

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: October 4, 2009

Freedom: From and For

by Dan Trygg

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Galatians 5:13-26

We have been called to freedom. That declaration is part of the essence of the gospel message. Jesus, quoting Isa. 61, announced that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him to proclaim good news to the poor, release to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to send away in liberty the ones having been oppressed (Lk. 4:16-21). **A central part of the message preached about the coming of the Kingdom of God was that it would bring freedom.** The institution of the King's dominion in one's life, and in the world at large, would mean a radical liberation of things that were currently under bondage, oppression, and domination under the sin-permeated world system. Just as every aspect of life and human interrelationships were affected by the consequences of Adam's and Eve's sin, in a similar way **the coming of the King's dominion** (His Lordship in your life) **would bring an upheaval of the old oppressive order and a radical transformation of every aspect of life and every human relationship.**

The Spirit of the Lord is called the Spirit of liberty, in that He is the one who will give life and ability to enable us to be transformed from our fallen, sinful, self-centered selves to become like Jesus in character and maturity (II Cor. 3:5-18). *He will enable us to radiate the more-than-human glory of the God who indwells us.* This is seen in the unconquerable joy, the identifying-empathy and compassion, the sacrificial and persevering love, and the acts of kindness and goodness which are expressed from the Spirit-inspired heart (II Cor. 3,4; cf. Jn. 1:14; Acts 10:38; Jn. 14:12; 17:18). The Mosaic Law had been unable to deliver the Jews who had attempted to live by it in the hope of becoming righteous. **The inability of the Law came through the weakness of our flesh, and the deceitful, rebellious nature of the sin which dwells within our members** (Rom. 7:7-8:3). Through Jesus, we have been liberated from even these limitations, if we learn to walk hand-in-hand with the indwelling Spirit. As Paul declared to the Pisidians, on his first missionary journey, "Therefore, let it be known to you, brothers and sisters, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and **through [Jesus] everyone who believes** (ongoingly) **is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses**" (Acts 13:38,39; cf. Jn. 8:34-36).

What are we freed from?

The dominion of darkness (Col. 1:13);

the penalty and dominating power of sin (Col. 2:13,14; Rom. 6:1-14);

the jurisdiction of the Law (Rom. 7:1-6);

bondage to the flesh, with its deceitful, self-seeking, sensual appetites (Col. 2:9-12; Gal. 5:24);

a slavish repetition of the futile ways of life which were given to us by our parents and families (I Pet. 1:18; cf. Ex. 34:6,7);

alienation from God (II Cor. 5:18-21; cf. Eph. 4:17-24),

to name just a few areas where freedom has removed bondage and barriers from our lives.

What are we freed for? It is vital to notice that **whenever the Scriptures talk of our freedom, there is always a freedom from something, and a freedom for something**, which is indicated by the context. For example:

We are delivered *from* the domain of darkness and *transferred to* the Kingdom of light, the Kingdom of God's beloved Son. Thus, our obligation, allegiance, and service are transferred *to* Him.

Our freedom *from* the penalty and power of sin in our lives frees us so that we can "count ourselves dead to sin *and alive to God* in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11). The consequence of this transfer of allegiance and service is that "therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting your

members to sin, as instruments of unrighteousness; but *present yourselves to God* as those alive from the dead, and your members (body parts) as instruments of righteousness *to God*" (Rom. 6:12,13; 12:1).

"We were made *to die to the Law*" (and its jurisdiction), so that we "*might be joined to Another*, to Him who was raised from the dead, *so that we might bear fruit for God*" (Rom. 7:4).

We "have been *released from the Law*, ...so that we *might serve* in the newness of the Spirit..." (Rom. 7:6).

Then, as the passage from Galatians 5, above, indicates, we have been *set free from the flesh so that we might walk in partnership and obedience to the Spirit*.

Our freedom purchased by Christ is not here so that we can use it as a license for sin, without fear of reprisal from God (cf. I Pet. 2:16). Rather, it has been purchased *so that* we could give ourselves without hindrance to serving the Spirit of God.

Finally, we have not been *redeemed from* bondage to the old scripting given to us by our parents and families so that we would still live it out, or create our own sinful adaptation to it. No! We were *set free* from that bondage *so that we could be renewed* in our minds *and learn to walk out a healthy, God-honoring way of living* our lives (Rom. 12:2; I Pet. 1:14,15; 2:12,16; 4:1-5).

In each example of freedom *from* something, there is also an expectation of a freedom *for* something else.

How do we experience freedom? What we find in Col. 3 is that **there must be a process of rejecting, or "putting off" of old practices and attitudes, and of "putting on" a new mind and new attitudes and behaviors.** The same teaching is stated by Paul in Eph. 4:22-24, with applications made in the following verses. Here, **he delineates three ideas:**

(1.) Put aside old ways of living;

(2.) Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, indicating not only a momentary reorientation or repentance of the mind, but also an *ongoing mental learning process* (cf. 5:10);

(3.) Put on the new person, with the corresponding godly attitudes and behaviors.

There is *choice* involved at each of these stages. **Freedom is not going to be experienced if we do not *choose* to leave the old master**, i.e., if we do not *choose* to put aside the old ways of living, or *choose* to learn new ways to live.

Paul's listing of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 is not given to us simply for our mental interest or curiosity. **These are attitudes and behaviors that Paul is telling us we should not tolerate in ourselves.** We should put them off. When we see ourselves having given in to these, we *cannot justify* our behavior, or think it won't matter. **These behaviors and attitudes are symptoms of where we are living.** They are the expressions of a mind and heart given over to the flesh, to sin. **If I do not repent** (call it what God calls it, and agree that it is wrong), **and put it off by rejecting it as a legitimate behavior for me as a servant of Christ, then my life will remain caught in the fleshly-orientation.** In truth, I *have been* set free with Christ, but *I continue to give myself to serve my old master*, Sin, in this area. What benefit is Christ to me, in any practical way in my life, at that moment? This keeps me rooted and locked into the world's way of living life, and, consequently, obscures from my awareness how I could live differently, and keeps my spiritual development (intimacy with God, responsiveness to God, growth in Christlikeness) at a near standstill. **If I want to grow spiritually, if I want to experience the freedom that God purchased for me in Jesus, then I cannot afford to be molycoddling my favorite sins.** There is a spiritual darkness, and a spiritual laziness, that settles in when we allow sin to go unaddressed in our lives. **While we are playing with sin, we also shut down the flow of the Spirit in our lives**, and, consequently, we miss out also on the excitement and joy of seeing God's working within us.

Sin is a barrier to the Kingdom. We see in Gal. 5:17 the inner struggle that there is over issues of obedience in our lives. **Either way we go, in obedience to God, or in obedience to the flesh, we will experience some kind of opposition.** This struggle is especially intense in new areas of growth. Do not view the struggle as defeat. It is a sign of the Life that is within you. **The struggle indicates that the Spirit is at work. The victory will not come without your partnership with Him, however.** Just as you find it difficult to obey God, at times, you will also find the Spirit will prick your conscience about your sin. What is important to see, however, is that **those who indulge in the works of the flesh will find their access to the Kingdom of God diminished.** I do not think Paul's intent here is to warn about losing salvation. I think it is more about *gaining access to the power and joy of the Kingdom* in the here and now. Do you want to be used powerfully by God? Do you want to have a relationship of intimacy with Him? Well, **you can't be intimate with God if you continually choose to not hear what He says**, nor can He use you mightily if you do not make your life available to Him in the everyday things. **If you want to experience the intimacy, freedom and power of the Kingdom, then you must freely, unreservedly give yourself to the King.**