

## **GENUINE DISCIPLESHIP**

A Sermon preached on Tuesday Evening, August 1, 1843, at Jewry Street Chapel, Aldgate, on behalf of the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society

"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

There is one feature in the Lord's ministry, when he was tabernacling here below, that has often struck my mind; and that is, the absence in him of the spirit of proselytism. He never sought to make proselytes; to allure, by concealing the difficulties of the way, the rich, the noble, or the learned to become his disciples: but he invariably set before all who professed any wish to follow him, that it was a path of tribulation, self-denial, and crucifixion in which he walked, and that they, as followers of him, must tread in the same footsteps. And, connected with this, the Lord never suffered any to deceive themselves into a belief that they were his heart-whole followers when his all-seeing eye penetrated into the insincerity that reigned in them. Judas Iscariot, you will say, was an exception. He was so; but it was to fulfil a certain purpose (John 17:12); and if Judas was an exception, though the Lord did not specially point him out with his finger, his ears were not spared the same truths which the Lord set before others, that those who followed him must take up the cross, and deny themselves.

It appears from what we read in this chapter, that there were some, if not many, who "believed in Christ," but in whose hearts the Holy Ghost had not wrought "the work of faith with power." (2 Thess. 1:11.) We read (John 5:30) "As he

spake these words, **many believed on him.**" There we have the express testimony of the Holy Ghost to their believing. But **how** did they believe? Did they "believe **with the heart unto righteousness**?" Did the Holy Ghost raise up in their souls "the faith of God's elect?" (Tit. 1:1.) Their words and their actions prove the contrary; for when the Lord addressed them in the faithful words of the text, their immediate answer was: "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" The pride of their hearts was immediately touched, and the viper in them started up in a moment with all its inbred venom. And the conclusion of the matter was, as you will perceive if you read the chapter, that the Lord said to these very men who "believed on him" with their heads, and not with their hearts: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." (John 8:44.) What positive proof, what indubitable evidence, that a man may believe in his head in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet be a child of Satan, and his end be Perdition!

The Lord, then, instead of alluring these professed disciples on, set plainly before them the real state of the case: "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."

We have in these words, **first**, a test of discipleship: "If ye continue in my word."

**Secondly**, the **genuineness** of discipleship: "Then are ye my disciples **indeed**."

And **lastly**, the **blessings** that spring out of genuine discipleship: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

I. The Lord, when he said, "If ye continue in my word," was not laying down continuance as a **condition**, so much as a **test**. Their "continuing in the word" would not **make** them disciples; but would **manifest** them as disciples. And thus the words are to be understood. Not as though their continuing in the word would bring them into the fold; as though **then** they were carnal, but if they continued to profess, nature would by some mysterious process he transmuted into grace. Such is not the meaning of the words; but it was put before them as **a test** of discipleship; the converse being the truth—that their **not** continuing in the word would prove they were **not** disciples.

We will then, with God's blessing, look a little at this test of discipleship: "If ye continue in my word;" and we will look at it, not so much as connected with the characters to whom it was addressed, as a test of discipleship to God's redeemed and regenerated family.

1. The word "**continue**" clearly points to some previous reception of truth, or to some work begun and carried on with power in the conscience. The "word," then, in which the Lord says they were to "continue" must in some degree have fastened upon their conscience, laid hold upon their heart, and been by a divine power engrafted into their minds, before they could continue in it. For clearly they could not **continue** in what was never **begun**. And this leads us to consider what is the first beginning of a work of grace upon a mans soul, which consists in the spiritual fastening of divine truth with power in his conscience. Some word (**and by word we are not to understand in every case exact letters and syllables, but some scriptural truth,**) is fastened with a divine power in the conscience; is lodged by the Holy Ghost in the soul. And what is the consequence? No sooner is the word lodged in a mans conscience, than it produces a

certain definite effect; and the Lord has given us several parables, to point out the nature of this effect.

