

Freedom: You Must WANT It!

(John 8:31-40)

INTRODUCTION:

1. A few weeks ago, I preached a lesson of **similar subject matter** where I used much of the **same biblical illustrations** that I will use today. It was called “We Must Change to be Changed.”
2. Upon reexamining that first sermon, I felt there was more to be said and that a different approach could be taken to gain the most benefit from the subject.
3. So, you might call this a follow-up lesson. And, I doing so ask for your indulgence, or maybe your forgiveness, as I take us back to consider more on a subject we addressed not too long ago.
4. In western civilization we live under the assumption, or the delusion, that if you give people the right information and can provide them with the right program we can change their lives for the good.
 - A. We approach so many issues this way (i.e., smoking, taking illicit drugs, drunk driving, etc.), believing that disseminating the **right information** (i.e., public service announcements) with the right program (i.e., medication, AA, etc.) people will quit their destructive habits.
 - B. If this were generally true, these destructive habits would be greatly reduced, even eliminated.
 - C. But they are not because **more is needed to bring about change** in people’s lives.
5. The veracity of my point has likely been seen in most all our lives.
 - A. Have you ever you said, “I **know** the **doctor** said this is bad for me...,” or “I **know** this will blow my **diet**...,” etc., only to follow it with “but I am going do it anyway”?
 - B. Thus, the issue is not ignorance or lack of a proper program, but **desire**, what one truly **wants!**
6. This issue holds true concerning our faith and the struggles we have with sin.
 - A. For, whether we are talking about bad habits or sin itself, people will never be truly **free** from these until they **want freedom...badly enough...to take the necessary steps** to get it.
 - B. That is what I want to talk about today—how you must **WANT** to be **freed** before God in Christ can **truly free us**.
 - C. And, as I alluded to before, I want to go back and consider the **Israelites’ exodus from Egypt** because I believe it illustrates this truth quite well.
 - D. It is my hope that by looking at what kept Israel from entering the Land we can learn and be warned concerning our own freedom in Christ and what is needed for us to enter God’s rest.

BODY:

- **I. The Exodus: Freedom without reward! [Exited Egypt but failed to enter the Promised Land]**
- A. Israel failure to enter the Land was *not due to their love for their bondage* in Egypt.
 1. Their lives were **bitter** (Ex. 1:13-14 – “The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; ¹⁴ and they **made their lives bitter with hard labor** in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.”).
 2. They **cried out** for help in their **misery** (Ex. 2:23-25 – “Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they **cried out**; and their **cry for help because of their bondage** rose up to God. ²⁴ So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵ God saw the sons of Israel, and **God took notice of them.**”).
 3. They clearly felt the pain and suffering of their slavery.
- B. Israel failure to enter the Promised Land was not due to **God grace** on their behalf **falling short!**
 - 1. God’s purpose and plan for Israel was their *freedom* from bondage and the reward of the Promised Land (Ex. 3:7-8, 10 – “The LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. ⁸ So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite...¹⁰ Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.”).

