

ABC's of Liberty

#0713

Study by W.D. Frazee—February 22, 1958

I suppose a number of you have seen the old liberty bell in Philadelphia. When I was a boy they took that bell on a tour of the United States. It came to California where we lived, and I saw it. Did you know there is a Bible verse on that bell?

“And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family” Leviticus 25:10.

I would like to study the ABC of Liberty. There are three things that God has given us to help us to have liberty and preserve liberty. They are three great blessings that we should thank the Lord for. I would also like to study with you the way of life that God has given us to ensure liberty and preserve it down through the ages.

You are all familiar with the Fifth Commandment:

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God gives thee” Exodus 20:12.

That thy days may be long where? Upon the land. Did God give His people to whom He spoke this law a land? Did He deliberately plan that everyone should have a home upon the land? That was His plan. And that plan was so important that He hedged it with safeguards.

Our opening text concerns one of those safeguards. To proclaim liberty throughout all the land has to do with the jubilee. When a man sold his farm, sooner or later it would come back to him or his prosperity. God made no provision that men should buy up the property north and south and west and east of them and keep adding land until they would become a great feudal lord. He deliberately planned that should be prevented.

If a man sells his land, when the jubilee comes the land will go back to him regardless. With that in mind the man who bought the land could only get the use of it up to the year of the jubilee. If the year of the jubilee was ten years ahead, all he would pay for would be to use it for ten years. But nobody could buy it for more than fifty years. It kept alive the thought that every family would have a home on the land. God saw fit to incorporate that in the law of Moses.

“The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is Mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me” Leviticus 25:23.

So when each family gets his lot, that land must not be sold forever. Every family must have that land.

The purpose of it was this great goal of liberty with which God connected the sounding of the jubilee trumpet.

“Then shall thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the Day of Atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family” Leviticus 25:9-10.

It was God's plan that families might be united, and that the land might be given to them. It is all a type of the reunion that we shall soon share together when we enter into the heavenly Canaan, there to receive our eternal possession from which we will never go out.

Oh, Glory to God, it is coming again,
Tis the grand jubilee of the children of men.

The jubilee trumpet is sounding in the Day of Atonement, and God's people are to be reinstated in their Eden home. God has been trying to teach His people that down through the years.

There is a liberty, a freedom that comes naturally to the man who is out on the land which is not so liable to be sensed or realized by the one who works in the factory and dwells in one of the city caves.

The first city was built by the first murderer, and murder and cities have been connected every since. Not but what there has not been murders in the country. But the cities are notorious as the centers of crime and violence.

“And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch” Genesis 4:16-17.

Cain turned his back on God and left the country around the Garden of Eden and went into a distant land to build a city. The final result of that was the great tide of wickedness that God had to meet with the deluge in the days of Noah.

Humanity didn't learn its lesson. After the flood God told them plainly to scatter out and fill the earth. But there were groups who united together to build cities and a tower.

“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” Genesis 11:4.

This is the second example of a city built by those who rebelled against God who told them to scatter out. One of the leading spirits among these Babel builders was Nimrod, the great grandson of Noah. Nimrod began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was called a mighty hunter. He was the inaugurator in the great plan of paganism, the influence of which is still felt in the world today.

Sun worship was the center of that, and oppression was its natural fruit. Persecution came as the result of that pagan worship centered in that city which was built in the land of Shinar. And even after the top of the tower was knocked off by lightening, and the language of the people was confused so they did scatter out, there were nevertheless those who tarried in that country and built up those great empires of Babylon and Syria which for ages fought against God and His government. They were notorious for their lack of liberty. The union of pagan religion which was civil government made it very difficult, sometimes impossible for the worship of God to be carried on.

We think of it in the days of Daniel. We think of the three Hebrews having to face Nebuchadnezzar and be willing to be put into the fiery furnace rather than to be willing to disobey God. And it all sprang from that diabolical plan to consecrate authority in a great metropolitan center, and to build up power and monopoly in order that the worship of God might be crushed.

I want you to see the difference in God's plan. God wanted every family to have a home on the land. He didn't plan for these great cities with their monopolies and concentration of power. His purpose is well stated:

“Those who departed from God built for themselves cities, and, congregating in them, gloried in the splendor, the luxury, and the vice that make the cities of today the world's pride and its curse. But the men who held fast God's principles of life dwelt among the fields and hills. They were tillers of the soil, and keepers of flocks and herds, and in this free, independent life, with its opportunities for labor and study and meditation, they learned of God and taught their children of His works and ways” *Education*, page 33.

