

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



December 19, 2010

The Bondage of Freedom

The modern definition of personal freedom ignores an inconvenient fact: none of us are truly “free,” least of all those who so loudly demand the freedom to do as they please.

“For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. 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 Pet. 2:18-19).

This passage is part of a larger description of false teachers who perpetually threaten God’s people (ch. 2). Peter identifies two characteristics of these teachers that deserve our attention.

The first characteristic is their message. In a word, they promise their followers “liberty.” The apostle Paul was a vigorous advocate of liberty (see Gal. 5:1), but as part of a higher calling to serve God. That’s not the message these teachers are pushing. Rather, their concept of liberty appeals to “the lusts of the flesh,” a desire to throw off the rules and restrictions that would inhibit us from doing whatever we please.

The second characteristic is directly related to the first: they are “slaves of corruption,” living lives given over to

selfishness, debauchery, and lust. When these libertines spurn the conventions of an orderly society, they betray a profound ignorance of human nature. The “freedom” they champion is nothing more than a surrender to the coarse passions we share with the lower animals. The result is a society that is ruled by the same law that governs the lower animals — the law of the jungle. They may feel free to do whatever they want; but they and their followers pay a dear price in broken relationships, emotional distress, even physical health problems. Their freedom from moral restraint becomes a bondage worse than slavery.

Peter’s description of these false teachers is an accurate commentary on the disease that ails much of Western civilization today. Our intellectual class has, over the last century, waged a successful war against not just the institutions of morality (religion, family, free enterprise), but the very idea of morality itself. Generation after generation of young people have been trained to believe that they have the freedom to define right and wrong however they

wish. Oh, this may be tempered with lofty talk of behaving “for the common good,” but at the end of the day morality still comes down to what each person “feels “in his heart. With such a vague beacon to guide our decision-making, it is not surprising to see personal irresponsibility dominate the fabric of modern society—and leave a long trail of human wreckage in its wake.

You see, it is really not a question of freedom versus slavery. *All* of us are in bondage to *something* in this life. The critical question is, who or what is our master? These advocates of absolute freedom sell themselves and their followers into a slavery that demeans and trivializes human dignity. Servants of God, on the other hand, willingly submit to a form of bondage that liberates them from the shackles of sin, and empowers them to serve humanity in a way that makes life better for everyone.

Those who declare their independence from God do not realize the trap they lay for themselves. It is only in surrendering to the rule of God that we find a freedom that is truly liberating.

– David King