

Freedom, Liberty, And Bondage

God's Aim is to Change Our Thinking

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Given 18-Apr-09; Sermon #934

One sometimes hears the terms "free" and "liberty" being used almost indiscriminately in regard to Christianity. Is there any difference between one being "free" and one being "at liberty"? The two terms are frequently used synonymously, but they are somewhat different. Both of these words appear to refer to the right or the opportunity to do as one pleases.

That simple definition makes them seem as though they are exactly synonymous; however, *Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedia Dictionary* begs to differ when comparing freedom, license, and liberty. I will not bother with "license," but regarding "freedom," it says, "Freedom is the widest term suggesting complete absence of restraint. Liberty, however, is a measure of freedom within restraint granted by, or as though by, a sovereign power."

From those definitions alone, "liberty" is the term much more applicable to Christian life than freedom. A Christian can, through God's grace and faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, be free from the penalty of the second death. But at the same time, even though free from that, he is most certainly not at liberty to do as he pleases, or he might end up enslaved to death once again. He is restrained by his knowledge of God, by his love for God, his deep and abiding respect of God, and his fear of bringing the second death back upon himself through poor conduct. A Christian's liberty is very definitely limited. All that one might do with freedom, one cannot do with liberty.

This message is, I believe, a specific natural conclusion to the Days of Unleavened Bread trilogy I put together here.

I watched a portion of the PTL Club. Maybe some of you are not familiar with that. It means "Praise The Lord" Club, and they operated right here in Fort Mill, South Carolina many years ago. I came away wondering if there is any more misleading program involving religion available to deceive the public than this one.

They made Christianity sound like a constant, unending stream of miracles, healings, blessings, and visions, almost one might say a "lark" in which doubt, fear, and discouragement were at an absolute minimum, because anytime those giving their testimonials on the show needed or wanted anything, God quickly supplied. They gave the impression that they were free to ask God for anything, at any time. It was an

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unrealistic "genie in the bottle" approach that made Christianity seem like so much magic. Rub the bottle. Out came the genie. Out came your desire right with the genie.

I do not want to give the impression that God will not supply our needs, but their presentation I felt was so unbalanced it completely obscured a major portion of God's purpose in our lives.

We are going to begin in Deuteronomy 8:2-3.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

We can see there some simple principles. God indeed tested those people. God indeed caused those people to go through privation, and He had a purpose in it. He wanted to see how they were going to handle this privation. He wanted to see whether they would be resourceful, whether they would stick to the things they said they would do.

We are going to connect Hebrews 2:16-18 to what it says in Deuteronomy 8.

Hebrews 2:16-18 For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Between these two verses we have God's open admission that He deliberately creates testing situations, and testing is very frequently an uncomfortable, stressful, and painful situation—a time of privation and many denials of requests. How often do we want to have this burden lifted from us, and we pray to God, asking Him to take it away, but He does not? It remains. So time like this is the progenitor, the source, of many questions and few answers. "Why?" "Why?" "Why?"

Let us look at Jesus. Jesus never sinned. Nevertheless, these verses just told me that He suffered, by God's design, so why should we not suffer? Should we not expect uncomfortable periods, judging by the fact that Christian living involves the building of character and the taking on of the image of Christ through the experiences that one has in a relationship with Him that began at conversion?

By their testimonies, those on the PTL Club made it seem as though God's getting man "saved" without some corresponding changes was God's only purpose. That was where it was so misleading. It is presentations like this that make me understand why men of education, of science and industry and government reject such things as emotional foolishness, that there is little relationship to the real world of ghettos, disease, earthquakes, economic upheavals, and wars.

Let us step back in our mind's eye to the Old Testament again. I think we have to admit that Joseph was quite a man. Was he not? Yet Joseph was sold into slavery. Slavery was a reality of that day, and though not so common today, it nonetheless still exists. Now in Joseph's case, God shows the privations of slavery was a result of the sin of the whole family, beginning with Jacob right on down through all the brothers.

Before long, because of the famine that God undoubtedly caused in order to move events along according to His purpose, the entire family of 75 was in Egypt as well. And once there, over the passage of several hundred years, they grew into a nation. But they again came into bondage, this time through the sins of the wealthy and ruling Egyptians who feared the loss of political and economical control because the Israelites' population was growing so rapidly. It seemed as though the Egyptians saw the handwriting on the wall, saying, "We had better get some shackles on these people or they are going to take over the whole country."

