

Freedom

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” John 8:36 ESV

Freedom! That’s a word we hear a lot in Christianity. “Freedom in Christ” or “Law of liberty” is usually how we hear it phrased. Do we understand what it actually means? Have we been able to experience this freedom? And how do we truly live out our freedom in Christ?

When we look at John 8, Jesus was speaking to people who thought they already knew what freedom was. The Jews answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?” (John 8:33). They were thinking of freedom in terms of outside circumstances, but Jesus was pointing to something deeper: slavery of the heart. He answered them saying, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:34-36)

In a way, I think many Christians today respond the same way the Jews did. We nod our heads in agreement at verses about freedom and say to ourselves, “Yes, I’m already free in Christ.” But most of the time, this freedom we claim doesn’t match the life we live. We, especially as women, carry guilt, shame, fear, and anxiety as if we’re still walking around in shackles. We say we’re free, but our hearts still feel bound by those heavy chains. Paul reminded the Galatians of this exact struggle: “But now that you have come to know God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?” (Galatians 4:9)

Sometimes the freedom we think we understand is far less than the freedom Jesus actually offers. We know it in theory, but we don’t walk in it. This freedom holds a depth and a power that can be hard to grasp sometimes. It was hard for me! It wasn’t until Jesus met me in a dark place that I finally understood what it meant to be free in Christ. He slowly began breaking off shackles, renewing my mind, softening my heart, and eventually set me free from the chains of anxiety and depression. I finally understood that Christ’s freedom is not partial, it’s full! “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1) If we aren’t careful, we can live like free women still choosing to wear shackles. This isn’t to say that the anxiety and depression I experienced in the past is completely gone and doesn’t try to sneak its’ way in anymore. The devil still tries!

But now, when I can spot the enemy’s tactics, when those things try to come creeping back, I’m equipped to ‘stand firm’ as Paul says. And now, I can’t sing through the chorus of the song, Living Hope, without a lump in my throat, a cracking voice, and happy tears of pure thankfulness and praise for the One who set me free!

So, what does this freedom mean? Scripture tells us it’s freedom from sin’s power and penalty. “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:2) For women weighed down with shame, it also means freedom from condemnation. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1)

The most amazing part, in my opinion, is that Christ's freedom doesn't stop there! He also sets us free from fear, anxiety, and despair. "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and of love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7)

Once I learned that fear is never from the Father, and that fear is a chain the enemy uses to keep us bound, I was able to 'stand firm against a yoke of slavery.' Jesus breaks off the chains fear brings and replaces it with His perfect peace. He says in John 14:27, "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."

When anxiety tries to overwhelm us, we are invited to lay it at His feet. Philippians 4:6-7 reminds us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

And even in seasons of depression and heaviness, Christ brings freedom. "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." (Psalm 34:18) When despair whispers hopelessness into your mind, God gives hope. "Why are you cast down, O my soul?... Hope in God: for I shall again praise him, my salvation, and my God." (Psalm 42:11)

Jesus said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

So how do we truly live in this freedom? Jesus answers earlier in John 8, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32) Abiding looks like turning to His Word in the middle of our chaos, inviting Him into our weakness, and letting His truth replace the lies we often believe. Living in this freedom also means recognizing when we're slipping back into old patterns of guilt, fear, or striving, then instead, choosing to cling to the truth of God's Word. His Word is not just a reminder of what He has done. It's a daily key that unlocks our hearts to live free, here and now!

So, when the burden feels too heavy, pause for a second and remember...You are not just "technically" free in Christ. You are FREE INDEED! Don't just know it. Live it!

-Rachel Spurlock