

"Freedom in Christ"

Paul said, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free." Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." Today we'll see how Christ sets us free. Stay with us!

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for the Lord's Way. Many people, who don't understand our faith, think of Christianity as merely a list of rules telling us what we can't do and what we must do. While there are rules and precepts in Christ, God gave us these instructions to give us freedom not to ruin our lives. You can't buy a new car without also getting a manual. That manual informs us how to care for the car and how to get the most pleasure and use out of the car. We're grateful for that manual. And in the same way, God gave us a soul, and the Bible is God's manual for the soul. He didn't give us this manual to punish us but to provide what we needed so we could be free to enjoy life forever. I'm so thankful to God for the Bible. Thanks for studying with us today. We want to be part of your life each week.

People long to be free from painful and humiliating restraints. Prisoners tired of walls want their freedom; slaves want to be free of their human masters; addicts want to be free from their enslaving habits; people who are ill or infirmed long to be healthy; and students want to finish school so they can be free to pursue their lives. We love the Lord, and our love for the Lord frees us from the things that harm us and gives us the opportunity to serve. It gives us the opportunity to bless others. The more we know the Lord, the more we want to be like Him. We freely choose to follow Christ because we love Him, and we know that He loves us.

Now if you want to study more about freedom in Christ, we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That toll-free number is 1-800-321-8633. Now if you live outside the United States, we have materials free online, and you can stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org, or on YouTube.

Larry Owsley will lead the Edmond church as we worship in song. We'll read from 1 Peter 2:13 to 17, and we'll examine the joy of freedom in Christ.

Our reading today is from 1 Peter chapter 2 beginning in verse 13 and continuing down to verse 17. And the it talks about how our freedom in Christ means we honor authority.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You give us freedom to be Your children and to be Your servants. To do good and to bless the lives of all around us. Help us to live as free men but always to honor You. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Galatians 5 verse 1 says, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free." While Christianity is a commitment to Christ; it's also a means of freedom for the soul. Christ came to this earth to give us an abundant life and eternal life. He came to bless us in the present and in the life to come. If you are in Christ, you now have all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. Treasure those blessings.

When we speak of freedom in Christ, we have to understand that Christ sets us free from many things that will harm us. When people decide to follow sin, they inevitably fall into ruin. They hurt themselves and usually hurt those that they love. The Lord Jesus said in John 8:34, "Truly, truly, I say to you, (that) everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." We might call this an addiction or a habit, but it's really enslavement. Sin is controlling and makes people do things they don't want to do. Paul explained in Romans 7:14 to 17, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me."

When people find pleasure in sin, that pleasure leads them to do wicked things that they regret and it brings them shame. It controls their thoughts and actions and only leads to ruin. We mentioned last week, Romans 8:5 to 8 and we'll say again, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Because he had sinned, Paul saw himself as wretched and he longed for the freedom that came in Christ! He said in Romans 7:24 to 25, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Maybe you've felt that way, felt trapped by sin and you longed for forgiveness. Paul wanted to live a righteous life that would please God. Paul knew sin—not God—was the real enemy that enslaves us and makes life miserable. The Lord Jesus came to this earth to set us free from sin and to give us peace and hope. He came to show us a better way of life and to give us the opportunity to live it.

How sad that some Christians return to the very sins from which they were delivered. They've forgotten the price Jesus paid to free them from sin. They have forgotten how sin traps them, and shames them, and ruins their lives. They let their eyes, their flesh, and their pride lead them away from God and back into misery. They put their souls at great risk. 2 Peter 2:20 to 21 says, "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them (that is those defilements) and overcome, (he says) the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them." Christian brother or sister, don't let sin take back your soul.

The forgiveness and freedom we have in Christ does more for us than the Old Testament Law could ever do. Paul told the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia in Acts 13:38 to 39, "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him (Jesus) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses."

The book of Galatians tells how some Jewish Christians were trying to bind circumcision and the Law of Moses on the Gentile Christians. Paul wrote in Galatians 2:15 to 16 that, "We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified." We find our freedom from sin by faith and obedience to Christ, not by the works of the Law. Galatians 5 and verse 6 says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love."

The freedom we have in Christ is not merely freedom from the things that hurt us; it's also a freedom to pursue the things that build us up and bless others. Galatians 5:22 to 23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." God is at work in our lives to produce some wonderful qualities, and there's no limit to how much these things we can enjoy and share with others. We are free to pursue these things to our heart's content, knowing they will not only bless our lives but bless everyone around us.

We have no limit on the amount of God's love we can show to others. The more we know of the grace and love of God, the more we rejoice and the more we want to share it. Paul prayed in Ephesians 3:18 to 19 that the Christians "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." The more we know the love of God, the more we are thankful for it!

Christ's love leads us to a joy inexpressible and full of glory! There is no limit to the joy we know in Christ. In fact, though he was in prison and fearful of losing his life, Paul urged the church in Philippians 4 and verse 4, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." Life can give us many miseries, but it cannot snatch from us our joy in Christ, the joy of a home in heaven.

