

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3)

Called to Liberty

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Given 05-Apr-10; Sermon #986A

If we were to come up with one word to encapsulate America and what it means to all of us, we could do no better than to choose the word "Liberty." Our founding document was the Declaration of Independence. And it is right there in that one word, "Independence," that has much to do with liberty. And that document states our rights as free men and women to govern ourselves—to liberate ourselves if need be from a rotten dictatorship like the reign of George III had devolved into.

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, as the main author, enshrined America's three fundamental rights—Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. Over our lifetimes we have seen our liberties taken away. And the one who has taken them away from us has not been a foreign power, but our own government. We do not really have one of our most fundamental rights anymore, at least not in the way that it used to be—the right to own private property.

The government controls your land—you cannot do certain things on your land now because the EPA will come in and tell you that you cannot. Just a few years ago, there was also the landmark Supreme Court decision, *Kelo versus New Haven Connecticut*, which expanded the rights of eminent domain, which is the government's right to come in and take your land/property for its own use.

Now, what was so landmark about this particular decision is that it was not just the government's right to come in and take your land if they needed to put something through your property like a road or some other truly important circumstance. No, the *Kelo* decision basically told municipalities and governments all across the country that if they wanted to increase their tax base by taking your property and upgrading it for other personal use, then they could jolly well do that.

So they did, and took a place in this city that was somewhat rundown, and made way for a corporation that wanted to go in there, who would pay more taxes to the city than the current landowners were paying. And the city won.

Now of course, we have the most recent threat to our liberty—the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, along with the Health Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation Act of 2010. They have nice sounding names, eh? But we know them as "Obama-Care." Now, this monstrosity—I have heard all kinds of estimates of the

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

number of pages that are in both of these bills, the bulk of which is in the senate's bill. It is at least 2500 pages of Byzantine Legalese. And what it all comes down to is that we will eventually all become wards of the state.

We will, soon, I believe 2014, no longer have the freedom to choose whether to have a health care policy or not. We will all be mandated to have a health care policy. But if we decide not to do so, we will pay a fine. I do not know if all this will occur because there are already states and people lining up to sue and challenge these bills in court.

But, there is more to it than that. The government will also have access to all of our medical records, so they will have all sorts of information that used to be private in their hands. And, of course, Sarah Palin was not far off when she said that the government will be given the power to say who dies and who lives, and how we can access health care, according to panels of bureaucrats telling us whether or not we will be allowed to have certain types of care that could save our life. She simply called them "death panels." It appears to go that far.

Something else we found out is that according to the way that this bill is structured that they will quickly put all the private insurance companies out of business...did you know that the health care industry insurance as a whole makes only 3% profit every year? And they have to conduct all their operations and expansions on that measly margin—3% is not very much at all. Now it does mean that billions of dollars because it is a huge industry, but the actual margin is only 3% that they make.

Now what is going to happen is that they, the insurance companies, are going to have to do a whole lot more on a whole lot less because the government is going to require them to keep so much more in reserve, and other things, making for a very bad scenario. I heard on the radio recently that it is estimated that once this goes into effect, the insurance companies would only last about 2 years before going under.

What does this all do? It leaves the whole health care insurance business wide open for government takeover. If they do not prop up the insurance companies, which they might do since they are "too big to fail," then they will simply take them over.

By 2016 to 2018 if things do not change for the better, the government will be the only health care provider left—a single payer system, which Obama wanted in the first place.

So we can see that America is less and less living up to its original premise of The Land of Liberty. It is quickly going the way of the kings of the gentiles as Jesus put it in Luke 22:25 as the nation's leaders exercise lordship over the people, dolling out their

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

permission to do this or that; and Jesus adds with a bit of sarcasm, "Those who exercise authority over them are called 'Benefactors.'" It is a sad point. It is also true. People, even in this country—Land of the Free, and Home of the Brave—want and love to have the government (or someone else) take care of them. They want the government to be their sugar daddy to give them the things they want when they want them so that they do not have to worry, so they do not have to work for the things that we used to struggle for by our own means.

It has come to the point where the people keep reelecting their oppressors to bind them more securely to the government dole. Do not be too sure that this Republican landslide predicted for November comes to pass. You remember the old saying—it is everybody else's congressman who is bad, but we like ours. What if the people in a Democratic district go to the polls believing such things? "This guy has brought home the bacon for us! This lady has gotten us 50 billion in stimulus this past year! We cannot let them go! They are our gravy train!" So we will have to wait and see.

