

Freedom

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Date: 08 March 2009

[0:00] The End of Freedom Freedom. People are often wanting an escape, an escape, a way out, a way to get away from life's humdrum.

! To escape, to escape. I saw an interesting testimony lately. It was a man who had been in a very violent past. He murdered people.

He killed people. He was a violent man, a vicious man. And yet one day, it says that as he was in prison, he was actually in a physical prison, and he was behind prison bars, and out of the blue, he got a letter pushed under his door.

And a Christian had written to him, and invited him to put him on his visitor list so that he could come and visit him in the prison. And he just threw it in the bin.

And then, as time went by, he was visited by another prisoner who saw that he had this letter that was thrown away, and he said, Oh, this man's visiting me too. And he comes into the prison, and you get to go to the visitor's room, and you can have some Coca-Cola, and you get to have this time in the visitor's room.

[1:26] And the guy said, I didn't want any Christian nutter coming witnessing to him. But then the guy said, Yeah, you should. You can have a Coca-Cola.

And so that was the incentive for him. He said, Okay, then. He wrote for a Christian, and this Christian just showed love to him, and was like a father to him in the prison.

And he was really happy. He had two Coca-Colas the first time he came. But this was an amazing turnaround that this man realised his great need of Christ as this man witnessed to him.

And one day, as he looked through the prison bars of his cell, it formed, as it were, a cross. The prison bars were in like a cross shape. And this really spoke to him, and he trusted Christ as his Saviour. And he said he never felt so free in all his life.

He felt so free, he said in this testimony that I heard, that as if it were that he spent three years in jail, and just in the next few hours, they were going to open the door and let him away, let him out into freedom.

[2:32] And yet he said, when he did trust Christ, he still had two and a half years to go. But nevertheless, God rescued him and gave him a freedom, a liberty. He was set free from the prison bars of his sin, of his lost condition. And what a testimony, what a change. In fact, this is the man who's coming and speaking at Pastor Neil's Open Air meeting around Easter time.

So let me know if you'd like to come. Maybe we could make a trip of it, for those that want to go to that, on a Saturday night, a Thursday night rather. So think about what it would be like to be a prisoner, and to have that escape.

We know people love escape stories, don't they? I know the story of Colditz Castle, where the POWs escape from that supposedly impregnable castle, that impossible place to escape from. And we think of how it's popularised in many movies and films of today, isn't it? But people want to escape, to escape from the realities, to escape from the routine, to escape from responsibilities, from problems.

And some turn to the prison bars of drugs, of alcohol, of religion, of mysticism. They don't realise they're enslaved, they're in chains, they're in bondage.

[3:56] It doesn't answer that emptiness that is inside. But friends, today, God has given us the escape plan. The escape plan. It's the wonderful plan of escape from our sinful condition, to escape from the dread prison house of sin, from the chains of our slave master.

There is an answer, there is an escape plan. From that captivity that the vast of humanity are bound in, and enslaved by. And the word of God tells us that wonderful escape plan, that wonderful freedom, that adventure, that this book is action-packed.

It's a dramatic encounter with Almighty God, a thriller, really, isn't it? And it's not fiction, amen? It's non-fiction, this is true. And it's a dramatic story of the divine intervention of God rescuing humankind, of God's sacrificial act, of His great compassion, of the great rescue of a man's soul. And God's wonderful escape plan is here for us to read, as we see in Isaiah 61, where the Lord Jesus quoted this later, we know. And it says, as Isaiah prophesied of that day, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. What drama! What drama! What joy! What love!

[5:35] That this is a story of hearts that are wounded being healed, of captives being liberated, set free, of prison doors being opened wide for them that are bound.

And it's because of this escape plan, this wonderful, incredible gift, this selfless gift, this amazing grace, His absolute act, the finished work.

Of Calvary, that you and I, we can be accepted in the Beloved. Just as this man, this vile man, he called himself scum, this killer of people, this evil man, could become accepted in the Beloved. And that is true for every one of us. That no matter how far away we have strayed, and no matter how far we've sunk into the miry pit, that there is a wonderful rock that He can lift us out of that miry clay and set our feet on the rock, Christ Jesus.

We can have those prison doors smashed down, those chains smashed to pieces by His grace. If we could but see that today, the escape plan of God, and apply it to our lives, Christians and non-Christians, there is freedom for you in Christ.

