



# **CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS**

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## Called to Freedom

June 26, 2022

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TEXT: Luke 4:18-21 (NIV)

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Galatians 5:13 (NIV)

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

2 Corinthians 3:17 (NIV)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

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Well, about 30 years ago, the eyes of the world were drawn to the dramatic rescue of two stranded gray whales in Alaska. The Alaskan winter had arrived early that year with an ever-increasing covering of solid ice that eventually cut off the whales from the open sea. A few kindhearted Eskimos with chainsaws attempted to slice through the ice to preserve a breathing hole for the whales. Now, media outlets picked up on what was happening here and they broadcast the Eskimos’ valiant efforts. And soon volunteers arrived from all around the area with heavy machinery and a determination to free the whales. But the volunteers’ energy was soon exhausted. And so, the National Guard sent helicopters to drop five ton concrete bashers to break up the ice around the whales. And then in a joint effort with the United States and the

Soviet Union, the Soviet Union agreed to dispatch two massive icebreaking ships to carve a channel so the whales could swim free. This whole effort of the whales required or called forth the combined effort of two governments, three weeks of heavy labor, and a cost of back then, even 30 years ago, over \$1 million. Maybe you remember if you if you were alive back then, seeing some clips of this on the evening news.

This story really hints at the longing, the passion, the desire, the love that human beings have for freedom. For freedom. There's this universal thirst, longing, desire for freedom in the human heart. As a matter of fact, throughout history, people of nearly all cultures have had some sense of valuing and desiring and pursuing freedom in its many different ways: in their in their organizing of governments, their organizing of communities, their artwork, and the creation of art and writings and behaviors and how people operate. There's this longing, this thirst for freedom.

You know, as we're heading towards the 4th of July now and the Independence Day celebration, the celebration here in the United States of our freedoms that we enjoy, that our forefathers fought for, these two weeks, this week and next week on the CC Broadcast here, we're talking about this nuanced topic of freedom. You know, some people define freedom as we see with the whales there as a as being free from external restraints, the restraints of the ice and freedom. You know, a prisoner is not free because of the external cell restraints, but freedom from prison is to physically move out of prison. Others, like the Greeks of antiquity, and often what we think of around the July 4th time, is the view of freedom in a political sense, of the freedom of people to operate in a nation and make their own choices and move forward with their own creativity. But the freedom in the Old Testament is focused primarily, you know, in many different ways, but primarily on freedom from slavery. In a sin-sick world, slavery happens and oppression happens. And the Old Testament focuses on people being freed from slavery. And it's a foreshadowing of the New Testament when God came among us to free human beings from that deep enslavement inside of us, to what the Scripture refers to as our nature of sin or our enslavement, to an old nature, an old, old Adam inside of us. And then also freeing us from the evil one, the clutches of the evil one, and the power of death.

So as we head towards the 4th of July, it's a great time to remind ourselves of the of the gift of freedom that God brings to us and in its many different forms and refresh ourselves on what the Scripture says about it. You know, they signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and then 11 years later in 1778, those that went before us and made all these sacrifices and pledge to themselves their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor because of this lust, this

desire, this urgency for freedom that they were feeling, this universal thirst, they signed the Constitution, the First Amendment, and these work to protect five basic freedoms: the freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, the freedom of press, the freedom of assembly, and the freedom to petition the government. And these five freedoms have made the people of the United States among the freest in the history of the world. And this has unleashed human creativity at a potential never before seen. And this is a gift from Almighty God. And these freedoms should be guarded. You know, the Second Amendment and the Bill of Rights and the first ten amendments, actually, they formed this foundation for freedom and undermined slavery itself. This country has released so many from oppression. We're not perfect by any means, but there's no perfect organized government in the history of the world. And the unleashing that has happened in the United States is worth celebrating.

When we look at what the Scripture says about freedom, we see some real basic tenets that are true there. God has revealed to us numbers of things about freedom. And when He said that He is, he is really pro freedom. 2 Corinthians 3:17 says the Lord is the Spirit. You know, you can't see him. He's a spirit. But where the spirit of the Lord is, you can sense him like the wind, where the spirit of the Lord is. The Scripture says there is freedom. Where God is near, more freedom breaks out on all different kinds of fronts. The evidence that God is pro-freedom is there at the very beginning in creation. In Genesis 2 we read that the Lord God took man and put Him in the Garden of Eden to work it and care for it. And the Lord commanded the man, You're free. You're free to eat from any tree in the garden, except for one. If you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you will certainly die. But other than that, you're free to eat from any tree. A little bit later, Genesis 2, He said The Lord formed out of the ground all the wild animals, all the birds in the sky, and he brought them to the man to see what he would name them. And whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals.

Wired into his original design, God put in the human heart in his creation of human beings, made in his image as a free God. He put into our hearts the freedom of thought, the freedom of expression, the freedom of choice. God is pro-freedom. As a matter of fact, when you go through the Old Testament, you see evil start to ensnare the Israelite, God's chosen people. We see then that God is against slavery and oppression so clearly. When He came to Moses, it recorded for in Exodus 3:7-10. "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I've heard them crying out because of their slave drivers. I'm concerned about their suffering. So I've come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians. The cry of the Israelites has reached me," he said. "I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now go. I'm

sending you, he said to Moses, to Pharaoh, to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt, out of captivity and into freedom.”

When Jesus came among us, we see it in the New Testament, and he started his earthly ministry. He went to Nazareth, he picked up a scroll, and he read that scroll which had the spirit of the Lord is on me, where the spirit of the Lord there's freedom. The Spirit of the Lord is on me because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. God is pro-freedom, but because we turned against him and were tempted and used our freedom in a way that was dishonoring to him, then this enslavement entered the world, sin entered the world, and the evil one started to get a foothold in human life and in the world. And so now this battle between our freedom and our enslavement at every level of existence continues to wage. It's a war, a war going on between freedom and enslavement, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, politically. And it's all around us, this battle.

