

Finding Freedom in Christ

What is Freedom?

Freedom?

- Can you and I do anything we want to do and still be free in Christ?
- Are there certain things we can't do?
- What are they?
- When do we cross the line?
- How do we know?

Definition of Freedom¹

1: the quality or state of being free: as

a : the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action

b : liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another : independence

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 33 They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" 34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." John 8:31-36 NIV

There's something in us that longs for freedom. Freedom from besetting sins, habits we can't break, recurring destructive patterns, etc. For some reason we keep repeating the same things over and over expecting different results and sometimes never find them. Our problems wreak havoc on our families, ourselves, others that we haven't even considered, doctors, health care system, family, coworkers, businesses, etc. We know we want to be free but can't seem to get there.

What is the source for freedom?

There's only one way to find true and lasting freedom and that is in Jesus Christ, but for many of us we are not willing to go there, consider it, or may not even know what it is. We may be clean, sober, or even stopped some destructive pattern in our lives, but without Christ I doubt we have found that lasting inner peace.

What does freedom look like in my life?

Definition of Free²

1 a : having the legal and political rights of a citizen

As Christians our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:30).

If we are Christians we should know this and yet we don't live this way. If we travel to another country where laws are different or they are not living in a free society we can feel the pressure within us of knowing this is not what we are used to and have that longing to be back to our home where true freedom is. As Christians somehow we can't get out of the mindset that this earth is not our permanent home and though we live here our true citizenship is in heaven and we have the rights of that citizenship while here. Most of the time we live outside of that in ourselves.

- Our focus is no longer on our struggle but on Christ. We no longer walk in fear of a former struggle but victory and obedience knowing that it has no hold on me anymore. This focus is often blocked by some secular, and unfortunately some Christian views of; once an addict always and addict mentality or even the disease model. If we are children of God he no longer views us as addicts, felons, alcoholics, etc. Why do we view ourselves that way?
- The emptiness in me is gone. Christ has filled the void that I used to fill with _____.
- We have a broader view of life knowing that God causes all things work together for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28)...because God is in charge of all things. What others see as failure or defeat God sees for good and can use if for good; it's our response and obedience that counts.
- Freedom is a place of being instead of a place of doing. It's not trying with all of our might to let God do it; it is having a conscious awareness of his presence living within us and then yielding to his direction.

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/freedom?show=0&t=1314712096>

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/free>

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The vine and the branches are a great example of this (John 15:1-11) The branch produces fruit but does nothing to produce it on its own, other than remain in the vine and receive what is provided. The key is staying attached to the source of life, which is Christ.

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but **emptied Himself**, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.** 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 12 **So then**, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.***

Philippians 2:5-13 NASB

- Other people's issues don't affect or control me emotionally as they did in my past; I am now able to act like myself (in my new identity in Christ) in the midst of trauma or hardship, like Jesus did, in every situation including on the cross.
- We no longer seek or need the approval of a person or others to feel complete. We are complete in Christ.

***His** divine **power** has given us **everything we need** for life and godliness **through our knowledge of him** who called us by his own glory and goodness. 2 Peter 1:3 NASB*

- Being able to listen, hear, and obey God in the confidence that he is in control and knows what's best for my life and that he has the ability to direct my paths and can get me back on track when I wonder off in a gentle loving fashion. Knowing also it is my decision to choose to listen or not when he is directing me back.

*Your ears will hear a word behind you, **"This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left.** Isaiah 30:21 NASB*

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart And **do not lean on your own understanding.** 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6 NASB*

- Stuff – We still have stuff but the stuff doesn't have us.
- There is a peace beyond understanding.

***Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.** 28 "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. 30 I will not speak with you much longer, for **the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me,** 31 but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. "Come now; let us leave. John 14:27-31 NIV*

- Knowing the truth and living in it.
- Freedom is not living life in a mentality of...I can't do this, can't do that, etc.

"Everything is permissible for me"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"--but I will not be mastered by anything. 1 Corinthians 6:12

When I quit drinking alcohol I still wanted to drink. My Psychologist even told me after some time in recovery I could drink again socially. My view of drinking socially and his were entirely different and so I began to drink and continue in my addiction allowing it to medicate and temporarily meet that inner thirst for something that I now know can be found only in Christ. I was looking for permission to abuse alcohol, still in denial of being a slave to it. Once real healing took place I began to realize that...sure I could drink...and would still be forgiven but I now choose not too. Not because I can't as some law but because I see the broader picture of things.

*13 **For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh,** but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, **"YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."** Galatians 5:13-14 NASB*

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Did Jesus live his life in the “can’t do this or that” mentality? No, he only did what the father directed him to do.

It’s a cop out to use the thinking of “If I become a follower of Christ I can’t do this or that”. That really just means we still want to do some portion of “this or that” and are not ready to commit ourselves to the relationship of Christ directing our life.

- Our whole life is transformed. Jesus presence within me has truly transformed and changed my life; not going to church, what my grandma or momma, or daddy or uncle or anybody else did. I’m identified with Christ and have my own unique story of change, not someone else’s experience.

What do I do?

You might say:

- That's not for me that's just the way I am.
- I have so many questions. Get them answered!
- I can do anything I want to do and God still forgives. Anything I wanted to do is what got me here In the first place. It’s the mentality of I only need God for salvation, I’ll take care of the rest on my own. If that’s where were at, we’ve missed the point.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 14:12

When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. 4 Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. 5 And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:1-5 NASB

the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing. Luke 5:17 NASB

The power to be healed is in Christ. The men were bringing the paralytic to Jesus to hear the message. Others are most often willing to help us. Are we willing to be brought? Are we paralyzed enough that or desperate enough to be healed? Did we just come because others wanted us to come? Others may have brought us to a meeting, church or whatever but we may not have the faith or the want to, to be healed yet. If this is the case it won’t work. Freedom will be a ways off for us until we are ready.

Going to church or meetings is not freedom getting to Jesus is freedom. The temple had been in place for years but there was something missing. They could have taken this man to the temple, and maybe they had, we don’t know. But one thing is clear, they did whatever was necessary to get him to Jesus and he was healed. He was the source for healing.

Are you that desperate?

Freedom in America had to be fought for. Freedom from our struggles is fought for in our will to keep doing things the old way, that didn’t work, or surrendering to Christ’s way that is guaranteed to work.

The choice is ours.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Cor. 1:18

It’s a choice...foolishness...our way...the power of God.