

“Free Indeed”

May 4, 2014

Text: John 8:30-36

Most of us take our freedom for granted—unless we lose it;

Then we suddenly treasure it—even long for it.

This includes freedom of every kind=> freedom from invasion by foreign powers, a freedom-guaranteeing Constitution, a free press, free trade, civil liberty, free speech, & freedom of religion.

But there is a freedom that is more important than any

other=> spiritual freedom of the soul.

This is the freedom about which Jesus will say in our text today,

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

which might well be translated “free for real.”

This is a freedom which cannot be attained, until a person first realizes that, spiritually, he is not free—he’s a slave;

He must realize that the belief he is completely free is

really an illusion, a myth, that must be maintained by

denying/overlooking his spiritual & psychological

slavery to certain silent forces w/i his heart.

These include self-aggrandizing/self-promoting ambition,

love of money, gluttony, lust, longing for acceptance,

chemical addictions, and a host of other issues/vices.

Underlying all of these, is an irrepressible aversion-to (and

rebellious hatred-for) submitting to God’s will.

For the unredeemed sinner, that seems like the ultimate loss of freedom.

But natural man is a slave of sin/Satan, and that slavery will eventually end in eternal death for him.

The final payoff for all such sins is the wages of sin=> death.

Our carnal desires are domineering lords, that can enslave a man, through the evil longings of his heart.

* E.g. he may labor to overcome the tyrant of his own anger.

* He may continually grind at the mill of his own greed.

* He may slave his life away in a filthy dungeon of his lust.

In time, he might learn to curb/control some of these tendencies, & to 1 degree or another, reform himself by his own strength/power.

But even then, he's still not really free, because those old sins continue to haunt his mind, like a night stalker waiting in the shadows for any sign of weakness.

And he fears that God has not forgiven him for the wickedness of his former deeds & life, before he changed his ways. & turned over a new leaf.

The good news is that Jesus holds out hope for all sinners, including you/me, saying=> “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed”—really free.

Free from slavery to sin/Satan, & from the condemnation & eternal judgment resulting from sin.

That's the message our Lord wants us to take from today's text.

- 1) It will begin w/ mention of a **problem** w/i the hearts of those to whom Jesus was speaking: faulty, inadequate faith in Him, which is why they aren't really free
- 2) X will respond by offering the **prospect** of turning such anemic faith into real saving faith, that can free the soul.
- 3) The Jews to whom He is speaking will **protest** that they are free already, & have never been slaves of anyone.
- 4) X will explain to them that even now they're enslaved to sin, but He will **promise** that He can truly free them.

* **The Problem**

[John 8:30] (John)=> “As He spoke *these things* [that He is the Messiah, the light come from heaven into this world; that they must believe in Him or die in their sins; & that He would ultimately be their Judge], *many came to believe in Him.*”

The problem which became evident at this point was that

“many” of Jesus’ listeners who came to believe in Him, did so w/ such ill-founded superficial faith, it couldn’t save their souls.

Although it appears (from the wording here) that these were true believers, they actually were not.

John even uses the phrase “*believe in* [or *into*],” which usually signifies true/saving faith;

But these people were not saved, & that becomes obvious in the following verses, where Jesus says that they want to kill Him (37), that they are children of the devil (44), & that they are liars (55).

In verse 52 they will accuse Jesus of being demonized, & in verse 59 they’ll pick up rocks intending to stone Him to death.

These are the same people who are said to believe in vs 30. Although the phrase “*believe in*” usually refers to genuine faith, John occasionally uses it to describe non-saving faith. E.g. here, in Jn 2:23-24, & possibly also 12:42.

The people in our text believed what Jesus had said about Himself, as long as they could interpret His words however they liked, & it didn’t contradict their own desires, preferences, prejudices, or preconceived ideas.

Theirs was an unsaving faith, that engaged their intellect, but left their hearts/will out of the transaction.

Man has a surprising ability to accept truth intellectually, & yet to disconnect the implications of that truth from the rest of his life.

This should serve to warn us, not to settle for learning facts/ideas from the Bible w/o immediately asking ourselves how they should impact our thought-life.

