



“Let Freedom Ring!”

Kevin Presley

I want to talk with you today about freedom. It’s a subject many of us hold very dear. It’s a wonderful thing that we shouldn’t take for granted. There have been billions of people in the history of Earth and billions even right now who don’t know what it means to enjoy freedom. Many have lived their lives under the shadow of tyranny, slavery, fear, and hopelessness. The thought of gaining the freedom to pursue one’s dreams and live to their potential is little more than a dream to them. We who possess that kind of freedom should be thankful for it and not abuse it or take it for granted.

I’m very thankful to be an American; not because Americans are any better or more worthwhile than other people on the face of the earth, for we are not. But I am thankful to have lived my life so far with the freedom to live, work, think, and speak according to my own conscience. When many of us see the flag waving in her glory or we see the July 4th twilight sky ablaze with fireworks and celebration, we’re reminded of the privilege of living in a free country. All of this could easily be gone tomorrow.

But there is a freedom that I hold even more dear and treasure much more. Regardless of where I might live or the type of government that I must be subject to, it is a freedom that no one can take away.

John 8:31-36 “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

Today I want us to think about the greatest declaration of independence ever signed, the greatest liberation to ever take place in the history of humanity. Our lesson is entitled *Let Freedom Ring!*

It was in 1831 when the United States was yet a young nation that Samuel Francis Smith, a young seminary student, wrote the poem that became one of America's early de facto national anthems. We know it well:

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From ev'ry mountainside
Let freedom ring!

The third verse perhaps captures the theme of the song best:

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees
Sweet freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake;
Let all that breathe partake;
Let rocks their silence break,
The sound prolong.

The song's desire was obviously that the freedom America represented would spread across the earth and around the globe. Throughout the history of mankind, oppressed peoples have dreamed and yearned for freedom from oppression, from subjugation, and from suffering. Even in Jesus' time, the Jews were not a sovereign and free people; they were subject to Caesar and had been a subjugated people to one Empire or another for hundreds and hundreds of years. They falsely hoped for a messiah to come and free them once and for all from political bondage. Jesus was indeed their Messiah, and He came to liberate His people, but the freedom He brought was not the freedom they sought. As we read in our text, Jesus told the Jews, "**And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free**" (verse 32). But they objected to that.

John 8:33 "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"

Their reply was absurd on its face. It was ridiculous and a clear case of delusion or being in a state of denial to claim that they had never been in bondage. They became a nation by being delivered from bondage out of Egypt. They had been in bondage to Babylon. They had been slaves to Assyria. They had been subjugated by Herod the Great. At this very time, they were complaining about being under the rule of Rome and hoping the Messiah would come and liberate them, giving them back their sovereignty. So, it's almost laughable for them to suggest to Jesus that they had NEVER been in bondage.

But, you know, there are many people who deny that THEY are in bondage today even though they are. They're either oblivious or in delusional denial of the power that holds them enslaved. Jesus explains to them what that is:

John 8:34-36 "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

You see, every sinner is a slave and in bondage, sold under sin, a subject in Satan's kingdom of darkness. Many people believe they're too good to ever be described as a citizen of Satan's kingdom, but that's how Jesus describes them. If you're living in sin today, that's how the Lord describes YOU. But He also says, ***If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*** In other words, the greatest freedom you and I can ever attain is the kind of freedom that Jesus brought.

Many people are unaware of the chains that bind them and of the freedom that Christ can bring. The freedom that Christ offers is not political freedom. So, what did Christ come to make us free from? The Bible says that Christ came to free us from the law of sin and death, for one thing.

Romans 8:1-2 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

In other words, Christ has liberated God's people from something that only brought death and condemnation. What is this *law of sin and death* that Paul refers to? It's certainly true that any unforgiven sin results in death; you can always associate death with sin. But Paul has something much more specific in view here in this place. In fact, we must go back to the previous chapter to see what he really means. In **Romans 7**, Paul makes a powerful argument for the fact that Christians have been freed from the law of Moses so they might be married to Christ. He says in **verses 1-6** that just as it takes death to break the marriage bond in the case of a man and woman, so Christ died that we might be freed from the law to be joined unto Christ. If we are to be obligated to keep the Mosaic law, and seek to be justified by Christ at the same time, Paul equates that with spiritual adultery:

Romans 7:4-6 "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

What is the law he is talking about? When the apostle Paul uses the term *law* and it's preceded by the definite article *the*, you can generally understand that he is talking about a specific law. He's not talking about any kind of restraint in the life of God's people, but specifically the law of Moses. We know that's the case in this passage because of **verse 7**.

