

TEXT SERMONS – 4th of July

Message: **“THE GREATEST FREEDOM”**
Scripture: **Matt. 8:31-36**

“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will be made free?’” Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

“Freedom” – no word in the English language describes more why the United States exists and what our country stands for. Since 1776 when we gained our Independence we have been a free nation. The brave men and women who sacrificed to bring this country into existence and have fought since to keep it free should never be forgotten.

We have learned in the last few years that what we mean by freedom is difficult to maintain in one part of the world if it is denied in another part of the world. And so, our military is now engaged in warfare attempting to extend freedom to enslaved peoples.

From our earliest school days we were taught “The Four Freedoms” – freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion and freedom of assembly. It is not my purpose to discuss these vital liberties in this message – all of us recognize them as being desirable, but I wonder if we are aware that they can never be fully realized in any permanent sense until and unless we add yet another freedom, the freedom of the soul which Jesus Christ offers? This freedom is so basic to our other freedoms that we should call it the *greatest freedom* for it is the most important freedom.

Jesus is the Great Liberator! He came to set us free - “you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32) And “if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” (Jn.8:36) In order to be clear about what Jesus was talking about let us consider this freedom from three angles: The Content Of This Freedom, The Character Of This Freedom and the Conditions Of This Freedom. Consider first:

I. THE CONTENT OF THIS FREEDOM.

What is the freedom that Jesus Promises? Let us approach this subject negatively as well as positively. First,

A. Considered Negatively.

It Is Not Freedom From Suffering.

The common ills of life do not cease to prey upon us when we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior! Even He, who was faultless, was not without pain.

Illust. You have heard or seen ads about “painless dentistry.” While this method of dentistry is less painful than the traditional methods, let me assure you, from my experience, that “painless dentistry” exists only in ads! We may also be sure that no such thing as “painless Christianity” exists. Jesus said, “In the world you shall have tribulation.” (John 16:33).

This Is Not Freedom From Temptation.

The freedom which Christ gives does not exempt us from temptation. “He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb.4:15) It is only when we surrender to the seducing power of wrong that we begin to loose our freedom.

It is Not Freedom To Live As We Please.

We are not saved by keeping the Ten Commandments. we are not free to break the Commandments either! We are not under law -- neither are we outlaws! Liberty is not license to live outside the will of God. One of the major delusions of our day is the teaching that we are free only when we throw off all restraints and do as we jolly well please. This is the gospel of post-moderns, of humanists and hedonists!

To summarize, the content of this freedom, negatively considered, is not Freedom From suffering, not freedom from temptation and not freedom to sin.

B. Considered Positively.

What then is the content of the freedom which is offered by the Lord Jesus? It is:

Freedom From The Past Curse.

The past curse is the curse caused by Adam and Eve’s sin. Romans 5:12 explains it: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” And Romans 3:23 adds, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

There is a word in the New Testament that makes freedom possible. It is the word “redemption.” It means “to be set free by the payment of a price.” Ephesians 1:7 tells us what that price was: “We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

This means that the recipient of God’s offer of salvation has had the price of redemption paid by Jesus Christ’s death on the cross; has had their sin-debt cancelled; has been set free from sin’s slavery; is no longer alienated from God and has the freedom that Jesus promised when He said, “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” Now we can sing:

*“He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.”*

The freedom that the Lord Jesus promises not only is Freedom From Sin's Past Curse, but it is also,

Freedom From Future Condemnation.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom.8:1)

And

"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" (Rom.5:9)

Plus

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free." (Gal.5:1)

Illust. Martin Luther King, in his famous sermon said, "Someday soon we will be able to say, 'Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we're free at last.'" Those of us who have been set free from the past sin curse and future condemnation can say right now, "Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, I am free at last!"

Thank God for freedom's content! Now, take into consideration

II. THE CHARACTER OF THIS FREEDOM.

Our text reads, "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32) And Jn.8:36 adds "if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

The Character of this freedom is seen in these two statements. Our freedom is predicated upon the divine Precept and the divine Person.