There is room for meditation in this statement. Here the city builders go in the land of Shinar and the valley of the Nile. But God says, Come out of that. I have something better for you. I want to give you a land of hills and valleys. I want to break up these great estates and give you farms where each family can raise its own

food. I want to give you a place for your flocks and herds. And in this free independent life, with opportunities for labor and study and meditation, you will learn of God and teach your children of His works and ways.

That was the program of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. That was the way Joseph learned those precious lessons during the first seventeen years of his life that enabled him to withstand the greed and vice and pagan worship of Egypt. These were the lessons that David learned on the hills of Bethlehem. These were the lessons that Elisha learned at Abelmeholah. Oh, that God might help us today to be wise and to know the glorious heritage that God has given us in living on the land, and in taking advantage of the opportunities that such a life gives us to learn and cherish the lessons of liberty and freedom.

Many today have their necks in yokes of bondage. Oh, how many are tied by installment payments and by other means to a commercial system which grinds them from day to day and week to week, and they never can call their souls their own. Oh brothers and sisters, be free in God. The jubilee trumpet is sounding. Get loose. Ask God to help you. Get loose and get a home on the land where you can be free.

As it was in ancient times, so it is now. The question of liberty is linked closely with the land, and agriculture is the A of the ABC's in this matter of liberty.

“It was not God's purpose that people should be crowded into cities, huddled together in terraces and tenements. In the beginning He placed our first parents amidst the beautiful sights and sounds He desires us to rejoice in today. The more nearly we come into harmony with God's original plan, the more favorable will be our position to secure health of body, and mind, and soul”
Ministry of Healing, page 365.

Here is another text on liberty:

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed 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” John 8:31,32.

“Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth” John 17:17.

So one of the agencies of freedom God has given us is His Word. So we will let the B of the ABC's stand for the Bible. Jesus tells us:

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me” John 5:39.

Jesus, the great liberator, stands revealed to us in the pages of this Book. And if we would be truly free, we must search the Scriptures. True liberty is derived from an earnest study of the Word of God. It is because this is true that Rome has sought to banish the Scriptures, to proscribe them, and interfere with the common people having them. Since Rome has not been successful in keeping the Word of God from the people today, the Roman church is sponsoring the reading and study of the Scriptures, but always with the provision that it shall be interpreted by the church. Of course, this is like trying to examine the landscape through colored glasses. You may see some things, but you may see them in a different color than they naturally are.

God intends that men shall come to the Bible direct, and study it for themselves. Only thus can it bring the liberty which God desires. I read:

“God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support” *Great Controversy*, page 595.

The basis of our belief should be what the Bible says. And unless there is a plain “thus saith the Lord” we are not to accept it, no matter if the majority believe it and follow it. It doesn't matter if the opinions of learned men support such positions, or if the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical counsel are in harmony with it. If it lacks a plain “thus saith the Lord” we are not to accept it, because the Bible is the foundation. The Bible is God's word.

“The Roman church reserves to the clergy the right to interpret the Scriptures. On the ground that ecclesiastics alone are competent to explain God's word, it is withheld from the common people. Though the Reformation gave the Scriptures to all, yet the selfsame principle which was maintained by Rome prevents multitudes in Protestant churches from searching the Bible for themselves. They are taught to accept its teachings as *interpreted by the church*; and there are thousands who dare receive nothing, however plainly revealed in Scripture, that is contrary to their creed or the established teaching of their church” *Ibid*, page 596.

That is a Papal attitude even though it may be in a Protestant church. The true Protestant position is that if the Bible teaches it, I believe it, no matter what the church may say. On the other hand, if the Bible does not teach it I cannot accept it as an article of faith. That is what Protestant teaches, and we are Protestants. We

are thinking as Protestants our duty to maintain the Protestant principle of liberty, separation of church and state, and an open Bible, with acceptance to the Bible on the part of every man and woman.

It is perfectly proper for ministers to lead the flock in feeding on the green pastures, but every member of the church of God not only has the privilege but the duty to search the Bible for himself.

“It is not enough to have to do what a man thinks is right or what the minister tells him is right. His soul's salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself. However strong may be his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and he ought not to guess at anything” *Ibid*, page 598.

This is no reflection on ministers. Ministers have their place. But their place is not in place of the Bible. Their position is the expositors of the Word. And if that Word is preached as it is in truth, it will appeal to the mind and reasoning of an intelligent being, and he will be able to see and accept the truth because he sees it in the Bible.

