

True Freedom
John 8:33-36

We are in this long dialogue with Jesus and the religious leaders, and also the people of Israel. And we saw in verse 30 that many believed on him. And in verse 32 we also saw that some of the Jews believed him, and these would have been the religious leaders. And they started to be convinced about the truths of Christ but they certainly did not have saving faith as we will see in this chapter. But Jesus wants to encourage their faith, and tells them what true discipleship or true belief in Christ looks like. There is an abiding in Jesus, which means that this faith and trust in him is not momentary or fleeting but it endures. The new life in the believers cannot and will not be snuffed out. And he gives incredible promises, and those promises are that they will know the truth, which would have been something hard for the religious leaders to swallow because they thought they already knew the truth, and they knew it better than Christ. And there is such joy in the believer's life because he knows the truth about Christ and has come to trust in that truth.

And then he goes on and says that this truth will set you free. Here will be a new liberty and freedom that you never have experienced before. And it is a glorious promise, and if you are a believer in Jesus Christ you know the glory of this freedom. You know the joy of serving Christ not for what you can get but because the bondage of your soul to sin has been lifted. You can enjoy and follow God, and you can know the penalty of sin has forever been dealt with on the cross of Calvary by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now freedom and liberty are prized possessions. We have never lived in a society where we have been in physical bondage. In the ancient world most of the populations were either slaves or subjugated people. They really knew physical oppression and how that affected their lives. Martin Luther King dream of an America where he and others could be "**free at last, free at last,**" and the freedom that he was talking about was the freedom from racism. We have had a little taste of our liberties taken away through the pandemic that we have gone through and are going through. We couldn't travel and some cases couldn't even work, and we didn't like it very much. In fact, some were very angry and wanted to engage in civil disobedience as if person physical freedom was the most prized possession for us.

And here is my point: people prize freedom. We are always looking for what constrains us and we hate it. And individuals always seem to be looking for that elusive freedom and liberty but are always held back by something. If I only had enough money then I would be free to do the things and live the life that I always wanted to live. If only my health were better or I didn't have these parents or whatever. People feel trapped and confined by the lack of money and or something else, and that is their Lord - whatever will give them their prized freedom. Paul says of money in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, "**But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.**" We some how think that this passage is not talking about us, but how often do

you think if only I had a little more money? Others think that I could just be free from my marriage relationship. It is not what I thought it would be and I feel so confined and trapped. If I could only be free. We know what the Word of God says about marriage, but so many are looking for a loop hole, and the only reason is that they want freedom. Others want freedom to explore their sexual passions. Others look for freedom in dangerous adventures in order to feel alive or whatever. And where are you looking for freedom and liberty? Where is your heart set that if I can only have this then I would be free and satisfied?

It is amazing to look at Paul and the rare jewel of Christian contentment, which is found in who we are in Christ, and where true freedom is regardless of our relationships or circumstances. Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:6, “**But godliness with contentment is great gain.**” There is a joy, freedom and satisfaction in godliness that nothing in this world can give. Nothing in this world can truly give the freedom that are hearts long for. It is only in Christ. Where are you looking for freedom? I want us to see tonight the problem and the solution of where freedom is found.

1. First of all, we need to see the problem. Vv. 33-34.

Have you ever seen a little child with their boots or their shoes on the wrong feet. They might say, “my feet hurt.” And you might say that your boots are on the wrong feet. And they might say, “no that’s not the problem.” And here is the problem is that we are not convinced that the problem is the problem. Jesus has just said, “**and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**” And it is just like we are saying, “No Jesus, that is not the main problem. I have greater bondage in my life. It is this that you have to fix.” And we are convinced that the greatest problem is outside of us. You hear it from the teen who says, “I hate living here with all the rules and regulations,” or the labourer who says, “I hate my job and I hate my boss,” or the spouse who says, “I feel so trapped.” We never glory in the freedom and live in light of the freedom that Christ gives, there is a lack of joy, satisfaction and contentment in the here and now because we are not convinced that the greatest bondage I have, the greatest problem I have is not around me or outside of me, but in me. Let me ask you: where do you see the greatest problem in your life? If you think it is outside of you, you will not look to Christ, and you will never glory in the freedom that is for all those who are his. You need to see where the greatest bondage lies. You need to be convinced of the problem.

