

Maranatha Mirror Missive



INNER FREEDOM

The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened and every one's fetters were unfastened.

Acts 16:22-26

The miracle in this passage is not the earthquake ... the earthquake was a minor thing compared with the fact that Paul and Silas, with their feet in the stocks, locked up in the inner prison, are still free men. And they can sing, pray, and they can give God glory

... outwardly bound, inwardly free.

Not to take anything away from being free on the outside. It's a wonderful thing to be free on the outside. Those of us who have never experienced tyranny cannot fully appreciate how wonderful it is not to have to live behind walls and bars, barbed wire and locked doors.

But it's even more wonderful to be free on the inside. Many a person who is outwardly free is inwardly bound. Outwardly they can go wherever they like. They can choose any one of a thousand roads. But inwardly their hearts, their wills, are so imprisoned in self, so chained to their fears, or their guilt, or their vanity, that no matter where they go outwardly...

they are still imprisoned inwardly.

Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make

you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to any one. How is it that you say, 'You will be made free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not continue in the house for ever; the son continues forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed....."

John 8:31-36

Jesus is talking about the inner slavery to sin that makes us prisoners, no matter how much scope we have in the external world.

And he's talking about an inner freedom from sin which makes us sons and daughters of the living God with direct access to heaven inwardly, no matter how limited our external world may be.

Outwardly Jesus lived a very limited life.

- On the Sabbath he was in the synagogue.
- On the high holy days he was in the temple.
- He was soaked in scripture.
- He spent time in prayer.
- He went about doing his work.

..... and that was it.

Jesus never traveled all over the Roman world as Paul did ... he hardly passed beyond the boundaries of Israel in his whole life time. Jesus wasn't as spectacular as John the Baptist ... his dress was ordinary and his life style was dull by comparison with John's.

But if we look closely...

we see Jesus doing things which reveal that he has inner freedom
such as had never been seen before on this earth.

- This devout man eats with tax collectors and sinners
... an unheard of thing.
- He breaks the Sabbath by all known standards.

- He touches lepers who are unclean and untouchable.

Jesus does what he chooses to do from an inner freedom, regardless of who's going to be upset, or what it will cost him in consequences.

By the power of this inner freedom Jesus starts setting others free from sin, from sickness, from demons, from death.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Luke 4:18

Jesus accomplished these things from the spring of inner freedom.

- Freely he chose to do his Father's will.
- Freely he redeemed the lost sheep of Israel and of the world.
- Freely he laid down his life for those sheep.

And the life which Jesus purchased for us by laying down his life ...
the life he gives to us by sending the Holy Spirit upon us ...

what other word can describe it but freedom? ... **inner freedom.**

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

II Corinthians 3:12-18

The veil over the mind is an inward thing ...
an inner blindness to

the presence
the reality
the splendor of God

And as long as that veil hangs over our minds we are in bondage to sin and self. And the removal of the veil is an inward thing ...

inwardly the veil is removed, inwardly we taste divine freedom.

...as with unveiled face we behold the glory of the Lord and are changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another.

But this inner freedom, which comes to us through the blood of the Lamb and the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit, is always in jeopardy. As long as we are in this body of flesh and blood there are forces at work which would take it from us and bring us back into bondage.

And the greatest enemy of this inner freedom is not the pagan world out there, but the religious world with its a spirit of religious intimidation.

Here's a man who's been walking around with a troubled conscience for years. Then one day on his lunch hour one of his friends leads him to the Lord. It's like fifty tons are lifted from his heart.

For the first time in his life he's a free man.

He goes home after work kisses his wife and hugs his children. And for about three months the man's a dream to live with.

But, as time passes his brothers and sisters begin to convey to this man the do's and don'ts of being a "Christian." Now on top of his wonderful fellowship with Jesus is laid a system of taboos. Separation from the world is defined in terms of external things ... a certain kind of music is good and another kind of music is bad. Commitment to the Lord now means,

- so many meetings per week,
- so much time in scriptures,
- so many hours in prayer,
- getting out there and ministering to others.