The people of this country have come a long way since, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country," was spoken—by a Democratic President no less (J. F. Kennedy).

So now we have come to the point where we have lost most of our freedoms, or they certainly are constantly being diminished. There is no hope in the politics of mankind, especially in a nation that has largely forgotten God and the principles of Christianity. And the reason that I can say this is because the liberties that this nation has enjoyed for more than 200 years have their origins in the principles of God's Word. Although this country is not set as a Christian nation, the people were generally Christians. And they had a Christian way of life and way of thinking. And, combined with the ideas that came out of the Enlightenment, they crafted our founding documents so that these liberties would be enshrined. But they recognized that only a Christian moral people could maintain such—liberty comes from God.

And so, these Christian principles were very much in the center in the things that they did and said in 1776 through 1787. The founders wrote some things that support this. Here follows a quotation from John Adams:

"The general principles upon which the fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity."

Here John Adams was writing mostly regarding achieving independence. So that whole

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

glorious time of patriotism when fighting the war against England was fought on Christian principles, because the Bible was at the root of their thinking.

Now Thomas Jefferson takes it a bit further in this next quotation that we often hear the end portion thereof, but it is the beginning portion that I am interested in right now:

"God who gave us life, gave us liberty. And, can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are a gift from God, and that they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep forever."

We hear this quotation in terms of abortion debate, and we think that Jefferson is making a secular prophecy in some respects saying that if the sins of this nation mount like the sins of abortion have, then surely God's wrath is going to turn against them. But Jefferson's real idea here is liberty and the loss of it.

It is kind of ironic, is it not, that the left has turned abortion into a right to choose—a liberty. It seems ironic to me.

Jefferson's quotation is particularly apt for our situation today. When the nation forgets God, forgets to appreciate Him, forgets to realize that their liberties came from Him, and continue to come from Him, His wrath truly cannot be too far away. We are in a place now where our liberties are being taken away. What does this mean in terms of what Jefferson has said in his quote? As Americans shove God further into the background, they are losing their freedoms and bringing national calamity ever closer.

It is not the government. It is: We the People—we are the government. We are allowing these things to happen. And we are allowing these things to happen because we like to be shackled giving someone else the responsibility. We have become slaves to ourselves—our government.

Now, this is the third sermon in my series, "Do You Recognize this Man," in which we consider the things that Jesus taught on a subject pertinent to these holy days. Today, as you can easily guess by my introduction, we are going to look at Jesus teaching on liberty and freedom.

I do not think that the things I will say in this sermon are going to be new or surprising. The things we understand and know Jesus said on this subject are pretty well known.

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

But perhaps we can uncover some maybe lesser known insights into His teaching on liberty.

And as I always do, please turn to Exodus 13. If you will remember last Tues, (the first Day of Unleavened Bread) we looked at the instruction in chapter 12, but chapter 13 is slightly different in its emphasis.

Exodus 13:3-9 And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LOORD brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. On this day you are going out, in the month Abib. And it shall be, when the LOORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LOORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what the LOORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.' It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LOORD'S law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LOORD has brought you out of Egypt.

Here we are at the end of the Days of Unleavened Bread. Now in the type, which we have in the book of Exodus, the children of Israel had been walking between Succoth in the Land of Goshen, and the Border of Egypt. It took them about a whole week to make that trip finally reaching the Red Sea. But when they reached the Red Sea, they found to their dismay that they were caught between the Sea and the Egyptian army.

We know the story—this was not the end. God opened the Sea for Israel to pass through. And then as they were finally on the other side, and the Egyptians had finally got the nerve to chase after them, that God dropped the walls of water back over onto the Egyptians smashing them and their chariots drowning them all. It was only at this point, once they had reached the far side of the Red Sea that the Israelites were truly liberated from Egypt, because all through those seven days they had been walking on Egyptian soil. And, all through those seven days they were still able to be reached by the Egyptian army.

The instructions we see here in Exodus 13 emphasize God's hand in granting them

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

freedom. Of course, it does emphasize do not eat leavening, put the leavening out. But it is interesting to see in here how many times God mentions the fact that He brought them out. In these seven verses that we read from verse 3 to 9, the concept of going out of Egypt is mentioned five times—five times in seven verses. In verse 3 you have two of them, "in which you went out of Egypt," and also, "that the Lord brought you out of Egypt." And, then in verse 4, "you are going out in the month of Abib." And then in verse 8, you are supposed to tell your son, "this is what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt." And then in verse 9, "the Lord had brought you out of Egypt." He did it with a strong hand.

