

Real Freedom

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[0:00] Romans chapter 7 verse 24 and 25. And then we're going to Romans chapter 8 verses 3 and 4. So let's begin Romans chapter 7 verse 24.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, so then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

And then if you turn to Romans chapter 8 verse 3 and 4. For what the law could not do, and that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

And so I want to just speak for a little bit on this thought, real freedom. Real freedom. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, I pray, God, that each and every single one of us that's here today, under the sound of my voice, would have a personal experience and revelation with you, God, through your word today.

God, I pray, God, it penetrates our minds through distractions and through other things, Lord, that it would be able to reach us, God, where we are today, and help us, God, in our infirmities of this body and this flesh that we contend with every single day of our lives.

[1:37] God, I pray you give us wisdom and strength through your word today. In Jesus' name, help us, Lord Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray, amen. Amen, amen. You may be seated. Overcoming many substantial obstacles that would stop most dead in their tracks, Pat Tillman did make it into the NFL as a safety after being drafted by the Arizona Cardinals in 1998 at the age of 21 years old.

It is unimaginable the effort and determination it takes to make it into the NFL. And for Pat Tillman, being only 5'11 and not super fast, it had not been easy.

He was an underdog for sure, but all of his life's focus and efforts paid off, and he obtained what he fought and struggled to get in life. And nothing he wanted more than to play in the NFL.

And his dream was realized through not giving up and working hard. He quickly became a standout player. He was known for his intelligence, his toughness, his leadership, and his crazy work ethic. And in the NFL, he earned a reputation of being a hard hitter and was considered for the Pro Bowl. What then would cause him, after just four seasons in the NFL, to turn down a nice multi-million dollar contract extension with the Cardinals?

[3:04] It was in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, that Pat Tillman felt a deep calling to serve his country.

In May of 2002, just eight months after 9-11, and while still in the prime of his career, he turned down a three-year contract extension from the Cardinals, and he walked away from the NFL entirely, and he enlisted in the U.S. Army.

He requested no special treatment or media attention. He completed basic training and went on to become an elite Army Ranger after passing the rigorous Ranger Indoctrination Program and Ranger School.

Tillman deployed to Iraq and later to Afghanistan, and then tragically, on April 22, 2004, at the age of 27, he was killed in action in eastern Afghanistan.

During an ambush and after further investigation, it was found that he was accidentally killed by friendly fire during the chaos of that battle. It's a tragic story, but to many, it was an inspiring story.

[4:14] I remember when we first moved to Arizona around 2005, 2006. It was still fresh in people's minds there and there in the Phoenix area, and there's a memorial set up for him at the Cardinals Stadium.

It used to be University of Phoenix Stadium where the Cardinals play. And you go out to one of the games there, you see his statue there. And so I learned of this story then. It's a tragic story, but it was inspiring to many because he fought his whole life to obtain something, but then realized what he spent his life doing to that point and what he thought was so important to him was actually not worth as much to him as he had first thought.

And he found himself realizing how trivial even something like making it into the NFL is and all the money that comes with that compared to serving something of a greater cause and purpose with greater meaning.

He exercised his freedom to choose his own route and life to adjust his path and destiny. He ultimately found a greater purpose than football and money and gave his life to that cause.

And you might say, well, what a waste of life. What a waste of, you know, if he would have stayed in the NFL, he could have made millions. He'd probably still be alive today.

[5:37] But he exercised his right to determine his own destiny. He decided what he originally devoted his life to wasn't actually worth his life after all.

And so he exercises freedom to choose what he would devote his life to, and he chose something he thought was a greater calling. And to me, that is the real freedom, the right to determine your own destiny, the right of self-determination.

Born in Ulm, Germany in 1879 to a Jewish family, by the 1920s and early 1930s, he had already become world famous for his groundbreaking work in physics.

He won the Nobel Prize in physics in 1921. However, as the Nazis rose to power, Albert Einstein, being Jewish and openly voicing his disapproval of the Nazi authoritarian government that was rising to power at that time, he became a target of the Nazis.

And the Nazis labeled Einstein's theories as Jewish physics and deemed them invalid, and they burned his books and placed a bounty on his head. And in early 1933, while teaching and lecturing in the United States, Einstein got word that the Nazis had seized his home.

[6:59] They seized all his property. They seized everything, all his work that he had done, and that it wasn't going to work out too well for him if he returned back to Germany. And so he made the decision to immigrate to the United States, and he permanently renounced his German citizenship.

