

# Religious Liberty

#0712

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—February 21, 1958

I'd like to have you repeat the Sabbath commandment with me. You all know it, I'm sure. Let's repeat it together:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" Exodus 20:8–11.

Now that's why we're here tonight, isn't it? Because that commandment is written in the heart of the law of God. The Bible calls that Sabbath commandment *what*, in connection with the law? The seal. And that seal is to be put where?

[Audience responds] In our foreheads.

In our foreheads. The law is to be written in the heart under the new covenant and, of course, the *seal* of the law will be there—the Sabbath commandment.

Is that why the winds of war and strife and persecution are being held back now so that sealing work can be completed? Yes. That seal, that Sabbath, is to be imprinted so deep into the minds and consciences—the heart and feelings and experience of God's people—that it can never be erased, never be effaced, never be taken away in any way.

You notice that the Sabbath commandment is linked with what great fact in the history of the world?

[Audience responds] Creation.

Creation. And with what individual, what person? Who? The Creator. Yes, the Creator, the One who *made* things:

"For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is..." Exodus 20:11.

We find that message re-echoed, repeated, in Revelation the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter. You know, the book of Revelation is a summary, as it were, of the whole Bible, focusing the message of Scripture upon this last generation in a special sense. And in Revelation 14:6–7, we have this great message which God has given us to give to the world. I'd like to have you repeat this with me, too, Revelation 14:6–7:

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” Revelation 14:6–7.

Here, then, we have the Fourth Commandment echoed, re-echoed. What is there in the message we have just quoted which echoes that Fourth Commandment? “...Worship Him that made...” what? “Heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters”—language very similar to the Fourth Commandment.

Now, here we're called upon to do what, with reference to the Creator?

[Audience responds] Worship Him.

Worship Him; we're to worship Him. Throughout the Bible, we're taught that we should not worship creatures. Even angels are not objects of worship.

You remember that when Peter came to Cornelius, Cornelius had been so impressed with the fact that this was a messenger from God that he fell down before Peter, but Peter said what? “Stand up.”

Turn over to Acts 10; I want you to see that. There have been men that claimed to sit in Peter's seat that wouldn't do what Peter did. Acts 10:25–26:

“And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshiped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man” Acts 10:25–26.

Is a man a proper object of worship?

[Audience responds] No.

Did Peter know that? Did he recognize it? Did he teach it? Did he practice it? Yes. He'd been taught of Jesus, and he knew that he (Peter) was no proper object of worship.

Well, if Peter wasn't, I don't think we are, do you? And if Peter wasn't, I don't think any other man in the world is. But as I said, this will teach us to abstain from worship even of angels.

Turn over to the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Revelation, Revelation 22:8–9:

“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship...” Revelation 22:8.

Worship—just what Cornelius did. Cornelius sought to worship Peter, but John fell down to worship who?

“...Before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things” Revelation 22:8.

Well, what'd the angel say? He said just what Peter said. “Don't worship *me*.”

“Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God”  
Revelation 22:9.

Very well, friends, then who is a proper object of worship?

[Audience responds] God.

Only God—nobody else. And that's the message of the first angel: “...Fear God, and give glory to *Him*...and worship *Him*...” (Revelation 14:7). And that's why we're keeping the Sabbath.

So the purpose of keeping the Sabbath is not just to do what the law says about coming on a certain day for religious service. It is to recognize God as the One who is worthy of worship. And the reason He's worthy of worship is what? He *made* us, He made us. And the Sabbath is a seal of that, and it's a sign of the fact that we accept God as our Creator, the One alone whom we are to worship.

In Revelation the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter, where we've just been studying, after telling us to worship the Creator, then He warns us against another kind of worship. Revelation 14:9, beginning. You know that; say that with me:

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God...” Revelation 14:9–10.

That's enough for now.

What mark is this that we're warned against? The mark of the beast. What worship is it that we are warned against? The worship of the beast and his image. And that is in contrast to the worship of the Creator. On the one hand, is the worship of the Creator, and on the other hand, is the worship of the beast and his image.

Now, over here with the worship of the Creator is what sign? The Sabbath. And that's called what? The seal of God (Revelation 7:1 and onward). And now, just as with the worship of the Creator is His sign or seal—the Sabbath—so here with the worship of the beast and his image is what? His mark.

Let's put that down here on the blackboard so we can all see it: *Worship Creator*. And over here is what? *Worship beast*. Or what else?

[Audience responds] Image.