He compares it for instance, in one parable, to leaven: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened." (Matt. 13:33.) There the Lord points out what is the inward effect of the word of God lodged in a mans conscience, by comparing it to the effect produced by the lump of leaven in the three measures of meal. It ferments, it heaves, it rises, it penetrates and pervades the whole mass; the dough is no longer the same substance that it was; a change takes place, and chemists would tell you a chemical change, whereby it is no longer what it was before, mere flour, and salt, and water, but the leaven so diffuses itself and penetrates into it, and as it were regenerates it, that a new substance is formed, which when baked we call **bread**. Thus it is with the word of God lodged in a mans heart. It does not lie there as a stone on the pavement, inoperative, without producing any effect in the spot where it is lodged; but it diffuses a secret influence through a mans soul, and by it he is begotten again. According to those words: "Of his own will **begat he us with the word of truth**, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures" (James 1:18): "Born again," says the apostle Peter, "by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. 1:23.)

But the Lord uses another figure to shew the same work. He compares the kingdom of grace in the soul to seed cast in the ground. There we have the effect of a work of grace, equally clearly and definitely pointed out. The seed does not lie like a pebble in the tilth into which it falls; but no sooner does it reach the seed-bed, than a process, a change takes place. Light, heat, and moisture all combine; and the effect is that a root is shot downwards, and a blade rises upwards.

Thus it is with the word of God lodged in a mans heart; the light, heat, and moisture of God's Spirit working in the word cause it to germinate and take root, so that it fastens downward into the conscience, and springs upward into a God glorifying profession. This is all the difference betwixt receiving the word in the letter, and receiving it in power.

Again: the apostle James, speaking of the same work, compares it to a graft. How beautiful and yet how simple are scripture figures! I have often admired them. And what is remarkable, they are not only so simple, but they are universal. We find very few figures taken from the customs of the East, which in this northern clime would not be understood; but such figures are employed as are universal to the whole race of men. Seed-sowing for instance and bread-making are known not only in all countries where civilized man dwells, but are alike familiar to all, even the most uneducated classes of people. And this figure—grafting, which is carried on in every climate where fruit is to be found, is equally simple and intelligible. But how sweetly does it point out the work of grace upon the soul! There must be a wound first made in the stock, in order that the scion may fit into it; and thus not only grow **into**, but grow **out of** it; for it is in this close and living union between the scion and the stock that the whole success of grafting consists. Thus the word of God does not lie on a mans conscience, as a withered stick might lie upon a post, utterly dead and inactive; but the heart being wounded by God's Spirit, forms a bed **(so to speak)** for the engrafted word to lodge in; they meet together, they coalesce, they grow into each other, and they bring forth fruit to God's honour and glory. Vital religion will always be of an operative nature; it will not be a mere profession; a something put on to satisfy conscience, or to please others; but is an eternal reality, begun and carried on in the heart by the Holy Ghost.

2. Now wherever the word is thus lodged in, and grows into and out of a mans conscience, he will "**continue** in it." He will never **(for God never will suffer him,)** relinquish his profession. He may sink into the greatest depths of soul trouble, he may mount into the highest heaven of soul enjoyment, he may for a time be buried in the world, he may backslide after idols, he may be numbed with torpidity, and carried in his feelings to the very north pole of darkness and ice, so that all vital godliness may seem frozen up in his heart; and yet the life of God's Spirit in his soul never can leave him. Being once quickened into **spiritual** life, he is quickened into **eternal** life; for the Lord has said: "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." (John 6:47.) And therefore he will "continue in God's word." Whatever be the temptations his soul is beset with, **(and there will be thousands of temptations to drive him back)**; whatever snares the world and the flesh spread for his feet, **(and in some of those snares his unwary feet will often be entangled,)**; whatever blasts from hell Satan may breathe upon him, to fill him, if possible, with a measure of his own infernal blasphemy and malice, still he holds on. "The righteous shall hold on his way" (Job 17:9): "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18): "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:28.) They "continue in Christs word," because "He which hath begun the good work" carries it on, and finishes it "until the day of Jesus Christ."

But wherever God makes a man honest by a work of grace upon his heart, **(and if grace has not made you honest before God and man, you have at present no proof that you know any thing whatever of grace,)** he continues just in that line of teaching that the Holy Ghost favours his

soul with. He does not sail into unknown latitudes, and, seizing hold of the helm, pilot his own ship. He does not take up with other mens experience, work with other mens lines, speak with other mens tongues, and drink into other mens sentiments. If he do this, he is not "continuing in," but departing **from** "the word." **He** only "continues, **in** the word," who keeps wholly and solely to God's teaching in his soul. The moment that a man gets out of the track in which the Lord is spiritually leading him; the moment he takes up with an experience which God has not wrought in him, or lays hold of doctrines that God does not bring into his heart with power, he is not "continuing in the word."

