

Freedom in the Crosshairs #1

“The Freedom-Truth Connection”

Introduction

I want to begin a new series on the subject of “Freedom in the Crosshairs”.
The foundational text for our teaching will be taken from a rather well-known passage in the Gospel of John where Jesus is in a debate with the rival Pharisees...

John 8:31-32

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Theme

Jesus is telling us here that there is a close connection between truth and freedom. Freedom comes from knowing the truth!

But we are now living in a time when both God’s truth and our personal freedoms are under attack.

We might say that Freedom and Truth are ‘in the crosshairs’. Why do we say that?

“In the Crosshairs”

It means to be in a position to be attacked; to become a target.

We are in a spiritual warfare with powerful forces aim to take away our Freedom by attacking the Truth. Freedom and Truth in the crosshairs.

So, what are we to do? That’s the subject of this series:

**Our goal is to be like Israel’s tribe of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32)
To understand the times and know what Israel ought to do.**

We will begin by taking a closer look at what Jesus said about the subjects of freedom and truth.

John 8:31-32

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I. Unpacking the Text

A. First: Who Is Jesus Speaking To?

1. The Lord is not speaking to the world; He is not speaking to the hypocrites; He is speaking specifically to those Jews ‘who believed in Him’.

2. He says: ‘you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free’; but notice that He is not making this promise to ALL ‘who believed in Him’.

a. There is a condition; an ‘if-then’ condition and consequence.

The Promise of Freedom is Conditional

IF you continue (abide, dwell, live) in My word...THEN you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

3. Many may miss this: Not everyone who says they ‘believe’ in Jesus is a true disciple of Jesus. Not ALL who believe in Him will ‘continue’ (abide, dwell) in His word!

Matthew Henry

The mark of a true disciple of Christ is continuing in His word. When they believed on him, they gave up themselves to be his disciples. But now, at their entrance into his school, he lays down this settled rule: That he would claim none for his disciples except those that continued in his word.

It is implied that there are many who profess themselves Christ's disciples who are not his disciples indeed, but only in show and name.

The Biblical Illustrator

Many of Christ's professing disciples do not continue in His word, as in the parable of the sower. But all Christ's true disciples do. Many are easily persuaded to take up a profession of religion, and just as easily persuaded to lay it down. Oh! this demand is a hard word and sends many away sorrowful from Christ.

(J. Spencer.)

4. There are literally *millions* of counterfeit Christians in our country today; we know this because they have not ‘continued’ in the Word:

a. In the last election, millions who say they ‘believe in Jesus’ voted for the pro-abortion candidate!

b. Many Pastors have not ‘continued in His word’ during the Corona-crisis by shutting down their churches. (1000’s are still closed)

5. Much of this counterfeit-Christianity is the result of hyper-grace, seeker-friendly preaching that fails to challenge churchgoers to examine themselves to see if they are really in the faith.

a. Some say such a sermon make people uncomfortable; but the Apostle Paul did just that.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified.

b. Some of you may be thinking, “Okay, so how do I examine myself on whether I truly believe?” I hope it’s an honest question. A Puritan Bible scholar gives us an honest answer.

The Biblical Illustrator

A soldier's confidence in his commander is evidenced by the soldier obeying his commander's orders. A patient's trust in his physician is shown by the patient following the physician's directions. In the same way, a disciple's sincerity in his professions of discipleship is only proved when the disciple walks according to the Master's teaching. There is no sincerity in a profession of faith where there is no obedience.

6. Jesus promised that knowing the truth would set them free-IF they continued in His word. True faith is not based on feelings. The old Puritan writers often warned about something called ‘false peace’. This is a dangerous condition where a person experiences an emotional moment and assumes they are saved on the basis of feelings.

Albert Barnes

Jesus cautions them against having too much confidence in their present feelings. They were just converted-converted by a single sermon. They had had no time to test their faith. Jesus assures them that if their faith should stand the test, if it should produce obedience to His commandments and

commitment to the truth, it would be proof that their faith was genuine, for the tree is known by its fruit. Faith that does not produce a holy life is in vain.

7. I am anxious to jump right into how ‘knowing the truth will set us free’. But I’m laboring over this point first because while knowing the truth will set you free, **knowing the truth is only possible to those who ‘continue’ in His word!**

8. There is one more word of instruction in the text found in...

B. The Corollary of the Text

1. There is a powerful corollary to our text. What is a corollary?

Corollary

A proposition that follows from one already proved.