[6:54] Non-Christians, if you trust Him, if you can but see that great need, you can have a liberty, a deliverance that nobody else can bring, no drugs, no religion.

Only Christ can give that freedom, that liberty, that deliverance. Have you realised it? Brothers, sisters, people today, the freedom that you can enjoy in Christ to realise that.

Or maybe you're still really truly in prison, not behind a physical prison bars or in a prison cell, but maybe you could be still held captive. Could it be addiction?

Could it be lust? Could it be greed? Could it be debt? That you're in prison, enslaved, trapped. But His important mission is to bring deliverance to the captives, to proclaim it.

And like that too, for us, for you and me, to proclaim this deliverance, this freedom message.

Romans 8.21 in part, it talks about people who are, quote, delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

[8:04] What a contrast from a bondage of corruption to a glorious liberty of God's children. Have you that glorious liberty? He is the one who can break the bindings, the bondages, the shackles, the chains, to bring a glorious liberty and freedom.

Glorious, glorious, glory. A beautiful freedom and a rescue. And Paul talks about it in Galatians. He says, stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

And be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. That sense He's made us free, it means completely liberated. In our world we have, people talk about the women's liberation movement.

Now we could, likewise, us blokes could, us blokes could maybe have a men's liberation movement. But you know, the ultimate women's liberator, the ultimate man's liberator is Christ.

The redeemer, the liberator, the freedom giver, the redeemer, the saviour. He is the one who can set a woman free and liberate them.

[9:17] He is the one who can set a man free and liberate them. To set us free. Free! Free from the power of sin. Free from the slavery of sin. Free from the condemnation of sin.

From inner wounds that have marked us. From the past. From self-righteousness. He can free you. From religion. He can free you.

Set free. Wouldn't that be great to have that freedom? To be as free as a bird. To be as it were, as a bird flying out of prison bars. Not held captive.

No restraint of sin. Of control of our life. Set free to live. To truly live. As a servant of God. As it says in that verse, Romans 6, 22.

But now, being made free from sin and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness. And the end, everlasting life. So, there's two things there.

[10:16] Free from the power of sin. To become the servants to God. There's a breaking free from sin's power and sway. And there's a freedom in Christ that...

Christ gives us freedom to serve him. To live for him. To be his servant. And it talks there in Romans 6, 22. About fruit unto holiness.

And the end, everlasting life. When you live for Christ, when you're set free by Christ's salvation, we're made free to live as his servant. And it says you're going to have a fruitful life.

An abundant life. An everlasting life. Now, that may not be measured in man's terms. As we know, a son would profess to see it as kind of material wealth.

But there's a richness that transcends any of that. The richness that goes beyond any material goods or wealth that people can see to that riches that are in Christ Jesus.

[11:19] The riches in Christ. The riches that he gives. The richness of the life that's lived in his will and life. And that freedom that we have as God's people, as his children, as his servants, it's like it's being talked about.

It's like the true freedom is like a kite. It's like a kite. The kite can only go up and soar and be a kite as it's held.

By something else. As it's tied to something. And for you, for me, our freedom is in the anchor of faith. It's in that solid foundation that we're rock solid.

That we stood upon. That we founded upon. That we grounded upon. And that life that sustains us, that frees us, is the life that is in Christ. That who saved us, has made us his.

Who sustains us. And as we have that commitment to the Lord, it's like that cord that holds the kite and makes it fly. It's as we're held by Christ, that we can truly soar, that we can truly live in that freedom.

[12:26] As we're yoked to Christ. As he talks about that we're his yoke fellows. That we're held, as it were, as oxen are held in a yoke of wood that holds them together. We're held by the yoke of Christ.

We're held to Christ. We're secured and sustained and in his service. As an oxen is yoked to an oxen. And this is the real thing. This is real Christianity.

That a Christianity that sustains us, that works through our life, throughout life's journey. And it has application. It can be translated into the everyday.

To have that kind of Christianity. Not some theoretical, philosophical thing. But a real grassroots, where the rubber hits the road kind of Christianity.

A Christianity that works. A Christianity that works through the painful experiences of life. So that when the tough times happen, we can still go through.

