

## **FREEDOM IN CHRIST**

**John 8:30-36**

**By Andy Manning**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. People want to be free.
  - i. William Wallace (“Braveheart”) “They make take our lives, but they’ll never take our freedom.”
  - ii. America’s Founding Fathers sacrificed everything to break free from the shackles of King Geroge. “Of the fifty-six courageous men who signed that original document (Declaration of Independence) in Philadelphia, many did not survive the war that followed. Five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Nine others died in the Revolutionary War, either from its hardships or its bullets. Twelve had their homes sacked, looted, burned, or occupied by the enemy. Two lost their sons in battle. One had two sons captured (Swindoll, *Living Above the Level of Mediocrity*, p. 51).”
  - iii. Patrick Henry “Give me liberty or give me death.”
  - iv. The story of Harriet Tubman illustrates how intensely people desire freedom. She was a slave before the Civil War. In 1849, she escaped from a Maryland plantation and eventually made her way to Pennsylvania where she was free. But freedom was so precious to her that she had to share it. She saved her money, and in 1850 she snuck back into Maryland to rescue her sister and her sister’s two children. A few months later she returned to get her brother and two sisters. Altogether she made 19 trips South and rescued more than 300 slaves. She had the code name Moses because she led so many people out of bondage.
  - v. In England, William Wilberforce was so passionate about liberating blacks from slavery that he dedicated his life as a politician to that cause. It took fifty years of work, but he finally achieved his goal.
  - vi. In the Civil War, 334,680 Union soldiers sacrificed their lives to free the slaves in the South.
  - vii. America is all about freedom. Our deepest values are liberty and justice for all. We are the land of the free and the home of the brave.
2. But the Bible says there is a different kind of freedom than economic and political freedom – spiritual freedom. It is the most important freedom, because you can have political and economic freedom but still be in bondage. The Bible offers this spiritual freedom to anyone, and it explains how to obtain it.

### **II. TEXT: John 8:30-36**

1. *30 As he was saying these things, many believed in him.*

- i. What “things” was Jesus saying? Jesus declared that He was the light of the world (v. 12), and then said that if you don’t believe in Him you will die in your sins (v. 24).
- 2. *31 Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples.*
  - i. Jesus gives us one of the marks of authentic salvation – continuing in Christ’s word, or continued faith and obedience in Christ.
- 3. *32 You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*
  - i. Jesus told the Jews how to find freedom, which implied that they weren’t free.
- 4. *33 “We are descendants of Abraham,” they answered him, “and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will become free?’”*
- 5. *34 Jesus responded, “Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.*
  - i. Jesus wasn’t talking about political or economic bondage, but spiritual bondage.
- 6. *35 A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son does remain forever.*
  - i. This appears to be a warning. “Right now you are in the household of Israel, but since you are a slave you are not a true Israelite, and one day you will be cast into hell. You must become a son – a true Israelite – by faith in Jesus Christ.”
- 7. *36 So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.*
  - i. Jesus says that He has the power to set us free from spiritual slavery.
  - ii. In this passage we can identify four truths about spiritual freedom.

### III. THREE TRUTHS ABOUT SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

#### 1. Without Christ you are a slave to sin.

- i. **John 8:34** “Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.”
- ii. Sin enslaves us in four ways.

##### 1. We are enslaved to the power of sin.

###### a. Sinful attitudes.

- i. Apart from Christ, our hearts are filled sinful attitudes: Pride, lust, jealousy, covetousness, prejudice, hatred, bitterness, selfishness, greed, etc.
- ii. **Jeremiah 17:9 (NLT)** “The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?”
- iii. This sinful heart was passed down to us from our first parents, Adam and Eve. It is called original sin.
- iv. We are so infected with sin that we are incapable of doing anything good apart from Christ. For an act to be morally good, it needs to be the right action with

the right motives. Apart from Christ, even our best acts of righteousness are tainted with sin.

- v. **Isaiah 64:6** “All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a polluted garment (literally *menstrual cloth*).”
- vi. And we are enslaved to these sinful attitudes. No amount of effort will succeed in breaking free.

