

# Free At Last!

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*John 8:31-38*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, "I Have a Dream" speech undoubtedly is one of the greatest speeches ever given in this nation. You know how Dr. King ended that speech: "When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual. 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!'"
- B. Today is the day that we as a nation pause to thank God for our freedom.
  - 1. Throughout the nation this day speeches will be given commemorating our freedom.
  - 2. Throughout the nation this day parades, picnics and fireworks will commemorate our freedom.
  - 3. In fact, the President of the United States will be at Haddad Park this afternoon to commemorate our freedom.
- C. However, this nation's freedom is really temporary.
  - 1. If a powerful empire were to arise in this world, this nation could very likely cease to exist.
    - a. I know that seems far-fetched, but that idea probably seemed far—fetched to the Persians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Ottomans, and countless other peoples throughout world history.
    - b. If and when this nation does cease to exist, what will happen to the freedoms we cherish so greatly?
  - 2. This morning, we want to think about true freedom, the freedom we can have in Christ.

## FREEDOM IN TRUTH, vv. 31-33

- A. "Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples,'" v. 31.
  - 1. According to chapter 7, Jesus is speaking at the Feast of Tabernacles, and a great many Jews had been caught up in Jesus' words and were listening to him.
    - a. Jesus' speaking at the Feast of Tabernacles was not without result, for verse 30 says, "As he was saying these things, many believed in him."
    - b. Apparently, "believed in him" does not mean that they became his followers as our passage this morning will bear out. These believing Jews acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah, but they weren't quite ready to follow him.
  - 2. Jesus says to these Jews accepting his Messiahship, "If` you really want to believe in me, continue in my word."
    - a. Abiding in Jesus' word obviously means to obey Jesus' word, to do what Jesus says to do.
    - b. Jesus says, in essence, "Being a believer doesn't mean saying, 'Wow, he's the Messiah. Being a believer means doing what I say.'"
- B. Jesus, "If you abide in my word, you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free," v. 32.
  - 1. The believers who abided in Jesus' word would know the truth.
    - a. The Greek term "truth" doesn't mean anything more than what it means in English.
      - 1) Greek writers used the term as the opposite of "falsehood."
      - 2) However, NT writers began to use the word in a heightened sense; they used the word "truth" oftentimes to mean the contents of the Gospel as the highest expression of Christian truth.
    - b. John, probably more than any other biblical writer, uses "truth" in this way.

- 1) “You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth” (Jn. 5:33).
  - 2) “Now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God” (Jn. 8:40).
  - 3) “For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice” (Jn. 18:37).
2. That truth, the contents of the Gospel, will make us free.
- a. Interestingly, Jesus does not here tell us from what we’ll be made free.
  - b. In this verse, he simply says, “You’re going to know the Gospel, and that will make you free.”
- C. As evidence that Jesus didn’t explain in verse 32 what he meant by freedom, notice what the Jews say, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free?’” v. 33.
1. In some respects, this is one of the most baffling passages in all of Scripture.
    - a. The Jews say, “We’ve never been enslaved to anyone.”
      - 1) Jesus was nicer than I would probably have been. I would have probably said something like, “You’ve never been enslaved to anyone. Ok, go tell that Roman soldier standing right there; he has no power over you.”
      - 2) The Jewish people had been enslaved time and time again — from Egypt to Assyria to Babylonia to Persia to Greece and to Rome.
    - b. But, notice what the Jews say, “We are descendants of Abraham.”
      - 1) The Jews believed that these other kingdoms were ruled by guardian angels and the stars.
      - 2) But, they believed that because they were physically descended from Abraham that God — and God alone — was their ruler.
  2. The Jews then asked Jesus, “Look, God is our ultimate Ruler. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be set free?’”
- D. We’re going to discuss the rest of Jesus’ statement on freedom in just a moment.
1. However, we need to pause here and grasp what Jesus has said thus far. ***The means of freedom is the truth.***
  2. Nothing else is able to free us from our enslavement.
    - a. There are many who go around espousing to know what God desires. But, if it’s not the truth, their audiences will not be freed.
    - b. You know how careful you need to be about every word spoken from this pulpit. You know to check every word for its accuracy to make sure it is truth, for nothing else will make you free.