And so we see clearly, as we read the Scriptures that God is pro freedom. But because of this battle, a freedom once gained, God can give to us and move us into is not indefinitely secured. We see this pattern through his people throughout history. They move into freedom and they misuse that freedom. And they don't keep it. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Paul writes, We should stand firm in it, be courageous in it. We shouldn't let ourselves slip back and be burdened again by the yoke of slavery. This pattern of history. Keep this in mind. When you think about our nation, it's something we have to keep fighting for. The evil one hates the freedom and the life that's been unleashed in freedom. He hates this. A newly found freedom cannot be always comfortably walked in.

I found this to be true when I went off to college and I experienced an enormous amount of freedom that first year. I know when my folks pulled out of the parking lot my freshman year, and I had this sense of, “I'm totally on my own now. I can make my own choices, do what I want, manage my own time.” That kind of freedom can be overwhelming to people who've never experienced it. There's such a thing as a “chained elephant syndrome” where we're an elephant that's chained when it's younger, gets so used to being enslaved by that chain and they grow old, or they don't even know they could walk free. They wouldn't have the capacity to do it. And human beings can be the same. We can get so used to our enslavement that we don't know how to walk in freedom, or maybe we don't even want to. You know, when God freed the Israelites from Egypt and he had them out in the desert and Moses and Aaron were

leading them, the scripture tells us the whole congregation of the Sons of Israel started to grumble against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness there. And they said to them, "We would wish that we had died at the Lord's hands in the land of Egypt. It would have been better. We sat there dependent on Egypt, not free, but we had food, pots of meat and we ate to the full." And that wasn't always the case. But they looked back on their enslavement and some of the dependents and people taking care of them there. It wasn't what they thought, but the new freedom was too much for them to handle. King Solomon wrote, "A dog sometimes returns to its vomit or a sow that is washed, sometimes returns to wallowing in the mud." And so a free person sometimes doesn't like the responsibility of freedom and will go back to their enslavement, enslavement of almost any kind. But the scripture says it is for freedom that Christ came to set us free and we should not let ourselves be burdened again and go back into slavery.

God is pro freedom and there's this battle for freedom between freedom and enslavement that's waging all the time in the world around us. And this freedom to walk in and takes faith and courage and discipline and persistence and responsibility to achieve and to maintain. And this is why – and this is story at the signing of the Constitution, after Dr. Benjamin Franklin signed the Constitution, he left the Constitutional Convention and was walking outside when Mrs. Power of Philadelphia asked him, "Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?" And Dr. Franklin replied to Mrs. Power, "You have a republic. If you can keep it," because a freedom once gained is not a freedom indefinitely secured, there's a there's a war going on around freedom and slavery.

And where there is freedom, people will abuse it. And when we abuse it, we start to lose it because we use freedom indulgently and selfishly and immorally. We're actually moving back towards slavery. People think that being free to do what they want to do, whatever lust they have in their heart is what they want. But ultimately, those lusts can take over and enslave them yet again. You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free, the scripture says. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh. We have the right to do anything, the Scripture says. But not everything is beneficial, and we shouldn't become mastered by everything. Freedom is a precious gift to be guarded, to be steward, not to be abused and not to hurt others with.

But ultimately, freedom is not the final goal. The final goal of moving into freedom is something far more important than freedom. Freedom allows this goal to happen. The end goal, the Scripture says, is not freedom. Though God is pro-freedom. The end goal of freedom

is love. It's love. You my brothers and sisters were called to be free. But we shouldn't use our freedom in a selfish way to do whatever we want. But we should use that freedom to serve one another humbly in love. We should be careful, the Scripture says, how we exercise our freedoms. We shouldn't flaunt them in front of others. Think about our culture and what's happening in our culture, friends. We're living in celebrating very often a freedom that's not biblical. It's a mirage. It's something that will lead us back into slavery. We shouldn't flaunt our freedoms. We should be responsible in our freedoms. We should honor God with our freedoms, live in a moral upright way before Him with the freedoms we have. And ultimately use the freedoms to serve one another in love.

God is pro-freedom. There's a battle raging between freedom and enslavement all around our world. It takes courage and faith and discipline to walk in this freedom. And as we do it, ultimately, we're walking in it so that we might fulfill the greatest commandment of loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And then the second command, it is like a Jesus said to turn and love our neighbor as ourselves. Friends, freedom is given to us to, to be responsible with, to serve Almighty God with, so that we might glorify and honor and praise Him. And then as we have this connection with him and his love grows in our hearts, we can pour that love out to those around us. This is what it means to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, to experience the freedom, the glorious freedom, of the children of God through the work of His Spirit in our lives. Once we come to be forgiven for our sin and that sin is done away with and atone for, we're set free from the power of sin, and the freedom of God's Spirit can work in our lives and flow through us like rivers of living water, so we might pour that love out to those around us with kindness and patience and gentleness and truth and love. Friends, this is the goal of freedom. And what a glorious design God has for us that we walk in freedom, loving one another and loving Him. This will not be perfectly experienced until Heaven, but we're called to do what we can to live in this freedom now and use that freedom in loving and caring for one another.

There's an unquestionable correlation between the spirit of God being present and freedom. We need more of this spirit in our nation being poured out as we head towards the 4th of July. Let's pray for that end. Heavenly Father, thank you for this time to turn to you and ask you to pour your spirit out upon us and bring freedom into our land. Help us maintain the freedoms we have, expand those freedoms, and call people to want to steward them well and honor you with the freedoms you've given us. All this comes as a gift from your hand and through the shed blood of your son, Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.