

73. The Gospel of John—8:32

“The Light of the World” Pt.6

(True Freedom-Pt.1)

(6/2/19)

We are currently studying chapter 8 of John’s gospel, and last week we ended by introducing verse 32—

John 8:31-32 (NKJV)

³¹ 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.**"

Jesus’ statement begs the question—*“make us free in what way”* or *“make us free from what?!”*

Now listen, as we said to close last week’s message, knowing how the truth of God sets a believer free is critical to having victory—and victory is the birthright of every child of God.

The Christian life is all about being set free from the old life of sin to serve God in the newness of the Spirit—*“It was for freedom that Christ set us free.”* (Gal.5:1)

And so, I’ve entitled this 2-part message—**“True Freedom”** and it contains 2 main points: *Understanding Slavery*; and *Understanding Victory*.

I. Understanding Slavery

It would help us to better understand the impact that Jesus’ words in verse 32 would have had on those in the crowd that day if we start with a little cultural background.

In the first century Greco-Roman world slavery was very much a part of their daily lives.

In fact, it has been estimated that more than half the people you'd see on the streets of some of the great cities of the Roman Empire back then—were slaves.

These were people without rights—mere property existing only for the comfort, convenience and pleasure of their owners.

And as you can imagine—the life of a slave was often hard, hopeless and downright terrible.

They were bought and sold like tools or animals—and discarded just as easily by their owners.

The Roman statesman Cato said,
“Old slaves should be thrown on a dump, and when a slave is ill do not feed him anything. It is not worth your money. Take sick slaves and throw them away because they are nothing but inefficient tools.”

Juvenal wrote of a slave owner whose greatest pleasure was *“listening to the sweet song of his slaves being flogged.”*

This was the cultural context in which Jesus talked about His disciples being set free.

Now, the idea of being set free from slavery wasn't foreign to them—that was the whole idea behind redemption—a concept they were very familiar with.

You see, the word **redemption** meant—*“to purchase by paying a price”*—and that was a concept everyone in the first century Greco-Roman world understood very well.

There were some 60 million slaves in the first century Roman Empire—and they were constantly being redeemed.

In the center of every major city stood the agora (marketplace)—this was the main place where slaves were bought and sold.

Thus, one of the Greek words for the act of *redemption* (the purchasing of a slave) is **agorazo**—from ‘agora.’

There’s a second word for *redemption* that the Greek reader of Scripture would have readily understood and that was **exagorazo**—“*the act of purchasing or redeeming never to return.*”

You see, oftentimes, a man would redeem (buy) a slave, use him for the cultivating and planting of his fields or for the harvesting of his crops—and then return him to the marketplace to be sold again.

Exagorazo was the antithesis of this practice, in that it spoke of a man redeeming a slave who would become the permanent possession of that master for the rest of his life.

The third Greek word for redemption is **apolutrosis**.

Apolutrosis speaks of a man going into the agora to purchase a slave for the purpose of—setting him free completely never to be a slave again.

That was rare but not unheard of—especially if it was a relative who had become another man’s slave due to unpaid debt.

However, when the Lord Jesus along with the writers of the New Testament talked about *redemption*—they weren’t talking about being set free from physical slavery as sanctioned by the Roman Empire—they had another slavery in mind.

When *they* talked about being *redeemed*—it was in reference to being set free from the bondage of spiritual slavery to sin and the devil.

That was the context in which Peter and Paul used it in their writings—

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Colossians 1:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

When Paul talked about our redemption thru Christ in Colossians 1:14, he used the Greek word *apolutrosis* which speaks of Jesus' blood setting us totally and completely free—never to be a slave of sin and Satan ever again.

When God first created mankind (which at that time consisted in one man and one woman, Adam and Eve)—they were made perfect and enjoyed beautiful, unbroken fellowship with Him.

God originally created man to be free but still under His authority—much like a soldier is free (not a slave) but under the authority of a commanding officer.

At that time, God gave them ownership of the earth and told them to watch over it, take care of it—and it would produce all they would need to live and flourish.

