

Oh Freedom! Part 1

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[0 : 0 0] just verifying my information Jesus got engaged Josiah, where's this? Annie and Josiah, there you go brother, good job young man I love it when young men have game, you know, walking around all I'm just missing me and Jesus and I just want to be spiritual Pastor Kevin, well you being spiritual? Yeah, amen, all right, we love Annie, she's great, congratulations you two, amen, I love good news, I was just watching Hallmark last night, oh gosh, better than Hallmark, yes ma'am, yes ma'am, better than Hallmark, Father thank you for the joy of the Lord, thank you for the joy of, of marriage and that people of this church believe in marriage, thank you for our younger folk like Annie and Josiah, two young adults who are walking with you, who have now decided to walk together with you, will you bless them in these days of preparation and watch over them and oh Lord, we're going to rejoice on that day when they become husband and wife, Father thank you for glorious testimony and thank you for how it gave glory to you, to you, you get the glory, you are the one who saves, you are the Lord, no one comes to you but that your spirit draws, thank you Lord for drawing our dear little sister and thank you for this worship service, thank you for the music and the confession and Lord thank you that we, your presence is with us, that's what makes the difference, knowing that you're here, knowing that you're here, knowing that you're here, and Father we, we're a little jealous right now, we think of what's happening at Asbury University and it seems maybe at Lee as well and will you bless those students to not get caught up in something that would not help them, keep the enemy from corrupting what you're doing there, keep false teachers away, allow your spirit to have his way, and continue to draw people to draw people to set students free in Christ, save Lord, save Lord, renew and transform and Lord we want some of that too, because you're the same God at Asbury as you are right here at New City Fellowship, and so Lord we surrender ourselves to you and we cry out for renewal and revival and the power of your spirit to walk, to be a people who truly know what it means to walk in the fear of the Lord, seeking first your kingdom and all that goes with it.

So allow your word now to go forth with your power and presence and encourage and strengthen, instruct, rebuke, build up, save.

Let your word, let your word, let your word have its holy will be done among us as it is your will, and use your servant. May he sound a clear note on the gospel trumpet so that people hear the voice of Jesus.

Thank you Lord for your mercy in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. John chapter 1, I mean sorry, backing up.

Now, John chapter 8 verse 31, I knew there was one in here somewhere, to 36, and believe it or not, we'll see how far we get. So Jesus said to the disciples who had believed him, If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

[4 : 1 2] 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? Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

The slave does not remain in a house forever. The son remains forever. So if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Amen. That is the word of the Lord. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. I was reminded, as I looked at this passage, of an old Negro spiritual called Old Freedom.

And I wish I could sing it, but I can't, so I'm just going to read some of it. Oh, freedom. Oh, freedom. Oh, freedom over me.

And before I be a slave, I be buried in my grave and go home to my Lord and be free.

[5 : 31] No more mourning. No more crying. Oh, freedom.

Before I be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave and go home to my Lord and be free. chattel slavery.

Chattel slavery, the horror of that, we can't even imagine. But it pointed to a deeper spiritual slavery in at least two ways.

I'm going to suggest two and maybe more, but two. It showed the spiritual slavery of racist whites and all whites in this country were not racist.

Thank you. Thank the Lord. The Quakers were definitely people who fought against slavery. I'm from the Quaker state, Pennsylvania. Thank God. But it showed the spiritual slavery of racist whites who erroneously believed in the superiority of whites to Africans.

[6 : 53] That's a type of ethnocentrism that idolizes one ethnic group. That's one way it showed. It also showed the physical, that the physical bondage of Africans, as horrible and unjust as it was, pointed to an even greater bondage of their wills to sin and death.

That's what the Old Testament Israel was supposed to show us too. That's why the slaves identified with Israel. They recognized that physical bondage is horrible and evil as it is.

There's a deeper bondage in all of our hearts. And even emancipation from physical slavery would not be enough to set them free from this deep spiritual bondage.

I'm glad to tell you that Jesus is the answer to both. He who the Son sets free is free indeed. You see, freedom is the cry of every human heart.

Freedom of religion. Freedom of expression. Economic freedom. Academic freedom. Artistic freedom. National freedom. Sexual freedom.

[8 : 20] Freedom to live wherever one wants. Freedom to choose. Freedom. We cry for freedom. True, true, because we are sinful and fallen, much of our cry for freedom is really a cry for autonomy.