A. It Is Based Upon The Divine Precept.

John 8:32 "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."(John 8:32) And Jesus added, "Sanctify them through Your Word, Your Word is truth." (John 17:17)

How did the human race get into the bondage and slavery of sin to begin with? By believing Satan's lie in the Garden of Eden! He said, "Eat of this tree and you will be wise like God – you will not die." (Gen.3:1-4) Adam and Eve chose to believe Satan, "the Father of lies" (John 8:44) instead of the Father of truth (Titus 1:2). Which one are you believing?

B. It Is Based Upon The Divine Person.

John 8:36 "if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

It is truth that sets us free – truth in a Book and truth in a Body! God's Word is truth John 17:17); God's Son is Truth – "I am the truth" (John 14:6).

The Precepts of scripture and the Person of God's Son are inseparable! Truth in a Book-truth in a Body-the basis of our freedom; believe both! Today we are told by those who consider themselves more wise than God, that there is no absolute truth. That was Satan's original lie to Adam and Eve. The Character of our Freedom is based upon absolute truth. The precepts and Person of God are our guarantees!

III. THE CONDITIONS OF THIS FREEDOM.

This freedom is conditioned upon two actions that sinners must take. There must be:

A. An Acknowledgment That We Need Liberating.

You remember the man that Jesus told us about, who stood on the street corner and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? We must agree with God that we are sinners who need liberating. That is called "repentance". Jesus said, "Except you repent you shall perish." (Luke 13:3)

Illust. Saul of Tarsus affords a good example of a sinner surrendering to the conquering love of God. On the way to Damascus God appeared to him and, acknowledging the One Who confronted him, Saul, later Paul said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6) Calling Him "Lord" and "Falling to the ground" (Acts 9:4) was acknowledgment of his sinfulness in the presence of the Sinless One.

The second action that the repentant sinner takes is,

B. An Acceptance Of The Liberator.

John 1:12 tells us "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."

Saul accepted Christ The Conqueror's terms of surrender and received the Lord as his Liberator/Savior. Later he wrote to the Galatian Christians, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

Illust. The Great Liberator is what Simon Bolivar was called. When he was born in 1783, all of Spanish-speaking South America and Central America was ruled by Spain and had been for almost 300 years. By the time Bolivar died in 1830, all the Spanish-speaking nations of this region had won their independence. The man who was most responsible for the liberation of these countries was Bolivar. That's why he is known as "The Liberator." The Liberator led a revolution that freed Peru from Spanish control. Part of Peru was separated from the rest of Peru and made an independent nation in 1825. It took its name from The Liberator and became Bolivia.

Liberation from political tyranny is to be desired for all peoples. However politically free the peoples of earth may be, all need to be liberated from the bondage of sin. There is only One who can be called The Great Liberator in that sense and that is Jesus Christ who said, "if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." Those who have been liberated by Him are called "Christians" who take their name from The Great Liberator from sin's penalty, power and eventually from sin's presence.

CONCLUSION

Have you been set free? Have you been liberated? Or are you yet a sinner slave? It is no wonder that the Gospel is called "Good News!" It is the message of freedom. The liberated

Paul wrote, “I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” (I Cor. 15:1-4)
That is the message of the Good News of freedom for sin’s prisoners, sight for the sin blinded, release for the sin oppressed.

Illust. The story is told of a liberated slave who went to see President Lincoln and assured him that he would not accept his freedom as a gift, that he wanted to pay for it. He threw a silver dollar on the President’s desk.

The kindly Mr. Lincoln tried to show the man that he could not pay for his liberty – it had already been paid for and was a gift. When the freed man insisted, the president took him to the window and showed him the row of soldiers’ graves across the river in Arlington. Then President Lincoln said to him, “your freedom has already been paid for by those who have died for you.”

Our Freedom has been paid for by the Lord Jesus on Calvary’s cross. Yes, “Jesus paid it all.” To borrow a phrase from Lee Greenwood’s song, with slightly different words, I can sing:

“I’m proud to be a Christian,
Because I know I’m free.
And I won’t forget the One who died,
Who gave His life for me.”

“If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”

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