*Image*. And over here with this worship of the Creator is what? *The seal*. And that seal of God is what?

[Audience responds] The Sabbath.

The Sabbath. And over here is the mark of what? *The mark of the beast*. Well, the mark of the beast *and* his image; the image has the same mark that the beast does. It wouldn't be a very good image unless it did, would it, because an image is a what?

[Audience responds] A likeness.

A likeness, patterned after something. Very well.

Now, this is the issue in the closing controversy. We're either going to worship the Creator and have His seal, or we're going to worship the beast and his image and receive his mark; one or the other. All the world will be in those two classes. We understand that, but I'd like to study a little deeper into it tonight.

First of all, I would like to notice *where* the seal of God is received. Where does it say in Revelation 7:1–3? Seal the servants of our God, where?

[Audience responds] In their foreheads.

In their foreheads. Well, does the beast put *his* mark in the forehead? Does he? Does the beast put *his* mark in the forehead?

[Audience responds] Yes.

Good, I'm glad you know. Stick right to something when you know it.

But is that the *only* place he puts it?

[Audience responds] No.

Where else?

[Audience responds] In the hand.

In the hand. Does God put *His* in the hand?

[Audience responds] No.

Are you sure about that?

[Audience] Yes.

Where does God put it?

[Audience responds] Forehead.

In the forehead.

All right, now suppose we put that down here, then. Seal of God where?

[Audience responds] In the forehead.

*In the forehead.* And the mark of the beast where?

[Audience responds] In the forehead.

*In the forehead.* Or where else?

[Audience responds] In the hand.

*Or the hand.*

You see the point, of course: that God is interested in impressing a man's *mind*—his conscience, his reason, his judgment, his heart's affections—and if God can get that and put His seal, His mark, in that man's forehead, then God is happy for his obedience.

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments" John 14:15.

And the seal of God in the forehead certainly includes the thought that we love God right up here in the forebrain where the will and conscience reign.

But now, Satan, he'd like to sit there too. Satan would like to reign in our lives through having the mind, the thoughts, subject to him. But suppose he cannot deceive a man as far as actually believing what the Devil says is concerned. Suppose he can't do that. Then what? Ah, he will seek to *force* that man to do, to act, to work (or rest) in harmony with Satan's edict, whether he believes it or not. That is the spirit of the beast. That underlies all persecution.

In fact, you can see at once, friends, that if Satan were willing to stop where God stops, there would be no persecution—there never would be any persecution. If Satan would simply meet God in the battlefield of each mind and reason his case, he might deceive some—he *does* deceive—but he wouldn't persecute. He'd leave it with each individual as to whether he would go with God or Satan. But Satan is not willing to leave the issue there. Satan says, "I'll deceive you if I can, and if I can't, then I'll make you anyway. I'll get you to think what I think, but if I can't get you to think what I think, I'll get you to do what I tell you anyway. I'll *make* you. I'll *force* you. I'll *kill* you if you don't."

So there is going to be a law, according to Revelation 13:16–17, that "...no man might buy or sell, save he that had..." what?

[Audience responds] The mark.

"...The mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:1).

But remember, friends: God will not force you. God will not force you. If you wait, then, for God to force you, you will wait in vain. Do you know many people are waiting for that? They are waiting for a *compelling* power to get hold of them and move them right out of their seats and get them to do something.

No, friends. God appeals to your mind, your reason, your conscience, but *you* have the choice. You can decide whether or not you will obey. You can decide, to a greater or lesser extent, whether you will believe. God waits for the consent of the will. He longs for our love. Satan wants our obedience, whether we love him or not. What did I quote from John 14:15? What does Jesus say?

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments" John 14:15.

Do you know that many of God's men, God's true reformers down through the ages who've seen a measure of truth, have missed this point? You think of the reformers like Luther and Calvin. You think of the Puritans who came over to Massachusetts. Many of those men, while they saw certain principles of separation from Rome, they carried over the Romish principle of persecution.

You remember that in New England, Quakers and Baptists were persecuted. Quakers who dared to come into New England were put in the stocks. Sometimes they were dragged through town, tied to a horse, just dragged along the street. Occasionally

people were killed just because they didn't worship God according to the majority. In other colonies of the New World, there were laws made that established this church or that church, and it required people to support it—all showing a lack of an understanding of this principle: God has left the soul free.

Some of you remember that there was a man who founded Rhode Island who had the true vision of this. What was his name? Roger Williams. He is called the first one on the American continent who grasped this full principle, this complete vision of absolute liberty of the soul. That's what he called it: soul liberty.

