

Freedom

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes that true freedom comes from the Spirit of the Lord, which liberates us from mental and spiritual bondage through faith in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 9:2-32, Luke 4:18, John 8:32, John 8:36

Topics: "Spiritual Freedom", "Christian Liberty"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of having the mind of Christ, which brings true freedom, contrasting it with being enslaved to the opinions of others or to fear. He emphasizes that the purpose of Jesus' coming is to bring liberation, not bondage, as seen in His mission to proclaim release to the captives and set the oppressed free. Through the story of the paralytic, Bieber illustrates how both physical and mental paralysis can hinder individuals from experiencing the freedom and healing that Jesus offers. He challenges listeners to examine their hearts, break free from the bondage of encrusted opinions, pride, dependency on others' thinking, and fear, and to open their minds to the Spirit of the Lord for true liberty.

Transcript

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

One of the arguments raised by people outside the faith, when they look at followers of Jesus who seem to be serious, is that they're brainwashed. They're puppets. They're running in a pack like a bunch of wild dogs and they don't have minds of their own any more.

We don't deny that this kind of thing has happened many times since the days of the apostles. Gigantic church structures have arisen and maintained their power by brainwashing people and taking their minds away from them. And we're going to see more of this in the days to come. For people who have the gall to do it --- and the skill, it's a quick way to power. And there are multitudes who are only too happy to give their minds away.

There's a fine line between having the mind of Christ, which is to be utterly free, and having the mind of some pastor or priest or leader --- to be "plugged in" to some earthly mind --- which is to be a slave. And there are times when serious followers slip across that line. A pastor violates the minds of his people. Or the people practically lay their minds on the table and say, "Here! You think for me!"

But the purpose of Jesus' coming, and of his presence here today is not to bring bondage, but freedom.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

If you continue in my word then you are my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

"And they brought to him a paralytic lying on his bed." A paralytic has no freedom. He tries to send out a signal to his hand so it will pick up a glass of water. Nothing happens. He wants to roll over in his bed, but he can't make his withering muscles respond. It's worse than being in a prison cell. It's like being in a straight jacket.

And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven." If Jesus had said nothing more to that man, he would have been walking very shortly. They brought him there to be healed and in those words was his healing.

But in that room that day were some men who were not paralyzed in body. They walked there and they would walk away. But their minds ... their minds ... were in chains. They were unable to stand there and watch Jesus and learn. They were unable to listen. As soon as they heard Jesus say to the man, "Your sins are forgiven," the chains on the minds of these scribes drew tight. Their minds closed. They said within themselves, "This man is blaspheming!"

So Jesus turned aside from the man with the paralyzed body and gave his attention to these thrice-pitiful men with paralyzed minds.

Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, "Your sins are forgiven"? or to say "Rise and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins

--- He then said to the paralytic --- "Rise, take up your bed and go home." And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Matthew 9

There are, no doubt, a few people in this gathering today who are at least partially paralyzed by some physical or nervous disorder that makes it difficult for you to function in daily life. It is possible that the roots of this disorder, far down inside you, are roots of guilt. For you there's good news. Anybody here who is in any way paralyzed by some guilt that lies way down at the bottom of your life --- if you want help, there is help here for you today. The Christ who is in this place is just as willing as he was back there in Nazareth to say to you right now, "Take heart, your sins are forgiven." And as those words soak down into your heart and wash away the guilt, the disorder will leave, and you will be free. It may happen during the prayer, or while you're kneeling to receive the body and blood of your Lord, or while you are singing a hymn. You will hear him say to you, "Take heart, my child, your sins are forgiven." Then the miracle.

But there is another kind of paralytic in this church today who is much harder to reach: the man, the woman, the youth, whose mind is in chains; the person who is paralyzed by a mind that is in bondage to something that keeps it from knowing the Truth. And the proof that the mind is in bondage is that it is

unable, openly, freely, without prejudice, to listen to what Jesus has to say.

