

Growing Into Liberty

Freedom and Unleavened Bread

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Given 27-Mar-94; Sermon #121B

Did the Emancipation Proclamation truly free American slaves from their two hundred years of slavery? Were they able to immediately move into the mainstream of American life and participate freely in all aspects of life?

We can look back on our history—that is, American history—and see clearly that the answer is, "No." Even putting aside the general resistance that there was in white society, regarding accepting them as a part of that society, the slaves themselves were not equipped to contribute, except in a very low level way. Even though they had a great number of highly developed skills in mechanical areas, they were still unskilled in many other things that had to do with operating freely within that society and contributing to its well being.

About one hundred years after the civil war, former President Lyndon Johnson said this in a speech:

Freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying, "Now you are free to go where you want and do what you desire and choose the leaders that you please." You do not take a person who for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him to a starting line of a race and then say, you are free to compete with all the others.

This is a true statement, which applies both to physical and spiritual slavery. In Hebrews 3 and 4, we find that Israel lacked a great deal in regard to the operations of their lives because they carried with them certain ideas, certain concepts, desires that kept them from really being free men and women.

Hebrews 3:9-10 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, "They always go astray in their heart.

They were free, they crossed the line, and they went from Egypt to the wilderness. God had done a great number of wonderful works in freeing them, but their heart was not unshackled—"heart" meaning "mind"; the place of residence in their character and attitudes. They were always going astray, despite the fact that they no longer were in bondage.

Hebrews 3:11-12 So I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter My rest." [Paul writes] Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;

[We need to consider this because Paul is showing here where the problem lay. God says very clearly it was in the heart. Paul makes it much more specific in that it was a problem having to do with faith, unbelief. And so he exhorts us:

Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Now a connection is made, if we are following the context here, between the heart, disbelief and sin, almost as though he is showing a progression. Because the heart was not unshackled there was disbelief and the result in was sin, a going aside, a turning off the way.

Hebrews 3:16-18 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?

They all fell in the wilderness, except for Joshua and Caleb and I would assume their families—an assumption—but God points them out as not having failed. We would have to consider here then that the whole slew of them (unshackled from their bondage to Egypt. Yet their heart was never unshackled) did not have the kind of faith God would require for salvation. They all died because they sinned.

Hebrews 3:19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Do you see what connection is being made here? It is a direct connection, almost as if they are synonymous between unbelief and sin. It is almost as if He is saying, one equals the other.

Hebrews 4:1-2 Since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

This is why I say that what Lyndon Johnson said in regard to the freeing of the American slaves, well over a hundred years now, that they were not really free to go to the starting line. You might say they were not ready to compete on a level field with everybody else because there were elements that were missing from their minds, from their hearts, from their character and from their instruction. They were unable to compete with the rest of society; they were not on the same level.

By the same token, somebody who has been taken from the spiritual bondage to spiritual Egypt is not up to snuff. They are free. They are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ and they have been given God's spirit, but they are not any where near where God wants to get them to so that they can inherit the land.

Israel was freed after around four hundred years of being in Egypt, about one half of that time in bondage. God's power in liberating them from that bondage, I think, was evident to all of these people. Unfortunately the very authority of God Himself liberated them but they were unskilled in belief and they failed.

The result was that even though freed, they maintained their traditional slave mentality they had shed the chains that bound hand and feet, but the mental shackles remained. To me it is impossible to think that the Israelites disbelieved God's existence. That was not the problem. They knew God existed. Their belief lay in a much higher level of faith than merely believing

whether or not God exists because after God's powerful demonstrations in their behalf, that concept of God's existence should have been drilled into their heads. Israel's disbelief lay somewhere else and it is so today as well. There are millions of people who believe in God's existence, but at the same time they do not submit to God any more than the Israelites. That belief is, at a very low level and of course it is shown by what they do with their lives.

They believe God exists, but the demons believe too and they tremble before God. Apparently men, who believe God exists, do not tremble before God. I think we can begin to see that there are levels of faith. I think we can understand why Mr. Armstrong wrote two different booklets, one saying, "What is Faith?" the other saying, "What Kind of Faith is Required for Salvation?"

Two different cans of peas altogether, the one leads to the other. The one is only a launching pad, that is, the kind of faith or understanding what faith is and believing in the existence of God, but the other kind of faith has a much higher level of capacity to it.

