

Free indeed

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[0 : 00] Let us turn to the chapter in the New Testament, part of which we read, John chapter 8 and verse 36, the last verse we read. John chapter 8 and verse 36, where Jesus says, If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Let us read from verse 31. Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man. How sayest thou, ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin, And the servant abideth not in the house forever, but the Son abideth forever.

If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. John 8 and verse 36, If the Son, therefore, make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

And the theme of the verses 31 to 36 is very obviously that of freedom. The word free is used four times. And the want of freedom is referred to twice.

[1 : 28] So the theme in these verses is that of freedom. A Jewish rabbi has written, If the sea were ink and the earth parchment, they would not serve to describe the praises of freedom.

What a precious thing freedom is. And all the more so when we see it trampled underfoot in communist countries. In so many parts of the world there is oppression, and tyranny, and intolerance, and pure despotism.

But with all our faults as a nation, our civil disobedience, our moral chaos, with all our faults, we still enjoy the enormous blessing of freedom.

Freedom of speech, of conscience, of religion. We have personal freedom, civil freedom, religious freedom, national freedom.

We are a free people. And to preserve this enormous blessing requires eternal vigilance. The greatest benefactors of mankind have been the champions of liberty from the days of Moses and Joshua and Gideon down to the present day.

[2 : 50] And the greatest enemies of mankind have been the enemies of liberty. So let us never undervalue or underestimate the freedom that we take for granted day by day in our own land.

But neither let us overvalue it in the sense of thinking that this kind of freedom is the only kind of freedom there is.

Because it's not. We belong to a free country. But there are many, many, many people in our free country whose souls are not free.

And there may be some here this morning. And it is this spiritual bondage and this spiritual freedom that the psalmist was speaking about.

When we read there in Psalm 142, he said, bring my soul out of prison. We were singing there in Psalm 116, Thou didst untie my bands.

[3 : 56] Thou hast loosed my bands. And it's a spiritual freedom that the psalmist is speaking about in these and other parts of the Psalter. And it's a spiritual freedom that the Lord Jesus is speaking about here when he says, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

He's not talking here about religious freedom. Religious freedom from persecution. He is speaking about something even more basic than that. He is speaking of spiritual freedom from the thralldom that belongs to every one of us by nature.

Let us then look at this great theme as we have it expressed in verse 36. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. And I want to begin with the last word in the text.

The word indeed. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. You shall be truly free. You shall be really free.

You shall be genuinely free, authentically free. The word indeed is not just thrown in there to fill up space. It has that very important meaning.

[5 : 09] And this leads us to notice the first of two things that there is a freedom that is false. There is a freedom that is false. That's the first thing we want to notice.

There is a freedom that is not freedom indeed. It is not freedom at all. For one thing, there is a freedom that is due to spiritual blindness.

Now the Jews had this to whom the Lord Jesus is speaking here. At least many of them had it. Look at verse 33. They were saying to Jesus, why are you speaking to us about freedom?

Because we have never been in bondage to any man. How can you say that we can be set free when we have never been in captivity? We have never been in bondage to any man.

My dear friends, there is blindness. They had forgotten all about Egypt, the house of bondage, and about the Passover that commemorated their release from bondage.

[6 : 16] Had they forgotten their 70 years in bondage in Babylon? Had they forgotten their own psalter? With so many laments about bondage and the lack of liberty in it?

And could they not see the Roman standard flying over the palace of the kings in Jerusalem? How could they say, how could they say, we have not been in bondage to anyone?

We are the children of Abraham. How could we be in bondage? Blindness, you see, and perverseness led them to believe in a freedom that had no foundation in fact.

And spiritual blindness does the same thing for us. It distorts our thinking. It tells us that we are free from the sins and the weaknesses of so many others.

Spiritual blindness makes Pharisees of us. I am not like other men, and certainly I'm not like this poor tax gatherer beside me. Such freedom for the natural man is a delusion.

[7 : 27] It's due to his blindness. He's not free at all. And then there is a freedom that stems from self-righteousness. When the Jews said, we were never in bondage to any man, I'm sure they were thinking not only of political bondage or political freedom, but of religious freedom.

They weren't heathen people. They weren't pagans. They were the children of Abraham. They were proud of that. And they were therefore children of the covenant.

They had a unique standing, spiritual standing. They were an elect people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. And therefore, they were a free people.

Their religion was handed down to them from Abraham. And it became theirs automatically. And they were therefore a free people. They were never in bondage to any man.

It was an hereditary religion that they had. And my dear friends, we've got to guard against laying hold upon an hereditary religion. We may have come from Christian parents.