And the religious leaders hated this implication that they were not free. So look at the extraordinary words that they say in verse 33, “**They answered him, ‘We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’**” You can almost read the tone into these words. And it is an incredible statement because they say that they have never been enslaved to anyone. And yet history and even the Scripture teaches us that they were enslaved by various different people whether the Babylonians or the Assyrians or the Medes and Persians, and even at this time they were not a free people in that they were subjugated by the Romans. But they take great offense at the words of Jesus and his implications that they needed to be set free.

But I believe that they understood the word of Jesus here, and that Jesus is talking about if you trust in him, he will give you some sort of internal freedom - freedom from judgement and freedom to follow God. But they claim that they have always had this freedom by birthright. They are the offspring or children of Abraham, so by birth right they are the chosen children of God, and Jesus really has nothing to offer. Even though they have been enslaved by various nations throughout their history they have never recognized their right to rule over them, and they would say that they never worshiped their gods but the one true God alone. If they served another deity then to them that would be tantamount to slavery but in their minds they never have. Again, it is the self-righteous nature that does not see true bondage and slavery of our own wicked hearts. It always wants to protest and say that is not the problem.

But look at verse 34, "Jesus answered them, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.”** Notice how he begins this verse, "Truly, truly," Jesus is going to say something that we all need to pay attention to. And it is such an important point because what he does is show the true nature of slavery and freedom. He says that true enslavement is not defined by seed or who were your parents but what is in us and what we do. It is defined by sin. If that person sins that that person is a slave to sin. He is under the domination, control, and even the penalty of that sin. And this is the fundamental bondage that has affected the whole human race. We define sin as something external but the Word of God says the greatest and most damaging slavery is inward. It is my very nature. And individuals sin because they want to, and they might even counter - Isn't that freedom? We want to do it so we do it. That is what is behind the sexual freedom movement. But they never ask a more fundamental question - why do we sin freely? It is because our hearts are enslaved to sin. Listen to Isaiah 1:6, **“From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it.”** Every aspect of our character and being is laden with sin. David says in Psalm 51:5, **“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”** And we all know what Paul says in Romans 3:10-12, **“as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.’”**

We know these truths as believers, so why would we ever think that the greatest problem I have is outside of me? We feed our inside sin nature by thinking I need something outside in creation in order to be free. Why would we ever think that if I could just have this or that then life would be so joyous and satisfying and liberating? We get so duped by sin. If we can just have a little more money, so we work over time at the expense of our family, and we do not realize we are feeding our hearts to crave for more, and they can never be satisfied. Or if I can just have a little sexual fantasy, and all of a sudden what we thought would satisfy ends up enslaving us. Where have you put your mind? What has become your hope and your deliverer? Where do you see your greatest problem and slavery in your life? Is it in you or outside of you? The importance of diagnosis is so important, because if we do not diagnose the problem we will look for some other solution where Jesus is at best the second best news but he truly cannot give the liberty my heart desires.

2. So we need to see the solution of true freedom. Vv. 35-36.

I cannot say this enough that freedom, the reason why so many want freedom is that it does promise joy and content and satisfaction in the life of the one who is truly free. Our problem and lack of joy and contentment in our lives is that we are always pursuing it in the world or through something that the world offers. So what Jesus is saying here, is not only where freedom is found but where joy and satisfaction and contentment is found. God is not trying to take all the joy and fun and freedom out of life but is giving us in Christ a greater joy. That is what is meant in the earlier quote we had in 1Tim. 6:6, **“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”** He is using financial terms for those who desire to be rich. Godliness, living for God the way he desires and living in light of who we are in Jesus Christ is greater gain than another thing that money can buy. It gives greater dividends or a greater return than anything this world offers. There are greater joys in Christ than anything that the world could ever give. We need to see and glory and enjoy our freedom to know Christ and to obey and follow him.