Deuteronomy 31:19-21 "Now therefore [God is telling Moses], write down this song for yourselves [he is talking here about the song of Moses which begins in chapter 32], and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me **against** the children of Israel." When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant. [Did God know what was in their heart? Of course He did.] "Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, **for I know** the inclination of their behavior today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them."

When the book of Deuteronomy was written, the forty years were just about up. Israel was ready to go into the land and God could clearly see what they

were already purposing in their heart. They were simply going to continue the behavior, a behavior that was motivated by what was in their heart, by the attitudes that were there. Even though this was the second generation, they were not free from the mental shackles even after all the experiences that they had—direct experiences and demonstrations of His providence.

Everyday they got up and the manna was out there. Whenever they needed water, it came out of rocks. Whenever they needed protection He gave it to them. Yet even though their clothes did not wear out, their shoes did not wear out, the cloud was up there and the pillar of fire was there, they still did not believe Him. Their heart was shackled to thinking, which under the circumstance they could not change.

Now we understand that God was not trying to convert these people. He was putting them through lessons for our behalf so that we can read these things and understand. We can begin to see that the level of faith that God is talking about is not a function of mere knowledge of God—mere knowledge of God's existence. There is more to it than that.

John 8:30-32 As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed." And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The key phrase is, if you abide, if you continue, if you live in His word. Now it is interesting that Jesus' response to these peoples' belief was to admonish them that His word was of value only as they were committed to it. Without commitment, they accepted what He said as being true, but they did not accept the implications of it for their lives.

Without commitment, a person is not really devoted to truth. Without devotion, love of truth is lacking and without love of truth, there is little understanding of what they are dealing with. It is interesting that in an old radio broadcast of Mr. Armstrong, he said all of his life he craved understanding. Not knowledge necessarily, but understanding.

Israel never understood. They did not see. They did not get what they were involved in. You see that is a function of God's spirit, and God's spirit was

not given to them. God put them through these paces in order to have something written for us, but we are without excuse because we do have God's spirit.

In relation to this, in I Corinthians 8, I want you to think about this book and its context. This was a really troubled congregation, divided all over the place. Paul admitted that they were converted, but yet they were carnal. He said in I Corinthians 3 that they were carnal. They had knowledge of God's existence, they had knowledge of God's plan, they knew the purpose that He was working out, but they were badly divided against one another. Now look what he says in verse 1.

I Corinthians 8:1 Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.

Regarding this particular subject, they had knowledge. This was no little matter in their day and age, this thing of meat offered to idols. It was a main part of the decision that was made in Acts 15 when the people were told to abstain from those things that were offered to idols.

Here in I Corinthians 8, we have a different look at it. Maybe it was a couple of years later Paul said they had knowledge of it.

I propose to you that they did not understand. They did not understand the knowledge that they had and thus they could not properly apply it. I know that I am on good solid ground because the instruction from chapter 8 all the way through chapter 13, when he finally gets to love, is explaining that these people do not understand that they had. So knowledge of and by itself is not the answer.

Understanding knowledge is a great part of the answer and then there is another part beyond that. It has to do with actually using knowledge and applying it in one's life, but I tell you one cannot apply knowledge in the right level to the right degree until one understands what he is dealing with. You only get started with it. That is what happened to the Israelites. They only got started when they came out of Egypt.

Do you think that these Corinthians would have done what they did, what Paul shows all through this book, if they really understood? Considering that they were converted, considering that they had God's Spirit, considering they had the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, do you think they would have done what they were doing here—offending one another and dividing the congregation left and right? Would they have done what they did at Passover if they understood what they were doing? I do not think so. I think we have to give them the benefit of the doubt. I Corinthians was written to give the people understanding of what they were doing.

Again, when we reflect upon the Israelites, we know they saw God's power. They heard His voice. They agreed what He proposed to them was good and true. We too are very happy to receive good things from Him. We know that there are times when God fights our battles but maybe like the Israelites when it came to, or when it comes to, doing our part of the relationship, we are not as committed as we should be. Like the Israelites, we consistently fail.