[8 : 37] We may have come from a good home. We may have tried to follow their ways. But we do not share in their faith automatically. Nor do we have their spiritual freedom automatically.

They can leave us an example. But they cannot hold hand over to us their faith and their godliness as they would pieces of furniture that they want to be kept within the family.

Whatever example we have had set before us by those who have gone before us, for us the fact still remains as Jesus makes clear in verse 34 that we are slaves to sin.

Far from being free from it in any automatic way. Far from being free, Jesus says we are slaves to sin. Jews and Gentiles are slaves to sin and nothing can sever such chains but the Son of God and if the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed and free from that false freedom that has no foundation in fact.

but there is a third kind of freedom I want to mention just very briefly and it is this, there is the freedom that some people think they have from the law of God.

[9 : 59] Freedom from having to obey the law of God and it is given a long name, it is called antinomianism and it simply means anti, against, nomos, the law.

There are those people, Christian people, many of them, who are against the law. They don't believe that they have to obey the law. They are free from the law or happy condition.

I'm a Christian therefore I'm under grace. I'm not under the law. I'm free from the law and therefore I can do as I please. I can live without having to obey it.

I don't even need to obey the fourth commandment. And so you get Christian people who have little regard for the Sunday. Because they're antinomians. They believe that they are no longer under the

law.

You know what Paul said about such people? He said, their damnation is just. Of course we are not under the law as a way of salvation.

[11:02] The law cannot save us. All it can do is to point out our need. It's our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. We're not under the law as a way and a condition of salvation but we are under the law as a rule of life.

We are not free from the law as our guide and teacher and schoolmaster. It is a false freedom to maintain that God's grace has made void God's law and that therefore good works are not necessary and the moral law has no hold over us.

That's not freedom or liberty that is license. And Rabbi Duncan says that at the very root of all heresies there is this one of antinomianism against the law being free from the law when in fact we are not.

Let us then guard against these spurious freedoms. What we need is not just to be free as we see freedom and understand it but what we need is to be free indeed.

Free indeed. Genuinely and truly free. And that brings us now to the very heart of the text. If the Son makes you free then you'll be free indeed.

[12:19] You'll be truly free. That brings us then to the second thing. There's a freedom that is false and there's a freedom that is real and true.

So then we ask the question and try to answer it. What does free indeed mean? Let us look at it this way. First notice the scope of this freedom.

The scope of it. Free indeed. Well free from what? That's the question. Free from what? And obviously we're bound to say this free from sin.

No human being has been free born in the spiritual sense. No human being has been born without sin. No one is free from sin's guilt.

No one has come into this world free from sin's guilt. What a heavy burden and unforgiven sin is. It is illustrated by Bunyan's Christian and the burden that Christian had on his back as he went towards the celestial city.

[13:28] It was a burden. It was a hindrance. It was a bondage. And when at last that burden fell off his back through the wondrous grace of God he gave three jumps for joy and he said blessed cross blessed sepulchre blessed rather be the man that there was put to shame for me.

He was freed from that burden and from the guilt of his sin. It's a weight and it's a bondage. And when we have been freed from it in the way in which our text tells us and which we look at in a moment when we have been freed from it then we can say with the apostle Paul who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?

Who can now lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who can now condemn us? It is Christ who died yea rather that is risen again. So we're freed from sin's guilt.

Yes and this is freedom too from sin's power. For until sin is pardoned it rules it holds sway over us it dictates our way of life it dictates our lifestyle it enslaves us it tyrannizes us it's a real bondage the power of sin.

But the great truth of the gospel is that because of Christ sin shall not have dominion over you. but Christ shall have dominion over you and when Christ has dominion over us then we are free make me a captive Lord and then I shall be free.

[15:10] And then there is also freedom not only from sin's guilt and sin's power but from sin's pollution for sin is a defiling thing we need to be washed and cleansed and to be freed by Christ is to have that cleansing through his precious blood that makes us whiter than the snow even though our sins be a scarlet.

