

## ISAIAH

### LIBERTY IS NOT LICENSE

Gal. 5:13; I Pet. 2:16

#### INTRODUCTION

Bob Iverson tells of the man who went to one of the new style worship services in which a "rock and roll" record was being played at ear-shattering levels (Rolling Stones now hold Guinness record of decibels 120 . . . SST Concorde is 130 decibels at take off). When he asked the young man in charge why such noise, the youth replied that this was an expression of "doing one's own thing." The older man, then, did "his own thing" by getting out his pocket knife and destroying the amplifier.

This illustrates the human problem of knowing and practicing freedom or liberty.

#### I. NO SUCH THING AS ABSOLUTE FREEDOM FOR MAN

#### II. TRUE FREEDOM

- A. Is when human beings recognize their limitation and obligations
- B. Is always relative and relational. It is relative to the will of the Absolute Creator and in relation to knowing and abiding in His will and fellowship with other human beings.
- C. True freedom is:
  - 1. Legacy
  - 2. Not license
  - 3. Liability

#### DISCUSSION

#### I. LIBERTY IS OUR LEGACY

- A. Christ came to free mankind.

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1. "Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not continue in the house forever; the son continues forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." Jn. 8:34-36
  2. "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Jn. 8:31
  3. The most important freedom Christ gives is freedom from falsehood. He reveals the real, abiding, saving, edifying TRUTH about who God is, who man is and how life is to be lived. YOU SEE, THE DEVIL LIED TO EVE AND ADAM ABOUT THAT AND HAS DECEIVED MOST OF MANKIND SINCE. . . . MAN ACTS ACCORDING TO WHAT HE BELIEVES. WHEN THE DEVIL DECEIVED MAN INTO BELIEVING AND DOING A LIE, HE ENSLAVED MAN WITH GUILT, FEAR AND SELFISHNESS.
- B. The real hindrance to true freedom is not God's Law (His Will) BUT GUILT, FEAR AND SELFISHNESS.
1. These are the elements Satan uses to keep men in bondage (Heb. 2:5-18) etc.
  2. Freedom comes only by faith in Christ's atonement, His priesthood, and His Lordship.
- C. Christ frees us from sin.
1. Sin is lawlessness.
  2. The devil's subtle lie is that freedom is found in rebellion . . . that we cannot really be free if we are going to let God tell us what is right or wrong.  
What most people do not realize is that if we don't let God tell us then we let the devil tell us! And he lies. You see, man, limited to this world cannot determine right or wrong, reality or unreality, for that has its basis in what is beyond our finite existence—only supernatural sources know ultimate truth.
  3. Christ frees us from the slavery of lawlessness.
  4. If you want an example of the slavery of lawlessness read Rom. 1:18-32.
  5. He also frees us from the guilt and penalty of sin.

D. Christ frees us from fear.

1. It is through guilt and the fear of death and the judgment the devil keeps men enslaved to him.
2. Christ paid our penalty, died and rose again and we who are in covenant relationship with Him do not fear death.
3. We are not driven by a motive of fear of failure to keep God's law . . . . that is a never-ending, never-attaining bondage.
4. We are forgiven, freed, adopted sons and now serve willingly from love.
5. By faith the law of love is transformed into the love of law and almost in proportion as the law is loved, it ceases to be felt as law at all, but privilege and blessing!
6. THE LOVE OF GOD MASTERS THE CHRISTIAN, AND THE MASTERY OF LOVE IS FOUND TO BE PERFECT LIBERTY.

E. Christ frees us from inordinate love of self.

1. L. H. Marshall in his, *The Challenge of N. T. Ethics*, says, "Jesus attributes all moral evil to the self-will that knows not the rule of God," page 31.
2. Selfishness enslaves us. We become incapable of growth; we become unteachable, impenetrable, unloving.
3. Selfishness destroys creativeness, the ability to appreciate and enjoy.
4. The selfish person imprisons himself, fetters himself, hinders himself more than any man who has ever been imprisoned in any concentration camp.

II. LIBERTY IS NOT LICENSE.

A. God has objectively, judicially and propositionally freed me.

God has emotionally, willingly loved me when I was unlovely . . . and He did it in such a way that it breaks my rebellious heart . . . and I love Him.

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1. Loving Him is not something I can produce without an adequate cause. "We love because he first loved us" (I Jn. 4:19).
  2. Jesus commanded His disciples to love others as He loved them. Perfect love has its origin and reproduction in the divine Lover.
  3. Our love is a rebound—a reaction—a response.
  4. Love is both a motive and a force operating on the human will.
  5. Love moves a person to want to do something.
- B. The love of Christ constrains me, but constrains me from what or to do what?
1. Love is not self-defining.
  2. Even in the Garden of Eden—in innocence, man's liberty and freedom could only be enjoyed and expressed within divine guidelines.  
Before man had ever been deceived by falsehood, God told man what to do to love his Creator.
  3. The creaturely nature of man forbids absolute license.
  4. God must be allowed to tell us how to love and what to love.
- C. Liberty is not self-defining.

1. C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, page 39:

"What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could 'be like gods'—could set up on their own as if they had created themselves—be their own masters—invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside God . . . The reason why it can never succeed is this. God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about His will."