## **FREEDOM FROM SIN, vv. 34-38**

- A. “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin,” v. 34.
1. This must have sounded so very strange to the ears of Jesus’ audience.
    - a. You see, the Jews thought that since they had the Law they couldn’t be enslaved to sin.
      - 1) The rabbis even had a saying, “The circumcised do not go down to Gehenna.”
      - 2) “Gehenna” is the Greek term for hell, the hell that is the eternal abode of Satan, his angels, and the wicked. Thus, they said that as long as one is a Jew, born of Abraham, he was a-ok.
    - b. The Jews also thought that the Gentiles, because they did not have the Law, were enslaved to sin.
  2. Jesus says, “Whoever — Jew or Gentile — sins is a slave to sin.” Jesus says, “I don’t care who you are. If you sin, you become a slave to sin.”
  3. Notice what Paul said about this slavery: “We know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Rom. 7:14-15).

- a. Doesn't that go quite well with our own experiences?
    - 1) You get so angry at your spouse, and you know you shouldn't say what you're about to say, but you say it anyway.
    - 2) You know you shouldn't go fishing on a Sunday morning, but the weather is just gorgeous, and you go.
    - 3) You know you shouldn't tell your supervisor why you really want the day off on Friday, but you go ahead and lie anyway.
  - b. Haven't we all found ourselves in those situations? Do you find yourself as a slave to sin this morning?
- B. "The slave does not continue in the house for ever; the son continues for ever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed," vv. 35-36.
- 1. Slaves did not live with a family for ever in this time period.
    - a. The Old Testament required that slaves be freed in certain years; in Gentile law, slaves could either be freed or sold to another household.
    - b. Sons obviously remained in the family.
  - 2. Jesus says, "Since I am a Son and abide forever, I can really make you free."
  - 3. I really wonder if part of the meaning isn't that Jesus can make us free from sin in a way the Law never could.
    - a. Moses was often called the "servant of God" in the Old Testament; the servant - Moses – does not abide forever. From the standpoint of those who heard Jesus, his law would soon pass away.
    - b. Yet, when Jesus, the Son, came he brought true freedom – "the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:17).
  - 4. Even Paul, when writing about his captivity to sin, knew that Jesus could free him – "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:24-25).
- C. How is it that knowledge of the truth – and even Jesus – will make us free from sin?
- 1. The truth frees us from sin, for Scripture tells us what pitfalls we must avoid in this life.
    - a. "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to thy word" (Ps. 119:9).
    - b. "If it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet'" (Rom. 7:7).
      - 1) Granted, in the context, Paul is speaking about the OT law, and he's making the point that the law served a valuable service in pointing out sin.
      - 2) Yet, isn't that a valuable service that all Scripture provides? Informing us of what sin is, what the consequences of sin are, and how much better our lives will be if we avoid sin.
  - 2. Jesus frees us from sin, for he has removed the guilt of sin.
    - a. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).
    - b. The punishment of sin, which should have been ours, he took and he has removed.
  - 3. Jesus frees us from sin, for he has taken away, not only the guilt of sin, but he has taken away our guilt, too.
    - a. You know what guilt can do to an individual. I-low many of us have sinned in the past and have been eaten up by guilt? I remember I once did something I ought not to have done, and I didn't eat for a week.
    - b. But, Jesus came and said, "I'll pay the price." We have no reason to be eaten up by guilt in Christ, for we have been forgiven.

## CONCLUSION

- A. We value our freedom as a nation – from cook-outs, to parades, to firework displays, we will celebrate that freedom this day.

B. Do you need to come and be made free this morning?