and then this freedom inevitably means freedom from the punishment from sin's punishment for if sin's guilt is pardoned and its power is broken and its pollution is removed then there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus thou hast loosed my bonds as we were singing there in Psalm 116 thou hast loosed my bonds no condemnation in Christ Jesus now that is not when you say that God has loosed our bonds and has freed us from punishment that is not to say that God has therefore made us perfect and sinless but it does mean that we are no longer under sin's power no longer under its condemnation and therefore no longer liable to its punishment because we have been justified freely by Christ's blood so there is freedom from sin but there is another kind of freedom too that is spiritual and it is freedom from fear freedom from fear freedom

for example from the fear of

God and there is a fear of God that is slavish that has nothing to do with being Christian the very opposite there is a fear of God that is slavish it is the product of our enmity towards God and makes us want to hide from God that is precisely what happened to Adam when he fell he hid himself and why did he hide himself he said because I was afraid I didn't want to meet you I was afraid I hid myself what a bondage that is to be afraid of God in that slavish sense but we are delivered from the spirit of bondage again to fear when Christ delivers us and we are given a healthy fear which is the beginning of wisdom fear from that free from that kind of fear and then to this freedom the spiritual freedom includes freedom from the fear of man and as the bible says the fear of man is a snare it's a trap what does that mean it means this that it makes us refuse to run counter to the fashions and customs and standards of those around us now what a bondage that is we simply cannot because of fear of man and what others will say we cannot run counter to the fashions customs and standards of those around us what a bondage what a snare and what a deliverance when we are set free from this snare of the fowler fear of

God fear of man but there is also deliverance and freedom from fear of death fear of death and what a bondage fear of death can be the writer in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 15 is speaking about those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage and it wasn't just the fact of death that they feared it was their own death they feared it haunted them it oppressed them they were afraid to die and they knew they were not ready to die and this was a bondage throughout their life through fear of death were subject to bondage and they were under that fear until God delivered them I wonder if that's true of anyone here this morning are you afraid to die I'm not asking are you afraid to have to leave behind you your loved ones a husband a wife a brother a sister or whatever well every one of us has that fear there's no doubt about it we all have that fear it wouldn't be natural if we didn't the fear of separation is a very real fear and a very proper fear so that we want to fight it we want to stave it off because death is an intruder a disruptor a destroyer our enemy but it's not the fear of what we are leaving behind that

I'm asking about it's the fear of what lies ahead that I'm asking about are we afraid to die now if we are Christian believers we shouldn't be afraid to die because the bible tells us that Christ delivers those who trust in him he delivers those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage now of course let's be honest we all have our misgivings the best people have their misgivings as they think of death and as they face death they have certain misgivings but my dear friends if we are really trusting in Christ if we are believing people if we have been delivered by God's saving and keeping grace then underneath all our misgivings there is the assurance of the psalmist yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me thy rod and thy staff may comfort me can we are we living our lives with that kind of freedom free from the fear of death because we know that we have put our house in order and that with us in the valley is the one who saved us in the world free indeed that's the scope of it now notice secondly the way of it as we think of this freedom that is real notice the way of it the son makes you free says our text the son makes you free and if he makes you free then you shall be free with real freedom you shall be free indeed how then do we become a free man of the kingdom how do we get the freedom of the city of the king well it's bestowed upon us by the king of the city by the head of the church by the son of the father if the son make you free you shall be free indeed now I think there are two things included here which we simply must notice regarding this freedom that is bestowed upon us and the first is this that this freedom has been provided and procured and purchased by the son that's the first thing it has been provided it's a provided purchased freedom purchased at mighty cost and at infinite sacrifice so great is sin's bondage so enslaving is sin's power so polluting is sin's defilement and so appalling is sin's punishment that it was necessary for another to be punished in our room and place in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood so

[22 : 51] Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us he has delivered us from the curse of sin by being made sin for us he who knew no sin he fought the battle on the ground on which it was lost by becoming man and on the ground of a human nature and on the cross he spoiled principalities and powers and triumphed over them openly and publicly through his cross so that he died for our sins and was raised again for our justification and for our deliverance he purchased deliverance for us that's the first thing we've got to notice it's a purchased provided procured deliverance through the death of christ but the other thing is this that the freedom that was purchased for us has to be received by us now regarding this point bishop jc royal says

that thousands will allow that christ purchased spiritual freedom for us but when it comes to the application of redemption they go astray and still sit in chains when it comes to the application of christ's purchase they go astray and still sit in chains what does he mean he means this that although they recognize that christ has purchased salvation they have not as yet received it by faith and are still in chains my dear friends a person may know very little about systematic theology but if a person believes in and trusts in the lord jesus christ he will know a great deal about liberation theology in its spiritual meaning and he will know it at the very seat of his existence in his soul in his heart because that is the liberty wherewith christ makes a man free and that's the liberty that the lord jesus is speaking of here and it's provided by him he purchased it and it becomes ours when we lay hold upon him that's the way of it and there's no other way there's no other way but laying hold upon what he purchased for us at such infinite cost one thing more i want to say before i finish and it is this to notice the result of this freedom the sun shall make you free and you shall be free indeed with real freedom what is the outcome what is the result of this freedom is this freedom the kind of freedom that a prisoner has when his sentence in prison is over and the gates are opened and out he goes from

