

**FREEDOM:
YOURS TO
DISCOVER**

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July 26, 2015

Sermon in a sentence: Christian freedom is the liberty to live for God, to serve and worship Him without constraint or restraint.

Congregational reading: Romans 6:15-23 NKJV

Rom. 6:15-23 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! ¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? ¹⁷ But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading* to *more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. ²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ²³ For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Scriptures: Rom. 6:15-23; Acts 16:16-38; Is. 61:1; Luke 4:18,21; Psalm 19:13a; Rom. 6:14; 1 Cor. 6:12; 1 Cor. 10:23; 2 Cor. 3:2-18.

Luke, in the book of Acts and Isaiah in his prophecy gives us a couple of great access points into our discussion of “freedom”.

Acts 16:16-38 relates events that took place in Philippi, where Paul and Silas endured physical imprisonment, before being miraculously released from their bonds by an earthquake. They were literally and physically set free; free to go, or free to stay. What began as a situation of physical bondage became a situation where they were twice freed; once by an earthquake, and once by the magistrates who had imprisoned them. (In both cases their freedom gave them the power and ability to choose to remain incarcerated, in order to fulfill a higher purpose.)

Isaiah prophesied an even greater and more exciting kind of freedom:

Is. 61:1 “The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound....

Jesus quoted this verse in Luke 4:18 and then in v. 21 told the people that they had just heard the fulfillment of this prophesy. He wanted them to understand that the freedom He came to bring was not a physical freedom from incarceration, blindness or oppression, but a spiritual freedom and deliverance from things that had held them captive. Psychological, emotional and spiritual chains.

In both Testaments, we learn that sin has a desire to enslave humanity and bring us all under condemnation. So, David prayed for help:

Psalm 19:13a Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me.

In a more aggressive tone, the apostle Paul stated:

Romans 6:14 ... sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

God has called us to freedom!

In a couple of verses in 1 Corinthians, Paul expands on this concept:

1 Cor. 6:12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

1Cor. 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.

We are free to do anything we choose to do, (unless of course God has already decreed we should, or should not do it).¹ Paul stipulates the boundaries of our freedom: we are free as long as we do that which edifies the body of Christ, and things we do not allow to have power or control over us.

Here is the big question. Is there anything in your life you do not have the internal power to say “yes” or “no” to? If so, you are in bondage. But thank God, Jesus came to set you free! Christian freedom and liberty is a gift from God through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. It is His Spirit that makes it possible to overcome the various ‘laws’ so many people are bound by:

¹ E.g. we pray without ceasing (1 Thes. 5:7), and we do not commit murder (Ex. 20:13).

- The 'law of the world' that seeks to have us conform to its customs and culture
- The 'law of the flesh' that pushes us to succumb to various lusts and sins
- The 'law of the devil' that entices us to prideful rebellion against God and idolatrous worship

Some people hate what they are doing, realize they need deliverance, and seek freedom from the bondage of the 'laws' listed above. Others are totally unaware they are bound, actually thinking they are free!

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In recent times, many Christians have abandoned certain "rules and regulations" of the church in order to embrace "freedom" in things considered "non-salvation issues." Many have focused on the "bondage" the church imposes on things like saints' entertainment choices and attire, and have begun to engage in practices that are beyond the guidelines and boundaries set by their pastors.

As some of these activities cannot be biblically deemed "sinful", have these saints not moved into greater light and freedom? Some have said: "Who do pastors think they are, placing boundaries and restrictions on the Christian liberty of the saints?" So, let's get to the 'heart' of the matter.

As a child of God, there are some simple questions we can ask ourselves. Our answers will indicate whether we are trending toward greater spiritual freedom or, in fact, toward greater spiritual bondage (see Rom. 6:15-23).

"In the past year:

- Has my newfound freedom caused me to become more or less involved in church ministry?

- Has my freedom spurred me on to share the gospel with others more than I did before?
- Has my freedom caused me to spend more or less time in prayer?
- Has my attendance to the house of God increased or decreased?
- Is my joy and excitement about coming to church growing or am I increasingly bored with church?
- Has my freedom caused me to give more or less of my financial resources to the work of God?
- Can I apply scripture to current issues in society, or does the Bible really seem out of touch with the realities of today's world?
- Have the hours I voluntarily spend on my job increased or decreased?
- In all honesty, who would I rather spend my free time with my Christian friends or my non-Christian friends?

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Christian freedom is truly the liberty to live for God, to serve and worship Him without restraint or constraint. It is the freedom to do that which pleases Him, without being stymied by the criticism of unbelievers (or even less committed saints). It is the joy of total surrender to His will and way, seeking only His approval. It is the joy of saying with the songwriter: "I am free to live for You, I am free."²

² "I Am Free", written by Jon Egan, popularized by The Newsboys.