Good helpful practical disciplines, *if they come from the heart.*

But if they are **imposed** from outside *they can be death.*

So the man begins to bog down under the weight of all the rules. Once again he staggers under a troubled conscience ... drained by the tension between trying to satisfy the demands of his new Christian life and trying to meet the needs of his wife and children which seem to him to be something separate and apart. He rarely smiles at home any more. He can't seem to relax and be a friend to his children, "when there's a world out there to be evangelized."

One night after the kids are in bed his wife says to him, "You know, you were five times easier to live with before you became a Christian than you are now."

And instead of listening to the cry of her heart,
the man interprets it as persecution.

"Just as the Lord said, 'A man's enemies will be those of his own house.'"

That woman isn't persecuting him, she's trying to tell her husband that the freedom he had when he first became a believer is gone. Now his heart is more rigid and tight and hard than ever.

How can we keep this from happening to us?

- If we stand fast in the inner freedom Christ has given us,
- If we keep our eyes on him inwardly,
- If we continue allowing him to rule and guide us inwardly by his word

... then we will be spared the bondage of religious legalism.

Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to any one.

How is it that you say, 'You will be made free'?"

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John 8:31-36

And to be free indeed is to be free within. As we behold him with unveiled face and continue in his word the Son makes us and keeps us free within.

1. We need to let Jesus *keep* freeing us inwardly from guilt.

If we keep open to him inwardly Jesus comes into the sanctuary of our inmost heart as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek and sprinkles the mercy seat with his own blood.

Our guilt comes out and mingles with his blood and dissipates.

- It's atoned for.
- It's gone. --We're free!

Who but the Lord himself can keep our hearts clean?

2. We need to let Jesus *keep* setting us free inwardly from our predisposition to sin.

He gives us the Holy Spirit to dwell within.

And when the Spirit dwells within, he is not passive, but like a mighty rushing wind he tears apart those chains which once held us prisoner to sin.

Before it was, ...

the good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that I do.

But now,

***For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus
has set me free from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law,
weakened by the flesh, could not do; sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful
flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement
of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh,
but according to the Spirit.***

***For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh,
but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the
Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death,
but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.***

Romans 8:2-6

Now we are inwardly free to set the mind on the Spirit.

- We can live by the Spirit,
- We can be led by the Spirit.

And where the Spirit is there is freedom to do God's will of mercy.

3. We need to let Jesus *keep* setting us free inwardly from the works of religious flesh.

"God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterous, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get."

Nothing. wrong with fasting or tithing if it comes from the heart. But when our acts of piety and self restraint are only an external shell with nothing inside, they are works of religious flesh. Jesus comes to us and says,

"Do you love me?"

“Then do it for me.

Not for appearance.

Not to impress or appease anybody ... just for me"

Feed my sheep

Tend my lambs

Give for alms such things as are within and behold all things are clean for you and you'll be free from legalism.

4. We need to let Jesus *keep* setting us free inwardly from the bondage of circumstances.

Paul and Silas were in prison.

- Their feet were in the stocks.
- Their bones hurt and their muscles ached.
- The blood was caking on their backs from the lash wounds,

but they could still sing and pray and give God glory.

When we realize that we've been crucified with Christ it's no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us, the life we live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us.

Then we can sing and pray and give God glory in the worst of circumstances.

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

II Corinthians 3:17-18

And to be changed into his likeness is to be brought into his freedom,
his freedom ...

inner freedom that freely does the Lord's will
and freely lays down its life for others.

May the Lord bring us into this freedom today and keep us in it
– forever.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You promised to release the captives and to set at liberty the oppressed. We cry out to you because we are inwardly bound, imprisoned to self, to fear, to guilt and to our vanity. Lord remove the veil that separates us from your presence, your reality and your splendor. When this veil is removed we know that we will have divine freedom. We know that the door to this freedom is to *keep* letting you do your work. May we keep letting you free us from guilt by allowing you into our inmost heart. May we keep letting you free us from sin because your spirit gives us the freedom to be agents of your mercy. And Merciful Lord, set us free from religious works. May the good we do, be because we love you from the depths of our hearts. And Lord, may we keep letting you free us from the bondage of our circumstances. May we exalt in you, no matter what the circumstances. Dear Holy, Lord, thank you for this gift of inner freedom, this honor of being liberated as we are changed into your likeness. May you keep us in it, forever. Amen.

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