So, here we have an emphasis particularly on what God did in bringing them up out of Egypt, and the emphasis is that there was no way that they could have gained their freedom without God. Even though they were about 2.5 million persons in Egypt, the Egyptians were a far stronger people. The Israelites were too downtrodden at this point in their history. They were just in their mud pits stamping up and down like you see in the movie. They were building whatever Pharaoh wanted to be built. They were kept working all the time, they did not have the energy to rebel. Egypt was a very strong power at this time, perhaps the strongest power on earth at this time. God had to use 10 plagues to soften them up, and even then, Israel might not have made it out on their own.

They were slaves. They did not have a government. They did not have good organization except what Moses and Aaron brought to them. They might have had some organization within their tribes, but knowing the Israelites, they most likely would have gone their separate ways, not getting along with one another for very long.

You would see in chapter 14 (which we are not going to today) that when they got to the Red Sea, and saw the Egyptian army coming after them, they panicked. They told Moses, "Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Let us go back!"

Moses had to say, "Shut up! Be still! Let God work! He will fight for you!"

So, God delivered them by decisively defeating the Egyptian army, which was the remaining strength of Egypt. Remember, throughout all the plagues, their crops were all destroyed, their livestock was basically destroyed, their firstborn had been destroyed, but they still had an army, and they still had a government. And so they pursued the Israelites with this army, and once they got between the walls of water in the Red Sea, all that was gone.

So God truly humbled the Egyptians and bought the liberty of the Israelites with the lives

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

of Egypt's remaining strong men.

So, the idea that I want us to understand here is that they, Israel, did not purchase their own liberty. God did. God redeemed them. God bought them with the lives of the Egyptian's firstborn, and even later with the whole army.

Turn to Psalm 146 to see an encapsulation of all this. This not only parallels what happened with Israel coming out of Egypt, but also with Israel's trek through the wilderness.

Psalm 146:5-7 Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LOORD his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps truth forever, who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LOORD gives freedom to the prisoners.

The God of Jacob, as He is called here, provided all the help that they needed, and a whole lot more. He faithfully kept His promises to the fathers. Remember that He had told Abraham 400 years before that his descendants would go down into Egypt, and would be oppressed. But He also kept His promise that He would also bring them back out. And He did that too.

He executed justice for His oppressed people. He really did that quite thoroughly on the land of Egypt. He destroyed the land, their crops, their animals, their government, and the firstborn of the whole land; He did everything to make it right. And besides that the Egyptians gave them loads of gold, silver, jewels, cloth, and all sorts of things.

So, He righted the scales so that His people went out into the wilderness quite rich. He fed them when they were hungry. He gave them 40 years of manna while going through the wilderness. And of course, He opened up the rocks when they needed a drink. And of course, He released them from their unjust captivity, as mentioned above at the end of verse 7, "the Lord gives freedom to the prisoners."

Their liberty was entirely dependent upon His purpose, upon His faithfulness, upon His power, upon His goodwill, and His love toward them.

What did they do? They got their sandals on and began to walk. They did not have to do very much at all. All they had to do was respond positively and follow the cloud.

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

And you know that the same thing has happened to us. In Colossians 2 is a parallel to what Martin brought us on the Sabbath.

Colossians 2:11-15 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

This parallels what Martin explained on the Sabbath. We were nothing, and going nowhere just like the Israelites in Egypt, until the Father decided to draw us to Christ. We were just out in the world doing our thing with no thought of God in our minds, not of the true way God really is especially—the true God. We were physically alive. We did all of these things. They might have been fun. But, we were just going along doing what everybody else did.

But, spiritually we were dead—certainly dead to God. We were alienated from Him. We were much farther than just arm's length away. We were headed to death—physically and spiritually.

But, He decided to change all that. He decided to draw us to Christ. So, He called us. He justified us by forgiving us our sins through Christ's blood. He made the New Covenant with us. And, He gave us true spiritual life by His Spirit.

