

Living Godly Lives: Lesson 3 – The Truth About Freedom

INTRODUCTION:

1. Americans have always valued their freedom, calling America the “Land of the free.”
 - A. People settled here to be free from tyranny, to be free to worship without persecution, etc.
 - B. As a country, America been able to provide these things reasonably well.
 - C. Though things are changing, and we may have a lot of questions about the future of our “freedoms,” that is not my focus today.
2. I want to talk about freedom because:
 - A. The gospel promises us freedom
 - B. What God’s word says about that freedom comes to play in our living godly lives.
 - C. Most views of freedom are wrong, especially when compared to the divine point of view.
3. So, let’s talk about freedom—what it is, is not, and how it relates to living godly lives.

BODY:

I. Free to choose:

- A. We hear this term a lot today, but few understand that freedom to choose comes from God.
 1. It began with God and creation (Gen. 1:26-27 – “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”).
 2. We, unlike any other creature, are created in God’s image, which has endowed us with the ability to reason and choose our course our actions *as does God*.
- B. Freedom of choice is not without consequences.
 1. We see both of these points from the beginning:
 - a. We see this in Eve’s and Adam’s choice (Gen. 3:1-3 – “Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’”² The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’”).
 - i. She *chose* to disobey God, as did Adam (Gen. 3:6 – “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”).
 - ii. Consequences followed in sin entering the world, loss of fellowship with God, the unending struggle between God’s people and Satan, in Eve’s pain in childbirth and her husband’s rule over her, the cursed ground and toil for Adam, as well as the reality of physical death.
 - b. Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:3-6 – “So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground.⁴ Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering;⁵ but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.⁶ Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?⁷ **If you do well**, will not your countenance be lifted up? And **if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door**; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”).
 - i. So, Cain and Abel were free to choose concerning their service to God.
 - ii. But those choices had consequences—God’s acceptance or rejection, a good life with God’s favor, or a bad life with sin, and Satan, constantly waiting to devour you.
2. This is seen in the choice presented to the Israelite nation (Deut. 30:19-20 – “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you **life and death, the blessing**

and the **curse**. So **choose life in order that you may live**, you and your descendants,²⁰ by **loving the Lord your God**, by **obeying His voice**, and by **holding fast to Him**; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”).

- a. Though God had chosen Israel, Israel had a choice to make themselves.
 - b. They could choose to **love** and **obey** God and have **life** and be **blessed**, or they could choose to **disobey** and face **death** and be **cursed**.
3. We see it in the choice presented to us today (Matt. 7:13-14 – “**Enter through the narrow gate**; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that **leads to destruction**, and there are many who enter through it.¹⁴ For the gate is small and the way is narrow that **leads to life**, and there are few who find it.”).
- a. We choose the gate we go through and the path we walk.
 - b. But we do not do so without the eternal consequences of life or destruction.
- C. What so few understand is that the choice we make concerning has significant impact on our freedom in this life.

II. Freedom defined:

- A. Our society has come to define freedom as the absence of restrictions.
1. People have come to view freedom as being able to choose to be or do whatever one wants without objections or consequences.
 2. People believe that to be *genuine* and *fulfilled*, you must be free to look inward and determine who you are and live out that life however you see fit.
 - a. And the world believes that this freedom requires everyone else to affirm their choices.
 - b. The world has actually dedicated the whole month of June for all to celebrate the various sorts of sexual perversion and sordid lifestyles people choose to pursue!
 - c. If you do not affirm their choices, they see you as refusing to validate their existence and then, of course, they have no problem bringing certain consequences upon you.
- B. True freedom has never been the absence of restrictions.
1. To illustrate this, consider whether a fish living *in a lake* is free?
 - a. A fish living in the element where God intended can move about unhampered.
 - b. A fish in a lake is as **free** as it ultimately can be, but not without restrictions!
 2. What happens to a fish that uses its freedom leave the water?
 - a. Consequences follow! If that action is not rectified soon, the fish will **die**.
 - b. A fish can move about freely within a lake and live. But it cannot live freely or with impunity outside of the element in which it was made to exist.
- C. From the life of a fish, we learn that true freedom:
1. Is not the absence of restriction, but choosing to submit to the right restrictions, to the life-giving restrictions, placed upon us by our Maker!
 2. Is living as God the Creator has revealed for us to live in His word. For, once you choose to go beyond that, to reject the godly restrictions God has placed upon you, freedom is lost and death follows.
- D. Thus, your authentic, fulfilled self will **not be found** by searching within and living according to your desires, but by looking to God and living according to His will for you.

