

Freedom in Christ

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted.

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July 2nd, 2023

This is the time of year that we hear words like freedom, liberty, sacrifice, life, and democracy, and just two days, our country is going to celebrate 200 and 47 years as a nation, many of us will get together with family and friends, maybe neighbors and have barbecues, watch fireworks, and be reminded of those who have sacrificed so much for the freedoms that you and I experience in this country.

We have the freedom to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We have the freedom to gather once a week in community and worship our Heavenly Father. And as followers of Jesus Christ, you and I are very blessed to live in the United States of America as we know we have brothers and sisters around the country. And around the world, who live in other areas where they are persecuted for their beliefs.

As followers of Jesus Christ, you and I have also experienced sadness as our leaders and society as a whole seem to be getting further and further away from biblical truth. Over the last 5, ten, 15 years, I would say that we've had a lot of ups and downs with the decisions that have been made by those in authority. But this is to be expected in a nation where you and I and other people are given the freedom to choose.

Sometimes the choices that other people are going to make are going to be decisions that we don't like or we don't agree with. And it is difficult as followers of Jesus Christ when our leaders and people and authority pass laws that make sin okay or acceptable. But if you are not a history buff like I am, please know this is not new with our country.

This has been going on since the beginning of the world, and you also need to know that it doesn't matter if sin is legal or illegal. People will find a way to do what they want. The legality of it doesn't change it. Also remember in the account that we have in the book of genesis that God chose to give us freedom, God chose to give mankind freedom and with this freedom, we have made many bad decisions starting with the apple in the garden all the way to today.

Did you know that even if you are born in America like I was, that you are born into slavery? You could be born in China, Russia, Brazil, England, yes, even the United States of America. It doesn't matter where you are born. If you are on this planet, you and I were born into slavery. And no amount of bravery or military might can rescue us. We can't fight our way out of it.

We can't establish a government that can rescue us. We can't pay off a debt that releases us. And this master that you and I are born slave to is a cruel and unrelenting master. And you know, potentially the worst part about this slavery is that most people don't even know or recognize they are in bondage. They have the false sense of freedom that lulls them into thinking that all is well.

I know today that many of you know the freedom that I am talking about, but I want to sound the alarm, if you will. I want to take time today to celebrate our freedoms in the USA, but I also want to make us aware of a freedom that is far greater than just our national freedom. This amazing freedom that I want to spend time talking about today is available to everyone regardless of what nation they are born into. This freedom is a freedom that cannot be taken away.

This freedom is offered to you free of charge, but because it is free, don't misunderstand that to mean that it didn't cost a lot. Because it did. Again, I know many of you understand the freedom that I'm talking about. But as we gather with family and friends this week to celebrate our national freedom, I would like us all to be reminded of the freedom which is far greater, this freedom that I will speak of is true freedom, and it's very possible that we have family, Friends, and neighbors that are still living in bondage, even though they live in a free country.

Maybe now is a good time as any, to discuss the true freedom that comes in Jesus Christ. So if you have your bibles, I encourage you to open up to Galatians chapter three one, Galatians chapter three verse one as the Apostle Paul is going to share with us what this freedom truly looks like and what it means for those that will receive it. Galatians and the New Testament Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians.

It's about two thirds of the way through the New Testament in the back of your Bible. While you're turning there, let me pray and ask for God's blessing upon our time. Heavenly Father, we gather before you today. Praising you in thanking you for the freedom we experience in our country. That we are able to gather without fear of persecution to be able to worship and praise you. But lord, as we gather, we also thank you and celebrate the freedom that is given to us through Jesus Christ.

And if there's any here that I haven't experienced that freedom, any that are watching online, listening on the radio. Father, my prayer is that hearts and eyes would be opened. To the truth of the freedom that is offered. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Now, before we jump into Galatians, chapter three, I have to give you a little bit of history to understand what we are reading. And so Galatians is actually a letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia.

This is a period. This is an area of our world and a church began there in this area in the Apostle Paul is writing them a letter of encouragement. He also wants to address some of the difficulties that this church is experiencing, and this church is a little different than our church today, because this church is made up of two very different cultures that are trying to come together. One culture is the Jewish culture.

