

Slave or Free

John 8:31-36

Introduction

Most every singer has a signature song, one they're known for, one you could call "their song." For the late Davy Jones of the Monkees, it was *I Wanna Be Free*. In the song, the fellow wants to love a girl and have the girl love him, but there's a catch. He doesn't want to feel tied down by that love. This really isn't love at all. Love is a relationship and relationships have ties. The better and stronger the relationship, the stronger the tie. But if you love that person, the bondage doesn't seem like bondage at all. That being said, we all have a desire for freedom of some sort. We don't like the feeling of being tied down. We wanna be free.

Unseen Slavery

The truth is, we are all slaves but sometimes, we don't even see our slavery. The Jews Jesus was talking to didn't. They said, "*We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?*" (**John 8:33**). Had they forgotten the 420 years in Egypt? What about when they were taken into exile by the Babylonians for 70 years? Were they blind to their current situation under Roman rule? Sometimes, we fail to recognize our situation as being enslaved. We work long hours at a job we don't even like so we can have fine things and go places. We've become slaves to things and pleasure. We might sacrifice our life for a principle. We sacrifice everything for our children, but because we love them, we don't see it as slavery.

Slaves to Sin

We are slaves to sin. We're born into it and we continue in it. It dominates our life, even if we don't notice it. After all, we're not that bad. Sometimes, we think if we are good enough that will be fine. We keep score, as if good deeds can outweigh the bad. The problem is, we can't stop sinning. Even if our good deeds would pay the price for our sins (which they don't), we could never get caught up. It's like trying to pay off a credit card by paying the monthly minimum payment while still using it. The debt just keeps growing. Paul finds himself in this state (Read **Romans 7:21-24**). What is the answer?

Set Free by the Son

That was the problem Martin Luther had. As an Augustinian monk, he was faithful to do all the penance, prayers, rosaries, pilgrimages, indulgences, and anything else he thought he could do to earn forgiveness, but it was never enough. He always felt like God wasn't satisfied with him. While studying **Romans 1:17**, *For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith"*, Luther realized that the righteousness of God mentioned here is not the active righteousness of God which we can never hope to attain, but the passive righteousness He freely gives by grace to those who believe. *The Son had set him free and he was free indeed!*

Willing Slaves

When our boys were in FFA, they had a Slave Auction each year to raise money for their annual convention. Folks from the community would come to the high school for a porkchop dinner. After dinner, the students would go up on the “auction block” one at a time to be bid on by the local farmers. The winning bidder would get that student for a day to work on their farm. They still have the auction, but I’m not sure what they call it now. “Slave” is too politically charged to use. We’ve lost sight that there are two forms of slavery—enforced and willing. Many of the slaves in Jesus’ day had sold themselves into slavery because it was their only chance to survive. That’s the kind of slave the FFA student was.

The Truth of the Gospel

Just how free are we when God sets us free from sin? (Read **Romans 6:15-18**). We become willing slaves of God, like the FFA students became willing slaves of the farmer with the winning bid. But this slavery is better than any freedom. This is the servitude and submission of a son or daughter. We freely submit to God because He is our loving heavenly Father who cares for us, feeds us, clothes us, defends us, and preserves us. This is all accomplished for Christ’s sake. When we hear the **WORD** or receive the **SACRAMENT**, we are reminded of our status as children of God. We see that it is no longer a question of being **SLAVE OR FREE**, but we are **FREED TO BE SLAVES**, slaves of righteousness.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
