

Christian Freedom (1)

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Bible verses [John 8:31-32, NKJV]

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."

1. Freedom from Sin's Slavery

Lord Jesus spoke these words in the presence of certain Jews. They misunderstood what Jesus said and protested that they were not in bondage because they were children of Abraham. But they were wrong. Their ancestors had been in slavery in Egypt before God freed them using Moses. Later, the people of Israel were taken to Babylon as captives. So, the history of the Jewish people included multiple experiences of slavery and bondage. And at the time of this dialogue they were under the colonial rule of the Roman Empire. However, Jesus did not mean that they were literal slaves at this time. He made it clear to them that they were slaves of sin in His eyes.

[John 8: 34-36] 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."

When God made man, He made man and woman in His image and likeness. And they had God's blessings which made them totally free to serve Him in joy and thankfulness while enjoying all things God provided for them in the Garden of Eden. Being in bondage of slavery was unthinkable to Adam and Eve. However, after they sinned, they soon realized that they had become slaves of sin under God's curse as a consequence of the sin.

The first change in a person's life upon sinning is that the sinner begins to drift away from God's presence. This is exactly what happened to Adam and Eve after they were deceived by the serpent, which was Satan in a serpent's body. They wanted to hide from God's presence. They used to have sweet fellowship with God on a daily basis. So, when God came looking to have another time with them in the cool of the day, He saw them hiding themselves away from God's presence.

[Gen 3:8] And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

As a consequence of their sin, Adam and Eve lost the privilege of being in the presence of God, the privilege of having fellowship with God and the privilege of enjoying all of the good things God had provided for their enjoyment. Instead, they met the curse of death, both physical and spiritual, so that they no longer enjoyed the eternal life. Although Adam lived 930 years and produced many children, he and his family had to live outside of the Garden of Eden, but under the curse of death. He had lost the freedom previously enjoyed when they lived in the Garden. We are all descendants of Adam and have inherited the same curse of death with the bondage of sin nature and death, both physical and spiritual, before we met Jesus Christ.

Now, let us consider the nature of the freedom that Christians are given to enjoy as we abide in Jesus, as promised by Him in John 8: 31-32. We may ask ourselves "freedom from what?" What are we freed from as we submit ourselves to the dominion of Christ in our lives? Romans 8 was written by the apostle Paul and it is the chapter in the bible that focuses on the Christian freedom. There are other scriptures that speak of the freedom of God's people, but I'd you to study the four types of freedom based on the highly helpful discourse by the Apostle Paul in this chapter: 'Freedom from Judgment,' 'Freedom from Defeat,' 'Freedom from Despondence,' and 'Freedom from Fear.'

2. Freedom from Condemnation

In the previous chapter, Romans 7, apostle Paul explains how the people of Israel were condemned through the stipulations of the Law of Moses. Whereas God gave the laws to the people of Israel through Moses so that they could become holy and godly people, Paul explains that they became sinners because the Mosaic law defined sins. Because they could not keep the laws perfectly, they were all sinners before God. And they were required to offer animal sacrifices so as to obtain cleansing from their sins. These animal sacrifices pointed to substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who was sinless and yet gave Himself as the holy sacrifice for the sins of all repenting sinners.

Today most of us are not Jewish people. And we do not live in the OT days. Therefore, we are not subject to the OT Mosaic laws. Thus, we might say, we are not sinners by the Mosaic law standards. We are subject to the laws of the United States. And if we do not break the laws of this nation, we are not sinners and are not subject to any judicial judgments. Thus, you may think that you are innocent and are not sinners before God.

Friends, the apostle Paul argues that no one is blameless, Jew or non-Jew, before God because all have sinned [Romans 3: 22-23]. Whether we are under the Mosaic law or outside this law, all people have sinned and are sinners before God. And we face sin's condemnation.

[Romans 2:12] For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.

Let me ask you. Is there any among us today who are sinless and you have not committed any sin, never lied to anyone, never harbored anger or hatred, never harmed anyone, never cheated, never stole someone else's belongs? Is there such a sinless person among us today? I know I am a grave sinner before God because I did many bad things. How about you? Are you blameless before God and dare to claim that you are not a sinner before God?

So, we all agree that all of us are sinners before God and are subject to God's judgment on the day of judgment. Although we may not have broken any laws of this country, all of us have broken God's moral laws in one way or another. Most importantly, some of us have ignored God's voice to come to Him to make peace with Him. We have consciously rejected the voice that has tried to draw us to the gospel of Christ. We have considered our desires, plans, ambitions, emotions and pursuits more important than God's plans, principles and moral standards.

We have relished the delicacies of sin and flesh while ignoring the gentle tug of God trying to draw us from the filth and corruption in this world. We have heeded the voice of Satan who kept whispering to us that we are quite justified in pursuing wealth, power and fame while yielding to the temptations of dishonesty, crookedness and moral turpitude that come to us along the way. We are all sinners before God and we deserve His stern judgment.

[2 Corinthians 5:10] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

We will stand before His judgment seat on the Day of Judgment and stand trial based on what we have done and how we have lived. There is condemnation waiting. And the prosecuting attorney will be Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who was slain on Calvary. He will make judgments based on the Word of God, which are the principles and the moral standards clearly written in the Holy Bible. And you will not be granted a defense attorney.