One grand mark then and test of genuine discipleship is to keep in the path which God points out; to advance no further than God leads on, and to fall no backwarder than he draws forward. And to know, to feel, and to act upon this, is to be in the spot so sweetly described (Matt. 18:3), where the Lord declares, that "except we be converted, and become as little children, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The little child does not chalk out a path for itself; it does not profess to feed itself, to clothe itself, to teach itself, to guide itself, to carve out its future prospects in life. The very mark of childhood is dependence upon the parent; and the moment the child gets out of the parents hands, and sets up for itself, that moment it loses the grand characteristic of childhood. And so a professor of religion, the moment he sets up for himself, and turns away from the guidance of the blessed Spirit in his heart and conscience, loses the character of a disciple, because he departs from the simplicity of spiritual childhood.

II. "If ye continue in my word, then **are ye my disciples indeed.**" What a stress the Lord lays upon that apparently little adverb **indeed!** And how the Lord, by the use of that

little adverb, points out that there is a discipleship, which is not a discipleship **indeed!** It corresponds with an expression in the prayer of Jabez: "Oh! that thou wouldest bless me **indeed!**" (1 Chron. 4:10.) Jabez knew that there were blessings which were not "blessings **indeed**;" that is, not real blessings, not spiritual and heavenly blessings, such as alone can satisfy a God-taught soul. And thus the Lord Jesus, whose eyes are as a flame of fire to discern betwixt the righteous and the wicked, saw and pronounced a solemn sentence in the expression, "**Then** are ye my disciples **indeed.**" As though there was a great possibility, and more than a strong probability, that many who at that time were disciples nominally, were not "disciples indeed."

What then is it to be a disciple "**indeed**?" It is to be made such by the Lord himself. How did the Lord make disciples upon earth? Did he not call them with his own voice? Do we not read, that "he called unto him whom he would?" (Mark 3:13)—no more, no less. And have we not, in nearly every case, a definite account of the Lord's individually calling each? In order then to be a "disciple indeed," the Lord by his own blessed voice, speaking with power to our souls, must have made us his disciples.

But we will, with God's blessing, look at a few marks of genuine discipleship; and may God enable us to believe that we possess them.

1. Discipleship implies **devotedness**. When the disciples followed the Lord, they devoted themselves to him. Thomas spoke what they felt in their hearts, when he said on one occasion, "Let us also go to Jerusalem that we may die with him:" implying such a devotedness to him, that neither life nor death should separate them. If then a man has not, as the Apostle says, "given himself to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5),



yielded himself up to his blessed hands, to be taught by him and him only, and to embrace him as "his Lord and his God," if he is not brought, by a divine work of grace upon his heart, to embrace his blood as the only atoning sacrifice for sin, his righteousness as the only justifying robe, his grace as the only salvation from "the wrath to come," his love as the only heaven begun below and perfected above; if he has not, in the depths of his soul, thus given himself wholly and solely unto the Lord to be his for ever; he lacks one mark of true discipleship. He is yet half-hearted; his "heart is divided, and he is found faulty" (Hos. 10:12); he has not yet "taken up the cross, and denied himself, and followed Jesus." He is yet like the rich young man, whom the Lord bade, as a proof sincerity, to sell all that he had, and give unto the poor, and come and follow him. (Matt. 19:21.) The root of devotedness was wanting in him; the Lord therefore struck a blow at that cursed root of covetousness, which is the bane of gospel devotedness.

2. Another mark of genuine discipleship is, **separation**. Did not the disciples separate themselves from all things when they followed the Lord? Levi leaves the office of publican, at which he earned his livelihood; Peter and his brother Andrew, James and John leave the one their nets, and the other the ship and their father, and followed him (Matt. 4:18, 21); they all separate themselves from what they were engaged in, that they might cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. Not that I mean to say, we are called upon to act precisely as they acted, in giving up those worldly callings in which grace found us, unless they are inconsistent with the will and word of God, as in my case it was to continue in a worldly system. Because the scripture expressly says that "every man is to abide in the same calling wherein he was called." (1 Cor. 7:20.) But what I want to point out is, that separation from things evil is the very mark and test of genuine discipleship.

