

Is Bondage Better Than Freedom?

Are you sure that you want to be free?

John 5.1–9

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • March 16, In the year of our Lord, 2014

Scripture Reader and Reading:

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Phil Joseph – No Suggestions

Prelude:

I. Is bondage better than freedom?

- A. How could I ask a question of that nature?
- B. If you are in bondage to something,
 - 1. are you sure you want to be released?
 - 2. Why would anyone ask that kind of a question?

II. Could imprisonment be better than freedom?

- A. Could receiving welfare
- B. be better than working?

III. These questions make more sense the more you think on them.

- A. Jesus asked a paralyzed man, if he wanted to be made well.
- B. Why would Jesus ask such a question?

IV. Sometimes we think

- A. that it is better to receive welfare than to work,
- B. that it is better to remain in prison than to have freedom,
- C. that it is better to remain in bondage than to live freely.

V. Do you want to be free from your sin?

- A. Currently in America, we believe that freedom means
 - 1. you can do whatever you want
 - 2. without accountability or responsibility.
- B. However, we cannot fool God, and
 - 1. we cannot fool man for long, because
 - 2. in time both will hold us accountable and responsible.

VI. Knowing such things, some people find bondage better than freedom.

- A. When the Soviet Union fell,
 - 1. the older people had a hard time, because
 - 2. suddenly the state did not own everything and
 - a) did not regulate their lives
 - b) as it had for the past 71 years.
- B. Some people commit crimes that they might go back to prison, because
 - 1. the free life is too much,
 - 2. especially if they had been in prison for a long time.
 - a) It is like some people who receive their sight.
 - b) They actually find it very difficult, and some wish to be blind again.
- C. Why do people go back continually to things we call “addictions”?
 - 1. Sometimes for them, and for us, bondage is better than freedom.
 - 2. Or at least we find bondage easier or more comfortable than freedom.

Persuasion:

I. Israel Thought Bondage Was Better than Freedom

- A. When some people hear of the promise of a better life,
- B. they expect it
 - 1. immediately and
 - 2. without cost.
 - a) Otherwise, they think to themselves
 - b) why make the promise, and
 - (1) they want someone else to do the work and
 - (2) to pay for it.
- C. This seems to be the case with Israel in the wilderness.
 - 1. They complained relentlessly about their freedom, and
 - 2. thought they had it better back in Egypt.

D. Listen to the things they said,

3 And the children of Israel said to them, “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (Exo 16.3).

3 And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, “Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” (Exo 17.3).

4 Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat? 5 We remember the fish which we ate *freely* [it is interesting that they use that word in relation to their bondage] in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; 6 but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!” (Num 11.1–6).

1. They complained about the Lord’s provisions,
 - a) so they cried to Him and
 - b) who do you think provided for them?
 - (1) The Lord provided for them,
 - (2) showing His generous grace and magnificent mercy!
2. They complained about their provisions, although
 - a) they did not have to grow it,
 - b) they did not have to purchase it, and
 - c) they did not have to make it!
 - (1) They just had to go out every morning and
 - (2) pick the food off the ground!

E. When Israel heard

1. that gaining the Land of Canaan might be more difficult
2. than they anticipated, they complained,

1 So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 2 And all the children of Israel complained against Moses

and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” 4 So they said to one another, “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt” (Num 14.1–4).

13 “Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us? 14 Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!” (Num 16.13–14).

a) Life was not easy for Israel leaving Egypt and living in the wilderness.

(1) In some ways they had it worse than in Egypt.

(2) However, in other ways it was much better.

(a) They were like all people in that we have a tendency

(b) to think yesterday was better than today.

b) In Ecclesiastes 7, Solomon warned against selective memory,

10 Do not say,
“Why were the former days better than these?”
For you do not inquire wisely concerning this.
(Ecc 7.10)

(1) Israel remembered the good in the Land of Egypt, but

(2) they selectively forgot the bad,

(a) the bad that made them cry out to God about it, and

(b) He answered their prayer by sending Moses,

i) who would take them to their own land,

ii) which God had said was already occupied by someone.

c) Yet, before they even reached the border of Canaan,

(1) they did not like their living conditions.

(2) Being on their own proved to be difficult,

- (a) at least more difficult than life in Egypt
- (b) where everything had been provided for them.

F. First Corinthians 10 teaches Christians to learn from Israel's freedom,

10 ...nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall (1Co 10.10–12).

- 1. Even if we do not make our complaints directly to God,
- 2. they may still be about God.
 - a) Israel made many of its complaints to Moses, but
 - b) he pointed out that truly they complained about God,

8 Also Moses said, "This shall be seen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the LORD hears your complaints which you make against Him. And what are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the LORD" (Exo 16.8).

- 3. Let us be careful with our tongues.
 - a) Let us remember who makes the conditions of our lives.
 - b) Let us be grateful.
 - c) Let us think about the implications of our complaints,
 - (1) whom we implicate.
 - (2) We might be fighting against the Lord.

II. John 5.1–9 – Do You Want to Be Made Well?

A. John 5 records this incident

- 1. that always baffled me,
- 2. until a preacher friend of mine, Russell Wilson,
 - a) when he spoke at Nile Street years ago, and

b) his text was John 5,

1 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. 3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. 4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. {NU-Text omits waiting for the moving of the water at the end of verse 3, and all of verse 4.} 5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity *thirty-eight years*. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" 7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me." 8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." 9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath (John 5.1–9).

B. The man lived in the bondage of paralysis for 38 years!

1. Do you think he had learned to adapt?
2. Do you think he may have gotten used to things being done for him?

C. This man had been immobile for almost four decades!

1. If this incident happened today in 2014,
2. that would mean that he had become paralyzed in 1976!

D. He could not take care of himself.

1. He depended on others.
2. He could use sympathy to get others to do things for him.
 - a) Now if he walks,
 - b) those things will not be true anymore.
 - (1) Suddenly he will have to be responsible.
 - (2) He will have to bear his own burden.

E. Freedom sounds wonderful, but

1. freedom brings many things with it.

2. Yes, it brings
 - a) fulfillment,
 - b) satisfaction,
 - c) contentment,
 - d) rewards,
 - e) adventure,
 - f) prosperity, etc.
3. It also brings
 - a) personal responsibility,
 - b) accountability for actions,
 - c) paying taxes,
 - d) hard work,
 - e) doing things for yourself,
 - f) being dependable,

Exhortation:

I. Christianity does not eliminate life's problems.

II. I once knew a Christian man who admitted

A. that he regretted having known

1. Christ,
2. the Bible, and
3. Christianity.

B. He wanted to sin, but

1. guilt tormented him.
2. Thus, he regretted having known the truth.

III. What does God think and feel when we are not grateful for

A. freedom from various forms of bondage?

B. If we have the wrong attitudes toward God,

1. if we do not want Him in our lives,
 2. how does that affect Him?
 - a) Yet, to whom are we going to cry
 - b) when we need help?
- C. It is true that we suffer now,
1. but if we are patient, and
 2. follow the Lord through the wilderness,
 - a) we will make it to the true land of Canaan.
 - b) However, you have to want to be free indeed!