

FREEDOM

by Ben Nelson

I was sitting in a worship service last Sunday, and worship opened with a song that I had not heard before. It was a song all about freedom. “I am free – I am free – Jesus set me free!” The song talked about free to sing, free to dance, free free free. The chorus stated “it is for freedom that we have been set free.” The worship leader then prompted us, “he who the Son sets free” and the congregation shouted together, “he is free indeed!”

As all this went on three questions stirred in my spirit.

What have you been set free from?

What have you been set free for?

What are you doing with your freedom?

Now, let’s examine some of the key scriptures about freedom. The first significant place we learn about freedom in the New Testament is John 8:36. It says:

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Now we jump and shout, because we are free. We dance and clap, we hoot and holler, we go home and scream at our kids, fret over our bills, divorce our wives, cheat in our businesses, lie and curse and come back again next Sunday to celebrate our freedom. This verse gets yanked out of Jesus’ mouth and made to mean a gillion things that it just does not say. Let’s look at the whole paragraph.

31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

33 They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

37 I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

**Slavery to sin makes it impossible to serve God.
You can’t serve God and sin!**

First, let’s consider the audience. We like to read this to a bunch of “Christians”. It gets the crowd pumped up, but Jesus said it for exactly the opposite reason. He took those in His day who “believed” and pushed them to see if they had what it takes to be a disciple. He made a distinction that preachers today don’t often make. He seemed to think that believing was not enough to make you a disciple. He seemed to think that you had to “continue” if you wanted to be a disciple. In other words, He wanted to

see fruit, before He would simply accept a man's profession of faith.

Let's picture Jesus doing an altar call. (Isn't that what He was doing here? Wasn't He trying to get them to repent, and believe?) Picture this, He has been preaching for a while. He is pointing out to the congregation that if they do not repent they will die in their sins (vs 24); and how they are the ones who will nail him to the cross (vs 28). When He gets to this point, many are ready to come to the altar. The scripture says many believe (vs 30). It seems like a good evangelistic meeting so far, but here is where everything goes wrong for Jesus. Every evangelist knows, once they are down front, what you do is pray with them. Pick any version of the sinners prayer you can think of and insert it here. Tell them they are saved and send them packing. Oh, be sure and record their names in a book and get an accurate count for your journal.

Or you could be like Jesus. You could preach on. Rather than a proclamation of freedom to those who believe, Jesus lays out conditions. Conditions for freedom? But if it is freedom, how could there be conditions? Perhaps we need to look at what this freedom is after all.

The first question I ask is **what have you been set free from?**

Look at verse 34 above. "*Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*" The main thing we have been set free from is sin. You will notice Jesus is not telling you that you are in bondage to law. Today, everyone wants to talk about freedom from the law. But Jesus isn't saying that the law is your problem. Yes, it shows you your sin. It points out your position as a sinner, and a lawbreaker. It contradicts what your flesh wants you to think - that everything is ok. But the law is not your problem. Sin is your problem.

To demonstrate this let's go back for a minute to Israel. Remember when Israel was in bondage to Egypt? After God set them "free", what was the first thing He did. He gave them the law! The law was considered a blessing! It was what set Israel apart from every other nation. Just look at Ps. 119. The longest chapter in the Word of God is dedicated to telling you what a blessing the law is. Look, also at this passage from Ps. 78:

5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:

6 That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children:

7 That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:

8 And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

The law is intended to cause us to put our hope in God, and to remember Him, and to help us please Him. How could we ever please God, if we did not know what He wanted from us?

The fact is that we have been set free from sin! Every Christian believes that. But what does it mean? Freed from the penalty of sin. Yes (if you continue in His word), He has separated your sin as far as the east is from the west and remembers it no more. Unfortunately, this idea has caused great sin to abound in the Christian community, because preachers don't go any further with it. They stop there, and so rob the Church of victory. They leave us in the same plight as Israel, with a law they tell us we cannot keep.

God has a better plan. His plan for freedom included another level of freedom; freedom from the power of sin. Jesus said the problem was that you were the slave of sin. That means, if you don't continue in His word, you do not have the power to prevail against temptation. This is where the preachers have really cheated you. You have been told your whole life, that you can expect to sin, you will always sin, and there is no hope of walking in holiness. Sounds like sin is still in charge to me. Why then did Jesus say that if we continue in His word, we would be free?

