

# Freedom

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn to John's Gospel, chapter 8, and verse 31. And we'll read verses 31 to 36. To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, If you hold my teaching, you are really my disciples.

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. They answered him, We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?

Jesus replied, I tell you the truth, Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.

So if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I wonder, to take a break from Luke's Gospel, and to look at these verses, particularly verse 32, then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Partly because it's a question that I was asked during the week about Christian freedom. And I want to see what this means.

[ 1 : 11 ] How the truth sets us free, and what it means to be free. We have God's truth. It's here in the Bible.

This is the truth of God. But to have the truth without freedom is to cast a slur on it, is to deny what Jesus is saying here.

He says, when you know the truth, the truth will make you free. So if there are those here who are Christians, and who feel that they are not free, then there's something that needs to be sorted out, whether it's in your understanding, or in your practice of Christianity.

Or there may be those here who are not yet Christians, and you may question the fact that the Bible says you're not free. And you may want to find out what that means, and you may want to find out how you can be set free.

Let's look at how the truth sets us free. Now, I'm assuming a lot in one way. The truth, Pilate said about to Jesus, what is truth?

[ 2 : 23 ] Well, the truth, Jesus said with himself, I am the way, the truth, and the life. The truth is Jesus. And Jesus is saying here, if you know me, then you will be set free.

And we know Christ through his word, which is also truth. Now, how does knowing Jesus, and how does following Jesus, how does having Jesus as our God, set us free?

And if we see that, there are six ways I'm going to mention. And as we see each of them, then we'll hopefully see what it means to be a Christian, how we become a Christian, how we are to live as Christians.

So let's look at the first way. To know Jesus, to be a Christian, to know the truth, means that we are set free from the condemnation of sin.

Now, if you look at verse 34, Jesus says, I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

The Jews had said to Jesus, look, we're not slaves, we're Abraham's descendants.

[ 3 : 33 ] We've never been slaves of anyone. And Jesus says, yes you are. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. And you sin, therefore, you are not free.

And that's the same for everyone in this world, everyone in this building. That we all sin. By sin we mean doing what is wrong.

We all do things that are wrong, to a greater or lesser degree. Not only that, sin is not only doing things that are wrong, but it's not doing what is right. And we all turn away from God, and we all don't do the good that we should do.

There's not one person who can say that they do not sin. So therefore, if Jesus is telling the truth, and he is, what he says is this, that every single person here, every single person in your family, every single person in Brora, throughout the world, who has ever lived, is a slave.

The slave to sin. Sin in slave. And it's not just in the dramatic way. We can talk about someone who takes drugs, for example, and they know that it's wrong, and they are a slave to it.

[ 4 : 50 ] They feel that they've got to keep doing it. Or somebody who may have a thing about stealing. They feel, they know that it's wrong, and it is, they have a compulsion to carry on stealing.

Well, we can understand it in that way. But we need to understand it also for ourselves. That's just like a drug addict. We are addicted to sin. We don't sometimes want to do it, we know that it's wrong, and yet because of our nature, we can't stop ourselves doing what is wrong.

And the simplest test of that is not for you to come and say, right, I don't sin. It's to go away and during this next week, see if you can live a sinless life.

In other words, you think no evil, and you do know evil. And there is not one person who can do that. Now, becoming a Christian sets us free from the enslaving power of sin.

Sets free of our addiction. Cures us from our addiction to sin. Paul puts it this way in Romans chapter 6 and verse 6. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

[ 6 : 18 ] And then in verse 11 to 23 speaks about this. He says, In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin ring in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

For sin shall not be your master because you are not under law but under grace. Verse 18, you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. Verse 20, when you were slaves to sin you were free from the control of righteousness but now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God so that the benefit you reap leads to holiness and the result is eternal life for the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Now what Paul is saying there is this, that when you become a Christian the sin that is within you, the sinful nature it was crucified with Jesus when Jesus died on the cross he carried our sins and therefore the power of sin has been broken for those who trust in Jesus.

And so a Christian is set free from the power of sin and that's very important. We are inclined to say well we carry on sinning so it doesn't matter but it does matter because we are no longer to be slaves to sin.

A Christian is to be set free and a Christian can't fold his arms and sit back and say well I can't help it it's in my nature. We have been set free from sin yet we continue to sin so how can we say we are free Paul in Romans chapter 7 he says about evil he doesn't want to do that he keeps from doing and the good that he does want to do that he doesn't do and he talks about being trapped who shall set him free from this body of death and he says thank you to God through Jesus Christ our Lord that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ.