As the Spirit works in our lives through the word, we can find peace. The Scriptures are filled with the promises of God in black and white. In Christ we can live free from worry, because we know our Father in heaven provides for us, that He hears our prayers, forgives our sins, protects us from evil, and gives us an inheritance. We can sleep at night with the assurance that God cares for us and is with us.

When we read of Christ's patience in Scripture, it leads us to be patience. Patience is the ability to remain emotionally calm and assured in the face of frustration or misfortune and keep from complaining. We see how Christ endured the cross without taking vengeance, and it gives us the inner strength to endure whatever hostilities we may face.

Because God has been so kind to us, we are free to pursue kindness towards others. We're free to help others in times of trouble, to forgive others, and to give freely of our time and energy to bless others. There's no law against kindness. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 6 verse 38, "give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure (that) you use it will be measured back to you."

God's example of generosity leads us to pursue a life of goodness and generosity. We know we can never out give God. Galatians 6:9 to 10 says, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."

The Spirit through the Scriptures also reveals to us the faithfulness of God, which leads us to be faithful. He fought for hours through the pain, the mocking, and the shame of the cross. The Lord Jesus endured the cross to the end and never gave up on us. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 28:20, "I am with you always, to the end of the age." We can count on the Lord, and that assurance leads us to be faithful to Him and never give up living the Christian life.

Now since God is gentle with us, blessing us even when we don't deserve His blessing, we learn to be gentle with others. Paul said in Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Our loving Father in heaven is the God of all grace, (He's) the God of all comfort, and (He is) the God of all hope. Because God treated us gently in saving us, you know what, we can forgive others when they trespass against us.

Some people think to be self-controlled is somehow a lack freedom, but the truth is that no one can be free who lacks self-control. When people can't control themselves, their passions enslave them to their desires and to their lusts. Addictions enslave, but self-control keeps us out of slavery. Self-control allows us to pursue what is good, pursue what's healthy rather than to feed some evil habit.

The gospel of Christ frees us from sin and frees us to pursue Christian love and service; but to have this freedom, we must abide in Christ. Our freedom is in Christ, not outside of Him. The Lord Jesus promised in John 8:31 to 32, "If you continue in My word, (that is you stay with what the word teaches) then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Staying within the words of Christ found in Scripture is how Jesus distinguishes His true disciples from others.

A train can't go anywhere unless it's on the tracks! The very tracks that confine it are the very tracks that make it free to travel mile after mile and carry heavy, heavy loads. Let's hold fast to Christ; only Jesus has the words of eternal life. And when we leave the teaching of Christ, we move away from God and from the freedom He gives to us. 2 John 9 says that, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; (did you catch that, does not have God) the one who abides (stays and dwells) in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son." To have the Father and the Son, we must abide in that teaching in His words. We must hear what Scripture says and follow it.

Well why does this matter? Well here's why. The Lord's words teach the truth that keeps us free from false hopes and lies. The words of Christ provide the truth and it means to tell right from wrong. They distinguish these words of Christ the real from the imaginary. They're a firm foundation to build our lives on. True freedom comes from hearing and doing what they say, from sticking to God's word. And to go beyond these words doesn't free us; it tangles us up in twisted human doctrines and opinions. And this is why we must ask ourselves if we're abiding in the words of Christ. It's the truth that sets us free, and we shouldn't settle for anything more. And we shouldn't settle for anything less.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for the love that You give us through Christ Jesus. And Father we're thankful that You've given us Your word. And Father help us to remain in Your word. So that we might be true disciple. And so that we might be free. Father we're thankful for Your love. Bless us and help to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Lord Jesus said in John 8:36, "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." I'm thankful for the Lord's power to set me free from sin and spiritual death. God gives us hope that we can change and become the people He wants to bring home to heaven. We don't have to be deceived and enslaved by sin. God desires something better for us. Romans 6:16 to 18 says, "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? 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, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness." Here were lost, slaves of sin who obeyed the Lord Jesus, were set free from sin, and became the servants of righteousness.

The Lord frees us from misery to set us on a better pathway to the abundant life of love and service, to joy, and to eternal life. You become a Christian by being united with Christ. To be one with Christ you must put your faith in Him as the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess Him before others, and be baptized into Christ. Galatians 3:26 to 27 says, "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Now baptism is that

time when those outside of Christ are united and come into Christ, where His forgiveness and blessings are. The Lord will wash away your sins when you're baptized according to Acts 22:16 and He'll unite you with Christ according to Romans 6:4 and 5. Won't you come to the Lord today!

We hope that today's study about freedom has stirred your heart to serve the Lord. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now if you live outside the United States you can also download our material online at our website: www.searchtv.org. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we won't ask you for money or put you on a list. We're here to help you draw close to God.

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