

Fully Free in Jesus (John 8:31-36)
That You May Believe: The Gospel of John
Southern Hills Baptist Church
February 5, 2017

WORD OF THANKS – INVESTING IN US

Happy Sunday! It is a true joy to be here opening up God's Word with you tonight. Before we jump into our study tonight, can I quickly give you a word of thanks? Both Matthew and I spent the first half of our week at a Pastor's conference and it was a true time of spiritual refreshment. This is something the church has sent us to 3 of the last 4 years now and each year it has a big impact on both Matthew and I. I just want to thank you for allowing us to go on this trip. Thank you for investing in us this way.

The Speakers – Gospel-Shaped, Gospel-Fueled Ambition

The conference was a true blessing. The speakers were fantastic. They both encouraged us and challenged us from God's Word to live out of a Gospel-shaped and Gospel-fueled ambition.

Stepping Away for Perspective

Additionally, these conferences are a huge blessing as they allow Matthew and I to step away from so many of the responsibilities that we have for a few days and reflect, consider, evaluate, and plan in ways that we simply can't here. I have a hard time thinking too far past the week I am in with all that is going on so stepping away for just a few days like this works wonders.

Thanks to the Wives

Again, thank you. I also want to offer up a word of thanks to our wives who shouldered everything while we were gone. They are nothing short of incredible. They did so with **excited hearts for us to go and be refreshed**. We are blessed beyond what we deserve to be sure.

Excited to be Back

We are always excited to come back after these conferences and roll up our sleeves and jump back into the work we are doing here and that was certainly the case this time around. We look forward to sharing more with you later about things that we learned and things God laid on our hearts while we were away. But again, in the mean time I just want to say thank you.

INTRODUCTION

Let's turn our attention to our text. If you have your Bibles tonight, turn over to John 8:31.

Freedom: Few Resources as Precious

Tonight, we will be considering the matter of freedom. There are few resources so precious as freedom. Freedom is a resource so valuable that that people are willing to lay down their lives for it. That is the story of the nation that we live, right? "Give me liberty or give me death!" This was the exclamation of Patrick Henry as he rallied men to join in the Revolutionary War. We are a people who value freedom.

Few Truly Know Freedom

Yet, sadly, few Americans know true freedom. They know freedom in some superficial ways, sure, but they don't know true, full, deep, lasting freedom. There is no nation in the world that can offer up this kind of freedom. There is but one liberator who can give the fullness of freedom, and His name is Jesus.

Preview

Tonight we will hear this bold promise of liberation from Jesus, we will consider what it means, we will rejoice over it, and consider how we can enter into this incredible freedom.

John 8:31-38

[31] So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, [32] and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." [33] They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" [34] Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. [35] The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. [36] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. [37] I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. [38] I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

The Promise: The Fullness of Freedom

The big promise of this passage is that Jesus is the **Liberator of Souls**. He offers a freedom that plumbs depths we had never known before. He tells the crowd that had confessed belief in Him that abiding in His Word and knowing the truth would set them free and if He sets them free, they would be free indeed, or free in the most significant ways possible.

Good News, Right? Yes and No

Now, this is a message of hope, right? Freedom is a good thing, isn't it? Well yes and no. This is a message of hope, but before you can see this message as full of hope you have to come to grips with the reality of your situation before your liberation. **The need to be freed means that you are enslaved, that you are captive. This isn't good news.**

Don't Need No Freedom

The Jewish crowd Jesus was talking to didn't like the implication that they were spiritually enslaved. It insulted the pride they had in their spiritual lineage. They respond by asking...

Freedom? What are you talking about? We don't need any freedom, we are Abraham's children, we are his descendants, we have no need for freedom as we have never been enslaved spiritually.

Trust in their Ethnic Heritage

You see, this Jewish crowd thought that their ethnic heritage kept them in the clear. They were Abraham's children, God's chosen people. Now, understand this, to be Jewish in the Old Testament was an incredible blessing as God had revealed Himself in special ways to the Jews.

- He had set them free from Egypt.
- He had tabernacle with them in the wilderness.
- He had given them the law.
- He had sent them many, many prophets with His Word.

Amongst countless other blessings. The Jews took great spiritual pride in this and in this passage we can see that these Jews did so to a fault. They had seen the blessings of God toward them and interpreted them as to mean that they were in a good place spiritually. No liberation was necessary.

Can You Relate? Do You Need Freedom?

Maybe you are here tonight and as I have talked about this matter of freedom the concept offends you.

Freedom? I already have all of the freedom I need. I can do what I want, when I want. I can believe what I want, who is there to stop me.

Maybe you look at all of the external freedom that you experience in life and take it to mean that you are fully free.

Offend Your Self-Worth and Pride

Listen, I understand how this concept could offend your sense of self-worth and pride, but this message wasn't delivered by Jesus to put you down, **it was delivered to hold a mirror up to each of our faces that we may know who we truly are and where we stand.**

Truth Hurts

Sometimes looking in a mirror can be less than fun. Believe me, I know. But it reveals truth, **sometimes the truth hurts, but that pain is the starting point of something. That pain is God's tool to help you know something is wrong, something is off, which should fuel you to pursue the change you need,** and that change can be found in Jesus!

Jesus Drills Deeper

Jesus drills deeper in to the captivity that holds all people before His liberating work in verses 34-35...

John 8:34-35

[34] Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

[35] The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever

Don't Feel Enslaved?

All who practice sin are beholden, enslaved to it. Maybe as I say that **you think to yourself that you don't feel enslaved to your sin.** The so-called "sin" in your life is like any other choice, activity, or habit in your life. It doesn't enslave you, it is merely something you enjoy or partake in.

Jesus, Designer of our Soul – His Take

Jesus, the designer of our soul, has a different take however. When Jesus speaks about people, He doesn't merely speak as one who has observed behavior, **He speaks as One who knows hearts, motivations, desires.** Do you remember what John recorded about Jesus back in chapter 2...

John 2:23-25

[23] Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. [24] But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people [25] and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Jesus Knows You Better

Jesus' assessment of you goes far deeper than your own assessment or understanding of yourself! And what Jesus teaches us about ourselves is that sin takes a hold of us in deeper ways that we can understand apart from Jesus' Word.

Made for More

Yet, sin gives us the illusion of freedom. Sin tells us that we are doing what makes us happy and that we will find happiness in this sin, but these are nothing more than lies. Sin can't offer true happiness b/c we were made for more.

Romans 11:36

[36] For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

We were made by, through, and for God. We were designed to be His. This is where we find our greatest meaning, purpose, satisfaction, and joy.

The Lie – Follow Your Heart to Happiness

Sin tells us the lie that we would be happy if we merely follow our hearts. You can't trust your heart brothers and sisters...

Jeremiah 17:9

[9] The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

So you may not feel enslaved to your sin, but **you can't go by feelings**, your heart is prone to wander, **your heart, when enslaved to sin, has deceitful desires that lead you to destruction as those desires lead you away for your created purpose.**

Illusion of Freedom

Listen to how Peter describes the illusion of freedom that false teachers live under...

2 Peter 2:19

[19] They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

The world will tell you that your faith is a prison, it will promise you freedom, it will tell you that you no longer have to live enslaved to all of the rules God has laid out in this thick book, and now you are free to go live life like you want to, but all the while the world is the one overcome and enslaved. The freedom the world offers you is nothing more than an illusion.

Set the Captives Free

Don't buy into these misguided thoughts, **you were made for something greater, you were made for someone greater, you were made for your Maker.** Thankfully, we don't have to live imprisoned to our sin, for Jesus, the Soul-Liberator, has come to set the captives free.

Luke 4:18-19

[18] "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, [19] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Jesus has Overcome

Jesus came to set free those who are enslaved to sin. While sin is too big for you to overcome, Jesus has already overcome it by living a life fully separate from sin, then dying the death that should have been ours because of our sin, then proving He is stronger than sin, He overcame it rising again from the grave.

Free Indeed – Full, True Freedom

And now He makes this promise that is full of hope, He will set sinners free.

John 8:36

[36] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

"Free Indeed." This phrase is emphatic. Jesus is saying that the freedom He offers is true, full freedom. It isn't a half-baked, most of the way, soul freedom. Jesus liberates our souls fully from the clutches of sin

The Fullness of this Freedom...

What does this full freedom look like? Here are 3 elements to the freedom that Jesus offers.

1. New Desires

First, our souls are freed from sin in that we are granted new desires, desires that align to our created purpose. The Christian life isn't painful toil of adhering to commands you have not desire to follow, that wouldn't be true freedom.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

[26] And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. [27] And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Heart/Inner Man Changed

When Jesus liberates us we are given new hearts, living hearts. The heart in the Bible speaks to the inner man, it is the sitting place of the desires, affections, motivations, and thoughts. Jesus reshapes our desires from the inside out and these new desire cause us to walk in obedience to God, showing us that we have a desire, a hunger, to live for God.

Desires Leading to Life

This is true soul-liberty! **You have been set free from the old desires of your heart that God called deceitful and sick. It was leading to your destruction. Now you have desires that lead unto life.** True freedom!

2. New Ability

Secondly, Jesus frees us from sin by giving us a new ability, spiritually speaking. We can see this from the Ezekiel passage we just read. Before Jesus does His liberating work our hearts are dead, hearts of stone, pumping no blood and sustaining no life. He gives us a heart of flesh, a living heart. The dead are stuck, unable to move, to effect any change. There is no freedom here. So Jesus does what only He can, He gives life!

3. New Eternal Destiny

Thirdly, Jesus frees us from the consequences and results of sin. Many feel free as they live in their sin, but destruction lies ahead.

Romans 6:23

[23] For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Gospel Story

Jesus liberates our souls from the condemnation that sin so surely brings from the Holy God. The Gospel is the story of how Jesus took our condemnation and gave us His perfection so that we might live in the reward that was to be His. Those who have been liberated by Jesus now live under the promise of eternal life, this is a liberating truth, only the best lies ahead of you as you follow Jesus.

Summary/Transition

So those who are liberated by Jesus are free, free indeed, free to follow Him with a desire to be His, free to follow Him in this new life that He has given, free to follow Him to an eternal rewards beyond all comparison. This is true freedom!

So what does this mean for us? Jesus offers perfect freedom, what are we to do with this?

Application 1

How Do We Enter This Freedom? Know the Truth, Know the Word

The first question we must ask is, How can we find this true, full, eternal freedom that Jesus offers? Jesus answers that question for us in verses 31-32.

John 8:31-32

[31] So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, [32] and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Know the Truth – Culturally Fuzzy

Let's work at this from the inside out. How are we to find the full freedom that Jesus has spoken of? We are to know the truth. This sounds good. I mean, who doesn't want to know the truth. The only problem is where do we find truth. This is where our world fractures and splits, right? If you turn on the news or go online to read about what is going on in the world you have to sort through an incredible number of fake news articles, other articles that are so clearly driven by an agenda they abandoned truth before the article was even written, and an ocean of "alternative facts."

Finding Truth – Jesus' Word

Jesus doesn't leave us on our own to find the source of truth that we need. He tells us exactly where to find it, in His Word. He goes farther than this though. The instruction He gives those listening is that His disciples abide in His Word and this is where they find the truth that leads to freedom.

Evaluating Discipleship

So a couple of things we need to note... first, Jesus is providing a way to evaluate true faith. Our passage opened up by describing this crowd as those who believed, but what we are going to see as we continue on in the passage next week is that this was a false faith. Jesus knew this and is trying to make sure His true disciples know the difference. This crowd confessed faith, but they will not abide in His Word. We see hints of it in our passage as they question Jesus with a spirit of defiance. This spirit builds as we continue in chapter 8.

Abiding

The other thing we need to take note of is that Jesus is calling for us to abide in His Word, **meaning we need to live in and from His Word. Abiding in the Word of Jesus means that we don't get to cherry pick the teachings we like best and abandon the rest. His Word is authoritative for all of our lives.**

Do you abide in the Word of Jesus?

- Do you consider God's Word when making big decisions?
- Do you consider the Scriptures when thinking about how you are going to respond to situations?
- Do the teachings of God's Word play a critical role in the shaping of your budget and how you spend money?
- Does God's Word define positions you take politically more than whatever party you align with?

- Does God's Word play the leading role in how you invest in your marriage, parent your children, work as an employee, make your schedule?

God's Word should be our authority in how we approach all of these situations and everything in between. That is what it means to abide in Jesus' Word.

Not Saved by Works/Abiding

Quick side note: Jesus isn't teaching that we earn our salvation, or earn our liberation from sin by good works, namely abiding in His Word. Abiding in the Word of God is the result of salvation. When God has changed our hearts, giving us spiritual life, we will have a hunger to know Him more fully and honor Him in all that we do, thus we will abide in His Word.

Transition

So Jesus has promised to liberate, to set free, those who abide in His Word. The choice has been laid out clearly before you, has it not?

Application 2

How Do We Respond to Jesus' Offer? Believe!

How will you respond to this gracious offer from Jesus? Believe! If you have not put your trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, today is the day of salvation, put your trust in Him today. You won't find this offer anywhere else. No one else can free you from your sins. Every other offer of salvation in our world is based on what you can bring to the table, but not Christianity. Following Jesus isn't about what you can do, it is about what He can do.

- He can live the perfect life you couldn't
- He can die in your place taking the wrath of God for your sins
- He can rise again, overcoming the grave and sin
- He can resurrect your dead heart, giving it new life
- He can change your heart, giving you new desires

Not What You Can Bring

So you don't have to come to Jesus wondering if you can bring enough. Jesus isn't interested in what you can bring, He will shoulder the load. All He asks for is your faith and love. Give Him your heart and He will carry the rest. This is joy of the Gospel, this is why we call it the Gospel, it is Good News!

Slavery Leads to Destruction

Maybe you are here tonight and you have not put your faith in Jesus, the reality is that you are living enslaved to your sins. Jesus tells us where this slavery is taking people in verse 35...

John 8:35

[35] The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.

Abraham's Sons

Jesus makes an allusion to the story of Abraham and His family. Abraham had a son with one of the servants in his home and another with his wife Sarah. Culturally, there was a huge difference between these sons, one was born legitimately, the other was born out of God's plan. God, to protect the lineage promise He had made to and through Abraham, ordered Abraham to send out Ishmael, his illegitimate son.

Spiritual Ishmael

Jesus is teaching these Israelites, who have been holding on to their lineage to Abraham for their salvation, that **spiritually they are Ishmael**, the son of a slave, not Isaac, the son of promise. Ishmael was cast out of his home and if they remain in their slavery they too will be cast out from God.

Jesus Can Set You Free, Believe!

Slavery to sin will see you cast out from God, but Jesus can set you free, **He can make you a son so you have a right to the home. Trust Him.** If this is something you want to learn more about, I would love to tell you more about Jesus and His Gospel. There is no greater news. Let me or someone else here tonight share more with you about the hope that can be found in Jesus and Jesus alone.

Application 3

What Does Jesus' Freedom Empower Us To? Take heart and fight sin, sin no longer has dominion over the Believer.

Something else we need to walk away as we consider the freedom that Jesus provides to those who have put their faith in Him is that **our sins no longer have dominion over us.**

I talked earlier about how many probably don't feel enslaved to their sins, but I bet there are just as many here tonight who would say the opposite. **You wonder why you have never been able to overcome that besetting sin in your life. It frustrates you to no end.** You feel owned by it. Despite hating its presence in your life, you have almost come to accept it as a reality b/c you have failed in every effort to put it to death. So you live with constant guilt.

Overcoming Sin is Hard, But No Dominion

Brothers and Sisters, **this is hard, sin is nasty, it is strong, we are weak, but Jesus is stronger** and when He set you free from your sin that meant He has broken its power over you. It doesn't have to dominate you as it has in the past. His liberating power is stronger, the grip that sin has on you is broken.

Romans 6:5-11

[5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. [6] We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. [7] For one who has died has been set free from sin. [8] Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. [9] We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. [10] For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. [11] So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Hope, Jesus Won!

We are dead to sin and alive to God. **There is hope in this battle with sin! Jesus has already won!** Now with that said, **this doesn't mean killing that besetting sin will be easy or smooth.** You will have to do real work to see it killed in your life. **The good news is that it is possible now. God has given you a desire to see it destroyed, that wasn't there before Jesus.** God has given you the ability to rid yourself of that sin as you are now indwelt by the Spirit of God. God has also saved you into a family of believers who are fellow-strugglers working through issues that are different, yet altogether the same.

Therefore His call upon your life to be holy as He is holy is possible. You can overcome that sin. Don't give up. **Rely on His grace, His Spirit, His Word, and His people and you can overcome any sin in your life because He has set you free and when the Son has set you free, you are free indeed.**

Conclusion/Application 4

Rejoice!

Let me close tonight by simply saying, what a Savior! Jesus frees us fully. The soul-liberation He brings is perfect and complete. He gives us new desires so we don't have to follow Him out of compulsory will power, we can follow Him from a heart of love. He gives us new life so that we have the ability and opportunity to follow Him. He gives us eternity so the end of our following Him is a forever glory and joy.

Free to Live Out Your Created Purpose – Joy!

The chains of sin that held us back from living out the purpose that God created us for have been broken. Jesus equips us to live the life that we were created to live. We can now live out our purpose, which is to live for the glory of God, **meaning there is greater joy and satisfaction to be found on this side of eternity** as well. We don't have to settle for false joys that give us the illusion of freedom, we can find the real thing in Jesus, which leads to life abundant.

LET'S PRAY