Romans 8:2-4 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. [We have been freed—unshackled, as it were.] For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Beginning to see a progression here? We are freed from the law of sin and death. We are given life. This is accomplished through the blood of Jesus Christ. What is the reason? The reason is that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us. Now again think of the analogy, Exodus through Deuteronomy. Was the righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in the Israelites? No it was not. They sinned so frequently while they were in the wilderness. Did they really understand what they did? No. We can look in Deuteronomy 29 and find out that God did not give them an understanding heart that they might go on from what God's purpose was. So we have been given the opportunity to do what the Israelites did not do.

Romans 8:5-6 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Again, think about the Israelites, what did we just read in Deuteronomy. The thing that caused the problem was the inclination of the heart, the heart being the seat of the thinking processes, of the attitudes. It was not a lack of knowledge. They did not understand. But we do have understanding, though not enough yet. Some have more than others. I am convinced that most of the time when we depart from the way of God and sin, it is because we do not understand what we are doing. I do not think we *want* to sin, but we just do not get it yet.

This is one of the reasons why Mr. Armstrong so frequently said that when a doctrine is being considered, one has to consider all of the scriptures on any given subject. When portions of an explanation are left out, the understanding at best is shallow and might even be wrong. If the understanding is shallow the chances increase, incrementally, that we are going to go off in the wrong direction even though we do not want to. We just do not get it yet. So to be carnally minded is death because the carnal mind is still chained to what? Spiritual Egypt.

You ought to be able to begin to see one of the things I am driving at here—and actually it is the main theme of this sermon: Liberty is not something that comes to us all at once. Liberty—freedom—is something that must be grown into. If we are really and truly growing in the grace and knowledge, then our freedom is going to increase by increments that have everything to do with what we understand about God's Word. Though we all have knowledge, we do not understand on the same level. God is bringing us to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, but we are not there yet.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

This series of verses shows to what the Israelite commitment was given. Essentially—if we can say it in broad terminology—it was to themselves rather than to the One who liberated them, provided for them, protected them and promised them a wonderful inheritance. So powerful was the pull to what the Bible calls the flesh that they could not stay committed to God.

When push came to shove, what did they fall back on? They always fell back on their Egyptian heritage. I am not talking about blood heritage. I am talking about their psychological, mental makeup heritage, their carnal heritage. Israel could only be faithful to God for short periods. Usually it was in a period that fell right after a miraculous delivery. Then their attention wandered back to themselves again. Once again they became the center of their own world.

What is a slave? The dictionary defines a slave as "a person held in bondage to another." But I think it is interesting to think about where the actual English word "slave" comes from. Do you know it is an adaptation of a national name? It comes from the name Slav. Do you know who the Slavs are? They are the eastern European and Russian peoples. The adaptation came whenever the Germans supplied the slave markets of Europe with captured Slavs. Do you know what the word Slav means in Slavic languages? It means "glory." Through a perversion and sometimes malice, a word that originally meant "glory" came to mean "servitude."

God created us for His glory. We are to glorify God in everything we think, say and do. It is an honor to be able to do this, and it should be glory to us to be able to do something like this. Instead, God finds that all of mankind is held in slavery to the ruler of this world. That came about through malice and deceit, as it says in Revelation 12:9 about the serpent that deceives the whole world. So the Bible shows all of us enthralled to Satan. We are bound to it through a combination of malice on his part and wrong choices on ours.

The story of Israel's release from their political bondage is a physical type of our redemption from our spiritual bondage. The story continues in its parallels and just as surely as they were vulnerable to disbelief, the chances are very high that we too are vulnerable to disbelief. There are reasons for this. To me there are two major reasons as to why we drift away so easily, so frequently, even though we have knowledge.

II Peter 3:3-4 Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts [walking according to the carnal mind; walking according to the inclination of their heart], and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

Uniformitarianism, we would say in the scientific world; everything continues as it was from the past.

II Peter 3:7-8 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved [instruction, knowledge for you and me. Do we understand this?], do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

I am not going to go into technical aspects regarding this because there is a broad principal that I want to extract from it. The problem that Peter is talking about here occurs because mankind does not think in the same parameters as God in regard to time.

