

## What is Christian Freedom?

Written by K B Napier  
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Undoubtedly, modern Christians do not understand the meaning of Christian freedom or, 'freedom in Christ'. Observation tells us this is so. We must know if we have 'freedom'. And if we have it, we must know what it is. As with all other matters, the only final guide we have is God's word, the Bible. At times Christians have to rely solely on conscience, but even conscience must base its actions upon God's word.

Some - no, many - think their Christian freedom allows them to believe or act exactly as they please. This is a misconception, for God places a fence around our thoughts as well as around our actions, as we shall see later. Sadly, a majority of Believers have a motley collection of thoughts that they call 'theology', but it is not God's theology.

A certain truism states that 'there is freedom only in restriction'. Even in the world of the unsaved, this rule applies. Think of, say, those whose lives are ruled by pornography. They think, act and live their sin. It has a vice-like grip on their lives and so they can do nothing else. Yet, such people claim they are exercising their freedom of choice! For the unbeliever there is no freedom at all, in any sphere of his life. He is owned, lock, stock and barrel, by Satan, and does his bidding. Thus, one who 'enjoys' pornography is actually its slave. Freedom has nothing to do with it. The same applies to violence.

On a similar line, there are those who shout loudly for 'freedom from censorship' in all things. They are deluded, for they believe this freedom is available. It is not. Let us take films as an example (Usually, the 'freedom' people seek for films is to watch sexual explicitness and horrific violence. They do not fight for freedom to watch films of a good or gentle nature, they just want to indulge their lusts!).

What happens in the film world is that directors receive various scripts for their approval or rejection. Scripts are rejected for a variety of reasons. The main spur to approval is that the script is perceived to be a 'box-office winner'. That is, it should bring in multi-millions to the filmmaker. Also, some directors make films they know may not bring them riches - they make them because the subject matter happens to coincide with one of their pet likes or desires. But, these are rarely made, because film companies must make money.

Thus, the director chooses what films will be made, not the public. Even before that, though, writers choose what to write! They disregard many topics and methods and choose whatever

## What is Christian Freedom?

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---

they wish to choose... and many choose to write about sexual perversions and promiscuity. This is, however, not so simple. Professional writers write scripts that are destined to sell well. They will do so because professional writers tend to write by formula. That is, they see what sells currently and so they write according to fashion. They mix sex, violence and foul language in previously accepted portions, so that the film they write is bound to earn a lot of money for the filmmaker. Even writers of novels use the formula approach. That is how famous writers sell so many books!

It could be suggested that the writer is, then, influenced by the public. This is not so. In all cases of mass-approval, it is a minority who instigate and guide choices, by socialistic manipulation. They provide only those choices that *they* want to survive. Thus, it does not matter what choice is made by the public at large, for each of the options has already been chosen beforehand by vested interests!

In the case of the writer, he, and others like him, have previously written scripts that happened to strike the right chord in the public. When that 'chord' is sex or violence, it is a success because God is missing in the national mind and because sex and violence are two of the easiest lusts to satisfy. Nevertheless, it takes a vested interest, i.e. a writer, director, or financier, to implant that thought in the first place. A writer knows he will influence many others. (Even a Christian writer writes in order to influence others. This writer wishes to influence other believers, not to think like him, but to be like Christ. That is the difference).

In the film industry, then, the pattern is this:

1.

The writer chooses what he will write and ignores other topics.

2.

That is, he censors what he will write. It is he who chooses the subject matter.

3.

He offers his script to a director/film company. The script is accepted or rejected. Bear in mind the company or director has not made a free choice - he can only choose and reject scripts he is offered. Thus, his film is a product of censorship, not of free choice.

## What is Christian Freedom?

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---

4.

The director makes a film based on a chosen script. That film is offered to the national censor who claims to act according to current public taste. He will accept or reject (censor) a film on that basis. He does not have a free choice about the films he has to censor - he can only choose from films already made by companies.

5.

The film then arrives in cinemas, on video, or in private clubs.