With this vision, my friends, a ruler does not grant religious liberty as a privilege. He doesn't grant it as a privilege. He recognizes it as a right. There's a great difference between those two.

You know, this month (January), our people all over the country are studying the question of religious liberty. And it is important that we understand the Biblical basis of religious liberty. And may I tell you, friends, the great reason you and I are believers in religious liberty is not just so that we can keep the Sabbath without being interfered with. It isn't just so we might work on Sunday without being thrown in prison. (I hope that those are not the reasons, primarily, that we're interested in religious liberty.) The great reason we should be interested in religious liberty is that it is a part of the Gospel—the free, pure Gospel of Christ. And as I say, Roger Williams recognized that.

I want to repeat that when this vision is clear, a ruler, a governor, a king—whoever may be the ruler—does not grant religious liberty as a *privilege* to the people. He recognizes it as a *right*. And no judge and no legislature and no king can take this right away. Please get that, friends. Nobody can take it away. It's God-given and even God will not take it away. God will not take this right away, and no man *can* take it away.

What did Jesus say?

“And if any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not...” John 12:47.

Oh, how few there are that grasp this principle in its fullness.

“And if any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not...” John 12:47.

Now, are we clear on this? This religious liberty that you and I believe in is based upon these facts that we're studying—that God is our Creator, that He has made the soul free, that He wants to put the truth in the mind and heart. He has no interest in forcing men. Satan *tries* to force men, but God has prohibited that. Satan can *try* to force men, but do you know, my dear friends, that Satan cannot force you to give up your liberty? He cannot do it.

The people of God are not going to receive that mark either in their foreheads or in their hands, are they? Why, no. Because God's message says that if you receive it *either* in your forehead or in your hand, you're going to what? Drink of the wine of the wrath of God. That's the seven last plagues. So there's evidence that God's people are not going to receive it *either* in the forehead or in the hand.

No, Satan cannot force you. He *tries* to force people to do it. And of course, He does force the wicked. They're scared of him, and so they do what he says. But no man *has* to. God has made the soul free.

So, I repeat that no ruler who understands this will seek merely to tolerate religious freedom or to give it to the people as if he were giving them something. No, for anything that a man gives, he can take away. If he has the right to give it, he has the right to withhold it. But the civil government has no right to *give* religious freedom. It has a duty before God to recognize religious freedom as the privilege, the right—the inherent right—of *every* man before God. And no legislature, no judge, can take it away, and even God will not take it away.

Now, let's go a step further. The individual himself has no right to surrender this right. There are some things that have been given to you that you cannot turn over to somebody else. This is one of them. You have no right to surrender this God-given right of soul freedom. God does not permit you to do it. He holds you responsible.

This is a fundamental doctrine of Protestantism and is basically opposed to the principle of popery and the papacy. The principle of the papacy is: Do what you are told by those who have the right to tell you, and they'll have to answer for it if it's wrong. But the principle of Protestantism is: You must know for yourself what God wants you to do, and you must do it. And you cannot turn that responsibility over to somebody else.

I repeat, the individual himself has no right to surrender this right. It's more than a right; it is a *duty* that man owes to his Creator, a *responsibility* which he cannot delegate, a *stewardship* which he must discharge individually.

This was the fundamental issue back there on the plains of Dura. You remember that Nebuchadnezzar, the great king, made an image standing way up there in the sky—gold. He gathered everybody together, and what did he say? Why, "You all must..." do what? "Worship this image."

"Why?"

"Well, because I said so, and I'm the king. If you believe in that image, that's all right. But if you don't, you bow down anyway or in you go in the fiery furnace."

You see, it was the same case of the forehead or the hand. And they all did what? Bowed down, except three. Who were they? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. What'd *they* do? Did they bow? No, they stood. Notice they didn't say,



“Well, we won’t worship the image in our hearts, but just so we won’t be noticed, we’ll ‘make like it.’ We’ll just put our knees down, but in our hearts, we’ll curse the image. We won’t worship him.”

No, they didn’t do that. They bore their witness publicly. Their unflexed knees gave testimony that there were three men there that loved God more than they feared man.

The same issue is going to be with us today. Will we worship the image?

“...If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark... the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God...” Revelation 14:9–10.

Well, thank God, He’s going to have some heroes of faith today who won’t worship the image any more than Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did.