“It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. . . . With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God” *Ibid*.

I come now to the third in the ABC's of liberty. It is the conscience. Paul shows us that there are multitudes in the world who, while they have no knowledge of the Bible, still have conscience speaking to them. Through this the Spirit of God has access to their hearts.

“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)” Romans 2:14-15.

Even the heathen who have never heard of the Bible have a conscience which approves certain things they do, and disapproves other things they do. That is the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to the soul.

“Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, page 120.

Just as there are great systems of religion that try to come between the individual soul and the Bible, so there are those who seek to supersede the conscience. There are those who seek to be conscience for the individual. And every system of oppression must inevitably do that. Every system which builds up a human being at the expense of other human beings must and will invade the conscience. But God is seeking to leave, and does leave the conscience free.

“Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?” 1 Corinthians 10:29.

Each man's conscience is to judge him and not another man. In other words, I cannot be conscience for others. They cannot be conscience for me. I may be interested in what their conscience approves or disapproves. I may compare notes with them. I may ask them the reason why they look upon this thing as right and that thing as wrong. But the whole thing must be brought back to be tried in the court of my conscience as far as my belief and conduct is concerned.

“In matters of conscience the soul must be left untrammelled. No one is to control another's mind, to judge for another, or to prescribe his duty. God gives to every soul freedom to think, and to follow his own convictions. ‘Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.’ No one has a right to merge his own individuality in that of another. In all matters where principle is involved, ‘let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.’ Romans 14:12-5.” *The Desire of Ages*, page 550.

It is a wonderful gift that God has given man—the gift of conscience. Like any other gift, it can be abused and perverted. Men take the Bible and twist it and make it say what it doesn't say at all.

Some people say, The Bible is like an old fiddle. You can play any tune on it.

I heard a friend answer that. He said, “The trouble is that people play by ear, not by note.”

So it is with this matter of conscience. It is like an instrument. What you hear coming from it depends upon who is seated at the piano. Conscience is the voice of God as long as God is given access to it. The Bible speaks of a good conscience. It speaks also of a bad conscience.

The conscience is up here in the brain. If you would take a hot iron and sear that brain tissue, the conscience wouldn't work very well. There are people who have literally seared their conscience with the poisons of alcohol and tobacco and other poisonous drugs and habits of life which interfere with the proper circulation of the blood fluids. And there are those who have seared the conscience through habitually violating the conscience.

If the Spirit of God speaks to me today and says, My son, do this, and I refuse to do it, the conscience is to that extent seared. If tomorrow God again speaks to my conscience and says, Do this, and I argue or delay, or neglect, the conscience is again to that extent seared. And that can go on until a man will even boast and say, That doesn't bother my conscience. I can do that and it won't hurt my conscience at all. Some people are proud of the fact that they can do this thing or that thing or another thing that seems to bother others but doesn't hurt them.

If a man can eat onions and it doesn't cause him indigestion, that is all right. If someone else has a weak stomach who can't tolerate them, he had better leave the onions alone. But that is not a matter of conscience. That is the matter of the stomach and its ability to handle certain things. And do not think for a moment that the person with a tender conscience is like a person with a weak stomach. No, no. Not at all. A person with a tender conscience has something to thank the Lord for and not something to lament about.

There are perversions of conscience. There is nothing good that God ever gave us but what it can be exaggerated. So there are some over-conscientious souls. But a true conscience, educated by the Spirit of God in harmony with the Word of God, will be sensitive and tender, and God will not have to speak in thunder tones to arouse such a conscience. He can whisper as He did to Elijah in the still, small voice when the earthquake, storm, and fire had all passed by. Oh, let us cherish the whisperings of the Spirit of God through conscience. Cherish those tender, loving appeals and warnings.

“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying,
This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right
hand, and when ye turn to the left” Isaiah 30:21.

Ah, dear one, have you heeded the voice of conscience? Have you done the thing that God prompted you to do? Have you said the word that God prompted you to say? Have you made right the thing that God prompted you to make right? Or have you put it aside? It may be that some here this morning may have faithful work, thorough work to do in going back and doing up their undone work. Only thus can conscience be revived. It is only as we heed what our conscience told us to do yesterday that we can be assured of hearing and understand His message today.

“God gives to every soul freedom to think, and to follow his own convictions. ‘Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.’ No one has a right to merge his own individuality in that of another. In all matters where principle is involved, ‘let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.’”