And asking how God would have us to behave and live differently in light of them.

* **The Prospect**

Instead of disdaining these people for their undeveloped faith, Jesus encouraged them to hold on tightly to it, in the hopeful prospect that it would grow into genuine/saving faith.

[Verse 31] (John)=> “*So [because their faith needed to develop] Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you **continue** in My word then you are **truly** disciples of Mine;’*”

I.e., you’re not truly My disciples yet, but you can become true disciples, if you’ll stay & grow in My word, making it the rule for your lives, and letting it have its life-giving impact on your hearts/minds.

Perseverance is the mark of true/saving faith.

I Jn 2:19 speaks of false believers who=> “*went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have **remained** [same word as *continue* v 31] with us.”*”

Their leaving the church wasn’t because they had lost their faith, & thus lost their salvation.

They hadn’t been real believers in the first place, & the day finally came when they stopped trying to persuade themselves & everyone else that they were.

That can be a very good thing if it’s the 1st step in a person’s seeking true saving faith.

Genuine believers remain under the teaching of X's Word,
seeking to better understand it & to better obey it, finding it
more/more precious to their hearts & dominant in their
lives as they do.

**But not only is perseverance a mark of genuine faith, it also
helps superficial faith grow into genuine saving faith.**

I Pet 2:2=> *“Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of
the **word**, so that by it you may **grow** in respect to salvation.*

How do you “*grow in respect to salvation*”?

1st, you may grow in biblical knowledge, & in readiness to
commit yourself to Jesus, because of that knowledge,
until you actually do become born again.

So this is growth that takes place before your actual
conversion.

Several people have told me they once thought they
were saved, but that, as they grew in their
understanding of the truth, they realized they'd
never truly believed in Jesus, unto salvation.

It was at that point they really gave their hearts to X.

2nd, you grow in your salvation thru sanctification, yielding
more/more fully/faithfully to Jesus, as your
Savior/Lord.

This growth takes place after you've become born
again.

E.g. II Thes 2:13=> “*God has chosen you from the beginning for [full] **salvation** through **sanctification** by the Spirit and faith in the truth.*”

In this case, a Xn is growing in grace after his conversion, becoming a mature believer.

X wants Xns to be people who are growing in their salvation.

As He builds His Church, He’s not as concerned about how many people are in it, as He is about the quality of their faith.

He fervently wants the Church to be made up of true believers, who are growing in faithfulness, maturing spiritually, & increasing in their love for Him, & His Father/Spirit.

He wants the Church to be filled w/ His true “*disciples*” (learners who sincerely adhere to what He taught)=> Doers of the Word, & not hearers only (Jms 1:22); People like the Psalmist, who said he delighted in God’s Word (119:77), & loved His Law (119:97).

Because this is not what most church-goers really want from their religion, X knows that His saying this is likely to offend/insult them so much, that many will leave.

But as we see in our text, Jesus says it anyway, because spiritual integrity/sincerity are what He desires most, for His Church.

Now we see that Jesus held out this wonderful prospect of true discipleship as an incentive for people to believe in Him, & in His words.

[Verse 32] (Jesus)=> “*and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*”

Those who stay focused on X’s word can eventually come to really know the truth, & to become His true disciples.

They won’t just agree w/ truth, but will commit themselves to it in their own hearts/lives.

“***The truth***” (not just “truth”—but “*the truth*”) is that which is revealed in Jesus, & is at the heart of the gospel of Jesus X. He is “*the way, and the **truth**, and the life*” (Jn 14:6). His Spirit is the “*Spirit of **truth***” (14:17), who testifies to men that Jesus Himself is divine truth incarnate (15:26).

“Knowing” divine truth is more than learning/understanding the facts about X—it is coming by faith to know X personally, who is full of grace/truth (1:14)—becoming united w/ Him, experiencing Him in your life.

This is the essence of what it means to become saved, because II Thes 2:13 says that salvation comes through faith in the truth.

