

Are You a Slave or Are You Free?

John 8:31-36

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. High expectations for Samson as a deliverer even before his birth → no one was ever born with greater expectations except for Jesus Christ and John the Baptist.
- B. He was made a Nazirite (even his mother became one when she discovered she was with child). According to Numbers 6, Samson was especially set apart for God, and as a sign of that, his hair was never to be cut, he was never to touch a dead body, and he was never to drink wine.
 - 1. Hair = set him apart from other men
 - 2. No dead body = maintenance of his ritual purity
 - 3. Prohibition against strong drink = find pleasure in the Lord alone
- C. Strong expectations for Samson, and as he began to mature, he exhibited unique physical capabilities as well. He was physically strong, but when the Spirit of God came upon him, miracles happened.
- D. In Judges 13:25 we read, “The Spirit of the LORD began to stir him...” God came upon him, and the Jews expected great things. Now that Samson had come of age, people believed he was going to deliver his people. But, his life fell apart.
 - 1. It all began when he pursued a Philistine wife (enemies of the Jews) despite his parents’ objections.
 - 2. He also made the mistake of having friends who led an immoral life.
 - 3. He used his powers selfishly and wastefully.
- E. Samson, smitten by a woman, Delilah, decided he would go out as he had done at other times and defeat the Philistines, but this time there was a difference he did not recognize. “I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the LORD had left him” (Judges 16:20).
 - 1. He had become desensitized to his spiritual situation.
 - 2. His perception was gone - he didn’t even know God had left him.
- F. The sad account continues, “The Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. And he ground at the mill in the prison” (Judges 16:21). He was to be the liberator of his people. But now he had become a blind, disgraced, emasculated slave.
- G. But Samson isn’t unique, is he? This is an archetype for countless thousands of lives - a reflection of those who have had great potential but fell short.
 - 1. You probably know a few. Maybe you feel like one.
 - 2. Those who seemed to be free and on the verge of accomplishing great things for God were suddenly in bondage, sometimes right up to the end of their lives on earth.

H. Samson was meant to be a deliverer but instead became a slave. **In John 8:31-36 we discover what lies behind slavery and the prescription and motivation for freedom.**

II. *John 8:31–36*

A. *[31] So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, [32] and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

1. Jesus was going toe to toe w/ the religious power structure
 - a) He had proclaimed that he is the Light of the world, implying that his opponents were in darkness.
 - b) He had also warned the Jews they were in danger of the fires of Hell because they were from below and he was from above
 - c) Now, he even suggested that they might actually be slaves!
2. The Jews completely missed his point. Jesus was speaking on a spiritual level, but they were thinking physically. Here, he speaks to some who had believed → remain w/ me and it proves you are my disciples
 - a) Over the course of the story we see that their belief is false. They don't remain. They don't believe his words and live by them.

B. *[33] They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, “You will become free?”*

1. In other words, “Nah-ah.”
2. They didn't get what Jesus was saying, but they were deceiving themselves because they were in physical bondage at many times!
 - a) Slaves to the lies they were telling themselves
3. Their people had throughout history frequently been slaves—in Egypt, in Babylon, under the Philistines, the Greeks, and Rome.
4. The Jews were slaves, but they would not admit it. That was their problem. Their pride blinded them to the truth.
5. But here Jesus was speaking of spiritual slavery, and those who rightly understood what he was saying chose to deny their condition.

C. *[34] Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.*

1. The same denial regarding slavery exists today when we speak of sin
2. People today do not accept the truth of their condition - that sin is slavery
3. If you tell someone that they are enslaved to their sin, they will deny it
 - a) Ex: a practicing alcoholic. “Me an alcoholic? Not me. I can stop anytime. Where did you hide the bottle?”
 - b) Ex: Tell the ‘sexually liberated’ that he might be in bondage, and he will probably retort that you are the one in bondage—to archaic conventions and a repressive lifestyle.
 - c) Ex: Tell the Muslim in Moria that he is enslaved, not to the camp but to Islam, and he will proudly and blindly stand on his faith regardless of never having read the Koran or the Scriptures.

