

11. Freedom in Christ (4Q 2011—Galatians)

Biblical material: Gal. 5:1–15; 1 Cor. 6:20; Rom. 8:1; Heb. 2:14, 15; Rom. 8:4; 13:8.

Quotes

- Liberation is not deliverance. *Victor Hugo*
- But the whole point of liberation is that you get out. Restructure your life. Act by yourself. *Jane Fonda*
- It is a great mystery that though the human heart longs for Truth, in which alone it finds liberation and delight, the first reaction of human beings to Truth is one of hostility and fear! *Anthony de Mello*
- I know but one freedom and that is the freedom of the mind. *Antoine de Saint-Exupery*
- Any existence deprived of freedom is a kind of death. *Gen Michel Aoun*
- Man is a being with free will; therefore, each man is potentially good or evil, and it's up to him and only him (through his reasoning mind) to decide which he wants to be. *Ayn Rand*
- There is no such thing as a little freedom. Either you are all free, or you are not free. *Walter Cronkite*

Questions

How does Christ make us free? What do we understand about the nature of true freedom? Why is freedom so important in God's universe? In what ways are we free? How can free will be abused, and what does this say about God and his gift of freedom? Is God free to do anything he wants? How does freedom fit into the great controversy?

Bible summary

It is not simply that we have freedom in Christ. Rather *we have been set free by Christ*. This is the message of Gal. 5:1–15. In consequence, says Paul, we need to stay free. Why should we want to go back and become re-enslaved to trying to obey the law in our own strength as a way of achieving salvation?

Additionally, Paul makes it clear that this freedom is not license to sin. He tells the Galatians to use their freedom to serve one another in love. This is divine freedom that always looks to the other rather than to the self. For now there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

Even though we are set free by Christ, this was at incredible cost to God. As a result we are to honor him in all we do (1 Cor. 6:20). For Jesus came and took on human form to save us, and died to save us from death, liberating us from the fear of death (Heb. 2:14, 15). As we follow the Spirit and not our sinful nature, we are made right by Jesus and follow the fundamental principles of the law (Rom. 8:4). As Paul writes in Rom. 13:8, by loving our neighbor we fulfill the requirements of the law.

Comment

Free to be free. That phrase sums up what God does for us and in us. We are set free from the slavery of sin in our lives, free then to make the right choices. This is not libertarianism that says you are free to do anything. For freedom also means you are free

not to do things that would negatively impact yourself and others. This is the same kind of freedom exhibited by God, who does not use his freedom to misuse his power, but rather freely chooses to do what is good and right.

The two key phrases here are these: “So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don’t get tied up again in slavery to the law.” “For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don’t use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.” (Gal. 5:1, 13 NLT). What a wonderful summary of the gospel!

What is freedom? asked Archibald MacLeish, and then went on to answer the question like this: “Freedom is the right to choose: the right to create for yourself the alternatives of choice. Without the possibility of choice and the exercise of choice a man is not a man but a member, an instrument, a thing.” The *dehumanisation* that results from a lack of freedom turns people into things. When human beings are “objectivized” then they are no longer human. “Liberty is always dangerous,” said Harry Emerson Fosdick, “but it is the safest thing we have.” And as Ramsey Clark concluded: “There is no conflict between liberty and safety. We have both or neither.” The only safe way is to allow freedom of conscience and religion, so that the principle “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” can be a universal reality.

“Man is born free, and is everywhere in chains,” wrote Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The tragedy of our experience in this life is that we are not free. We are enslaved by sin and our own selfish nature. We are imprisoned, and we want to be free.

The truth is that freedom speaks to the innermost part of our being. It is the value that we most want—the opportunity to live lives of freedom, to be able to choose our own destiny and not to be enslaved or dictated to.

Most important of all is our attitudes and our beliefs, most of all the way we relate to God. What kind of God do we believe in? What is his nature and character? Will we be happy for all eternity in his presence?

We are made to be free. God values freedom above all—at the heart of the great controversy. Tragically we are enslaved and enchained by drugs, addictions, and evil that prevents us from achieving who we are and what we should be. Only the Son can set us free, and then we are free indeed!

Ellen White Comments

The light and understanding which God’s word imparts is not designed merely, or chiefly, to promote intellectual culture. For an object higher than any earthly or temporal good were the holy oracles committed unto men. We see therein revealed the great plan of human redemption, the means devised to free mankind from the power of Satan. We see Christ, the Captain of our salvation, meeting the prince of darkness in open battle, and, single-handed, obtaining the victory in our behalf. We learn, too, that by this victory, was opened to us a door of hope, a source of strength, and that we may, as faithful soldiers, fight our own battles with the wily foe, and conquer in the name of Jesus. The powers of darkness must be met by every soul. The young, as well as the old, will be assailed, and all should understand the nature of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, and should realize that it concerns themselves. All are actors in the scene, sharers in the conflict. To be armed for the battle, all need “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” {RH, September 25, 1883}

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