

WHAT IS FREEDOM?

by Billy Morrison

Will I really be free?

I am a prisoner. I often sit in my prison cell and dream about physical freedom—life without barred windows and locked doors, where I can freely live my life as I see fit, and not as the prison authorities require. We all want freedom. All prisoners long for their release, when they can walk away and leave behind the prison walls that keep them bound. Anyone who feels their liberty hindered longs for freedom, whether they are a real prisoner like me or someone whose relationships or circumstances feel like a prison to them.

But as I sit and think, I wonder. I wonder if release from physical bondage really brings freedom to our lives? When the ex-

citing moment comes and an inmate finally walks out that gate for good, is he really going to freedom or will he be walking from one bondage to another? When you land that dream job and can finally leave your “bad boss,” will you really be free? When you finally get can get away from those who are ugly and oppressive to you, can you really sigh with relief and rebuild a life without drama? Well, it depends. In short, you can leave a physical prison behind for good, yet still be in a prison as real as any physical prison you have left.

The Bondage of Sin

What am I talking about? I am talking about the bondage that every human being experiences: the bondage of sin. In 2 Timothy 2:24-26, the apostle Paul tells us that he hoped that God would grant repentance to those who opposed the gospel of Christ (all unsaved people), and “that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (or, to do his will). This is the bondage I am talking about. Each human being, according to the Bible, is in a prison. Instead

of physical walls and bars, this prison keeps us captive under the domination of our sinful desires.

The Bible tells us, “There is none righteous, no, not one...there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom 3:10, 12). Each one of us is held captive by our sinful desires, and we cannot escape from them: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jer 13:23). Therefore, when you walk out that front gate or experience the external change of circumstances you hope will set you free, you might not be achieving real freedom at all, but an illusion of freedom. If you are still in bondage to sin, to fear of the future, to fear of death and the judgment of God, then you are not truly free. But this does not have to be.

Real Freedom

Think of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man! He came to this earth to set at liberty all those who repent and believe the gospel (Mar 1:15), to set them free from the bondage of sin and all that this

brings. He says that He came “to preach deliverance to the captives...to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luk 4:18). He also said that all those who follow Him would “know the truth, and the truth shall make you free...If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (Joh 8:32, 36).

The freedom that Christ gives is true freedom, and can be had by all those who repent of their sin and believe in the saving work of Christ on the cross. *Repent!* Be sorry for your sin, and at the same time, turn away from it to serve Christ instead. *Believe!* Receive what Jesus did for sinners in His sinless life (meriting their salvation) and especially in His amazing death on their behalf (atoning for their sins and offering the perfect sacrifice for their salvation). Trust Him as He has finished the saving work, rose again from the dead on the third day and now reigns as the King of the universe! Christ will give you freedom from the bondage of sin, its powerful chains, its guilt and shame, and its penalty of eternal hell. This freedom was purchased for every believing sinner by the sacrifice of

Jesus Christ on the cross: “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Rom 5:8-9).

Two Bondages

Those of us who are in physical bondage (prison or any other) are in fact in two kinds of prison: one physical and one spiritual, and both are ultimately caused by sin or its effects in this sin-cursed world. But the physical prison does not prevent us from escaping our spiritual prison! Christ is not kept out by prison walls, bars, governments, oppression, or poverty. Jesus will forgive you and save you right where you are just as quickly and surely as He will forgive and save someone enjoying the earthly freedom you long for. With God, it does not matter what you have done or whether your own actions have made your prison sentence long or your condition of bondage worse. God says, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as

snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa 1:18).

You can find forgiveness and freedom in your hardest time; and when you find freedom in Christ, you will be really free. If God gives you physical freedom as well, it will be a bonus. But like myself, I pray that you find that freedom can be found through Jesus Christ even while you are in bondage, whether it is prison or any other oppressive condition in this world. “My body in prison may be, but God has set my soul free.”

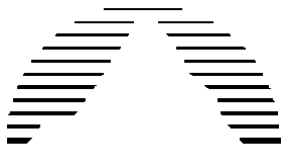
This tract was written while the author was serving a life sentence in H.M.P. Maghaberry, N. Ireland. He has since been released and is now serving the Lord as a free man. Chapel Library freely adapted the author’s text for a broader audience.

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