Separation, for instance, from a world dead in wickedness; separation from another world dead in profession; separation from all God dishonouring doctrines, from all reckless and careless professors, from all things that in any way bring a reproach upon the gospel, or are opposed to God's glory and to God's truth. And this not merely **outward** separation,—that is in a measure easy;—but **inward** separation: separation in heart from the spirit of the world; separation from that spirit of covetousness, which as a canker seems to be feeding upon the very vitals of God's Church; separation from formality, self-righteousness, superstition, will worship, and all that "leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy;" inward separation of heart, soul, and spirit, whereby we yield ourselves up unto the Lord, that he may "work in us that which is well pleasing in his sight."

3. Another mark and test of genuine discipleship is **an utter prostration of our own wisdom**, our own strength, and our own righteousness at the feet of the Lord. Whom do we profess to serve? The Lord God of Israel. In giving up ourselves unto the Lord, in yielding up ourselves to his service, it is not some earthly monarch, whom we profess to devote ourselves unto; he could not demand all that is in us, though he might claim our outward service. But in giving ourselves up to the Lord Jesus Christ, in receiving him into our hearts as "our Lord and our God," in submitting to his righteous authority, in "kissing the Son," and bowing ourselves before his sacred feet, we prostrate before him every thing inconsistent with hi? Inward dominion and kingdom in our hearts. Our own strength stands in the way of **his** strength, for "his strength is made perfect in weakness;" then the genuine disciple has his own strength prostrated before the Lord, that the power of Christ may rest upon him, and shine forth in his infirmities. The genuine disciple prostrates too his righteousness at the Lord's feet;

he tramples it under foot as "filthy rags;" he looks upon it with contempt and shame; he feels that it is nothing but pollution and abomination before God; and thus he casts it away at the feet of Jesus, that he may stand clothed in that comely robe, which the Lord of life and glory wrought out and brought in. And he prostrates also his wisdom, so as no longer to be wise in his own eyes nor prudent in his own sight; but renounces all wisdom except that which comes from God's own mouth into his soul. As we read (Prov. 2:4-6), renouncing his own wisdom, he "seeks for divine wisdom as for silver, and searches for her as for hid treasures, knowing that the Lord giveth wisdom, and that out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." And thus he prostrates all his own wisdom at the foot of the cross, that the Lord may be his "wisdom," as well as his "righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30.)

4. Another mark and test of genuine discipleship is **a being conformed to the likeness and image of Jesus**. What is the disciple to follow his Master for? Is it not to catch some resemblance to him? Is it not to be imbued with a measure of his spirit? Is it not to be penetrated and pervaded with his meekness and gentleness? Can a whole-hearted disciple walk with a broken-hearted Lord? Can a proud, presumptuous professor walk in sweet communion with a lowly and humble Jesus? Can one whose heart is in the world, and whose affections are completely buried in the things of time and sense, walk with Him, who was not of the world, but in every word and every action was separate from it, though he walked and moved in it? Can any one a prey to hypocrisy walk with Him, whose every word and every thought was uprightness and integrity? "The disciple is to be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord." (Matt. 10:25.) He is to think as Jesus thought; for says the Apostle, "we have the mind of Christ." He is to speak as Jesus spoke; for his

"conversation is to be seasoned with salt." He is to walk, in a measure, as Jesus walked; for "he hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps." The genuine disciple catches **(so to speak)** the spirit of his Master; just as the cloak of the rising Elijah fell upon the worshipping Elisha, so does the spirit of the Lord fall more or less upon those who walk after him and cleave close unto him.

These **(and doubtless there are more,)** are some marks of genuine discipleship; and these marks test the reality of a mans religion. It does not signify what a man professes in the mere letter of truth; the mere profession of certain doctrines does not affect a mans heart, nor touch a mans conscience. A man may be in his sins, and under the wrath of God, just as much under the profession of the highest Calvinism, as though he were grovelling in the mud holes of the lowest Arminianism. Vital godliness is something deeper than a mere profession, and something higher, because a thing spiritual and supernatural. The mark then of a genuine disciple is not that he gives in his adherence to a certain creed, or believes, that such and such a minister is sent of God to preach the gospel, or belongs to such or such a church, or has gone through such an ordinance. Vital godliness is something very different from this mere husk, which is well enough to encircle the kernel, but is a thing totally distinct from it. To be a "disciple **indeed**" is to be a disciple in ones heart and spirit, made such by the supernatural and secret operations of God upon our conscience.