Now in all that, how much of this did we do? Well, in what I have shown you, it is nothing at this point. Realistically, even though we think that our conversion was a wrenching experience, and took so much courage and effort to change our lives, all we actually did was (like our Israelite fathers) responded—we followed the cloud. We followed Christ. We responded to His actions in our behalf. He called us. He granted us justification by His grace.

It was Jesus, was it not, who sacrificed His blood and gave up His life for us? Really

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

when you think about it, what we did when we responded to Him was only a teeny tiny part of the process. Even though it was tough for us, we must come to the realization that we did not do very much at all. God and Christ did the lion's share of the work.

Like I said, the Father called us from His place on His throne (way off in the north somewhere, in what we call outer space). He looked down here and found you. Now that was probably easy for Him to do, because He knows everything and knows where we all are. And, He decided that this one—you—would be a good son or daughter in His kingdom as part of the firstfruits.

So He called. And what did we do? Well, we probably fought Him for a while, but ultimately we answered Him—we responded. But there was a whole lot more that was done behind the scenes. Like I said, Christ spent 33 ? years overcoming His human nature, Satan, and sin. And then, at the end of that, He had to die—He had to go through that horrible beating, and the crucifixion; and then at the end of that to have all the sins of humanity put onto Him—that was true suffering.

Of course, with all that, because He had all those sins piled upon Him, His father could not stand to look upon Him, or to be with Him anymore. So, the Father had to leave. And that was the ultimate, I think, in His anguish, because suddenly..."My God, My God! Why have you forsaken Me?" He had never known a time without the presence of God our Father—His One true Companion. That was enough to kill Him right there, probably. And then, of course, He died.

He was raised and what kind of power did that take? He ascended, then, to the Father's right hand. And all of that was done in order for us to have things, so we could have forgiveness of sin, so the Father could forgive us by His grace, grant us eternal life, and Christ could impart the Holy Spirit to us.

Have we done much here in this list of things at all? Not a whole lot. Pretty much, all we have done is say, "Here I am Lord. I am coming." Sure, you repented, and that was difficult. And we are still going through that—trying to change. It is not an easy thing. We were baptized and went through the ceremony. We did accept the New Covenant. And that was all good. But when it really comes down to it, our spiritual freedom was essentially handed to us with only minor cooperation on our part.

That is all now in the past for us. Our justification is in the past. We are like the Israelites after crossing the Red Sea in the wilderness free at last. But the Promised Land—the Kingdom of God—is still before us, many miles as it were. How many years, we do not know, but it is still before us. So, we are in this position of having to trek through the

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

"wilderness" like the Israelites had to trek toward the Promised Land. And we are free! That is one of the most important things. We are free there on the other side of the Red Sea.

But the question is, "How will we remain free?" Freedom is not something that is given once, and it is forever. That is what my entire introduction was about. Sure, we were granted freedom by our Declaration of Independence, but over these last 230 years or so, we have lost some of these freedoms. We did not maintain the liberty. We have allowed it to leak away from us. So, just because we have been set at liberty does not mean that we will remain at liberty.

You know, from the example of the Israelites in the wilderness, they had a terrible time remaining free. Sure they walked behind the Cloud for forty years. But, they were not free. They were physically free, yes. And I am sure that you know that they never actually walked back to Egypt. They never put the shackles back on their wrists and ankles. They never got back into the mud pits. But, their behavior along the way to the Promised Land showed that they never really left Egypt inside their heads—mentally—and certainly not spiritually either. While physically free, they were still slaves. They never learned how to live as free men and women. They were still slaves. They never really changed their way of life. They still wanted someone to tell them what to do. They had no initiative. They could not discern the difference between God and Pharaoh. They did not know how to be free.

Now, this is where Jesus Christ comes into the picture. He is the same God who brought Israel out of the land of Egypt and their bondage there. He also suffered 40 years of non-stop murmuring, stubbornness, and open rebellion. So He knows a great deal about people who cannot live free. And that history that we see in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and various other places in the Old Testament, are examples of how to fail to inherit the Kingdom of God—in how to fail at remaining free. And in His ministry, among the descendants of those same rebellious Israelites, He gives us instruction on how to maintain our liberty and therefore to attain the Kingdom of God; because we know that those people never made it to the Promised Land. They failed, as we saw last week, their bodies were strewn across the wilderness—averaging 100 to 200 a day dying—still slaves in their own minds. They never reached the glorious liberty of the Kingdom of God—the Promised Land.

