

Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death

“Give me liberty, or give me death” are powerful words. Patrick Henry spoke them before Virginia Convention in 1775. These words helped to convince the Virginia House of Burgesses to vote to commit troops to the Revolutionary War.

The Declaration of Independence speaks of liberty. It says, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Liberty brings to mind the freedoms enjoyed by the people of this land. The freedom to speak, write and the freedom to worship according to one’s belief is counted precious. Also there is the freedom to pursue one’s own happiness/pleasure. That pursuit often leads a person down the path of sin.

The Bible speaks of liberty also. Jesus declared, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). The liberty Jesus spoke of was not freedom from slavery. It was freedom from the oppression of the religious leaders of their day. The Sadducees, Pharisees and scribes were blind to their own corruption and hypocrites. And their teachings enslaved the people (Matthew 15:3-9; 23:13ff). Jesus said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27).

Jesus said that the truth would make a person free (John 8:32). But this freedom is not the liberty to live according to one’s own evil desires. Greed, covetousness, idolatry, fornication, adultery, lasciviousness, licentiousness, drunkenness, extortion, murder and any other thing contrary to the will of God is not included in this liberty. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” The liberty Jesus speaks of is freedom from the bondage of sin and freedom from the snare of the devil (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave to sin.” These are the words of Jesus in John 8:34. Solomon wrote, “His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, And he is caught in the cords of his sin” (Proverbs 5:22).

Being in the bondage of sin will, in the end, bring destruction upon you. “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” (Romans 6:16.) In Romans 6:23 Paul said, “For the wages of sin is death.”

False teachers are often the nicest people. But beware. Peter warned about false teachers saying, “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage” (2 Peter 2:19). In contrast, Jesus said that if you abide in His word you would know the truth and the truth would set you free (John 8:31-32).

True liberty, lasting liberty is not found in the Declaration of Independence, but only in Jesus Christ. He said, “Therefore if the Son [of God] makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). The only way to have true and lasting liberty is through Jesus Christ. The only alternative is death. Give me liberty; the liberty that is in Jesus Christ.

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