I Tim 4:3 says Xns “*believe & know the truth.*”

Non-Xns, by contrast, are “*always learning & never able to come to the **knowledge of the truth***” (II Tim 3:7).

They turn away from the truth (II Tim 4:4),
go astray from the truth (II Tim 2:18),
and even oppose the truth (II Tim 3:8).

The prospective blessing of remaining in, & coming to the knowledge of the truth, is that it results in a believers becoming free, spiritually.

This freedom to which Jesus was referring is freedom to live righteously, no longer enslaved to sin/Satan.

This is a freedom that was never available to him until he became born again.

It is the freedom about which Paul wrote, saying to the Romans,

*“Thanks be to God that though you were **slaves** of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, / and having been **freed** from sin, you became **slaves of righteousness**”* (Rom 6:17-18).

Real freedom is willingly conforming to the truth—the teaching of X—then receiving all the blessings/joys of having done so.

And doing so because we are committed to it, we love it, & we are now able to obey it, in the power of the H.S.

What Jesus was offering to those Jewish people (& is still offering to us today) was the prospect of the most wonderful possible kind of life—a life of truth and of true freedom.

Step #1) It begins w/ true discipleship, in which a person comes to love Jesus, to treasure His words, & to feed on His word—God’s Word.

He is not like the folks in our text whose inadequate faith believes in X up to certain point, but only when X’s words agree w/ their own preconceived notions/preferences/perspectives.

No matter what Jesus says, the true believer accepts and embraces it as true, simply because Jesus said it—he fully trusts Him implicitly.

His whole life comes to reflect his relationship w/ X, because he has surrendered to the Lord his own personal life, his vocational life, his home-life, & every other aspect of his life.

Having committed himself to living for X, he has real assurance of his salvation, & the Spirit’s witness w/i his heart, that he truly belongs to Jesus.

Step #2) True discipleship produces a sacred knowledge of the truth—the saving/purifying/glorifying Truth of God, which he has assimilated into his heart/mind.

When a person sets out on a course of believing in Jesus, & he continues in it, X’s Spirit teaches him the Truth over time.

He no longer needs to guess/speculate about the truth, or think only in terms of probabilities, because he has come to know the Truth deep w/i himself.

He is absolutely sure of it.

God's truth has become a well-known friend to him.

It influences him, strengthens him, comforts him, & its power makes him more/more like X Himself.

Step #3) True discipleship having produced knowledge of the truth, that, in turn, produces spiritual freedom.

The truth sets him free, emancipating him from the tyrannical power of slavery to sin.

Jesus, the very personification of divine Truth, sets every true believer free spiritually, turning his life into a life lived on the basis of truth, a "life of truth", as God has intended from eternity past.

Our souls lay hold of the liberties rightfully belonging to the citizens of heaven's Kingdom, because we have embraced the light/life of God's truth for our own.

This is the great prospect Jesus held out to those who had only half-believed in Him, calling them to wholehearted faith.

* **The Protest**

[Verse 33]=> *"They answered Him, 'We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?"*

**These were the same people who were said to believe in vs 30,
but were now angered by X's saying they were slaves,
who still needed to be freed.**

They couldn't have been referring to their history as a nation
when they said they'd never been enslaved to anyone.

Their whole nation had been conceived in slavery w/i the
land of Egypt, and they had again become slaves to
the Babylonians much later on in their history.

So they, like X, must have been referring to spiritual slavery.

But in denying they were slaves of sin, they were still
wrong, being absolutely blind to their own
sins/sinfulness, & too proud to acknowledge their
need for Jesus to free them from it.

So they protested angrily when Jesus said they were slaves
of their sin & were therefore essentially no different
from the heathen.

**Self-deception about one's own sinfulness is the common lot
of mankind, just as Jeremiah had said=> *"The heart is
more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who
can understand it?"* (Jer 17:9).**

It's not unusual even today for people whose lives display
absolutely no trace-evidence of regeneration, to falsely
claim/believe they are saved.

Being religious to one degree or another, they are
convinced that they're not dead in sin;

That they have received God's forgiveness/grace,
that they've believed in Jesus, & that they're
indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

They are no different from the folks in verse 30 of our text.

