

11-29-20

Sermon Series: Finding Truth

Sermon Title: Truth is Freedom

Sermon Text: Philippians 1:1-6

Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry

Sermon Summary:

This message looks at Paul's letter to the Philippians by using the first 6 verses as a guide. In these verses we discover four truths that can help us find real freedom in life! Paul introduces himself as a servant, (slave) of The Lord Jesus Christ and from this we find that being a servant of God brings great freedom to an individual. We then look at how Paul tells us God's plan for our lives was conceived by God, will be carried by God, and will be completed by God. Each of these things, if understood and trusted in, can bring amazing freedom for a person. Other passages from letters Paul wrote, and from other parts of the book of Philippians are used to showcase why truth is freedom.

Full Sermon Notes:

"You reign above it all" I don't know about you, but that gives me great comfort in this crazy year we call 2020! The truth that God reigns supreme and is above everything, also gives me peace, confidence and freedom!! The reason is that God's truth is freedom. Let's pray and ask God to teach us how His truth can set us free! Pray!

Truth is freedom! Let me ask you a question. What is your definition of freedom? Webster says this...

Freedom: the quality or state of being free: such as

a: the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action

b: liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another

If you look the word up on the internet you will find the Oxford dictionary definition which is more modern, but not necessarily more correct...

Freedom: the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint.

Hey kids, I'm so glad you're here with us today. I want to ask you a question...Do you think it would be a good thing if everyone could just do or say whatever they wanted to without any concern how it might hurt someone else? Of course that wouldn't be a good thing! The problem with the more modern definition of freedom is this: When a person has the power or right to act, speak or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint, they can end up doing, saying or thinking things that enslaves them on the one hand to arrogance, hate, and bitterness, and on the other hand, to sorrow, guilt, and worry. Not to mention the harm done to others. But there is such a thing as freedom in Christ! Maybe a good definition of freedom would go something like this...

Freedom - The emotional, mental, spiritual and physical well being and peace that comes from knowing the truth of God's love, His mercy, His principles, and His purpose in our lives.

Before we get to our main text for today's message, I want to establish that truth is freedom, by reminding you of these words spoken by Jesus Himself! Listen...

John 8:31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

John 8:32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

John 8:33 They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

John 8:34 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

John 8:35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.

John 8:36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

John 8:37 I know that you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word.

Jesus knew the Jewish people who had once been enslaved to the Egyptians, had now become slaves to the law. The law was given to show them the right way to live so the law wasn't evil, it was good! However, the law had revealed the wickedness of humankind and trying to live up to the law by their own goodness had enslaved them to a life of striving to do what they had no power to do! God knew this dilemma and had sent Jesus to save us! Paul the Apostle knew as well as anyone the futility of trying to earn salvation by good works and living by the letter of the law. He wrote the following words in Romans 7...

Romans 7:22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law;

Romans 7:23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

Romans 7:24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

Romans 7:25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord...

Folks, that's a powerful truth! Paul knew this truth needed to be taught because it was the truth that would bring freedom to peoples lives! This theology is found in all of the letters Paul wrote and he wanted to get this message of truth to people so they could experience the freedom found in Christ. Listen to the way he put it in his letter to the Romans...

Romans 7:5 For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.

Romans 7:6 But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

So with the words of Jesus and this Pauline theology as a backdrop, I want us to look at Paul's letter to the Church at Philippi, which will be in your Bible readings for the coming week. Our text

for today is Philippians 1:1-6. In this passage we are going to discover why Truth is Freedom! Let's look at the first two verses which are an introduction, but pack a lot of truth about freedom...

1. Truth is Freedom because it teaches what it really means to be a servant of God!

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

Philippians 1:2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is fascinating that Paul talks about being a servant of Christ Jesus right off the bat. The literal word here is slave. And Paul goes on to say, "To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus." When he says, "in Christ Jesus, Paul is implying they were all servants of Jesus and he goes on to use the terminology..."the Lord Jesus Christ!" This indicates complete submission to Christ and His leadership in our lives. Theologian Frank Stagg said this...

"To be 'in Christ' is not only to be bound to Him individually by faith, trust, and commitment; but it is to be bound together with His people."