[13:23] When the going gets tough, the tough get going. You know, when we have the painful times of life. And I don't mean to say this glibly. Because I know there's people going through that right now.

That there are painful things that happen. Maybe even happening right now. Painful experiences of life. Yet he is with you. He will sustain you, it says. He will sustain you.

He will secure you. He will hold you safe. He will hold you sure. Through the struggle. Through the conflict. Through the hard times. And being a useful Christian means that we can find that strength beyond our own.

That can help us to see us through those times. And we can have that Christianity with its boots on. With its sleeves rolled up. A Christianity that's applied through. And we can take his hand through those times.

Through every stage of life. And walk with him. And Christianity is a very practical thing. This is not some kind of theory. Some kind of make-believe.

[14:20] Make-believe. Some kind of superficial. Superstitious thing. This is real life. This is life with meaning.

Life more abundant. And the word of God. It's full. It's jam-packed full. Of very precious truths that we can apply. For example, Micah 6 verse 8.

It says, He has showed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.

It's a lifestyle. It's a life-changing thing. And it's life fulfilled. For example, Romans 14 talks about the kingdom of God. It's not in meat and drink. You know, some that's in our world today make a fuss about meat and drink.

It's not in that. But it's in righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Spirit. This kind of faith gives us righteousness, peace, and joy.

[15:24] It's not a manufactured imitation thing. A man-made kind of religion, but it's a God-made faith. It's interesting. The word religion has this word within it from the Latin that means to bind.

Ligio, I'm told, means to bind. Religion will bind people. We know that there's many well-meaning people with well-meaning philosophies following well-meaning teachers half the time, reading well-meaning books that they call holy books, yet we know the lie of the enemy is behind much of that.

And Christians too can come under this religion of trying to please God by our own workings, by our own strivings, by our own effort.

And God doesn't intend it that way, that we should follow a religion, but that we should have a relationship, that we should have a precious relationship, a precious joining of our hearts to Him and Him to us.

Religion binds people, but Christ sets people free. He sets us free from the yoke of bondage. He teaches us how to live. In John 8 he says, And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

[16:38] If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. That's John 8, 36. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

Free indeed. That means really, absolutely free. And the Lord Jesus, He relates in His teachings, life is explained to us, it's guided by the Word.

If we'll but open it. And we know, we read earlier from the Sermon on the Mount, the great truths of that, and the whole context of that, Matthew 5 to 7, there's an application there for everyone, for everyday life, for everyday situations.

This book is for you to apply. It says, Don't just be a hearer of it, be a doer of it. Put an application in your life on it. It teaches us how to live, how to manage, how to cope.

In real life, what faces you through life? Could it be? Worry will face you. Worry might face you. Disappointment, fear, guilt.

[17:52] You might have trouble with forgiveness. With receiving it or giving it. With relationships. With work ethic. It's all here. The truth is here.

We've just got to mine it. We've got to dig deep. We've got to put the hard hat on and get the shovel and dig into the Word. Dig into it. Search the Scriptures. Investigate them.

Be a detective, as we talked about before. Search the Scriptures. The truth is there. The meaning for life is there if we just search. And it takes application.

It takes endeavour. It takes intensity to have that time. If we'll search, we'll find the answer. And from that prison house of darkness, we can come through to that life, that wonderful liberty, that glorious liberty, that joy of salvation.

If we'll just let the Spirit of God be our teacher. If we'll let His textbook for life be our guide and put it into application. As we learn of Him, we see the heart of Christ.

[18:56] This one who says to us, in Matthew 11, He says, Come unto me. Come to me, He says. He says, Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.

For I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls. People are searching today but yet they're not coming to Him.

They're missing the point. They're missing that only one, that one and only who can give us everlasting life, that one of whom He says, I am the way. It's not some new way, some new age.

He says, I am the way, the truth, the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. He is that one and only that we should have that heart's cry to seek, to search, to find.

And He is that one who shows us how to live. And it's interesting, who are the ones that He attacks? Who are those that He attacks, that He rebukes, that He condemns?

[20:00] The religious ones. He rebukes them. Why? For their sins of attitude. Largely the sins of that spirit of inhumanity. That selfishness, that self-righteousness, that pride, that greed, that narrowness that they had, that religion that they had.

was His, where He gave the brunt of His attack. And yet we know in our world there's many religious ones but they're holding onto this religion that really and truly binds them and holds them back from the liberty that only Christ can give.