If you question their salvation, they too will prob. protest.

* **The Promise**

**Jesus promises that He will free from slavery to sin, those
who will look to Him for their deliverance, by true faith.**

But first, they must recognize that they actually are slaves to their
sin.

[Verse 34]=> *“Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly [this is an
essential truth for you to understand, so pay close attention]
I say to you, **everyone** who commits sin is the slave of sin.’”*

**X lays down a general truth here: Everyone who continually
sins should recognize that he does so because he is the
slave of sin—and it is his master.**

Jesus isn't talking about occasional sins (which even Xns commit
at times), but an ongoing pattern of sin in a person's life.

It is sinning that can't be stopped by man's own moral
efforts.

A person like this has been mastered by sin, & is incapable
of overthrowing that vicious tyrant by his own moral
power/strength.

II Pet 2=> *“By what a man is **overcome**, by this he is
enslaved” (II Pet 2:19).*

Apart from X's deliverance, sinners will always be slaves to the moral/spiritual corruption w/i their sinful hearts.

The only way for anyone to escape from this disastrous state of affairs is by seeking deliverance from Jesus, the great Deliverer/Emancipator of souls.

But no one will do that until he leaves behind that crowd of people in verse 33, who were arguing that they've never been enslaved & he cries out to X seeking His deliverance.

Like them, he may believe a lot of good things about Jesus, but until he accepts the fact that Jesus is the Savior sent by God to deliver people from their sin, and sincerely seeks that deliverance for himself from Him, he cannot be saved.

Man typically reacts to this truth, by looking for some other way, to gain spiritual freedom.

Everything w/i us resists casting our souls before Jesus' feet, pleading for His mercy/help.

The Jews thought they had found another way, through the Mosaic Law.

They believed that their having descended from Abraham made them members of God's household, and that that helped to prevent them from becoming the slaves of sin.

They were convinced that, as Abraham's descendants, their adherence to the Law was the only other help they needed, to keep from being overcome by sin.

Jesus nullified that false belief, demolishing their false security.

[Verse 35] (Jesus)=> *“The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.”*

These words would have caused the Jews to think back to the story of Ishmael and Isaac.

Ishmael had been born to Abraham through a slave-girl named Hagar, the handmaid of Abraham's wife, Sarai.

Isaac, however, had been born to Abraham by Sarai herself.

He was the son God had promised to Abraham, and the rightful heir to all his father's belongings/blessings, including God's covenant w/ Abraham.

When Ishmael mocked his step-brother Isaac, Sarai demanded that Ishmael, being a slave-son, not a true son, be driven out of Abraham's house (a/w/a his mother, Hagar).

Jesus was telling the Jews that the same principle applied to them; as slaves of the Law, not true sons of God.

Jesus Himself was God's true son, His only-begotten Son, and He would remain in God's household forever, while the Jews would be driven out, like Ishmael.

They were indeed driven out of God's House (the Temple) in A.D. 70, when the Romans invaded Jerusalem, and demolished that Temple.

They had temporarily enjoyed the privileges/blessings of the Master's house/Kingdom (divine revelation from the prophets God sent them, the covenants, the Law, the Temple service).

But unless they became true children of God through faith in God's Son, Jesus, it would all be taken away from them.

In Mt 8:12, Jesus actually warned the Jews=> *"the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness."*

Many good folks today are just trying to do their best in the flesh, but they too are, like those Jews, holding onto a futile hope of finding some way other than faith in X, to become saved (or even to gain spiritual freedom/truth).

Jesus, being God's rightful Son, would inherit all the Father's possessions, including His slaves.

And that was the Jews' only hope of staying in God's household.

[Verse 36] (Jesus)=> *"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."*

When a slave-owner died, his son inherited his slaves.

He could do w/ them whatever he chose, including setting them free.

True believers enjoy real freedom, given to them by God's only begotten Son, who has received them from His Father, and set them free.

Moreover, He has made them children of god.

How does one become a son/child of God? Thru faith in X.