Now look how Jesus continues here, **“The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.”** Now what does Jesus mean here, because we see the terms “slave” and “son?” The Jews thought they were by birthright the people of God and therefore sons, and Jesus has just said because we all sin we are all slaves of sin, and therefore not children of God by nature or birthright. So here is the point - the slave does not remain in the house forever but he can be sold at any time because he is under the ownership of another, but the son remains forever. If they are slaves of sin then they have no right to claim to be sons.

But look at the promise of Jesus and the solution to this slavery, **“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”** The Son who is in the house of God and has ownership is able to give freedom. And notice the promise here is that you will be “free indeed.” And by giving this invitation and promise to the Jews if they believe on him he is saying that this freedom is not their’s yet. But it is only in Jesus that this is found and it is only through his perfect life that he laid down as the payment price for our freedom that we have freedom in Christ.

And last time we said, and let me reiterate it, that the freedom here is two-fold. One from the penalty of sin. The wages of sin is death. We were under that penalty and until we come to Christ that penalty hangs over us all our lives. When we come to Jesus we are declared righteous based on him paying the penalty and his perfect righteousness being laid to our account. Therefore there is freedom and liberty. I do not have to worry about my sin record. I can bask in the assurance that **“Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain, he washed it white as snow.”** Praise God for his goodness. Praise God for the liberty. Praise God for the security and assurance that are ours. We are his children forevermore.

But since we are justified by faith alone, Paul asks the question in Romans 6:1, are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? Does our new freedom from the penalty of sin mean that I can live anyway that I want? And the answer is no. This is the great thing about our freedom. It is freedom not only from the penalty of sin but from the tyranny of sin or its rulership over me. I can now obey God and follow him. Listen to Romans 6:5-7, **“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall**

certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin." We are no longer slaves to sin. We no longer have to obey its passions. We have been set free from the rulership of sin in our lives to follow God and obey him, and that is true freedom.

And think of how encouraging this truth is. So often we look at a particular struggle in our lives, and we feel so in bondage to it. It's promised us joy and satisfaction and contentment but now slavery, and we think all we can do is live with it. We will only fall time and time again. But Paul says we are free. We can say no to sin and actually live for Christ, and love Christ and actually follow him. So many think it is hopeless but God through Christ has already given us the freedom to say yes. Yes, we will be tempted, and yes the pull will be strong, but we do not need to listen to that voice or obey its lordship in our lives. Listen to what Peter says based on who we are in Christ in 1 Peter 2:11, **"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul."** We are sojourners and exiles. This is not our home, and he says abstain from the passions of the flesh. I do not need to entertain them or follow them. And I do not even need to pray to God to take away these desires. I just need to say no to sin and yes to God. Listen to what Martyn Lloyd Jones says about this, **"I do not know of a single scripture—and I speak advisedly— which tells me to take my sin, the particular thing that gets me down, to God in prayer and ask him to deliver me from it and then trust in faith that he will. Now that teaching is also often put like this: you must say to a man who is constantly defeated by a particular sin, 'I think your only hope is to take it to Christ and Christ will take it from you.'** But what does Scripture say in Ephesians 4:28 to the man who finds himself constantly guilty of stealing, to a man who sees something he likes and takes it? What am I to tell such a man? Am I to say, 'Take that sin to Christ and ask him to deliver you?' No, what the apostle Paul tells him is this: 'Let him that stole, steal no more.' Just that. Stop doing it. And if it is fornication or adultery or lustful thoughts, again: Stop doing it, says Paul. He does not say, 'Go and pray to Christ to deliver you.' No. You stop doing that, he says, as becomes children of God." You do not have to wait for some sort of extraordinary experience or some sort of miracle. You can say no to sin. Christ has given you liberty and freedom.

And this truly is the freest life and the most satisfying life that we could ever live. It is where true joy and contentment are found. Listen to what John Phillips writes, **"As the Holy Spirit works in our lives and as we grow in freedom by devoting ourselves to God's Word, we are set free to really care about other people, no longer being so absorbed with ourselves, set free to give our lives away for things that really matter, set free from the domination of sinful desires and habits, and set free to bear the marks of God's grace in our lives."** Realize where true freedom is found and what true freedom is. It is not freedom from the pandemic or the threat of the Corona virus or if I just had financial freedom or sexual freedom. Our joy is our freedom in Christ. Live out who you are in Christ.