Einstein left behind the land he was born in, the people he worked with, his family, his friends, his whole life's work to be in a country that allowed him the freedom and the ability to continue his work. And he ultimately helped the United States develop atomic weapons before the Germans could, which helped the Allies win World War II. Einstein gave up everything he had established and built up in his whole life to be able to continue in what he believed was his calling.

That is the real freedom that I'm trying to talk about today, real freedom, freedom that allows you to determine your own path forward. Right now as I speak, the news is reporting estimates that range between 2,000 and 12,000 people killed.

It's a wide range of estimates, and nobody knows for sure how many, but they do know mass amounts of people have been killed in Iran because they are protesting against the government of Iran.

[8:17] It has been going on for over the past month now, and the people, it was like December 28th or something like that when it started, and the people in Iran are currently engaged in one of the most significant waves of protests in the country's history, fighting against decades of repression under the Islamic Republic regime that runs Iran.

And the people of Iran are demanding freedom and dignity and a political system that respects human rights, and they're fighting for the right to be able to choose their destiny is what they're fighting for.

They're fighting for the right to be able to have self-determination instead of it being controlled by a regime of great hatred and no tolerance and all these things.

And so the protests have spread. It started out in the capital of Tehran, and it now has spread to over 500 different locations and more than 200 cities across the entire country of Iran.

And Iran's response has been to turn off all forms of communication and to cut off their internet. They can't communicate with the outside world. There's no form of communication allowed, and they have used deadly force to try to suppress and disperse all these protests of these demands for freedom.

[9:35] And they've done this with live ammunition and machine guns, and it's been mass killings. And because of the communications blackouts that they have, that the Iranian government has put

in place, nobody really knows how many people have actually been killed or what's really going on, but our government has assessed that it is in the thousands of people killed for protesting in the streets against an oppressive government regime.

And the citizens of Iran right now are dying by the thousands in the streets to gain real freedom. They're fighting for freedom, the freedom to determine their own destiny and not be controlled in that way.

And see, we want to have the real freedom of self-determination. That's something that we have and it's something that we want, and we do have that. And self-determination meaning we get to choose which direction we go in life, and that is real freedom.

People have changed career paths, like I've talked about. People have changed their countries. You know, they've immigrated to new countries.

People have even fought against governments to overthrow them, all to gain real freedom to be able to exercise the right to determine my own destiny. Right?

[10:49] Now let me get to the whole point of this, because I'm talking about a lot of worldly examples, but there are things that I thought that we could all understand and relate to. But my whole point that I'm trying to get to today is we're not truly free, first of all.

We aren't truly free. So you are serving a master. Whether you want to accept it or not, you are serving a master. In this life that we have been given by our Creator, there are two and only two masters to choose from.

The Bible says in Romans 6, verse 16, Know ye not that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness.

Please tell me you understand this today, that to whichever master you yield and serve, that's who you belong to.

You're a servant to that master. And you choose who you serve through obedience to that master. You're either going to obey sin or you're going to obey God's Word.

[12:00] And the Bible says if you are obedient to sin, you will have death. But if you are obedient to God's Word, you will have righteousness. Amen. And the end results are important to understand.

It's death and righteousness. Those are the end results. But don't miss the implied fact that either way, you are going to be obedient. I know that's a cuss word in this society, and you're not going to make me obey nothing.

But whether you want to accept the fact or not, every single one of us is obedient to a master. Amen. We're not the master of ourselves. We have a master.

There's only two different masters that we're talking about in the Bible. There's only two different types of masters, and we're going to be obedient to one. Either you're going to be obedient, which means you will never be the master.

You're never going to be the master. You will always be a servant. So we have to get it out of our heads. We have to let it get far from us that you get to be the master of anything in this life.

[13:01] You have been given by God. This life has been given to you by God. You're the creation, not the creator. Whether we like it or not, we're going to serve.

We're not the master. You will always be a servant. You will obey one of the two masters, either sin or righteousness.

But we want freedom. We don't want to be ruled by anyone or anything. We don't want to be servants. We think real freedom is being your own master, and we want that kind of freedom.

But we'll never have it. You're never going to have that kind of freedom. You're not the master. You are a servant of flesh and sin or a servant of spirit and righteousness, and you will serve.

And so we are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness. Having to serve a master, although that is not true freedom, let me suggest to us today that real freedom is still given to us and that although there are only two options in whom we must serve, God does give us the real freedom of self-determination.

