

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

**September 3, 2023 "30 days to freedom ... Why does this even matter?"**

### **I Intro.**

The official end of summer is approaching. Things are cranking back up and we want you to be a part of this great community. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

### **II Sunday.**

Sunday we jumped into a new, kind of unusual and will be a constantly evolving series. This series will fold two separate ideas into one very useful idea. First, anything we can commit to, and sustain for 30 days has a good chance of becoming a regular part of our lives. Obviously we call these 'habits', and they are difficult to start. And once they become ingrained they should be even more difficult to stop. This series is going to challenge us to commit to 30 days of intentional effort. Second, this series will redefine and help move us to a greater true freedom. The foundational belief is we often define/confuse freedom with the ability to choose. We just want to be able to do what we want to do. This understanding of freedom is so limiting because it's primarily rooted in fear. We're more motivated by the fear of not being able to choose our preferences, that freedom is framed in the fear of losing the ability to choose. Which doesn't sound all that appealing. It sounds more like a prison. So, for the next four weeks we're going to look at what true freedom is. And how our commitment to 30 days of different practices can lead us to the kind of freedom we actually desire. But as always, some thought provoking questions to start this series off.

**What are some healthy habits you have that are just a part of your daily routine?**

**What are some habits you've tried to start but just can't seem to get any traction?**

And to make the turn forwards understanding freedom.

**What does freedom mean to you?**

**How does society define freedom?**

**How do you wrestle with the idea and practice of spiritual freedom with a more societal understanding of freedom?**

We have two scriptures for this Sunday. One to help us frame the understanding of freedom. And one to help us with a commitment to a life that leads to freedom. So, read **Acts 28:17-20, 30-31**.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

**What did you take away from Paul's situation?**

**How can it be said that he was "without hindrance"? (NLT)**

It's obvious from this passage that Paul felt free and unhindered even though he was under house arrest. Apparently physically confined. Still boldly proclaiming the message of Christ. So, it seems that Paul FULLY experienced the type of freedom we talked about earlier. Freedom wasn't about being able to make the choices he wanted to. Freedom was not living in fear that his preferences would control him. Nothing external could take away from his feeling free.

Now let's talk about the 30 days to...part. This first Sunday we talked about what it takes to make a 30 day commitment and the steps we need to take. The passage for this teaching was from **2 Timothy 2:1:15**. Read it and we'll pull some truths from it.

**What jumped out to you from this passage?**

**What do you see as important elements to committing to 30 days of intentional effort?**

The primary question for this first Sunday is a simple one. **Do you want to be free?** Not as the world or our society defines it. By being able to choose our preferences. But as Jesus defined it. We saw this in the life of Paul. A freedom that's not dependent on the things of the world. It's not based on our external life. But an inner freedom. That comes from a growing relationship with God, what he wants to share with us, so we can experience true freedom no matter what situation we find ourselves in. In this passage Paul highlights 3 truths to help Timothy experience this relationship with God, but still in our world that brings true meaning to life.

### **1. Throw yourself in the work of Christ.**

This is the New Living Translation, but I love the idea of "*throw yourself*" in describing what a life of freedom is rooted in. Think about things you really love to do. I mean you REALLY love to do them.

**What does it mean to "throw yourself" into them? What kind of commitment does that require? And what kind of energy do you channel to "throw yourself" into that thing you love?**

This is what Paul was telling Timothy. Want freedom? Center your life around the work of Christ.

### **2. Fix this picture firmly in your mind.**

I'm going to land on the phrase. "*Fix*". This means to attach in a permanent way. When you fix your mind to something nothing can distract you or lead you off course. We use the word "fix" to describe an over and above intense attention. When I used to walk our dog he would become 'fixated' on a particular place because of a smell there. You could not pull him off of it. To "fix" is to place all of your attention on what you make important. **What would this look like in you pursuing freedom?**

### **3. Concentrate on doing your best for God.**

Lastly, "*concentrate*". I like the idea of the physical act of total focus. But I'm also intrigued with the word "concentrate" when it comes to certain foods or liquids. Concentrated can also mean all of the unnecessary stuff has been removed and this product is pure. Super powerful. **So, to concentrate on doing your best, what would it look like to be pure and without any fluff or extra in doing your best for God?**

### **III Challenge.**

This isn't a list of things to do to experience freedom. There are practices and habits, truths we can work into our daily life. But to experience true freedom we just have to answer that one question. **Do you want to be free? Do you want a freedom that isn't dependent on anything in society or culture?** It's the same freedom that allowed Paul to experience actual freedom even though he was under house arrest...for the rest of his life. I know I want to experience that kind of freedom.