

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: MEN ARE FREE -- THROUGH CHRIST

Scripture: Book of Mormon, II Nephi 1:116-121

And the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall, they have become free for ever, knowing good from evil; To act for themselves, and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the Lord, at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given. Wherefore men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; For he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

Ye are free to act for yourselves; to choose the way
of everlasting death, or the way of eternal life.

Are you free? Think well before you answer. The Pharisees were astonished and insulted when Jesus suggested that if they would follow him they would know the truth, and the truth would make them free. "We be of Abraham's seed," they said, "and were never in bondage to any man." And yet at the moment they spoke they were in political bondage to Rome, and even more in bondage to false tradition, pride, and superstition.

Bondage is not always immediately apparent. Sometimes we are so accustomed to the cords and shackles of our bondage that we do not even notice them. Sometimes we love our own ease and pleasure too well to exercise the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, and before we know it find ourselves in bondage. Sometimes we indulge in things that give a certain physical pleasure or gratification, and suddenly waken to find ourselves slaves to habit, appetite, and passion.

Adam's fall made him a captive of Satan, subject to the bondage and thrall-
dom of death. He was not free to live after the fall, but doomed to die -- and all his posterity inherited the same consequences. In his own strength there was nothing he could do, no price he could pay, which would break that bondage. Suppose that no provision had ever been made to redeem man from death. Death would then have held all mankind in bondage to Satan forever. There would have been no choice, and no purpose or result to be achieved by a choice if there had been one. Logically, if there is to be a

choice, there must be at least two alternatives from which to choose. If there is only cherry pie, you are not at liberty to choose apple pie. You may be at liberty to choose to eat cherry pie or none at all. But in the case of Adam's posterity there was not even that choice. They could not choose to take death or leave it; it could be escaped only if there was available an alternative choice of life.

If man had been eternally confronted with only one alternative -- death -- with never any hope or prospect of the alternative, life, then there would have been no meaning or significance to any choice. Whether he chose love or hate, righteousness or wickedness, the end would have been the same -- death. This would have been the worst kind of bondage, because it would have been complete, total, eternal, and without a single ray of hope.

God has never been willing to make man a slave -- even to righteousness. God wants man to be free to act for himself, to choose his way of life, and then to be responsible for the consequences of his own free choices and free actions. The war in heaven was fought over this issue. Lucifer wanted to compel all men to come to God by force; God rejected this method because he could not consent either to enslave man or to share his own glory with Lucifer, the son of the morning. Lucifer rebelled, and in the ensuing war in heaven, he and his followers were cast out to become the devil and his angels.

Ever since that event, Satan has been continuing his ancient efforts to destroy man's agency and his freedom to choose. And on the other hand, God has continued to exert his power to preserve man's agency, man's freedom to act for himself and not to be acted upon, save in punishment that comes as the consequence of his own freely chosen acts.

Satan's temptation of Eve and of Adam was a part of this general, over-all scheme to trap and enslave all men, and bring them under bondage. God could not stand unconcernedly by and permit this complete loss and destruction of man's liberty. Therefore, from the very foundation of the world, God provided that his Only Begotten Son should come into the world to redeem men from the fall and from its consequences of death. By his own resurrection, Jesus made it possible for all men to be restored again to life. He supplied the alternative to death. Knowing of this redemption, all men from Adam until now have been made free to choose between life and death. Because Jesus came, if they repent and choose righteousness and good, there is a certainty of life, just as there is a certainty of continued death and bondage to Satan for those who deliberately choose evil. Choice now has meaning, as each choice we make, however small, makes its contribution to the great and eternal choice which we may freely make through Christ -- the choice between life and death.

Several Book of Mormon writers lay considerable stress on this relationship between Christ's atonement and redemption of man, and man's agency, or his freedom to choose for himself. "The Lord our God has redeemed us and made us free." "Behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge, and he hath made you free." "Ye are free to act for yourselves, to choose the way of everlasting death, or the way of eternal life." "They are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and

power of the devil....."

One thing which most of us do not stop to realize, as we enjoy the liberty of thought, of speech, of worship, and of action guaranteed to us under the laws of a free nation, is that every bit of freedom we have is made possible and made significant by the redemption Christ made for us. If Jesus had not made it possible for men to choose life, what difference would it have made whether they made right choices, or any choices at all in life? The devil would have gotten them anyway.

Freedom is from God. The right to freedom is inherent and inalienable; freedom itself must sometimes be dearly bought -- as it was in the gift of God's own Son -- or as it has been in many of the wars fought to liberate men from the bondage of tyrants. One thing is sure; God is always on the side of freedom and life, and Satan is always on the side of bondage, slavery, and death.

One does not have to look very far today in the affairs of men and of governments to discern that Satan is still trying to bring men into bondage and death. He seeks to enslave them spiritually and religiously, by binding with the chains of ignorance, superstition, and fear. He enslaves men by means of corrupt, tyrannical and cruel rulers and governments. He enslaves men to the physical -- to appetite, habit, and lust. He enslaves them economically, binding them down with great burdens of debt. He binds them socially with prejudice against race, class, and color.

We must never lose heart in this battle which has been continuing since before the creation of the world, for God is still on the side of freedom. It is still his will and his eternal purpose to make men free to choose for themselves, to exercise free moral agency, to choose life or death according to their desires. To this end he sent his Son, and to this end he will not rest until every man has made his free choice and been granted the results and the consequences of that choice.