Autonomy means we want to be a law unto ourselves to do whatever we want with no restrictions. God doesn't give human beings autonomy.

He doesn't grant that kind of freedom. But there is one freedom, again, that many are not aware that they need.

Yet it is the most important. And as I've already said, it's freedom from sin. That's the most important freedom we need. All the other freedoms, most of them, that is, are good.

But without freedom from sin, those other freedoms get corrupted and abused. You see, our bondage to sin is the cause of all of humanity's problems and miseries.

[9 : 35] Sin is the cause of the war between Russia and Ukraine. It is the cause of racial tensions and oppression. It is the cause of family breakdowns.

It is the cause of addictions. It is the cause of painful unrest in our churches. It is the cause of natural disasters like the horrible earthquake in Turkey.

You say, how did sin cause that? Because sin has corrupted all of creation. And so, Paul talks about in Romans 8 how all creation groans, waiting for the revealing of the sons of God so that creation will be set free from sin, the bondage to sin.

And, here's the thing, knowing what freedom you really need and the world needs most and what you, and what we should pursue will help determine your spiritual health and even happiness.

What freedom do you crave the most? We all want freedom. What freedom are you pursuing? What freedom keeps you going, gets you up, and makes you, ah, what freedom that you don't have maybe, that you are craving and craving more and more?

[10 : 57] What freedom are you chasing after? It will determine how spiritually healthy and happy you are.

Jesus is speaking in this passage as the light the truth and purity of the world. And now he shines his light directly on how to experience freedom.

You notice in the text as I read it that that's that that's the dominant theme here. The truth will set you free, verse 32. Verse 33, free.

They claim, hey, what do you mean we will become free? We're already free. And Jesus warns them that you're actually a slave. And then that he who the son sets free is free indeed.

that the idea of freedom is pregnant in this passage. So I want you to notice a few things today and we'll see how far we get. First, I want you to notice that it is in the word of Christ that we find three things.

[12 : 10] And the third one is the point. We find identity, truth, and freedom. Identity, truth, and freedom.

And notice, again, in verse 31, Jesus says to them, and he's speaking to those who have believed in him. Because remember, we just saw in verse 30 last week that many have believed in him.

So now he turns to those would-be disciples, those who claim to have believed in him. And then he says to them, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.

The benefits that Christ offers from his word, meaning his teaching, and keep in mind, all the Bible is the teaching of Christ. However, his teaching is centered on his sacrifice that his death will provide forgiveness of sins, adoption as God's children, that we saw last week, deliverance from God's eternal justice for all who trust in him.

The gospel. His teaching is centered in that gospel. But he's saying that these benefits are not given to those who are casual about what he says.

[13 : 37] Casual by casual, I'm referring to sometimes, you can talk about casual in different ways, but one way I'm thinking about casual is how sometimes we tend to raise other philosophies and ologies and traditions up to the same level as the word of Christ.

And so, when we hear the word of Christ, we say, oh, that's cool, but what does? And we're not saying that to let the word of Christ speak to that other stuff.

We're saying that because what we're doing is listening to the world and saying, okay, I heard what Jesus said, what the Bible said. That's all well and good, but what does my favorite blog say, or my professor say, who is not concerned with the things of God, we're always, or what does my tradition say?

Gloria, when her testimony talked about some of those things that get raised up to the same level as God's word in various traditions of the church.

Casual. We can be very casual about receiving his word as good advice. That was nice, you know, it's like Jesus becomes our life coach rather than our Lord.

[15 : 07] Lord. Receiving his undeserved kindness and love, we call that grace, is meant to produce in us a hunger for more of him and his ways.

When the gospel truly impacts your heart, it causes you to want more of Jesus. the gospel reveals Christ to our soul, not just to our ears, but to our soul.

And when we see Jesus in all of his majesty as the Spirit of God applies the work of Christ, his death and resurrection to our lives, as that Spirit does his holy work in us, what happens is the grace of God just amazes us and we want more.

More, please. That's why he's saying if you abide in my word, you will know the truth.

The truth will and you will be truly my disciples and the truth will make you free. See, abiding has the idea of remaining.

[16 : 33] Chapter 15, we'll come back to that word, but it has the idea of remaining, of continuing or living in what Jesus says. It's not casual.

It's not a life of flawless obedience, but it's a life of continual pursuit of the person and word of Jesus because in him, in his word.