III. But we pass on to consider the blessed fruits and results of genuine discipleship. They are twofold, as stated in the text: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." **Spiritual knowledge**, and **divine freedom** are the two blessed fruits and results of genuine discipleship.

But what is "the truth" spoken of in our text? It is not confined to certain doctrines, which are emphatically distinguished by the word **truth**: as it is said in common parlance, Such a minister preaches **the truth**, when all the truth perhaps that he preaches is contained in and confined to the five doctrinal articles that bear the name of Calvin. But "the truth" comprehends every thing, be it doctrine, be it experience, or be it practice, that God has revealed in his word of truth; and especially it embraces Him, who said of himself, "I am the way, and **the truth**, and the life." To "know the truth," then, is to know every thing connected with the Person, work, blood, love, grace, and glory of Jesus, as revealed in the scriptures of truth. We cannot admit a lower definition than that; we cannot take **a portion** of the truth, and say **that** and **that only** is "**the** truth." We cannot take one isolated street, or one little alley in London, and say **that** is the metropolis. No; we must take the whole circuit. And so to say this or that doctrine is "the truth" is incorrect; it is a part of "the truth," but "the truth" is not to be shut up in such a nutshell—is not to be limited nor confined to a few particulars. There are, I believe, some ministers and some hearers who would confine all the truth in the land to their pulpit, or their chapel; and call every thing lies and error, which their dim eyes do not see, and their tiny fingers do not grasp. But none can be said to have **the whole** truth who have not had the whole Bible spiritually revealed in their heart, and worked out experimentally in their soul. And where is such a minister or such a people to be found? "The truth," then, that is the whole truth, contains every thing of an unctuous and savoury nature, every thing that God has revealed for the salvation and edification of his Church. In a word, every line of the bible is "the truth," when God is pleased to make it known in our souls as such.

1. But the grand force of the promise lies in the word **know**: "Ye shall **know** the truth." What! in the future? Why should the Lord put it in the future tense? He would not allow that they knew it yet; they neither had the word, nor had they continued in the word. In order to "know the truth," they must not only have the word lodged as a vital principle in their conscience, but they must "continue in it," and be "disciples indeed;" proving their genuine discipleship by their adherence to the Lord at all costs and all hazards, cleaving to him through all the difficulties, temptations, and trials that their souls might be led into. To "know the truth" is to know it by a spiritual and supernatural revelation of it. Not to compare scripture with scripture, passage with passage, and parallel with parallel, and thus to elicit truth, as a man may elicit some truth in mathematics, or work a Rule of Three sum. People think if they can get a Concordance, or collect a number of parallel passages, and compare one passage with another, they have got hold of the truth; they have indeed in the letter, but this is not the power. **That** is another thing; that can only be made known in the heart by God's special application, and by the Spirits supernatural and unctuous revelation of it. And this all genuine disciples know. Genuine disciples feel their ignorance, their darkness, their spiritual inability to communicate to their own souls a saving and savoury knowledge of the truth. Their part is often to walk in "darkness which may be felt," to "grope for the wall like the blind, and to grope as if they had no eyes, and to stumble in desolate places like dead men." But many of our modern professors when they come to hear a minister of the truth preach, if they can but carry away his divisions, or recollect the substance of his discourse, are sure they "know the truth," when perhaps the Holy Ghost has never sealed a single portion of the sermon upon their hearts, nor made known any line of it with power in their consciences. Now it is the very ignorance felt by God's people, the very darkness of

