

# THE FREEDOM OF BONDAGE

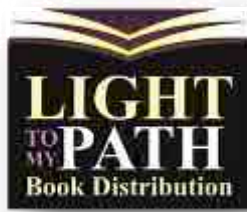


EXPERIENCING TRUE FREEDOM  
AS A SERVANT OF CHRIST

F. WAYNE MAC LEOD

# The Freedom of Bondage

*Experiencing True Freedom as a Servant of Christ*



**F. Wayne Mac Leod**

**Light To My Path Book Distribution**  
Sydney Mines, N.S. CANADA B1V 1Y5

## The Freedom of Bondage

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Special thanks to proof reader:  
Diane Mac Leod

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# Preface

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As modern people, we value freedom. Often the freedom we claim, however, holds us in bondage. Our freedom of speech has released a tidal wave of slander. Our freedom of religion has abolished prayers and Bible reading from schools. lest it be offensive to those of other religions. Our freedom of expression has produced a plague of immorality and confusion. By championing our rights and freedoms we have restricted ourselves.

What is true freedom? Can true freedom ever be experienced outside of submission to God and His purpose? Does freedom imply a release from all authority and the right to do as we please?

Scripture has some important things to say about true freedom. It shows us that the freedom God intended for us is found only in submission to Him and the purpose He has for our lives. The apostles boasted of being servants of Jesus because in this role of servanthood they found great delight and true freedom.

What we often consider to be freedom is actually a slavery to sin and the passions of the flesh. Christ offers us another way. The goal of this study is to expose what we call freedom for what it really is and to reveal the teachings of Scripture about true freedom in Christ. I trust it will be a blessing to you. - F. Wayne MacLeod



# Chapter 1-

## The Great Lie

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Some time ago I noticed a license plate on the front of a car that said: "He who dies with the most toys wins." In a nutshell, this statement captures the general philosophy of a materialistic society. Take everything you can get. Fill your life with pleasure and possessions because when you die, you won't be able to take them with you. In the end, the measure of success is based on how many toys you accumulate and how much fun you had playing with them.

In recent years, billions of dollars have been spent on finding ways to make our lives easier and more convenient. What North Americans spend on entertainment alone is staggering. While there is nothing wrong with modern conveniences, the fact remains that the god of materialism would have us believe that we are in this world to serve ourselves. Nothing should stand in our way. If we don't have the money, we can pay later. The moral principles our parents lived by are considered outdated. In our "enlightened and liberated" society, we believe we have been set free from these restraints. Immoral lifestyle and premarital sex are not only considered natural but, in some cases, are being promoted in our schools as legitimate alternatives to the traditional and Biblical values practiced by previous generations. We are led to believe that we can do



as we please as long as we don't hurt anyone in the process. Relativism prevails. "If it's good for you, then go for it," is the motto of our contemporary society.

Back in the Garden of Eden, Satan tempted Eve with the same philosophy (Genesis 3) As she stood before the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Satan led her to believe that she deserved more than she had and that there were things in life she had never experience and she was the poorer for it. Very subtly he told her that, if she was going to experience life to the full, she needed to cast off restraint and treat herself to the best that life had to offer. He led her to believe that living under the restrictions God had placed on her meant unnecessary bondage. To experience a better life, she needed to be freed from God's rules and regulations. True freedom, according to Satan, can only be experienced when we have liberty to do as we please, unrestrained by rules and regulations imposed upon us.

Very subtly this philosophy has been penetrating our ranks. Many people in our day see the Word of God and its principles as being outdated and irrelevant. As he did in the Garden of Eden, Satan has once again succeeded in causing many, even among God's people, to believe that the rules and restrictions of the Word of God bind and restrict us.

Satan has succeeded in causing many to believe the lie that he told Eve in the Garden. He would have us cast off restraint and live for ourselves. The result is devastating. Dishonesty, immorality, broken homes and hopelessness have been the result. Our pursuit of freedom has left us in bondage. It is not from restrictions we need to be set free; it is from ourselves.

## For Consideration:

- How has your society changed over the years? How has it wandered from the principles of God's Word?
- Is the Word of God intended to restrict us? What is the purpose of the Word of God?
- Can a society be truly free if it is not guided by the principles of God's Word? Explain.
- What lie did Satan tell Eve in the Garden of Eden? Do you know people today who believe this lie?
- What is the impact of materialism on a society? Will the accumulation of worldly goods and pleasures solve the problems of our society?