**b. Sinful addictions.**

- i. Apart from Christ we often find ourselves enslaved to sinful addictions. First, we look to sin for pleasure (a forbidden fruit), and then pleasure turns to pain when it begins to hurt us, and then pain becomes a prison because we can't stop.
- ii. There are many kinds of addictions: Food, sex, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, attention, shopping, etc. There are too many to name.
- iii. Apart from Christ we will always be addicted to sin – sinful pleasures.
- iv. An addiction is simply an idol – it is something other than God that you look to for happiness. It is something you worship other than God.
- v. Without Christ the only way to break an addiction is to swap it for another addiction. You can stop smoking, but you will have to exchange it for something else that makes you happy – maybe food, or alcohol, or drugs, or dip, or pornography.
- vi. This is the reason Alcoholics Anonymous points people to a “higher power.” They know that no “program” can deliver someone from addiction. All AA can do is to help you trade in one addiction for another one. To truly break from addiction you need the power of Christ.

**2. We are enslaved to the penalty of sin.**

- a. Apart from Christ we must pay the penalty for our sins. What penalty?
- b. **Romans 6:23** “For the wages of sin is death.”
- c. This verse is talking about spiritual death, which is eternal separation from God in hell.
- d. Many people don't believe that they deserve to go to hell. They admit that they are not perfect, but they assume that hell is too severe a punishment. But that's wrong. The

seriousness of sin is determined by the victim. It's not so much how you may have sinned, but who you sinned against. If you shoot a harmless frog just for fun, then you're sick, but you probably won't see any jail time. If you shoot a dog for fun, then you'll probably be incarcerated. If you shoot a person for fun, then you're a murderer, and you're looking at the death penalty. You may not have committed murder or rape, but any time you sin against God, you are sinning against the creator and ruler of the universe, and the punishment is infinite.

- e. Some people assume that as long as their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds when they die that God will let them into heaven. But your math is wrong. When a murderer stands before the judge, the judge doesn't weigh his good deeds against his bad deeds. It doesn't matter how good the man is, he committed murder and must pay the penalty for murder. No matter how many good deeds you may do, you are still a sinner against almighty God, and you must pay the penalty – eternal punishment.
- f. And there's nothing you can do to save yourself.

### **3. We are enslaved to the prince of sin (Satan).**

- a. **1 John 5:19** "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is under the sway of the evil one."
- b. Apart from Christ you are under the control of the devil. You may think you are free and in charge of your own life, but you aren't. Not only is the devil deceiving you, but he is using you to do his work and further his kingdom. You are one of his loyal soldiers; one of his obedient children.
- c. He is using you to tempt others; to hurt others; to hurt yourself; to dishonor God; to persecute the faithful; to discourage others from seeking Christ; to destroy God's institutions of marriage, family, church, and government.
- d. Next week we will go deeper into the work of Satan as we study John 8:37-47. Just know that the devil has control over unbelievers, and he can cause them to do all sorts of horrible things.

### **4. We are enslaved to the performance trap of sin.**

- a. There are only two kinds of religions in the world. Biblical Christianity, and everything else. All other religions are about man's attempt to earn heaven. Christianity is about resting in the atonement of Christ for heaven. Apart from Christ, you

are stuck in the performance trap, trying to be good enough to make it to heaven, and worrying that you might not make the cut.

- b. The story of the great reformer Martin Luther comes to mind. Martin Luther was raised a Roman Catholic in Germany. And he had a very sensitive conscience. He was terrified of hell, so he was obsessed with earning his way to heaven. He thought he had a better chance of saving his soul by becoming a monk, so he joined a monastery. The rigors of monastic life included the renunciation of self-will, the scant diet, rough clothing, vigils by night and labors by day, mortification of the flesh, the reproach of poverty, the shame of begging, and the distastefulness of cloistered existence. Prayers came seven times daily; the monks were awakened at 1 or 2 in the morning by the ringing of a bell, went into the church, and prayed. The more he fulfilled his duties, the more fearful he became. He fasted so often that his friends feared for his life. He practiced prayers and vigils in excess of what was required by the monastery. He often slept without blankets to mortify the flesh. He went begging to experience humiliation. He confessed frequently, one time for up to six hours straight. Sin had to be confessed to be forgiven, so he was terrified that he would die before confessing his sins and go to hell. He would travel long distances to visit the relics of dead saints, believing that by doing so some of their excess righteousness would be added to his account. This was a man who was enslaved to the performance trap. He was consumed with trying to be good enough and worrying about not being good enough. Without Christ this is the prison that we all live in.