I want you to stop for just a second and think. These were God's people, and the whole nation was made to suffer the degradation of slavery. You know enough to understand God Himself designed that because of the purpose He was working out, according to a plan He had designed. He would be releasing His own people from their slavery as part of that purpose, but before He could release them He had to take them into the degradation of slavery first.

Are you beginning to get my drift here? God knows where He is headed with His purpose for each and every one of us. We do not know that, and so we may be required, according to His purpose, to suffer, and to suffer terribly despite our faith in Him. When one begins to look at this from this perspective—and we know that it is a true perspective because we can see it in His Word—it is what He does that He can

lead us into circumstances He creates that are going to be most uncomfortable. But remember, it is our job. And never forget that He is still on His throne, and He is still working out His purpose regardless of what our circumstance looks like on the surface.

Now in a broader sense, the Bible shows all of mankind is in slavery as a result of sin that began with Adam and Eve, and continues to this day. What has resulted from living lives of sin is this world with its warring society and unjust depraved system warring against each other.

Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread deal with how one can escape this spiritual bondage, and what to do after one becomes free. The escape, or getting free—or better still "redemption," which puts a spiritual twist on it—we can understand from God's Word, is almost totally engineered and carried out by God. It was God who got them in slavery, and it was God who got them out of it. Passover deals with this aspect.

If we think back to Israel's bondage in Egypt, the slaves did almost nothing to get themselves free. That is a reality, because there is almost nothing slaves can do because they have little or no control to effect such things themselves. Virtually all that the slaves did was make a few preparations to leave, slay the lamb, and then walk away.

Now in spite of the little they could do, there was nonetheless a tremendous cost involved in redemption from slavery. It is part of God's operation that we understand somebody has to pay. It is a reality that there is no such thing as a free lunch. Freedom, liberty, is very costly, and the liberty that we gain as a result of what God provides for us is something to be guarded with utmost vigilance.

God almost completely devastated a proud and powerful nation, finally sacrificing its firstborn. But God's work did not stop then. He even made Himself Israel's rearguard to protect them from the pursuing Egyptians, and more Egyptians lost their lives. This, we might say, if we are comparing what happened to Israel in a physical manner with what we experience spiritually, is the beginning of God's grace toward us. This most certainly is not the end of God's grace, because every aspect of salvation is by grace, and all along the way God is giving us gifts to enable us to continue on the path toward His kingdom.

Is there anything we should be learning from grace that will produce direction and practical application to our life right here and now? We are going to see how grace actually places limits on our liberty through Christ's blood. Sometimes people get the

idea that grace, in a sense, is cheap. No, it is not.

Titus 2:11-15 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

These scriptures are those that we should keep fresh in our memory because they are so important to our understanding of the "grace/works" relationship. If there is anything these verses teach us, it is that grace is not the entire story, most especially after we leave Egypt.

Paul uses a very vivid picture here in which grace is personified; but not only personified, it appears suddenly out of moral darkness as though one is having an epiphany. In fact, the word "epiphany" actually appears in these verses, and it is translated by the word "appearing." The personification purpose is as a human teacher. In reality, grace is here symbolizing Jesus Christ. It is being personified as Him, and He appeared on the world scene suddenly.

Of course He came with a message of redemption, and He came with a message of grace. But He also came with a message of what we are supposed to do when we are redeemed after having received that grace, because it tells us here that we must deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. We must live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age. Do you think that this is not putting limitations on a Christian's liberty? We should live life looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us.

The realization of grace given and what it accomplishes for us puts us under obligation to respond to God in the way that these verses instruct. In other words, we are in obligation to not live in the way that we did before, in bondage to sin. Grace must produce changes in our conduct, in our attitude, or we are not taking advantage of it. We are taking the wrong forks in the road all the time.

