

True Freedom Is Bound to Its Giver

(John 8.31-41A)

Introduction

We all want freedom! Ask a prisoner, and he will give all his money for his freedom. Ask an American, and they will sing, “The land of the free and the home of the brave.”

Today we are going to learn that **true freedom is always attached to its Giver!**

1. What's the issue? Slavery

If you ask an ancient Roman and a modern person to define slavery, their answers will differ greatly because slavery in the ancient world was so different from the modern slavery we know. Nevertheless, you will still find one common theme in both definitions: the absence of freedom.

In the ancient world, there were various reasons someone could end up in slavery: being captured in war as spoils of war, because of debt, or simply by birth—if one was born to enslaved parents.

In light of Jesus' words, His theology is crystal clear: (v.34-35)

- Original sin — We inherit it from Adam and Eve. We are born sinful.
- People ruled by sin — The Greek expression, “he who practices sin,” is in the present tense, conveying the idea of a sinful lifestyle rather than an occasional sin.
- The lack of freedom — Sin promises you one thing but delivers another. Sin always asks more of you than you expect, takes you farther than you ever wanted to go, and keeps you in prison longer than you ever thought it would.

2. What's the human solutions to the issue? Philosophy, Religion & Self-ruling.

A) Knowledge says, “I am going to think my way out.” (v.32-34)

Plato developed a famous allegory about a group of men chained inside a cave. They could not see the outside world—only its shadows projected on the wall. One man was suddenly set free. As he walked out of the cave, he saw the light and the real world. At first, the light hurt his eyes, and it took him a while to discover the joy of light and freedom.

Plato's conclusion is that humanity is chained inside a cave, seeing only shadows instead of reality. According to Plato, knowledge is the light outside the cave, while ignorance and stubbornness keep everyone inside it.

We should give credit where credit is due. Plato's allegory is brilliant, and there is much truth in it. **But Jesus goes deeper.**

Plato diagnosed humanity as imprisoned; Jesus diagnoses humanity as enslaved. A prison only confines your body, but slavery masters your life. Wherever you go, you remain a slave. Plato diagnosed ignorance as humanity's greatest problem; Jesus diagnosed sin as humanity's greatest problem.

Question: If knowledge is all we need, why do so many educated people still destroy themselves?

B) Religion says, "I am going to obey my way out." (v.33)

How about religion? That is exactly what the Jews appealed to when they objected to Jesus: "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves to anyone."

Their ignorance could hardly have been greater. The very first commandment begins: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

The entire nation of Israel was formed in the context of slavery. Yet they were too proud to admit it. Ironically, while they were saying these words, they were living under Roman occupation.

"The worst kind of blindness is the blindness of the one who can see, yet refuses to."

"We have pedigree," they said. That is the same argument they used with John the Baptist in the wilderness. John's sermon had one point: Repent! They did not think they needed to repent because they were "Abraham's descendants."

You know John's reply: "God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham." In other words, that excuse will not work with God. God's children possess Abraham's faith, not merely Abraham's bloodline.

Jesus says the same thing: "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works Abraham did."

Question: If moralism is the solution, why are the most religious people in this passage trying to kill Jesus? (v.37)

C) The modern world says, "Let's call sin 'freedom'." (Genesis 3)

How about the modern world? It defines freedom in these terms: “I do whatever I want = freedom.” “I have no accountability = freedom.” “I have enough money to buy whatever I want = freedom.” “I indulge worldly pleasure = freedom.”

The world seeks freedom apart from God, just as Satan did in the Garden of Eden. Nevertheless, there is no freedom apart from God. An alcoholic or smoker mocks the believer, saying he is a prisoner who can’t enjoy the world’s “pleasures.” But the Christian replies: “I’m free from those things — but apparently, you’re the one trapped in the bottle and the cigarette.”

All three solutions are proven lacking due to one common issue: self-centred pride.

3. What’s the Gospel solution? Truth → Redemption → Discipleship

A) “The truth will set you free” – On its own, in almost any area of life, that statement is powerful. For example, an undiagnosed cancer may kill you. But once it is discovered, you can fight it. (v. 32)

Here is the key difference between Plato and Jesus: Plato’s cave analogy would stop with verses 31–32: knowledge and truth. But Jesus goes beyond: he is the truth!

B) Redemption – “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (v.36)

Truth has a name. It is not a set of doctrines, it is not a liturgy, it is not a diploma. Jesus is the Truth, and He redeems us through His cross. **Freedom is a gift completely tied to its Giver!**

In light of the main theme of this chapter, Jesus is even more profound than Plato.

Plato said, “Knowledge is the light.” Jesus says, “I am the Light.”

C) Discipleship – Jesus invites believers to abide in Him and in His Word. (v.31,32 & 34-36)

It is clear that believing is not the end goal—discipleship is. Believing in Jesus is only the beginning of the journey.

Unfortunately, we live in a day and age when people reduce salvation to a one-time confession or a one-time baptism. Jesus’ words are clear: This is not a tourism visitation. This is “abiding” discipleship.

Notice how Jesus develops this theme: Know the Truth → Abide in the Word → Abide in the Son → Abide in the Father.

Those who truly love Him abide. There is a remarkable contrast between Jesus' disciples and the religious leaders. His Word abides in the hearts of the disciples. His Word has no place—not even an inch—in the hearts of the religious leaders.

Conclusion:

Freedom is a gift completely tied to its Giver!

Any pursuit of freedom outside the scope of obedience and dependence upon God ultimately leads to sin and slavery.

- Philosophy seeks freedom through knowledge—but is left wanting.
- Moralism seeks freedom through religion—but is left wanting.
- The world seeks freedom through pleasure—but is left wanting.

Only Jesus satisfies. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. He grants peace. He forgives. He saves His people. In His presence there is fullness of joy. According to John, the Son is the Word, the Truth, and the Light.

In the Old Testament, foreshadowing the promises of the New Covenant, God gave a slave who loved his master the option to remain with him voluntarily. Why? Because his master had shown him security, mercy, and dignity.

We are called to freely and willingly submit ourselves to Jesus—not out of fear, but out of love. Because He is the Truth, the Light and our freedom.

FOOTNOTE:

2 important Greek words: Gnosis - knowledge. Meno - Abide.

Illustration 1: "I have been to Jamaica" ≠ "I live in Jamaica." "Jesus calls us to abide in him! Not simply fleeting tourism."

Illustration 2: "I have been to Jamaica, I know Jamaica." ≠ "I was born in Jamaica, I know Jamaica." First set of knowledge is shallow and intellectual; the second one is deep and emotional.

*Final comment: People thought that **Philosophy + religion + self-ruling = Freedom.** But it became just a different type of slavery, now rooted in selfish pride.*