## For Prayer:

- Take a moment to ask the Lord to help you to see the lie of the enemy about the accumulation of pleasures and possessions.
- Ask God to give you contentment in what He has provided. If you have need, ask Him to provide what you need.
- Thank the Lord that He has given His Word as a guide in how we are to live.
- Ask God to help you to trust His Word and His purpose for your life.



# Chapter 2 - The Bondage of Unrestrained Freedom

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North Americans pride themselves in being free people. However, the very rights and freedoms that have been fought for have created a whole new set of problems. Our search for freedom has led us to greater bondage. Let me illustrate what I mean.

I remember the story of a teacher who threatened to discipline an unruly child if he did not behave. The child calmly reminded the teacher that she had no right to touch him. It used to be, when a child was disciplined in school for being bad, when he returned home, he would be disciplined again by his parents. Today, however, parents are more likely to call a lawyer. In recent years, what teacher has not hesitated to exercise discipline in the classroom for fear of legal action being taken against them? While these rules have been made to protect our children from abuses, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to maintain discipline in the modern classroom? Not only is this true in the classroom but also in the home. Legal cases are springing up across our nations related to the question of parental discipline of children. Parents themselves are hesitating to discipline their children for fear of being reported and brought to court.

The western world has always championed religious freedom. We pride ourselves in our tolerance of people of differing beliefs. Consider, however, where this freedom of religion has left us. In recent years, we have seen prayers abolished in schools for fear of being an offense to those of another faith. It is becoming increasingly difficult to bring our faith into the classrooms of our day. Christian organizations working with youth find themselves treading on thin ice when working with students in modern schools. The more neutral Santa Claus is replacing manger scenes at Christmas. Some municipalities have made Christmas manger scenes in a public place illegal. Often the only legitimate use of the name of the Lord in the workplace today is as a swear word.

Our free enterprise system has produced for us a "dog eat dog" society where the strong control the market at the expense of the weak. In recent years, banks have been encouraging the concept of financial freedom. Credit cards, loans and "buy now pay later" plans have thrown millions of people into debt. We are being encouraged to cast aside restraint and free ourselves from financial bondage. The result is that many people will go to the grave over their heads in debts they have no way of paying.

Our freedom of speech has unleashed a tidal wave of slander. Recent news stories have revealed the horrors of privacy invasion for a good story. In the name of freedom of expression, pornography has flooded the market place enslaving countless individuals and creating a whole new set of addictions. Our newfound sexual freedom, unhindered by Biblical principles, has produced for us a wave of sexually transmitted diseases and broken families. Sexual practices, once frowned upon, now are broadcast on prime-time television for our children to see. We are now

wrestling with the right of the woman to end the life of the child in her own womb.

With all our emphasis on rights and freedoms, are we really free? Never before have we seen a society so confused and disoriented. Where is all this freedom leading us? Is this what freedom is about?

There are two types of bondage in the world today. The first type of bondage happens when we are stripped of our basic freedoms and rights as human beings. We have seen the horrors of this type of bondage throughout history in times of war or under cruel dictatorships. Even our own North American history relates a time when slavery was the norm. In this form of bondage, the individual is dehumanized and treated like an object whose only purpose is to make life easier for someone else.

The second form of bondage is just as bad as the first. It comes about when we set no boundaries on freedom. This is the bondage that takes place when we give each person the right to do what seems right in his or her own eyes. We are experiencing in our modern society the bondage of unrestrained freedom. Satan tells us that we need to cast off restraint and be freed from the bondage of law. We have seen that this only leads to another even worse form of bondage. Freedom without restraint leads to chaos, anarchy and bondage.

I remember hearing the story of a school that took down the fence surrounding their schoolyard. Children who had felt free to run and play freely within a fenced in yard, no longer felt safe. The busy street beside the school became a threat. Is this not what has happened in our day? By removing regulations and safeguards we become vulnerable and more prone to attack. Without the fences that protect

us and keep us safe we feel threatened. Without the guidelines and boundaries, we no longer know where to turn. Our points of reference, now stripped from us, leave us in chaos and confusion.

True freedom comes when each person knows his or her limit and functions within those parameters. The Bible provides us the guidelines we need to understand how we should live. It gives us direction and purpose in life and reveals the purpose of our Creator for us. Only by submitting to that purpose can we experience the fullness and freedom for which we were created.

For Consideration:

- What happens to a society when everyone is free to do as he or she pleases?
- Why do we need guidelines in life? How do laws and regulations help us to function as a society?
- Is total freedom to do as we please ever a good thing? Explain.
- How can too much freedom hinder us and our society?
- Why do we need the Word of God? How does the Word of God give us greater peace and freedom in society?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to help you to see your need for the principles of His Word in your life.