We are now going to go to another set of verses that contains the words "grace" and "works," and it is very familiar.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith [notice how "saved" (salvation) is put in the past], and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship [this is why grace has been given], created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

When you put the sense of these two verses together, you can understand that grace does not stand alone. Grace makes ethical demands on us consistent with its nature, and that nature is the nature of God. Grace is given so practical changes can take place—changes consistent with God's purpose. That is why they are works He ordained that we should do, because those particular works are in alignment with His purpose. In this case, its purpose is training us for life in the Kingdom of God. That is what grace is given for. Right now, it is to train us for life in the Kingdom of God so that when Jesus Christ returns, we are ready to live there.

One of the things that initially motivated me to put this sermon together (which was all the way back in 1984) is that I came in contact with a newspaper article that was talking about a speech George Gallup (of Gallup Poll) gave to a seminar of Southern Baptist leaders, and it is very enlightening. I will not go through the whole thing, but the sense of it was this:

George Gallup said they found out from this very extensive poll that the conduct of people who claim to be Christian (and for the most part went to church very frequently) was almost absolutely no different from the conduct of the common man on the street. So he was asking these people at the seminar, "Why is this so?" He did not know the answer, but he could not deny the statistics his pollsters came up with—that there was little or no difference between the non-Christian and the Christian in terms of his normal behavior, his normal conduct in the daily business of life.

In this Western world most are certainly aware of the doctrine of grace. We just read in Titus 2 that it has been preached to all mankind. So there is an awareness there, but it has not affected people in the way Titus 2:11-15 says it should. That article indicated there is little difference between the ethical practice of those claiming church affiliation and those claiming no church affiliation. Brethren, this ought not to be. It gives us an understanding that many of these people who are claiming they are Christians really are not. They are religious to be sure, but they are not Christians. They are not conducting their lives as the Word of God says they should.

I want to touch base with Matthew 13 so that we understand where we stand in regard to

those in the world. It gives us an understanding of why the ethical conduct of those people in the world is no better whether they go to church or not.

Matthew 13:10-13 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."

Because of Jesus Christ, and because we have truly been given grace, Jesus Christ has broken the bond of ignorance and deception which held us in its grip as a slaves of Satan and this world, but now we are at liberty to make choices that lead to God's kingdom. Before our calling, we simply were not able to even begin to understand to see these things, and that is why their behavior is as it is.

Because God has given us grace, He expects a great deal more of us, because we are not blind. We can see. God, by His grace, enables us to live with the prudence that will keep us within His purpose.

Let us consider Israel "after the flesh" once again when they left Egypt. Is a man free because he is taken from one form of government to another? Were the Israelites any freer because they stepped across a boundary line marked by the Red Sea and into another country? It may have appeared to them that this was simply so because there were no Egyptian overlords to be seen, but this was really no more than a surface observation.

The record of the Israelites is there for us to read in the pages of the Bible. Their freedom was only relative, because moving or changing government had not removed the real cause of their problems even when the change was to God's government; therefore the Israelites were turned loose, but were they really free? At first, they thought so, but soon it became evident that their ideas of freedom were far different from God's or Moses'.

Numbers 11:1 Now when the people complained, it displeased the LOORD; for the LOORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LOORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp.

Numbers 11:4-8 Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. The people went about and gathered it, ground it on millstones or beat it in the mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil.

Numbers 11:11 So Moses said to the LOORD, "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me?"

Numbers 11:20 . . . but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the LOORD who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?"

Let us just summarize here. To govern these free people was a tremendous burden for Moses day in and day out because they were not free of their slave mentality. They still thought like slaves. They kept feeding their minds with gripes, and actively rebelling to the extent that they yearned to go back to the bondage they had yearned to come out of just a very short time before.

The problem, on the surface of this context, was over their diet. But that was not the real problem. The contrast, as God presents it, was between what was to them a plain and a bland diet as compared to the rich and stimulating diet that they were accustomed to in Egypt. They wanted to be more stimulated, not realizing that their tastes were perverted and enslaving them. The New Testament said these people were eating angels' food, and griping about it, that it was not stimulating enough for them.

Right here is encapsulated a major key to understanding what mankind's problem is. It has to do with what food symbolizes. In Titus 2:12 the term "worldly lusts" appears. In the Greek it is actually only one word—*kosmikon*, and that means "of the world." The spiritual synonym of *kosmikon* is "carnal." Its spiritual antonym is *hagios*—"holy."

