

THE BROADLANDS BROADCAST

**But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God,
you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.
Romans 6:22**

One bleak day in February 1832, a young theological student sat in his room at Andover Seminary. Samuel Francis Smith was going over a sheaf of German songs for children, given him by a friend, the composer Lowell Mason. Sunset shadows crept into the room and Smith was tired from a strenuous day of study. He was relieved to spend a few relaxed moments going over his friend's music.

As he hummed over one after another, one struck his fancy. He glanced at the words at the bottom of the page and his knowledge of German told him that the words were patriotic, but they did not appeal to him. He decided to write his own words. He searched around on his desk until he found a scrap of paper, about five or six inches long and two-and-one-half inches wide. On this, as he tapped out the rhythm of the music, he began to write,

My country, tis of thee
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing:
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountain side
Let freedom ring.

Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996)

My Story: From Prison to Freedom, and What I've Learned about the Promise of the Gospel

Formerly incarcerated person pastors church in Orange County
Jeff Ludington

When a publisher asked me, "Why would someone want to read a book written by you?" it took me longer to answer than I expected.

And my answer impacted my faith.

I come from a broken family. I had a long battle with drugs, was kicked out of my house before I was an adult, and committed countless crimes to support my addiction. I've slept at friends' homes, in trunks of cars, and often did drugs so that I wouldn't have to sleep, because I had no

home. Crime and drug abuse led me to county jail, and eventually state prison.

But others have a similar story, so again I had to ask why anyone would want to read a book by me.

When I was young the gospel began to reach into my family. I wish I could say that was when I came to faith, but circumstances actually pushed me further away from Jesus.

Fast forward to 1997. I had been out of prison less than 100 days when I was arrested again. This time, I'd done enough to never get out. I had a gang affiliation, a long record, and was on parole. Just an hour before the arrest, I had committed a home-invasion robbery of a drug dealer's home. While driving, a cop saw me and pulled me over simply because I was known to them. In the car were drugs, a gun, and stolen goods.

I was immediately taken back to jail.

The next few days were spent detoxing from drugs and wondering what I would be charged with. The robbery was public now, and it was a reality that I might never get out of prison. And, if I were honest, I'd have to say I was ok with that fact.

I had become more comfortable inside prison than I was outside. I was institutionalized.

I sat alone in a cell and prayed the most heartfelt prayer I had ever prayed. I asked God to change me and promised to never stop serving him.

I didn't ask God to get me out of prison. I deserved to be there.

I just wanted to be different. I started reading the Bible and following God to the best of my ability. When I said that prayer over 20 years ago, I never imagined I would become a pastor and author, or even live outside prison walls. Jesus showed grace to me, and my life is completely different than it was.

God is in the Business of Redeeming Our Broken Stories

I have always been fascinated by redemption stories: Jacob going from a con-artist to being "Israel"; Moses from

murderer to prophet; David from adulterous murderer to friend of God; and my favorite is Hosea and Gomer.

If you don't know this last story, I encourage you to read Hosea 1-3. God tells a prophet named Hosea to marry a woman who will be repeatedly unfaithful. Hosea does as God says and marries Gomer. Just as foretold, she cheats on Hosea and becomes pregnant from other men.

Gomer literally prostitutes herself into slavery. What comes next rivals any story of redemption. At God's direction, Hosea goes and purchases Gomer's release. Then, looking at his disgraced wife, Hosea says in 3:3, "You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you."

Hosea spoke to a disgraced Gomer and called her to be his wife again. This verse points us to the gospel of Jesus because it calls sinful and broken people to a completely new life. Here's three things in particular that stand out to me.

1. No matter what sins I had committed, Jesus paid the price for them all.

Hosea completely paid Gomer's debt, freeing her from her slavery. I had been a horrible person and struggled with some things I had done. Embracing that Jesus paid the entire cost of my sin means I am completely free from my past. Just as Hosea redeemed Gomer from her sin, Jesus paid for my freedom!

2. I am not defined by my past, I am defined by Jesus.

Hosea tells Gomer to no longer live like she had lived (unfaithful and a prostitute), but instead to come and live as his bride. He promises to be her husband. Imagine how she must have felt getting an entire new lease on life. Upon my release from prison, I had a choice to live as I always had (an addict, convict, and criminal), or I could live in a new way. Not only was my sin paid for, but I was also no longer defined by my worst decisions. I could now be redefined by Jesus' victory over sin. I could be exactly who Jesus called me to be.