mind under which they often groan, the very clouds that hang over their path, which are blessed of God to teach them that they cannot instruct or guide themselves into a spiritual knowledge of the truth; and thus they are led to cry, and groan, and supplicate, and wrestle, and beseech the Lord to apply his own word of truth with power to their souls. And as the Lord is pleased to enlighten the eyes of their understanding, and to apply his truth with a divine unction to their hearts, they begin to know by soul experience, and by inward revelation, such a measure of truth as He himself makes manifest in their consciences. As the Lord, then, leads them to "know the truth"—for instance, the truth of his declaration with respect to their own vile, deceitful and corrupt natures, they "set to their seal" that God spake truth when he said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jer. 17:9.) When they read that from within, "out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, fornications, murders, adulteries," and all that awful catalogue of human wickedness and crime (Mark 7:21), they "set to their seal" that the Lord of life and glory spoke the real truth of the case. And when the Lord the Spirit leads them to see the glorious God-man Mediator at the right hand of the Father, they know that there is such a blessed Mediator, because he hears and answers the requests of their soul. In the same way are they brought to know the efficacy of atoning blood; the beauty of justifying righteousness; the sweetness of undeserved grace; and the love-taste of eternal glory. And thus they "know the truth;" not because this or the other minister preaches it, not because this or that eloquent or experienced writer has unfolded it, not because this or that Hymn Book contains it, no, nor even because the scriptures themselves reveal it, though through the scriptures all saving truth comes; but they know it by its being let down with power into their hearts, and experimentally and spiritually revealed in their consciences.

My friends, how many truths have you learned in this way? Say you, I believe in personal and eternal election, particular redemption, imputed righteousness, final perseverance, and all the doctrines of grace. So you may, and there are thousands in hell who do the same, for even "devils believe, and tremble;" but do you know these things, as the Lord Christ instructs his people into the knowledge of them? by first having the word fastened upon your soul with power, continuing in that word through many grievous temptations, painful exercises, and soul tribulations, proving your discipleship by cleaving to the Lord and yielding your soul up wholly and solely unto him, and then, as the Lord is pleased to lead you step by step and line by line into the truth, receiving it from his own blessed lips as a special and spiritual revelation in your conscience? That is the way to "know the truth;" and if a man live and die without "knowing the truth" in that way, he lives and dies in his sins, and where God is he will never come.

We live in a day very trying to God's real family. There is so much profession and so little possession, so much truth in the letter and so little truth in the Spirit, so much of the form and so little of the power; and we are so easily drawn aside, we so love to be deceived, we so gladly drink down the delusive draught, that unless God himself is pleased in a special manner to undeceive us, and drag us through painful temptations and soul exercises, as through briars and thorns, and thus strip off every rag of creature wisdom, strength, and righteousness, we never seem to come rightly at a knowledge of the truth. And I think those who hear ministers of doctrinal truth are of all persons the most likely to be deceived; because when they are pleased with a mans eloquence or gift, or yield a complete assent to what drops from his lips, they are so fully satisfied that it is "truth," that



they look very little at the way in which the truth is received into their own heart. Nay they may pride themselves to think that they have the truth in their chapel, and rest in that, when, were the matter probed to the very bottom, it would be found in many cases that they received it not from God, but only from the lips of their minister.

2. —But the second fruit and result of genuine discipleship is, **spiritual freedom**. "The truth shall make you free." What are we by nature? Slaves and bondsmen; slaves to sin, to Satan, to the world, to pride, to prejudice, to presumption, to every thing hateful and horrible; and only so far as the Lord brings us out of our wretched serfdom, do we come in any measure into real spiritual freedom. But **what** freedom is this? Oh! says one very trippingly upon the tongue—'Oh!' answers another in a moment from some corner of the chapel—'Of course it is gospel liberty that the Lord is speaking of. I do not doubt it; but just as "**the truth**" may perhaps include a little more than is contained in your church articles, and embraces a wider range than what is wrapped up in most Established or Dissenting nutshells, so the **freedom** of which the Lord speaks, may possibly (**I throw it out as a suggestion,**) have a more extensive scope than some of you may dream of. There is a freedom from things, distinct from gospel liberty, though gospel freedom will produce it. Gospel freedom consists, we know, in a freedom from the curse and hard bondage of the law; in a freedom from the wrath of God; in a freedom from agonising doubts and fears. And God's people, when they "know the truth," and are blessed with a feeling reception of it, are favoured with this freedom. But is there not such a thing, think you, as being made free from the world? I am afraid, if we were to follow into their shops and counting-houses some who talk much of gospel liberty, we might find that the worlds fetter had not been struck off their heart. We might possibly find