- Thank the Lord that He has given His Word to guide us in what is best for us and our society.
- Ask God to help you to be more willing to sacrifice your rights for your brother or sister in Christ.
- Take a moment to consider the Lord Jesus who so willingly gave up His life for us. Ask God to enable you to follow His example.





## Chapter 3 - Created for God

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Have you ever found yourself lying on your back on a warm summer evening looking up at the stars in the sky and wondering why you were on this earth? What is the ultimate meaning and destiny of this world? Theologians and philosophers alike have debated these questions from the beginning of time. There has been, over the centuries, a wide range of answers to these all-important questions. These answers fall anywhere between nihilism, on the one hand, that says that life is meaningless, to the playboy mentality which says “we’re here for a good time.”

What is the meaning of life and why are we here on this earth? The Bible has some very definite answers to these questions. Consider, for example, the teaching of Paul in the book of Colossians:

16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (Colossians 1)

Notice what Paul is saying here. He is telling us that God created us for Himself. We have some friends who designed their own home. As they consulted with the carpenters and architects they created for themselves a home

that they would be comfortable living in. They had the choice of the size of rooms, how many rooms, the layout of these rooms, the type of fixtures and windows, where these windows and doors were going to be located and so on. They designed this home for themselves. Now they expect to be able to sit back and enjoy it. It was built with the express purpose of providing pleasure for its owners. Paul is telling us that this is the reason you and I were created. We were created for God and His pleasure.

The apostle goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 8:

5 For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”— 6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1 Corinthians 8)

Notice what the apostle is telling us here. He reminds us that it is only because of God that we exist. The writer to the Hebrews tells us the same thing when he writes:

10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. (Hebrews 2)

The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that we not only exist because of God but also for God – “for whom and by whom all things exist...” God created us for Himself. As the Creator, He, has the right to do this.

If you want to understand the meaning of life you need to look to God. He created us for Himself. Since we are created for God we will only find our greatest joy and satisfaction in Him. The great church father Augustine taught that since God created us for Himself our hearts will always be restless until they rest in Him.

Great are you, O Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise; your power is immense, and your wisdom beyond reckoning. And so, we men, who are a due part of your creation, long to praise you – we also carry our mortality about with us, carry the evidence of our sin and with it the proof that you thwart the proud. You arouse us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is inquiet until it rests in you.

*(From the Confessions of St. Augustine (Book I, Chapter 1) [http://www.piercedhearts.org/theology\\_heart/teaching\\_saints/hearts\\_restless\\_st\\_augustine.htm](http://www.piercedhearts.org/theology_heart/teaching_saints/hearts_restless_st_augustine.htm)*

The enemy would have us believe that we are here for ourselves. He challenges to drink our fill of life's cup, and spend our resources on ourselves. If there is anything left over at the end of a busy day and we feel like it, we may have time for God. Our hearts can have their fill of earthly possessions and freedoms and still be as barren as the desert. On the other hand, those whose hearts are full of God, though they have nothing in this world, they have all they desire.

We were created for God. True freedom to be everything I was created to be comes only when I understand that I was created not only by God but also for God.

## For Consideration:

- What does it mean to be created for God?
- Is it wrong for God to create us for Himself?
- Will there be any true satisfaction or freedom in life outside of the purpose for which God has created us?
- How does surrender to God and His purpose give us freedom?

## For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He created you for Himself? Take a moment to praise Him for the fact that He desires to have fellowship with us.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for questioning His purposes for your life. Thank Him that He knows what is best for us.
- Thank the Lord that there is security and true freedom to become everything He intended us to be in surrender to Him and His purpose.

# Chapter 4 - Created for Communion with God

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Human beings are the only part of creation said to be created in the image of God. There has been much debate over what this means. It seems, however, that one of the conditions of being created in the image of God is that we are given a soul that has an ability to communicate with our Creator and have a relationship with Him. We have both a physical and spiritual nature. This is what separates humans from animals.

By its very nature, the image of God requires that we live on a higher level of existence than the animals. Animals do not have the capacity to communicate or enter a relationship with their Creator. They live to satisfy their needs and instincts. Human beings, on the other hand, will never be truly satisfied or free living on this level of existence. Because we are also spiritual beings, there will always be a need for spiritual reality in our lives.

Very often, however, human beings live only at the level of the physical realm. Unconcerned about their Creator, they live like the animals around them, following their most basic needs and instincts. This lifestyle does not bring ultimate happiness and freedom. Life can be filled to overflowing with all this world offers, but never seem to bring

satisfaction. Instead, many are left feeling only emptiness. Like a mouse on a wheel, there is a constant forging ahead but never seeming to arrive at the destination. As we spin our wheel day after day, there is a voice deep down that keeps asking whether there might be something more to life than this small cage and wheel.

