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Heavenly Father, please help us now to hear what you are saying to us. Please speak to our hearts through your Holy Spirit. Please guide my words to say whatever it is you would have me to say to your children. In Jesus' name, amen. So today I am going to be talking about freedom. And I came up with the idea, the talk on freedom, like a week ago. And then yesterday my dad texted me and he said, "Matt, did you know that it's Pulpit Freedom Sunday?" And I said, "No, I had no idea." Pulpit Freedom Sunday is a day where churches around the country celebrate the fact that in America we are free up here at the pulpit, that I can say whatever I want. That if I wanted to say, you know, vote for that guy, not for that guy, that I have the freedom to do that because of the country living in the separation of church and state. And there are a lot of other churches today that are celebrating that. But that's not what I'm talking about. That's a great freedom and I'm so happy we have that freedom. But that's not the freedom we're talking about today. Today we're talking about the freedoms that we have in Christ Jesus. I'm going to start by reading John 8, 34 through 36. This is Jesus speaking. I tell you the truth. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now, a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed. And then we're flipping over to Romans eight. Verses one and two. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus, the law of the spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. The type of freedom we're talking about today is freedom from sin, freedom from the law and freedom from all these other things that that we were in bondage to that Jesus has given us freedom to. And I was thinking about coming up here today with my face painted like Braveheart. Because it's like, you know, second to last week, what are you going to do? But then I realized that that's a 20 year old movie and I need to get out more. So here is 1995. It makes me feel old. So anyway, it's freedom from sin, freedom from the law. I started the reason that I got on this subject is because I have, you know, I have a new job. I've been preparing to transition out because Keith is coming in and I got my first paycheck and I started thinking, oh, we'd be thinking about tithing and stuff like that. And so I started researching on tithing and that kind of stuff. And I found some very interesting stuff. And I said, God, please don't make me speak on tithing. I asked last second to last week because, yeah, that's the kind of sermon that gets you in trouble. But we what I was reading was about how tithing that there's this the concept of tithing is a is an Old Testament. It is a it is something from the law. It is something that the God gave to the Jews and had these very specific prescribed things. Here is how you tithe. Here's who tithes. Here's what and when and how you tithe. And the the website that I was reading this article on was pointing out, he's like, you know, all of those really specific detailed laws and stuff, those aren't in the New Testament. Those aren't there for Christians. There is commands to give and be generous to Christians, but that whole nitpicky concept of tithing that's in the law is no longer there because we have freedom from the law. As we just read in in in John, when the sun sets you free, you are free indeed. Before Christ, the Bible says that we are slaves of sin. And when I read that verse and I think when other people have read that verse, they get this idea in their head. And and it's not it's not an entirely accurate idea. And I've heard some bad teaching on the subject. The this this wrong idea that people tend to get is that when you are a slave of sin, that you are somehow this mindless robot who had who cannot do anything good. You have no choice but to sin. You are just like an evil machine. And I know too many people who aren't Christian, but who try to be good people to know that that's not how it works. People without Christ aren't just mindless, evil, sin committing machines. Sin being in slavery to sin does not mean you don't have free will. But it does mean that sin is your master. What that means is that sin, sin owns you, basically. Sin has the right to do whatever it wants to you. Sin has the right to punish you. Sin has the right to pay you your wages. And as we all know, the wages of sin is death. Romans six twenty three. When when you were a slave to sin, you are just you are trapped by it and it doesn't necessarily control your every movement like your. Like I said, like a robot, but but it has say over your life. Sin has power. Sin had power and authority in your life before Christ. Now, when you came to Jesus, when you were placed in Christ. Your wages, they they still existed, but instead of belonging to you, the wages of sin, they were now transferred to the cross. You see, when you become a Christian, it's not that your slate gets wiped clean, it's that you hand your filthy slate to Jesus and he hands you his clean one. And now we stand before God with a clean slate that is not our own. It is the slate of Jesus. It is the life he lived. It is his righteousness that allows us to approach God and to be set free from sin. Second Peter one one is one of the many places that talks about how we have the righteousness of Christ. Our righteousness, we weren't able to be righteous on our own. And so the righteousness of Christ was credited to us. And so. It's that's what it means to be a slave of sin and then to to come into Christ is that. And as I'm sure many people here can attest that when you came to Christ, when you put your faith in him, you know, switch, flicked and suddenly you were like this mindless robot who only did good things and you never got tempted. Obviously, we all as Christians know that that's not the case either. Slavery to sin and freedom from sin in neither case means you have lost your free will. But it talks about who your master is and and what that master is is giving to you. Sin is it your master is giving you death. Christ, if he is your master, gives you life. And that kind of leads me to my next important point is that sin is only no longer your master if Christ is your master. And that sounds a little counterintuitive. I said, man, I thought you're talking about freedom today, but now you're saying we're slaves to Christ. Yes, but bear with me. Our freedom