

WHAT IS FREEDOM?

by Billy Morrison

Does Release from Prison Bring Freedom?

Many times have I sat in my prison cell and thought about physical freedom—a life without barred windows and locked doors, where you are free to live your life as you see fit, and not as the prison authorities lay down. I would say that all prisoners long to be free and out of prison, away from the prison walls that keep them in bondage.

But I wonder if release from physical prison really brings freedom to our (prisoners') lives? When you walk out that gate for good, will you be going to freedom or will you be walking from one type of bondage to another type of bondage? You could leave the physical prison behind you for good, yet still be in a prison as real as any physical prison you have left.

The Bondage of Sin

What am I talking about? I am talking about the bondage that every human being is in: the bondage of sin. In 2 Timothy 2:24-26, the apostle Paul tells us that he hoped that God would grant repentance to those who opposed the gospel of Christ (all unsaved people), and “that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (or, to do his will). This is the bondage I am talking about. Each human being, according to the Bible, is in a prison. Instead of physical walls and bars, this prison keeps us captive by the domination that our sinful desires have over us.

The Bible tells us, “There is none righteous, no, not one...there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom 3:10, 12). Each one of us is held captive by our sinful desires, and we cannot escape from them: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jer 13:23). Therefore, when you walk out that front gate, you are not walking to real freedom, but an illusion of freedom. You will still be in bondage to sin, to fear of the future, to fear of death and the judgment of God. But this does not have to be.

Real Freedom

When Jesus came to this earth, He came to set free all those who would repent and believe the gospel (Mar 1:15), to set them free from the bondage of sin and all that this brings. He says that He has come “to preach deliverance to the captives...to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luk 4:18). He also said that all those who follow Him would “know the truth, and the truth shall make you free...If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (Joh 8:32, 36).

The freedom that Christ gives is true freedom, and can be had by all those who repent of their sin (which means not only a sorrow for your sin but a turning away from it to serve Christ instead) and have faith in the saving work of Christ on the cross. Do this and Christ will give you freedom from the bondage of sin and its consequences, hell. This freedom was bought by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross: “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Rom 5:8-9).

Two Prisons

Those of us who are in physical prison are in fact in two prisons: one physical and one spiritual, and both are caused by sin. But the physical prison does not prevent us from escaping our spiritual prison. Christ is not kept out by prison walls or bars. Jesus will forgive you and save you in your prison cell just as quickly and surely as He will forgive and save anyone in their own homes. It does not matter what you have done or how long a prison term you are serving. God says this: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa 1:18).

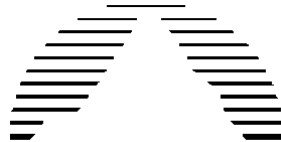
You can find forgiveness and freedom in your prison cell; and when you are released from prison, you will be really free. Like myself, you can find that freedom can be found in a physical prison through Jesus Christ. "My body in prison may be, but God has set my soul free."

This tract was written while the author was serving a life sentence in H.M.P. Maghaberry, N. Ireland. He has since been released and is now serving the Lord as a free man.

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