People 'choose' the films they want to watch, thinking they have made a free choice, but they have not... they can only watch those films that have been censored and approved by the national censor. He, in turn, can only censor those films he is given to censor by film companies. But, the film company chooses only from scripts sent in by writers... and writers determine what will be written in the first place!

Can the reader see what has happened? There is censorship all the way down the line. But, ultimately, it comes down to just one person... the writer. By the time a film arrives at a cinema, freedom to choose has been eroded massively, at every step. Thus film-goers may only watch those topics given to them by writers. They are 'choosing' from a pre-selected list of items. Therefore, all talk of 'removal of censorship' by various freedom-fighters, is nonsense. They just do not understand that they have no freedom at all, but are led by the nose, like animals to the slaughter. Interestingly, that is exactly how the Bible depicts unsaved men! They are slaves to sin and can do nothing but sin.

### **Pre-Determined 'Choices'**

The film industry is just one example of pre-determined choices. A theatre in Chichester, England, has deliberately chosen to ignore classic plays in order to draw in younger people. They perceive the best way is to depict nudity, bad language and rebellious ideas. The content and quality does not matter, so long as younger people pay their money and come in! Many theatres operate in this way, so they completely censor productions on offer, by rejecting quality and culture in favour of mindless superficial rubbish that is bound to be immoral. In this they manipulate public perception and choices, and recreate their own idea of morality.

## What is Christian Freedom?

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---

It is common practice in industry to 'concede' to certain demands of workers, but the workers rarely realise their 'choices' have already been pre-determined by their employers! When they earnestly 'choose', then, they are really choosing from a list of options previously approved by the employers. Free choice does not come into it. The same applies to politics and to all other civil activities. Sociologists acknowledge that power rests in the hands of the few, the elite. It is this elite, the vested interests, who dictate what the masses will do and say and think.

The rise of Hitler and his ideas makes fascinating reading! From a lowly and insignificant beginning, he came to power by manipulating the choices available to people. He was so successful that the people of Germany really were convinced 'they' had made their own 'choice' to follow Hitler! Yet, Hitler presented to the people only those options he himself wanted them to choose. (This is what Satan does with sinful men - including Hitler!). Make no mistake about it: only a tiny minority actually choose in the true sense! But, as we know, the unsaved will only choose what is sinful, so even the vested interests, the elite, cannot choose what they wish.

**The only people on this earth who have power of choice are Christians.** They may choose to sin or not to sin. They have this freedom because they are no longer slaves to sin. So, they can reject it at any time. In the broader sense, Christians can choose or reject everything they think or do in life, whereas the unsaved cannot. Even Christians do not understand what this means.

'Free will' is not the topic of this Article, but it obviously enters into it. Do Christians have 'free will'? Let scripture itself supply the answer. What follows is an examination, in brief, of what the Bible says about Christian freedom. Such a short Article cannot hope to cover everything involved, so the reader is reminded of this fact.

### John 8:32

1.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Certain Jews did not understand the words of Jesus, even though they wanted to follow Him. They said they were sons of Abraham and had never been slaves to any man - so how could they become 'free' from something if they had never been slaves in the first place? As usual, they were thinking along nationalistic lines and so they completely missed the spiritual point

## What is Christian Freedom?

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---

made by Christ. Jesus gave His answer in verses 34-36:

1.

. "...whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

2.

And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: (but) the Son abideth forever.

3.

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Before making this statement, Jesus said that if they continued in His word, they were His true disciples. Thus, the last part of His answer can be translated (broadly) as follows:

"As such (i.e. as disciples) you shall come to understand what is true concerning God and Man's duties toward Him, and that knowledge will set you at liberty from the dominion of sin and your slavery to it."

(Note: Ethically, it also includes freedom from the Mosaic law. Growing numbers of Christians today think it is proper to return to the demands of Mosaic and Old Testament traditions or feast days. Scripture - as in this instance - describes this as being in bondage to sin)

In the text above, Jesus tells us that whoever sins is the servant of sin. The word 'servant' in this text is *doulos*. It means to be servile; a slave; given up to the will of another: *doulos* comes from the word *deo*, meaning 'tied fast or to fasten with chains; prevented from doing right by Satan'. This is why the pornography addict mentioned earlier cannot escape his sin on his own; he is ordered to do what he does by Satan, to whom he is bound by chains. He is not 'choosing' to 'enjoy' pornography: he is ordered to follow his desires by Satan, whose aim is to destroy his life.

