

Jonathan Ashley's 1749 sermon to the Deerfield slaves

On at least one occasion (Monday evening, January 23, 1749) Jonathan Ashley delivered a special sermon to the assembled slaves of the town of Deerfield. Although the location of the original manuscript is not now known, what appears to be the complete text was published in the March, 1867 issue of *The Historical Magazine – And Notes & Queries concerning the Antiquities, History & Biography of America*. Excerpts follow. Robert H. Romer, 2002.

I Corinthians 7, 22 For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's Freeman; likewise also, he that is called, being free, is Christ's Servant.

I will show that Christianity allows of the relation of masters and servants.

Servants who became believers began to proclaim liberty to themselves and declare it unlawful for such as were Christians to be servants. But the apostle [Paul] by the direction of God's spirit considers and determines this point – They who were servants were not to forsake their masters but to abide in that station.

...What a temptation of the devil is it to lead servants into sin, and provoke God; to insinuate into them that they ought not to abide in their place of servant – and so either forsake their master or are uneasy, unfaithful, slothful servants, to the damage of masters and the dishonor of religion – the reproach of Christianity.

I will show that such as are by Divine providence placed in the State of Servants are not excluded from Salvation, but may become the Lord's freemen.

The offers of Salvation are made to Servants as well as masters. ... The Gospel is not sent to one nation or people. ... Bond and free are all alike welcome to Christ – tho they are under bonds to earthly masters, yet they may be free in Christ. Spiritual liberty is not inconsistent with a State of Servitude – men may serve their masters, and yet be free from the law of sin and death, and be free to serve Christ.

I will show what a privilege it is to be the Lord's freemen.

They who are the Lord's freemen are delivered from the covenant of works. They are not under the law, but under grace.

They are freed from the bondage of fear.

They are the children of God, adopted into His family.

Christ's freemen have the holy angels to guard them and minister to them in the world.

Christ's freemen when they come to die enter into everlasting rest and glory. They go to be with the Lord.

I will give some directions to you that you may become Christ's freemen.

...You must be contented with your state and condition in this world and not murmur and complain of what God orders for you. [Emphasis added]

For motive, consider –

If you are not Christ's freemen, you will be the slaves of the devil.

Think what it is to die in sin – not freed by Christ.