

Living in Freedom

Air Dates: July 3-7, 2023

Day One

Once I was asked a very interesting question by a woman who had come to hear me speak. She said to me, "Are you a liberated woman?" I think that's a good question to consider as we celebrate July 4th tomorrow—the day we declared our freedom as a country. So in answer to this question: Are you a liberated woman?, my answer is a resounding YES! I am a liberated woman, because I've been set free by Jesus.

Paul wrote to the Romans: *Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness....But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life* (Romans 6:16, 18, 22).

Hallelujah! I'm a liberated woman because I'm free from the curse of sin. That is true freedom; that is the personal freedom that so many are looking for today—but they're looking in the wrong places. Jesus is the only one who can set us free indeed—that's why he came.

The Bible says that as individuals we are each slaves—slaves to whatever masters us. What is mastering you today? Money? Possessions? Sex? Laziness? Food? Television? Pornography? Drugs? Alcohol? Work? Well, Jesus Christ offers liberation from anything that makes you into a slave and robs you of freedom.

Most people think freedom is the right to do whatever they want to do. Women over the past years have been led to believe that they'll find freedom in new opportunities. But it simply doesn't work. Only when Jesus sets you free do you really know what it means to be free.

I'm glad to say that I'm a liberated woman—free from being a slave to sin.

And because of that, I'm free from guilt. God has forgiven me for every sin that I've confessed to him, and furthermore, he has forgotten those sins. He doesn't hang them over my head ever again; I am no longer condemned. So, even though my past is not what it should be, I don't live under a cloud of guilt as so many people do. I'm free from guilt. I'm a liberated woman.

If you are looking for freedom, let me introduce you to Jesus Christ, who can set you free indeed.

Day Two

It's July 4th, a special day for us here in the United States, as we celebrate the freedom that is ours because we live in this land. It's a freedom we often take for granted, but we need to stop and thank God for the freedom we enjoy.

But you know, real freedom is when you are free from the things that keep you personally in bondage. No earthly government can grant you that freedom. It is found only in Jesus Christ.

What is holding you in bondage from which you really want to be set free?

- Fear or guilt?
- Shame?
- Failures in your past?
- Wrongs done to you?
- Poor choices you've made?
- Insecurity?
- Pride?

Paul wrote to the Galatians: *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery (Galatians 5:1).*

Mind you, Paul was writing to Christians, those who had declared themselves to be followers of Jesus Christ. And yet, Paul is encouraging them not to let themselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery because Christ had set them free.

When as Christians we continue to live in bondage to these things, it's like someone has put us in a jail but they didn't lock the door, so at any time we can push open that door and walk out to freedom, but we don't. We sit in that jail cell, as though we cannot escape, when all the time all we have to do is push open the door and walk out.

Later in that letter to the Galatians Paul wrote: "You were called to be free. . ." If you've been born from above through faith in Jesus Christ, your calling from him is to be free from all that weighs you down. Jesus said, "*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*" (John 8:36).

So, as you celebrate our nation's freedom, ask yourself if you are standing firm in the freedom that Christ has given you, or if you're allowing yourself to be burdened by a yoke of slavery.

Day Three

Condemnation—isn't that an ugly word? Webster says that condemnation is the state of being pronounced unfit or unworthy, of being declared guilty. Condemnation is disapproval and lack of acceptance.

Have you been subjected to any condemnation lately? It can come from friends, from family, from bosses, from society. The world is full of condemnation—one person condemning another, one race condemning another, politicians condemning each other. I hate condemnation and I'm sure you do, too.

One of the most marvelous and wonderful truths of Scripture is that those of us who have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, who have been forgiven by him and accepted as God's child are free from condemnation. Paul writes in Romans 8 that "*There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1-2).*" Now, is that good news, or what!

I love the Phillips translation of Romans 8:33-34: "Who would dare to accuse us, whom God has chosen? The judge himself has declared us free from sin. Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us!"

The next time you're feeling condemned, remember that if you belong to Jesus, he is the only one who can truly condemn you, and he doesn't. He may deal with you to bring your life more into conformity with his will, but he won't heap up condemnation on you.

Oh, it's not that we don't deserve his condemnation; all of us do. But the judge himself, Jesus Christ, has paid the penalty and taken our condemnation himself. So, we are no longer condemned. We are set free from the penalty which we deserve.

Keep this marvelous truth in the back of your mind all day. Rejoice in the fact that Jesus does not condemn you, so who else could possibly have a right to do that? You're free from condemnation, praise his holy name.

Day Four

Would you love to catch the next flight to some forgotten island and leave no forwarding address? Running away sure looks appealing sometimes, doesn't it? King David felt that way, too. He wrote, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest."

Maybe your job is just driving you crazy. Could be a difficult boss or a boring job; could be the people you work with or too much work. Or perhaps you're having troubles with relationships; they can make you want to fly away. Maybe it's your spouse, or your child, or a close friend, a romantic relationship. Undoubtedly for many it's financial worries that make them want to run away.

Well, whatever it is that's giving you the run-away blues, I understand because I've been there. I remember when I begged God to let me out of a job I was in. I wanted out so badly, I thought I couldn't take another day. But God made it clear that he had a purpose in keeping me there for a while longer.

I look back and see why: I needed to learn many spiritual lessons in that spot. There were people with whom I formed friendships and shared my faith and trust in Jesus. I wouldn't have missed that opportunity for anything. And the business knowledge I gained by hanging in another couple of years gave me the resource and experience I needed to go out on my own which paved the way to begin this ministry.

Oh, it's easy to see that now, but at the time all I could do was simply agree with God to persevere. Second John 8 says "*Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.*" Most of us give up just before the victory! And when we do, we waste all the hard work and effort that's been poured into our lives.

I want to encourage you today to persevere. Say with King David that instead of running away you will "cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall."

Day Five

You know, everybody needs encouragement and help at times, don't they? As I read 2 Corinthians 7, I realized that even the great Apostle Paul had his times when he needed other people. He said in verse 5: "For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within."

Doesn't that describe the way you feel at times? Conflicts without, fears within? But this is the spiritual giant, Paul, and it surprises us to realize that he would have these same feelings. Well, we really need to remember that positions of prominence do not isolate anyone from being human. Paul was tired and fearful. He needed help.

Where did his help come from? He goes on to say, "But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus." He needed a friend at his side to comfort him, and so Titus came along. We could say to Paul, "But wasn't it enough to have the Lord there?" And Paul would respond, "The Lord was there in the person of Titus. He comforted me by sending Titus."

Yes indeed, that's how the Body of Christ should function. God wants to use us in each other's lives as messengers of comfort and encouragement, to pick each other up at those weary and frightened moments of our lives. God has given us each other for that purpose.

Paul goes on to say that he was comforted by the good report Titus brought to him of the concern for his welfare by his friends in Corinth. Paul needed to know that they cared, that they hadn't forgotten him, that they still loved him.

How often do we miss these opportunities to be God's comfort in the lives of others? How often do we need to be by a friend's side when they're experiencing dark days? Or send a message to them—by email, on the phone—just to say, I care.

Is there someone in your life that needs a Titus? Ask God to show you, and allow him to use you as his agent of comfort and encouragement.