## What is Christian Freedom?

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The word 'sin' is hamartia, meaning a violation of God's law; to miss the mark; to wander from His uprightness and honour (particularly applicable to the Jews, as in the book of Romans for example); an offence against God. Thus, the unsaved sinner is one who repeatedly offends God by going against His commands. He does so because he is servile to Satan and cannot escape from doing whatever he demands. There is much pathos in listening to unsaved people demand their 'rights' and 'freedoms'. They do not even know what 'freedom' is, nor do they understand there is no such thing as freedom, even in the civil or worldly realm.

So, what is in store for the Christian? He will be 'free indeed'. That is, he is set at liberty from servitude to sin - no longer a slave. Again, the book of Romans contains a superb treatise on this subject! The addition of the word 'indeed' means: truly; in reality (as opposed to the delusion of the unsaved), as a matter of fact; certainly. Its meaning is very similar to the typical New Testament statement of certitude: "verily, verily". The repetition is an assurance that what is said will, or has, come to pass, and can be utterly relied upon.

### **Romans 6:18**

"Being then made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness."

(Note: That is, after believing in the teachings of God and after being slaves to sin - verse 17)

Here we are told we are made free from sin, becoming instead the servants of righteousness. This seems to offend some believers! It certainly offends unbelievers, who reject any idea of being servants of God. (It is with wryness we observe these unsaved folk in their utter servitude to Satan, unable to make a choice to serve God even if they wanted to! They reject what they are not free to reject!).

What does this servanthood mean? Is it the same as the servitude to Satan? No, because we have choice! We may do good **or** evil, whereas the unsaved can only do evil all their days, except that Christ intervenes and saves them. 'Servants of righteousness' means: bonded to a state of acceptance to God. This 'state of acceptance' includes and requires: integrity; virtue; purity of life; rightness; correct thinking, feeling and actions. That is, the keeping of the commands of God, leading to everlasting life (verse 22). None of this is available to the unsaved.

## What is Christian Freedom?

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We can **choose** to do evil, but they cannot - they **must** sin, because their master, Satan, **demand**s it of them. We may choose to do good, but they may not - they **cannot** do good, for everything they do is as dung, unacceptable to God. They can certainly do good in the worldly sense, but this is as nothing to the Lord, for it is not done to His Glory or by His approval.

So, Christians are free to choose their options. No man, however, including Adam, has ever had absolute 'free will'. Christians are free only within the boundary set by God. True Christian freedom is to act within that boundary, which is greater and wider than any perceived 'freedom' envisaged or enjoyed by the unsaved. Within that boundary our freedom is boundless! How can this be? It is boundless because spiritual existence itself is boundless, made so by God.

God's bounds are in infinity. Satan's bounds are finite, confined to a small sphere determined by God. The unsaved sinner who derides Christian freedom-within-bounds is rather like a chained, starving prisoner in a dark, dank dungeon, shouting at rich, well-fed people in the gardens outside who are able to roam wherever they wish, whilst they are in prison! It is an absurdity and there is simply no comparison. This is expanded upon in Romans 8:2:

### **Romans 8:2**

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

The word for 'life' in this text is zoe, meaning to be absolutely full of life, which belongs to God; active and vigorous and devoted to God - therefore, being blessed by Him, both in this life and in the next. Its opposite is called 'death'. This refers to the present misery of unsaved sinners and to the future misery of the wicked in hell. It is also a reference to the ignorance and darkness of sin. Who would deliberately choose the law of sin and death? No-one! But, the unsaved have no choice and the saved may choose it or not, at least whilst in this life.

In 1 Corinthians 9:19, Paul says although he is free in Christ, he has chosen to be a servant of men, so they may hear the gospel and be saved. It does not mean he is subject to their sin, but that he has devoted himself to the work of God in all humility. This is one sign of the life bonded

## What is Christian Freedom?

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---

to Christ - it serves. We are to move forward in holiness and not to go back to a life based on sin.

