

FREEDOM TO DO WHAT?

TODAY COULD BE CALLED FOURTH OF JULY EVE I SUPPOSE, AS TOMORROW IS THE FOURTH OF JULY. OUR FREEDOM IS STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH THIS DAY. THE BILL OF RIGHTS, WHICH IS THE FIRST TEN AMENDMENTS OF THE CONSTITUTION, IS "INTENDED TO ASSURE AMERICANS THAT THEIR GOVERNMENT WILL PROTECT THEIR LIBERTIES AND STAY WITHIN THE CONFINED LIMITS OF THE CONSTITUTION". NOW BY THAT SENTENCE OF THE PREAMBLE TO THE BILL OF RIGHTS IT IS CLEAR, I BELIEVE, **THAT THE WRITERS THOUGHT MAN, BEING MAN, COULD ABUSE POWER AND RESTRICT THE LIBERTY OF ITS PEOPLE LIKE THE KING OF ENGLAND HAD DONE TO THE COLONISTS**. WHAT MAN GIVES, MAN CAN TAKE AWAY!!! HISTORY IS FULL OF EXAMPLES LIKE THE NAZIS IN GERMANY.

FOR CHRISTIANS, GOD HAS GIVEN US "FREEDOMS" BUT UNLIKE MAN GOD WILL NOT TAKE THEM BACK. HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF THE "FREEDOMS" WE HAVE AS CHRISTIANS? HAVE YOU EVER ASKED YOURSELF THE QUESTION, "FREEDOM TO DO WHAT?" IF, AND I KNOW THIS IS NOT WHAT OUR CULTURE SAYS, BUT **WE DO NOT HAVE ANY "RIGHTS", BUT WE SURE HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES!** **THAT IS THE PARADOX, THE OXYMORON, THE CONTRAST OF A LIFE OF FAITH AND FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST!** THINK OF THE CONTRAST IN THE WORDS OF SCRIPTURE. "*THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE*", BUT REMEMBER JESUS' WORDS "*THE LEAST AMONG YOU WILL BE THE GREATEST*". I CORINTHIANS 7:22 SAYS "And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free in the Lord. And if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ".

FREEDOM IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS MEANS OBEDIENCE AND SERVANTHOOD. THERE IS A VERSE IN GALATIANS 5:3 TALKING ABOUT HOW CHRIST HAS SET US FREE, BUT "**FREE FROM WHAT TO DO WHAT?**" THAT IS WHAT I WANT US TO FOCUS ON THIS MORNING. HOW CAN WE MAKE OUR WALK, BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, MORE EFFECTIVE TO THOSE AROUND US? WE CAN BE THAT WITNESS FOR CHRIST NOT ONLY IN WORD BUT IN ACTION!!! **GOD DOESN'T WANT US SITTING ON THE SIDELINES.** THERE IS SOMETHING TO DO AND SOMEONE, SOMEWHERE THAT NEEDS YOU, YOUR WORDS OR AN ACTION. WE CAN NOT SIT ON THE BENCH AND LET THE CLOCK RUN OUT. GOD CAN USE US NO MATTER OUR AGE!!!

NOW IN ORDER FOR US TO BE "FREE" TO DO HIS WORK, WE MUST BE FREED FROM SOMETHING. AS CHRISTIANS WE MUST NEVER FORGET THAT JESUS CAME TO US, LIVED AMONG US AND SHOWED US BY BEING FREE WHAT WE CAN DO TO MAKE A BETTER WORLD, ONE PERSON AT A TIME. ALL BY HIMSELF HE SUFFERED THE AGONY OF THE CROSS ONLY TO RISE AND NOW SIT AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF "CHAINS" WE HAVE BEEN SET FREE FROM BECAUSE OF JESUS CHRIST.

