

The Responsibility of Freedom

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John 8:31–36 (NKJV) “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.’³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’³³ They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, “You will be made free”?’³⁴ Jesus answered them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.’³⁵ And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

Freedom is a precious treasure. Those blessed to live in freedom often fail to understand how precious freedom really is. They do not understand the reason why so many people have laid down their lives to obtain it. They do not understand its blessing nor its responsibility.

What is freedom? It might be best to first ask the question, “What is slavery?” Our country fought a civil war in part over the issue of slavery. Slavery has been around since the fall of man. The story of the Exodus is the account of deliverance of God’s people from oppressive slavery under the Pharaoh in Egypt. Sadly, slavery is still the plight of many people in our world today. A person who has never been a slave cannot understand how different life can be. Have you ever wondered what your life would be like if you were a slave today? So what is slavery? Slavery is domination of another person’s will. If you were a slave, your free will would be non-existent in practicality. If you did anything outside of your master’s will, you would be punished or possibly even killed. Slavery means ownership of another person’s life. If you were a slave, you would be the property of another person to do with as they so desired. Slavery is the limitation of another person’s potential. Slaves do not receive education and they are never empowered to pursue a dream. Slaves have no right to a family and their children are not their own to keep. Slaves are property that can be separated and sold on the slave market. Slaves are not allowed to dream. Their entire life is limited to doing what they are told and nothing else. Slavery is restricting God’s purpose in another person’s life. Slavery does not recognize that God owns every soul of man. Slavery prevents people from becoming what God intended for them to be. Slavery prevents a person from pursuing the gifts and calling of God in their life. Slavery is the limitation to do what is right. Slaves are not allowed to think for themselves, to have an opinion, or to question their master’s actions. Slaves have no inheritance. They share in no profit. Plain and simple, slavery is a curse. This is why people paid great sums of money or paid with their own lives to win their freedom. Freedom is a precious treasure indeed! Freedom is something to be guarded and defended. Once lost, it may never be regained in this life.

Jesus used the imagery of slavery to illustrate men’s slavery to sin. Although not everyone is a slave of men, everyone is a slave of sin because all have sinned. Jesus said that whoever commits sin is a slave to sin. A slave will not remain in the house forever.

Before a slave can walk in freedom, they must first experience deliverance. Deliverance is not the same as freedom. In order to be free, slaves must find someone willing to pay the slave price to set them free. Deliverance prepares a person for freedom. When a person is delivered from slavery, they become personally responsible for their own success or failure. When a person becomes dependent on someone else, they become subservient once again to men.

What is freedom? First it is important to state what freedom is NOT. The worldly definition of personal freedom is lawless in nature. It actually brings people into the bondage of sin. Freedom is NOT a license for sin. We were not freed from sin in order to live in sin. Freedom is NOT an opportunity to pursue the lusts of the flesh. We were not freed from the power of lust in order to pursue lust. Freedom is NOT an escape from God’s order. We were freed from Satan’s order to be properly ordered in Christ’s kingdom. In Romans 6:1-17 Paul made it clear that grace frees us from our slavery to sin so that we might serve as sons and daughters in God’s kingdom.

None of us deserves freedom from slavery to sin because we are each debtors to the slave master of sin. None of us are able to free ourselves from sin because we cannot repay the debt of our sin. We are completely dependent

upon Christ who paid the freedom price. Therefore freedom is the gift of God purchased by the blood of Jesus. Thanks be to God!

Freedom from sin is primarily mental and spiritual. People who are slaves of men can still be the Lord's free man. A person incarcerated in prison who has found forgiveness in Christ is freer on the inside than sin bound people on the outside. Spiritual freedom is not a matter of status, circumstance, or location. Spiritual freedom is a matter of being delivered from the power of sin by the power of Jesus Christ. Sin held us bound but Jesus set us free! Those whom the Son sets free are free indeed!

Once a person has been freed by Christ, they must no longer live as slaves to sin. They must learn to walk in the way of freedom. What is the way of freedom? It is walking according to God's Word. Jesus said, *"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 Spiritual freedom from sin exists and is maintained where the word of God is known and obeyed.

One of the mistakes that people make is to think of freedom without any obligation to appreciate and maintain that freedom. However, freedom brings with it a great responsibility. Thomas Jefferson said, "The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time." Winston Churchill said, "The price of greatness is responsibility." Freedom is not the right to live irresponsibly. Freedom is not the absence of law, responsibility, or accountability. Slaves once freed find that freedom opens many doors but requires great personal responsibility. Freedom means accepting responsibility for one's own success. It requires more self-motivation, self-control, self-discipline, self-determination, and self-motivation than slavery ever did. Freedom is a burden that only responsible people can bear.

What other responsibilities does freedom require? Freedom requires of men the responsibility of self-management. In slavery men are managed by their slave masters. Freedom requires of men the responsibility to manage their own environment. In slavery men have no control over their environment. Freedom requires of men the responsibility to manage their own resources. In slavery men have no resources of their own to manage. Freedom requires of men the responsibility to exercise dominion over their sinful cravings. In slavery men are dominated by the sinful drives of the flesh. Freedom requires of men the responsibility not to do what they want but to do what is right. In slavery men are forced to do whatever is commanded regardless of their convictions. Freedom requires of men the responsibility to help others bound in slavery to become free. In slavery men are unable to help themselves, much less to help others. Freedom requires of men the responsibility to serve one another through love. In slavery men only serve others out of obligation. Paul said to those freed in Christ, *"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."*² In conclusion, freedom requires of men the responsibility to live for the glory of God who set them free. In slavery men live for the glory of sin.

Freedom is a gift from God that comes with responsibility. When people fail to act responsibly in the freedom they have been granted, they will soon find that their freedom is taken away. They may avoid prison but they cannot avoid a prison of bondage to sin that can be even more destructive.

Freedom is a precious treasure indeed! Do you want to be free? Do you want to be delivered from your bondage to sin? Come to Jesus so that you might be free indeed! Commit to walk in the way of freedom by knowing and obeying God's Word. Embrace freedom's responsibility. Use God's gift of freedom to do what is right, to serve others, to set others free, and to bring glory to God!

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¹ John 8:31-32 (NKJV)

² Galatians 5:13 (NKJV)