



Freedom Leviticus 14; John 8:31–59; Song of Solomon 7:1–4

“Even though I know it’s wrong, I sometimes think, ‘If I hadn’t accepted Christ, I would have so much more freedom.’ And then I venture down that road and realize just how terrible it is. It takes me to a very dark place.” This deep, heart-wrenching statement by a friend made me realize there are countless people who probably feel this way about Jesus. And what if, unlike my friend, they hadn’t figured out the latter part of this statement? They were probably walking a road closer to legalism than the road Christ envisions for our lives. Or they could be so far from actually experiencing grace and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that they have yet to see how incredible a life lived for Jesus can be.

Jesus promises freedom: “Then Jesus said to those Jews who had believed him, ‘If you continue 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). What we often gloss over in this passage, though, is that Jesus is speaking to believers. If you haven’t begun to fully trust in Jesus, the thought that He gives us freedom is difficult to understand. Someone could ask, “Isn’t He creating a system that forces us to live a certain way?” The answer is no: Jesus is setting up what will be a natural response to His grace.

The context of this verse also makes me wonder if someone who hasn’t yet truly sacrificed for Jesus, beyond just a simple tithe, would fathom what freedom with Him looks like. The Jews Jesus is addressing would have already been experiencing some sort of social ostracism for their belief in Him—they would have understood that sacrifice brings spiritual freedom.

This concept isn't easy to grasp, but in the simplest terms possible, Jesus frees us from religious systems and gives us the Spirit to empower us to do His work. This Spirit guides us and asks us to make sacrifices for Him, but those sacrifices are minimal compared to the eternal life He gave us through the sacrifice of His life. These sacrifices don't become a system with Christ, but something we strive to do because we want to. That's the freedom of the Spirit.

Have you experienced freedom in Christ? How can you seek the Spirit's presence so you can experience more freedom?

JOHN D. BARRY





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