Example:

If knowing the truth will set us free, believing a lie will bring us to bondage!

2. According to the corollary: Any area of my life where I am truly free, it is the result of knowing the truth. Any area of my life where I am in bondage it is the result of believing a lie.

3. God sets us free with knowledge of the truth; Satan brings bondage when we believe a lie. The Apostle Paul warns us that the spirit of antichrist is a *lying* spirit with power over all those who do not love truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and *lying* wonders, and with all unrighteous *deception* among those who perish, *because they did not receive the love of the truth*, that they might be saved. And for this reason, God will send them strong delusion, *that they should believe the lie*, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

a. The choice is clear: to those who do not receive the love of the truth, God will send a strong delusion so that they will believe a lie.

4. The Bible teaches us that mankind’s fall out of freedom into bondage was the result of believing a lie; and it was a whopper! The serpent tempts our first parents with a false promise...

Genesis 3:4

‘You shall be like God’.

5. Never underestimate the power of believing a lie! It brought the whole human race into bondage to sin. To this day, Satan robs us of our freedom when he gets us to believe a lie!

6. In the same way, evil leaders use lies to bring entire nations into bondage.

a. Adolf Hitler used the power of a lie to come to power in Germany. And the bigger the lie the better...

Adolf Hitler

“The great masses of the people will more easily fall victims to a big lie than to a small one.”

b. Hitler convinced the German people that they were a superior race; he also convinced them that all of their problems were caused by the Jews!

c. He took control of the national media, the radio, the newspapers, and the printing presses to propagandize the lie through repetition.

Adolf Hitler

“Make the lie big, make it simple, keep saying it, and eventually they will believe it.”

d. He basically hypnotized the nation with big lies and the result: 6 ½ million Jews exterminated and Germany brought to destruction.

7. It’s easy to look back at the horrors of the holocaust, where 6 million Jews were exterminated by belief in a lie, and think it could never happen here. The problem is that it IS happening here.

8. Our freedom is in the crosshairs of the antichrist political powers America just elected; and their weapon is always the same; an all-out assault on the truth.

C. Our Freedom is in the Crossfire

1. Our freedoms have been slipping away at an accelerated pace for over a year now; the Corona crisis became the government’s excuse for a never-ending

list of regulations that affected our families, our businesses, our schools, and even our churches. The social and economic impact is literally too big to be measured.

2. But much of what we allowed to be done to us was based on **lies**:

- They told us 2 to 3 million would die
- They told us it would take 2-5 years to find a vaccine
- They told us lockdowns and mask-wearing would solve the problem
- And the other day the President told us that if we all follow the rules, we ‘might’ be allowed to have a backyard Barbecue with our families on the 4th of July!

a. That one statement, to me, reveals how much freedom we have lost and how powerful we have allowed the government to become; aided and abetted by the mainstream news media, who can be counted on to lie to us.

3. I’m reading the updated version of Dr. Chris Thurman’s book first published 30 years ago...

Dr. Chris Thurman, “The Lies We Believe”

This book is about the lies we believe that ruin our lives—and the truths we must believe to live truly healthy and abundant lives.

4. In preparing this new series I began to make a list of “the Lies (Americans) are believing’ today; lies that are stealing our freedom and bringing us into bondage. I almost ran out of paper. And some of these are whoppers!

The Lies We Believe

- **Socialism is good; in many ways, it is even Christian**
- **The government has the right (even the responsibility) to redistribute wealth**
 - **The nuclear family is outdated (the Bible also)**
 - **Gay marriage is just as legitimate as traditional marriage**
 - **Homosexuality is a legitimate alternate lifestyle**

The Lies We Believe

- **Gender is determined by choice, not by biology (Qualifies as a whopper)**
- **A woman has a right to her own body, including the right to an abortion**
 - **The constitution calls for the separation of church and state**

- **The climate will kill us within 15 years (Another whopper)**
- **The character and compassion of America requires open borders (Another case where a ‘noble cause’ conceals the real agenda)**

The Lies We Believe

- **America is and always has been systemically racist**
 - **America was founded in 1619 not 1776**
- **Critical Race Theory explains what’s wrong with our country**
 - **Mass murders will end when we have greater gun control**
 - **The greatest problem in America is white supremacy**
 - **Preaching certain Bible passages amounts to ‘hate speech’**
 - **The death penalty is an inhumane, unbiblical concept**

5. I could continue the list but I spare you: this list of the lies many Americans believe, (including many professing ‘Christians’), are bringing us into bondage like no previous generation has ever experienced in our country. So the question arises...