[ 8 : 36 ] so as a Christian although I continue to do things that are wrong I am no longer enslaved by sin because its condemnation has gone.

God doesn't condemn the Christians for sin because God has already condemned his son Jesus for our sins. So let's try and simplify that a wee bit.

We're all fat in sin. We can't escape from that. Not one person here can go out and say right I am no longer going to sin. There is a problem. Every one of us needs to be set free from that.

Jesus God's son came into the world and died. He died the death of the wicked though he himself was perfect. He died taking our sins the sins that you and I committed.

And when we come to believe in Jesus and when we come to follow Jesus and when we come to know Jesus and to know the truth then what Christ did is counted for us so that because I know Jesus and because any Christian knows Jesus then we are set free from being condemned by our sins.

[ 9 : 58 ] And other Christians I can then say that although I hate the evil that still I do at times yet sin will not have dominion over me and yet although I hate it my guilt is taken away my sin is atoned for.

And that's extremely important because there are Christians who allow themselves to be pushed down by sin and who allow the devil to accuse them.

And they forget this freedom that we have free from condemnation free from the power and the enslavement of sin. To say that God cannot forgive our sins is to suggest that his work on the cross is not enough and is to call God a liar.

1 John 1 and verse 9 and also in chapter 5 we are told that this is the testimony that God has given that we have life.

If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins. So the first freedom that a Christian has is freedom from sin.

[ 11 : 14 ] Now nobody but nobody in the world has that. There is not one person no matter how free they say they are no matter how rebellious they may be there is not one person who has this freedom but a Christian does and a Christian should use it and a Christian should proclaim it.

Then there is another freedom and it's this freedom from the law. The people who were accusing Jesus were the teachers of the law. The law condemned people not because it was an evil thing but because it demanded such a standard of perfection that it showed up everyone as sinners.

No one can live by the law not one of us. And in the beginning of John chapter 8 the woman who was caught in adultery by the law said that she ought to be stoned.

And they were about to stone her and Jesus remember how he wrote in the ground if any of you is without sin let him cast the first stone and every single one of us has that sin.

So we are all under the law. The law would condemn every one of us. And when you know Jesus when you become a Christian you are set free from this law.

[ 12 : 44 ] Romans chapter 7 and verse 4 My brothers you also died to the law through the body of Christ so that you might belong to another. But now by dying to what once bound us we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Again this is what is being said that God has a law and he sets up this law and he says in this law you shall not murder you shall not commit adultery you shall not steal you shall not be greedy you must worship me and so on.

And that law is a law which if we break in any part we are guilty of breaking the law but the Bible says in order to stand before God we would need to keep it perfectly now none of us keeps it perfectly therefore we are all condemned by the law but and if we tried to live our Christian life by the law or if someone tried to become a Christian and they said I am going to become a Christian by reading my Bible by praying by not stealing by all the things that they could do they would never succeed the law would only condemn them in Romans we are told that we live in the new way of the spirit not in the old way of the written code now what does that mean it means this that what the law couldn't do Jesus has done you and I couldn't obey the law the law would condemn us and instead

Jesus obeyed it for us and we are told that he took that law and he nailed it to the cross and now by trusting in Jesus and by knowing in Jesus we are set free from obeying every requirement of the law ourselves in other words I have broken the commandment do not steal or I may have broken the commandment do not murder because I hated somebody or I may have broken all the commandments and the law would say you are condemned to hell but because Jesus has fulfilled the law I am set free from that law and Jesus has obeyed it for me and I can no longer be condemned by that law so when the devil will take up God's law and will accuse me I can say as a Christian yes I know that I am guilty but God has set me free from this law now that is very very important we live in the age of the gospel the age of freedom and Paul warns us that we must not allow ourselves to come under the bondage of law again that we do not live by the law but we live by God's spirit and that is not saying that the old testament law was wrong it's not saying that we have a right to go out and steal what it is saying is that we cannot be put right with