that some who could boast very largely, and talk very fluently of "standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free," had a golden chain, though invisible to their own eyes, very closely wrapped round their heart-strings. There is no use then talking about Christian freedom and gospel liberty, unless a man has liberty from something else; if he is not made free, for instance, from the power of **covetousness**, for the Scripture declares, that "a covetous man, who is an idolater, shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." To be made free, then, implies a liberty, not only from the curse of the law and so on, but also from the world, and the spirit of covetousness in the heart. There is a being made free also from the tyrannical empire of **respectability**; from the desire to rise in life; from the miserable system of outliving ones income, in order to cut a respectable appearance in the eyes of neighbours. Many who talk about gospel liberty, and would scorn any thing like imputation of bondage, are under the dominion of this tyrant, Respectability. And there is a being made free **from the power of sin**. I greatly fear, if we could follow into their holes and corners, and secret chambers many who prattle about gospel liberty, we should find that sin had not yet lost its hold upon them, that there was some secret or open sin that entangled them, that there was some lust, some passion, some evil temper, some wretched pride or other, that wound its fetters very close round their heart. And there is a being made free from **self** also: from proud self, presumptuous self, self-exalting self, flesh-pleasing self, hypocritical self, self in all its various shapes and turns, self in all its crooked hypocrisy and windings. We should then very much understate what this freedom is if we said—'Oh! it is a freedom from the curse of the law, a freedom from eternal wrath and damnation, and left it there. No; we must extend the circle somewhat wider; and if we extend the

circle, we may find that some, who boast much of gospel freedom, have not yet reached the bound of gospel liberty.

But "the truth shall make you free." And who want to be made free? Not those who are boasting of self-assumed freedom. The Jews, to whom the Lord spoke it, could not bear the imputation. Said they, "We be Abrahams seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, We shall be made free?" What an insult to talk to **them** of being made free; as though they were not free always! But they had forgotten the Babylonish captivity; they had forgotten the captivity under which they were at that moment to the Romans. Self deceit so blinded them, that they resented as an insult the imputation that they were not free, at the very moment when the Roman coin was circulating among them, carrying with it the mark of their subjection. And think you, this will not bear a spiritual application? Freedom! what, think you that I am not free yet? am I in bondage?—will say many a one who is a slave to his lusts. Many cannot bear to be thought in bondage, who have never yet known any thing of being made free by the truth. But the truth will make a man really free. It will free him, not merely as to those things, in which gospel freedom is said chiefly to consist; it will make him free from the fear of man, from the smiles of the creature, from bowing down to any person to gain his good opinion; it will make him free before God, so as to walk before the Lord with an enlarged heart.

**"He is the free man whom the truth makes free, And all are slaves beside,"** sang a Christian poet; and when the truth, any part or portion of it, comes into a mans heart, it makes him free, because it has a liberating effect. And if time sufficed, I might endeavour to point out how every part and particle of God's truth in a mans conscience, from the first teaching of God upon the soul, has the seeds of freedom in

it, and works in him a freedom from those things, in which he was entangled.

We have seen then a little of what it is to be a genuine disciple, and what are the blessed fruits and effects of genuine discipleship; and if we are enabled, by God's blessing, to trace out in our souls honestly that we possess the marks and tests of genuine discipleship, we stand interested, whatever be the darkness of our mind, in all the promises made to those who are Christs, and in all the blessings stored up in heavenly places for them.

But my business this evening is, to speak a few words on behalf of the Aged Pilgrims Friend Society. A friend, speaking of it, remarked to me the other day, that "of all Societies it was the worst supported." "This witness was true." And it caused this question to arise in my mind. What are the causes of this general want of support? This effect cannot arise but from certain causes; what then are the causes of this general indifference to its wants and claims?

1. The first cause that strikes my mind is this. The patrons and the supporters of, as well as those who are supported by this Society, profess those doctrines of sovereign, discriminating grace, which are hateful to the bulk of the professing world; and therefore, from their very profession of truth, a stigma is necessarily cast upon the Society. Those who are wrapped up in self-righteousness will of course turn their backs upon it, and cannot support a Society, which fosters what they consider most pernicious heresies.

