TITLE: Real Freedom!

TEXT: John 8:31-34; James 1:23; Acts 16:22-28

INTRODUCTION: Did everyone have a good Independence day?

 July 4th we celebrated our 238th Independence day in this nation. For 238 years we have been a free nation!

 A nation that is not under the rule, oppressive or otherwise, of any other nation.

 America has become synonymous with the word freedom.

 As a nation we undoubtedly enjoy more freedom than any other nation in the world. Today. It is what has drawn countless millions to our shores---In search of the freedom that only can be found in America.

 But just the fact that we live in a free nation doesn't necessarily make us free men and women.

 Of the individuals that comprise this nation today, there are probably more that are in bondage, of one kind or another, than of any other time in our nation’s history.

 In fact, our freedoms in this nation, in a lot of cases, are the direct cause for a lot of our bondages…

 Because we have the right to choose, possibly more than any other individuals that comprise any other nation, we have more choices available to us that can lead us into the bondage of slavery.

 There are a lot of addictive substances that we are free to use in this nation that bring us under the yoke of bondage.... Just the effects of alcohol abuse alone in this country is staggering... not to mention the current epidemic of drug abuse..

 We have freedom of speech and freedom of expression and because of that freedom pornography is available to us from everywhere from the news stand to the TV set to the internet! Many become enslaved to the grips of its effects…

 We may not be in bondage to any other nation, but our freedom itself at times has led to enslavement.

 Webster defines freedom as: ***Not under another's control, loose, clear, unrestricted....***

 The ironic thing is that this is just how God created man.

 Not under another’s control…

 Man was created with free moral agency, with the right to choose for ourselves.

 What is ironic is that from the very beginning of time man, being free to choose, has often chosen to be in bondage to one sort of thing or another.

 Adam, the first man, the only truly free man, made the choice of disobedience to God and by that choice he fell into bondage and became enslaved to a sin nature.

 And since that time each and every one of us has made that same choice! The choice of disobedience to God which leads to the bondage and slavery of sin.

 Let’s go to a portion of Scripture that I believe closely parallels where we are at in this country today.

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

**32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."**

Jesus was speaking to believers here. It says;

 To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said:

**If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.**

**32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."**

 Real freedom, true freedom, The freedom that God has for us, the freedom that He intended for us when He created us has nothing to do with placement, what country we may live in.

 That is why we can live in a country such as the United States of America and still be in the bondage and shackles of slavery.

 These Jews, even though they were under Roman occupation didn't see themselves as slaves.

 **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?"**

 To them, Roman rule was just a form of government.... They still had their own commerce. They owned their own property; they were free to express themselves however they wished in regards to their religion....

 They paid taxes to Rome much like we pay taxes to our government and they had to live by certain laws just like we have to.....

 They certainly didn't think of themselves as slaves to anyone... In their minds and in their culture they were a free people.

 So they say to Jesus---"**How can you say that we shall be set free?"**

**34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.**

 Real freedom isn't defined by where we are, it is defined by who and what we are.

 **Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.**

 How many times have you heard people say, how many times have you heard Christians say, well, I am human and as a human I will sin...Even as a Christian I will occasionally sin because I still have a sin nature.

 Scripture says that **“anyone then who knows the good that he ought to do and does'nt do it, sins!"**

 What we need to realize is this-- If we sin, and we can't help but sin, then we are a sinner and a slave to sin! It still has us mastered!

 Isn't that what slavery is? Not being able to do what you want or know that you should do?

 If we don't want to sin but find that we do it anyway then can we really say that we have been freed from sin and that it no longer has mastery over us?

 The word for free used here is:

**{el-yoo-ther-o'-o}**

**1) to make free**

**2) set at liberty: from the dominion of sin**

It comes from the root word:

**{el-yoo'-ther-os}**

**1) freeborn**

**1a) in a civil sense, one who is not a slave**

**1b) of one who ceases to be a slave, freed, manumitted**

**2) free, exempt, unrestrained, not bound by an obligation**

**3) in an ethical sense: free from the yoke of the Mosaic Law**

 How is the only way that one can be free from the yoke, the burden of the Mosaic Law, Gods law to man?

 To be saved and cleansed by the blood of Jesus and then going ahead breaking the law because we are no longer under its yoke, its authority?

 Church, if it was sin to break Gods law before we came to Christ it is still sin if we break it after we come to Christ.