God by obeying the law we are put right with God through faith in Jesus Christ and therefore although I have broken the law and although at times I will again break the law I'm free from its condemnation and that's what makes real Christianity so different from false Christianity that's what makes real Christianity so different from all the other religions of the world because the other religions of the world say this do this and you will live do that and you will live we have all these sets of laws but in real Christianity we have this great freedom that nothing that we can do can make us Christians except faith in Jesus Christ but it's done for us you see there are people who take the Bible and they twist it and they would call us in the church and other Bible believing Christians they would say they're fanatics they're terribly fanatical and so on and they would call us legalists and various other things but you know it's the other way around we bring the Bible as Christ intended to bring freedom to set people free from all the moralistic requirements that do-gooders profess as

[ 17 : 14 ] Christianity and we say Jesus is here offering himself freely without Christ and without cost we're set free from the law free from the condemnation of sin we're set free from death Romans chapter 6 and verses 8 to 10 if we died with Christ we believe that we'll also live with him for we know that since Christ was raised from the dead he cannot die again death no longer has mastery over him the death he died he died to sin once for all but the life he lives he lives to God tomorrow we're going to have a funeral there are two types of funerals and only two types of funerals that we can have there is a funeral where there is a desperate sadness because we do not know whether the person was a Christian or not we don't know we cannot say we don't know how God worked in our life there was no profession of Jesus Christ and so it is a very very sad occasion but tomorrow is not to be a sad occasion yes it's an occasion for mourning it's an occasion for saying farewell to somebody but when someone dies with a Christian there is a world of difference because all the consequences of death the Christian has been set free from you see sin and the law the wages of sin is death sin and the law combine together to bring death therefore if we are set free from sin and we are set free from death from the law rather then it also follows that we are set free from death and this is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 where oh death is your victory where oh death is your sting the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law but thanks be to God he gives us the victory to our Lord

Jesus Christ if the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law then when these two are taken away then the sting and the power of death is taken away it's like a bee and take the sting out of bay it's harmless and the same for the Christian death is harmless to the Christians because a Christian will not be condemned a Christian need not fear the consequences after death and that doesn't mean that we don't physically die of course we die we're all dying as Christians you and I are dying but it does mean that we need not fear what is beyond we need not fear God's judgment or God's punishment we need not fear as we go through the valley of the shadow of death we need it fear because to the Christian death is the gateway to heaven that's why the early Christians when they were given the choice between disobeying Christ and dying they chose dying and it wasn't because they were fanatic it's because they knew that to die was gain so as a Christian I am set free from the power of death from the consequences of death and that is a great thing and if you're not a Christian here this morning you have to ask yourself what would happen if you walked out of this building and you had a heart attack what would happen to you if you were knocked down by a car what would happen to you your life is not guaranteed you may not be here next week you may not be here again to hear God's word and you are under the condemnation that death brings there is no hope for you I would hate to be conducting your funeral without the knowledge that you knew Jesus and so had been set free from the power of death as a Christian you're set free from the condemnation of sin a Christian is set free from the law a Christian is set free from death and a Christian is set free from the world people people in Colossians Paul says this since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world and later on he says having been set free from this world now what does that mean it means that Christians are set free from the standards of our society from the pressure of our friends peer pressure why is it that a young person will start drinking for some it may just be they would like to try it and see but for many it will be peer pressure go on do it because all their friends are doing it or a young person will start smoking travelling on a school bus and everyone else is doing it so they do it there's peer pressure why is it that we have the standards of living that we have because we compare ourselves with our neighbours there is peer pressure put on young and old and people can rebel against that you get young people who do rebel against the standards of the society that we live in and people say oh that's shocking and that's terrible and they think that they're being free but really they're just conforming to another set of rules and regulations people like to think perhaps that they are being different but all of us are influenced and they're trapped in the world we can't escape from it except

[ 23 : 15 ] Christians Christians are set free from the pressure of our society supposing the whole world was to go against you yet as a Christian you can still stand supposing every single person in Aurora and all your family and all your friends they were to put pressure on you and people can do to do different things you can resist that pressure because we're set free from the world because to us it doesn't ultimately matter what the world thinks we are more concerned with God we have our hearts set on things above and that's a great freedom I don't need to do what anybody else tells me to do I am free from all the pressure that the television that the radio that the community around me would put on me to conform to its own standards I am free from that and again that's something that

every

Christian should have then we're also set free from ourselves 1 John chapter 3 verse 19 if our hearts condemn us God is greater than our hearts some people are locked inside themselves they are so inward looking everything depends upon themselves their feelings their emotions they can't cope their minds are just locked in on themselves and it's no wonder that so often there are so many problems because people are inward looking there are some people who condemn themselves who have this massive guilt complex and they are imprisoned in their own minds well as Christians again we are set free from ourselves because here's a non-Christian number one is me always I comes at the centre of life but when you become a