PSALM 107, VERSES 10-16 SAYS "*Some of you were locked in a dark cell, cruelly confined behind bars, Punished for defying God's Word, for turning your back on the High God's counsel— A hard sentence, and your hearts so heavy, and not a soul in sight to help. Then you called out to God in your desperate condition; he got you out in the nick of time. He led you out of your dark, dark cell, broke open the jail and led you out. So thank God for His marvelous love, for His miracle mercy to the children He loves; He shattered the heavy jailhouse doors, He snapped the prison bars like matchsticks!*"

GOD LOVES EACH ONE OF US AND SENT CHRIST AND THAT IS WHAT CHRIST DID FOR ALL OF US BY GOING TO THE CROSS AND THAT IS WHAT HE CONTINUES TO DO FOR US TODAY!!! JAMES SAYS IT QUITE WELL IN CHAPTER 1:13-15 "*Whenever you feel tempted to do something bad, you should not say, "God is tempting me." Evil cannot tempt God, and God himself does not tempt anyone. You are tempted by the evil things you want. Your own desire leads you away and traps you. Your desire grows inside you until it results in sin. Then the sin grows bigger and bigger and finally ends in death.*"

THERE IS A QUOTE THAT GOES THIS WAY **“THE CROSS WE CARRY IS NEVER AS HEAVY AS THE CHAINS FROM WHICH WE HAVE BEEN FREED”**. THAT REALLY HITS HOME WHEN WE RECALL THE WORDS OF JESUS IN LUKE 9:23 “ *Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me.”* BEING A FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST DOES NOT MEAN WE ARE WITHOUT A BURDEN, THE “BURDEN” OF DOING THE RIGHT THING!!! LIKE LOVING AND FORGIVING THAT NEIGHBOR, WHO EVER IT IS. BUT HOW CAN WE DO THAT WHEN WE CANNOT BEGIN TO DO IT HERE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS??

WE ARE ENCOURAGED TIME AFTER TIME TO WORK WITH EACH OTHER WITH LOVE AS EPHESIANS SAYS “*Being Tenderhearted And Forgiving As Christ First Forgave You*”. WE NEED TO NOT JUST REMEMBER THOSE WORDS, BUT LIVE THEM WITH EACH AND EVERY PERSON IN THIS CHURCH!!! **GOD DID NOT GIVE US THE CHOICE OF WHO WE LIKE, DARE I SAY, “LOVE” WHEN HE PUT US TOGETHER IN THE BODY OF CHRIST CALLED CENTENNIAL**. REMEMBER TOO, WHEN WE GET TO HEAVEN WE WILL ALL BE THERE!!! THESE PEOPLE AROUND YOU, YOU WILL SPEND ETERNITY WITH!!!

WE HAVE BEEN FREED TO GIVE UP THOSE THINGS OF THE FLESH LIKE HURTING OTHERS WITH OUR WORDS OR ACTIONS. IF NOT, THEN WE ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN THE CULTURE IN WHICH WE LIVE!!! JESUS TOLD US “*The Truth Will Set You Free*” AND THE TRUTH IS IN THIS BOOK. WHEN WE CRY OUT TO GOD FOR MERCY AND GRACE, HE DELIVERS IN MANY WAYS AND IN MANY SITUATIONS.

WE ARE FREE FROM SIN, ACTS 10:43 “*To Him all the prophets bear witness that **everyone** who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.* AND NOTICE IT SAYS – **EVERYONE!!**

SIMPLY SAID “SIN” IS GOING AGAINST GOD, BUT WHEN WE DO, HIS GRACE IS THERE TO PICK US UP SO WE CAN MOVE ON. BUT WHEN WE GIVE EXCUSES LIKE “that's just the way i am live with it” THAT'S NOT LEAVING ANY ROOM FOR GOD TO CHANGE YOU. AGAIN, IT IS THE REASON BY THE GRACE OF GOD WHY WE HAVE BEEN “FREED UP” - TO BE THAT SERVANT,

WE ALSO HAVE FREEDOM FROM FEAR. IN ROMANS 8:15 IT SAYS “*The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to be heirs*” **NOW IF YOU REALLY WANT TO LIVE A LIFE WITH A BOLD SPIRIT REMEMBER ROMANS 8:38-39** “*Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture: None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.*” **JUST THINK OF THE PEOPLE WHO MUST LIVE IN FEAR EACH AND EVERY DAY BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW THE TRUTH TO SET THEM FREE, THAT LOVE OF CHRIST AND THE HOPE THEY CAN HAVE FAITH!!!!**

