

Freedom in Christ: True Liberation

Text: John 8:31-38

Introduction:

Freedom today is reduced to a mere memorial. A term that can be easily mistaken with “independence,” “rights,” or to do something you want to do. This shallow view of freedom is a complacent perspective in living a life freed and redeemed by Christ.

Let me give a definition of what Freedom is. Freedom is to do what we ought to do. What we must do as a follower of Christ. It calls beyond the thought of doing what I want to do, instead, I will do what I must do.

Why? Because many of us are slaved or blinded in the romanticized view of freedom. When I was a kid, all I wanted was freedom from the authority of my parents. I wished that when I turned 18 years old, I will do what I want to do. Influenced by the pop culture, deceived by society, and peer pressure from my friends, this was the idea of freedom for me. Yet, as I mature, I realized how many disasters it was to embrace such a definition.

I pray that after this sermon, we will all be freed from our own idea of freedom and embrace the high view of the Scriptures—Biblical Freedom.

Background:

In the context of Second Temple Judaism or the time when the Jewish people wait for the coming of the Messiah, they have the perspective that they will be freed once he arrives. Freedom from what? We know that during the first century, the Jews are under the government of Rome and were influenced by the culture of the Greeks.

Jewish people during the ancient time do not have much freedom to gather, to do what they want to do. They cannot even enjoy their own salaries out of their own businesses like fishing, farming, etc. They are required to pay high taxes. From this long struggle, Jewish people cry out for the coming of the Messiah.

Similarly, in today’s context, it is easy for Christians to view freedom with liberation from poverty, government oppression, corruption, and embrace the idea of progress towards human perfection. I mean, several of these ideas are not wrong, but focusing too much on these physical matters clouds our mind to the real and true purpose of freedom.

Main Idea:

In our passage, Christ told those who believed in him that the only way to be freed is to abide in His words because it is the truth that sets a person free. Not by any might nor any effort but only through Christ.

I. Freedom in Truth

We know that Jesus is the Truth Personified in John 14:6. Indeed, the truth sets us free. This claim of Christ makes us realize that we now ought to live a life freed from the imprisonment of lies. Lies, conceit, entitlement, pride, bitterness, and guilt all come together. This burdens a person and traps you. It shackles us to move forward and enjoy life.

Lying does not only entrap us and gives us a heavy burden but also makes us a family of the devil. In the same chapter of our passage in verse 44, *"You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* There are only two options here, being a child of God in Truth or a child of the devil in Lies.

This kind of deceived life is evident in the Jewish people in those times. In verse 33, they are arguing that they have never been enslaved to anyone. Knowing the history of the Israelites, they have been exiled and under the control of different nations many times. How come they uttered such words to Christ?

This is also the same with us today. When you ask a person, do you want to be saved? Do you want to be free? The person would usually say, free from what? I am not a slave nor bound from anything. Saved from what? I am not in danger. I am just fine.

Not until the Holy Spirit shows the state of our heart. A state where corruption, lies, wickedness abounds in our hearts. Only then we can recognize the need to be freed and liberated in Christ. Brothers and sisters, if you feel trapped, imprisoned, or burdened today, lift up these burdens to Christ. Maybe you are unaware or ignorant of these lies that you make. It is easy for us to mixed up reality with our fantasy. Pray to God to wake you up from the dream of lies and rest you in the spiritual reality that you still and always need Christ.

"Do not lie" is one of the ten commandments. Liars do not have a place in heaven, Revelation 22:15 states, *"Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters **and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.**"*

Again, moving forward, the True Liberator Jesus Christ frees us in Truth. Another is:

II. Freedom from the Bondage of Sin

The following verses 34-36 point that all sinners are bound to sin. We all choose to sin; actually, no. Before being a Christian, you do not have a choice (Eph. 2:1). It is in your nature to commit sin. Because your heart itself is filled with sin. Romans 3:10, 23. Jeremiah 17:9, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick."*

As argued, yes, we have free will, but most of the time our free will tends to lead us to sin. Most especially when we do not have Christ in our lives. We enjoy the pleasures of sin. It entertains us. We want to follow our own desires. We disregard the advice and wisdom of the adults. We fall short in all things.

But Christ echoed similar thoughts about true liberation in the Gospel of Luke.
Luke 4:18-21 (Isaiah 61:1-2)

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” No longer slaves to sin. You have the freedom to not choose sin.... ²¹ He began by saying to them, **“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”**

Meaning, those who are in Christ have now the power through the Spirit to overcome sin and fight against it. You are no longer a slave to sin. In our passage, you are now freed from the bondage of sin. We do still commit sin, but this does not trap us nor make us followers of it. We can now say “NO” to it, repent, and mortify it. Romans 6:22, *“But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.”*

Again, now that we are freed from the slavery of sin, we are called to mortify sin. Read Colossians 3:5-11.

Being freed in Christ is having a transformed and changed life. Only from that standpoint, and starting from this point, then we can make a ripple effect that will influence and transform not just ourselves, but also our families, our community, our nation, and our world.

Conclusion:

As I conclude let me read this short prayer of St. Augustine. Augustine of Hippo struggled from lust, fleshly desires, and pride. Yet he was aware of his sins and other sins. He prayed: “Look with mercy on these follies, Lord, and set us free who already call upon you. Set free those also who do not yet call upon you, so that they may invoke you and you may give them freedom” (*Confessions*, 14).

Who can change a sinner’s heart? Only the one who was proclaimed in the book of Isaiah as the suffering servant who bears the Spirit of God, ought to deliver sinners from their sins and redeem them for his eternal glory, Jesus the Christ.

Let me end with a question, paraphrasing the question of Jesus, “What does it profit a man if he liberates the whole world, yet fail to be liberated himself?”

May we find true freedom in Christ alone. Live freely. Free from lies. Free from the slavery of sin. Live brother. Live sister. Live in Christ.

Ptr. John Paul Arceno

UCBC New Jersey

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