That is why this is given here. Do not forget that God does not think in the same parameters in regard to time as we do! That is so important in regard to faith and operation of faith, whether or not if we are going to be saved, whether or not we are going to be doing the right things, whether we are going to understand what it is that we are going through. Time moves frighteningly fast to us and we feel the need, the pressure, of fulfillment. We know that we are going to die. We feel as though life is slipping away. We feel as though our health is degenerating, society is degenerating. Our children are growing older and we feel responsibilities to them and to our mates that certain things ought to be accomplished. We feel the responsibility, the pressure to obey God. We want to enjoy pleasures, but always with time, our attitude toward time and our understanding of time, there is a certain measure of discouragement that tugs at us.

We are such that we get a concept in our mind and very rapidly, sometimes largely, solely because of time, it becomes a fact. We are so impatient it is incredible; we think and act as though all life hinges on what I do or what happens right now. The result, unfortunately, is that we act impulsively. And that creates a great deal of instability, not only in one's own life, but those who are in contact with those who are impulsive and impatient.

There may be hundreds of things associated with the passage of time that motivate us to do, or not to do, things in relation to God. They are things that serve to put us into bondage to time from which we will never be free until our faith is such that we know, and we are acting because we understand, that God is in control of time. It is never too late for God. He can resurrect us from the dead if need be. It is never too late.

Let us look at another area that we are going to connect to this.

Hebrews 2:14-15 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

This is another broad area: faith in relation to time and faith relation to fear. The fear of death here represents all of the fears that constrict a person's life. We bear with them but they nonetheless have very powerful effects on what we do. Maybe if I change this word to "insecurities" rather than fear, we would understand it a little bit better. Our insecurities force us to feel certain ways and unfortunately these feelings of fear, these feelings of insecurity very rarely induce noble conduct in any of us. Yet despite all of the energy expended in bearing our insecurities, they only serve to help us bring about our death, all the while making us miserable along the way.

Let us notice how this is expressed in the Exodus story:

Exodus 14:9-12 So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon. And

when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD. Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

Moses was not afraid, but he was a man of faith. They were not. So what did they do? When they saw the problem, fear quickly came to mind and it **determined their action!** Was that the act of someone filled with faith? Moses was the one who was filled with faith and his reaction was not one of fear. He said to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord."

What I am talking about here—the principle here is that this frequently happens in our lives: We get a fear, an insecurity, and it is what determines what our action is going to be in relation to God and to other people. We do not act out of faith; we act out of our insecurity.

There is an interesting example that my wife mentioned to me. It shows God telling Israel what they are going to do when the crunch is on. In Isaiah 30:1-4 is a political situation. We are talking about something here that happened five hundred years at least, maybe close to seven hundred years after the Exodus. What does Israel do when they are in political, military, and economic trouble? Where do they turn?

Isaiah 30:1-4 "Woe to the rebellious children," says the LORD,
"Who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of
My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who walk to go down to
Egypt, and have not asked My advice, to strengthen themselves in
the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!
Therefore the strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and trust in
the shadow of Egypt.

Seven hundred years later they are doing the same thing as Israel did in the wilderness. There is instruction there for us, you and me, because if we

would follow the story of the children of Israel all the way through the book of Exodus on into Numbers and into Leviticus and Deuteronomy, we would find a theme repeated over and over, numerous times. What is that theme? We find that Israel is being pressured by a combination of what they feel is time closing in on them and their fear that God is not going to take care of them and provide for them. So what do they do? They turn back to their own counsel, which had been trained in Egypt.

The lesson is there for you and me, that when push comes to shove so frequently in areas regarding faith, we are going to turn back to carnal thinking. We turn to things that we have learned in this world.

Are there times when you fear that you are not going to make it, that you are unworthy of your calling, that God did not give you His spirit, that He does not hear your prayers, that He is gone way off somewhere or that He is not aware of what church leadership is doing? Do you know what He shows repeatedly? He shows that the fearful quail before problems and they flee, as God says, when nobody is chasing them. It is something that we need to learn.

Why did these people do it? They did what they did because they did not even have God's spirit. We do these things because we have not reached the level of growth that is needed to be able to face the problem in the right way, a way that involves using the faith of God. So we turn to what Paul calls in Hebrews 3, disbelief.

In Deuteronomy 32:28, we are right in the song of Moses. Now look at God's indictment here about Israel.

