

What Does It Mean to be "Free Indeed"?

John 8:28-36

1 America is the land of the free. 2 The staggering immigration rate proves it. People from all over the world want to live here. Our country was founded on Christian principles. 3 Our military, through the years, have fought wars and died to defend it. 4 Great crusaders like Martin Luther King have enhanced it. 5

But there is a freedom that only Christians can claim explained in John, Chapter 8, verses 28 through 36, that goes beyond what citizens of our great country can experience, So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”¹ 6

Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him. To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

¹ v28-29.

They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?” Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”² ⁷

What does it really mean to be free indeed? To appreciate the freedom we have in the Lord, we need to ask . . . ⁸

I. What was Freedom Like During Ancient Times?

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Hebrew society during Jesus' day looked like this. ¹⁰ According to the Law slaves were to be treated humanely and with dignity. ¹¹ Hebrew slaves could be redeemed by their families anytime. ¹² Exodus, Chapter 21, verse 2, said that Hebrew slaves could

² v30-36.

only be enslaved for seven years. ³ ¹³ Leviticus, Chapter 25, verses 39 through 41, said that in the fiftieth year, the Year of Jubilee, all slaves would be freed and all debts cancelled. ⁴ ¹⁴

Roman society during Jesus' day was a bit different. ¹⁵ Slaves were the complete property of their masters and treated hardly better than animals. There was good news and bad news here. The bad news is that slaves were usually citizens of a country conquered in battle or sold as payment for a debt. The good news is that the emancipation of slaves in Roman culture was quite common. ¹⁶

Normal people, who were not slaves, living in the Roman empire did not necessarily have civil rights. Only "free born" citizens had civil rights in Roman society. ¹⁷

³ Exodus 21:2 - If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything.

⁴ Leviticus 25:39-41 - If one of your countrymen becomes poor among you and sells himself to you, do not make him work as a slave. He is to be treated as a hired worker or a temporary resident among you; he is to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. Then he and his children are to be released, and he will go back to his own clan and to the property of his forefathers.

The Apostle Paul used his "free born" status to advantage when he got into trouble. In Philippi he demanded that the city officials apologize and escort him out of the city. ⁵ ₁₈

In Jerusalem it was even more dramatic. Acts, Chapter 22, verse 23 through 29, **As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, the commander ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and questioned in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this. As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"** ⁶ ₁₉

When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. "What are you going to

⁵ Acts 16: 35 & 37 - When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." . . . But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

⁶ Acts 22:23-25.

do?” he asked. “This man is a Roman citizen.” The commander went to Paul and asked, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” “Yes, I am,” he answered. Then the commander said, “I had to pay a big price for my citizenship.” “But I was born a citizen,” Paul replied. Those who were about to question him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains. ⁷

With that understanding . . . ²⁰

II. What is Freedom as a Christian?

. . . What is freedom as a Christian? ²¹ For one thing, the Christian faith did not do away with the practice of slavery. Several passages of scripture commands slaves, who are now Christians, to obey their earthly masters as they would the Lord. ⁸ ²² However, in Christ all social distinctions are done away with. Galatians, Chapter 3, verses 28 and 29, There is neither Jew nor

⁷ Acts 22:26-29.

⁸ Ephesians 6:5 is one of them.

Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. ²³

The Book of Philemon, in our New Testament, was written to a slave owner. Onesimus, a slave, had run away with money he had stolen from his master. He arrives in Rome broke and alone. As a runaway slave in the big city, Onesimus finds the only person he knows; the Apostle Paul. Paul, in prison there, helps the runaway slave and, eventually, leads him to the Lord. They agree that the right thing to do is for Onesimus to return home to his master, Philemon, and return the money he stole. Since Philemon was a good friend of Paul's and had, himself, been introduced to the Lord by the apostle, it would be fitting to show mercy to his new, repentant, Christian brother. The letter is written on Onesimus' behalf to help smooth the return and establish a new slave/master relationship again. ²⁴

Verse 34 tells us that everyone becomes a slave when they commit sin and all of us have sinned! ⁹ ²⁵ Romans, Chapter 3, verse 23, **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .** ²⁶ Romans, Chapter 5, verse 12, **Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.** ²⁷

So, how did we get our freedom? When Lord Jesus died on the cross He provided that freedom! What does this freedom include? ²⁸

Freedom from the Law of Moses. ²⁹ Colossians, Chapter 2, verse 14, . . . **having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.** ³⁰ Again, in Romans, Chapter 8, verse 2, . . . **because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.** ³¹

⁹ v34 - I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

It also includes freedom from sin. Romans, Chapter 6, verse 18, says, **You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.** ³²

So, what does "free indeed" mean then? Absolute freedom would be anarchy! ³³ Effective freedom must be within boundaries. ³⁴ Freedom in America is freedom under law. ³⁵ Freedom in the family for wife and children is provided by the protection and authority of their husband/father. ³⁶

In fact, a wife who submits to her husband's authority is promised special spiritual power! Let me explain. ³⁷ First Peter, Chapter 3, verses 1 and 2 say, **Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.** ³⁸ In the original language, the word "purity" ¹⁰

¹⁰ ἁγνός.

means chaste, even holy. The word "reverence" ¹¹ is the common biblical word for fear. ³⁹

The command to wives is balanced by the one to husbands. First Peter, Chapter 3, verse 7, continues, **Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect . . . so that nothing will hinder your prayers.** ⁴⁰ The word "considerate" ¹² means to be knowledgeable of your wife; and the word "respect" ¹³ means to honor, even worship them! If they don't, it could even affect their prayer life! I think the ladies come out ahead on this one! ⁴¹

"Free indeed" is spiritual freedom within the scope of God's word. ⁴² Verse 32 emphasizes, **You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.** ⁴³ You are free within the boundaries of God's revealed truth! ⁴⁴

You are free to be what God created you to be; living the way He intended for you to live. When you receive

¹¹ φόβος.

¹² γνῶσις.

¹³ τιμή.

the peace and contentment He planned for you to have; then, you are "free indeed"!

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