
FREEDOM – GLORIOUS & DANGEROUS

The Bible says a spiritual characteristic of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is freedom. Galatians 5:1 boldly proclaims, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.”

- Freedom is a human right.
- More than that, freedom is a gift of God.
- But even more, the freedom we have in Christ Jesus is a spiritual freedom that is given only through the forgiveness of sins that was won on the cross.

Freedom, however, can be a slippery concept.

- Freedom is a noble word but one that can be used selfishly.
- Sometimes we use the word for good purpose.
- Sometimes we use it as justification for something we really shouldn’t be doing.

Freedom always needs a helping word with it to provide clarity for what we’re talking about.

- When we say, “freedom from,” our mind goes in one direction.
- When we say, “freedom for,” our mind goes in another.
- When we say, “freedom from,” it’s like looking behind us, escaping from something; we are free.
- When we say, “freedom for,” it’s like we are looking forward to something we are able to do, no one or nothing is holding us back; we are free to do this.

In the founding history of our beloved country, we celebrate both how our nation became free from tyranny and how our citizens are free to pursue happiness, a word that originally meant “excellence.”

Often the experience of freedom comes to us in fleeting moments; often that moment is poised exactly between “freedom from” and “freedom for.”

I have another parent and baby stroller story to share with you. This time it was a young mom I saw.

- It was 6:30 in the morning - early light, birds singing, the air fresh.
- More importantly, the baby, all bundled up, was sleeping. This is no small thing with babies; who knows how much the baby had kept the mom up in the night?
- She pushed the stroller with only one hand because the other was tightly grasping a large traveler’s mug of coffee, clutching it like a life preserver.
- She was having a moment of freedom, freedom from all the baby and life demands that can be so oppressive, freedom to enjoy this peaceful and refreshing morning walk with her precious but mercifully-now-sleeping baby.

Some moments of freedom, however, seem not so free at all.

- The drug-addict or alcoholic stares at the product in his hand.
- “I have the freedom to take this, to use this, to drink this,” he thinks. “It’s my right to be able to do so.”
- While this is a “freedom to”, it is not a “freedom from.”
- How we use our freedom always has consequences. As a Christ Follower, you have the responsibility to use your freedom wisely and God pleasing ways.

2 Peter 2:19 warns of the interplay of freedom and entrapment, “*They promise freedom... yet ‘people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.’”*

Freedom is both glorious and dangerous.

- Glorious for how empowering and full of potential it can be.
- Yet dangerous because of the trouble our freedom can cause of us or others.

Way back in the garden of Eden, in the infancy of humanity, God looked at Adam and Eve and said, “I’m giving you a gift, but it’s going to hurt.”

- “How can something be a gift and yet hurt?” they asked.
- “I’m giving you the gift of freedom, free will. You’re going to be able to make choices for yourself.”
- “Why will that hurt?”
- “Because every choice will have consequences. I’m even giving you the freedom to make choices about whether or not to obey me.”
- “Well, how could that hurt?” they thought to themselves right before they bit into the fruit of the forbidden tree.

Freedom is meant to be paired with responsibility. Parents know this.

- Good parenting is the progressive giving of increasing freedom to your growing child, but at each stage also teaching your child to use their increased freedom responsibly.
- The growing children feel the glory of the freedom. The parents feel the danger of it.

Listen how Scripture teaches wisdom on the interplay of the gift of freedom and the responsibility of using that freedom for good purpose:

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

“I have the right to do anything,’ you say—but not everything is beneficial.

‘I have the right to do anything’—but not everything is constructive.

No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.”

- By the way, do you see any potential application in that verse on the present debate over wearing virus protecting masks in public?

Let us close by returning to Galatians 5 and see how the fuller passage balances freedom with responsibility,

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. But stand firm, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery... You were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

What a gift God has given us, our freedom!

What a great responsibility God has given us, our freedom.

Amen.