What did Peter say early on? Where else shall we go? You have the words of life. You see, when the gospel hits you, when your heart is being rent asunder, you don't sit in sermons to judge the word.

You sit under sermons to allow the word to judge you. We come listening. You know, I've been, I talk to preachers all the time because I have these young guys sometimes I get to work with and we talk about preaching and, you know, they'll say to me, man, Pastor Kevin, there's some people in my church, man, you know, they listen to my sermons listening for what they disagree with.

That's not listening to the word. I get to hear preachers myself. I love being on vacation and I get to go hear preachers and I go to churches that are newsy, not PCA churches and I'm sitting there and I have to, and I've learned over the years, God's helped me because I, because there's nothing, there's nothing like being a critical preacher of preachers.

[18 : 11] I wouldn't have done it that way. Oh, he missed the point there. I've learned I don't care where he's from if he's opening the Bible, I've learned to listen for the word of God.

Yeah, I wouldn't have done it that way, but I'm hungry. I want to hear the word of truth. I'm not sitting there to critique him. I'm sitting there to hear Jesus speak to me from his word.

How do you listen? How do you listen? His word is is meant to impact how we live, how we think, how we believe, to abide in it no matter what.

And that's the work of the Spirit. That's how you know the Spirit is at work in you because you hunger for the word, you hunger for the truth, and not just to hear it, but you want it to, you want it to impact everything about you.

You want the word to speak and guide your life because you've met Jesus and man, he's glorious. I've met people, and you have too, who have said, I tried Christianity or Jesus and it didn't work for me.

[19 : 39] Please tell them, no, you didn't. You can tell them that. It's okay. No, they didn't. It is those who abide in Christ's word, not those who try him out for a time like taking a car for a test drive.

It is those who abide in Christ who receive his blessing, his word, his truth, and they find that he's real and true. But this little try Jesus, it's like, listen, saints, listen, you got to hear this.

I'm going to change my metaphor here. Jesus doesn't go on dates. He doesn't shack up. He gets married. There is no trying Jesus.

So then you go try Muhammad and then you go try Harry. No, no, no, no. Jesus married his church. He's honorable. He's not going to date you.

He's not going to shack with you. He says, marry. I want to marry you. I want you to be part of the bride of Christ, which is the church of God. See, that's not trying Jesus.

[20 : 46] That's called commitment. Wonderful sermon he's preaching this morning. See, Jesus says this about this abiding in his truth.

Why does he say this? Because way back in chapter 6, verse 66, by the way, 666, if you missed that, many people, he had, he had a church growth revival going.

People were coming out of the woodwork to listen to Jesus and then he preached a sermon and it says, many of them no longer walk with him. he had the, he broke his church down to 12.

I don't want that kind of revival. He broke it down to 12 and it was those 12 disciples that said, we're abiding. It was actually 11. You know what I mean?

11 of them saw in his words life, life, and they couldn't get enough of life. I'm concerned what's happening in our churches across this land.

[22 : 09] We're, we're shopping online and something's wrong, y'all. I'm sorry. It's something, I know, it doesn't mean every, I'm not saying people are necessarily saved, some of them may not be, but this idea of no longer coming and gathering with the people of God to be in the worship on the word and sacrament, settling for easy discipleship where we don't have to deal with people.

Living room discipleship, first church of the couch and patio discipleship. Be careful if you're listening, be careful that you are now, that you're not truly abiding in his word because you need us to help you.

Again, I'm not saying everybody who chooses, it's not, I'm not saying that, you heard me say that now, I got it on tape. I'm saying there's a disease going on, a spiritual disease that swept through our nation and our discipleship is looking weird.

Where's the hunger and the thirst? This is not hunger and thirst. Oh, okay, pause, oh, oh, we'll watch a little bit of that one, oh, a little bit of that one.

That's not hunger and thirsting for the word or for the fellowship of the saints. It's casual discipleship. Jesus doesn't want casual disciples.

[24 : 00] Grace causes us to want him. And here's the thing about Jesus. When you love him, he says, you also love my people. Matter of fact, he says, you can't say you love me and hate my people.

Grace causes our hearts to be bowed in worship to Jesus, realizing he's chosen to love you. That's what happens when you abide, when you remain in his word.

I've been chosen. There was nothing in me or in you that compelled him to forgive us of our sins or even want us in his family.