- 2. God gave Israel the **right information** to convince them that Moses was His chosen redeemer to bring them out of Egypt (Ex. 4:1-9).
 - a. This information was needed (4:1 – “Then Moses said, “What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’”).
 - b. God provided the necessary **proof** by giving Moses power to do **signs** and **wonders** like turning his rod into a snake, making his hand leprous, and turning Nile water into blood.
 - c. This was all done (4:5) “that **they may believe** that the **LORD**, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, **has appeared to you.**”
- 3. God provided the **right program/plan** to give Israel **freedom** and to gain their **allegiance** (Ex. 19:3-6 – “Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: ⁴ ‘**You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians**, and how **I bore you on eagles’ wings**, and **brought you to Myself.**’ ⁵ Now then, if you will indeed **obey My voice** and keep My covenant, then you shall be **My own possession** among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and **you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”).
 - a. Here God reminds Israel of the successful nature of His **plan** for their freedom and how it provided the **proper motivation** for Israel to serve Him.
 - b. For, God’s use of the plagues on Egypt allowed Israel to **see His power** over the **creation** (i.e., water, light and darkness, weather, creatures, and life itself), and over Pharaoh, Egypt’s gods, and the Egyptians, bringing freedom Israel had not known for so long!
- 4. Israel’s eventual failure to enter the Promised Land was not due to the failure of God’s grace to provide the right **knowledge** or **plan** that Israel needed to get them there!
- C. Israel **failed** to receive their reward, to enter the Land because:
 - 1. They **did not want** God’s freedom enough to get it!
 - 2. Sure, they were miserable in their slavery. But at the Red Sea, soon after leaving Egypt, Israel declared **freedom** was not **their true desire** (Ex. 14:10-12 – “As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. ¹¹ Then they said to Moses, “Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have **you dealt with us** in this way, **bringing us out of Egypt?**’ ¹² Is this not **the word that we spoke to you in Egypt**, saying, ‘**Leave us alone** that we may **serve the Egyptians?**’ For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”).
 - 3. Israel **did not want** to make the **sacrifice** that God’s freedom required (Ezek. 20:5-8 – “Thus says the Lord God, “On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God, ⁶ on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. ⁷ I said to them, ‘**Cast away**, each of you, **the detestable things of his eyes**, and **do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt**; I am the LORD your God.’ ⁸ But they **rebelled against Me** and were **not willing to listen** to Me; **they did not cast away the detestable things** of their eyes, **nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.** Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them **in the midst of the land of Egypt.**”).
 - a. Further reading shows though Israel’s obstinacy came close to bringing **God’s wrath** upon them, God instead **freed them for His own name’s sake** (20:9ff.)!
 - b. Israel’s aversion to this demand of freedom continued to plague them (Josh. 24:14 – “Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and **put away the gods** which your fathers served beyond the River and **in Egypt**, and **serve the LORD.**”)!
 - 4. These sentiments prevailed until the end and cost them entrance into the Promised Land.

- a. When the 10 spies gave their faithless report Israel again showed their true colors (Num. 14:1-2, 4 – “Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and **cried**, and the people **wept that night**.² All the sons of Israel **grumbled** against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had **died** in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had **died** in this wilderness!...⁴ So they said to one another, “**Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt**.”). **There it is!**
- b. They acted like the man Jesus warned about (Lk. 9:62 – “But Jesus said to him, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and **looking back**, is fit for the kingdom of God.”)!
- c. So, if they **did not want** God’s reward, He was not going to force it on them (Num. 14:28-30 – “Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the LORD, ‘**just as you have spoken** in My hearing, so I will surely do to you; ²⁹ **your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men**, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me. ³⁰ **Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you**, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.”).

5. Despite all that God had done to display His great power and love in bringing Israel out of Egypt, they never wanted freedom enough to do what was necessary to enter the Land!

• II. Application: You must WANT freedom to receive its reward!

- A. As was true with Israel, God’s grace through Jesus has made salvation and freedom possible for all (Eph. 2:4-9 – “But **God**, being rich in **mercy**, because of His **great love** with which He loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive** together with Christ (**by grace you have been saved**),⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.⁸ **For by grace you have been saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”).
- 1. Yet, like Israel, our initial exodus/freedom from sin by grace will produce no reward unless we **want it enough to trust God and obey** (Heb. 3:16-19; 4:11 – “For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?¹⁷ And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?¹⁸ And to whom **did He swear that they would not enter His rest**, but to those who were **disobedient**?¹⁹ So we see that **they were not able to enter** because of **unbelief**...^{4:11} Therefore let **us be diligent to enter that rest**, so that **no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience**.”).
- 2. So like Israel of old, our entrance into God’s rest comes down to the question of whether you and I truly **want freedom** and its **reward**.
 - a. It is not enough to be *dissatisfied* with the guilt and suffering of our bondage in sin.
 - b. For, there is a big difference in being dissatisfied with one’s actions/life and **wanting freedom** enough to **do what is necessary** to gain that freedom!
- B. That we must want freedom and its reward enough to do what is necessary to receive it is proven in Romans 6.
 - 1. First we learn that God’s work of **grace** is to produce people who are **dead to sin** (Rom. 6:1-2 – “What shall we say then? **Are we to continue in sin** so that **grace** may increase?² **May it never be!** How shall we who **died to sin** still **live in it**?”)!
 - a. Biblical **death** is defined as *separation*, a *severing* of the spirit from the body (Jas. 2:26 – “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”).
 - b. So, to be **dead to sin** means that the Christian who lives by God’s grace has been totally **separated**, or **severed**, from their life of sin!
 - 2. Death to sin and resurrection to new life come by submitting in faith to water **baptism**.
 - a. Rom. 6:3-7 – “Do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus** were baptized into his death?⁴ Therefore we have been **buried with Him through**