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, found himself on this treadmill. Listen to how he describes his experience.

3 I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. 4 I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. 5 I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. 6 I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. 7 I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. 8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man. 9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also, my wisdom remained with me. 10 And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. 11 Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind,

and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.  
(Ecclesiastes 2)

Can you sense Solomon's frustration here? Here was a man who had everything his heart could ever want, but he felt barren and empty in the end. Countless men and women after him have testified to the same experience.

What was Solomon's answer to the meaning of life? In the final chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes he challenges us to remember our Creator and fear Him. This, he says, is the conclusion of the whole matter.

13The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 14For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12)

After searching high and low and trying everything this world had to offer, Solomon concludes that true freedom and purpose in life is found in reverent obedience to the commands and purpose of God. Only in this context can we find true freedom. Solomon realized that true freedom was only found in an understanding that he was created in the image of God as a spiritual being with a unique capacity to know and commune with His Creator. This world with all its lusts and desires enslaves us like the mouse on the wheel. The treadmill of life can sap us of all our energy and strength, wasting hours and days, leaving us with nothing to show for it in the end. We need to be set free from this treadmill to live on a higher plain.

As one who has been created in the image of God, I have been called to enter the joy and freedom of communion



with my Creator. True freedom comes only when I understand that I was created with the capacity both to enjoy and commune with God. This world may temporarily satisfy my animal instincts, but it will never satisfy my spiritual hunger. Only a personal relationship with God can fill that void. If I am to experience true freedom it will only be by understanding that I was created in the image of God for communion with Him.

For Consideration:

- How are human beings different from animals? What is it that distinguishes us?
- Can human beings be truly content living at the same level as the animal –seeking only to please their physical nature and appetites?
- What lessons did Solomon learn when he sought to please his flesh, ignoring his soul?
- How does keeping the commandments of God and entering a relationship with Him give us freedom and purpose in life?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to forgive you for times when you lived only to please your flesh.
- Thank the Lord that He created you with a capacity to find true joy and freedom in a relationship with Him.

- Ask the Lord to give you a hunger for a deeper relationship with Him and the freedom that comes from walking in communion with Him.



# Chapter 5 -

## Chosen to Belong to God

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If we are to understand the nature of true freedom, we must do so in the context of why we were created. Maybe you have had the experience of trying to pound a nail with the sole of your shoe. A shoe was never intended to be used as a hammer. Imagine a carpenter trying to build a house using his shoe as a hammer. While he may have a certain measure of success, he will not experience true freedom as a carpenter until he discovers the hammer. What I am trying to say is this: If you want to understand true freedom to be everything you were intended to be, you must closely examine the reason you were created and live accordingly.

The apostle Paul makes a very important statement in Ephesians 1:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. (Ephesians 1)

Notice what Paul is saying here. He tells us that we were chosen before the creation of the world for a purpose. Even before the world existed, God had us in His mind.

Before we were conceived in our mother's womb, God had chosen us to be holy and blameless in His sight. What does it mean to be holy? A person who is holy is one who is set apart for God. What Paul is telling us is that we were set apart for God from the beginning of time. It was the intention of God, from before the creation of the world, to create for Himself a people who would belong to Him. We were created to be set apart for God.

Paul goes on to say in the next verse:

4... In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1)

The word "predestined" simply means "to determine beforehand" or to "ordain in advance." What this is saying very simply is that from the very beginning of time God determined that He would adopt us at the cost of his Son. This decision was made before we even knew Him. It was part of His great overall plan set up before the creation of the world.

There is another verse I want to look at in Ephesians 1. Verse 11 tells us:

11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1)

Paul again tells us that we were "predestined" or "chosen in advance" by a sovereign God who works out all things according to his own purposes. The God who works out all things for his purposes has a plan for us. That plan, says Paul, was that we might be for "the praise of His glory." In other words, that we might bring praise and honour to His holy name. This was why we were created.

In Romans 8:29 we read:

29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8)

Once again, we see that God had a purpose in mind for us. Paul tells us that we were predestined to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. In other words, God's intention for us was that we be like His Son Jesus Christ.

What I am trying to say here is that you and I were created with a very particular purpose in mind. We were created to be set apart for God. This was the intention of God from the beginning of time. When He created us, and brought us into this world, He did so, so that you and I could bring glory to His name. He knew exactly what He was doing. He created us with all that was necessary to accomplish His purposes in us. One thing is sure. If you are not actively pursuing the glory of God, you are living your life in a way it was never intended to be lived.