Romans 7:7 "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

Paul says that that same law taught him *thou shalt not covet*. Well, that's the Mosaic law, beginning with the Ten Commandments. So, why does he refer to the law of Moses with terms like *the oldness of the letter* (**verse 6**) and *the commandment unto death* (**verse 10**) and as something which killed or *slew him* (**verse 11**)? Is it because the law was bad or evil itself? No, not at all. Look at **verse 12**.

Romans 7:12 "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

What then was the problem? The problem was that Paul couldn't keep it, and neither could anyone else except the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul portrays himself as a Jew trying to be justified by keeping Moses' law

who finds himself perpetually frustrated and in a hopeless state of condemnation. By that illustration, he is showing them the futility of trying to be justified by one's own works apart from faith in Jesus Christ. You see, that law demanded perfection. Justification could only come through that law itself by perfectly keeping the law of Moses and no one ever, save Christ, perfectly kept it. All fell short of it. Had Jesus never come and fulfilled that law and freed us from it, no one would've ever been saved under it. That's why Paul calls it *the law of sin and death* (**Romans 8:2**). All who lived under it were condemned by it as sinners because of their inability to keep it.

Romans 7:14 “...but I am carnal, sold under sin.”

That doesn't refer to a Christian, you see. It refers to him as a Jew trying to keep the Mosaic code and by extension to those who try to be saved by their own effort and goodness even today. Paul says it cannot be done. He says in **verse 21** that under that law, *evil is present with me* and in **verse 23** he is *in captivity to the law of sin*. So, you can see the state of slavery in which man was held as long as he was living under that law. He was shackled by sin and he never could find freedom. But Jesus came to bring freedom.

Romans 7:24 “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

No Christian can say that, for the Christian HAS been delivered. The Christian is not subject to that law that brought sin and death. The Christian is free from it. But in the next stroke of his pen, Paul says:

Romans 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...”

You see, the law—as good as it was, as intended for the good of man as it was, as holy as it was—was a yoke of bondage because man could never unerringly keep it. So, it pointed forward to Jesus who would provide a sacrifice and finally provide liberation and freedom from the yoke of sin.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that God does not have a law for His people today. And don't pervert the grace of God and think that man is not required to obey the commandments of Jesus and His apostles today. God forbid! But under the law of Christ, we can know liberty. His yoke is easy and His burden is light, but the Christian is not unrestrained and free to do, act, think, and worship as he or she pleases. Not at all.

Hebrews 5:9 “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;”

John 14:15 “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

Mark 16:16 “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;”

But no longer must one try to justify himself through his own goodness or his own works or perfection because it simply cannot be done. Judaizing false teachers were troubling the church at Galatia, trying to take the Christians there back to the law of Moses and the rite of physical old covenant circumcision and Paul urgently pleads with them and sternly warns them.

Galatians 5:1 “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Friend, you may not be trying to keep the Old Testament law, but are you deceived into thinking that your moral goodness, your good deeds, even your religious works are enough to earn you approval in the eyes of God? You can never earn approval in the eyes of God. I can never earn God's favor or approval. The very definition of grace is *unmerited favor, undeserved favor*. Do you think you don't need Christ or to obey His gospel? That you don't need to be in His church? A subject in His kingdom? That your kindness and charity are enough to somehow merit His favor? Friend, you are deceived as millions of people are. You are in bondage trying to earn God's favor by your goodness and works.

Jesus came to set you free from that slavery because as hard as you work and as good as you try to be, you'll never pay off the debt. You'll eternally drown in sin's debt. But Jesus paid the debt in full on Calvary. When you commit your life in believing, trusting, obedient faith to Him, then you can have the promise of salvation and there is the certainty of everlasting life. He who the Son makes free is free indeed.

Perhaps today, you are enslaved by sin. Its shackles are holding you tight.

Proverbs 5:22 "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins."

If you're not serving Jesus today, you are the servant of sin. That's the simple fact of the matter. You are the servant of the devil. You may not like to think about it in that way, but if you're not giving Jesus your life and doing His will, you are doing the will of the devil. You are doing the devil's bidding day by day. There is no such thing as being free to yourself. The fact is you are a servant—either of Christ or of the devil.