God eventually put Adam and Eve into a beautiful garden (the Garden of Eden) which contained many fruit bearing trees they could eat from and only gave them one prohibition.

He told them they were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that they ate the fruit of that tree—they would surely die. (Gen.2:17)

Well, they went ahead and disobeyed God and when they did sin entered into their soul and they fell from perfection.

And even though God had warned them that if they ate the forbidden fruit they would ‘surely die’—they didn’t die *physically* (not immediately)—but they did die *spiritually*.

Their spirit died instantly and when that happened—their communion (connection) with God was broken.

Since God is the source of life, when they were disconnected from God—they began to grow old and would *eventually* die.

Before the fall of man there was no sickness and no death—both sickness and death entered the world at the time of the fall through man’s sin (Romans 5:12).

Sin set in motion entropy—and in particular the second law of thermodynamics which says that everything is moving from order to disorder, from integration to disintegration, wearing out, growing old (rust, decay)—and going from life to death.

In fact, when God warned Adam and Eve that if they ate the forbidden fruit they would “surely die”—the Hebrew is, “*dying you will surely die.*”

In other words, they would no longer live forever as God had originally intended—but now would slowly age until they died.

But listen, Adam’s sin didn’t just bring death into *his* life—it impacted all of his descendants as well.

Paul the apostle stated in 1Corinthians 15:22— “*Adam’s sin caused all of his descendants to die.*”

But that's not all that happened when Adam sinned—at that moment the 'title deed' (ownership of the earth) was 'transferred' to the devil and he became the earth's new owner (the 'god of this world')—and man's new master.

And the way Satan would exercise control over our lives would be thru our fallen nature (read Romans 7:15-25).

Luke 4:5-8 (NLT2)

⁵ Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ "I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them," the devil said, "because they are mine to give to anyone I please. ⁷ I will give it all to you if you will worship me." ⁸ Jesus replied, "The Scriptures say, 'You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.'"

Notice that Jesus didn't dispute Satan's claim to be the rightful owner of the earth and its kingdoms—if he had been lying, Jesus would have told him so.

And further notice that—Satan had to *tempt* Jesus outwardly (by coming to Him directly) into obeying and worshipping him because Jesus was born without a sin nature (virgin born) and therefore Satan had to come to Him outwardly to tempt Him because he had no sin nature *within* that Satan could use to tempt Him thru (much like Satan had to come to Adam and Eve outwardly to tempt them in the Garden because at that time they also didn't have a sin nature to tempt them thru inwardly).

Eventually, Jesus went to the cross to *apolutrosis*—to redeem us thru His blood, setting us totally and completely free—never to be a slave of sin and Satan ever again.

The New Testament has a lot to say about the redemption of Christ towards us that has set us free.

In Romans chapter 8 Paul tells us that someday we, as believers in Christ, will be redeemed (set free) from these bodies that are subject to death when God gives us our new glorified bodies—which will never die.

And also, the creation (subject to the fall and the curse) will be redeemed (delivered) and recreated beautiful, pristine and completely uncorrupted by sin.

Again, the word *redemption* when used of our redemption thru Christ means *to purchase out of slavery never to be a slave again*—or in other words, to be free!!

This means that we are free from the Law (Gal. 5:1), free from slavery to our fallen sin nature (Rom. 6), as well as free from the power of Satan and the world—

Galatians 1:4 (NLT2)

⁴ Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live.

Colossians 1:13-14 (NLT2)

¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom [redeemed us] and forgave our sins.

We are now free men and women, no longer belonging to a family of slaves (the family of Adam)—but now we have been redeemed into the family of God and have become heirs to all that belongs to Him.

However once Jesus set us free—we turned around and gave ourselves back to Him as His slaves. (Explain—“bond-slave”)

Man, once free (his own master) acted independently of God, ate the forbidden fruit and brought sin and death into the world—but now thru redemption, he would become the slave (no longer a free man) to a new Master (not himself or Satan)—but to the Lord Jesus Christ!

“For you were bought (redeemed) with a high price (the blood of Christ)—therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which now belong to Him. (1 Corinthians 6:20)

Most people don’t realize that the goal of life isn’t to find freedom—it’s to find the right master!