Now I know you might be thinking these are strange verses to read when talking about freedom, because Paul is talking about being bound to Jesus and to His people! And what's more, Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter. But even prison could not rob Paul of his freedom in Christ! True freedom comes in complete surrender to Jesus as the Master of our lives and when Jesus is your Master He casts out all of the old taskmasters who were once in control of your life in harmful ways! Paul wants people to know that freedom is found in Christ, because Jesus is the way, the truth and the life! Paul's use of words indicates that real freedom comes only to those who are willing to surrender and submit to the Lordship of Christ in their lives. Let me explain this real quick. When a person admits they need a Savior, believes Jesus died on the cross to be that Savior, and calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus to be their Savior, then the penalty for their sin is forever taken away. This happens when we first accept Him into our lives. But we must understand that Jesus' death on the cross was not only to take away the penalty of sin, but the power of sin. However, here's a truth we must understand: Finding freedom from the penalty of sin happens when Jesus becomes our Savior, one and done, but finding freedom from the power of sin happens daily as we allow Jesus to be the Lord of our lives, our choices, our attitudes, and our actions! Paul says...

Philippians 1:2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's grace is a gift given at salvation and daily as we make the decision to allow Jesus to be Lord of that day. What follows is God's peace. These truths bring amazing freedom into the lives of followers of Jesus! What Paul says next will guide the rest of our message today and you don't want to miss the truth of what he is about to say because your freedom depends on this truth...

Philippians 1:4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy
Philippians 1:5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,
Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Here's what Paul says to his fellow believers who had partnered with him in sharing the gospel: God began a good work in you, God will carry that work He began in you, and God will complete the work He began in you! In other words, God conceived it, God carries it, and God completes it. This truth will bring great freedom to those who accept it and understand it. How so, let me show you!

2. Truth is Freedom because it reveals God conceived a plan for your life!!

Paul was confident that God had begun the good work in the lives of the believers there at Philippi! He knew that things were not easy for them, and we know from some of Paul's other letters that the Church at Philippi was surrounded by a very hostile culture of religious cults, and paganism. Paul himself had been mistreated by these non-believers when he was there. So Paul wanted his brothers and sisters in Christ, his partners in the gospel, to be reminded and encouraged by the fact that God was the One who had conceived the plan to take the gospel to Philippi, and God was the One who had reached out to the people there with the Good News of Jesus! When a person knows the life they are living originated with God, and their relationship with God was initiated by God in the first place, a great confidence follows and how freeing is that? When we realize God began the work in us, we find freedom from the fear of insignificance. Why? Because you are so important to God that He created you in the first place, and in His image, I might add, and He has a plan for your life, which can only mean one thing: You are not insignificant! Your life is not insignificant! Let me remind you of some very well known Bible verses that bear this out. Very well known Scriptures, but they bear repeating often because their truth is freedom...

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

You see, God took the initiative! God so loved, God gave, God saves! Frank Stagg once again weighs in with his commentary on Paul's letter...

"Divine initiative in calling and human response in faith, both belong to one's becoming a saint...The term (saint) applies to all Christians, not to a select few of special spirituality or moral excellence. Saints are such by divine calling, and they are also ones who on their part have called upon the Lord Jesus Christ!"

God takes the initiative and offers us forgiveness, salvation, and a personal relationship with Him! Way back in the Old Testament we read these words in Jeremiah's often quoted passage...

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Paul actually says this in so many words a little later in his letter...

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

Philippians 2:13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

That verse is one of the promises of God which I am most thankful for... “it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose! God has a good and noble purpose for your life! Now you might be wondering what Paul meant when he said “work out your salvation”? Notice, Paul didn’t say “work ‘for’ your salvation”, he said “Work ‘out’ your salvation!” What does that mean? It means we are to allow the power and the grace of our salvation to be worked out into every area of our lives as we allow Jesus to be Lord of our thought life, our work life, our family life, our school life, our hobby life, our entertainment life, and our social life! And this leads us to this very important truth...

3. Truth is Freedom because it discloses how God carries out His plan for your life!

God conceived a plan for your life, but He also carries out His plan for your life by providing everything you will need to live that plan! Talk about freedom! You don’t have to worry, fret, despair, or fear when it comes to how you will live the life God has called you to live. We only have to be submissive to God’s plan by allowing Jesus to be Lord of our daily life! Paul paints several beautiful pictures of what submission to Christ looks like. Let’s look at the one found in chapter 2...

