

Living Free, Letting Go, Looking Ahead

II. "Prisoner of Hope"

1st Samuel 1-6



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You are here today as Children of God. You are not here today as just another number or a face lost in the crowds of life. God knows you! I did not say God knows of you like I my knowledge of the President or a famous actor. I said, "God knows you!" That in itself should give you a whole new way to look at your life and your relationship with Christ. God knows you and he chooses to freely give you grace and salvation. That in itself is a miracle for me in particular because I do not deserve anything and yet God chooses to give it to me.

Last week we learned from scripture that we cannot settle for second best because God does not want that for us. We have to also let go of the past and look to the future of what God has waiting for us.

I. Find Your Strength

This week I want to build on those teachings and realize more of how we can begin Living Free, Letting Go, and Looking Ahead. I want to look out the freedom we have in serving our Lord. The story today comes from 1st Samuel 1-6:

David and the army were off fighting in the war when he was sent back to his home in Ziklag. When he got there it had been raided, destroyed and all of the women, including his own wives, and children kidnapped. The men were angry with David because of their loss and were talking of stoning him as their leader for allowing such a thing. However, in all of his despair, including his faith, his personal life and professional life, the Bible tells us that he, "found strength in the Lord his God."

James 1:25: But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

David was doing what he believed he was called to do when his town was invaded and his family kidnapped. He was working in God's will but yet life still happened around him. But God also continued to take care of him. Look at the story: suddenly after serving faithfully for a full year he was dismissed from service in the war and sent home. Had that not happened it might have been too late to act and save his family. Even in the midst of his despair David sought the comfort, strength and knowledge of God in his darkest hour and found what he needed. He tracked down the invading army, defeated them, reclaimed all of the women and children (all which had not been harmed) and regained all of their possessions including the possessions of the army! I encourage you to look "intently into the perfect law that gives freedom" in all of your circumstances!

However, looking intently upon Christ is not enough by itself and that.

II. Speak and Act

James 2:12 tells us to “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom..”

I think that by “speaking and acting” as Christians that we in many ways help fulfill the scripture we talked referenced last week out of Luke 4:18,

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,..”

What this means is that you can offer freedom through Jesus Christ to everyone by being a witness to your own freedom. Amen? Yes, it is true! I am not diminishing the omnipotence of God but the continued presence of the church is dependent upon you fulfilling this scripture. You have freedom and you should proclaim that freedom with your life every day. But in freedom, we have a choice. Freedom is a dangerous thing. By allowing us to be free we run the risk of becoming captive. It is so easy to make choices in the name of freedom that really hold us hostage to ourselves. Today is the perfect example of how your freedom can keep you captive. You have the opportunity to take Holy Communion today. But if you are simply eating the bread and drinking the cup, because you are free to do so, without recognizing what it really means then you are separating yourself from what God really wants for you. If you take communion just for the sake of taking communion because everyone else is, then your freedom to do so is holding you captive.

1 Corinthians 8:9, Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.

III. Seek Understanding

I am not talking about your worthiness to take Holy Communion because I assure you none of us will ever be worthy enough on our own merits to share in fellowship with God our Father. Worthiness has nothing to do with it but understanding does. Should you strive to be more like Christ? Yes. Should you go and offer forgiveness and seek forgiveness from others? Of Course. Should you constantly seek to remove all barriers between you and God? Absolutely. But will you ever totally succeed? Not a chance.

As I have said, in freedom we can become captives and I don't want to be a captive of anything that keeps me from God. But there is one way in which I want to be like the Apostle Paul and that is by being a prisoner for Jesus Christ. Now don't get me wrong, I don't want to be willingly locked up behind bars and separated from my family and society at this point in my life but the prisoner I am talking about is that of being a prisoner of hope. I want to passionately be a prisoner of my faith in Christ and all he does in me and through me by the Holy Spirit. I want to be locked into my belief that God works through prayer. Through my salvation I want to be shackled to cross and know my sins are forgiven. Through learning the Bible I want to be confined to the presence of the Holy Spirit 24-7-365. Through my fervent believe that God came down to earth in the form of his son, Jesus Christ, and by his baptism, suffering death and resurrection I want God to sentence me to do 99 to life working in a chain-gang called the Body of Christ with no chance for parole.

1 Peter 2:16, Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.

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Find strength in God by intently looking into the perfection of Jesus Christ for the freedom he offers you and start speaking and acting in your relation with Jesus Christ. It is only in doing so that you will truly live free.