

Misunderstanding Freedom and Free Will

There is a great misunderstanding of freedom and what it really means to be a follower of Christ. When we become a Christian or follower of Christ we think that our 'free will' is merely about the choice of whether we follow Christ or reject God. But I think we have missed the bigger picture and we ignore some of the verses in the Bible like in Romans 6 "*16Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. 17Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. 18Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.*"

It seems that some people who choose to follow God think they are servants not slaves and can 'choose' to do what God asks of them and He will reward them when they do. However God will be disappointed when they don't do as he asked, so they will confess it later when they want to get back into His good graces. Alternately they see themselves as children of God covered by His grace and part of the royal family, a prince or princess, simply because they follow Him with obedience and diligence they expect to receive blessings and rewards. Eventually people can come to a place in their relationship where they are children of God, but I don't believe this is possible right after accepting God into your life as you would have no idea how to act and behave as royalty, that takes time and training.

How many of us really understand freedom in this matter or faith. We think freedom and free will is about our choice to accept or reject Christ and ultimately God when the truth is that it is really all about whether we submit to follow God's perfect path or carve out our own path in this tainted and decaying world. We don't realize that we are slaves. Our lives were bought with a price, the price of blood, a price we cannot repay. Our life was never our own to begin with that was just the deception pulled over our eyes from birth, that we can choose our own path and make our own choices and society and the world continue to brain wash us with this idea over and over again.

We don't realise that we are slaves to the world and sin, but think we are freely making our own choices not realising all the many things in the world like society, media, friends, family and spiritual forces, that influence those very choices we are making. God has a perfect path for us to follow, and at that moment when we decide to follow Christ or accept Him into our heart/lives, we should submit to following that path that God had set out for our feet to follow, a path that was set out for us to follow even before we were born. But we think choosing to follow God is enough of a choice and that we still have some control over certain parts of our lives, that we get to have a say in the choices that are made. But that is not so true and straightforward as we would like to think it is, our lives no longer belong to us as we thought they did, especially before we believed, they belong to God and we essentially should forfeit all rights to decide which path we will follow. This shouldn't be seen as a bad thing to do, after all following God's perfect path would mean more love, satisfaction, happiness and contentment in our lives.

When God created Adam and Eve, He had a perfect plan for their lives, a plan and path that would have kept them happy and in union with God. But they choose to go their own way and only pain and disappointment followed. We, from birth, believe this lie that they created, that we can choose our own path and make our own choices, this seems to become more evident when we 'choose' to follow God and we makes choices that we

think God would be happy with or we ask Him to bless the choices we make but we never ask for His option or input before we make our decisions.

The truth is, as it is with any slave, that their master dictates their life and what they will or won't achieve in life. God is our master or at least that is the way it should be. He purchased us with the blood of his own Son and that is not the only reason, but on top of being our master He is also our creator. It is His right to tell us, His creation, what our purpose is what we can and can't do, what dreams and goals we will achieve. Not only because He bought us, but also because He created us and He knows the perfect life path for us and the reason why each one of us was created (Psalm 139:14) each of us has a unique purpose that no one in history or the future can fulfil the way God has intended it to be.

Instead of submitting to God, we want to retain some control over our lives so we run around like ants busy, busy, busy, trying to work out our own lives and only call out to Him or include Him when we find that we cannot do it on our own or suddenly find that we are in need. We don't realise through any part of this process that if we had just submitted to God's in the first place, not only our lives to Him, but also our wills and desires, we wouldn't have to struggle so much.

By this time some people who read this might think me a fanatic or extreme in my views, and think we as a creation should have some say in how our lives are run and what decisions we make after all if we don't have a say, doesn't that make us just a bunch of robots. My answer is no, because it is that freedom and free will of yours that says at every decision of your life, that you could do it this or that way, however you free will gives you the freedom to submit to the wisdom of God and follow His direction and leading. Freedom is misunderstood that it allows you to do whatever YOU choose, but freedom is more about responsibility of the right choice rather than making a selfish choice, doing whatever YOU want is what got Adam and Eve into trouble in the first place because they didn't ask God and thought they had the free will to make a selfish choice.

I am not trying to say discussion with God about choices and decisions should not be undertaken, after all it is a relationship and you may want to know why He wants you to go somewhere or do something. But if the final word comes from God, then we know it is good and He won't lead us into harm. After all the Bible tells us in Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, Plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope". If you think about it, does it make sense that you would really argue about what direction to take, when you have no idea where you are going, isn't that like pointing to north and to start walking in that direction despite the fact that you don't have a compass. You could get lucky and find the right direction or you could end up in trouble and in quick sand quickly being swallowed by the wrong decision. It would make more sense and be less detrimental to your life if you leave it up to the one who has the map and a compass and actually knows the right path for you to follow.