Sochten prison and out into a world that doesn't want to know him he's free he asserted his sentence his wife doesn't want to know him he can't get a job he's been in prison he's free but yet nobody wants to know him is that the kind of freedom we have in the spiritual sense of course not spiritual freedom is freedom with a plus it's freedom plus it's freedom with a bonus you see when the governor releases a prisoner and the man walks out into the big world the governor doesn't run after him and say look come and I'll bring you into my family and I look upon you now as a son I've never heard of that happening but that's exactly what happens when we are set free by God through Jesus Christ our Lord you see verse 35 what verse 35 says the servant abides not in the house forever but the son and the word son they should have a small s not a capital s a small s it's not the Lord it's referred to but sons of

God the servant abides not in the house but the son abides forever the son abides forever when we are set free we are made sons and we are brought into the family of God in other words Christian freedom means adoption Christian freedom means immediately sonship and the Christian carries his sonship and his freedom and his adoption down with him to the grave and beyond the grave it's the servant the son of the bondwoman Hagar and Ishmael who are put out they don't stay in the house but the son abides in the house forever he belongs to the family of God now the apostle Paul speaks of this in Romans 8 where he speaks about the glorious liberty of the children of God the glorious liberty of the children of

God or as that is put better the liberty of the glory of the children of God the liberty of the glory of the children of God it's not only the liberty that is glorious it's the liberated who are glorious for whom he justified them he also glorified and part and parcel of the glorified believer is his liberty his freedom and that freedom reaches its summit in the kingdom of glory that's the ultimate in liberty that's the ultimate in liberty it comes into its own in the next world the glorious liberty of the children of God the liberty which the glorified children of God have in heaven that's what the verse I think means but whilst its ultimate is in the kingdom of glory we must remember this that its beginning is here in this world well has it begun for us do we know something even now of the liberty that is ours in Christ if the son makes you free you shall be free indeed if we know that liberty and if we've been in that liberty perhaps for many years or perhaps just for a few days or a few weeks then listen to what Paul says stand fast therefore in the liberty where Christ has made you free stand fast hold on to it don't lose it and then he goes on and says be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage that has not become entangled with anything that takes away our enjoyment of our freedom purchased for us by Christ and received by faith let us not get tied up with the world and the things of the world in such a way that our life becomes a shared bondage and we're bound and we're tied and we're in bonds to this and that and the other for it's all the time Christ has made us free stand fast in the liberty we have and don't get entangled with those things that would take from us our enjoyment of it stand fast in it it has been dearly purchased let it be held as a precious thing and don't allow anything in our work in our life in anything come between us and our realization of this liberty our enjoyment of this liberty dearly bought but if there are those here this morning and you are still in bondage to sin sin's guilt it's power it's pollution and it's punishment that lies ahead then there's only one way of getting out of that situation and that is by laying hold upon the Lord

[30 : 48] Jesus Christ you see in the verse before here verse 33 Jesus says you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free now here is the truth that makes us free that if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved and we shall know that that's the truth that's the truth that makes us free that when we lay hold upon Christ we are set free with the liberty with which Christ sets us free and if we haven't got that freedom then let us not rest until we have it and then be able to say as Charles Wesley said long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound by sin and nature's night then I diffused a quickening ray I woke the dungeon flamed with light my chains fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed thee have we got that testimony and if we have do others know that we have it let us pray oh lord our god we bless thee today that we have a liberator and a deliverer who has delivered us from so great a death and will yet deliver we bless thee oh lord that we need thy delivering power all the way along until we stand at the gates that enter in through the city lord we pray that thou wilt help us more earnestly to lay hold upon thee and to stand in the liberty that has been dearly purchased and the liberty that has been received by us through faith lord speak to our hearts today if we are in bondage to anything wilt thou break our bonds give us the testimony of the psalmist thou hast loosed my bonds give us the prayer of the psalmist bring my soul out of prison we thank thee for the delivering power of christ who can break any bond and every bond that binds us to the world and who will ultimately break that final bond that releases our spirit so that it goes back to god who gave it look upon us we pray and help us to enjoy even in this world the glorious liberty of the children of god to have it here in its beginnings and to have it in prospect when this world is over and to see the ultimate reach and development of that liberty that is one of the marks of heaven hear us we humbly pray and bless us in thy presence now and be with us as we part for

Jesus sake amen