Now, watch this point. With this right—this right that each man has to choose, to make his choice, and to carry it out—with that responsibility, a man must accept the *results* of his choice. We can’t sow with the Devil and reap with God. A man may choose what he’s going to plant in his field, but he reaps whatever he sows. And therefore, God warns us in the third angel’s message. He tells us what will happen if we worship the beast and his image and receive his mark, not to scare us into blind submission, not to force us into surrender of our will, but to enlighten the mind and conscience so that our choice will be an intelligent one, so that in choosing one way or the other, we will understand what the results will be.

Please watch that point because some people who don’t understand this say, “Oh well, God and the Devil *both* threaten you.”

But the threatenings of God and the threatenings of the Devil are of an entirely different character, my friends. The Devil threatens men with what *he* will do to them if they don’t do so and so, and his purpose is to force them through fear into a blind submission. God, on the other hand, makes clear the results of transgression in order that we, enlightened through an intelligent conscience, may be able to choose to leave the service of Satan and accept the program of God.

In *Great Controversy*, page 598, we are told that each man must form his opinions for himself as he must answer for himself before God.

Now, I’ve been studying this with you so far tonight largely as it relates to what we call “religious liberty”—in other words, our relationship to the laws of the land and the proper sphere of civil government. We see how Nebuchadnezzar got out of his place when he put that image there and required every man to worship it.

But now I would like to study, for a few minutes, the question of religious liberty in the church. Many seem to think that the church is different, that here it *is* proper to surrender the conscience to another. But I want to say to you that this is the papacy. This is the beast against which the third angel's message warns us.

The beast is not, primarily, a state government. The beast is, basically, primarily, a *church*, and it resulted in an apostasy from the *true* church established by Jesus Christ. Isn't that true? And my friends, there is nothing in all the history of the church that marks Roman Catholicism as an apostasy more than this very point. It came to the place where it set the church *above* God and the church *between* the soul and God. And in both of those, it proved itself to be an apostasy.

So God says, "Don't worship the beast and don't worship his image." In other words, don't worship something *like* it—*anything* like it—for this principle is abhorrent to God. And let me tell you that the truer the doctrine which the church teaches, the more abhorrent to God it is to have the principle of force put along with the teaching of that doctrine. God would rather have paganism enforced with persecution than He would have the cross of Jesus Christ connected with persecution.

Now, as in the state, so it is in the church. A leader does not grant religious liberty as a privilege. He recognizes it as a right. And any true leader *will* recognize that. He will never say (mark this!), "You must believe this because I say so. You must believe this because I teach this, and I am so and so." That's the echo of that voice on the Tiber.

And just as it is in the civil government, so it is in the church. The individual must not surrender his conscience and will to another. God will someday say, "Give an account of thy stewardship." And when God does that, I cannot say, "Well, Lord, I turned that over to Elder so and so 40 years ago. He'll answer for me."

We can't do that. God is talking to me personally. And so we read in the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans, dealing with this very question of the individual conscience, these significant words in Romans 14:12:

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" Romans 14:12.

And so Paul adds:

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more..."  
Romans 14:13.

Now, this doesn't mean unlimited independence, my friends. With my choice, I must accept the results of my choice. I cannot be both a goat and a sheep. I can't do that. I can go one way or the other. I can't be both. I can't be over here and over there, too. And freedom (mark it!), freedom does not mean the ability or the opportunity to be

on both sides of the fence. Freedom simply means that you can choose which way you will go.

But when I choose, I get the results. If I walk with God, I'm going to have the joy of fellowship with Him and persecution from the world. Is that right? If I walk with the world, I may miss that persecution, but oh, I'll also miss the joy of fellowship with my Creator, my Redeemer, and eventually, my life will go out in the blackness of separation from the God on whom I have turned my back.

Now, in the light of what we have just studied, someone may say, "Well, what place is there for church discipline? Are there not some things that the church is to enforce?"

The church is not to enforce anything in the sense of trying to *force* somebody to do something. No. But there are certain things that the Lord has put in the hands of the church to enforce in this sense of drawing a clear line as to what church membership includes. For example, the keeping of God's commandments—the Sabbath. Sabbath-keeping is one of the tests of church fellowship. When the church disciplines a man who breaks the Sabbath and takes his name from the books, the church is not trying to force him, by penalties, to keep something that he doesn't believe in. Oh, no. The church is merely recognizing the fact that he himself, the individual man, has *already* withdrawn himself from that bond of fellowship.