Satan will do his best to distract us from this purpose. He would delight to have us build our houses with shoes as hammers. It is quite understandable that there are so many people frustrated in their lives? You can't hammer too many nails with your shoes before beginning to wonder

if there is not a better way. You are free to build your house with your shoe, but you will never experience true freedom in doing so. True freedom only comes when we accept the purpose for which we were created and submit fully to that purpose. I will be free only when I accept that I was created to belong to God and submit to seeking His glory in my life.

For Consideration:

- Is it possible to live our lives in a way that they were never intended to be lived? Explain.
- Why were we created? What was the purpose of God for us from before creation?
- Can we find true freedom outside of the purpose for which we were created?
- Why do you suppose so many people try to live outside the purpose of God? How are they being deceived into thinking that they are free?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to show you if you are living as He intended. Ask Him to reveal His purpose for your life.
- Ask God to show you the joy and freedom of walking in obedience to Him and His purpose.
- Do you know someone who has been resisting God and His purpose? Take a moment to ask the Lord to open their eyes to the freedom of confessing their sin and walking in obedience.

# Chapter 6 - Freed from Sin, Self and the World

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It is no secret that Satan would have us drink our fill from the well of sin, self and the world. You do not have to look far to see that he has had a great measure of success in convincing many that their freedom lies in drinking deeply from this well. This was the essence of his temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden. We know where that has led us. Sin, self and the world have been the source of all our problems. Jesus, on the other hand, teaches that true freedom can only be found when we are set free from this evil trio to become everything we were created to be.

By His death on the cross, the Lord Jesus set us free from the grip of sin. As slaves to sin we were destined to an eternity of hell, separated from God. This evil master of sin still enslaves countless individuals today. Paul tells us in Romans 6: 6, 7:

6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. (Romans 6)



Those who have accepted Christ's sacrifice on their behalf can be freed from sin and its dreaded consequences. They have been freed to live as servants of Christ:

17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6)

Notice what the apostle tells us here. We are freed from sin and its eternal consequences but made slaves to righteousness. We are freed from one master and bound to another. The difference, however, between sin and righteousness is the freedom to become everything we were created to be. As slaves to righteousness we enter a relationship with our Creator and tap into the power and purpose He has for us. In that purpose alone can we experience true freedom.

Another member of this deadly trio that has enslaved us is "self". One of the greatest enemies that you and I must deal with daily is the temptation to pride and self-seeking. How many disagreements and arguments have been the results of this selfishness and self-seeking attitude? How many crimes have been motivated by a love for self or a gratification of the desires of the "self"? What would this world be like if we were free from self and self-seeking? Has "self" not been a real enemy to our marriages, friendships, and society? Speaking of the death of Jesus, Paul writes:

15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (2 Corinthians 5)

The reason Christ came to this earth was to set us free from "self" and the results of living for self in our society. He offers us a means of dying to self and all its evil desires. He invites us, by His death, to be renewed in our inner being. He promises to make us new people, who are no longer controlled by pride and selfish ambition but by His Spirit.

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5)

Imagine an army going to battle with each person only concerned for themselves and unwilling to sacrifice for anyone else. Imagine a sports team filled with individuals who were not concerned for the team as much as they were for their own glory. Society cannot survive with this kind of attitude. Entire societies have been destroyed by selfish ambition and pride. Countries have been devastated by this cruel slave master. We were not created to live for ourselves and our own desires alone. Self is a powerful taskmaster. It traps men and women in its deadly web, and once they are entrapped, it destroys them and their society. Jesus came to offer us freedom from self. He came to be our Master. He came to teach us the freedom of living for Him and His purpose instead of for ourselves. Only by being set free from self can we know the fullness of the life God intended for us.

The third member of this deadly trio is the world. Paul tells us in Galatians 1:4 that Jesus:

4 ... gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, (Galatians 1)

According to 2 Corinthians 4:4 the god of this age (Satan) has blinded the eyes of the unbeliever so that he or she cannot see the truth. We do not need to look very far to see how true this is. So many live their lives with no thought of God. Their only concern is for the things of this world. Their world is too small. For them, this world and what it offers is all there is. They live for the moment. They have no concept of eternity. All of us, at one point, were slaves to this thinking. We lived for this world and its possessions. Nothing else mattered. Jesus came to give us a higher objective. He came to set us free from the puny mindset of this age. He came to open our eyes to the reality of eternity and the power of His Spirit in and through us. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 16:26:

26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? (Matthew 16)

The pursuit of this world and its possessions is a futile effort. The day will come when each of us will stare death and eternity in the face and realise that nothing of this world lasts past the grave. The enemy has deceived many. There is much more to life than what we see here below. Jesus came to free us from the futility of living only for this world. He came to take us off the treadmill and set our feet on solid ground. He came to heal the blindness imposed upon us by the god of this age. True freedom comes only when we are set free from sin, self and the world. Jesus came to offer this freedom.