You have people that belong to this church that were raised in a Jewish family. They were taught about Yahweh. They were taught about the law. They were taught about Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And they were raised with this idea that they needed to be obedient to the law to receive favor from God.

And so, even though they have now come to believe that Jesus Christ is the messiah, they've witnessed his resurrection, his crucifixion with their own eyes, and they are proclaiming Jesus as their lord and savior, they are still wrestling with following all of the old commands that they were taught as they were growing up. All of these laws that they were given. That's one part of the church of Galatia. The second part of the church of Galatia would be the gentile believers.

Many of these would have been Roman individuals that were raised with a Pantheon of gods. There were many gods that they were to worship and they were to make sure that they didn't offend so that nothing bad would happen to them. But these gentile believers have thrown away all of that teaching that they received when they were younger, and they have now dedicated their lives to following Jesus as their messiah. Their savior.

They have come to the conclusion that the things that they have seen with their eyes, the things that they have heard could be nothing more, but the fact that Jesus is God. And so they have submitted their lives to him. And while they are trying to bring these two groups together, the gentile believers, believers, and the Jewish believers, there is a problem that is taking place and this problem is that the Jewish believers are trying to convince the gentile believers that they need to be obedient to the law, just like they were.

And you could imagine, because some of the things of that law, they weren't too excited about doing that. If you don't know what circumcision is, you can read about that later. That was part of the law. They said, all the

males need to do this. So, let's get into Galatians chapter three, where we understand we have this dichotomy that's taking place. The struggle that's taking place, where these Jewish believers are trying to get the gentile believers to follow all of their old customs and commands and feast and celebrations, and they don't want to.

And it's a good thing that we don't have any struggles like that in our church today. Traditions, values, all of those things. So it does apply to us as well. Paul writes to the church in Galatians chapter three verse one. You foolish Galatians. Now I want you to know he is calling both the Jewish and the gentile believers foolish. He's not singling one out. They're both being foolish in this argument. Paul says, who has bewitched you?

Before your very eyes, Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I love this because Paul is writing to people that have firsthand account of the resurrection. Before your very eyes, nobody told you about this, you experienced this. You saw this before your very eyes, Jesus was crucified. Verse two, I would like to learn then, Paul says just one thing from you. Let me just ask you one question.

Did you receive the holy spirit by works of the law or by believing what you heard? Here is the issue. Those Jewish believers are trying to go back and grab from their history, grab from their heritage, grab from the traditions that they have that the priests have handed down. All of these laws and rules and regulations that have been given, they knew the stories of Abraham.

They knew the story of Moses, who went into the desert and rescued the Israelites from bondage and captivity to Egypt, then Moses went up on the mountain and received the ten commandments on the tablets. And he said, we still have to be obedient to this first covenant, this law that was given through Moses and Paul is saying, when you were trying to be obedient to that law, did you receive the spirit? Or did you receive the spirit when you believed what you heard?

Now, for those of you that aren't familiar, as you read in the gospels, of course, they received the spirit when they believed when they had faith. So in verse three, Paul says, are you so foolish that after beginning by means of the spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Have you experienced so much in vain if it really was in vain?

So again, I ask Paul says, does God give you his spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Paul is making a clear separation here saying, listen, we are no longer bound by the old law. We are no longer bound by the old covenant. Paul uses their own testimony to make this point. He says, listen, you received the spirit of Salvation through your belief through your faith, not by obedience to the law.

Why are you trying to continue to follow the old way and force others to do the same thing? Paul wants to give them more proof to free them from this bondage to the law that they were living under, to somehow believe that they had to earn their Salvation from a loving Heavenly Father. And so he goes in Galatians chapter three versus 6 through 9 to speak about Abraham. They all knew Abraham. He was the father of their entire ancestry. He was their ancestor of the entire people the Israelites.

So also Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Understand then that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Now, this is beautiful. We have to stop here. In this verse, the Apostle Paul is saying, there is now a distinction not based on nationality in this church, not based on it's not based on nationality in the world in which we live, there is now a distinction based on those who have had the same faith as the faith of Abraham in Yahweh in God, the father.