Deuteronomy 32:28-29 "For they are a nation void of counsel, nor is there any understanding in them. [Did they have knowledge? Yes. Did they believe that God exists? Surely they did. Did they understand the knowledge that they had been given? No, they did not and not understanding it, they did not know how to use it.] Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

What is he telling us? They always reacted, not according to the counsel of God, not according to right understanding. They fell back on their Egyptian trained hearts. They did not consider the outworking of faith. So Israel was a nation driven by bondage to time, driven by their fears but deceived in to thinking that they knew better than God and His servant Moses. Their whole thinking process had to undergo a conversion. They had to learn to be free!

All their lifetime, up to that point, they were subject to bondage. Somebody else was doing their thinking for them, telling them in the types, when and where to sleep, when and where to work, when and where to eat, maybe even telling them when they can go to the bathroom, and all the while filling their minds with negative, God-rejecting attitudes.

The author of these attitudes that turns us in on ourselves is Satan, but we willingly reinforce and eternalize his ways into our mind to such an extent that we think they are ours. He imprints on us almost from the day that we are born, and he programs us to believe his lies.

Again, did you notice what God said—"that they would consider their latter end"? Faith considers the end; the outworking of what one is going to do. Their excessive concern about time and the fears that they would not be provided for express themselves in their lack of trust. They lived for the moment, and I guess I might say that "deferred gratification" was not in their dictionary.

Satan is called the accuser, is he not? Now what is his message? Right from the beginning, he accused God of being untrustworthy, that God could not be depended upon, that He is that not fair and that He withholds good things from us. His unchanging lie is that God could not possibly be interested in us. Satan does not stop there. He tried to make us believe that God could not possibly be actually involved with us. Again, when the Church of the Great God started, the first sermon was "Do You See God?" How you see God is the crux of our life, because without it the operations of faith are not going to work.

If we do not see Him involved personally in our life, involved personally in the life of this whole group, then we are going to rely upon our own

conceptions of time and be motivated by our own fears. We are going to do things, just like the Corinthians, that are going to divide us and bring us into all kinds of offenses against one another.

We, with all of our obvious weaknesses and shortcomings, absorb Satan's lies, and over the years in this world, we come to believe them. This world's system now is six thousand years of slavery. You may only be twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years old, but the system from which we are being freed is entrenched in every aspect of life. Very quickly this gets impressed upon our minds. It is not a mind that is free, but it is a mind that is enslaved to the system.

There is hope and that is the other side of the story. There is hope, and we can be mighty thankful that God is patient and able to bring us through and out of this bondage. It takes time and it is something that we have to grow into. This liberty that He wants to give us is not something that comes all at once.

Isaiah 55:10-11 "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

God does not fail in what He sets out to do. This does not relieve us of our responsibility, but it ought to be a truth that is burned into our consciousness so that we do not lose sight of His involvement in our lives and live in fear and faithlessness.

Everything does not have to be settled, resolved, done right at this moment. God has a plan that involves thousands of years of time of which we are only little specks compared to what He is doing. Satan makes us believe that the moment is so important. He drives us with this fear that somehow or another we have to be gratified in this concept that becomes fact in our mind so very quickly.

Ephesians 1:3-12 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us [the church] with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places [but we do not have every spiritual blessing yet. We have to grow into that, but it is there. God has made it available to us, but it is there] just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love [His word has gone forth and it is going to accomplish what He said it is going to do. There is hope that we can come out of these problems, that we have of our lacks of faith and that we can grow and overcome.], having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will [does He ever fail in what He sets out to do? Do we have faith? Do we understand that He never fails? Do we understand that He is involved in our lives and that time does not mean so much as it used to mean?], having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one [body, church] all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him [the Him there is Christ]. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Slavs. Not slaves; Slavs. We need to burn this into our minds that He not only made us, He chose us to fit into the purpose, the mystery of His will. We have obtained an inheritance. It is written in the past tense, because God considers things that He purposes as already done, as though they already exist. We are part of His purpose and He accomplishes everything that He sets out to do.

Who is going to stand before God and prevent Him from saving us? Only you can choose to do that. It depends upon the exercise of our faith, our concept of time. It also depends upon whether or not we are going to operate according to our concept of time and our insecurities.

Romans 4:16-17 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.

If you understand the story of Abraham, you know that Abraham became the father of the faithful. Abraham was part of a process that God was working out. God involved him in that. Any of you who heard the Bible studies I gave on Abraham (I think there were 7 or 8 of them) understand that the Abraham at the beginning of God's calling was a far different man from the Abraham at the end of God's calling. We find Abraham in that span of time making quite a number of wrong choices, and yet he was a man of faith.