3. Complete transformation is, by definition, what the gospel promises.

I was paroled from prison just before my 30th birthday feeling like my life was over because I hadn't even graduated from high school and I had a long criminal record. In my mind, I would never amount to anything because I had thrown away two decades of my life. That is not what the gospel promises. Jesus, through his life, death, and resurrection, makes prostitutes into brides, and makes criminals into men of faith. The gospel says complete transformation exists in Christ.

When I finally answered the publisher's question about why anyone would want to read a book I wrote, I said that I have seen more transformation than anyone I know, and I can point to Jesus in the hardest times of life.

<https://bit.ly/3yhSTp>

**Freedom is the right to be wrong,
not the right to do wrong.**

John Diefenbaker

What is Christian freedom?

The Bible states emphatically in Galatians 5:1 that believers are free in Christ: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1). Before Jesus died on a cross, God's people lived under a detailed system of laws that served as a moral compass to guide their lives. The Law, while powerless to grant salvation or produce true freedom, nevertheless pointed the way to Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:19-24). Through His sacrificial death, Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law, setting believers free from the law of sin and death. God's laws are now written in our hearts through the Spirit of God, and we are free to follow and serve Christ in ways that please and glorify Him (Romans 8:2-8). In a nutshell, this is the definition of Christian freedom.

An important aspect of Christian freedom is our responsibility not to return to living under the Law. The apostle Paul compared this to slavery: "Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1). Continuing to live under the Law after salvation is merely a legalistic form of religion. We cannot earn righteousness through the Law; rather, the Law's purpose was to define our sin and show our need of a Savior. Christian freedom involves living not under the burdensome obligations of the Law but under God's grace: "For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

In Christ, we are free from the Law's oppressive system, we are free from the penalty of sin, and we are free from the power of sin. Christian freedom is *not* a license to sin. We are free in Christ but not free to live however we want, indulging the flesh: "For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13, NLT). Believers aren't free to sin, but free to live holy lives in Christ.

Christian freedom is one of the many paradoxes of the Christian faith. True freedom means willingly becoming a slave to Christ, and this happens through relationship with Him (Colossians 2:16–17). In Romans 6, Paul explains that, when a believer accepts Christ, he or she is baptized by the Spirit into Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. At that moment, the believer ceases to be a slave to sin and becomes a servant of righteousness: "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17–18, ESV).

Only Christians know true freedom: "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). But what does Christian freedom look like in a practical sense? What are we free to do and not do? What can we watch on TV? What can we eat and drink? What can we wear to the beach? What about smoking and drinking? Are there limits to Christian freedom?

In 1 Corinthians 10, the apostle Paul gives a practical illustration of Christian freedom: "'Everything is permissible'—but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible'—but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others" (1 Corinthians 10:23–24, NIV84).

In writing to the church in Corinth, Paul mentions members who were attending meals in pagan temples, just as they had done before receiving Christ. They felt free to continue participating because they thought these festivals were merely a normal part of the social culture. They didn't see their actions as pagan worship.

Paul laid out several warnings, reminding the Corinthians of Israel's dangerous flirtation with idolatry in the Old Testament. Then he handled the practical concern of eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols.

"Everything is permissible," the Corinthians were saying. True, Paul says; Christians have a great deal of freedom in Christ. However, not everything is beneficial or constructive. Our freedom in Christ must be balanced by a desire to build up and benefit others. When deciding how to exercise our Christian freedom, we ought to seek the good of others before our own good.

In Judaism, restrictions were placed on purchasing meats in the market. Jews could only buy and eat kosher meats. Paul said believers were free in Christ to buy and eat any meat (1 Corinthians 10:25–26). However, if the issue of meat sacrificed to idols came up, believers were to follow a higher law. Love is what limits Christian freedom.

A little later in the chapter, Paul wrote about eating meat as a guest in someone's home. Christians are free to eat whatever they are served without questions of conscience (1 Corinthians 10:27). But, if someone brings up that the meat has been offered to an idol, it is better not to eat it for the sake of the person who raised the issue of conscience (verse 28). While believers have freedom to eat the meat, they are compelled to consider what's best for those who are observing their behavior.