When that reality washes over your soul, you want to be near him. The true disciple of Jesus remains in his word because in his word he hears the voice and sees the face of his greatest love.

That's why I'm going to read this book. Because when I open up his word, I see him, I hear him. Don't you? Don't you?

[25 : 15] Can't get enough of him. I'm reminded of my trial sermon was on Luke chapter 10, 38 and 39. It's Mary and Martha.

You remember this story. Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.

But Martha was distracted with much serving. Who did Jesus commend? He commended Mary.

Mary, you're a lazy at lima bean. Get up and help me. I'm doing, I got the cornbread in the oven. I got the collard greens on the stove. I got the, I got steak and I got, you know, she's, I'm cooking up in this place and you ain't helping me.

Jesus, will you tell Mary to get off her bottom and come in here? All that sitting at your feet, listening to you talk. She's lazy. That's what she was saying, y'all.

[26 : 27] And Jesus looked at her and said, Martha, you are worried and distracted about so many things, but Mary has chosen what is best and I will not take it from her. So many times we just, we are so busy trying to do.

Doing isn't part of the Christian life, don't get me wrong. It's not saving you, but doing is a part of the Christian life. Good works. But we can get so caught up in doing that we haven't spent any time remaining in the Lord's Word, sitting at His feet, listening to Him talk.

Do you know the voice of the Lord? I think many of us don't. We haven't spent enough time listening. You can't know His voice if you don't spend any time listening to Him.

Not just in sermons, but sitting, opening the Word for yourself. There you go, talking about reading the Bible again. Why every sermon, he got to talk about reading the Bible? Yep, that's exactly why I have to do it.

because that question doesn't make sense. We're Christians, meaning we're people of the book. It is in this that we hear the voice of our Savior.

[27 : 46] So yes, I will point you to the Scriptures every single Sunday and challenge you to read it in Jesus' name every single Sunday because watching TV ain't going to do it for you.

Reading your little blogs, I'm a Twitter account ain't going to do it for you. Reading great novels and going to see the latest movie probably ain't going to do it for you. We've got to spend time.

Jesus says it so powerfully and profoundly. If you abide in my Word, you are truly my disciples. That's a huge statement, saints, especially since he just told us before that, that we have to be careful that we don't die in our sins and perish.

And then he says, if you're truly my disciple, if you're truly, if you abide in my Word, you're truly my disciple. In other words, eternal justice has been satisfied for you, disciple of Jesus.

So, yes, brothers and sisters, where are you abiding? What captures your imagination, your thoughts, and desires the most? What do you dream about?

[29 : 03] If it is not the beauty of Christ and his kingdom, then you're going to find his Word boring and uninteresting. If Jesus does not capture your imagination, if Jesus is not capturing your heart, if Jesus and who he is and what he has done doesn't make you shudder and with joy and reverence and awe, if you haven't met that Jesus, or if you're not continually sitting at that Jesus feet, brothers and sisters, you will find his Word quite boring and uninteresting.

You will always find an excuse to do something else and read something else. You will always be saying, I don't have time to read the Bible. I wish I had more time, Pastor Kevin.

You have all the time you need in the story. You have all the time you need. We give it away to other things, lesser things.

Never say you don't have time to read the Word of God. It's not true. You're lying to yourself. Don't do it.

Listen. Jesus is speaking, and he's saying to us, listen to me, sit at my feet, let me talk to you for a minute. And when you do, when you prayerfully come to the Word, looking for Jesus in the book, meditating on the gifts he has given you, you will find the Word taking root in your life and in your heart.

[30 : 43] You got to open the present. Jesus has many gifts to give us, and they're found in his Word, many gifts, but gifts are no good if you don't open them.

My wife is good at that. Sandy's not here, is she? She re-gifts. I don't re-gift nothing. You give me a gift, I'm keeping it. I feel honor-bound to keep it.

Sandy, she just loves giving. She just gives, and so if someone gives her a gift, sometimes she'll just, somebody needs something, she'll find somebody who needs something, and go, I'm like, did you even open the box?

Did you even try it on? Because gifts are no good unless you open the box and try them on, take them out for a spin, do something, do what it's supposed to do. Jesus has so many gifts to give us.

The gospel, his love and grace gives us so much. church. And the only way to open the gifts is to remain, to sit at his feet and just say, Lord, okay, tell me more, tell me more, show me more.