And just as when a man dies, his name is taken from the church books because he's no longer an active member (he's not a member at all—he's dead!), so the man who breaks the law of God—who commits adultery, who steals, who breaks the Sabbath—that man has himself withdrawn from the body by that act, and the action of the church in disfellowshipping him is not, in *any* sense, trying to force him. It's recognizing the fact that that man *has* a free choice, that he has exercised that choice, and that his choice has been in the other direction. But never think that that is in the way of trying to force anybody. Not at all. It's recognizing that the individual cannot *be* forced. It is recognizing that the individual must live with the results of his choice. He has chosen to go the other way.

Of course, we need to remember that God has warned the church against entering unnecessarily into the details of the individual life as far as dogmas and rules are concerned. The Pharisees were full of that. In their endeavor to try to get men to keep the Sabbath perfectly, they entered into the details of just how far a man should walk on the Sabbath. And they finally got to the place where it was utterly impossible to keep the Sabbath according to their laws. But that was because they went beyond what the Word of God taught.

Now, I come to something that perhaps is most important of all to you and me here tonight, and that's this: if neither the state nor the church has the right to force my conscience, has an individual, some other individual, that right? And if I cannot use either state or church as my proxy, if I can't turn my conscience over either to the state

or the church, can I turn my conscience over to another individual? Never, friends, never. The soul must be free.

Now, please watch carefully, then, these conclusions, and let every soul walk in the light of this precious truth from God's book. If what we've studied so far tonight is true, friends, then I must never try to get another person to do my way. I must *never* be conscience for another person. Why? Because *he's* got a conscience. God is seeking to appeal to him individually. God is talking to him personally. And I must *never* try to force him. I must *never* try to get another person to do my way. And I must never allow another person to make my decisions for *me*. I mustn't try to make his decisions, but I mustn't allow him to make *my* decisions. God has left the soul free in matters of conscience.

Can you live happy that way, friends? I want to tell you, you can't live happy any other way. Are you looking for a place where everybody will do just exactly as you do in matters of diet and dress and Sabbath-keeping, in ideas of education, in music, in reading and recreation? In your endeavor to find such a place or an experience, do you sometimes try to bend the conscience of others? Or do you sometimes try to bend your own conscience so as to agree with others? If so, may I tell you that you are getting ready for the mark of the beast? That's true.

The seal of God is going to be put only in the foreheads. The mark of the beast comes from the endeavor of men to regiment other men, to get them to think alike so that they will act alike, and if they can't succeed in that, to *make* them to act alike, whether or not they think alike.

Do you know there are other ways of pressing people besides telling them they can't buy or sell? There are mass pressures. If it weren't so serious, friends, it would sometimes be amusing to watch the way people *yield* to the mass pressures that they happen to be exposed to. If you see them in one place, they dress, for instance, in a certain way, but let them get a hundred miles away, and they're more than a hundred miles different in their dress. Sometimes it doesn't take a hundred miles. The same with diet. Does it make a difference, dear friends, *where* you are?

You've heard of the old proverb, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." That's the motto that many people use. But it's significant that that motto came from the Roman apostasy, and it's a part of the Roman philosophy.

In fact, those who have traced the proverb to its source tell us that it came from the mouth of one of the bishops of the church, way back there in the early days when the bishop of Rome was leading in an apostasy exalting Sunday and honoring Sunday above the other days of the week. And this bishop—I've forgotten which one it was, I think he was from over in Africa or Asia Minor somewhere—was asked by another bishop what he did about a certain practice. Doing it one way would honor Sunday, and doing it another way would be the opposite.

“Ah,” his answer was, “when I’m in a certain place, I do it this way, but when I’m in Rome, I do it the way they do it in Rome.” And so we have the proverb, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.”

Let me say to you, friends, there is nothing wrong with that principle when it comes to certain practices that have nothing to do with conscience. If we were in Japan tonight, what would we take off before we came into the chapel?

[Audience responds] Shoes.

Our shoes. But instead, we men took off our hats here. The Japanese, when they come over here, learn to leave their shoes on, and take their hats off. Is that a matter of conscience? No, that’s just a matter of custom. There’s no principle involved as to whether you take your hat off or your shoes off.

Back there in the days when Moses was herding his sheep out there in the desert, the Lord told him to take what off?

[Audience responds] Shoes.

His shoes off. And what did He tell Joshua? The same thing. That was the custom at that time, and that was a mark of reverence. But the particular *thing* a person does to show respect—whether it’s to take his hat off in America or to take his shoes off in the Orient—that particular thing as to *which* one of those is done is not a matter of conscience. It doesn’t *need* to be a matter of conscience. It’s a matter of showing respect.