Romans 14:1–13 raises a key determiner in understanding the limits of Christian freedom. In the passage, Paul again brings up the issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols and also observing certain holy days. Some of the believers felt freedom in Christ in these areas while others did not. Their differing perspectives were causing quarrels and disunity. Paul emphasized that unity and love in the body of Christ are more important than anyone's personal convictions or Christian liberty: "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister" (Romans 14:13).

Essentially, Paul's message to the New Testament believers and to us today is this: even if we believe we are right and have Christian freedom in an area, if our actions will cause another brother or sister to stumble in his or her faith, we are to refrain out of love.

Paul spoke again of the matter in 1 Corinthians 8:7–9: "Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak."

The issue in New Testament times was eating meat offered to idols; today there are other "gray areas" that arise in our Christian walk. Romans 14:1 calls these "disputable matters," areas where the Bible does not give clear-cut guidelines on whether a behavior is sin. When we are faced with gray areas, we can rely on two guiding principles to regulate our Christian freedom: let love for others compel us not to cause anyone to stumble, and let our desire to glorify God be our all-encompassing motive (1 Corinthians 10:31).

<https://bit.ly/3yyJLij>

**We are in bondage to the law
in order that we may be free.**

Cicero

Climbing Towards Freedom

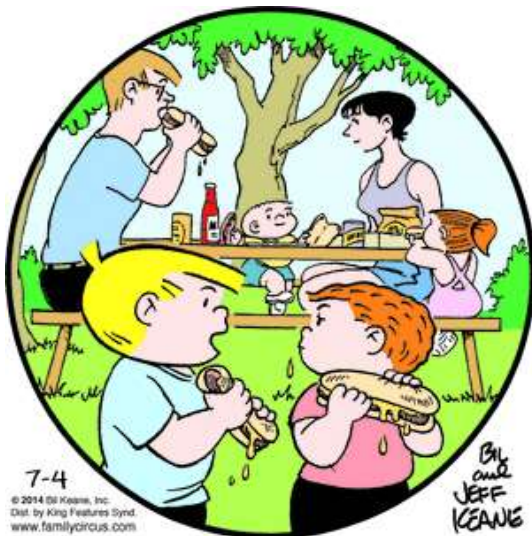
Rosyln Yilpet

Slaves had many reasons to feel hopeless, yet they persevered in hope for freedom. Despite enduring horrid mental and physical abuse, family members being sold and stripped of all identity, slaves believed God had a better plan for them. The American Negro spiritual “We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder” portrays their belief that, as they pressed forward, freedom would come, either on earth or in heaven.

Slaves couldn't talk while working in the field, so they would encourage one another through singing. As they sang this famous spiritual, they believed God's promise to Jacob extended to a promise of their freedom. God promised Jacob, "I am with you and will watch over you . . . I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (Genesis 28:15). The symbolic ladder inspired the slaves to keep climbing, believing in God as they journeyed through trials of life. And they knew the true freedom that began within their souls through their relationship with Him.

The lyrics—“every rounds goes higher and higher”—emphasize spiritual growth through a personal relationship with Jesus, sharing Jesus with others, and serving others (Galatians 5:13). The slaves experienced inward freedom and could wholeheartedly sing the last stanza of this song, “Rise, shine, give God the glory.” We glorify God as we press forward towards the goal of knowing Christ and making him known to others (Philippians 3:10).

<https://bit.ly/3jAydXs>



"Today's a good day to eat hot dogs, 'cause that's what our fourth fathers always ate."

July Birthdays & Anniversaries

Bo and Twila Cooley 1st

Austin and Debbie Arabie 3rd

Elijah Fontenot 5th

Kellie Friend 5th

Carla Brown 15th

Bernice Cole 15th

Nelton Robinson 18th

Bernice and Olin Cole 21st

Melanie Chimene 25th

Clarence Friend 30th

Caryn Simmons 31st

Nursery Worker Schedule

07/04 & 07/11 Sarah Harrington & Kellie Friend

07/18 & 07/25 Judy Bergen & Teresa Smith

Elder/Deacon Schedule

07/04 Justin Fontenot

07/11 Herbert Ragle

07/18 Tim Reeves

07/25 David Smith

Activities

LEADERSHIP MEETING—July 16 @ 6 pm

VBS—July 19-23