[32 : 00] Do it in your family devotions. When my kids were little, that's how we taught our children to sit in church, by the way. We taught our children to sit in church, sit in pews, because at home, we sat on our lap and read the scriptures to them.

and we made them sit on our lap. And they learned by doing it at home, how to do it in church. Teach your children the word of God.

And then maybe they, you got boys, testosterone is real, I understand. But maybe, just maybe, you'll find it's easier for them to sit in church and listen to the word, too.

Or just join the service. Last thing I want to say, and then we're going to break for the Lord's Supper.

As you abide in his word, he will also give you a new identity. And I've been saying it, but let me be clear. The new identity that you have is disciple.

[33 : 08] That's who you are. Disciple. Jesus. The word means learner or student. It refers to all those who follow Jesus, not just to the twelve we read of in the Gospels.

Jesus chose his students. They did not choose him. John 15, 16, you did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

You did not choose me, but I chose you. I remember vividly as a young man playing basketball in the neighborhood, yeah, we played ball every day.

It was crazy in the summer. We played ball until the lights came on, and then we played some more. But when you play ball, when you're playing ball on the playgrounds, when a team is, when two teams are already playing, somebody will call next.

I got next. That means that guy now is going to put together a team that's going to play the winner of the game that's happening. And that's sacred, man.

[34 : 15] You call next, you got next. I mean, that's basketball sandlot rule, man, you don't mess with that. And so, what this guy would do was while those guys were playing, he'd start walking around the court.

You want to play rich? You want to run? You want to run? You want to run, Willie? Hey, you want to run, Alvin? He starts, he's walking around the court. BB, you want to run? You know, he's choosing guys around the court. And believe me, this guy, this guy, he's looking for the best players he can find.

He's not looking for scrubs, as it were. He's trying to choose the best, okay? And he puts together his team, and now here's the truth of it. You would choose to say yes or no based upon whether you thought he was good.

Because you don't want to play with no loser. So you would sit there and if a guy who was a loser came over and said, hey, you want to play, you want to be on my team? You go, ah man, I got, I'm chilling right now.

I'll get back to you. Because you don't want to play with no loser. It's funny to me that Jesus doesn't go choosing the best. Jesus goes around and looks for the scrubs.

[35 : 22] He chooses folk who can't dribble. He chooses folk who travel with the ball. No, dribble, man. Oh, okay. He chooses folk who can't make a layup.

He chooses folk who ain't never made a jump shot. I mean, they can't even jump. He chooses people like us to be his disciples.

And here's the thing about it. We look at him and we realize he's the best guy. We definitely want to be on his team. You can't even say no. You can't even say no because you realize this captain, he's the best.

He's going to win. We're going to win with him, y'all. We're going to win. Disciples have been chosen not because they are the best, because really they're the worst.

But they've chosen by the captain who is the best. And so now, being chosen by this great captain by Jesus, we desire to be like him.

[36 : 30] That's the nature of discipleship. When Jesus lays hands on you, you want to not just follow him and listen to him. You want to be like him. That's what Matthew 10 says.

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple to be like his teacher and the servant like his master. That's Jesus.

He is our teacher. He is our Lord. He is our master. And we long, that's what's going to come up next week, we long to be like him.

And that's what the gospel does. Jesus starts the process of transforming you and changing you to look more like him.

It's a lifelong process. We'll talk about it next time. But it's beautiful. And there will be ups and downs. Yeah, you're going to, because you're still there, it's still you, you know, but there are ups and downs and there are places where you're going to see where, oh man, I need help, I need work.

[37 : 35] Yes, you do. And that's okay. Jesus signed up to do that work in you. And if you don't see where you need work, you're in danger.

You're in deep danger. Because walking with Jesus in the light exposes our sin.

And we cry, freedom. Oh, freedom. We long for freedom. And Jesus says, exactly.

Father, in the name of the Lord, we bow and we ask that you would take the first part of this message now and drive it into our hearts. Prepare us for next week, Lord, as we come back to this great passage and talk more about your freedom.

Oh, God, prepare us even now as we once again think about are we abiding in your word? What does that mean? And who are we?

[38 : 47] Who are we really? Are we truly disciples of Jesus? and how should that affect our lives? Show us, Lord, even begin that work as your people think and pray throughout this week.

Begin to speak to all of our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen.