

## BEING SET FREE

The events in Eastern Europe that started unfolding in the last half of 1989 which involved a transition from the domination of communism center on a deep basic desire of people everywhere and that is the need to be free. Most people will tolerate pretty sorry conditions as long as they have some freedom of choice and many would rather have difficulties and struggles with the right to decide what they will do and how they will do it as opposed to no problems and no choices. There have been two major battles fought on the North American Continent -- the American Revolution and the Civil War -- and both these were battles for human freedom.

It is a paradox that the idea of Freedom and Liberty can become enslaving if we fail to recognize the need for love and responsibility to go along with freedom. For example, if a person insists on his freedom to drive but does not act responsibly by exercising care by refraining from drinking, then he has let the idea of freedom become a dominating force in his life rather than an environment in which to thrive. Many women in today's society are clamoring for freedom to "have control over their bodies" by taking the life of their own unborn child as a convenience. This kind of freedom enslaves the possessor rather than liberates. Others claim freedom to ruin their lives with narcotics without realizing that they have responsibility to contribute to society and not be a burden on it. These are freedoms that are based on a lie and are not real freedoms but are counterfeit and they enslave. This is typical of evil that is sometimes so appealing and yet the appealing part is just the bait in the trap that captures and enslaves.

Jesus recognized that freedoms which are not based on the right premise are deceptive and are not freedoms indeed.

**JOHN 8:31-32** Jesus has created several strong links in this statement. He has tied His word to the truth and the truth to freedom. In this statement, Jesus has also given the qualification for a true disciple of His. To whom was Jesus talking? [To those Jews which believed on Him.] They believed His claim to be the Messiah; however, they did not commit themselves to Jesus. Simply believing that Jesus is who He said He is, is not enough. Unless there is commitment, obedience and trust (saving faith), then there is little that has happened other than mental exercise. One of the elements of commitment is to "continue in His word." This is not just reading the Bible but involves living according to the teachings of Jesus. In living according to the teaching of Jesus as a consistent lifestyle, we will prove the truth of what He taught. When we see the truth in actual experiences, then we will be free of the powerful drives that motivate so much of the world to get ahead at all costs, to look out only for themselves, and to show so little concern for anyone else. Going the second mile, turning the other cheek, and giving to anyone who ask you won't seems so far-fetched when we have the kind of freedom that Jesus is talking about. This is the kind of freedom that transcends this world and relieves us from the domination of sin that lead to death and we, consequently, have eternal life.

**JOHN 8:33-41** The Jews were offended when Jesus told them that they could be made free. They thought they were free already. This would be like someone coming to preach at our church and telling everyone that they aren't saved and that they should put their trust in Jesus and be born again. We would be incensed at the suggestion. The Israelites were not the only descendants of Abraham. You remember Ishmael. The Israelites were descendants of Isaac who was born of the true wife (Sarah) and not of the slave girl (Hagar); therefore, they were not in bondage, but free. This is what they meant by their statement. It does not refer to the 400 years that their forefathers spent in Egypt (part of the time in slavery) nor does it refer to the 70 years in Babylonian captivity. But Jesus is

talking about a different kind of freedom, He is talking about spiritual freedom. To emphasize the difference, He proclaims a significant truth. When you see "Verily, verily" this is a signal that a profound truth is going to follow. This profound truth that He gave them was this: "Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin." A clearer translation of this would be "Whoever goes on doing sin is in bondage (or is a slave) to sin." Jesus then returned to their point about Abraham and reminded them of the consequences of being a slave. There was no permanent home for the slave in the house of father Abraham. The implication is that in the house of God the Father there is no place for slaves to sin. However, there is a place for those who have the status of sons. What does this require? Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans (8:14): "They who are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." It is Jesus' action in dying for us that sets us free so that we can be led by the Spirit. This is true freedom--free indeed. Jesus agreed with them that they were physical descendants of Abraham but would not agree they had inherited the faith that Abraham had. He could tell they had murder in their hearts -- they wanted to kill Him because of the truth that He had just shared with them. A person's actions and attitudes are indicative of his descendency. Jesus spoke the truth in love and this indicated that He was of God. The Jews hated and plotted murder and this indicated that they were of the devil. If they were of the same spirit of Abraham, then they would do the works of Abraham. The Jews were not winning this debate and so they reverted to personal attacks. Their statement that they were not born of fornication may have been a reference to the questions that surrounded Jesus' birth. They then made the assertion that God was their spiritual Father in answer to the statement that Jesus made that He did the works of His Father (God) and they did the works of their father (the devil).

**JOHN 8:42-47** The Jews were going to lose this debate, also. The same argument applies to having God as our Father as to having Abraham as our father in the spiritual sense. Jesus pointed out that if God were their Father, then they would love Him (Jesus) because He came from God. However, because they were in bondage to sin could not help doing the desires of the devil. They were so much in bondage that they could not even recognize the truth of what Jesus was telling them. Jesus tried to use logic with them and get them to consider the entire witness that He presented. Would they have any reason to not believe Him? Had any of them ever seen Him do anything that was wrong? Their problem was that they had not repented and turned to God. A person has to quit resisting God and turn back toward Him if he is ever going to experience salvation. In the parable of Prodigal Son, he came to himself and headed back toward home. Continuing to run away from God just puts a person further into bondage to sin and further away from being set free.