

The Old Paths

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“Liberty In Christ”

Jarrod Jacobs

On July 4th, if the Lord wills, we will celebrate the 231st anniversary of the birth of this nation. In the beginning of this nation, a Declaration of Independence was written and signed by those whom we now call the “Founding Fathers.” This document stated that God granted unto men “certain unalienable rights,” among which are “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” Therefore, every July 4th, we pause to celebrate the anniversary of the day we declared our freedom, or liberty from England.

While celebrating freedom is a wonderful thing, have we considered the fact that God granted liberty to men long before this nation ever existed? When we read the Bible, we find the word “liberty” used 27 times, and the word “free” used 59 times. Consequently, the truth is that God has granted us liberty! In fact, He is the author of liberty or freedom. II Corinthians 3:17 states, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Liberty is a wonderful gift that God has given us. Therefore, even if a man or woman is enslaved in some foreign land, this one is still free in Christ. One may be enslaved by men, but a Christian is truly free (Jn. 8:36). Christians are free from sin and free from Satan, and this is the real freedom.

How can we obtain this true liberty or freedom? The Bible tells

us how.

God’s Word Brings Liberty.

David made this clear when he said, “*I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts*” (Ps. 119:45). David understood the relationship between God’s word and freedom. Isaiah and Jeremiah also used God’s word to “*proclaim liberty*” to the people (Isa. 61:1; Jer. 34:8). Incidentally, Isaiah 61:1 was a prophecy concerning Jesus (Lk. 4:18-21). Therefore, not only was Isaiah using God’s word to “*proclaim liberty*,” but so was Christ when He spoke! James called God’s will “*the perfect law of liberty*” (Jas. 1:25). Can there be a better description of God’s word than this? God’s word brings liberty to men! By following the word of God, one can be free from sin and Satan (Rom. 6:16-18).

Christ Brings Liberty.

We cannot separate the work of Christ and the work accomplished in His word. Christ came to bring spiritual liberty to men, and this is revealed in the written word. He said, “*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*” (Jn. 8:36). Our Lord sacrificed Himself for us that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin. His death on the cross and shed blood provided the means by which all men can be saved (free) from sin. It is for this reason that when those at Rome “*obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered...*” the Roman Christians became “*free from sin*” (Rom. 6:18, 22).

Distinctions Between Spiritual Liberty And Spiritual Bondage

It seems obvious that there is a vast difference between liberty and bondage in the physical realm, but many do not recognize liberty in the spiritual realm. This fact is apparent when we look and see so many who are struggling in sin daily. Many love being in sin, and do not wish to change. These people do not recognize the difference between spiritual liberty and spiritual bondage!

Why would one wish to be in oppression and bondage when he could be free? This seems like an obvious choice, yet, multitudes today are enslaved in sin. Why is this? One reason why people refuse to leave the slavery of sin for freedom in Christ is because they have been deceived. Peter warned of false teachers who, “*promise them (the beguiled, v. 14, 18) liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.*” Therefore, while people are fooled into believing one thing, the truth is exactly the opposite! They might think they are free, but they are actually in bondage. Why? “*For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage*” (II Pet. 2:19).

Men may think they are “free” when they: use drugs, drink alcohol, commit fornication, use God’s name in vain, worship God when/how they please, etc. The truth is that such people are in bondage. They are in bondage to sin and to Satan who has fooled them into thinking that their actions are the result of “freedom,” while serving God and worshipping Him “*in spirit and in truth*” is bondage. Of course, the exact opposite is true! May we open our eyes and see how Satan has us fooled. Spiritually speaking, this type of reasoning which looks upon sin as “freedom” and God’s will as “bondage” is exactly 180 degrees

out of alignment! *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”* (Isa. 5:20). Sadly, this is where many people are today!

Conclusion

As we pray, it is right and proper to thank God for freedom in this country. It is also fun to shoot off fireworks, etc., in celebration of our nation’s founding.

Yet, let us never forget nor take for granted the true freedom offered to men through Christ, as is revealed in the Bible. This spiritual freedom can be experienced in any place on earth, at any time of year, by any person (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). Are you

A Tragic Truth

J.I. Packer

“...How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house...” (Acts 20:20)

Certainty about the great issues of the Christian faith and conduct is lacking all along the line.

The outside observer sees us staggering on from gimmick to gimmick and stunt to stunt like so many drunks in a fog, not knowing at all where we are, or which way we should be going. Preaching is hazy; heads are muddled; hearts fret; doubts drain strength; uncertainty paralyzes action. We are much unlike the first Christians who, within a century, won the Roman world, and those later Christians who pioneered the Reformation, the Puritan awak-

ening, the Evangelical revival, and the great missionary movement of the last century. We lack certainty. Why is this? We blame the external pressures of modern secularism, but this is like Eve blaming the serpent. The real truth is that we have grieved the Spirit. For two generations our churches have suffered from a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. We stand under divine judgment. That’s a tragic truth!

Editor’s Note:

I wish what has been written above were not so, but sadly, it is true. We suffer a famine of hearing God’s word. How has this happened? Is it because God’s word is not readily available to us? No. Is it because God’s word is too complicated for men to understand? No. Is it because we live under a tyrannical government which suppresses Bible reading, study, and practice? We know this is not true. Then, why are we faced with a famine of hearing God’s word? It is because we have men not preaching *“all the counsel of God,”* (cf. Acts 20:27) and there are those who *“love to have it so”* (cf. Jer. 5:31).

You know, one who refuses to eat will die of starvation just as quickly as the one who has no food! In our case, we are refusing to feast upon God’s word and we are suffering for it. What a paradox we see in this country: We are a nation of

overweight people, who are refusing to eat! That is the “tragic truth.”

Brethren, where is our demand for sound, strong gospel preaching? Unfortunately, the demand for such preaching is on the decline, and we have some ready to fill whatever the demand may be. Brethren, many are confusing “demand” for “need,” and they are not necessarily the same thing. What is needed spiritually is not always what is demanded spiritually, and this is sad indeed.

I know that many brethren continue to demand sound doctrine, and this is a great thing. Yet, let us not only think about this, but actively promote and encourage those we know who are teaching the unadulterated truth without fear. Let us thank God for those who continue to *“Cry aloud, spare not”* and *“lift up (their) voice like a trumpet”* to show folks their sins (Isa. 58:1). Let us thank God for those who are preaching the word as the apostle Paul taught Timothy to do (II Tim. 4:2-5). Let us be active in supporting them that we might be ready for the onslaught of Satan. Too many of our brethren are falling prey to the attitudes and actions described above by bro. Packer. Let us have our eyes and ears open and be determined to learn from history, lest we repeat the mistakes of our fathers!

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“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” (Jer. 6:16)