Romans 6:16 "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

Jesus came to break sin's awful fetters. You can be the servant of righteousness as opposed to the slave of sin. Jesus came to release you from sin's debt and its slavery. He came to free you from sin's sinister hold on your heart and your life. Long ago when the Jews of old would let their inheritance slip away, they would have to sell their land or offer themselves as slaves to pay a debt. But every fiftieth year at the day of atonement, the call would go out and a year of jubilee was declared. That was to be a wonderful time for those people because the land was to revert back to its rightful owner and the indentured servant was to be set free. Things were restored to the way they were in the beginning. You might say it was a national reset in the land of Israel when jubilee came.

There's a great New Testament theme in that. Jesus brought the everlasting year of jubilee. Those who have been baptized into Him and therefore know the forgiveness of sins know freedom from sin and its slavery and debt. When Jesus began His ministry, you may recall that He went to the synagogue in Nazareth. He stood up and opened the scroll of Isaiah.

Luke 4:17-21 "And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them

that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

He offers you freedom today—regardless of where you may live or what political system you may be living under today. I may be talking to people around the world through the internet today who are living under oppressive regimes and very difficult circumstances. Regardless of your circumstance in this short, fleeting life, Jesus came to give you the greatest liberty that any person can ever receive: freedom from sin, condemnation, fear, failure, and hopelessness. That’s the freedom for which all should yearn, if we haven’t already obtained it.

In New York harbor, a lady stands tall today with a torch in her hand giving out light. Inscribed on the pedestal where she stands are these words:

GIVE ME YOUR TIRED, YOUR POOR, YOUR HUDDLED MASSES YEARNING TO BREATHE FREE, THE WRETCHED REFUSE OF YOUR TEEMING SHORE, SEND THESE, THE HOMELESS, TEMPEST-TOST TO ME, I LIFT MY LAMP BESIDE THE GOLDEN DOOR!”

On her head is a crown with seven spikes representing seven seas and seven continents. It says that no matter where you are in the world, you can come to America with your burdens, your oppression, and your problems because Lady Liberty is holding a torch to light your way. Then at the bottom of her feet is a chain that has been broken. People by the millions held hostage by one situation or another in life have come to that place through the years to find freedom.

God is holding an even better promise of freedom to those who are looking to escape the bondage of sin. He welcomes all to come and bring your problems, burdens, and needs. You see, His word lights the way.

Haldor Lillenas wrote this wonderful hymn so many years ago:

Once I was bound by sin’s galling fetters,
Chained like a slave, I struggled in vain;
But I received a glorious freedom,
When Jesus broke my fetters in twain.

Freedom from all the carnal affections,
Freedom from envy, hatred and strife;
Freedom from vain and worldly ambitions,
Freedom from all that saddened my life.

Freedom from pride and all sinful follies,
Freedom from love and glitter of gold;
Freedom from evil, temper, and anger,
Glorious freedom, rapture untold.

Freedom from fear with all of its torments,
Freedom from care with all of its pain;

Freedom in Christ, my blessed Redeemer,
He who has rent my fetters in twain.

Glorious freedom, wonderful freedom,
No more in chains of sin I repine!
Jesus the glorious Emancipator,
Now and forever He shall be mine.

Jesus can be YOUR Emancipator today. He paid the debt with His blood. He came to break the chains of sin.

Romans 6:16-18 “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”

What Paul is saying is that when they obeyed the likeness of the doctrine, the likeness of the gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—when in faith and repentance they were lowered beneath the baptismal wave, the blood of Jesus Christ washed their sins away.

Romans 6:3-4 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

They were buried with Him in baptism, dying to sin. The old man and all of his lusts, desires, and his nature dying and a new man coming forth to walk in newness of life. Free from sin, liberated from sin. Yes, my friend, let freedom ring today. From heart to heart, from home to home, from shore to shore, and from continent to continent. If they take my freedom away today as an American, I still have my freedom in Jesus. I still have the hope of eternal life. That is a freedom no one can take away. It's really the only freedom that I'm very concerned about at the end of the day. I hope that kind of freedom will ring in your heart right now and that you'll come to Christ and claim it in gospel obedience today.

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