Christian you're set free from that slavery the slavery of the me culture and you're set free to serve God to love your neighbour as yourself and in doing so you yourself will have a happier and a more fulfilled life if our hearts condemneth God is greater than our hearts my emotions my mind my heart the way that I think these things do not rule my life Jesus does and that is a great freedom for any Christian to have and then the last freedom is this we're set free from sin free from the law free from death free from the world free from ourselves and we are set free to something free to serve the living God again in the book of Romans Paul illustrates this in Romans chapter 6 and verse 13 do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness but rather offer yourself to God as those who have been brought from death to life and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness and also in verse 17 but thanks be to God that though you used to be slaves to sin you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness free to serve the living God when we talk about service to God those of you who are not Christians may regard that as a kind of slavery but it's not to do what you were made to do to do what you were intended for is not slavery it's freedom we were made to glorify God and enjoy him forever and if we do anything else we are bound in slavery when I say that we are free to serve the living God it's the kind of freedom that comes as sons we are free as sons to serve a father the mark of the Christian is that he serves God out of love as a son rather than out of fear as a slave it's a great freedom that's why those who are not Christians and who look upon Christians and they say oh it must be terrible being a Christian having to do all these things having to go to church twice and to a prayer meeting and to read your

Bible they have this tremendous impression of religion as being this oppressive system of rules and regulation and laws but real Christianity is the very opposite but we come to church because we want to we read God's word because we want to we pray because we want to it's as natural to us as speaking to our own family we do it because we have been set free to do free to serve the living God we're not slaves most people in the world they'll look and they'll say that people going to church that they're either man or they're being caught up by religion watch out you're getting into it too heavy it's too serious watch out you'll go crazy but we are not slaves we have been set free and it's a complete reverse you and I as Christians can do as God wants us to a man quote

[ 29 : 13 ] Augustine once said this it's a very dangerous thing that he said but it's a biblical thing he said love God and do as you please love God and do as you please he said that was his motto but if you do love God then you will please God you will want to do what pleases God it's a sad day when Christians come to church when Christians obey God's word purely out of fear rather than out of love and out of freedom God has not given us a spirit of bondage he has given us the spirit of freedom so therefore those of us who are Christians we have to use that freedom we have to apply it to every part of our life and those of you who are not Christians the Bible says that you're so trapped that you're so much in sin that you're dead you can't live you can't be free but if you want to then the answer is to know

Jesus and in knowing Jesus then you are set free from the things that would bind you and would trap you and what do we mean by knowing Jesus what do we mean by following Jesus well if you hold to my teaching said Jesus then you are truly my disciples and his teaching is surely this to recognize that you are a slave if you don't know that there's chains on you then you won't want the key so the first thing to do is to recognize that you have a need that you are a slave that you are bound by your own sin that you are under the condemnation of the law that death does have a thing for you that you are trapped in the world and within yourself that you cannot serve the living God to recognize your need to recognize God's remedy that Jesus was sent into the world God's only son to live and die the death that we deserve to die and to commit your way to follow the Lord

Jesus everywhere to call him the Lord and in that following you then receive freedom Charles Wesley wrote a hymn and part of that hymn was my chain fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed thee when he came to understand who Jesus was and who he was and how this light shone into his heart he could say this my chain fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed thee may the Lord grant that we would all be able to testify to that let's just remain seated and bow our heads in prayer Lord we thank you for the freedom that comes in Christ we thank you that Jesus is the truth we thank you that we can be set free from the guilt and the condemnation of sin and from its enslaving power we thank you that we can be set free from the power of the law and of death and from the pressures of the world and from the pressures that come from within ourselves and we thank you that we can be set free to serve the living God in the new way of the spirit and not in the old way of the written code we pray that you would grant that freedom to each one of your people for we know our God how easily we can slip back into bondage even in our own minds and we pray Lord that you would grant that freedom to those who as yet do not know you that even as we bow before you this morning that we would give our hearts to you that we would seek to follow you Lord take us and use us for your glory and set us free for we ask it in your name Amen