Turn to Luke 4, and begin looking at Jesus' teaching on liberty. We all know this passage very well.

Luke 4:16-21 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

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 LOORD 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 liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LOORD." Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

And then they tried to kill Him.

Notice here that liberty is mentioned a couple of times. Now, despite the concept of liberty being such a large part of His message, the words that we use to discuss liberty are very infrequently used in the gospels.

The word "free" appears only five times in the gospels. This does not count things like "freely," because they are not the same as when we think of freedom or liberty.

The word liberty only appears twice, and both are right here in the passage, in verse 18.

The words "redeem," and "redemption" only appear four times, and the various forms of "deliver" or "deliverance" appears many times, but only four times in the sense of "setting free." There are a lot of times where the term deliver was used like, "deliver Jesus up to Pilate..."

When you add all these up, that is only 15 times that the concept of liberty is addressed directly in the gospels.

Now what this says to me is that Christ's teaching on spiritual liberty is found throughout the gospels without being explicitly mentioned as such. And that is what we find when we study the extended passage on liberty in John 8. This is the only extensive passage on liberty found in the gospels.

Now most people, when they think of this, turn to John 8 and start in verse 30, but not this time. We need to go all the way to the beginning of the chapter because the idea of liberty, the concept of liberty, actually starts in the illustration in, "the woman caught in

the act of adultery."

John 8:2-12 Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

Like I said, His teaching on freedom begins here. The Scribes and Pharisees haul before Him an obviously sinful woman, caught in the very act of adultery. Now, they must have know that this was going on, and they set up some sort of sentinel to watch to make sure that it was happening, and they went in and got her.

Where did the guy go? Why did they not bring him in, too? He may have been part of the cabal that was trying to get it done, because their real aim was Christ, not the woman.

Then they brought her to Him. Starting with the woman, consider her and her freedoms. Was she free? No. She was obviously sinful. We have their word that this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. So, she was bound under the law as a sinner. And because she had been caught in the very act, I am sure that there must have been more than two witnesses, she was also bound under judgment. So, not only had she committed the sin, of course she would automatically have been under judgment in that case; but in this case I am talking legal judgment in terms of the people executing a

judgment, not just under the judgment of God. So, already she is bound to her sins, she is a slave of sin, and she is now going to be bound as a prisoner under the law.

Now, because she had committed adultery, she was probably also married. And so she was bound to her husband, right? Is that not how Paul explains it? So, she was bound a third time. She was not free to do as she did.

Now, think about the Scribes and Pharisees. Were they free? They probably considered themselves to be free, but they were not free at all either. Jesus shows them by His maneuvers saying, "He who is without sin cast the first stone." He shows them that they were bound under their own sins, because they had to admit that they were sinful too. And there was an admission when they left the scene that they were sinful—that they recognized that they were just as guilty as this woman was who they had brought. So they were also enslaved to their sins. It also shows here that by bringing up the law of Moses, "Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned." By bringing this up, they acknowledged that they were also bound to the law of Moses. And, really, the way that they operated, they never operated outside the law of Moses.

That is why the Scribes and Pharisees were as they were, because they had taken the law of Moses, and they had proscribed all these extra things to put a hedge around everyone. So, they were confined within their own self-righteous interpretation of the laws of Moses. They were unable, then, to conceive of another approach that might be better or not to this woman's sin. The law of Moses proscribed one way to deal with someone caught in adultery. So they were bound to that.

Now they were also blinded and bound by their hatred of Jesus. That was also confining the way that they could act. They wanted Him dead. And they would try to come up with any way to make sure that He was arrested and put to death. And so they were bound, then, in their hatred. They cannot believe, they cannot conceive that Jesus was who He said He was. So, they were bound in their own thinking as well. They could not look at the Man, hear what He had to say, look at His works, and come up with a right conclusion that this was their Savior, even though the prophecies that they knew backwards and forwards were telling them that this was the One.

How many times did Matthew say that He did this because it was written in the prophets saying thus and such, that Jesus had fulfilled all these prophecies. But now, the Scribes and Pharisees had blinders on. Blinders are binding. They do not let you see certain things. And so, they were bound in their thinking, not to mention bound by Satan, and bound by all these other things that they had to work with.

