

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

Of Slaves and Sons

John 8:33-40

Intro: Jesus is in the middle of a head-to-head conversation with the religious leaders and a crowd that had gathered in the court of women in the temple to hear Him teach. The religious authorities have been doing their best to get rid of Jesus and they have failed or have been stymied by Him at every turn. They are incensed that He is still around and that He feels free to teach His doctrine at any time to anyone who will stop and listen to Him. Now, while they are angry at Jesus, He is not angry at them. In fact, He's trying to help them. In fact, He's giving them some very good information. He knows that in their heart, they don't believe a word He says about Himself but in our last study we saw that Jesus told them outright that the truth of His testimony concerning Himself and His ministry would be fully evidenced when He is "lifted up." That means everything Jesus said would be verified beyond any doubt by His crucifixion and the subsequent supernatural events that would occur along with it (resurrection, ascension).

Not only that, but Jesus also revealed to them the blessed results that accompany truth. If they abide in His word, they will be true disciples of His. They will know the truth; meaning they will come to know certain spiritual truths and of those truths they will be certain. Finally, the truth will set them free.

Remember, there were those in the crowd who believed on Jesus and then there were some who merely believed Him – they were inclined to think that what He said was true but they were not ready to yield to Him that full-fledged allegiance that real saving faith in Him requires. This is the most dangerous spiritual state a person could ever find themselves in: to recognize that truth is in Jesus and to do nothing about it means that person consciously aligns themselves with the enemies of Christ. It also indicates that there is some powerful spiritual force holding back the would-be believer from following what they recognize as the right course of action. We can readily see this in the response of those to whom Jesus is speaking with in our text.

33- Jesus has just told them the amazing reality that they can actually know

the truth and it will set them free! The reaction of His listeners wasn't, "That's fantastic! Tell us more about what it means to be free by trusting in Your Word." But that's not the case here. Their reaction was basically, "We don't need this. We're good." That would have been bad enough but what they actually said was patently false. Apparently, in their minds, being connected to the great ancestor of the Jewish race was a high privilege that was inconsistent with being in bondage.

Unfortunately, the history of the Jewish people disagreed. Israel had been in bondage to Egypt for 400 yrs. The Book of Judges also records at least 7 other countries that subjugated Israel during that time period. Part of Israel was carried into captivity by the Assyrians and a few yrs later Babylon carried the rest away. They were subsequently in bondage to the Medo-Persians and the Greek. Even if these men were merely referring to themselves and their own experience, they would still be wrong because there was more than likely a Roman garrison looking down from the ramparts into the very temple courts where this boastful falsehood was uttered. This statement is ridiculously false and only serves to prove that the power of self-deception in the unconverted man is infinite (Ryle).

These men seemed to be offended at the suggestion that they needed to be set free. Sure Rome was calling the shots for Israel now but they weren't wearing leg-irons or being forced into performing some manual labor. In their minds, the suggestion that they needed freedom was ridiculous – they weren't in chains! But Jesus is about to move the conversation from the physical world into the spiritual realm.

34-36- Jesus reminds them here that there is another kind of slavery other than social or economic slavery. Sin is a slave-master and it's even possible for people who think they're free to be enslaved to sin. Jesus said, "whoever commits sin..." but the verb tense in the original language points to a continuing state. Jesus is not saying here that every individual act of sin represents slavery. He's saying that everyone who continues in sin; the habitual, continual action of it, is a slave to sin. Those who sin are slaves to their sin whether they realize it or not. Slavery to sin is the worst kind of slavery because there is no escape from our sin. A physical slave may escape from their master but a person cannot escape from themselves. They need a power greater than their own to free them from their sin.

Jesus then calls attention to the difference between the slave's relationship to the home and that of a son. He does this to show them that He can bring them the freedom they so desperately need but cannot gain for themselves. A slave, no matter who he belongs to, has no permanent standing in his master's house. His position, at best, is merely temporary. He has no rights, no security. He can, at any time, be sold or moved to another location or position. It's completely different for a son. A son has a permanent place in his father's house by right of birth: once a son, always a son and nothing can alter that! He belongs. He has rights!