He did not understand everything that he did. Sometimes his lack of understanding and his concepts, misconcepts of time motivated him to do things, like lying about Sarah, like going down into Egypt when he did not have any reason to go down there. He did many things, but at the end Abraham was the father of the faithful. He succeeded because God was with him and Abraham allowed God to work within him.

God willed it, even as God has willed that you and I should be in His Kingdom, even as we just read there in Ephesians 1. But Abraham had to grow. He had to yield. He had to make use of his faith. By the way Abraham that conducted his life, God could very plainly see that this man was growing and that he was going to be a suitable example of the father of the faithful—somebody that we can look to as an example.

Isaiah 1:16-20 "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean [This is what the Days of Unleavened Bread are all about]; put away the

evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. "Come now [He says], and let us reason together," says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword"; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

The point here is that we are looking, and we are involved in, this liberation. This freedom that we are talking about is a process. Yes, there is a time that we step across the line and we become free servants of God. We belong to Him. We pass through the door that has the blood all around it and we are put into a state of justification. Holiness has yet to come—a process by which we are cleaned up. We grow into the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and as we grow, liberation comes. All this hinges on our concept of faith; and that so frequently hinges on our understanding of time and our understanding of our own fears.

I think all of us might know how some wild monkeys are caught and then sold to zoos. Here is a method by which people capture monkeys. They take a narrow necked bottle where monkeys are known to inhabit. Those of you that can remember the old time milk bottles; it is something of that nature. Inside the bottle they place sweet smelling fruits and nuts that the monkeys find irresistible. The monkeys smell the fruit; they are curious; they come over to the bottle; they smell the fragrance that is coming out of there; they investigate and find that they must reach inside in order to get at the fruit to eat it. They put their arm inside the bottle and they grab a handful of fruit. Then they find out that they cannot get their hand out of the bottle once it is balled into a fist. They do not want to let go of the fruit and they are stuck.

The only way to get free (here comes the lesson) is to drop the goodies. All they have to do is let go and they would be free once again to roam the jungles. However, the great majority of monkeys do not do that and so they are captured and sold to zoos.

We have to ask ourselves, "What is it that is in our jug of goodies that we will not let go of?" How about pride? Oh, this is a major contributor. How

about food and alcohol, things that we may indulge excessively in? How about anger? People who have tempers that they will not let go of? There is a lot of pride involved in temper. How about self pity? There is a lot of pride in self-pity as well. How about the fear of failure? How about the fear of people? How about the desire for money, the desire for praise? What about impatience?

I think that if we begin to examine our jar of goodies, we would find impatience and fear are very likely involved in each and every one of them. How about the elevation of the self? This is what was involved in Israel's problems. If we look at Israel's sins back in I Corinthians 10 and reflect on the story that unfolds, Paul is just reflecting on the occurrences in this case and reporting them. He tells us that there are lessons there. If we would go back and look at it in Numbers and Exodus, we would find impatience, pride, fear involved in these things.

I Corinthians 10:5-13 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they lusted. [Does the monkey lust after the goodies that are in the bottle? Yes. In this case goodies are not evil. They are food that is good to eat, but the monkeys' desire turns it into a sin. The impatient need for gratification, the fear that if I let go I will not have it.] And do not become idolaters, as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor murmur. [Verse 11 he repeats] Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, [There is hope, His word goes forth and it accomplishes what He wants] who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

There is a great deal here which we will not go into.

II Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Liberty is a function of God's spirit. God has made it possible for us to be free by calling us, granting us repentance, forgiving our sins, redeeming us from our bondage to Satan and giving us His spirit, so that the process can be continued to its completion. This is what changes the heart so it is not inclined, by nature, to fall back on the Egyptian-trained thinking. But it has to be exercised; it has to be called upon; it has to be understood if it is going to be rightly used.

Now remember I said earlier: We have to learn to do well. We must grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. We must go onto perfection. We are in a process of being prepared to inherit all things. We are to become like Abraham became. God does not want the thinking processes that put this world into its bondage to be brought over into His Kingdom.