[14:19] We can't get around the fact we're going to have to serve. And that may not sound like freedom, but we have real freedom because we are free to choose which of the two we serve, and in that, our destiny will be.

That's real freedom. That's self-determination. Self-determination, I do get to choose if I want to live without righteousness or with righteousness. I get to choose if I'm going to repent of my sins. I get to choose if I'm going to be obedient to this word and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of my sins. I get to choose if I want the free gift of the Holy Ghost. And then I get to choose every single day if I'm going to be led after the Spirit as a disciple of Jesus Christ or if I'm not. I get to choose all that or I can choose to reject all that. And so there is some freedom of choice that we have. We have the real freedom of self-determination. God has given us the freedom to choose. We have the freedom to change masters.

[15 : 26] I choose to be set free from the slavery of sin in order to become a slave of God. I choose to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, a disciplined follower of Jesus.

Let's look at the opening scriptures again. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord so when then with the mind I myself serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin.

There in that is this terrible struggle that every true disciple of Jesus Christ has to deal with. Even though we love God's laws and we want to obey His laws with our hearts and our minds our sinful flesh keeps pulling us towards sin.

Keeps pulling us away from those things. And you can hear it in Paul's struggle. He feels miserable about it and he cries out who can rescue me from this fleshly sinful body that keeps dragging me towards death.

The place I don't want to go. I am freely choosing I want to serve the Lord. I want to serve the Lord and I want His righteousness. I want to follow the laws of God.

[16 : 51] but how can I because I am being dragged by this flesh of sin and this sinful body that keeps dragging me towards death.

But then he immediately answers his own question. The only deliverance comes through Jesus Christ our Lord. Even after being saved the battle continues. His inner man that renewed mind that we get when we get the Holy Ghost wants to serve God's laws but the flesh that we still live in every single day it still wants to serve sin.

And so this is the honest reality of the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ while we are still in these sinful bodies. It's a struggle that we have to deal with day in and day out.

It's a choice that we have to make day in and day out. And there is a law of God and there is a law of sin. But here is the thing that is hard to understand in all this.

The law of God is weak. It's weak because of the flesh. The law that God gives us to live by points out what is righteousness and what is sin.

[18 : 04] That's what this whole word of God is for. That's what the law is. The law is weak because of the flesh. All it does is point out what is right and what is wrong.

This is all that this word of God does. All the law of God does is displays puts it on display. That's right and that's wrong. Without the law of God we would not know what is right and wrong.

With the law of God we know what is right and wrong and without it we wouldn't know. We wouldn't know it was wrong to lust if there wasn't a law from God's word not to covet.

so the law of God is needed. The law is required and this law is righteousness and it's going to be the thing that will save us but the law of God is weak because it doesn't account for our flesh that we carry every single day.

It puts it on clear display what is right and what is wrong and it gives us the opportunity to choose but that's all it does. So it is weak because of the flesh.

[19 : 17] It is impossible for us to be righteous. We cannot obtain righteousness through our own strengths. We can we can choose most of the time to follow the law of God but we're not going to be perfect.

It's impossible. We're going to fail. We're going to make mistakes. It is an impossible ask from God's laws for us to be without sin.

It's impossible. It's not possible for us to be without sin. It's not possible for us to follow this word of God perfectly. The law provides us what is to be righteous righteous but it is not possible for us to be righteous.

So it's weak because of the flesh. And so thank God for the law but the law doesn't give us all that we need. With just the law and the desire to serve the law of God we still fail.

our renewed mind and heart is desperate to serve the laws of God but our flesh prevents us from doing that perfectly.

[20:37] And so the law is weak. What then shall we do? Romans 8 chapter 3 and 4 says for what the law could not do and that it was weak through the flesh God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

So the law of God it is perfect it is holy it is the holy word of God is a perfect holy book but it could never make us righteous because of our sinful flesh always fails to keep it perfectly.