Jn 1:12=> *“As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who **believe** in His name.”*

Jesus has all authority as the Son of God, & He exercises that authority to liberate spiritual slaves, like us, and to turn us into children of God.

X gives us spiritual freedom.

Not just making us free, but making us *“free **indeed.**”*

That’s a level of freedom for which every other freedom is just a feint/preliminary hint to the nature of true freedom.

He gives us freedom from the law of sin/death (Rom 8:2).

Freedom from Satan (Jn 17:15), from condemnation/guilt (Rom 8:1), and from spiritual darkness (Jn 8:12).

Someone: I don’t think X could set me free like that, because on such/such a day I committed a sin that is unforgiveable.

My friend, there is no sin so bad that God cannot forgive it except the sin of refusing to accept His gracious/infinite forgiveness.

You may have done something so despicable that it brought you to the very gates of hell, but God’s arm is strong enough & long enough to reach you even there, if you’ll only place your full trust in His Son, Jesus X.

S go to His Word and continue in His Word, finding there, all this wonderful truth.

You may feel like you've been chained by Satan himself to hardened unbelief, and you can't shake it so that there's no longer any hope.

But I can assure you, that if you'll simply cry out to Jesus, asking Him to forgive you and set you free from your sin, you'll discover what Chas Wesley discovered=>

“My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.”

Jesus, because of His death, has earned the right to set you free.

He has the right to emancipate those enslaved to their sins, because He died for sins, having been dragged before Pilate, beaten, scourged, & nailed to the cross.

If you've believed in Him, you're free, because He sacrificed His freedom to death, bearing the burden your sin/guilt.

And having now the right to give you freedom, He gives it to you freely/graciously/abundantly.

“Free Indeed”
May 4, 2014

Text: John 8:30-36

1. There is a freedom that is more important than any other—[20 spiritual] freedom of the soul.
2. Jesus holds out hope for all sinners, saying, *“If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed”*—[14 really] free.

*** The Problem**

[John 8:30]

3. Some of Jesus’ listeners who came to believe in Him did so with such superficial faith, it couldn’t [10 save] their souls.

Jn 8:37, 44, 55, 52, 59; 2:23-24; 12:42

*** The Prospect**

4. Instead of disdaining these people for their undeveloped faith, Jesus encouraged them to hold on tightly to it, in the hopeful prospect that it would [10 grow] into genuine saving faith.

[Verse 31]

I Jn 2:19; I Pet 2:2; II Thes 2:13

5. As Christ builds His Church, He is not as concerned about how many people are in it as He is about the [16 quality] of their faith.

Jms 1:22; Psa 119:77, 97

6. Jesus held out this wonderful prospect of true discipleship as an incentive for people to believe in Him and in His [12 words].

[Verse 32]

Jn 14:6, 17; 15:26; 1:14; II Thes 2:13; I Tim 4:3; II Tim 3:7; 4:4; 2:18; 3:8

7. The prospective blessing of remaining in, and coming to the knowledge of the truth, is that it results in a believer’s becoming [10 free] spiritually.

Rom 6:17-18

8. True discipleship produces a sacred knowledge of the saving, purifying, glorifying [12 Truth] of God.

*** The Protest**

[Verse 33]

9. These were the same people who were said to believe in verse 30, but were now angered by Christ's saying they were [14 slaves].

Jer 17:9

* **The Promise**

[Verse 34]

10. Everyone who continually sins should recognize that he does so because he is the [12 slave] of sin—it is his master.

II Pet 2:19

[Verse 35]

11. These words would have caused the Jews to think back to the story of Ishmael and [12 Isaac].

Mt 8:11

12. Many good folks today are just trying to do their best in the flesh, but they too are like those Jews who were holding onto a futile hope of finding some way other than [12 faith] in Christ to become saved.

[Verse 36]

Jn 1:12

13. Christ gives us freedom from the law of sin and death, from Satan, from condemnation and guilt, and from spiritual [20 darkness].

Rom 8:2; Jn 17:15; 8:12

14. Jesus has the right to emancipate those enslaved to their sins, because He [10 died] for those sins.