comes from slavery to Christ. And we've talked about we were just talking about underground railroad and slavery is bad and and and all that. But when you were created, you were created in the image of God, but you were created lower than God and you were created aware that you are lower than God. Every human being knows in their heart that there are higher forces in the universe. Now, people acknowledge what those higher powers are. Some people say it's, you know, God and angel and spiritual stuff. Some people say the higher power is nature. And we've seen some cultures that worship nature these days. Most most people on the street you ask will say that the higher power is science and they wouldn't say I worship science, but they trust in and believe in science and use science as the source of everything they hope for. They rely on science when things start to go crazy. So so everyone, even if they say they don't believe in God, believes in a higher power, whether it's science or nature or the spiritual or something. That's because we were created to be. Beneath something greater, we were created to be. Plugged into something greater than us. Romans six versus 16 through 18. Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey, whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death or to obedience, which leads to righteousness. But thanks be to God that though you used to be slaves of sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. This this concept of slavery, what it's talking about is we all have a source that we plug into that we rely upon for our lives. And although that that's those might look like a great big buffet table of different things that you rely on, the things that are your source, the truth of the matter is it's God and sin. And no matter what else, these other things are, if they take the place of God in your life, it is idolatry and it is sin. For example, some people. Rely on reputation. They are so concerned about what people think of them, that people think highly of them. You know, for some people, it's like entertainment and they want to be a kind of Mr. popular center of attention. For some people, it's academic. They want to be the smart guy in the room, but they work so hard and they will do anything to maintain reputation to them. Reputation is their idol. It is their source. It is what they have submitted themselves to. For other people, it's relationships. They think, oh, this person is my perfect someone. And if I could just have that person and we're together, everything would be perfect and wonderful and they will do anything and say anything to be in that relationship, to be with that person. Other people, it's success. It's about the accumulation of wealth and titles. And stuff. And for other people, it's feelings and highs and emotions. That's the source of of how they live their lives. They they go from one good time to the next. They're constantly calling up their friends, saying we need to hang out. They constantly have music playing in the background because they can't stand being alone in the quiet. That's the reason that all of our restaurants have TVs nowadays, because there always has to be entertainment and noise and something going on. There has to be that rush and that high. And you can tell when people are submitted to these these idols, these false sources, you can tell when people are have enslaved themselves to these things when you take these things away from them because it devastates them. It destroys them. Someone who has hinged everything on his reputation, if you risk, if you damage his reputation, he will lash out in anger and if he can't defend himself, it will just destroy him. Someone who has put everything into a relationship, if that relationship ends, they are just destroyed. Because they have been using a person as their source rather than relying on God. For someone who has been plugged into success as their idol, they have submitted themselves as a slave to success. They will, you know, they will throw away their family. They will throw away everything. They won't care about anything else. But when that success is taken from them, when they lose their job, when they lose their money or when their stuff is stolen or broken or whatever, it destroys them. How can they do that to my stuff? How can they do that to my job? And it just is destroyed. So that's what it means when it talks about slavery to Christ. I'm telling you, slavery to Christ is freedom from all of those other things, all of those false sources, all of those things will never satisfy and they will only bring you death. But in Christ, in slavery to Christ, you find true freedom. When you when you allow Christ to be your master, when you are enslaved to him and to righteousness. Then you find suddenly that you are whole and complete. You are everything you were created to be and you are complete. And and so when it comes to matters of reputation, you can go hang out with the weirdos and the gross people and the stuff that people say, how can you hang out with people like that? What's that going to do to your reputation? You say. Reputation, I'm I'm complete, I'm whole in Christ Jesus. I don't have to worry about my reputation anymore. I can go down with, you know, the scum of the earth and and I can mingle among them just like Jesus came and mingled among us. It wasn't about reputation for him. When it comes to relationships. When it comes to relationships. You can be single on your 35th birthday. And you can be OK. And even though people will come to you and say, I got to find you that girlfriend and we got to get you married and how can you how can you live single like that? And and don't you know, oh, man, if you only knew what you were missing and everything and. I'm complete and I'm perfect and I'm whole. And if God chooses someday to bless me with a wife and praise God, I'm sure it'll be a wonderful, beautiful thing because it's from him. But I'm not going to be all tore up and destroyed. Because I am complete in Christ. When you are in Christ. Success doesn't matter when you're in Christ, people will say, oh, if you would just move to that town and take that job, you could be making six and seven figures. And, you know, you just you just have to leave Indiana and and go out to Silicon Valley and how can you stay there and take a job making so much less than what you're worth? Because because it's not about success, it's not about