In other words, true freedom comes by becoming a slave of Jesus Christ!

Romans 6:22 (NKJV)

²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

The Church consists of slaves who are subject to the total control of their Master and King—Jesus Christ.

Christianity isn't a democracy—we don't get to vote on matters of faith and practice in the Church.

The Church is a monarchy and Christ is its Sovereign King!

This is what it means to be a Christian—that we live in absolute subjection to our King and Master without which we cannot call ourselves *His* people—His subjects!

Jesus said, *“No one can be My disciple without denying themselves and taking up their cross to follow Me.”*

In other words, He is now in charge and we follow Him—He doesn't follow behind us, blessing where we want to go and what we want to do in life.

When we receive Jesus as Lord and Savior our life as we have known it and lived it is over—we are now the slaves of Christ!

Jesus doesn't come alongside us to help us fulfill our dreams and bless our desires—He takes over.

Many in the church don't get that—

Luke 6:46-49 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? (Comment)

The word 'lord' in the Greek is the word 'kurios' which means, "*One who has the power, ownership, and absolute right to command*".

The word is used 747 times in the N.T. and is synonymous with another word 'master'.

Jesus is to be our only Master or Lord as Christians.

The corresponding word to *kurios* is doulos.

One of the big reasons that Christians today don't get it when it comes to a proper understanding of their relationship to Jesus is because—they don't have a proper understanding of the word 'doulos'.

Doulos only means one thing in Greek—slave. It has always meant slave and it only means slave.

There are six or seven words in Greek for 'servant' which is a different concept from *doulos*.

➤ *A servant is someone who works for another—a slave is someone who is owned by another.*

➤ *A servant is the employee of another—a slave is the property of another.*

The N.T. identifies Christians as the *douloi* (slaves) of Christ 150 times.

A slave in N.T. times was bought and owned—he had no legal rights and could not refuse any of his master’s commands.

He was totally dependent on his master for protection and provision—and was rewarded or punished as pleased his master.

But slavery is offensive to us—we don’t like it—we associate it with evil.

Therefore, the translators of the N.T. sought to soften ‘*doulos*’ and so they translated the word in almost every N.T. version as ‘*servant*’ or ‘*bond-servant*’ instead of slave.

The word ‘bondservant’ doesn’t even appear in the Greek—but if you tell me the N.T. says that I am the slave of a Master who owns me and whose commands I have no choice but to obey—now I start to get it.

However, if you tell me I’m the *servant* of Christ that could imply I’m an employee—and that puts me in a negotiating position.

Now folks, that makes a huge difference in my understanding of my relationship with Jesus Christ.

Listen, all slaves back then were servants but not all servants were slaves—as a slave of Christ I am His servant—but not His employee!

If I understand myself to be the slave of Christ—a slave who has no rights, no power and no freedom to make my own decisions and do my own will—that’s N.T. Christianity.

However, if I see myself as a servant to Christ Who is my “boss”—it completely messes up and confuses Jesus statement, “*No man can serve two masters*”.

If ‘master’ means ‘boss’ that doesn’t make sense because a lot of people have more than one boss over them at work—or work two jobs serving two bosses.

But no man can be a slave of two people because—you can’t be owned by two people at the same time.

When Jesus is truly your Master, you are owned exclusively by Him and you give up your rights, your independence, all autonomy—in other words, you no longer call the shots!

And that, in and of itself, is enough to bring victory into our lives as Christians!

I mean if we only do what our Lord Jesus commands—if we only go where He leads and fill our minds with His Word and busy ourselves with the work of His Kingdom—there’s no way sin or Satan or the flesh will control us!

That “great theologian” Bob Dylan once sang, “*You gotta serve somebody!*”—well as Joshua put it—if everybody’s gotta serve somebody—make that Somebody the Lord Jesus Christ!

Joshua 24:15 (NKJV)

...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

And so, our first main point in this little mini-series we entitled “**True Freedom**” has been, “*Understanding Slavery*”—but understanding slavery is not the same as having victory.

And so next week we’ll look at “*Understanding Victory*”.