But Jesus moves from discussing a son and begins talking about the Son – Himself. This Son truly “abides forever” in the sense of His eternal existence. It's because Jesus is what He is that He can give the freedom He speaks of. In that day, if a son inherits his father's estate, he had the power to grant freedom to any of the slaves in the household. Now Jesus, the Son, precisely because He is free and holds a permanent place in the Father's household, can make others free. The Son grants His own freedom to those who are receptive to His word and are willing to continue in it.

Thus, if the Son sets you free you are truly free. But what is freedom? We've seen this referenced twice now, in [v32](#) and [v36](#) but what exactly is this freedom that Jesus talking about? From the context of these verses 2 answers are given – 1) freedom from ignorance and 2) freedom from sin.

Freedom from ignorance – mainly the ignorance of spiritual things. This is what [v32](#) is referring to. We should all be aware of the bondage that natural ignorance produces. Someone who does not know it limited. A person with no secondary education has certain doors closed to them, the professions namely and their prospects in white collar work are few and far between. It's even more difficult for someone who is completely illiterate. Our nation recognizes the truth of this and as a general rule, emphasizes the need for education.

But, if this is true on a natural level, it is even more true on a spiritual level, at least the stakes are much more higher. A person who doesn't know the teachings of God's Word cannot thrive spiritually. Worse yet, a person who doesn't know the fundamental truths of the Christian faith cannot come to Jesus for salvation. The biggest problem with this situation is that many of the folks who don't know much about Christian truth and are thus bound by their ignorance are nonetheless unaware that they are ignorant and resist

any attempt to help them to become free. They're just like stubborn children. No one blames a child for not knowing what an adult knows, but at least you expect a child to be willing to learn. If he's not willing, something's wrong. Many people are exactly like this spiritually.

"We're not in bondage to anyone!" Really? Even as they were talking to Jesus, these men held coins in their pockets that bore the image of the Roman emperors and testified to Rome's dominion over them. We smile at this kind of blatant self-delusion. But, it's no more ridiculous than the self-delusion of people today who are slaves to ignorance in spiritual matters but refuse to acknowledge their slavery. They don't know anything about God yet they think they know all there is to know and so they will not educate themselves about the claims of Jesus or come to Him in faith.

Freedom from ignorance is important because having knowledge is important: a lack of it limits an individual. It's also important because we are ignorant. But, the real reason freedom from ignorance is important is because it's through a knowledge of spiritual truth that God saves people from sin, from themselves and from Satan. How does a person go from complete ignorance of God's truth, blindly going about their day-to-day tasks thinking that they're doing just fine to falling to their knees and crying out to God for forgiveness and salvation? Little by little, thru various means and mechanisms, God's truth begins to seep into their lives. Be it thru a neighbor, co-worker or relative or by listening to the radio, watching it on television or reading a tract; each one or all of these begin the drip, drip, drip of truth that begins to change their thought processes, then their world view, then their entire life. It's what happened to Paul, what happened to Pastor Raul Ries, in fact, it's what happened to everyone who has accepted Jesus Christ!

Has it happened to you? Are you someone who's heard the truths of Christianity and needs to come to Jesus Christ as your Savior? You can come today. You don't need to do anything but commit your life to Him. Believe these truths: you're a sinner; there's a judgment day coming for sin; but Jesus died for your sin. Accept His payment and stand firm on these truths! Don't linger any longer in the bondage of spiritual ignorance!

