

FREE INDEED

By John Richardson

SCRIPTURE

John 8:31–36

[31] So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, [32] and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” [33] They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’” [34] Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. [35] The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. [36] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

OBSERVATION

The beginning of the chapter unfolds Jesus as the Messiah, who came to die and take away the sins of those who believed. At the close of Jesus’ message, some believed His words. This passage of scripture is addressed to those who believed Jesus.

- Abiding in the Word for the new believers meant immersing themselves in the Word and obeying Jesus’ commandments. The test of validity of their faith was connected to their continued pursuit of Christ, in His Word and on His path. Many evangelical churches have created a finish line at verse 30, “you believe Jesus, now you are saved.” The finish line for believers is written at the end of their lives, seeing that they have believed and faithfully followed Christ, through understanding and obeying His Word. When churches move the finish line, they are comprised of people who rarely read God’s Word or chase after Christ. The goal becomes coming to church and giving money (both are necessary) but becoming a fully devoted follower of Christ is moved off the table. This shift has the church filled with many false confessors and few faithful followers (v. 31).
- Freedom is something that Americans hold near and dear. Americans are not alone in desiring freedom; here the Jews also valued their freedom, though they were not actually free in that Israel had been under slavery in Egypt and Babylon, just to name a few. Where the Jews were focused on physical freedom, Jesus was focused on spiritual freedom (see 2 Peter 2). Everyone (everyone) who makes a practice of sin is a slave of sin. The slaves of sins will not remain in the house, they will be cast out. The son, heir to the house/family, will remain forever in the house. The contrast allows every reader to examine their hearts: are they slaves of sin, with no concern for the Word and presence of God, or are they sons (vv. 32–35)?

- Jesus balances the idea of freedom based on who He has released from sin. The actions of pursuing God through His Word and obedience is a response to being set free by Christ. One cannot move from slave to son by their own efforts; they must be declared free/son by Jesus. Every person who has been set free by Christ desires to follow Him, even in the hard seasons of life. Every person who continues in sin, never repenting, is enslaved to their sin. The members of God's house (the church) must do more than affirm historical facts, they must continue to have relationship with Christ that involves knowing Him through prayer and the Word (v. 36)

OBEDIENCE

If you have been set free by Christ, you can turn from your sin and follow Him. No matter how deep-seated the sin, Christ has given you the power to wrestle with it and overcome. Overcoming sin may or may not be instantaneous, but it will always flow from the grace of Christ.

- Spend time asking yourself if you have continued in relationship with Christ beyond just affirming that He is Savior. Though Christ is the Savior, if that is all we know about Him, after years, then maybe it's time to press into your relationship with Him.
- Measure the totality of your walk with Christ: are you following Him every day or had a one-time encounter? How have you walked through life with Christ?
- Wage war against your sin. If you are a follower of Christ, you have been given power to overcome sin. Of what sin do you need to repent today?

PRAYER

Ask God to open your eyes to your sin. Thank God for salvation and the fact that you do not have to remain in sin. Pray to God over those around you who are not followers of Christ.