## **2. Some do not know they are in bondage.**

- i. After Jesus told the Jews that they were slaves, they were offended.
- ii. **John 8:33** “We are descendants of Abraham,” they answered him, “and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will become free?’”
- iii. This is an amazing statement. The Jews had Roman overlords, and in the past they had Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Syrian overlords. They were slaves in Egypt for over 400 years. And yet they claimed that they had never been slaves to anyone.
- iv. Not only were the Jews in denial about their economic and political slavery, but they were ignorant of their spiritual slavery. They knew nothing of the spiritual slavery that Jesus spoke about.

- v. Many people are like that. They don't realize they are in bondage. They don't realize they are slaves to sin. And that is the worst place to be, spiritually. To believe that you are doing just fine without Jesus. You're not a slave to sin. You don't need God. You don't need a Savior. You don't need a redeemer.
- vi. Jesus can only liberate people who see their sin. He can only liberate people who know they are broken. He can only liberate people who are desperate for help. He can only rescue people who know they are drowning. He can only heal people who know they are sick. He can only forgive people who know they are evil.
- vii. This is what Jesus meant by the first Beatitude. **Matthew 5:3** "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs." To be poor in spirit is to recognize that you are spiritually bankrupt; it is realize that you are in bondage; it is to realize that you are headed for hell; that you need to be saved and liberated and redeemed. That's the only kind of person that Jesus can save.
- viii. Jesus told a story to illustrate this point. Two men went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee was standing and praying like this: "God, I thank you that I'm not like other people – greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get." But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner!" Jesus said, "I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Both men were sinners, but the problem is that only one of them knew it. And that's the only one that Jesus could help.
- ix. Today, I urge you to see and admit that you are in bondage to sin; that you need a Savior; you need Jesus.

### 3. You must know the truth to be set free.

- i. The final truth about spiritual freedom has to do with how to get it. Jesus tells us in verse 32.
- ii. **John 8:32** "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
- iii. Jesus promises to deliver us from sin if we will know the truth.
- iv. What does it mean to know the truth?
- v. Jesus is the truth. **John 14:6** "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
- vi. Truth is first and foremost a person, not a concept, or idea, or series of facts. It is the person of Jesus Christ. If you want to be free, then you must know Christ. You need a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

- vii. How do you establish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? He tells us in the previous verse.
- viii. **John 8:31** “If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples.”
- ix. You must continue in His word. That is, trust in Christ and obey Him.
- x. Notice the word “continue.” To become a Christian is a commitment to trust and obey Jesus one day at a time, for the rest of your life. And it is a daily commitment. Many people start with Jesus, but they don’t finish. They fall away. They quit. Those aren’t true disciples. True disciples continue. Day after day they look to Jesus for salvation, for deliverance, for liberation. Those are the true disciples. Those are the ones who will be set free.
- xi. **John 8:36** “So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.”
- xii. This is a beautiful promise, and it has been confirmed by the stories and experiences of millions of people throughout history. If you will turn to Jesus and continue in His word, He will set you free...
  - 1. From the power of sin. **2 Corinthians 5:17** “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!”
  - 2. From the penalty of sin. **Colossians 1:14** “In Christ we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin.”
  - 3. From the prince of sin. **Colossians 1:13** “He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.”
  - 4. From the performance trap of sin. **Galatians 3:11** “Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law, because the righteous will live by faith.”
- xiii. Back to the story of Martin Luther. Eventually he was appointed as a teacher at the university in Wittenberg. He was teaching the Bible when he came upon that phrase, “The righteous will live by faith,” and his eyes were opened to the truth of the gospel. We are not saved by good works, but by faith in the work of Christ for us. He was set free. He was liberated. And he went on to change the world.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

- 1. We are slaves to sin, and Christ came to set us free. Apart from Christ, we are slaves to sinful addictions, and to the penalty for sin, and to Satan, and to the performance trap. But Christ came to redeem us from all of that. He can free you from any addiction. He can secure a home for you in heaven. He can take away your fear of hell. He can save you from sin.
- 2. We just have to continue in His word. We have to get to know the truth – Jesus Christ.