For Consideration:

- How has sin entrapped many people? What have been the results?

- What has a focus on self done to our society? What happens when we are freed from selfishness and pride?
- Have you met individuals whose life consists of living for this world alone? How does an understanding of the reality of eternity free us from this puny mindset?
- How does becoming a slave of righteousness give us greater freedom than being a slave of sin, self and the world?
- What temptation is there for the Christian to live in the old way of this world? Have you been freed from this?

#### For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord that He has set you free from sin, self and this world to live in the freedom of forgiveness, service and eternity.
- Take a moment to pray for those around you who have never been freed from sin, self and the world. Ask God to open their eyes to the freedom He offers when we become His children.
- Ask the Lord to help you to live in the freedom He has given you. Ask Him to help you to walk more and more in that freedom.



# Chapter 7 - Life Through Sacrifice

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The Christian life is a life of paradoxes. One of these contrasts is that if we want to live we must die to ourselves and our personal ambitions. True freedom comes by means of sacrifice and abandonment. Jesus put it this way:

38 And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10)

Who among us does not know that the things of greatest value often come through sacrifice and hardship?

If I want to experience life to the full, I must be willing to sacrifice what I consider to be mine. To find life I must first lose life. I must be willing to take up my cross daily and follow (as a servant) the Lord Jesus. When I get up in the morning I must be willing to pray as Jesus did:

42 "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." (Luke 22).

Could you pray that prayer each morning? Is it your intense desire to live your life for the Lord Jesus and for Him

alone? Are you willing to put aside your interests and desires to follow His agenda? Jesus tells us that true life and freedom can only spring from the soil of willing sacrifice and death to self, ambitions and desires.

Listen to what the Lord Jesus told His disciples in John 12:24:

24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12)

Life is produced through death. The seed planted in the ground must die if it is to produce life and yield fruit. Paul describes this experience in 2 Corinthians 4 when he said:

11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you. (2 Corinthians 4)

The sacrifices of the apostles produced life in the believers to whom they ministered. The secret to abundant life, according to Paul is to die to self so that Jesus might live through us. This process of dying to self is not just a one-time thing. We must pick up our cross daily. Each day and each moment we live we must be willing to abandon our own ideas and desires to submit to the will of God. As we surrender to Him, He fills us with His life and purpose. Paul understood this concept when he wrote to the Galatians:

20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2)

Paul experienced the life and empowerment of Christ as he surrendered to Him. Jesus tells us that He came to offer us life:

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (John 10)

The Greek word used for “abundantly” can be translated by the phrase “beyond measure.” The idea here is that Jesus came to offer us a life that is over and above the normal life, a life that is superior or surpassing all other lives. If I want to know this life, however, I must be willing to surrender to His Lordship. Why is it that many Christians do not experience the abundant life? Could it be that it is because they have not understood the fact that it can only be experienced in total surrender to Christ? All too many believers still have one foot in the world. They have never learned to die to self. They want Christ and the abundant life, but they do not want to give up the life they presently know. Jesus tells us that until the grain of wheat dies, it will not bear any fruit. Only when we die to sin, self, and the world can we experience what Christ meant by the abundant life. We are invited to enter the freedom and joy of abundant life in dying to ourselves. True freedom is experienced only in surrender to the Lord Jesus.

For Consideration:

- What is the difference between the secular world view and the teaching of Christ about living life to the full?



- How did the sacrifice of Christ produce life in us? How is this an example for us? How can we impart life and hope to others?
- What does it mean to be crucified with Christ?
- How does the sacrifice of ourselves and our ideas produce life and true freedom?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to free you from the secular mind-set about life and freedom. Ask Him to show you His purpose instead.
- Take a moment to consider how the sacrifice of Christ produced life and freedom in you. Ask Christ to enable you to live your life in such a way that your sacrifice gives hope and life to others through Him.
- Thank the Lord for the purpose and blessing He has given you as you have surrendered to Him.

# Chapter 8 -

## The Greatness of Service

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How do you measure greatness? Greatness in the world's eyes is often measured in terms of money, power and fame. Those who have an abundance are said to be great people. The more people they have serving them, the greater they feel.