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

The only truly free person on the scene was Jesus Christ. His mind was free of sin. He of all people on the face of the earth for all time was the most open-minded person who ever lived, because He was not bound by sin. His mind was uncluttered, and unhindered by rotten attitudes, and perverse habits of mind. He looked at everything fresh. He saw His own law, which was the source of the law of Moses, not as a confining set of rules and penalties, but as Paul described them—as definitions of love toward God and man.

His brother (James) would later say that they were the perfect law of liberty; the royal law—meaning the law that is far above all—the commanding law—the governing law.

So, while the Pharisees in their bondage demand her lawful punishment, and it was lawful (you can go back in the book and read what it says should be done to someone who commits adultery), Jesus in His freedom shows mercy. It is just another mindset. It is the same law, and same penalties, but Jesus looks at it with forbearance. Jesus looks at it over a long time—over someone's lifetime. Jesus looks at it with the opportunity for change for the better, whereas the Pharisees want nothing of those things. They wanted justice, and they wanted it now—her death.

Jesus, though, says, "Do not sin anymore, I do not condemn you." He urges her to repent—to change her way of life. It is exactly the opposite of what the Israelites did not do in the wilderness. They were saved, they were free, they were redeemed, they were delivered, but they never changed.

So, if we were to encapsulate the difference between Jesus and the Jews in this situation: He sees sin, but finds a way to improve life. He condemns the sin, obviously. But He does not condemn her, because He sees a way that if this woman lives, she could be changed for the better, whereas the Pharisees want only death.

Now, His statement in verse 12: "I am the light of the world, he who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." This is a summary of what had just happened here. It is the teaching that comes out of it. And it is very enlightening for you and me.

Think of it this way and it will become a bit clearer. Instead of using the terms of light and darkness, use the terms liberty or freedom and bondage. In essence, what He says here is that He is the world's perfect example. He is free. And if people would truly follow His example they would be free too. Walking in darkness, walking in bondage is frightful and confining. Have you ever stumbled over something while it is dark? You have to get from one place to another and you cannot see a thing. There is not even any reflected

light in the room.

Have you ever been to Carlsbad Caverns when they turn the lights off, and you cannot see anything? It is scary is it not? Even though you know that the tour guide is going to turn the lights back on, you get this creepy feeling.

When you are in darkness, you cannot see where you are. If you try to go anywhere, you cannot see where you are going. And any obstacle along the way is bound to trip you up and harm you. You are going to become disoriented, and things will not go very well at all. Yet, those who walk in light see everything. Everything is beautifully illuminated. There are clear paths to follow, and we can see the goal that we are headed toward.

People who walk in the light are free to move about at will.

Of course, we know that we are constrained by what God has said is good and right. But within that very broad area of what is good and right we have freedom. We have a lot of freedom. We have freedom to make judgments that affect things—very big things—eternal things! And God has granted that to us. We are at liberty.

He intimates, here, that those who live in bondage, who live in darkness, find only death; while those who have liberty are in light and find life. That is what He says..."but have the light of life."

If we are in darkness, we are not going to find the way out. But if we have the light—we have liberty—we are going to find the light at the end of the tunnel, and be in the Kingdom of God. So we see that His teaching on liberty is in summary to follow His example to the kingdom. He is the way, the truth, and the life.

Now, in the next couple of paragraphs, Jesus has to defend Himself more against the Jews. They are badgering Him again about various things; but at the end of the second passage, He reveals His secret of being and remaining at liberty.

John 8:29 "And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

It is that last clause, "for I always do those things that please Him." The key to true liberty is to always please God in everything. He is the only One who matters. He has the ability to set us free and to keep us free. And if we are on His team, then He will

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

make sure that we remain free. If we want to stay on His team, we will do what pleases Him. God is looking out for us, and He will make sure that we have all the freedom that we need to be in His kingdom.

Think about it—if we are pleasing God, we are, first of all, not sinning! You cannot sin and please God! They are mutually exclusive. You cannot sin and please God a little bit. It just does not work that way. What happens when we sin? Well, we are cutting ourselves off from God. It is the way that things are. He is so pure and holy that He cannot abide sin. And so, if we are pleasing Him, we are not sinning.

But more than that, if we are pleasing God, we are living according to His perfect character. And what does this mean? It means ultimately that we cannot help but produce spiritual fruit.

And what does it say in John 15:8?

John 15:8 "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

It is all one big happy circle! If you please God, you are not sinning; you are actually living according to His perfect character, and we are producing fruit, and that just pleases God and glorifies Him. So, that is how you maintain liberty.