IT IS OUR DUTY, BEING A SERVANT, IN OUR FREEDOM TO MAKE THAT TRUTH KNOWN TO OTHERS. IN ISAIAH 61:1 IN PART SAYS “ *He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners...*” THIS IS THE “WHAT” WE HAVE ALL BE FREED FROM BECAUSE OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE GRACE OF A LOVING GOD. **IF WE CHOOSE, WE ARE THAT NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST THAT HAS NO MORE SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS AND CAN SEE WITH SPIRITUAL EYES THE NEEDS OF OTHERS. WE ARE NO LONGER IN THE DARKNESS! WE WALK IN THE LIGHT AS HE IS IN THE LIGHT AND HAVE FELLOWSHIP, ONE WITH ANOTHER AND OUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN BECAUSE OF JESUS**. WHAT A BLESSING!!!! I AM REMINDED OF THE WORDS OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING. “*Free at last, Free at last, Thank God almighty we are free at last.*” DR. KING KNEW WHERE HIS REAL FREEDOM CAME FROM. YES, WE ARE FREE WHEN WE WALK IN THE SPIRIT FREE AT LAST.

WE CAN DECEIVE OURSELVES IN BELIEVING THAT WE ARE SLAVE TO NO ONE OR NOTHING. WE CAN DECEIVE OURSELVES THAT WE HAVE NO FEAR. WE CAN DECEIVE OURSELVES WE ARE NOT BLIND TO ANYTHING OR ANYONE. WE CAN DECEIVE OURSELVES THAT WE CARRY NO CHAINS THAT BIND US, BUT PAUL KNEW THE DANGER OF NOT ADMITTING THIS. IN ROMANS 12:3 *“Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.”* **IT IS WHEN WE “SEE” OUR FAULTS, ADMIT THEM, AND ASK GOD FOR MERCY THAT HE IS FAITHFUL AND GRACE IS FREELY GIVEN LIKE THE SONG WE HAVE SUNG SO MANY TIMES.**

NOW THAT WE KNOW WE HAVE THIS FREEDOM, BUT WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH IT? SIT ON IT? I DON'T THINK SO!!!! JESUS TOLD US TO BE THE *“Salt Of The Earth” “A Shining Light On The Hill”* AND IN VERSE 16 ENCOURAGES US *“ Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be **generous with your lives.** By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.”*

THIS IS THE TASK BEFORE US, TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CHRIST, REACHING OUT, LOVING AND SERVING. IN MATTHEW WE ARE REMINDED THAT JESUS DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED BUT TO SERVE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY. PAUL TOLD US HE WAS A VESSEL TO BE Poured OUT.

BY NOW YOU CAN PROBABLY QUOTE BACK TO ME VERSES FROM GALATIANS, IN PART *“Do not turn your freedom into an opportunity of the flesh, but through love serve one another”* **THIS IS FREEDOM, TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER WITH LOVE, BECAUSE IT IS BY THE SPIRIT WE WALK AND “WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, THERE IS FREEDOM.”** JUST LIKE THE PEACE THAT PASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING, SO THE FREEDOM WE HAVE MAKES US TRULY, TRULY FREE!!!!

IN CONCLUSION A SHORT STORY...

John Newton, the reformed English slave trader who wrote the hymn "[Amazing Grace](#)," said, "By the grace of God, I am what I am. I am not what I ought to be. How imperfect and deficient I am! I am not what I wish to be. Though I am not what I ought to be, I can truly say that I am not what I once was—a slave to sin and Satan. I can heartily say with Paul: 'By the grace of God I am what I am!' " Until the day he died, Newton never stopped marveling at God's grace. In a message he gave not long before passing from this life, he is quoted as proclaiming loudly, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: That I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior!" Amen.