Greatness in the eyes of Jesus, however, is very different. Jesus was asked on one occasion who He considered to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. I am not sure what the disciples thought His response would be, but I am quite convinced that the answer shocked them:

4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18)

11 The greatest among you shall be your servant.  
12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23)

Being a child-like servant is not our idea of greatness. We often see the role of servant in a negative light. In the world's eyes, true greatness can only come with worldly power, prestige and possessions. Jesus teaches us, however, that greatness has nothing to do with these things.

Judas, the disciple of Jesus, had a love for money. According to John 12:4-6, he oversaw the moneybox. When Mary anointed Jesus feet, Judas was upset at the expense of the perfume she so liberally poured out. John 12:6 tells us that Judas was a thief and saw in this perfume a means of enriching his own pocket. The day came when Judas had to make a choice. Would he serve Jesus or his love of money? For thirty pieces of silver, Judas broke free from his bondage to Christ. Would his newfound situation give him the freedom and purpose he longed for? Soon after this event, Judas discovered that life was not what he thought it would be. Overcome with grief, Judas took his own life.

Jesus told the story is told of a son who did not want to be bound to his father any longer. He longed for the freedom of living his own life. Armed with his rich inheritance, he set out for a foreign country. He gained a reputation with his great treasure. He met many new friends and enjoyed a life of pleasure and extravagance. Where did all this leave him in the end? He was barren and dry. He humbled himself and returned to his father begging him to accept him as a servant. He now knew that being a servant to his father was far better than all the wealth and greatness this world had to offer (Luke 15).

The Psalmist put it this way:

10 For a day in your courts is better  
than a thousand elsewhere.  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my  
God  
than dwell in the tents of wickedness. (Psalm 84)

The Psalmist came to the same conclusion as Judas and the prodigal son. Serving at the door of the house of God

as a lowly servant, was better than living in the rich courts of this world. Being a servant to the father was better than anything money and worldly pleasure could offer.

The apostles understood this when they boasted about being "bondservants" to Jesus Christ (see Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1; Jude 1). They were proud to be called "servants of Jesus." They wore this title as a badge of honour. In service of Jesus they had been set free from the bondage and barrenness of this world. To die for Him was better than to live for the world.

The experience of many individuals, who have come to faith in Jesus Christ, proves that only as servants to the will and purpose of God can we understand true freedom and greatness. Greatness is not found in the accumulation of riches and possessions but in service to the King of kings.

Those who live to accumulate the things of this world will only find themselves enslaved to those things. They will take nothing with them when they die, for death will strip them of everything they have worked to achieve. They will stand before God naked and ashamed. Jesus, on the other hand, calls us to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven:

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matthew 6)

All that this world offers is temporary. It is not to anyone's advantage to invest in something that will rust, be stolen or destroyed. Shall we look with envy on those whose

banks are filled with money they cannot take with them to the grave? Shall we long to be like those who fill themselves with all this world has to offer at the cost of their soul (Mark 8:36)? True greatness and freedom is not to be found in those who accumulate wealth and possessions to satisfy the lusts of the flesh, but in those who willingly surrender all to be true servants of the King of kings. In this alone is true greatness and freedom.

For Consideration:

- How is true greatness measured in the world? How is it measured in the Kingdom of God?
- Why is the accumulation of worldly goods a poor measure of true greatness?
- Can a servant be truly great? Consider how the apostles boasted in being servants of Jesus Christ?
- True greatness is measured more by our willingness to be a servant of Christ than in what we can accumulate on this earth? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to enable you to be a better servant?
- Ask the Lord to help you to see that while He has given you the things of this world for your enjoyment these things in themselves will never satisfy your soul.

- Take a moment to surrender what you have to the Lord. Ask Him to help you to fix your eyes on Him and His purpose for your life. Ask Him to show you how to use what He has given for His glory.
- Ask the Lord to set you free from the worldly concept of greatness. Ask Him to teach you what He meant when he said that the greatest among us would be a servant.



# Chapter 9 - The Freedom of Surrender

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While there may be many words that could summarise the Christian life, I would like to suggest that the word “surrender” very nicely summarises what it is all about. True freedom to become everything I am intended to be can only be realised through absolute surrender and abandonment to God.

