



How to Be Free

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It seems as though one of the major topics of any "movement," whether political, social or whatever, is freedom. We repeatedly hear the cries for "freedom of choice," "freedom from social tradition," and the like. One begins to wonder if these people even realize what true freedom is or if they realize what the world is actually enslaved to. In Romans 6:16, Paul made it clear that each individual is by choice a servant to one of two masters. We are each either servants "of sin unto death," or "obedience unto righteousness." Of course, the freedom we should all fervently seek is freedom from sin. When we have been freed from the wicked grip of sin, then, we have found the only true freedom that exists. In the same context that Paul spoke of all being servants to either sin or obedience, he gave the route of freedom.

"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" (Romans 6:17,18).

Paul here gives a threefold plan to be free. To be free, one must . . .

Obey

Paul said they were servants of sin, "but ye have obeyed." Though many object to the preaching of obedience and cry "legalism" every time they hear it, it is a basic tenet of New Testament teaching. Christ is the "author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him," (Hebrews 5:9). Christ himself said that those who would be saved were the ones who did his Father's will (Matthew 7:21). He pointed out the hypocrisy and futility of calling him "Lord, Lord," yet not doing the things that He said (Luke 6:46). Yes, though many may object, if we are to be free from sin we must obey. The obedience required though is more than mere mechanical actions. Thus we must . . .

Obey From the Heart

The very problem that the prophet Isaiah addressed in Isaiah 1:10 and following and many other passages was "mechanical obedience." Though Judah was offering sacrifices (verse 11), observing the holy days and seasons (verse 13), and feasts (verse 14), it was to the Lord as "vain oblations" (verse 13). No, it is not enough for us to simply obey if such obedience is not prompted by a desire of the heart. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). It is no wonder that the Lord emphasized so much the condition of the heart, the basis for obedience. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). We then come to the last step. Though there are many who have sincerely obeyed, sadly there is a multitude who are being led astray to obey the wrong thing. Paul said freedom came when one sincerely obeyed . . .

That Form of Doctrine Which Was Delivered You

Paul was here speaking of that divine message that he and all inspired men proclaimed. It is the same message that Christ spoke of as "my commandments" (John 14:15), "the will of my Father" (Matthew 7:21), and "thy word" (John 17:17). Contrary to what many are teaching today, it is knowable (John 8:32) and is the basis for unity in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:10). Many modern "preachers" have apparently failed or refused to see the singularity and simplicity of this divine message for they preach of "sincerity" and "unity in diversity" instead of sincere obedience to "that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Romans 6:17). Sadly, many will find out that sincere obedience to the wrong doctrine will avail nothing in the day of judgment.

What is it then that God has given us in His word to obey? His commands are plain. If we are to be free we must obey from the heart what He has said concerning:

Faith: "Without faith it is impossible to please Him . . ." (Hebrews 11:6).

Repentance: "God . . . commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

Confession: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus . . . thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Baptism: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

Faithful Living: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

Do you want to be free? Do you want to experience true freedom? Paul by inspiration said the way to find it was sincere obedience to the word of God.

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