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

God's word is central to our having faith. Remember Jesus said to His disciples in John 6, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Israel as a nation rejected God's word. They did not believe what Moses told them, even as Adam and Eve rejected it as individuals. Jesus, when He said, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," was not talking about anything magical. It is not merely a matter of getting the word of God into us; it is the meaning of the words as they apply to life that Christ is concerned about.

Remember I used John 8, at the beginning, "If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed." Jesus was alluding to the fact that what He is involved in to freedom is something—that liberty is something—that one achieves by going through a process that involves the inculcation of the meaning of God's word, so the people can have knowledge of God's word. They can have knowledge of God, but if they do not understand what it means and they are not committed to finding out what it means, they will not

go on to the liberty that God wants to give us. The liberty that Paul talks about in Romans 8, of the "sons of God."

The older I get the more impressed I am of the wisdom of Solomon's request of God. When God came to him in a dream, God asked Solomon what he wanted, and Solomon said, "I want understanding, that I may judge Your people."

Mr. Armstrong said that all of his life he craved understanding, and God gave it to him. Mr. Armstrong was so good at understanding things. He made things so plain because he understood. He made things so plain that people thought he was simple minded. He understood far better than they ever did, because God answered those requests.

"If you continue in my word." People fail. They are brought back into bondage because they are not committed to His words' implication for their lives, and so frequently they do not really consider the end results of what they are doing.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Do you believe that? Do you understand it? If we really believe that God loves us and that He is a part of our lives, why should we fear what He allows to happen is anything but good? Why should we fear then?

Fear abounds where there is an expectation of punishment. If I believe that the penalty has been removed, then why should I fear death? Why should it dominate my thinking? Why should my insecurities of whether or not I am going to be taken care of make me act?

Jesus said in Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount, "not to worry, God is going to take care of you. If He takes care of the birds and the flowers of the field, and we are worth far more than that, He is going to take care of us." We see their words and we say that we believe them, but do we understand

it? You see, our lack of understanding comes out by how we conduct our lives. We find instead we are motivated by fear rather than faith in what God says. We do not really understand it yet; we have not gotten the grasp of that.

Fear is eliminated by getting rid of an excessive consciousness of the self. What is the answer to this? It lies in the possession of God's spirit. Liberty is a function of God's spirit; it is explained a little bit more specifically in Romans 5.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

What a power-packed statement that is! Do you rejoice in the hope of the glory of God? Did you see what He said there? He said, "If your hope is right, if you really believe God, if you understand what He is saying, He is saying you are going to be God. You are going to have the glory of God—almost as though it is a mantle put on us. Not only that, we glory in tribulations." "All things work together for good." We see those words; we say them; we believe them, but do we understand what He is talking about here? We would glory in tribulation if we really understood. But, this is the same God who subjected Israel to slavery in Egypt. It is part of His discipline. Did it work out for them? Sure it did.

Romans 5:3-5 We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and **character**, hope. [Character is the result of going through trials; character is the result of going through the fire. Character becomes purified because we have passed through the fire of trials. What is that supposed to do? If we understand that we realize that because we have passed through this trial, we have hope that we will go through the next one, too. That is why tribulations produce hope. And it is almost as if we are looking forward to the next test.] Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which was given to us.

I John 4:18 There is no fear in love; [There is the answer. When we really have the love of God, fear and our concept of time will not dominate what we do because love drives out fear] perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

Fear strips a person of his liberty because fear destroys love. Is that not what happened to Israel in the wilderness? Because they feared, they turned back to Egypt. The answer to this is to grow in God's love. The source of fear is excessive self-consciousness. When a person is focused on himself he is not free to love. He is not free. When person is focused on himself, he sins and he brings himself into the ultimate bondage—death.

Do you realize that when one is focused on helping, serving, giving, being kind, generous, etc, it is almost impossible to sin? It is virtually impossible to sin. Now that is a free person. That person unifies; he does not drive apart.

This does not come easily and it does not come quickly. Forty years God was directly involved in the Israelites' lives, and still they thought like slaves—still unable to respond correctly to God's governance.

We have much growing to do. We are far too much held in bondage to impatience, to fear, impulsiveness. Things drive us to be overly self-concerned and keep us from truly being free. We have a lot of growing to do, but God is faithful. He said His word goes out and it returns to Him having produced what it is that He set it out to do. We have hope that we can be free, but we have something here that we must grow into.