Satan and the world cannot be in the court of judgment for your defense because they will have been judged and sentenced to eternal damnation already. There will not be a Harvard Law School graduate attorney to defend you when you stand before the Judge of the world. When the Son of God was in this world as a human, He took upon a very humble stature in the form of a servant, as prophesied by Isaiah and died a cruel death as the Lamb of God, the substitute ransom for the sins of repenting sinners. But, on the Day of Judgment, this same Jesus, whom they killed, will be the Judge of all sinners.

The gospel of Jesus Christ, however, declares that there is still a time to avoid the sin's condemnation, a certain way to be freed from the eventual judgment as sinners, a marvelous way to be kept from being dragged into the court of God as a guilty. God's mercy is being extended to us until the Day of the Lord.

[Romans 8: 1-2] There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Through these verses the apostle Paul declares that the Christians who live according to the guidance of the Spirit of Christ are freed from the law of sin and death, and are thus freed from the condemnation. Those Christians who yield their hearts, minds, thoughts, wills and plans to Lord Jesus live each day as encouraged, nourished, taught and guided by the Spirit of Christ have been freed from the laws of sin and death. What is the law of sin and death?

[Romans 6:23] For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sin's consequence is death, both physical and spiritual. Because Adam sinned, we all die physically. No one lives for eternity on this earth. Because we are in sin and have sinned, we all live outside of God, that is, dead spiritually. However, when we accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are brought into the realm of eternal life in Christ Jesus. This marvelous transition frees us from the sin's condemnation. We come to make peace with God and become His children. God's children are removed from the list of the guilty and the convicted. Therefore, we are freed from the condemnation of sin and death.

[John 5: 24] Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

This marvelous transition that occurs in the life of a sinner who accepts Christ and becomes a Christian can be compared to a case of a convicted criminal, who has been sentenced to death because of the severity of his offense, is now somehow categorized as innocent and is freed from the prison, so that he is no longer confined in the prison wearing the uniform of a death-row prisoner.

He is placed outside of prison's walls and is set free. Recently, I saw such a movie, where a horrible convict has been sentenced to death, and had to experience awful violence from fellow prisoners. Yet, the anguish of the coming execution tormented him far more than the abuse from fellow prisoners. His old mother pleaded with the authorities to have her son's sentence reduced to avoid death. However, she died of heart attack on a train on her way to see her son. Because of his mother's death and the plead of all of his home village, he was retried, where the judge reviewed the circumstances and reduced his sentence from death to a life term in prison. After serving a number of years in the prison, he was released and was given opportunities to tell his story to other prisoners.

Whereas this death-row criminal's transition from a death-sentence status to freedom took many years, a Christian's transition from a condemned sinner status to a freed child of God can be achieved immediately. It all depends on your choice and will – to consciously accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life as your Savior and Lord. Friends, if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have been freed from the condemnation of sinners. Therefore, you may rejoice in this wonderful freedom and should never want to go back to the sinful past life.

3. Freedom from Defeat

The second freedom of Christians in Christ is that we have been freed from defeat in our spiritual battles against the flesh, the world and the devil. Because we have transitioned from our former life of satisfying the desires of the flesh and the world to now serving the Lord under the guidance and power of the Spirit of Christ, we are now free from having to serve our former master, the self and the attractions of the present evil world.

[Romans 8:12-14] Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

By the Spirit of Christ, we “put to death the deeds of the body,” so that we no longer live to serve the flesh but now the Lord Jesus. As sons of God we are led by the Spirit of God. Now, let us consider how we can put our flesh to death without actually dying physically. Earlier in Romans chapter 6, Paul explains that our death to sin occurs when we are baptized.

[Romans 6: 3-4] Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Early Christian baptisms were by immersion in water, where a person’s body is fully immersed into the water before being raised above the water by the baptizing person. John the Baptist baptized in this manner. Our Lord Jesus was baptized in this manner. In a baptism by immersion, a person’s body is fully immersed, which symbolizes the burial of the body in Christ Jesus. This was symbolic of a Christian’s body entering death together with Christ before being raised in a resurrection in the newness of life in Christ.

Paul explains further this process of being dead to sin and coming alive to life in this chapter:

[Romans 6: 9-11] Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise, you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our Lord Jesus, although He was sinless, went through the experience of death and resurrection so that He could be the model for all Christians. Thus, as Christ did, we die to sin and death and are raised to the new life in Christ. The word “reckon” in Rom 6: 11 means to “establish in accounting, understand, or have opinion.” Christians who have been baptized in Jesus Christ are established in God’s accounting as being dead to sin but are now alive in Christ.

We have declared ourselves as dead to sin and alive to Christ. And this declaration has been sealed by the Spirit of Christ in us. This is a true freedom from defeat, from any obligation of having to please or serve the flesh. We are not in any way bound to the enticements of the flesh and the world. Instead, we are free to follow the marvelous high standard of our Lord Jesus. And we gladly follow the example of Jesus Christ, whose high moral standards we aspire to reach through the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. How wonderful and powerful is this freedom to all true Christians!

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