Freedom from sin – Jesus is not talking about the penalty of sin in [vs36](#), He's talking about sin's power, the hold that sin has over us, before and

after salvation. His point is that He can set us free from this bondage too! Is that something you would like to have? You might have a measure of freedom now. Since becoming a Christian you've been freed from the fear of judgment. You don't fear death. The guilt of sin doesn't weigh so heavy on you anymore. You're now free to grow in the knowledge of Christ almost indefinitely. And still, maybe there's a sin that you can't seem to shake. You can't control your temper. You offend people by your thoughtlessness. You're stuck in some sexual sin and can't escape it. I don't know exactly what particular defeat is in your life, but I do know Jesus is the answer to that defeat. Let Him set you free from it. Come to Him! Learn of Him! Call on Him! Claim His promises! He said, "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." Are you free indeed – truly, completely? As a believer, we all have a responsibility to pursue complete freedom from the power of sin thru Jesus Christ.

Maybe you have? Maybe you've gotten a handle on the things that use to trip you up and you're currently walking in victory. Great! Glad to hear it, but our responsibility doesn't stop there. The Bible definitely teaches that there's a role mature Christians have in helping others achieve this freedom. Granted, there are some things that only God can do. Bringing new life into a dead soul is one of them. None of us can make a person be born again. God alone must do it. But once God's made that person alive, then there is certain work God that gives to us so that we might share in the other person's full salvation.

Let's consider some biblical examples. When Jesus brought his friend Lazarus back from the dead, it was the Lord Himself who called him: "Lazarus, come forth." But after He brought Lazarus forth, still wrapped in grave clothes, His next words were to those standing around. He invited them to have a hand in Lazarus's full liberation: "Loose him, and let him go." When God called the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, it was God alone who called him and who brought forth new life in Paul. The others who were with Paul did not even hear the words God spoke. Yet, after Paul was brought to Damascus, Ananias was used to visit and baptize Paul so he might receive his sight. God used Philip to bring the light of the gospel to the Ethiopian. He used Priscilla and Aquila to bring a fuller understanding of the truth to Apollos. In the same way, each Christian has a ministry in the life of another person or persons.

The parable of the prodigal son brings this truth home (Lk 15:20-23). Notice that when the prodigal came home, it was the father who met him. He didn't send his servants out to meet him, the father himself went, and greeted him with great affection. The father personally forgave him and restored him to his home. This was something only the father could do. Still, after he'd done this, the father turned to the servants who stood by and said, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, it's time to celebrate!" The point is that the servants had work in each of these four areas.

First, the best robe is a picture of good Christian teaching. Robes in Scripture often speak of Christ's righteousness. We have a role in actually helping put Christ's righteousness on the sinner. We're not content to just preach Christ. We want men to put Him on and we want to help them do it. God uses many in the work of teaching and evangelism.

Second, the ring speaks of fellowship. Many who can't teach can still do this work simply by getting to know others who have become Christians, becoming friends with them, and including them in Christian activities. In fact, one of the best ways to teach a new believer the Christian lifestyle is to live it right before their very eyes.

Third, the servants were to put shoes on the prodigal's feet. There were roads to be walked, and shoes were necessary. In a similar way we can help others to prepare for life's journey. We should start as soon as possible, at the earliest age. That's why we have Sunday School for the youngsters – so they can learn spiritual truth at their own level. And it works! We've seen children accept Christ and we'll see more in the future. But even those will need continued guidance, instruction and help in determining God's direction for their life.

As for the fatted calf and the celebration, there are babes in Christ to be fed and many believers to be cheered up and made welcome. There is plenty to be done. Each Christian has a responsibility to help others in God's service.

All of this leads to and contributes to the freedom from the power of sin in the believer's life. This is the hidden value of the freedom from ignorance and sin. If you haven't experienced both of these in your Christian life then not only are you stunting your own spiritual maturity but you're also missing

out on participating in the divine responsibility of assisting others in experiencing them in their lives. If you're not where you need to be, seek the Lord; redouble your efforts in receiving spiritual instruction and freedom from the weight of sin that so easily ensnares you.

If you have been freed from spiritual ignorance and sin, you've not been set free to be idle – there is work for you to do. You have been set free to serve God! If you are a Christian, then God wants you to follow Him in Christian service. It doesn't have to be "the ministry" but it will be some kind of ministry. Get to it because time's a wasting! 😊