Worldly lusts are those desires which are not of God, but are of the world, and those desires are fueled by the reservoir of concepts in our minds that have their source in the

world and form the basis of our thinking. It includes that mass of thoughts, opinions, concepts, ideals, perspectives, speculations, hopes, impulses, and aims at any time current in the world, but gathered into the mind where they lodge and become part of our thinking process and decision-making process.

Brethren, we live in this atmosphere, and these things can confront us anywhere, at anytime, seeking out our destruction, because they are already there. It is because of this that the Apostle John said in 1 John 2 "not to love the world." It is what we must come out of if we are ever going to have true Christian liberty.

Psalm 106:6-7 We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; they did not remember the multitude of Your mercies, but rebelled by the sea—the Red Sea.

Let me add something that you might not realize. They rebelled against Moses and God before they even went through the Red Sea—the first seven days! That is how enslaved they were to their thinking. How quickly the killing of the firstborn had somehow slipped from their mind in a matter of less than a week. Oh, they could remember it, but they forgot an awful lot in that time about how they marched out in joy. They were free! "Free at last!" "Thank God, I am free!" They were not free at all, regardless of where they were, or whose government they were under.

Now the grace is given to change that, and I read those verses in Titus 2:11-15, because it gives us a brief summary of what God expects as a result of grace breaking into our lives. He is actually putting the brakes on our liberty to do whatever we please. But something has to be changed along with the gift of grace, as we shall see, because these people were rebelling right away.

Exodus 14:10-12 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."

Let us learn from this. God has called us to liberty, and that liberty right now, while we are still living in the world, does not have to do with location. It does not have to do in one sense with what government we are under. It has everything to do with the way we think. It has to do with the way each one of us thinks about himself, the way each one of us thinks about others, and above all, what each of us thinks about God and His purpose.

In my sermon on the Holy Day we read Romans 8:3 where Paul states that the problem with the Old Covenant period was not just with Israel at the Red Sea. It was with the people, and they carried that problem with them the entire forty years. The problem was in their mind. The problem was with the way that they thought, and they thought the way they did because they were missing vital elements to God's way. One vital element was of course the Holy Spirit, but we are not going to be focusing on it here.

Remember, when we were in Numbers 11 a little bit earlier, the Israelites rebelled because they were having a problem with their diet. Let us look at this just very quickly, because we need to draw upon a little bit of symbolism, and you will recognize it immediately.

I Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.

Hebrews 5:13-14 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

We can begin to see that the Bible's writers frequently used food as a metaphor for the Word of God. They did this to show that even as food gives satisfaction, sustains our life, strengthens and energizes and refreshes us physically, so does the Word of God fulfill many of these functions for us spiritually.

Now milk indicates that which is simpler foundational material. Meat symbolizes those things that are more profound, mature, and refined. Even as a person will physically become prey to attack by disease, become unproductive and die if one's diet is not sufficient, so will a person who does not regularly imbibe of God's Word. He will also open himself to attack by spiritual forces that will infect and weaken him so that he can actually become a place of spiritual death.

Let us add another very well-known scripture. This ties right into one of the places where we began, which was Deuteronomy 8, because Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8.

Matthew 4:4 But He [Jesus] answered [Satan] and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

That very definitely, dogmatically tells us that the Word of God is a nourishing factor essential for a person's well-being. Bread we need. The Word of God—we need it too. We cannot be a whole person without it. We cannot be morally and spiritually well, strong, vigorous and vital without eating the Word of God, and so every Passover service we go through at least an overview of John the 6th chapter, and I want to turn there.

John 6:30-31 Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

Drop down to verse 48. Jesus makes it very plain.

John 6:48 I am the bread of life.

John 6:50 This [meaning Himself] is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

Now there it is in a nutshell. What the people of Israel were lacking in the desert, in the wilderness, is that they did not have in them the Word of God to give them direction to their life, and without that they could not communicate with God on hardly any level. They were totally and completely carnal. They almost completely thought only on a human enslaved level—enslaved to sin.

These verses that I just went through instruct us that we are to imbibe of Jesus Christ; not literally, of course, but the instruction rather that He gives through His Word and

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example. He is the living Word of God. The words that He speaks are spirit, and they give life if they are used.