It's not the believers in Jesus who are narrow-minded, friend. It's these people who usually think of themselves as quite modern and up-to-date, whose minds are so bound that they can't give Jesus a fair hearing. They think they're open-minded. But as soon as Jesus draws near and begins to speak, the chains around their minds click tight; and instead of listening with receptive, honest attention, the mind hears nothing but what it has been conditioned to hear. ... Like the scribes who said within themselves like an army of puppets, "This man is blaspheming;"

The troubled sinner will listen. But the person whose minds is in chains will not listen, no matter what the Master says or how the Spirit moves. That man goes right on thinking what he wants to think, doing what he wants to do, straight on into Hell.

To what are these minds in bondage?

There is the bondage of encrusted opinion.

"This is my opinion. It has always been my opinion and it will always be my opinion. Don't tell me anything different, because I won't hear you anyway." Then they either get mad or they fall asleep. A person who is in this kind of bondage will never be changed by arguments. You can stand up here and preach for fifty years and they'll go out each week and say, "I've been to church." But no change.

There are people whose thinking hasn't changed a fraction of an inch in the twelve years I've been here, as far as I can see. Jesus talks to them, but they don't follow Jesus. They follow their own opinions about what it means to follow Jesus. Until they throw away their opinions and open their minds and say, "Jesus, teach me," they remain paralyzed.

There is the bondage of Pride.

These people say, "I know I need more than I have, I know there's more to it than this. But if to get it, I have to come down off my pedestal; if I'm going to have to look like a dummy; if I'm going to be humiliated, no thanks! Maybe Peter could get down on his knees in the fishing boat and Paul could fall in the dust on that Syrian road. Not me, It took me a long time to get up on this pedestal. Aint nobody going to get me to come down,"

There is this bondage of a dependency on another man's thinking.

Millions of people hardly know what it is to have a thought of their own. They think thoughts that are fed into their mushy minds by their leader, their best friend, their wife, their husband or their TV set.

Jesus says, "Follow me now, out into the streets, and I'll teach you to catch men." "Sorry, Lord, but my leader tells me to be still, here in the sanctuary Sorry Lord, my wife has other plans."

There is the bondage of fear.

"Lord, we want to listen, but we're afraid of what it's going to cost us.

What will they do to us if we walk with you?

What will they think about us?" They're so afraid of trouble, poverty, physical danger, that the mind closes up. It cannot even hear Jesus say, "I'll be with you. Everything you need you'll have, You don't have to be afraid."

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" --- if the Spirit can only get in! It's an easy thing for the Spirit of the Lord to come down into a guilty, penitent heart and set it free if the mind is open. But if the mind is closed, the Spirit of the Lord remains outside and that life remains paralyzed.

And whenever the mind is closed so that the Spirit cannot get in, this is a sign that the heart within is unbroken, impenitent. The heart does not want to be set free.

"Why do you think evil in your hearts?" Jesus said to the scribes.

To open their minds, Jesus had to break their hearts. He had to show them the glory of God so that they would have to see how narrow and childish and petty and silly they were.

"Rise, take up your bed and go home."

And as they saw that man get up and walk away --- at least for a few moments --- their pride broke. At least for a few moments the chains on their minds snapped. Now there was a chance that their paralyzed minds might be healed.

Jesus used the sinner with an open mind -- the paralytic -- to wake up the sinner with a closed mind -- the scribe.

So Jesus through the Spirit, searches this gathering this morning for the paralytic whose mind is open and whose heart is broken. He looks for the man the woman the young person who wants to be set free from guilt in his heart.

He'll set you free today.

He'll make you whole this hour. He'll put your feet on a new road

so that those whose minds are closed, looking at you, will have to see the glory of God.

And you, whose minds are closed, who haven't had a new thought or changed your opinion about anything in years, look around you!

See what God is doing:

How can you see these lives change,

How can you watch these paralytics get up and walk,

and not marvel?

Won't you let the Spirit of the lord bring liberty to that paralyzed mind of yours? Stop thinking evil in your heart and listen to what Jesus has to say to you!

If he puts his finger on some sin, repent of it now.

And when he says to you, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven;" believe him.

And when he says to you, "Come, follow me!"

get up and go with him, and keep

going with him, on and on.

For where the Spirit of the lord is, there is liberty.

Nowhere else.

You can have all that money can buy,

You can travel to the ends of the earth,

but if your mind and your heart are void of God, they are in bondage to the Enemy.

Jesus is here this day to set you free.

Open you heart and let him do it.

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