

Are You Really Free?

Introduction

We Americans celebrate the 4th of July, as a national holiday in honor and memory of our independence from the bondage and rule of the king of England. We rejoice that we are free from the rule of any foreign power. History tells us that the original 13 colonies were being over taxed in an effort to steal the very heart of the land for the use and pleasure of a foreign King. It was a very clear picture of what is said in John 10:10.

“The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill and to destroy: I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly”

Our ancestors rose up against the king and fought off the tyranny until they gained victory, which resulted in a life of great abundance for many...more so than the people of any other land. We, as Christians, do also realize that tyranny and bondage comes in many forms and by many kings, both in the natural and spiritual realm.

Freedom In The Natural & Spiritual Realms

In the natural realm, we fight off the oppressors to preserve our freedom, sending our next generation to die, if necessary, that we may live in peace and freedom. But what do we do in the spiritual realm to get free and stay free? What type of bondage do we face and by whom?

II Corinthians 10:4-12 tells us that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, (Earthly like tanks and war planes), but are mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.” The Biblical writer understood that God’s people were at war in a battle of wits with an unseen enemy that somehow enters the imagination, planting thoughts that call up impure desires from within that are meant to capture and hold our minds in bondage to the forces of evil. We know this enemy as Satan, the devil and his entire evil hoard.

Life In Abundance

Life in abundance is not found in the things we possess. It is, however, discovered in the truth that comes from our heavenly Father. That’s why Jesus said; **“Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free”**. He, of course, is the Truth that came from the Father and who did, in fact, set us free, by way of the cross. But our liberty is not to be used as an occasion for sin, so says Paul, but rather an opportunity to serve the Lord.

Paul also said; Galatians chapter five that we should “Stand fast in the liberty where-with Christ has made us free and be not entangled again in the yoke of

bondage". He knew that freedom always comes with a price tag. It cost something to keep it active. There is always a price to pay. We pay the price, in the natural, with the blood of our sons and daughters that die in foreign lands. In the spiritual, **we pay with our lives**, laid down unto the death. This is the ultimate sacrifice for our own freedom.

Free Will

Now I know you are going to say that I am straying off the biblical path and going against what the bible says, not really. A closer look reveals that Christ has indeed set us free...actually bought us with a price, His own blood. We are indeed free but free to do what? This is the moment of truth, where we all stand in the valley of decision, making free will choices in life that keep us free or lead us back into bondage. Without our "**Free Will**" choices on a consistent basis, we will fall and fall hard. That's why we are instructed to "Put on the whole armor of God", "Stand fast in the liberty" "Resist the devil" because our freedom can be easily taken away if we do nothing.

Let me show you where it says that we pay the ultimate sacrifice...Revelation chapter 12, "And they (that is us) overcame him (that is the devil) with the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony and that they laid down their lives unto the death." Most pastors call attention only to the 1st two parts of this scripture but it is the 3rd, the laying down of ones own life, which seals the victory. Jesus supports this "self death" notion when He tells His disciples that they must deny themselves, take up their cross, (referring to their own death) and follow Him.

Why is it so necessary for us to die in order to live an abundant life?

Romans Chapter five tells us that Sin entered the World (human experience) through the transgression of one man, Adam. It also tells us that by one man, Jesus Christ, all shall be made alive. Adam is the 1st man and Jesus is the 2nd man. The 1st man fell into sin and as a result death passed upon all men, for all have sinned. Romans chapter three supports this where it says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Also there is none righteous, no not one. The wages of sin is death. Death passed upon all men. Get the picture? Holiness (glory of God) was replaced in the 1st man with sin, which is, in fact, the very nature of Satan. We are bound to the devil by nature...however, the 2nd man, Jesus, did not sin, has no evil or darkness in Him and as the spotless Lamb of God paid the price of sin. He bought us back, giving us life in relationship to God. Through Him and in Him, we move and live and have our being.

Remember the baptismal picture? We are buried with Him (Jesus) and raised with Him (Jesus) to newness of life. Now we have two natures, one of sin which is that of evil and one of God which is, like in the beginning, Holy. According to the bible, these two natures war against one another inside of us, seeking to dominate our personalities.

We are asked, by the very fact of having a free will, to make our own choices, to walk in one or the other. Paul again says that if we live in the Spirit we should also walk in the Spirit. He also says that we should be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we may prove what is that perfect and acceptable will of God.

There is no Switzerland in the Spirit realm. We either walk in the flesh or in the Spirit. One must die so the other can live. We must carry our own cross; letting that nature of rebellion die so the nature of God can grow and be supreme. This is the ultimate sacrifice, to forgive instead of condemn, to love instead of hate, and so on...Galatians chapter five list the evil fleshly appetites as well as the fruit of the Spirit.

Again I ask, **are you really free?** Here's how you know that you are:

- You will have a good sense of peace in your heart.
- You will be quick to forgive.
- You will be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.
- You will see or be aware of the fruit of God's Spirit in you.
- You will see the gifts being manifested in you as you follow Him.
- You will have hope in the future and be optimistic about life.

Notice that there are no feelings of depression, anger, hate, or malice of any kind. There is no jealousy. The deeds of the flesh are bound by death and the new creature lives in harmony with God and at peace with his neighbor. However, that same new creature is also a warrior who stands against the evil nature in himself and the evil actions of those around him. This is not a passive stand. It is an aggressive walk in the Spirit that says to self and all around. " get out of my way for I am walking with God." He is determined to stay free, as God originally intended.

Take a moment this 4th of July, the season of celebrating freedom, to reflect on those things that have you bound. Chances are they are things of the flesh, which tells you that you are in need of a "Death To Self" experience. There is a need to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. How do we do that? By, as Romans 12 says...present your bodies as a living sacrifice unto God. Paul also tells us in II Corinthians 10:4-7 that we are to use the knowledge of God as a weapon to cast down every imagination.

Bondage By Choice

Your bondage is by choice. God has not given you the spirit of fear that leads you back into bondage, but of Power and Love and a Sound mind. Life abundant is given only to those who pass through death first. They must, at all cost, stand up in the Power of Jesus' name to keep it. This takes guts, prayer and a determination to follow Jesus. It is also the true meaning of Lordship, when Jesus

becomes LORD over your flesh and leads you to the cross in a transforming death unto life experience. Thus is the reality, "Though you are dead, yet shall you live"

Truth & Application: The flesh is characteristic of the nature of evil. It is where Satan wants you to dwell...so you portray his image on this Earth instead of God's. All that Satan needs to do is to plant a thought or fashion an image in your mind that calls up what is already inside of you. This is the imagination of II Corinthians 10:4-7. Act upon the thought or image, giving it place and you fall out of the Spirit into the flesh. Reject the imagination and you put to death the old man and continue to walk in the Spirit.

Being really free is a "Free Will" choice and is a conscious action of the will to keep the flesh in a state of death and the Spirit in control of your mind. We cannot blame God when we make bad choices. We can however, repent, ask for His forgiveness and begin again...this time with a new determination to walk in the Spirit.

Until next time

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Freedom Cost All We Have