

FREEDOM COMES FROM DEEP INSIDE

Dr. Fred Fourie ~ Sunday, July 1, 2007



Matthew 11: 28-30 Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

The answer to the question, "What is Freedom" depends on whom you ask! Politically speaking, one can say that the majority of people on earth are not free. Sometimes we completely disagree with what others call "Freedom – Liberty." Even amongst ourselves, we have different concepts of freedom. Ask the question, and expect a surprising answer.

For many, freedom means the avoidance of all responsibility, the elimination of all constraints--to do one's own thing without any regard to the effect on others or society. We even added some confusing concepts of our own! We **harass** the new groom and say his freedom is over forever. Stressed-out parents think of freedom as the day **when the last chick has flown from the nest**. Taxpayers tell sour jokes against the IRS. The weary **homeowner** dreams of retiring to a condominium with no grass to mow. Freedom, most of us say to ourselves, **is absence of responsibility**.

Nevertheless, deep inside we know it is all a lie. For true freedom is not the absence of responsibility. Such freedom would be hell. We only have to look about our society to see what freedom from responsibility has done for many people. **Moral bankruptcy and monumental misery follow in the wake of freedom without responsibility!**

It is worthwhile to compare our concepts of freedom and liberty with that which Jesus Christ taught, so many years ago. **He did not offer a definition of freedom, nor recommended neither a political system nor a series of rules en regulations.** Jesus understood the sad and tired condition of the masses around him and extended an invitation that would become a cornerstone of his teachings. "Come to me," Jesus said, "all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest!" Coming to Jesus simply mean that those united with him would find the road to true freedom. True freedom is being joined or linked together with Christ. Many Christians would discover that this road indeed leads to freedom. Ask them and they will tell you! When the going gets rough, he is there with us encouraging us, sharing the load, helping us to endure. "Take my yoke," Jesus told his followers, **"for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."**

How can a yoke make us free? The truth is that everyone is yoked (joined or linked) together to something. People who refuse to carry any kind of responsibility often become yoked to their own laziness, lack of initiative or to their own self-indulgent whims. People who are not yoked to Christ often become yoked to the **unhappiness of a failed life**. Christ is ready to **replace** the heavy loads of sin that people are carrying with his **gracious yoke of forgiveness** and a life filled with meaning and hope. True freedom is living without guilt and shame. So many people are suffering because of negative things that have happened in their past. Some are struggling under a load of guilt as result of their current lifestyle.

Many years ago, I had the joy and privilege of working with a most gifted organist. All who heard him spoke of his talent, joy in his work and ability to lift our spirits with music to soar above the clouds. Will I ever forget that on particular Saturday morning when he was rehearsing for the following days worship service? I heard the music from my office, quietly went over, and sat in a back pew of that huge church, carried away by the Handel's **Hallelujah** chorus. He noticed my presence, completed the chorus, and asked me to wait while he came over to speak to me. He shared the painful fact that he was suffering from AIDS. His time for hospitalization was almost at hand.

We spoke for a long time. About life and death – about sin and forgiveness – about misery and hope! **He told me about his faith and described it as follows:** **He began by saying that a few Saturdays ago as he was alone in the huge Sanctuary. A window was open and a little bird flew in.** Once inside, the bird flew around, having a big time looking that huge church over. What an adventure, so exciting and new. **Then all of a sudden, it dawned on the little bird he was trapped inside the sanctuary.** He began to fly back through the air looking for some way out of the church building. After a while, he landed upstairs in the balcony. The musician ran up the stairs after him. As he reached down to pick up the little bird, it took off again. **Back downstairs he went, from one end of the church to the other following the tiny bird.** Up against the top of the window it hit, trying to escape its captivity, but could not find its way out. The struggle went on for a long time. **Then in utter exhaustion, giving up, the bird fell to the floor. He was not dead, but he had lost hope.** My friend walked over to the little bird, knelt down, reached out his hands, and gently picked it up. He carried it in his hand over to the window and opened his hands, and the little bird flapped his wings and flew away with a new life. He was free--free to fly and climb the heights again.

Then, he explained, "This is exactly what happened to me. Just a few years ago I was broken, torn apart emotionally, trying this way and that to find a solution. Then one day, completely exhausted, not knowing what to do, I was cornered. I entrusted my life into the loving hands of God. My God picked me up! Through Jesus Christ, God nursed my wounds with love and brought me close to God's heart. My God healed me of all my brokenness and made me whole. God has set me free and death has lost its sting! Our faith tells about freedom and liberty that comes from deep inside. As we come to the table this morning and receive the tokens of love and forgiveness, the question comes to each one of us.

What about you? Are you weak and heavy laden? Jesus is very near! AMEN