You don't have to go and think up some odd thing to be different from other people in order to exercise your conscience. There will be plenty of opportunity for you. If you will go ahead and study the Bible and the *Testimonies* on your knees, God will bring you to things that if you follow them it will be necessary for you to be true to conscience regardless what those around you do. There will be plenty of opportunity to get exercise in that way.

“It is no part of Christ's mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit, that seek to compel the conscience. . . . There can be no more conclusive evidence that we possess the spirit of Satan than the disposition to hurt and destroy those who do not appreciate our work, or who act contrary to our ideas”
The Desire of Ages, page 487.

This was one of the great issues in this denomination in the late 1880's and 1890's. Many of you have heard of the Minneapolis Conference in 1888. The message of righteousness by faith was brought to the conference at that time by Jones and Waggoner. It was opposed by men of experience.

But there was quite an issue over this. Among the things that were pointed out by the Spirit of Prophecy as being especially offensive to God was the spirit on the part of some to try to silence those who differed with them in matters of religion and conscience. They tried to keep them from having any voice. Yet God was using them.

“But these men who presume to judge others should take a little broader view and say, Suppose the statements of others do not agree with our ideas; shall we for this reason pronounce them heresy? Shall we, uninspired men, take the responsibility of placing our stakes, and saying, This shall not appear in print?

“If they still persist in clinging to their own opinions they will find that God will not sustain their action. Do they take the position that all they advance is infallible? . . .

“Has not our past experience in these things been sufficient? Will we ever learn the lessons which God designed we shall learn? Will we ever realize that the consciences of men are not given into our command? If you have appointed committees to do the work which has been going on for years in Battle Creek, dismiss them; and remember that God, the infinite God, has not placed men in any such positions as they occupied at Minneapolis, and have occupied since then.

“I feel deeply over this matter of men being conscience for their fellow men. Stand out of the way, and let God work His own instrumentalities” *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 294.

Those statements will bear study. They should never be understood or used in any other way as to encourage rebellion or off-shoots of any kind. They were not written for that purpose. They were written for the purpose of encouraging every man and woman in the church of God to study the Bible for himself and listen to the

voice of truth and conscience. They were written to help all to stand out of the way and not attempt to come between the people and the Bible, or the people and their conscience.

“God has appointed no man to be conscience for his fellow man” *Ibid*, page 477.

I read this because when these earlier statements were read some say, Oh, that was written back in the 1890's, and great things have happened later that completely changed all that, and it is all out of date.

Great things did happen. Great reformations were affected at the General Conference of 1901. But this statement I am reading was written in 1908, seven years later, and it says:

“For years there has been a growing tendency for men placed in positions of responsibility to lord over God's heritage, thus removing from church members their keen sense of the need of divine instruction and an appreciation of the privilege to counsel with God regarding their duty. There must be a reform. . . .

“It is the privilege of every believer to obtain an individual experience, learning to carry his cares and perplexities to God” *Ibid*, pages 477,478.

So this matter of conscience is a very sacred thing. I read:

“Any man, be he minister or layman who seeks to compel or control the reason of any other man, becomes an agent of Satan to do his work, and in the sight of the heavenly universe he bears the mark of Cain” *Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1, page 1087.

Is it possible for men, knowing this last message, to bear the mark of Cain? Yes. What was the matter with Cain? Ah, he didn't like it because Abel reasoned with him and pled with him to follow the sacrificial plan. Cain argued with Abel that his sacrifice was just as good as Abel's.

Abel wasn't trying to force him. He wasn't trying to compel him. In brotherly love he pled and reasoned with him to save his soul. But Cain became angry and became a murderer trying to force Able contrary to the will of God.

So today any man, be he minister or layman, who seeks to compel or control the reason of any other man becomes an agent of Satan to do his work, and bears the mark of Cain. Oh, that God may keep us from that mark. Oh, that God may bless us with the appreciation of love and liberty in the Gospel.

“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” 2 Corinthians 3:17.

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” Galatians 5:1.

I leave you these three great things that God has given us in this way of life. Do we appreciate them? Do we thank God for them? Do we have them? If we do, let the world go by in all its mad rush. Let the world go by chained to Satan's chariot. Work for them. Plead for them. But do not envy them. Do not rush with them after the things they are going for.

Be free in Christ. Take the way of life that God has given His people. Take the Bible and study it on your knees. Listen to the voice of truth and conscience. Let us be free in this glorious jubilee hour for Jesus' sake.

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