We have been lied to. The idea that you cannot be holy, has kept you from continuing in His Word, and so kept you from victory. Jesus never said you can't be holy. He said you **must** be holy. And He said He would send the Holy Spirit to help you be holy. We are supposed to be the

overcomers, not the overcome. **We are supposed to be victors not victims!**

My second question is **What have you been set free for?**

Here again I must go back to Israel. God said, "**Let my people go, that they may serve me...**" The simple reason that God wants you free, is so that you can serve God. Slavery to sin makes it impossible for you to serve God. You can't serve God and sin. Your captivity to the world system, to your own lusts, and to satan and his hosts, keeps you from doing any real good in the kingdom of God. Your guilt, caused by your inability to keep your promises to God, keeps you from opening your mouth and telling others about Jesus. Ultimately this spirit of compromise keeps you from any real victory and shuts you down. If you have no peace, you can't tell others about the one who came to make peace, and even if you do, the message won't ring true.

The mark of a child of God is that he is the servant of God. This is how the apostles would identify themselves. "*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ*", "*Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ*", "*Jude the servant of Jesus Christ*", "*James the servant of God*", "*Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ*", "*and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John*". Most importantly let's

The liberty that Christ paid for with his precious blood is not freedom to sin!

look at Jesus. Phil 2:7 tells us that He *“took upon him the form of a servant”*, and again in Heb. 10:7 he is quoted *“I come...to do thy will, O God.”* And once more, John 6:38 *“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”* Are you of a different spirit than these? Is your spirit of freedom one that releases you from service, releases you from doing the will of God? Does your freedom release you from the great commission? Does it release you from loving your neighbor as yourself? Does it even release you from the Ten Commandments? Which one can you break? Can you murder and be a Christian? Can you be an adulterer and be a Christian? How about a liar? God forbid! **GOD FORBID!**

Now you know the word tells us in II Corinthians 5:17 that if any man be in Christ he is a *“new creature.”* That new creature is God’s workmanship which is *“created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (Eph. 2:10). It is a creature with a totally new nature, a nature without limits, without fear, without a past. This new nature is alive with the Spirit of God, created by the very breath of God breathing into your dead spirit, and giving you new life, Spirit life, zoe, the God kind of life. And this new life was created for one reason, **to serve God.**

If the Word of God is true, then you, new creation that you are, are free to do the will of God. So my final question is **What are you doing with your freedom?** If you are a born again child of the living God, a new creation, created unto good works, free from sin, its penalty and power, free from the curses it brings, like fear, anxiety, loneliness, then, what are you doing with your freedom? Jesus demonstrated His freedom over and over again. He was free from peer pressure, He would heal on

the Sabbath even if all the people of status hated Him for it. He would dump over tables of money in the temple. He would correct the doctrine of the scholars, He would preach damnation to the religious leaders rather than sit by and let them lull the masses to sleep, with their *“peace – peace”* messages.

So what are you going to do about it? Are you willing to serve the One who set you free? Are you willing to give Him your life? (not just a few minutes at the altar, but rather your body on the altar 24-7) Will you tell you friends about Jesus? Or your mom and dad? Or your teacher? How about your co-worker? Didn’t Jesus die for all of these? Are you going to let them die without Him? Will you go if He tells you? Will you even ask Him?

Finally I leave you with this:

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s. 1 Corinthians 6:19,20

Are you really free? If you are, then serve. Serve Jesus with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. God forbid we should be content with anything less.

Ben Nelson is an anointed servant of God. He also serves on the Board of Directors of Kim Josephson Ministries and has been like a right arm to me. The article is dynamite and I wanted to share it with you.

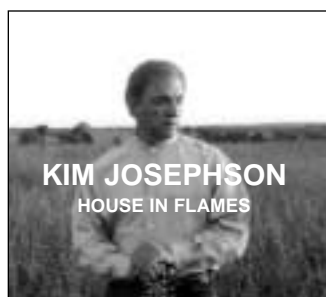
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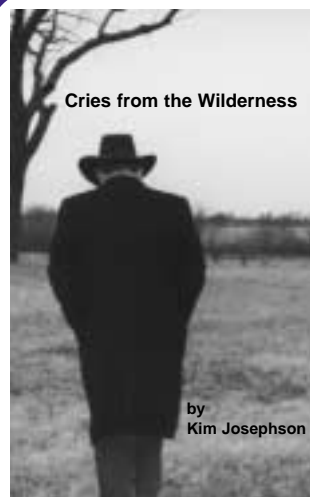
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