So, there are a great many things in life for which the motto “When in Rome, do as the Romans do” is perfectly proper, but not in matters of conscience, my friends. No matter if we go into the very heart of Rome, the seventh day and *only* “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.” Is that right? Yes. And no matter *where* we go in Rome or anywhere else, ethyl alcohol is still intoxicating, and whether it’s served as wine or beer or whiskey or gin, when in Rome, we will not do as the Romans do. Is that right? Did Daniel settle that question? When in Babylon, did he eat as the Babylonians ate and drink as the Babylonians drank? No.

Do you know where I think the place to learn to practice that principle is? Right here, right where we are, my dear friends. And I feel sorry for anybody, young or old, that cannot stand alone for a principle in his own mind and conscience and in his own actions, without feeling antagonistic to those who look at the thing differently, on the one hand, or feeling on the other rather cowed and beaten and driven because he’s with the minority, perhaps a minority of only one.

Oh, my friend, if you and I are to stand in the issue ahead of us, we must have such an experience that we will feel right at home standing up all alone for God. Daniel did. He went all alone to the lion’s den. John the Baptist did. All alone, he stood facing

King Herod. He lost his head because of it, but what of that? He did not surrender his *principle*. That seal of God was in his soul. He *loved* God. He loved God's commandments. Herod could take his head off, but he couldn't take away this liberty.

Oh, our young people need an experience in standing alone! I've been in places where parents pleaded that the church or the school might lift up certain standards so that it would be easy for *their* young people to stand for those things, and they wouldn't have to go against the mass pressure of the crowd they were in—shame on the thought, my friends.

Your son, your daughter, dear parent, should be able to stand *all alone* for principle, regardless of what young people around them do. It should not, in *any* sense, be necessary for other young people to be brought into line in order to save your boy and girl. If your boy is to be a Daniel, if your girl is to be an Esther, they need an experience in standing all alone and in being able to do it without trying to force others to come to their same standard.

And so I believe, friends, that right here we still have an experience to get, to go deeper into, in this matter of religious liberty. I believe that we can seek God for an experience of standing.

But what are you going to stand *for*? The Lord deliver us from merely standing for some quirk of the mind, some human opinion, some silly idea, some fanatical thing, some extreme position. The Lord deliver us, friends, from reading some of the great mass of literature that's floating around today (like the frogs of Egypt just leaping into the houses) and getting some queer idea that's called "reform," and then we stand for that and we think we're martyrs.

Let us be sure that the thing we stand for is the law and the testimony as we see it taught by the Spirit of God. Let us be sure that we can give a "thus saith the Lord" for that for which we stand, but let's do it, as Peter said, "with meekness and fear." Even when we're able to give a *reason* of the hope that is in us, we should do it with a proper humility.

1 Peter, the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter, and the 15<sup>th</sup> verse:

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience..." 1 Peter 3:15–16.

Do you know what a good conscience is? Well friends, first of all, a good conscience is one that's taught by the Word of God. It's not just a matter of impressions and quirks of thinking. Second, a good conscience is one that is followed rather than violated. You can't have a good conscience tomorrow if you violate it today all the while. If we do those two things—if we'll take our consciences and teach them by the Word of

God and the testimonies of His Spirit, and then second, follow them, whenever we believe a thing to be right, stand for it though the heavens fall—we'll have a good conscience, and we'll be able, as Peter says, to give to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear.

When we come to the cross of Calvary, we see there that Jesus is so anxious that the soul liberty of man be preserved that He will give His life rather than allow man to lose that opportunity. The great reason that Jesus died, my friends, was that man might have a chance to use this choice. This choice that Satan had sought to deprive him of, Jesus thought it so valuable that He gave His own life on the cross, at the risk of failure and eternal loss, in order that man might have this right.

How precious it is then! How we should value it! How we should thank God for it! How we should cherish it, not only for ourselves but for others. And let us seek to practice it in the little things of everyday life, thus preparing us for the great issue ahead.

Shall we bow our heads?

Our Father in Heaven, teach us the principles of true religious liberty. Teach us to respect these principles as they apply to others. Teach us to cherish them as they apply to our own lives. Help us to know Thy will for us, and then happily, joyously, live according to conscience, letting the consequences be what they may. Help us to be willing to go to the fiery furnace or the lion's den rather than surrender loyalty to Thee. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

What would you like to say tonight? I'd like to have you say the thing that you feel impressed with that has a blessing or a lesson in it for you.

[Testimony service follows]

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