The law shows us our sin but it has no power to fix the sinful nature of our flesh so God did what the law could not do. He came in the flesh he came in human flesh but yet he was without sin he was perfect Jesus didn't sin and his he had his perfect life and then he was crucified on a cross condemned he in doing so he condemned sin right there in the flesh God himself right there in the flesh perfect sinless holy and he condemned sin through what he did on the cross he defeated its power and paid its price for us in the flesh he did what only God could do he was perfect he was holy he was without sin and he died to condemn sin itself because of that because of what Jesus did the righteousness requirement of the law the requirement of perfect obedience can now be fulfilled in us not by our own strength but as we walk after the spirit instead of following the old sinful flesh Romans 8 and 1 says there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit and so what does that mean for us what does it mean to walk after the spirit and not the flesh the Bible uses walk to describe our daily direction in our life it is the pattern and direction of our life it's how we live moment by moment that's our walk in

Galatians 5 and 16 and 17 says this I say then walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh for the flesh lust is against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other so that you cannot do the things that you would Galatians 5 and 25 says if we live in the spirit let us also walk in the spirit if we live in the spirit if we have the Holy Ghost if we come here faithfully on Sundays every Sunday we're faithful and we come here we obviously have committed to something right we've committed to this and so if we're going to live in the spirit then we should also walk in the spirit so how do we do that we have to present ourselves as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable unto

[24:32] God where we go what we do what we say how we think all has to be surrendered to God we have to be led by the spirit that means decisions have to be made in our lives and actions taken to follow the teachings!

that are in the word of God that is preached here every Sunday and not continue doing what we have always done there needs to be change there needs to be tangible change and God is not expecting or asking for perfection because we're not capable of that but there should be a continual growth and change Romans 8 and 5 for they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh but they are after the spirit the things of the spirit what are you after what are you minding set your mind on the things of the spirit fill your thoughts with God's word be continually in prayer how do you pray continually pray continually we wouldn't get anything done if we just I think what it means is just it needs to be the number one mode in your mind is

God on your mind all the time everything you do how long do you go between thoughts of things of the kingdom of God hopefully it's not seven days only on Sunday think on spiritual things instead of carnal things let the fruit of the spirit be produced in you work on it daily you're going to fail you're going to fail I failed this week you're going to fail it's inevitable but work on it daily mind it it's like tending the garden you don't mind it you don't tend it it's you're going to have weeds everywhere right but if you man it's been a minute since I got out there let me get out there and catch up and pull those weeds and keep up with it that's just that's what it is minding the things of the spirit instead of the flesh Let the fruit of the spirit be produced in us but try again and don't stop trying and pray and ask

God to help you overcome the thing that keeps tripping you up tripping you up we all have these things right and it takes that's why it's important to come together as a body of Christ it's why it's important to come and participate in services and be together and strengthen one another and exhort one another edify one another hear the word of God preach feel the spirit of God moving because we need that we need that source of strength so just try again don't stop trying and!

the mistakes should get further and further between and I would say one of the main things we have to do to be walking in the spirit is we have to avoid grieving and quenching the spirit meaning whatever it is that restrains us and letting loose in the spirit has to be conquered we have to figure that out we cannot grieve the spirit of God that's in you when he tries to prompt you and pulls you to do something or say something or to speak to somebody or worship or clap your hands it could be anything he's pulling you to do that the spirit wants to prompt!

[28:31] you to do that and it grieves the spirit when you hold back and it quenches the spirit that's that's I think one of our greatest things that we need to work on to walk in the spirit not to grieve the spirit not to quench the spirit don't quench the spirit let the spirit live in you unrestrained don't restrain the spirit we aren't free in the sense that we we do have to serve we are going to be servants to sin or righteousness we're going to have to have a master but we do have a real freedom that we get to choose our destiny God has given us that real freedom of self determination so will we serve sin or will we serve righteousness and so my prayer for us today is that we walk after the spirit that we mind the things of the spirit and that when we fail we don't we don't condemn ourselves and we don't condemn each other and we recognize this is the life that we live as disciples of Jesus

Christ we've made up our mind we want to follow the word of God we want the law of God we want righteousness but we understand that we're not perfect and we're not actually going to be able to obtain that ourselves we're going to fail but that's why we have the spirit of God in us and we have to keep that flame kindled through prayer and through through our spiritual disciplines reading his word applying it to our lives as often as best as we can until the day Jesus returns amen and we're here to support one another and be the body of Christ together right and then we're also here looking for other people to join us and be a light to this place that we we're in amen so I'm going to put on the song we're going to pray and we'll be dismissed but let's really think about the word today how can we walk better walk in the spirit amen let's not quench the spirit let's not grieve the spirit today amen he's worthy we're not worthy but he is worthy and when we fail but he's never going to fail and so I thank God for his righteousness and I pray that his righteousness can be in us