And friends, today as people are searching and longing for that aching, for that hope, that real peace, that real life, if they would but learn of Him. He says, come to me.

Learn of me. If only we would cry out to Him. And brother, sister, Christians this morning, cry out to Him. Come to Him. Keep coming to Him. He says, draw nigh to me and I will draw nigh to you.

He says, the prayer is our lifeline. If we would but take that lifeline of prayer, that communication with Him, we can find the answers that we see.

[21:20] To put it personally now, are you free or are you a prisoner? Maybe you're still held bound, still held captive. Sin is a miserable captivity.

As pictured in the life of Samson, you might want to follow Judges 16 and verse 21. I've heard it put, there's three things that happened to Samson you could see in this one verse of Judges 16 verse 21.

It says, the context there we know, Samson had Delilah as the flame of his life who was really bent on his destruction.

She conned him, she tricked him, deceived him until he gave away his secret. It wasn't such, as such, the length of his hair so much as the hair was the token of his devotion to God.

And that was what? Was his downfall. He told her that secret, they cut his hair which was a symbol of his devotion to God and that was the end of his strength as he gave that away.

[22:33] And it says then as he was brought into captivity as the Philistines, as we know that you could call them in modern terms the Palestinians, the Philistines took this man Samson, they put him in a prison, it says in Judges 16 21, but the Philistines took him and they put out his eyes and they brought him to Gaza and bound him with fetters of brass and he did grind in the prison house.

Interesting, isn't it? They put out his eyes, they bound him with fetters of brass and he did grind in the prison house. You can see three things about sin here.

Sin blinds. Sin blinds. They put out his eyes. Really he was already blinded. He was desensitized as Delilah had conned him and as he'd be tricked and swallowed the lie.

He was blinded to see the danger of his sin and it says that as he went out as before he tried to break free from the bondage that the Philistines had shackled him and he knew not that the Spirit of God had departed from him.

He was blind and snarled by the woman's charm who was bent on destroying him. Sin blinds. Secondly, sin binds. They bound him with chains of brass.

[23:58] Sin's bondage is going to bind you. It's going to hold you. It's going to chain you. It's going to hold you as a grip of bondage. It's going to secure you and it will not let you go.

the binding power of sin can drag you down to hell and yet there is one, the chain breaker. The chain breaker who can smash the shackles, he can smash the chains to smithereens by the power of his blood.

If you all got cry out to him, this one who brings rescue, sin blinds, sin binds and sin grinds. Where did he end up?

Around the grinding stone as the mill was there and he was held down to a post that drove the wheel around a rut that the people would pour the grain in to turn it into flour.

And Samson was treated like a cow, like an ox, as he was like an ox, as he was driving around and around in circles through the daily grind if you like, of his life.

[25:05] And friends, sin was going to grind you like that. It's going to grind you, you're going to end up in a rut that you can't escape from. And in that hot Gaza sun, as Samson, he couldn't see the sun, his eyes could no longer see, he would grind day after day after day.

What a bondage, what a picture of sin, of its binding power. And yet, the Lord Jesus in John 8, he says, I have come that you might have life, I have come to set you free, free indeed.

Free indeed. Isaiah 42 verse 7 tells us that he has come to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and to them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

Freedom in Christ. You can find that, you can find that courage, that healing, that freedom, freedom from the damning and conquering power of sin. Proverbs 29 verse 25 assures us, Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

If you put your trust, if you lean, if you put your confidence in the Lord, you shall be safe. Safe. Safe from the powerful forces of temptation, safe from the destroying power of Satan, safe from death and hell and every evil.

[26:33] Psalm 91 verse 4 promises, He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust. His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

He shall cover thee with his feathers. There's refuge there. Refuge as eaglets under an eagle. Who would dare and try to take from under the wings of an eagle, her eaglets.

Not man or beast with any sense. You have that wonderful peace as God's child that you are under his care and cover. What rest, what relief, what peace.

You can get there. You can find that freedom in Christ. You can escape. You can experience real freedom in knowing Christ as your Lord and Master.

you can know him, the one who rescues us, our God, our deliverer, redeemer and saviour. And for you there is therefore now no condemnation.

[27:39] ending