

# Freedom

*John 8:31-36*

- The First Amendment to the Constitution says,

*“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble.”*

- At the root of all that we’ve been taught at school and in society are these things that we refer to as our “Basic Freedoms”
- These thoughts are ingrained in our upbringing and a part of our being... That:

*We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable; that all men are created equal and independent, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent and inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, and liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*

- We think that Freedom is a right that each one of us has, and it can’t be taken away
- That no matter what, we should fight to keep those Freedoms
- But, what is Freedom
- Fundamentally, most Americans proceed on the belief that “as long as you aren’t hurting anyone else” you can do whatever you want
- “Being able to do whatever you want” is how most people would define Freedom
- From the moment you wake up in the morning until the time you fall asleep you are free to do whatever you want
- You are free to make whatever decisions you want
- You can make mistakes if you want
- You can work hard, or you can not work at all

- You can dress the way that you want
- You can eat whatever type of food that you want
- You can do whatever you want
- But, are you really free?
- Do you really **FEEL** free?
- Many people don't feel free
- Many people feel trapped by their job, their mortgage, their marriage, their life
- Many people live a lifestyle that they can't afford
- Many people are in a job that makes them unhappy
- Many people are in a loveless marriage
- These feelings of being trapped and defeated often lead to anxiety and depression
- Anxiety and depression often lead to other poor choices, which compound the problem
- Many people feel frustrated and somehow cheated, abused or taken advantage of because they feel like they have this fundamental right to be free, but simply don't feel free
- The expectation that because each one of us have this inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness has somehow been twisted to an expectation that we **ARE** going to be happy in this life – That we **ARE** going to have freedom
- Have we ever stopped to ask ourselves?
- **SHOULD** we really feel free?
- **SHOULD** we live with the expectation that our life is our own to enjoy?
- I don't think that that necessarily is a reasonable expectation
- Jesus said...

- 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.”

- While this is true, I do believe that there is a corollary by President James Garfield,
- “The truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable.”
- True Freedom isn’t easy
- True Freedom is not what most people think
- The path to True Freedom isn’t about throwing off your shackles and rejecting all authority
- Oddly enough, the path to True Freedom comes by Surrendering
- Surrender is not a popular word
- It is probably disliked almost as much as the word Submission
- Surrender implies losing, and no one wants to be a loser
- Surrender evokes the unpleasant images of admitting defeat in battle, forfeiting a game, or yielding to a stronger opponent
- Surrender is almost always used in a negative context
- In our competitive world we're taught to never quit trying, never give up, and never give in
- We never talk about surrendering
- If winning is everything, than surrendering is unthinkable
- Yet, in the Bible, instead of seeing words like win, succeed, and conquer, we see words like *yield, submit, obey, and surrender*
- Surrendering is best demonstrated in obedience
- Surrendering means cooperating with your Creator

- Surrendering means allowing God to work in you for his good pleasure
- You say "Yes, Lord" to whatever he asks of you
- Whatever!
- Surrendering is all about giving your life up to God's Schedule
- God's Agenda
- God's Budget
- Romans 6:13

13) Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but **present yourselves to God** as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as **instruments for righteousness**.

- Romans 12-14 – Message

That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time---remember, you've been raised from the dead!---into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.

- You stop being the one that you are trying to please
- You focus on something else – someone else
- You focus on turning yourself into an instrument of righteousness
- It sounds pretty scary to give us this amount of control in your life...
- But it works out well because of WHO you are giving control to
- God is not a cruel slave driver or a bully who uses brute force to coerce us into submission
- He doesn't try to break our will, but woos us to himself so that we might offer ourselves freely to him

- God is all about love and freedom, and surrendering to God brings freedom, not bondage
- But, look how Romans continues...
- Romans 6:16-18
  - 16) Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?
  - 17) But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,
  - 18) and, having been set free from sin, have become **slaves of righteousness**.
- The reality is that in pursuit of True Freedom we make ourselves slaves to God
- It's counter-intuitive, but true
- The supreme example of Surrender is Jesus
- The night before his crucifixion Jesus surrendered himself completely to God's plan
- He prayed,
- Luke 22:39-45 - Read
  - 42) "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."
- Jesus didn't pray, "God, if you're able to take away this pain, please do so"
- Instead he prayed, "God, if it is in your best interest to remove this suffering, please do so. But if it fulfills your purpose, that's what I want, too"
- Genuine surrender says, "Father, if this problem, pain, sickness, or circumstance is needed to fulfill your purpose and glory in my life or in another's, please don't take it away"
- This level of maturity doesn't come easy
- It's hard to give up control over your own life

- To release your schedule to someone else
- To change your agenda to meet someone else's needs
- God doesn't make it easy
- The time that you are called to serve Him will often be the most inconvenient
- You're incredibly busy and you've got a brief window open
- You've been wanting to enjoy this one thing for months, and it looks like it's going to work out and you'll be able to squeeze it into that brief window
- THAT is when God chooses to send someone into your life that He wants you to help
- God wants you to learn to fully surrender your will over to Him
- To be like our Lord Jesus, and be able to say, "Not my will, but yours"
- This isn't easy
- It's hard to know what God wants from us
- It's sometimes even harder to do it once we figure out what it is
- But, if we really want to experience the Freedom that God has planned for us
- It doesn't involve doing "whatever you want"
- It involves making the same choice that Jesus made before he faced the Cross
- This bread and wine that we are about to eat are symbols of the choice that Jesus made, and call us to make
- True Freedom involves doing "what God wants" with your life