III. What God says about freedom:

- A. Lack of *restrictions* or *restraint* always results in *slavery*.
1. Jesus said it clearly (John 8:34 – “Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”).
 2. This is because despite Satan’s offer of “freedom” to fulfill our desires, the more we seek to fulfill them, the more we become slaves to those desires.
 - a. Peter spoke of the world’s deception concerning this slavery in his warning to Christians (2 Pet. 2:18-19 – “For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they **entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality**, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,¹⁹

- promising them freedom** while they themselves are **slaves of corruption**; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.”).
- b. We see this in drinking alcohol, sexual lust and immorality, materialism, etc.
 - c. The more our culture seeks freedom in eliminating all restrictions on following our desires, however perverted, the more our nation will devolve into slavery and chaos (Rom. 1:26-32 – “For this reason God gave them over to **degrading passions**; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,²⁷ and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a **depraved mind**, to do those things which are not proper,²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;³² and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”).
 - d. So, being free to choose does not mean one is not choosing slavery.
- B. True freedom does not come from within us, from our thoughts, wisdom, etc.
1. Jeremiah explains the problem (Jer. 10:23 – “I know, O Lord, that a man’s way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.”). Any life direction that is purely from within, from our own mind, is not going to be the right direction.
 2. True freedom must come **from God** through Jesus (John 8:31-32, 35-36 – “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “**If you continue in My word**, then you are truly disciples of Mine;³² and **you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**”...³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.³⁶ So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”).
 - a. Freedom is **received** from God.
 - b. It happens when a sinner chooses to submit to Christ’s words. For, at that point he/she learns the truth that can make them free.
- C. **Freedom is found in servitude.** For, through the work of God in Christ:
1. We are free to serve God and others (**1 Peter 2:11-12, 15-16** – “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.¹² Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation....¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.¹⁶ **Act as free men**, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but **use it as bondslaves of God.**”).
 - a. Peter reminds us that Christ has made us **free**, but we are not to use that freedom for sin, but to live as **bondslaves of God**. In other words, we are freed from sin to **serve God**.
 - b. This means that as free people in Christ, we must choose to do God’s will by:
 - i. 2:11 – Not indulging our every desire of the flesh, because some desires are in opposition to our soul and the abundant life God desires for us.
 - ii. 2:12, 15 – Keeping our lives excellent before the Gentiles so that Christ will be glorified in us.
 - iii. For, Christians do not live for themselves, but for Christ and others (1 Cor. 9:19-23 – “For though **I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.**²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law;²¹ to those who are without law, as without law, **though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ**, so that I might win those who are without law.²² To the weak I became weak,

that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. ²³ **I do all things for the sake of the gospel**, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.”).

2. We are free to become God’s slaves resulting in sanctification and eternal life (**Rom. 6:15-23** – “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! ¹⁶ Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as **slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?** ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became **obedient** from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been **freed from sin**, you **became slaves of righteousness.** ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as **slaves to righteousness**, resulting in **sanctification.** ²² But now **having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.** ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.”).

 - a. No matter what path you choose, the effect is the same. Servitude!
 - b. No matter what choice you make, even if it seems to be no choice at all, you become a slave by that choice.
 - c. How do you leave or become free from sin and its death in the lake of fire? You choose to obey another—to become a slave to God resulting in sanctification and eternal life.

D. Is pure freedom real or an illusion?

1. There is only one choice to make. Every other choice is a subset of that choice.
 - a. If you choose to live your life by your desires, you are a slave to your desires and sin.
 - b. If you choose to be a slave to God, you will be free from sin and its death, but must become a slave of righteousness.
2. **So, freedom (without any form of servitude, restrictions, etc.) is an illusion.**

IV. Why not choose to serve God? The benefits are infinitely greater in every way.

- A. In Christ we are not just slaves, but children and heirs (Gal. 4:4-7 – “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶ Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.”).
- B. When you serve God, Jesus, God’s Son, is your friend (John 15:14 – “You are My friends if you do what I command you.”).
- C. As Christ’s friend service is not a drudgery, but a willing sacrifice resulting in joy and eternal life (1 Pet. 1:3-9 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to obtain an inheritance which is **imperishable and undefiled** and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you **greatly rejoice**, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷ so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in **praise and glory and honor** at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸ and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you **greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,** ⁹ obtaining as the outcome of your faith the **salvation of your souls.**”). **There is no better offer in this life than that!**

CONCLUSION:

1. You have a choice to make—just one—will you serve Christ and live a godly life resulting in eternal life in Heaven, or will you serve sin resulting in the second death of eternal torment in hell’s fire.
2. You will be a servant of one or the other. You cannot avoid that.
3. If you desire life, will you come in F-R-C-B that you might be raised to life and hope?