202 To Free (*Liberare*)

Christ frees us from the snare of sin and from the dominion of the devil.

Concerning the first, if a cow crosses through snares placed for capturing small birds, it breaks them. Securely the birds can afterwards cross through those places, so however the incarnation of Christ. The devil has placed snares for capturing men, Jer. 5[:26]: “Among my people are found wicked men.” But Christ who is most strong, Job 12[:16]: “With him is strength.” He breaks these snares through his incarnation, Jer. 30[:8]: “I will burst his bands, and strangers shall no more rule over him.” Therefore, he has freed us from those, Psal. [123:7]: “The snare is broken, and we are delivered.”

Second, he freed us from the dominion of the devil. First through his power of making war, but although he is the most powerful, however in his passion he freed us rather by suffering a diminution, he freed the infirm member from sickness, so Christ by suffering, 1 Mach. 12[:15]: “We have had help from heaven, and we have been delivered.” Second, he freed us through is wisdom by overcoming the devil. For the devil exerts his power on man in a double way. First by reason of giving, Judges 2[:14]: “The Lord being angry against Israel, delivered them into the hands of plunderers.” Second by reason of selling, Isai. 50[:1]: “You are sold for your iniquities.”

But Christ being wise against the first dispatched the trickery in a certain respect and absolutely because certainly God handed man over to the devil for punishing not because of this. It follows absolutely because he handed him to his dominion, so we see that the earthly lord hands over some malefactor to his jailor for imprisoning, nor does it follow because of this that he is his man. Rather afterward the Lord frees him as Christ did, Psal. [56:4]: “He has sent from heaven and delivered me.”

¶ Against the second, Christ acted against the devil by a judgment of possession. For man from the beginning of creation was in just possession while 1 Cor. 6[:19]: “Your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost ... and you are not your own?” Therefore, man unjustly alienated himself from God when therefore the Lord justly sought him, but his possession so to be freed from a false buyer, Wis. 10[:13]: “She forsook not the just when he was sold, but delivered him from sinners: she went down with him into the pit,” namely, our corruption, but up to limbo and in chains, he did not abandon him until he carried off the scepter of that king. He even descended himself, he did not send an angel, Exod. 3[:8]: “And knowing their sorrow, I am come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians,” that is, the devils.

Third, he freed us through his clemency by offering the price of himself when the pledge was given as a security, with the debt paid, he was freed, so Christ paid for himself, Tit. 2[:14]: “He gave himself for us.” Therefore, note here that last petition in the Lord’s Prayer is [Matt. 6:13]: “Deliver us from evil,” which Augustine treating, *Epistola* 26, says,[[1]](#endnote-1) “Why do you look around whence God may free you. Do not go far. I have returned to you. You are still evil. When therefore God frees you, he himself has freed you from yourself, then he frees you from evil.”

Wherefore the Apostle exclaims, Rom. 7[:24]: “Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” And Exod. 3[:7-8] the Lord said seeing Moses ... I am come down to deliver them.” So, Christ descended once for freeing his oppressed people from the mud and the side of the devil. When the serpent who spiritually was reduced in size would have killed the chicks of the eagle, the parent descended to free them and revivify them, so the Son of God.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Wherefore Gal. 4[:31]: “Christ has made us free.” And Rom. 6[:22]: “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end life everlasting.” Those who are freed from the state of sin find freedom for themselves in conformity with those who are free from prison, as is evident in Act. 12[:7] in the liberation of Peter and in the liberation of Joseph from prison three things happened, Gen. 41[:14] which come about through being penitent because the chains are put off, the clothes are put away, and the bowl shapes the haircut. So, the penitent first puts off the chains of sins through confession, he puts aside the clothing through honest conversation, he puts away superfluous things through satisfaction, so Jeremias 38[:12-13] by ropes interspersed with old rags he was freed, because if the ropes of penance are hard, the remembrance of old evil desires are interspersed.

1. Augustine, *Sermones de tempore* 256.1 (PL 38:1191): Quid circum inspicis unde te liberet, quando te liberat a malo? Noli longe ire, noli aciem mentis circumquaque distendere. Ad te redi, te respice. Tu es adhuc malus. Quando ergo Deus te ipsum liberat a te ipso, tunc te liberat a malo. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* 10.5.17 (LCL 353:302-303): est acrior cum dracone pugna multoque magis anceps, etiamsi in aere. ova hic consectatur aquilae aviditate malefica; aquila hoc rapit ubicumque visum. ille multiplici nexu alas ligat ita se inplicans ut simul decidat ipse.

   it has a fiercer battle with a great serpent, and one that is of much more doubtful issue, even though it is in the air. The serpent with mischievous greed tries to get the eagle’s eggs; consequently the eagle carries it off wherever seen. The serpent fetters its wings by twining itself round them in manifold coils so closely that it falls to the ground itself with the snake. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)