

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

Let Freedom Ring!

John 8:31-36

1 On August 28th, 1963, from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Dr. Martin Luther King said these immortal words: "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.' I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together as a table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today. . ." The motto of this gathering of thousands of people was "Let Freedom Ring".

It was through crusaders like Dr. King and others that the rest of us were awakened to the extent of racial

discrimination that was happening in our country. This march on Washington began a change of attitude throughout the nation resulting in the election of Senator Obama, an African American, to the presidency of the United States. If real freedom is going to happen, however, then it must go beyond the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968.

Where does the Bible tell us to "Let Freedom Ring?" ²

In John, Chapter 8, verses 31 through 36, it says, **To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.** ³

I. Where Does the Bible Tell Us to Let Freedom Ring?

Where does the Bible tell us to let freedom ring?

Most of the religions of the world are based on keeping rules. God, or Nirvana, or something, or someone spiritual and greater than we are, is up there someplace. In order to have a relationship, or state of being, more desirable than what we have in this life, we are to obey the rules. We are to participate in the ceremonies at the right time, in the right way, and conform to the right obedient lifestyle. To the degree we are successful with the regulations, to that degree we complete our spiritual quest. And, usually, you never really know if you are successful until after the end of your earthly life. Religion is a big gamble, isn't it?

Fortunately for us Christians, God doesn't work that way today. He did originally; but it was only a

preparation stage for the plan He ultimately intended. His full desire is for freedom to ring in your life. ⁴

First, you are free from the curse of the Law of Moses. This is the Old Testament section taking up three quarters of the contents of your Bible. There's a reason it is labeled the Old Testament. ⁵

Let's look at its purpose. Galatians, chapter 3, verses 23 through 25, states, **Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.** Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. The original audience hearing this passage had a clearer understanding of what it meant than we do. Here is the social context.

Whenever the Greek, and later the Roman, army won a war and conquered a country they would imprison the leaders, often the political and educational elite. The Romans would parade their captives through the streets of Rome in a victory celebration. These

captives would then be sold as slaves to the aristocratic families who could afford them. Often the slaves were better educated than their owners. ⁶

The Greek "Paidagogos" ¹ was usually an old slave trusted with the children's moral character. Often his only official duty would be to see that the children got safely to and from their schoolteacher each day. If he were one of the educated slaves, he could also teach the children.

One of the original Walt Disney feature movies was called "Song of the South". It was the story of a southern plantation prior to the civil war. Early each morning the slaves would walk to the fields singing spiritual songs as they labored until evening. One of those slaves, Uncle Remos, was too old for strenuous manual labor. His job was to take the little slave children, too young to labor in the fields, sit them under a shade tree and tell them stories to give them wisdom and develop their moral character. He would

¹ παιδαγωγός.

**tell them about Br'er Rabbit outsmarting the fox!
When I think of the Paidagogos, I think he must have
been like Uncle Remos.**

**The Law of Moses had its function as the Paidagogos
had his. Each served their purpose and became
obsolete when that purpose was fulfilled. When the
children grew up the Paidagogos was no longer
needed. When Lord Jesus died on the cross the Law
of Moses was fulfilled. ⁷**

**You are no longer justified by obeying the Law of
Moses. Romans, chapter 8, verse 2, *The law of the
Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*
God wants to work more on your hearts than on your
brains! The fallacy of the Jewish ceremonial system
was that it was all heady, no heart. ⁸**

**In the ninth chapter of John ² Lord Jesus miraculously
restored sight to a man who had been blind all of his
life. But the whole chapter records criticism of the**

² John 9:1-34.

miracle by the religious leaders because the Lord performed it on the wrong day! 9

This example brings up the other implication of letting freedom ring in your spiritual life. You are free also from the legalistic attitudes that are created by law. 10

You need to realize that you are saved by grace. Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 8, **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.** Shortly after I graduated from college, I was driving my old car down the highway and picked up a hitchhiker. This was back in the days when it was relatively safe to do this. The first question he asked me was, "If you were to die tonight could you be sure that you would go to heaven?" The first thing that popped into my mind was this: I had committed my life to serving the Lord; I had just graduated from a Christian college; I was about to enter seminary and I was planning on being a pastor all of my life. Of course I believed I was going

to heaven! But my confidence was based on my legalistic viewpoint. Boy, did I get corrected! ¹¹

You can get caught up in religious legalism even as a Christian. Romans, chapter 14, verse 1 says, **Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters**. ¹² Again, Colossians, chapter 2, verses 20 through 23, **Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.** ¹³

And, in fact, because justification doesn't come by the Jewish law, us Gentiles (non-Jewish people) can be saved. Galatians, chapter 3, verses 13 and 14, nail it down, **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law**

by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

The truth is: you and I are dirty rotten sinners saved only by grace. It is because of what Lord Jesus did on the cross that we have any hope of a personal relationship with God. You can't expect to walk through the pearly gates because you are such a good person. God's minimum requirement for getting into heaven by living a good moral, ethical life and keeping all the rules is perfection. Have you always lived a perfect life? Hardly! You and I desperately need the cross. There's no other way!

But we need to be careful that we don't carry letting freedom ring in our lives too far because there is . . . 14

II. The Abuse of Letting Freedom Ring Uncontrolled

The abuse of letting freedom ring uncontrolled. There are a couple of restraints to this freedom you need to keep in mind. ¹⁵

The first one is not to become a stumbling block to the weaker brother. First Corinthians, Chapter 8, verse 9, says, *Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.* Most new Christians have a difficult understanding of what it means to receive the grace offered by the cross. They are still caught up with the idea that you need to be good enough to merit salvation before the Lord will accept you. ¹⁶

Romans, Chapter 14, points out some common problems associated with this. ³ You might be more mature in the faith than another Christian. You might be progressing in your faith faster than your brother.

³ Romans 14:1-15:2.

In the churches in the New Testament congregations consisted of Jewish and non-Jewish members. New Jewish converts were largely vegetarians who followed the Kosher laws embedded in their religious background. This was also a cultural thing with them. They lived all of their lives observing these food laws which were linked to their understanding of what the Lord required of them. As new Christians they were saved by God's wonderful grace. Their relationship to Him was no longer tied to what they ate. Many of them had trouble adjusting to this. They were considered the weaker Christians. ⁴ ₁₇

There were also Jewish ceremonial festivals required by the Law of Moses. ⁵ ₁₈ **The non-Jewish Christian, who knew salvation was based upon the grace of the cross, might ridicule his Jewish brother for having difficulty separating God's grace from the legalistic demands of his former life. Don't let your freedom**

⁴ Romans 14:2.

⁵ Romans 14:5.

become a stumbling block to someone who is having trouble understanding it. ¹⁹

The second restraint is not to let your freedom become an excuse for indulging in sin. Galatians, Chapter 5, verse 13, **You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.** ²⁰

Notice, also, First Peter, Chapter 2, verse 16, **Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.** Romans, Chapter 6, says your baptism is a sign of your freedom from the sin life! ⁶ ²¹

Now that you are free you can volunteer to enslave yourself to Christ! For the purpose of loving and

⁶ Romans 6:1-7 - What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

serving Lord Jesus, you can be free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.⁷ ₂₂

Let freedom ring in your life by not being in bondage to legalistic thinking. But don't use that freedom as an excuse to live a sinful life!

<http://biblelifemessages.org>

⁷ I Corinthians 9:19.