- baptism into death**, so that as **Christ was raised** from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we **too might walk in newness of life**.⁵ For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death [in baptism – rp], certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,⁶ knowing this, that our **old self was crucified with Him**, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, **so that we would no longer be slaves to sin**;⁷ **for he who has died is freed from sin.**”
- b. Col. 2:12 – “having been **buried with Him in baptism, in which** you were also **raised up with Him through faith in the working of God**, who raised Him from the dead.”
 - c. So, separation from sin and the new life it brings in Christ are owed to God’s great grace bestowed on those who in faith submit to being baptized into Christ and His death.
 - 3. Eternal life requires **wanting freedom enough** to...
 - a. **Consider yourself** to be dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 6:11 – “Even so **consider yourselves** to be **dead to sin**, but **alive to God** in Christ Jesus.”).
 - i. Consider: An imperative, demanding that a Christian **take into account** that he/she is “dead to [separated from] sin but alive to God” and conduct him/herself accordingly.
 - ii. So, we must **surpass the faith of Israel** and truly believe that God’s power **has freed us from sin** so that we can now **live to God** and **not for sin**! *So, how is this seen?*
 - b. Refuse to submit to sin (6:12-13a – “Therefore **do not let sin reign in your mortal body** so that you obey its lusts,¹³ and **do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness**”).
 - i. We cannot be like Israel who though dissatisfied with their slavery never fully desired to be freed from it!
 - ii. Freedom in Christ must drive us to break sin’s allurements and rule in our lives! We must give up the “idols” of our past—the pleasures of sin!
 - iii. **Freedom** in grace **makes it possible** and **requires** that we stop giving our bodies over to temptation and sin!
 - c. Submit to God and righteousness (6:13b – “...but **present yourselves to God** as those **alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**”).
 - i. Freedom from sin’s death that brings life in Christ requires **obedience**, doing right.
 - ii. So, again, we must surpass Israel who went along for freedom’s ride, but refused to trust God enough to accept that they were free to do what He said—to take the Land.
 - iii. We have to want freedom enough to believe in God’s word that we can not only be made righteous by freedom/forgiveness, but **we can** and **must live righteously**!
 - d. I know some who hear this will yell “legalism” or “works oriented salvation,” but **salvation by grace requires this way of life** (Rom. 6:14-16, 20-23 – “For **sin shall not be master over you**, for you are not under law but **under grace**.¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? **May it never be!**¹⁶ Do you not know that when you **present yourselves** to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of **sin resulting in death**, or of **obedience resulting in righteousness**?...²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.²¹ Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the **outcome of those things is death**.²² But now having been **freed from sin** and **enslaved to God**, you derive your **benefit**, resulting in **sanctification**, and the **outcome, eternal life**.²³ For the wages of sin is **death**, but the free gift of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.”).

CONCLUSION:

1. I hope the word has impressed upon each of us the gravity of **truly wanting freedom** and how it must drive us to **do all that we can to live in grace by obedience** to Christ that we might receive the reward of eternal life.
2. So, my friends, do you truly want freedom in Christ and its reward? God offers it by His grace in Jesus to all who desire it enough to trust and obey Him.

- A. If you are unsaved, will you begin your freedom by coming to Jesus in faith, repenting of your sins, and submitting to baptism that you might enter Christ's death and be raised with Him through God power to newness of life?
- B. If you are a Christian, one previously freed from sin, but have returned to your ways of sinful slavery and brought reproach on Christ and His church, will you humble yourself and return to Christ today, confessing your sin, repenting, and seeking God's grace to forgive that you might live again in submission to Christ for eternal life?
- C. If you desire to be free, you can be freed today if you will come as we stand and sing.