Philippians 2:1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, Philippians 2:2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

Philippians 2:4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Philippians 2:6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

Philippians 2:7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Philippians 2:9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,
Philippians 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
Philippians 2:11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

You might say, "But Pastor Larry I could never be that good!" And I would say, "You're absolutely right! You can't, but God can through you! Did you notice the "if--then" statement Paul begins with? He says...

Philippians 2:1 Therefore **if** you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, **if** any comfort from his love, **if** any common sharing in the Spirit, **if** any tenderness and compassion, Philippians 2:2 **then** make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

a. God carries out His plan by uniting us with Jesus!

Our encouragement comes from being united with Christ! Once you've accepted Jesus as your Savior you are united with Christ. How so? Listen to what Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans...

Romans 6:4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Romans 6:5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—

United with Christ! People, that's freedom!

b. God carries out His plan by comforting us with His love!

How does the comfort of God's love help carry out His plan for our lives? When you realize how much God loves you it will motivate and strengthen you with all the strength you will need to live the life God has called you to live. Paul wrote about this powerfully in his letter to the Church at Ephesus. Listen...

Ephesians 3:16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

Ephesians 3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

Ephesians 3:18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

Ephesians 3:19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Ephesians 3:21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

c. God carries out His plan by the power of His Holy Spirit!

Paul said he put no confidence in his flesh, his power, his credentials, or his righteousness, but rather Paul said...

Philippians 3:3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve (worship) God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—

Paul was saying that true circumcision was a heart thing and accomplished by God rather than by the hands of men. The fact that we are united with Christ, comforted by His love and empowered by His Holy Spirit, brings a freedom that gives us confidence to say with Paul...

Philippians 4:12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

d. God carries out His plan by motivating us with tenderness and compassion!

When we begin seeing the world through the eyes of Jesus, we will begin to care about others and want them to know the same good news that changed our lives. Paul was once a very harsh and cruel man. However, once he accepted Jesus as his Savior and began allowing Jesus to be the Lord of his life, everything changed! He went from throwing people into prison, to being imprisoned for his faith in Jesus and rather than being angry at his captors, he had tenderness and compassion on them because he realized they were the real prisoners. He wanted them to be set free. In fact, listen to what he said...

Philippians 1:12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.

Philippians 1:13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

Philippians 1:14 And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

Wow! I want to have that kind of freedom in Christ! Most of us would be throwing a fit that we were in prison and our rights had been violated! Paul was like, “hey God’s allowing me to share the gospel with these prison guards, how cool is that?”

4. Truth is Freedom because it ensures God will complete His plan for your life!

So God conceives the plan He has for our lives, He carries out His plan for our lives, and He will complete His plan for our lives! There's great freedom in knowing that we don't have to depend on our own power to live the life that God wants us to live and that he will provide for us everything we need to live that life. And the fact that God completes his goals for our lives as we follow him can also bring great freedom. We don't have to worry about our future or for our eternity because that's in God's hands for He who began a good work in us will complete it! It's not that we don't strive to be all God wants us to be, for His glory, we do, but we don't have to worry that we won't make it, because God will get us to the finish line if we will place our trust in Him. Paul talked about his desire to reach his God-given goals...

Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Philippians 3:11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Philippians 3:13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

Philippians 3:14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

What a goal!! I want to have the same goal in my life but sometimes I worry about reaching that goal. Even though I know God has saved my soul and called me to be a servant of God, and that He conceived the plan for my life, and promised to carry that plan out in my life by His power and provision, I sometimes struggle with worry, and fear does at times creep in. I come up with these "what if" scenarios. But Lord, what if this happens, or that happens. You probably don't deal with such things, but I do! You know, God knew I was going to struggle with this so He inspired Paul to write something in his letter to the Philippians, just for me! Well, maybe not just for me! But very much for me and maybe for you!

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Philippians 4:5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Those verses are on a card on my desk. I repeat them to myself often! Paul is writing from prison and he says Rejoice in the Lord always! He then reminds us that the Lord is near! That alone should bring confidence. Then he says not to be anxious about anything, but to pray with thanksgiving as you present your request to God! Praying with thanksgiving simply means that

you acknowledge and thank God that He keeps His promises. And how about this promise at the end of Paul's letter to the Philippians...

Philippians 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

When you realize the truth that when it comes to God's plan for your life, God conceived it, God carries it, and God will complete it, then...

Philippians 4:7 ...the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Let's Pray!