God, because the right principles of God’s government are cherished and loved in his heart. He is like a man who, having been chained in a dark prison for many years, suddenly finds himself free in the open sunshine of God’s world. He feels like leaping and shouting for joy!

Passing by all the hosts of angels who are only servants of God, he enters into His presence as one who has received “the adoption of sons, . . . no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:5-7).

Here is genuine freedom. Best of all, no one can ever take it from you!

There is no need to fight for it, for it was granted you before you were born.

No need to seek for it, for it is yours now.

No need even to ask for it, for you simply receive what is yours. You take it by faith, by receiving the truth, and “the truth shall make you free.” That truth is Christ Himself, and His gospel is simply the “glad tidings” that *you are free*.