

The King's Highway.

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness—Isa. 35-8

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TRUE FREEDOM

(Sermon by Rev. W. Edmund Smith)
Fifth Radio Address

Text: John viii:36—If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Free! What a word to conjure with! You can make it mean anything you like, from the most rigid legalism to the wildest license. You tell me what you mean by freedom and I can tell you what you are. Many who think themselves free are held in slavish chains.

A nation may think itself free because it dominates its internal affairs and regulates its foreign policies without any outside dictation. This nation builds its great battle ships and organizes and disciplines great armies, and the more it cultivates the spirit of militarism the greater becomes its bondage to the fear of attack. It is the bondage of fear that precipitates war. This was true in the awful World War, and the same fearful spirit is steadily growing in Europe today, cultivated by the secret activities of preparation for war.

A church may think itself free and at the same time be so cluttered up with ecclesiastical machinery and millinery, so dominated by pompous and austere ritualism, that it has long since ceased to function as a channel for the Spirit of the Living God.

Here is a young man who thinks himself free—very free, yet he disregards physical law, violates civil law and repudiates God's law. He glorifies in what he calls self-expression. He becomes a law unto himself, and thus is soon held fast in the chains of abject bondage.

We all must learn that true freedom can never come by ignoring and violating properly constituted law. Our highest liberty is gained and conserved, not outside the limits of law but within the operation of its regulations and restraints. We live in a moral and a social order. We are members one of another. We have personal rights and so have others. We maintain our own highest physical, civil and spiritual interests when we have regard for those of others. The closer our social contacts the greater the need of beneficent laws to restrain the actions of bad men and to regulate the conduct of good men. And when our nature is rightly adjusted to all good laws we escape the bondage of their coercive power, and are glad in their educational and the directorial value.

Robinson Crusoe on his lonely island was a law unto himself. Till Friday came he had no social contact whatsoever. He could build and live in any kind of a shanty, keep his pig in the parlor, dump his garbage on the front lawn, make hooch in the cellar, get uproariously drunk and run amuck over all the island; he could plant the poppy and make opium, lull himself off to sleep and there was

none to question his actions. "He was monarch of all he surveyed."

His right there was none to dispute. He could dominate his man Friday by his superior might. But when Crusoe came to the mainland and bought a farm, he soon ran up against the proposition of a line fence. That fence indicated as to how far over he could run the cutter-bar of his mowing machine, and within what limits he must keep his cattle and sheep. He might have grumbled and said: "This is a queer place. Not like this on my island." "O, yes, Robinson; you are off your island now, and must respect the rights of others. But remember the same line fence that holds you in check, also holds your neighbor in check. That fence acts and reacts to your own good."

But suppose Crusoe comes to the city, and buys a lot of land on a good street, and proceeds to put up a shanty like he had on the island. There is trouble at once. The city building committee waits on him and informs him that he must erect a dignified modern house on that land valued at so many dollars. He may bluster and say: "This is a queer town when a man can't do as he likes with his own." And so it is. He goes out in the street with his car and is halted by the red lights and the traffic cops. He is fined for not keeping on the right side of the street and running by the red light. "Queer city this," he grumbles. "Not like this on my island." O no, it is not. But Robinson remembers that the same laws that regulate your conduct also regulate that of others, and thus your property rights are conserved and your life protected. If you are not pleased with these regulations that are the expression of the highest intelligence and the individual and collective interests of the people, then go back to your island home. This is the price you must pay for your social contacts."

So we claim that the character of your citizenship is determined by your attitude to civil law, and the way it affects your spirit. The really honest man will be honest in any circumstances. He does not need a policeman on the corner with a big stick, or doors with locks on them to make him honest. If all the policemen in the city were to go on strike, and people were to leave all their doors unlocked, the honest man would steal no more than now. He keeps the law from and inner disposition that harmonizes with the law. He sees in all laws a directing and instructing medium. He does not feel their coercion and restraint for he is inclined to keep them all, and sees in them the highest good.

And we say the same principle applies in the realm of the moral and the spiritual, when our inner nature is rightly adjusted to the law of God. Naturally we are out of harmony with God's law. When He commands us to "keep off the grass," we naturally think that is the only place for us. We want to do the

things that He forbids. We think that in their indulgence we may find the highest happiness. It is the delusion of sin. God's high and holy nature is revealed in his law, and also our highest moral and spiritual good. And I contend that end of divine grace is to so bring our nature into harmony with the nature and the will of God, that we, instead of groaning and complaining under the bondage and restraint of the moral law, as the picture is given us in the seventh chapter of Romans, may know the blessedness of the "expulsive power of a new affection." The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus making us free from the law of sin and death.

This is just what God promised to do. He said, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh. And a new heart will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes and keep my precepts to do them." This was the promise long before Christ came. How Paul rings the changes on this spiritual freedom! "I will put, write my commandments upon the fleshy tables of your heart." And John says: "This is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and they are not grievous." Not grievous! They must be grievous unless we have hearts that love the law.

To revert to the Old Testament. How the Psalmist gloried in this liberty and freedom! "I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea thy law is within my heart." "Thy statutes have become my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." Some one said: "Let me make the nation's songs and I care not who makes the laws." But the psalmist made songs out of the laws, because he saw in the law of God the expression and revelation of God's exalted character, and also the securing of his own highest good. And we claim that through the regenerating and sanctifying power of the blood of Jesus, all that the prophet and apostles have spoken is abundantly substantiated in the hearts of God's children today. It is this experience that makes it not only possible but easy to be a true Christian. The expulsive power of love makes all God's requirements reasonable and delightful.

We have seen this even in the realm of the natural, how that human love makes the load easy. You have heard the story of the little girl, who was carrying her baby brother in her arms. He was a lusty chap and she tugged bravely while his feet dangled to the ground. A sympathetic passerby said, "O little girl, I feel sorry for you with your heavy load." The little girl looked scornfully at the sympathizer and then a sweet smile broke upon her countenance as she replied, "Please, mam, he ain't heavy. He's my little brother." Love made the burden light.

I think of Susannah Wesley, whom Dr. Adam Clark called one of the greatest women that ever lived, as to physical beauty, intel-

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Mrs. Wm. Chace, June 31
P. F. D.