### **Galatians 5:1**

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

We are to 'stand fast' or persevere/stand firm in 'liberty' - THE liberty of Christ. That is, we have the freedom to ignore what has nothing to do with salvation; we are to live as we ought and not as we please. We must not be entangled or ensnared: that is, we must not oppose God. The word is based on the meaning 'cling to'. We must not cling to those ways and thoughts that set us against God. The word 'again', shows that we were once in that position, but we must not return to it.

The 'yoke' in this text is the burden of slavery, especially to the Mosaic laws, the Jewish traditions, and the trivia taught by the Pharisees. Christ taught that His own yoke is 'easy' to bear, whereas the yoke of slavery to sin is heavy and too great to bear. 'Bondage' means 'slavery to a base power' or, 'yielded to', i.e. to Satan.

This verse says, then, that we must not return like a dog to our own vomit... the slavery to sin we once knew, but from which we have been saved by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. He offers us freedom, where before we had none.

### **1 Peter 2:16**

We must not act as before we were saved but:

"As free, and not using (your) liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

How many times have we heard Christians say, before stabbing a fellow Believer in the back: "I am telling you this in love"? It is just a pretext for being vicious! That is what the word 'cloke' means in this text: a pretext or excuse. For what? For being 'malicious', showing ill-will, a desire to injure another, wickedness, depravity, not ashamed to break laws (of men or of God). That is,

## What is Christian Freedom?

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Tuesday, 20 July 2010 15:30

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to do what is evil in God's sight. We must never pretend that what we do is good when it is obviously evil. So many Christians do wrong but excuse it with one Bible verse or other. God sees it all as a pretext, an excuse for hiding our sinfulness. This is contrary to a true, holy desire to be 'servants of God'. Our Christian freedom does not, then, give us an excuse to do whatever we wish.

### 2 Corinthians 3:17

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord (is), there (is) liberty."

Where God is, there is true freedom. Where is the Lord? In those saved by Grace. And we even have a bonus in this text: have you succumbed to the evil lie that the Trinity does not exist in the Bible? (Jehovah's Witnesses often say this, but so do many so-called 'Christians'). Well, take heart! We are told the 'Lord is that Spirit'; the word for 'Lord' in this text is kurios. This, amongst other things, means Lord and Master to Whom we belong; God the Messiah. He (God the Messiah, Jesus Christ) is that Spirit. Thus, Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit, because He is God. Elsewhere, Jesus Christ refers to Himself as being as one with the Father. That is, Christ is the Father, because He is God. The word 'God' automatically includes Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus, the Father = the Son = the Holy Spirit, even though each is *separate*, together they are One\*. That is what this text tells us. (\*This is an oversimplification for the sake of brevity).

Only Christians have the Holy Spirit and so only Believers have liberty.

### The Abuse of Freedom

There is abundant evidence that many Christians abuse their freedom in Christ. They insist that whatever they do is covered by this pretext or 'cloak'. Thousands of sincere Christians are cast out by their local churches every year in the UK alone. Whole churches have been removed in this way. (Other literature deals with this activity, so we will here discuss the matter quickly).

We do NOT have 'freedom' to abuse others. Yet this is exactly what happens, many times over, throughout the UK and the world, as reports to us indicate. Thousands of Believers are forced out of their churches by misled and sinful Christians, who believe they are free to act, and abuse, as they wish. The Bible guides us with regard to disfellowship, but this is ignored by pretentious pastors and congregations who act wickedly. Discipline has been replaced by mob-law and personal anger displaces personal holiness. Yet, as we have read, Christian freedom is all about doing God's word, which gives us full spiritual life.

## What is Christian Freedom?

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Unmarried Christian couples live together, or have regular unmarried sex, without shame, believing their 'freedom' allows it. The pretext is 'love'! Others use the same pretext to join with unbelievers in ecumenism. Pretext upon pretext is our common way of life as fewer Believers bother to see and do what scripture says. It is now time to discard pretexts and to embrace that life of the Spirit so graciously given by God.

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