

# True Freedom

By Steve Pruitt

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*

2 Corinthians 3:17 (ESV)

When I began my worship leading days I heard the above passage of scripture interpreted in the following way: Wherever and whenever the Spirit of God is manifest we have freedom to express our worship in whatever manner we choose. We are free to worship! And we are free to use whatever spiritual gifts are available to us.

Of course this interpretation totally misses the context of the verse. Paul is speaking of the removing of the veil by which one is blinded who continues in the old covenant. When a person comes to Christ the veil is taken away and there is freedom to behold the glory of the Lord and be transformed by it (2 Corinthians 3:16-18).

So, why is freedom so important? Why and from what do we need to be set free? Before the foundation of the world the Almighty God looked down through the tunnel of time and this is what he saw: . . . *as it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.* (Romans 3:10-18 ESV) Many years before Paul King David wrote, *God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all fallen away; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.* (Psalms 53:2-3 ESV)

What God didn't see was a human race with free will to choose between good and evil. He saw a human race bound by the chains of sin and enslaved by a nature that was totally bent toward evil with no capacity (freedom) to make a righteous choice (1 Corinthians 2:14; Titus 3:3); who were by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3). God didn't see men with free will he saw slaves, for whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved (2 Peter 2:19). And the intentions of man's heart were and are evil from his youth (Genesis 8:21) leaving man incapable of choosing to be free in and of himself. Man neither could not nor cannot by his own free will choose to set himself free (Romans 8:7).

God not only saw a sin enslaved human race he saw a spiritually dead human race. For man is not only a slave with no free will, apart from Christ he is morally dead in trespasses and sins and a follower of Satan. *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.* Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV) A dead man has no free will; he can neither make a choice nor give himself life.

It takes a sovereign act of God's mercy and grace to make a man spiritually alive. *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive** together with Christ—by grace you have been saved. . . .* Ephesians 2:4-5 (ESV) *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **God made alive** together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.* Colossians 2:13-14 (ESV)

So, before the foundation of the world God foreknew (Gr. *proginosko*) a son (1 Peter 1:20); a perfect representation of himself (Colossians 1:15). God did not look down through the tunnel of time and see a man who would one day live a perfect life and be perfectly obedient to him and

then choose him as his son based on what that man would one day accomplish. God did not choose Jesus to be his son because Jesus was the best human or even because he knew Jesus would be. NO! God had a relationship with his son before the world was made. Jesus was a beloved son before he was born (John 17:5, 24).

Another thing God didn't see before the foundation of the world was a group of people who would one day choose him and then decide to call them his sons based on their decision to choose him (Romans 3:10). What God did see was a group of people that he would foreknow (Gr. *proginosko*), predestine to set his love upon and call to be his own (Romans 8:29-30); a group of people with which he chose to have a relationship before they were born (Galatians 1:15).

Had God not chosen a people for himself (Ephesians 1:1-12; 1 Peter 2:9), none would have ever chosen God (John 6:44, 65; 15:16; Romans 9:14-16). It is God who puts his laws into the mind of man and writes them on his heart and makes them his people (Hebrews 8:10). It is God who gives a new heart to man and takes the heart of stone and makes it a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). It is God who qualifies men to share in the inheritance of the saints (Colossians 1:12). It is God who shows mercy and brings forth man apart from human will (Romans 9:16; James 1:18). It is God who makes man willing to choose to be free and causes him to be born again (John 1:12-13; 1 Peter 1:3). And God accomplishes all of this through his son. As the son said, *All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.* (Matthew 11:27 ESV)

God foreknew a plan before the foundation of the world that through his son many would be set free from the yoke of slavery (Acts 4:26-28). And in due time God sent his son into the world (Romans 5:6) in the form of man (John 1:14) with a mission to set every man free who believes in the son (John 3:36) and to bring those who believe to God (1 Peter 3:18).

The son, Jesus, made these declarations about himself: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to **proclaim liberty to the captives** and recovering of sight to the blind, to **set at liberty** those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.* (Luke 4:18-19 ESV) *I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* (John 14:6 ESV) Furthermore, Jesus told the Jews who had believed him, *If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.* (John 8:31-32 ESV)

Jesus claimed to be the truth, John declared him to be the Word (John 1:1, 14), so to know the truth is to know Jesus and to abide in his word is to abide in him. To know him and abide in him is true freedom because it is for freedom that Christ sets free all who believe in him (Galatians 5:1). And if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:36). For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2 ESV)

What is the ultimate goal of our freedom? *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, **to the praise of his glorious grace**, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.* Ephesians 1:3-6 (ESV)

*In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be **to the praise of his glory**. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, **to the praise of his glory**.* Ephesians 1:11-14 (ESV)

The ultimate goal of our freedom is the praise of God's glorious grace. It's not so much that God has set us free to worship, but in setting us free He displays the glory of his grace; a grace that he sovereignly chose to lavish on us.

That's why we praise him!

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