 We are not freed from the yoke of the law by not having to keep it, we are freed from the yoke of the law by being given the ability to keep it that we didn't have before we came to Christ.

 You see, it is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit of Christ in our life that gives us the ability to do that which we could not do before--- Live up to the letter of the law! To obey God! To become Holy just as He is Holy! To live lives free from the bondages of sin!

 Church, this is the freedom that Jesus came to secure for us..

 To not just save us from our past sin but to deliver us from future sinning! He does that by giving us the ability, through the work of the Holy Spirit in our life, to stop sinning.

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

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

**36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**

 Jesus said:

**"If you hold to my teaching,**

**32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."**

**36 (and) if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**

 So how do we find this freedom that God has for us, that Christ has secured for us?

 Jesus said:

**"If you hold to my teaching,**

 Hold= **meno {men'-o}**

**1) to remain, abide, to sojourn, tarry**

**1a2) not to depart**

 It means to be a doer of the Word and not just hearer of it!.

 **Jame 1:23 (NIV) Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror**

**24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.**

**25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.**

**"If you hold to my teaching,**

**32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."**

**36 (and) if the Son sets you free, you will be free \*\*indeed.**

Indeed= {**on'-toce}**

**1) truly, in reality, in point of fact, as opp. to what is pretended, fictitious, false,**

 If Jesus sets you free then you are truly, in reality, in fact free!

 Church, there are those who live in atheistic, communistic countries where just the profession of their faith could get them imprisoned or killed that are experiencing a greater degree of freedom than many in America who are lost and being held captive by the bondages of sin….

 Because real freedom is not determined by where we are, what environment that we may be in, it is determined by who we are on the inside.

 Example of real freedom:

**Acts 16:22 (NIV) The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten.**

**23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.**

**24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.**

**25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.**

**26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.**

**27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.**

**28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"**

 Paul and Silas where in a Philippian jail because of their profession of Christ, their backs laid open by a whip, shackled in their dungeon cell with chains....

 By all outward appearances they certainly couldn't be looked at as free in any sense of the word...

 But by their actions they showed that they experienced a freedom that almost defies definition.....

 You see they were free on the inside!

 It says that they had been severely flogged! (Cat of nine tails)

 They were in the inner cell (dark damp, no light, a very dreary place)

 They were in prison!

 Yet it says that about midnight that they were praying and singing hymns to God.

 How could they, in the condition that they must have been in, be sitting there singing and praising God?

 Because they were really free men, they were free on the inside!

 They had been freed by the blood of Jesus! They had been forgiven their sin and given the ability to go and sin no more! As they surrendered their lives to Christ and were allowing Him to live His life through them they experienced a new found freedom that was not dependent on outside circumstances!

 They were free on the inside!

 EXAMPLE: I use a Bible in the Jail ministry put together for those that are incarcerated called Free on the inside.

 It says this on the back cover:

 “**Freedom from the bars of prison can get you outside, but it can’t change you inside. You know what it is to be bound by bars. But many people, even on the outside, are held prisoner to a life without hope. Perhaps you know what it is to be captive to despair. This book offers you a better hope than getting out—the chance to draw near to God and be given a new life through Him.**

 **Open this book and you will find there’s only one way to be free on the inside.”**

 Example of inmates saved… Over the years of jail ministry I have had several men and women come to a saving faith in Christ while behind bars.

 Men and women who were held captive by the bars of a jail and many headed on to be placed behind the bars of a prison and yet they had come to a greater freedom than many who are on the outside of those walls. They became free on the inside.

 One man who I had in Bible studies at the Jail for about 13 months while he went through the trial process for a serious crime he had committed came to Christ and the last time that I spoke with him before he was sentenced said that he didn’t know how much time he would be given but whatever sentence he ended up with it was ok because he had placed his life in God’s hands and whatever God’s will for him was he was OK with it.

 He was sentenced the next day to two consecutive 25 years terms

 How about you this morning?

 Have you experienced the real freedom that is not dependent on outside circumstances?

Have you been set free by the truth of Jesus Christ?

Are you free on the inside?

 Have you allowed Jesus to come and be the Lord and Savior of your life, setting you free from the bondage of your sin?

 Invitation...

 Is it your desire today To be set free from sin & condemnation by allowing Jesus to become Lord and Savior?

 To resolve to be, not just a hearer of the Word but to become a doer of the Word. To hold on to His teachings--to allow Jesus to change your life by allowing Him to live His life through you?