II. What Are We To Do?

A. Live Not By Lies!

1. One of the best, most important Christian books I have read in the last 10 years is “Live Not By Lies”, written by Rod Dreher, the Senior Editor of the American Conservative.

a. The book is a chronicle of how Christian people resisted and eventually overturned Communist rule in Eastern European countries in the previous generation.

2. The title, “Live Not By Lies”, is taken the last words from the last words the great Russian patriot Alexander Solzhenitsyn spoke to the Russian people after he was released from prison and exiled to America: “Live not by lies!”

a. Solzhenitsyn wrote about how the Russian people had come under Communism because they were willing to ‘live by lies’.

Rod Dreher

What did he mean to ‘live by lies?’ To Solzhenitsyn, to live by lies meant

accepting without protest all the falsehoods and propaganda that the state compelled its citizens to affirm—or at least not to oppose—to get along peaceably under totalitarianism.

3. We made a long list above of the lies we've believed that have brought us to bondage. The election revealed that, by and large, Americans were willing to go along with the falsehoods and propaganda the State has compelled us to affirm.

a. Even now, many churchgoers believe that we will be able to go along peacefully with all this until it all blows over.

b. But real Christians know the score; this won't go away on its own.

4. *One of the greatest challenges for true believers today is the feeling that we have no power to change things.* But Solzhenitsyn says that the feeling that we are powerless is the lie that gives all the other lies their power! (Selah)

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Everybody says that they have no choice but to conform and to accept powerlessness. But that is the lie that gives all the other lies their malignant force. The ordinary man may not be able to overturn the kingdom of lies, but he can at least say that he is not going to be its loyal subject.

5. God has allowed the American church to be tested in the most hostile political environment in our nation's history; it's already here. We do not have a choice about being surrounded by lies; but we do have a choice.

a. In the book we meet Maria Wittner, a hero of the 1956 Hungarian uprising against the oppression of the Soviet Union.

Maria Wittner

You will be surrounded by lies. You don't have a choice. But do not assimilate into it. It's an individual decision for each person. If you want to live in fear or if you want to live in the freedom of the soul. If your soul is free then your thoughts are free, and then your words are going to be free.

Rod Dreher

You have to live in a world of lies, but it's your choice whether that world lives in you. Once you perceive how the system runs on lies, stand as firmly as you can on what you know to be the true and real when confronted by those

**lies. Refuse to let the media and institutions propagandize your children.
Teach them how to identify lies and refuse them.**

6. In the week's to come we will be delving deeper into how we can identify lies and refuse them, each of us in our own sphere. For now...

III. Conclusion

A. Review: Summing Up What We Have Said

1. Jesus taught us that there is a close connection between truth and freedom. (John 8:31-32)

2. Freedom comes (to the true disciple) by knowing the truth; which is why the enemies of freedom will always attack the truth with a lie.

3. Knowing the truth will set us free; believing a lie will bring us to bondage.

Rod Dreher

It is up to us today to take up this challenge, to live not by lies and to speak the truth that defeats evil. How do we do this in a society built on lies? By accepting a life outside the mainstream, courageously defending the truth, and being willing to endure the consequences. These challenges are daunting, but we are blessed with examples from saints who have gone before.

a. We must accept a life outside the mainstream as we courageously defend the truth

b. We must be willing to endure the consequences

c. We must learn from the examples of saints who have gone before

4. In the coming weeks we'll meet some of these saints and share the secrets that can overturn all the strategies of the kingdom of darkness: by knowing the truth that sets us free. That is our job; the same one Paul assigned to Timothy.

1 Timothy 3:15

I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

5. The strength of great buildings lies in its pillars and ground; so the relationship of the church to the truth; the greater that lies are let loose in the culture, so the responsibility grows greater on the church to proclaim her. The church of the true disciples must know the truth that can set us all free.

Adam Clarke

The church is entrusted with the business of maintaining the truth, of defending it from the assaults of error, and of transmitting it to future times. The truth is, in fact, upheld in the world by the church. The people of the world feel no interest in defending it, so it falls to the church of Christ to preserve and transmit the truth from age to age.

Closing Prayer