You don't need to be Jewish to be an ancestor of Abraham anymore. You don't need to be Jewish to be a child of God. Anybody who has faith can enter into the family of Christ. What a beautiful truth, Paul is saying. In verse 8, Paul says scripture for Saul that God would justify the gentiles by faith, and he announced the gospel, the good news in advance to Abraham when he said, all nations will be blessed through you.

You and I are blessed through Abraham and through his faith, in verse 9. So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. Jews and gentiles, Paul says, are no longer under the law because Jesus has fulfilled the law for us. You and I couldn't keep it anyway. We couldn't adhere to the entire law. It's not something that we could earn. Galatians chapter three verse 20 5.

Paul says, now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. This is the good news of Jesus Christ, because no one could fulfill the law. We were all prisoners to our own disobedience, our own sin. We were slaves to it. The cost of our disobedience was death. Paul is going to use another example to make his point saying, maybe you're not getting this. Maybe you're not understanding this.

Let me give you another analogy. And so he's going to use the analogy of an error, not hair, but an error. Someone that receives something in a will or in a state that has been left, and he's going to say, okay, let me just use this example to help you understand what it means to now be called a child of God. Galatians chapter four versus one through 7. What I am saying, Paul says, is that as long as an error is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate.

So we all understand this. Maybe we've experienced this in our own life. As you're planning your will, if you have young children, you know, you have to answer all of these questions and, of course, you have to say, okay, until my child is a certain age, I don't want to just give them what I'm leaving behind. And for some of us, it's a lot, and for some of us, it's very little, so it doesn't matter, right? But you say, okay, I want them to be responsible with this. So when they're underage, I don't want them to get it. And so what Paul is saying that that underage person, even though they are promised all of this until they reach that age, it's as if they're still have nothing.

There's still a slave, right? In verse two, the air is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. We do the same thing. We put somebody in charge of the finances and the estate until the child is old enough to make their best decisions. So also, now here's where the analogy is going to come. When we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come. So what is he talking about?

The set time. What is the set time? When Jesus came, all of the Jewish people living under the law before Jesus, it's like they were underage people awaiting the gift that had been waiting for them. All right? But when the set time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, Jesus was born under the law to redeem those under the law, that you and I might receive adoption to son ship that we could be brought into the family.

And so when we are brought into his family, we become his sons and daughters. God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts, the Holy Spirit, which crawls calls out ABBA father. So you are no longer a slave, but you are God's child, and since you are his child, God has made you also in here. Think about that. We went from being a slave to sin, which the consequences, the result of that sin was death.

And when we proclaim Jesus as our lord and savior, not only do we get rid of that old master of sin that leads to death, we now have been adopted, and we are called sons and daughters of God and because of that, we now can receive the promises that are for God's people. We have been set free. We are no longer slaves to sin and death. We are no longer slaves to the law, which we could not uphold.

We have been given freedom over it. Paul is going to use another example here. This will be the last one we'll look at. From the Jews history to make his point. Now he's going to focus on the Jews a little bit and say, okay, let's look at your own history. And if you don't know the Old Testament that well, this will be a little harder to grasp, but I'm sure you can still grasp it. If you know the stories of the Old Testament and Abraham, who was the father of all the Jewish people in Abraham, God promises him, I'm going to bless the world through you.

You're going to have all of these descendants, and yet his wife can't get pregnant, Sarah, and so they try to figure this whole thing out and Sarah says, well, why don't you also marry Hagar, the slave woman? And so he marries Hagar, and he has Ishmael. And he thinks that the promise is going to come through that child. But then, of course, as they get older in age, Sarah does give birth to Isaac and the promise continues through Isaac. So he's going to use this whole story to help us understand the freedom that comes through Christ.

Galatians chapter four versus 21 to 31. Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman, Hagar, and the other by the free woman, Sarah. His son by the slave woman, Ismael, was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman, Isaac, was born as the result of a divine promise.

If you go back and read that story in scripture, they were promised that they would have a child through whom God would bless the world. These things are being taken figuratively. The women represent two covenants, one covenant is from Mount Sinai. What is that coming in from Mount Sinai, who received that? Moses, remember he went up on the mountain. He got the covenant. He brought it back to the Israelites. That's one woman is representing that covenant. That's Hagar and bears children who are to be slaves.