2. Another apparent cause of its want of support, is that it does not lend its aid to, what the late Thomas Hardy used to call, "mans godship." You know what the old serpent said to Eve, when he breathed his poisonous words into her ears:

"Ye shall be as gods." His temptation was to elevate her into godship. Now man, unhumiliated man, never can do with any thing that does not flatter this imaginary godship. Bible Societies and Missionary Societies, from the Christian knowledge Society down to the humblest Tract Society, all flatter man's godship. They say—"Co-operate with God; it is your province to convert the world; send forth your Missionaries, and convert all men to a knowledge of the truth." This exalting men into gods is wonderfully pleasing to the flesh; and thus all rush forward to contribute to a Society, whatever it be, that flatters them by making "lords many and gods many."

3. Another cause, as it strikes my mind, is the general poverty of those who love the truth. God has "chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom;" and therefore, the bulk of God's people being poor, they have so little to contribute to the wants of others, that this Society cannot command those subscriptions and those sums, which are readily contributed by such as love a flesh-pleasing gospel.

Without going further, I think these three causes will sufficiently account for its want of support. But is not that a great reason why we should give ours? Suppose, as we were walking in the street, there were some pitiful accident (**so called**) to take place, and the people held back, and no body would go forward. Some human being was crushed, and lay bleeding, and dying, and all stood aloof; would not the very circumstance of their standing aloof, not merely draw forth the pity of our heart towards that suffering object, but induce us, for the sake of suffering humanity, to lend some aid? And if the religious world, who support the various Bible and Missionary Societies, if the numerous chapels and churches in London that despise the truth, hang back, who are to

come forward? Why, those surely who believe the same truths, whose hearts are touched by the same Spirit, who are brothers and sisters of the Pilgrims whom the Society supports, and who are "bound up in the bundle of life" with them and their common Lord. Thus the very reason why we should come forward, those of us who have it in our power, is because others hang back; their keeping back is the very thing to push us forward.

And who are the persons, whom we are called upon to support? They profess to be—and we trust that they are—pilgrims; Aged Pilgrims; travelling on to a better country; only needing a little more of this worlds good; pressed down with poverty; suffering often perhaps pangs of hunger and want; fearful of being ejected from their little tenements, and of being turned out of their garrets (**which, though uncomfortable to us, are comfortable to them,**) by some cruel landlord. How anxiously do they watch for the coming of the visitor! I have no doubt the husband says to the wife, or the lonely widower, or desolate widow to himself or herself—"Tomorrow the visitor comes; there will be the money for the baker, or for the rent." How anxiously he is looking for the sum he is to receive! Yes; but how is water to come out of the well, if there is no water in it? Or if we lock up the handle of the pump, how is the water to flow? **You** must give the spring; it is your part, your privilege, to help to fill the well; and then the visitor has but to drop the monthly bucket, and draw up a supply for the Aged Pilgrims. How painful it must be for these poor creatures, when the time comes, and there is no money for them! I am told that the Society has been sometimes driven actually to want the money for the next payment, unless by some miraculous and providential interposition; and God has sent some person, with grace in his heart and money in his pocket, just in time

to help them out of the present difficulty, that they may look up to Him in the next emergency.

I hope we shall see this evening, then, a liberal collection. And to the marks of genuine discipleship which have been brought forward, I hope I may be able to add another; and what is that? "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye love one another." But how are we to show our love, except by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and giving drink to the thirsty?—which the Lord himself will acknowledge as done to Him, when he will separate the sheep from the goats.

But I will add no more. Exhortations fall with little power, where God does not own them to the heart. And therefore I will conclude with reading a statement that has been put into my hands.

"This Society has extended its valuable aid to 1, poor aged members of the mystical body of Christ, amongst whom have been distributed £22, . There are at present 47 pensioners, who receive £10,10. per annum, or 17s. 6d. per month; 117 at £5. 5s. per annum, or 8s. 9d. per month; and 169 approved candidates, who receive 4s. a month. In the whole 333; amongst whom are distributed monthly, at their own habitations, upwards of £126. The income arising from annual subscriptions does not exceed £905; while the expenditure is £1575; leaving a deficiency of £579, two-thirds of the amount of the subscriptions, which presses heavily on the Committee, and which they have to make up by obtaining donations and collection sermons wherever they can. Every department is filled gratuitously. Annual subscriptions, Donations, and Legacies, will be thankfully received."