

When Are You Free?

If you ask most anyone if they want to be “free” they might say, “Sure, who wouldn't?”

If you ask them what it means to be free, they would most likely say something to the effect of being unrestrained in being able to do what they want to do.

That idea runs into difficulty when filtered through the Bible, which in turn raises some interesting questions regarding the presuppositions and predispositions of that view.

There are a number of key verses/passages in the Bible that address what it means to be free, and how it is attained. We will focus on two, in close proximity, in the gospel of John. Those are:

John 8:32 “and you will know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”

John 8:36 “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed”

Let's follow the time tested method of moving from information, to implication, then to application.

In John 8:32, Jesus is making a direct, and very clear, connection. Truth makes you free. Said another way, you cannot disconnect being free from Truth. Both the Bible itself - “The sum of Your word is truth,” (Psalm 119:160) - and Jesus in the bible - “I am the way, and the truth, and the life ..” (John 14:6), declare themselves to be truth. Now we have an implication.

When Jesus declares Himself to be truth in John 14:6, in very simple terms it means you cannot be “free” apart from Jesus, as the Apostle Paul notes in Romans 6:15-22.

Let us now consider John 8:36, “So if the Son makes you free, you are free indeed.” Most all the major translations use the word “indeed.” It means really or truly.

The implication is significant. To be truly “free” is something only Jesus can do for you. The application should be apparent.

In making this application, I believe it is also interesting, and beneficial, to consider another passage that adds to the Apostle Paul's comments in Romans 6:18 regarding the believer becoming a slave. In 2 Peter 2:18-19, where Peter is commenting on freedom, he closes v.19 saying “..for by what a man is overcome, by this is he enslaved.”

This does not have the same connotation as in Romans 12:21 “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” and several references in Revelation, where to overcome implies victory.

The word translated “overcome” in 2 Peter is “to be overcome as in a battle or lawsuit.” Here it is being overcome, i.e. losing the battle. Most know history would suggest if you lose enough battles you will lose the war.

Those familiar with the passages being referenced might consider this “old news.” But I would submit for your consideration, that one might conduct an exercise of reviewing an ever growing litany of “freedoms” obtained in our country over the last fifty or so years.

We can start with the “freedom” from moral constraints that came through the efforts of protests, propaganda and promoting those of supporting influence to public office (an oft used formula) that developed in the late 1960's.

Just a few years later, in 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court recognized a woman's "freedom" to terminate an unwanted pregnancy.

The list goes on, and has grown substantially over the years, to the current time.

There is a common denominator in the examples. The "freedom" sought did not emanate from "Truth" which followers of Christ would equate to "revelation."

From where did it come?

Some would suggest there are four judges in the "Supreme Court" of our decision making.

It could be argued that reason and experience (two of the four "judges" along with revelation) were the major components of the underlying motivators for gaining the particular freedoms in question.

I would propose for your consideration that the fourth "judge" of that "Supreme Court" – desire, the most influential of the judges, that was the primary motivator.

We learn from the beginning of chapter 3 of Genesis, something very significant in Satan's temptation of Eve, regarding how that could occur. In verse 1, he says, "Indeed has God said you shall not eat from any tree in the garden?"

This reveals his strategy of undermining (dishonestly so) revelation. Then reason, once "free" from the constraints of revelation, becomes even more susceptible to desire, which then becomes the most influential "judge" in our decision making process.

What has been lost in this "frog in the water" transition, is that the loss of being free "indeed" is the cultural new normal.

Many years back the term for a person's framework of thinking was called one's "truth system." The common term now is "worldview." I would suggest the terminology is telling.