the Benjamins, it's not about how much money I'm making. It's I'm complete in Christ. And so I can find his will and his purpose for me and not have to worry about whether I'm achieving the highest income. And then finally, when you're complete in Christ, you can sit still in silence. You don't constantly need noise and input and friends and entertainment. And. Chemicals, you can just sit and enjoy the presence of God's Holy Spirit. God gives us when God and says God gives us freedom from sin, it's freedom from all of this, all of these pursuits. That just eat people up and just destroy their lives. That's what freedom from sin is, and it is found in slavery to Christ. It is found when you make Christ the head of your life, when you plug into him as the source and you find your completeness and your perfection in him. And then we find that we are free from outcomes. God, God. Has good, it says, and I wish I looked at this verse ahead of time, it says that before the foundation of the world, he has prepared good works for us to do. He doesn't just want us being hippies sitting around feeling good. He has good things for us to do. He's got stuff for us to accomplish. But he says, you be faithful and leave the outcome to me. This is something actually when I was at Carmel Junior High, I started there in sixth grade and we had a teacher come in and explain to us, you are responsible to your friends, not for your friends. What he meant by that was you are responsible how you treat your friends, you're responsible to them, but you're not responsible for them. You don't have to get in trouble if they make bad choices. And that's what this idea kind of brings to mind. We are responsible to God, but not for God. And the first time that that thought popped in my head, I thought, wait, is that heresy? Can I say that? Yes. We are responsible to God. He says he's given us this book and said, here's how you should live. I want you. I hold you responsible to this, what I've revealed here, but we are not responsible for him. He is responsible for himself. We are responsible to him. We are responsible to be faithful to what he's called us to. But we're not supposed to ever get caught up and worried and frustrated about the outcomes. As long as we are walking the path, he's told us to walk. We trust the outcomes into his hand. And that's something we talked about two weeks ago about no longer being a church that worries, but instead being a church that steps out in faith and enjoy of doing the love and the service that he's called us to. And one final point I want to make is that in Christ, we don't have freedom from temptation. Which I think is something that some people have falsely taught, but we do have freedom from hopeless temptation. As it says in 1 Corinthians 10, 13. No temptation has seized you except what is common to man and God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. So temptation is going to come. It's not it's not God that tempts us, but in this life, temptation comes. But when it happens, God does not let you be tempted to a point where you can't handle it and you have to give in to sin. He provides you a way out. I think a great description of of the situation that we're that we face is 2 Corinthians 4 starting in eight. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down, but not destroyed. We are in Christ. When we are plugged into him, we are not crushed, we are not destroyed, we are not abandoned. There will still be pressure. There will still be perplexion. There's a persecution. But God will get us through. We're going to have our time of open worship now. And I want you to think about. Is there anything in your life that if it were to be threatened? Money, relationship, success, whatever, if someone were to take that away from you, would it destroy you? Would it just break you down? If so, then that might be an idol that you need to say, God, I repent of that. And if the Holy Spirit searches your heart and you don't find anything, then just take this time to enjoy the beautiful presence of our master, Jesus Christ. In the book of Job, right there in Chapter 1, after Job has lost everything, everything of his value in his life is taken away from him in one day. He says, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised." Are you at a place in your relationship with God where you could lose everything else and still praise the name of the Lord? If you're properly connected to him, the answer is yes. Before I close, I want to let you know about next Sunday. It is our last Sunday before Keith arrives. And because this is an important transition, I am going to be spending time next Sunday worshiping God and also praying for this church, for the future of this church, that God will unlock the blessings he has in store for us, that he will knock down the barriers and the roadblocks that are standing in our way. And I am asking you to to be an intercessor with me. I'm asking you, all of us, to join together as the members of this church to stand before God and to pray for this church. And so next week, there's going to be a time when I open it up and I would like individuals to please stand up and pray for us. And I'm telling you this now. I'm not going to say you pray and hold a mic in your face. It's not going to be like that. It's going to be voluntary. But if you love this church and if you care about God and the work that he's doing through us, then please spend this week preparing your heart to stand up and pray. And I want I just want as many people as possible to stand up next week and to say a prayer for this church. For everything that God is going to do in the next season. All right, let's close in prayer. Heavenly Father, thank you for the freedom you have given us. We thank you for the freedom we have in this country. But God, even the people who don't have that kind of freedom have this wonderful freedom from sin in Christ. We have this freedom from the law. We have this freedom from all these false idols that make us work and work and work and in the end, just let us down and give us death. We are free from all of that, God. And we praise you and we thank you and we ask you to open our eyes to anything that we may still be stuck under any false source that we are still relying upon. Open our eyes to that and help us to be free from it. Help us all to plug into you as the ultimate source for life and freedom. In the name of your son, Jesus. Amen.