4. People do not like to be told they are enslaved. We are numb to our own condition - we do not see it, or we do not want to see it.
 5. Samson is a good example of this blindness. As Samson's love and involvement in the world increased, he became proud and ignorant to the fact that God could leave him, that his powers were not unconditionally his.
 - a) In his arrogance, after God helped him defeat one thousand Philistines and gave him water from the rock, Samson went to a prostitute to celebrate.
 - b) In his arrogance, after three attempts by Delilah on his life, Samson still trusted her and told her the secret of his power.
 - c) His sin had robbed him of his sense.
 - d) Samson imagined he was the freest of men b/c of his great strength, and yet he was a slave.
 6. Many people (e.g. college kids) think they are the verge of freedom as they depart from God's Word and go their own way, embracing the "enlightenment" of the world
 - a) "The standards of sex are so oppressive" we might think
 - b) "Psychology has moved us beyond the parenting we see in Scripture"
 7. In reality, however, we are about to enter the greatest bondage we have ever known. Those compromises do not lead to freedom, but slavery
 - a) Once we enter into that slavery, we resent any suggestions from church family, friends, or acquaintances that something is off in us.
 - b) We need to wake up and realize that the path to freedom lies in obeying the Word of God.
 8. When we grow numb to the reality of sin and the enslaving power it has upon us, we arrogantly think that we can fix ourselves - it is like trying to clean up an oil spill w/ a napkin! It just will not work b/c sin is a spiral
 - a) Ex: I just need a little bit more \$ and then I will be happy
 - b) Ex: I just need a different partner and then I will be content
 - c) Ex: I just need to meditate more, buy some crystals
- D. Remember Jesus' first words in verses 31 and 32: "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
1. This is the path to freedom. Only by abiding in the Word of God can we enjoy the freedom Christ offers us.
 - 2. Abiding in the Word involves two things: hearing the Word and obeying it. The result is freedom.**
 3. When one abides in the Word, he becomes a disciple, or literally a learner. "If you abide in my word, you are truly my learners."
- E. Verse 32 shows us the second step: "and you will know the truth."

1. Romans 12:2 says we are transformed by the renewing of our minds: truth
 2. By becoming hearers and obeyers, abiding in the Word, we open ourselves to truth—not primarily scientific or historical truth, but truth about spiritual things—our nature, the nature of God, way of salvation, true joy.
 3. These become clear and certain to us if we abide in the Word, and they bring freedom previously unknown
 4. A man does not become free to know Christ, to have his sins taken away, until he knows the truth. And as he grows in his knowledge of the truth, more freedom is available to him as the truth is applied.
 5. The more we abide in his Word, the more we become hearers and doers.
 - a) The more open we are to his truth, the more truth he gives to us.
 - b) The more truth we learn, the more we can obey it and experience new freedom.
 - c) As sin is a spiral, so is this. It is a spiral of blessing.
 - d) The key, in John 8, is abiding in his Word, holding fast to it.
 6. Abiding begins w/ learning, but it doesn't stop there. We must be students of the Word—not only the preachers, not just the educated, but all believers. And yet even if that takes place, we are not necessarily abiding.
 - a) To abide in the Word we must obey it. And that is how freedom comes. We learn the Word of God, we obey it, and we are free.
 - 7. The promise of freedom should motivate us to study the Word of God and obey it.**
 8. The reason many Christians are not experiencing spiritual freedom today is that while they may be Biblically literate, they are not Biblically obedient.
 9. If you asked me to summarize what people need as followers of Jesus, I would tell you to hear and obey the Word of God
 - a) If you are Biblically literate, yet feel bound, perhaps you are not obeying the Word of God.**
- F. *[35] The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.*
1. So Jesus presents the solution of abiding in the Word of God and then in verse 35 paints the portrait of the freedom he wants us to have
 2. The spiritual freedom that comes to us is as dramatically different as that of a slave and a son.
 3. The son is in the house and has access to everything. He can go wherever he wants to go. He can stay as long as he wants to stay. But the slave has no rights. If you are a slave to sin, you are not free like a son.
- G. *[36] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*
1. Christ, “the Son,” is the One who enjoys freedom, and he is the One who gives us that freedom. The freedom we enjoy is the freedom that Christ

enjoys. The freest being in all the universe pumps freedom into our lives that he describes as "free indeed."

- a) Freedom to know you are FREE and no longer a slave to sin
- b) Freedom to rise above our sins and experience victory
- c) Freedom to live a holy life b/c God changes you
- d) Freedom that we never had before - the freedom to choose the right, the freedom to choose the best, the freedom to keep on growing, the freedom to reach our potential.
- e) To be free indeed comes from abiding in the Word of God, from hearing and obeying God's Word.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. One of two words describes us. We are either slaves or we are free.
- B. Perhaps you have not entered into the initial freedom of being delivered from sin by trusting in Jesus Christ to deliver us - abiding begins w/ repentance and belief.
- C. Others of us may find that even though we have been liberated, the word bondage seems best to describe where we are today.
 1. That may be because we have returned to our old ways. We have become desensitized. God's power is gone from us.
 - a) Although we are free indeed, we are acting as slaves to sin, crawling back down the spiral into willful slavery
 2. What we need to do is repent, turn to God, appropriating the gospel
 3. Samson, in the last moment of his life, despite all his backsliding, returned to God in faith and God used him in the greatest event of his life to redeem the people of Israel from the Philistines.

D. If you have been wayward, know that it is by faith you repent and turn back to God. It is not by hard work or human effort!

1. In this, we can have freedom - even if circumstances say otherwise (e.g. Moria)
- E. For you, **Are you a slave or are you free?**
1. Have you come to the point where you have turned from your sin and trusted in Jesus as your king and savior?
 2. Are you abiding in the Word, feeding yourself on it?
 3. Are you obeying the Word?
 4. Those are questions of freedom, and we need to constantly return to them week after week, day after day, moment by moment.