Ultimately the choice is up to you how you choose to live your life and whether all choices or only some choices include God in the decision making. But if you choose to make your own choices without God's guidance, don't be surprised if there are pot-holes, bumps rocks and speed-humps in your path, because those are the signs that you have left the solid road of Christ and taking the much less cared for decaying road of self. Psalm 23 tells us that "He leads me beside still waters", if we end up in a place

where life is rough and the waters are rushing by, God didn't lead us there, we did that to ourselves.

Bad things happen to people and then they'll turn around and in arrogance say "Why me?" ... well why not you, were you following His plans did you seek His guidance or it is possibly that in his Omni-science that he knows what this bad thing will lead to, so as with all good Masters and Fathers, allows bad things to happen so that something better can spring forth from a mediocre or bad situation. God doesn't want us to settle for good enough or okay... He wants to give us the best. We live in a broken world and bad things happen to everybody, not just the 'bad' people, but God can bring good from any circumstance Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Becoming a server or child of God takes time, do we really think we can go from being a slave to sin straight to being royalty and a child of God, if this happens so quickly, when did God have the time to get to know us more intimately or more importantly when did we have the time to get to know Him as Father. An adopted child may call a guardian their parent, but only after time of getting to know each other and allowing love to grow will they call them father or dad. If we will submit to God and truly embrace what it means to be a slave to righteousness, then our relationship with God will grow and I believe that we can move from being a slave into being a completely obedience child of God, our wills and choices would be in unity with the Father-heart of God and we would no longer be feeling as if it is our duty to live a righteous life, but we would be voluntary desiring to live that way. So the truth of God's plan is that we may start off as slaves, needing training and guidance on the right way to act and behave while tending to the will of the Master, but through constant obedience and discipline we grow closer to our Master and we transform from a slave to God our Master to a child of the King, our creator and Father.

As I conclude this topic, let us examine Psalm 23 in relation to this subject

Psalm 23

¹The LORD is my shepherd;

We are the sheep, His followers, and Christ is the shepherd or our Master, He leads us down safe paths and when needed pulls us back in line with His shepherd's crook when needed.

I shall not want.

He will supply all our needs, as a master usually does, he supplies all food, water, shelter and rest to his sheep to keep them healthy and content and capable of continuing to follow Him.

²He makes me to lie down in green pastures:

Sometimes we must rest so that we can recover from the traumatic experiences or busyness of life, but if we won't voluntarily rest, he will cause circumstances to happen that will make us rest, for He knows the benefit of rest for even God rested on the seventh day of creation.

he leads me beside the still waters.

If we trust in God completely and where He is leading us, we won't be scared but will be able to drink at the still waters, we will be at peace and content and follow Him without getting caught in the thorns and vines that the world uses to strangle our faith and joy. A shepherd will not take sheep to drink at a rushing river because of the risk that they will be

swept away in the heavy current and if one falls in the rest may follow and if this happened the sheep could drown.

³He restores my soul:

Just as He ensures we rest our bodies, our souls are in great need of restoration as we battle those spiritual elements that seek to destroy us

he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

As slaves we work for our master, doing His will and accomplishing that which He desires. The perfect path that He has set out before us will not only accomplish many great things in our lives, but at the same time we will be doing the will of our Master because after all, it is all about God and we are His representatives on earth so everything we do should be for His name's sake and His glory.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Like a shepherd, Christ NEVER leaves His followers. He said "I will never leave you, nor forsake you" so even when we pass through those darkest times of our lives when we should be scared, we can feel peace and comfort because we know that Christ is with us always protecting us from Harm. Using His rod to deter us from negative and ungodly behaviour, He corrects us and in a loving way He promotes positive growth so that we may grow more Christ-like in all we do.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

Even when the predators are surrounding us, when it seems everyone is out to get us, Christ is with us and will protect us from all harm, He will supply what we need to be nourished, rested and able to continue following His will.

you anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

Christ came to give us abundant life and joy to enjoy the life and world that God created. As we grow in relationship with Christ our shepherd, we can feel closer to Him and vulnerable which can lead to a feeling of an overwhelming love that God has for us. If we allow ourselves to be in complete union with God the Joy of our salvation can be so much that it seems we cannot contain it and our cups will run over as we share this joy with others around us.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

If we follow the perfect path that God has set out for us, then our lives will be filled with the good things and blessings that God desires to give those who cheerfully obey and serve Him. However when we do mess up and stumble, through God's grace He will be merciful to those whose motives and hearts are true to seeking and following Him.

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

If we will follow God and allow Christ to be Lord and Master of our lives so that not only do we come to know God, but through relationship He comes to know us, then we will spend an eternity in heaven with Him as sons & daughters of the King.