It is in this next passage, the one that most everyone thinks about regarding truth and liberty that summarizes all of this. Returning to John 8,

John 8:3-33 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." They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone...

I just have to stop every time I am in this passage. This is such a stupid, lying statement by the Jews. Maybe they meant in their own lives that they have never really been in bondage to anyone; but they are talking about Abraham's seed, and his descendants had been in bondage time after time—not just in Egypt, but also Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greeks, and now by the Romans. So how could they say that? It shows you just how much in bondage they really were. They could not see the reality of their own

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

situation that they were under the heel of Rome. It is just amazing to me.

John 8:33 How can you say, 'You will be made free'?"

How would you "free" us if we are already free? (But they were not free.)

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.

So He brings it back to what He is really talking about, slavery to sin, not political bondage. He was talking spiritual bondage.

John 8:35-36 "And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

So we remain at liberty by continuing or living in God's word. And this living in God's word proves that we are His disciples. We are His disciples if we follow Him and His example, which is what He said there in verse 12. It is all a circle; it all comes back. You have freedom when you do the truth—recognize the truth and live it.

So, His word is the truth, and it is this truth that makes us free. That is why in these days and what is going on in this country today, it is so important to be able to discern truth from error. It is becoming ever more necessary as the deceptions of the end time continue to mount.

I wonder every time I turn on the news, and I hear something...my first thought, now, is, "Are these people telling me the truth? What is their slant? What is their bias?" It has gotten to the point where I do not believe anything that comes out of the mouth of the President of the United States, because he has a bias that can make black look like white. For instance, the other day he said that this health care bill will help small business. Where did he get that? Maybe there is some obscure little part in there that might give small business a little break on something, but he touts that as being this wonderful thing for all small businesses. Kumbaya, too.

But, from what I have heard elsewhere, and I hope that they are telling me the truth, cause I seem to believe it, is that it is going to crush businesses in this country.

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 3) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

This is only an example. Every public official... I wonder whether they are really telling me the truth. I cannot trust them, can I?

So if we really want to remain free throughout these worsening times, we have to learn to recognize the truth and cling to it for all we are worth, because that is the only thing we are going to have to hold on to as things get so much more tumultuous in the days ahead.

But we know where we have the truth. It does not matter how much politicians say, the truth is right here in our laps. God's word is truth.

The best thing we can do is to follow Jesus' advice there. We have been truly made free by the sacrifice of Christ and His continuing life as our High Priest. He set us free from sin, so we do not want to return to a life of slavery. If we have been set free by the Son, we are free indeed (verse 36).

Now notice again what He said in verse 35:

John 8:35 "And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.

A slave has no permanent place in God's house. But a Son does. We do not want to be a slave. We have to be a true child of God if we are to remain free. So, do not let sin bring you back into bondage. Remain free by doing everything to please God. This is what Paul said in Galatians 5. I do not want to end today without something for you to do.

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

So, he said basically what I just said. The Son has made you free, therefore do not go back to what the kind of life you lived before then, because that will get you back into bondage, and no slave will be in God's house—only Sons. So, maintain your liberty.

Galatians 5:13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Here is the thing that you do. There is a negative and a positive. Just like in the Days of Unleavened Bread, there is a negative and a positive. Do not eat leavening and do eat unleavened bread. So in like manner, you have the same type of choice here. Do not use your liberty as a cloak for vice, because really you are just fooling yourself. If you have these vices, and you keep going to your sins, you are a slave. You are not at liberty anymore. But what you can do is turn that around and use those energies for helping one another, serving one another—that is the fruit that pleases God and glorifies Him.

So, putting it another way, Paul tells us to get our thoughts and minds off ourselves and turn them around toward others. Show your love—outgoing concern—for your fellow Christians. Love one another. Serve one another. Is that not the new commandment that Jesus gave us all? Love one another.

It is also found in John 15, right after producing fruit.

Let us conclude today in Romans 8. I have already alluded to this once today.

Romans 8:18-21 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

It is not easy to maintain freedom. It often takes tremendous sacrifice and exhausting effort to remain at liberty. But once we have achieved the permanent liberty of the Kingdom of God, our present sufferings and agonies, as said above in verse 18, will fade into nothing in the glory of our eternal life with God.

So, maintain your Christian liberty at all costs.

It is worth it.