That's all of us. We are all born as slaves under that old covenant because we are slaves to sin. This is Hagar. He's just going to make it very clear, all right? This is who I'm talking about 25. Now Hagar stands for mount Sinai in Arabia, and she corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem because she is in slavery with her children. What is the statement that Paul is making? Our city is in slavery to sin. The city of Jerusalem is representative of the descendants of Hagar because they have not believed in Jesus Christ.

Could we say the same is true of some people in our city and in our nation? Absolutely. They are in slavery. But the Jerusalem that above is free and she is our mother. I love this. If you go all the way to revelation, you see this new Jerusalem coming out of heaven and the vision that John shares with us, you know this vision where this new city of Jerusalem comes down. But the Jerusalem that is above, Paul knows about this new Jerusalem, and she is our mother, and she is free for it is written.

He's going back to the Old Testament. Be glad barren women, woman, you who never bore a child, shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labor because more are the children of the desolate woman than that of her who has a husband. Now you, Paul says, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, our children of promise. We are like Isaac if we're taking this analogy that Paul is using. We are like Isaac.

We are children of the promise for at that time the sun born according to the flesh, persecuted the sun born by the power of the spirit. And it is the same now. If you read back in genesis, Ishmael was taunting and making fun of Isaac, the child of promise. Guess what happens today? The people of the world, the people that are in bondage to slavery are making fun of those who are free in children of the promise. It still happens today.

But what does the scripture say, Paul says, get rid of the slave woman and her son for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son. Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman. To which we all should say, amen. Amen. We are no longer a slave to sin. We have been set free.

We are not a child of the slave woman in her son. Instead, we are the children of the free woman. If we receive Jesus Christ as our savior as our messiah, he has fulfilled the law for us that we could never do and he frees us from a life of sin. This is true freedom. And this freedom comes automatically with your citizenship in heaven. Have you thought about that before? Our number one citizenship is in heaven.

Now we might have dual citizenship because we have heaven, and I'm also an American, or your citizenship is in heaven, and you're also Brazilian, or whatever it is, your nationality. We may have dual citizenship, but the one that really matters, the one that I would never give up is my citizenship in heaven. Galatians chapter 5

verse one. This is the last verse. Paul says this. 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.

We have been set free by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. He has conquered our master sin and the apostle Paul says, don't allow yourselves to be burdened by that again. But the sad truth is that most people don't even know they are a slave to sin. We all have family members, Friends, neighbors, people that we love and care about. Who don't recognize is that they are even in bondage that their sinful desires control them.

And for whatever reason, they can't get the victory and sometimes we've had those conversations with our family members and friends if they would open up to us. And so we have people that struggle with alcoholism. We have drug addicts, men and women who are addicted to pornography. The person who feels the need to gossip the glutton. Most of these people, when you talk to them, don't want to be controlled by these things, but they can't see a way out. Many that I talk to feel like that they have control over these things, though it's very obvious from their life that those things control them.

They are enslaved. And that is where you and I have the good news of Jesus Christ. That they also can be set free from bondage. Just as we have been set free, the chains can be broken. Jesus has made a way, and you and I are no better than anybody else that struggles with these things. We also can struggle with them. We can allow ourselves to be in bondage again.

And so today, this week, we celebrate our freedom for the country in which we live, but more importantly, would we take time to celebrate our freedom through Jesus Christ? And take this as an opportunity to share that freedom with our family and Friends. That they can have citizenship in heaven, where they become an heir to the promise, they can become a child of the king.

And the blessings that come with that. Let me close in prayer. Heavenly Father, what a beautiful truth that we have in your word. That we can be called your sons and your daughters. And when we are adopted into your family, it means that we inherit the estate that is left. The gifts, the blessings, the eternity, spent with you, forgiveness of sins, freedom from bondage.

Or if there are any here today, any that are listening on the radio or watching online if they are in bondage right now to sin, my prayer is that eyes and hearts would be open. To the freedom that comes through Jesus Christ. So it's in his name we pray. Amen.