Now leavening on the other hand is a type of sin, and it is used by the Bible's writers because of its natural qualities of spreading, fermenting what it is in, and then changing it into something else. In Matthew 16:6 Christ used it to signify the corruption of doctrine.

Matthew 16:6 Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."

In Luke 12:1 it signifies hypocrisy.

Luke 12:1 In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

In the Psalms it is used sometimes to indicate bitterness and anxiety of one full of internal churning.

I want you to turn to II Corinthians 5:21. We find this regarding Jesus.

II Corinthians 5:21 For He [the Father] made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Now never was a life completely unleavened as was Christ's. It is His Word and His example that are to become the basis of our thinking. I could go through a long string of verses, but I will just touch on one to point out something.

Exodus 12:15-17 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt.

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Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.

This is repeated in Leviticus 23:6. This is commanded. This is part of the mind of Jesus Christ. It is actually a part of His grace in revealing the Days of Unleavened Bread to us. In Numbers 28:16-17 and in Deuteronomy 16:3 it makes it very clear that unleavened bread is to be eaten seven days.

Now back to I Corinthians 5:7-8. Notice what he says we are to do. It is an object lesson in which we participate by carrying through what God says to do physically. This is done in order to teach us a lesson.

I Corinthians 5:7-8 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Two commands are given here at the same time. The one is to get rid of the leaven out of the house; the other is to get rid of the leaven that is in the mind. "Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump;" not the house be clean. Yes, the house should be clean, but we need to be made new.

I want to leap ahead in thought here using the word "truth." The word "truth" in I Corinthians 5:7 is exactly the same word that appears in John 17:17 where it says, "Thy word is truth." This word is used a number of ways in the New Testament. It can mean "genuine." It can mean "reality" as opposed to mere appearance.

In John 17:17 it is used in the sense of something derived from God, or declaring the will of God as compared to that which is of the world. God's Word is real. It is genuine, and we understand that it is eternal, and that it is life-giving opposed to the words from the world which are all leaven and are words of death by comparison.

In I Corinthians 5:7 it is used in the sense of truth in terms of conduct in a life lived. It is very similar to the word "sincerity," which precedes it, and is contrasted in the next verse with "malice" and "wickedness." What we are seeing here is the difference between God's Word and the words of man. We think with the words of man when we are unconverted. When we become converted there has to be a cleansing that begins to

take place within our mind where we are beginning to think with the words of God which will produce good conduct, good decisions, and a good life. So both should not remain in the same mind. It is part of the responsibility of the grace given to us to put a check on what came in the mind in the world, and replace it with the Word of God.

It is very similar to the word "sincerity," which precedes it, and is contrasted with "malice" and "wickedness." The word "sincerity" means "pure" or "clear." In other words, free from adulteration marked by genuineness. That is the way the Word of God is. It is free from adulteration. Eating unleavened bread is symbolic of eating the pure and unadulterated Word of God, which is spirit, and which in turn becomes the basis for thinking within new parameters, and these are parameters which always have God and God's purpose and perspective in mind.

I will make sort of a concluding statement here. When we are actively doing this, it is right here that we find the roots of the liberty which God is educating us into. We will not literally be free in the way that God wants us to be until there is a complete cleansing of our mind, and we know that is not going to happen in this life, but God wants us to be working on it. There is only one or two ways that these words, which are spirit and which are life, can get into us. One is by studying God's Word. The second is by living it, and the third is by talking to God. It is the source of our life, brethren.

Let us go back to the Old Testament again, to Proverbs 30:5-6.

Proverbs 30:5-6 Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

This does not sound like we have very much good that we could add to God's Word, does it? We can understand one thing Solomon is saying here, and that is that every Word of God is pure. Do not go beyond what it says, and it will protect you.

Psalms 18:30 As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.

Again, notice the implication of protection that comes from God's Word. Protection from what? Protection from all the harmful things that bondage to sin implies.

Let us turn to Exodus 6:5-8. What we are going to read here applied to the Israelites,

and it applies to us as well. God is speaking to Moses.

Exodus 6:5-8 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LOORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LOORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LOORD.'"

