



Christian Life Fellowship
Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



True Freedom
November 11, 2007

Rev. David Koch

Introduction:

Today in our series LIFE 360 we are going to talk about the balance of liberty and restraint.

What do you think of when I say the word freedom? Do you picture our flag? Do you picture soldiers fighting? Do you picture someone who has been in prison who has been released?

When a person decides to ask Christ to be the leader of their life and the one who forgives their past failures and sins, that person is freed from being enslaved to serve sin. They now have a liberty in Christ that they did not previously have or know.

Paul in his letters gives indication that Jesus came to free us and we have been granted that position for a purpose. In his letter, Paul gives us some insight as to how we are to use that freedom. **Galatians 5:1 - 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.**

I. Don't be burdened again by a yoke of slavery

Why do people go back to slavery when they have been freed? The people of Israel were free from slavery in Egypt. They no longer had to work hard to make bricks. They were at liberty to worship the way they chose. But their hearts longed for the flesh pots and bread they ate till they were full. In **Exodus 16:3**, the Israelites complained about their circumstances. They wanted to go back to Egypt. They would have been willing to trade their liberty, their freedom and their position that God had given them for the way things used to be. That was a time when they had to serve their enemy but enjoyed the temporal things.

The lesson for us is: don't go back, don't get sucked into sin and serving it. Your master is Christ. Let Him direct your life. It is better to be free and not

enjoy as much of the things that are temporal than be a slave and filled with things which only bring temporary satisfaction. The pleasures of sin are only for a season. They do not last and they are not eternal like the pleasures of righteousness. Peace, joy, rest, comfort; these are the pleasures of righteousness.

Let me encourage you today to do everything you can to maintain your freedom. Be willing to fight for it. Be willing to sacrifice for it. Be willing to hold onto it and don't look back to a life of sin or bondage. When you are free, don't link up with the pleasures or the temporary things that satisfied when you were not free. With freedom comes responsibility. With freedom come choices. Freedom allows us the luxury of choices and lifts restrictions. Unless the choices you make will hurt someone, there usually is great latitude within the confines of freedom.

Galatians 5:13 - You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

II. The purpose for freedom is not just for us but service to others.

If you are held as a captive to some power or force, then you are bound to serve that power and you don't have the liberty to serve another force. Paul makes it quite clear that the freedom we have is to be used to serve one another in love. The great part about freedom is that we can use that freedom to bring knowledge and freedom to other people.

Be a slave when it comes to your love. We are free to love one another as Christ loved us. How did He do that? He set aside His rights, His position, and His place with God in heaven and became like us. He got close to us. His love is without limit, without reservation, without judgment and without condemnation.

We are to be yoked with Christ. I quote Christ's own words to us as recorded in **Matthew 11:29-30** - **Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**

III. The result of yoking to Christ is freedom and rest.

Freedom from servitude to sin is one of the results of being yoked to Christ. We no longer serve sin but now we serve Christ. Rest is promised to those who are yoked to Christ. Without being yoked to Christ there is strain. The effort to be moral, the effort to be good, the effort to fight against evil and sin done in one's own strength is a battle that is not winnable. When we are yoked to someone or something, we work together and the load is shared. The tasks are completed as a team. Jesus wants us to know of His gentleness and humility and when we are linked with Him, there will be rest for our souls. **1 Cor. 8:9** - **Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.**

IV. Be cautious of how you exercise your freedom

1 Cor. 10:23 – “Everything is permissible” - but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible” but not everything is constructive.

In this part of his letter, Paul is talking about eating meat offered to idols. When he wrote this letter, the custom was for meat to be offered to idols. Even though idols were phony and the pagan ritual of sacrificing to them was meaningless, eating such meat offended some Christians with sensitive consciences. Paul said that mature believers should avoid eating meat offered to idols if it would violate the conscience of weaker Christians.

Freedom does not mean that anything goes. It means that our salvation is not obtained by good deeds or legalistic rules, but it is the free gift of God. Freedom in Christ is tied to being responsible with the decisions that we make.

Paul makes it clear that everything is permissible but everything is not beneficial, either to your health, your relationship to God or your testimony to other people. Everything is permissible but not everything is constructive. We need to be thinking about how exercising our freedom builds up the kingdom of God or builds up our brother or sister in Christ.

New followers of Christ are often very sensitive to what is right or wrong, what they should and should not do. Some things may be perfectly fine for a believer but might harm a Christian brother or sister who is still young in their faith. When we love others, our freedom should be less important to us than strengthening the faith of a brother or sister in Christ. Our freedom can become a stumbling block to the weak. Rather, our freedom in Christ should become a means of service and expression of love both to God and to other people. **1 Cor. 10:32- Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.**

Our freedom is a wonderful thing. We have the freedom to serve God in whatever we eat or drink, wherever we go, whatever we say. However, there are some things that would cause others to trip in their faith journey, so for their sake, even though we are not inhibited by the word or our own conscience, we limit exercising that freedom.

This not only shows a rounded perspective, but it demonstrates maturity when we are willing to

practice restraint in what we could do for the sake of another person's walk of faith.

V. How to be free from bondage.

First, you must understand that Christ has broken all the bondages of sin that would ever try to keep you enslaved. It is not His desire or will or purpose for your life that you stay bound to those things that control you other than Him.

Second, scripture says, **John 8:36** "...so if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Third, we have the power of the Holy Spirit and His anointing which stands ready to break every yoke of bondage that we might experience. We are liberated from the past, from the bondages, from servitude to sin. Things that bind us include fear, Satan and sin as well as habits that we get stuck with that take control of our time, resources, thoughts, devotion, etc.

Conclusion:

We have a calling to be free in Christ. We are to use that freedom to serve God and others. We find liberty and rest in that freedom but we must be cautious that we don't become slaves after we have been freed. Also, we must be careful how we exercise our freedom for the sake of the kingdom and not to cause others to stumble.

Perhaps you need to take a step toward God this morning. Not realizing that you have been a slave to yourself and to sin, you want God's forgiveness; you want to be free in Christ. I want to help you in taking this step. I want to pray for you today.

For others who are already on this faith journey, here is a step you can take this week. I challenge you to examine the freedom you have been given in Christ. Perhaps you need to evaluate how God has set you free and how you are using that freedom to serve Him and others. Take a few moments before you leave today to think about and apply this truth to your daily walk.

Another resource of power available to us is the path of fasting. Through utilizing the spiritual discipline of setting aside food to focus on God's word, through prayer and meditation, bondages and the oppression of powers that captivate us can be broken and we can enjoy freedom. **Isaiah 58:6- Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?** So our lives can be free for the purpose of serving others, for the purpose of showing God's love and for the purpose of sharing that freedom in Christ with other people.

Romans 6:18- You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Phillips Brooks (1835- 1893), Perennials. "No man in this world attains to freedom from any slavery except by entrance into some higher servitude."