We all like to hold on to our rights as human beings. I would like to suggest, however, that until we are willing to surrender our rights to the Lord Jesus, we will never know true freedom. Victory in the Christian life is only possible by means of surrender. We will never get very far in our own strength and will. Jesus used the illustration of the vine and the branches in John 15. He compared Himself to the vine and His people to the branches. The production of fruit is only possible when the branch is receiving its life from the vine. Imagine the branch saying: “I want my freedom; I think I will separate from the vine and do my own thing.” Separated from the vine, that branch will wither up and die. Only in staying connected on the vine and surrendering to the life of the vine is life and fruit possible. True freedom is not found in separation from the vine but in service to the vine. The sooner we learn to surrender to the Lord and



abide in Him, the sooner we will know the joy and freedom Christ has to offer.

Paul reminded the believers in Corinth that they did not have a right to our own body. Listen to what he told them in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20:

19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6)

When the Lord Jesus died for us on the cross, He rescued us from the tyranny of Satan and this world. He bought us for Himself at the cost of His life. This means that we no longer belong to ourselves. We belong to God—He has every right to our lives.

All too often however, we rebel against His lordship in our life. This only leads to anguish and grief. An infant is free when he is under the loving care of his or her parents. In his father's arms the child is free from hunger, danger, or anything that would harm him. Away from his parents that child is in danger. This is also true in our spiritual lives. In Christ, there is freedom from sin. In Christ, we are protected and kept. Apart from Him we are open targets. The cost of this freedom, however, is a complete and total surrender to Him.

The Bible tells us that when we come to Christ, we are to surrender our right to sin. There are those who claim the right to not forgive an enemy. Others claim the right to be bitter and envious. Still others want the right to lust or gossip. Probably the most imprisoned people I know are those who claim the right to hate their enemy. Paul tells us that,

as servants of the Lord Jesus, we are to surrender these rights to Him.

25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4)

Until we are willing to surrender our right to sin, we will never know true freedom. Our sinful attitudes and actions will only hold us captive.

Tradition, impure attitudes, immorality, pride, greed and any number of other cruel taskmasters have bound many men and women today and kept them from the experience of true freedom. Jesus demands a complete and total surrender of our rights to Him. In return He grants us freedom and release from the bondage our cruel taskmasters have caused.

In light of these facts, let me close with Paul's plea to the believers of Rome:

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12)

The challenge of the apostle Paul is clear. As believers, we are to present our bodies to the Lord as living sacrifices. This means that we die to ourselves and submit to God in all things. He is our Lord—we surrender to Him as His servants. We reject the ideals of this world and commit ourselves instead to God's ways. In this alone is true freedom.

In John 8, the Lord Jesus makes this important statement:

34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. (John 8)

Jesus would also say:

24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." (Matthew 6)

What do these two statements of Jesus tell us?

First, they tell us that to do as we please and ignore the purpose of God is to place ourselves under the control of sin— "everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin." The

concept of the freedom to do as I please is an illusion. In reality, I am submitting to the sinful desires of the flesh and allowing those desires to be lord and master of what I do. I am being controlled by sin.

Second, Jesus reminds us that we cannot serve two masters. If money, possessions, fleshly desires or anything else is controlling me, I cannot say that I have surrendered to Christ as my Lord. I have a decision to make. Either I will allow sin and fleshly desires to be lord or I will submit to Christ and His purpose for my life.

There are two masters in this life. We can choose to submit to sin and the flesh, or we can choose to submit to the Lord Jesus and His purpose for our lives. The reality of the matter is that we are not our own masters—we are servants. There are those who think that they are their own master, but they are merely servants to the sinful desires of their own flesh.

As servants, we have a decision to make. To whom will we submit. To submit to sin may satisfy the temporary desires of the flesh, but true freedom is not found in being a servant to these desires. True freedom can only be found in submitting ourselves unreservedly to our Creator and Saviour. In Him alone can we understand the reason for which we were created. In His purpose alone is freedom from sin and freedom to become all that we were intended to be. True freedom is not found in the absence of a master but in knowing the true Master.

## For Consideration:

- How can the Christian life be summarised by the word “surrender”? Has this been your experience?
- Consider the illustration Jesus used about the vine and the branches. Can the branch ever be free apart from the vine? How is this like the Christian life?
- Can we ever say that we are our own masters?
- How is sin a master? What does it mean to be a slave to sin?
- In this life, there are two masters –sin and Jesus Christ. Whose servant are you? What is the difference between being a servant of sin and being a servant of Christ?
- Can a servant, who has surrendered his or her rights, know true freedom?

## For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He is a loving and compassionate master.
- Do you know someone who is still under the control of sin? Take a moment to pray that the Lord would set them free.
- Ask the Lord to give you grace to surrender more to Him. Thank Him that in surrender to Him we experience greater freedom.

- Thank the Lord that He came to set us free from the power of Satan, sin and the world.



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