Just a little bit earlier I said that these promises apply to you and me even as they applied to them. God is promising us to bring us out of our bondage, but this time He is getting to the root of the problem, and that is sin, and sin is all generated in the mind. So God's concern in our lives is what it is that is feeding our mind, because the mind is that faculty by which we direct our life. This is why the Israelites were never free. God made no attempt to convert them. It is only when God actually gives people the opportunity to think in the way that He thinks that conversion and salvation is possible, and He has done that for us.

Now with that thought in mind, we are going to leap all the way to John 8, and if you are familiar with John 8, it shows an argument that took place over freedom.

John 8:44-45 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.

John 8:32 And you shall know the truth [God's Word is truth], and the truth shall make you free.

There it is in a nutshell. So it comes down to this question: What are we doing to pack our minds with truth? If we do not have truth—God's truth—what are we left to think with? We will be like Satan, where Jesus said he thinks from his own resources. Our resources, brethren, are in the world, except to that extent we are packing our mind with

the truth of God so that it becomes the mechanics, the words, the things that we work with to make decisions and to carrying them out.

Our bondage stems from the lies which we have all followed. Replacing those lies with truth, and using that truth, produces real liberty, and it can bring freedom from self, freedom from passing vanities, and freedom from fads and fashions of this world. We can gradually grow free from the kind of fearful and depressed thinking that brings on mental illnesses, and the freedom from being in bondage to that arch Deceiver who would painfully lead us to our destruction.

God does not remove us from any one geographical location to another. We have to come out of our own personal spiritual bondage regardless of where we are, because that is where the real problem lies. So in most cases, we physically remain where we are.

Brethren, one's life takes its values from its purposes and goals, and most peoples' purpose in life is merely physical; thus the things they pursue in life, and the means they use to accomplish those goals, is what is bringing everything and everybody into their bondage. First of all we need to re-evaluate every once in awhile what is our real goal in life, because that goal is going to pretty much determine what our values are, and you will use those values to accomplish the getting of what you want.

Now in terms of Christianity, its great goal motivates one to set the highest standards, and this will clearly establish one's thinking, and those highest standards come out of God's Word.

We are going to turn to Luke 4 where Jesus quoted a prophecy that involved Him, and I want to write this down just a little bit more thoroughly, a little bit more clearly, because I want you to see how clearly stated how He was going to help those who listened to His message and follow Him.

Luke 4:16-19 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim [preach] liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim [preach] the acceptable year of the LORD."

Did you happen to notice how frequently the word "preach" occurred in there? Preaching, brethren, consists of words. What Jesus is doing here is in a sense laying out His educational program—at least as far as this main point. Brethren, words are symbols of the concepts and ideals upon which we base our thinking and decision-making. Words are spirit. The gospel is words arranged to form God's purpose for our benefit.

Now Jesus said He is going to preach the gospel to the poor. The poor, brethren, are those deprived or powerless, and the gospel gives vision of God's purpose and causes us, if believed and used, to establish the highest of goals in life. **There is no greater goal in life than the Kingdom of God.** Is it worth it? That is for us to think about.

He says He is going to heal the brokenhearted. These are those who are truly repentant, and thus in that healing He will take care of the past, giving comfort and encouragement to push onward toward the goal without having to worry about the past.

He says that He is going to preach deliverance to the captives. He does this to inspire enthusiasm and to give hope for a bright future.

He says He is going to help people to recover the sight of the blind. These are those primarily who are spiritually blind, and He does this by giving truth, and therefore direction and clear thinking.

He says that He is going to set at liberty. He is going to do this by forgiving sin, and in order to forgive sin people have to have knowledge of their sins, be convicted by them, and then He will heal them of those sins and remove the spiritual and psychological weight, thus helping us to keep free.

He also says that He is going to preach the acceptable year of the LORD. Do you know what this does? It is this that instills a sense of urgency and drive. The time, brethren, for us is NOW! "This is the acceptable year of the LORD." He is saying there is no time to waste. We must get His Word into us.

In all of these functions, God is working on the mind by means of His Word, His Truth, empowering us through an educational process, and the addition of His Spirit to make the best possible use of our free moral agency, and thus of our lives. This, brethren, is how we make the best use of Christian liberty.