2. Anything God forbids He does so to free us from anything which is not His nature.

Anything God commands He does so to create in us the divine nature.

- D. Liberty is found in order. God is order. Our lives must operate within order and discipline.

1. An ancient writer of Athens illustrated the consequences of license and disorder this way:

A farmer, not wishing to take the time and effort to sort his harvest, threw into his granary barley and wheat and peas together. But then, when he wanted barley bread or wheat bread or pea soup, he had to pick them grain by grain, instead of having them separately stored and easily accessible.

2. In 1776 George Mason wrote this statement into the Virginia Declaration of Rights:

“... the blessings of liberty can (not) be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, *moderation*, *temperance*, frugality, and *virtue*, and by frequent recurrence to fundamental principles.”

Edmund Burke, British statesman 1727-1797, said: “(Liberty) cannot exist unless a controlling power on the will and appetite is placed somewhere; and the less there is within, the more there must be of it without.”

4. Discipline is not antagonistic to liberty. License is not proof of freedom. The test of the greatness of liberty is the extent to which we can obey self-imposed law.
5. As Christians we are free to move responsibly within an orbit as wide as the revealed will of an all-knowing, all-loving, all-true, all-holy God.

A study in 1968, entitled “Studies in Self-Esteem,” of young men from homes where parents demanded high standards of behavior and performance and where firm discipline was a fact . . . findings . . . suggest . . . the development of independence and self-reliance is fostered by a well-structured, demanding

environment rather than by largely unlimited permissiveness and freedom to explore in an unfocused way. (See *Education In America*, by G. Charles Roche, III, pub. Fee, p. 142.)

### III. LIBERTY IS LIABILITY.

- A. Booker T. Washington, in his book, *Up From Slavery*, describes the scenes among the blacks on the night of the proclamation of their freedom. "There was no sleep that night. . . . All was excitement. . . . Early in the morning we were all sent for. The proclamation was read and we were told that we were free and could go when and where we pleased. . . . There was great rejoicing, followed by wild scenes of ecstasy. But the wild ecstasy did not last long. . . . The great responsibility of being free seemed to take possession of them. . . . Now that they were liberated, they found possession of freedom to be much more serious business than they had anticipated . . ."
- B. Freedom is never free! There is always a price that those who would possess it must pay. The price of freedom is responsibility. Those who demand freedom but are not willing to pay this price, seek, not freedom, but license.
- C. One man illustrates it as like the fundamental law of economics: "There is no such thing as a free lunch . . . there are no moral bargains in freedom. Liberty has a price—it is responsibility."
1. A generation of young adults fed existentialism in education, art, and modern rock music, pursues the self-defeating course of aspiring to freedom while seeking to evade responsibility.
- D. Liberty demands self-mastery.
- "During a Fritz Kreisler concert, a young violinist sat enthralled. 'Ohhh,' she sighed, 'what I would give to have such finger dexterity, such mastery, such freedom!' Later she told the incomparable Kreisler that she would give her life to play as he did. The violinist looked at her compassionately, then said, 'But, my dear, *I did.*'"

E. The man who has not accepted the liability and paid the price to discipline himself has narrowed his freedom. A man who cannot deny himself, cannot choose.

More advance in rank in USN, more liberty—*but* more responsibility.

More Christian maturity, more liberty—*but* more responsibility.

F. Liberty is a capacity, a potentiality.

1. We are freed by Christ to make possible the reaching of that capacity, that potentiality for which we were made . . . that beautifully free, purposeful, harmonious person, Christ demonstrated in the flesh it was possible to be!

2. Liberty is in being . . . not in things or circumstances!

3. The difference between a baby making random movements in his crib and the beautiful balance and coordination of a Willie Mays or Jack Nicklaus is the discipline and self-mastery and growth it takes to reach the potential.

4. The difference between a show-off, infantile, immature church of Christ in Corinth, and one that truly serves and ministers and reflects the gospel of Christ, is the discipline and self-mastery those Christians would exercise in the liberties Paul declared they had as Christians.

5. Liberty is not license.

Paul wrote: "All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful, but I will not be enslaved by anything."

"All things are lawful, but not all things build up." True liberty is having self-mastery to do what is right and good when we don't "feel" like it!

"Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him. For Christ did not please himself . . ."

HOW DID CHRIST, THE FREEST, MOST LIBERATED PERSON EVER TO LIVE UPON THIS EARTH, KNOW SUCH LIBERTY? He found it surrendering self to the will of the Father as revealed in God's Word.

Liberty cannot survive in a vacuum. Jesus illustrated this with His parable of the unclean spirit who returns to his house to find it swept and put in order, but empty, and goes and gets seven other spirits more evil than himself and re-occupies the liberated, but empty, dwelling place!

CHRIST HAS LIBERATED US *for* SERVICE. HE HAS LIBERATED US TO LIBERATE OTHERS. LIBERTY IS NOT JUST TO ENJOY . . . IT IS TO USE! AND TO USE FOR HIS GLORY! LIBERTY IS NOT SELF-INDULGENCE, BUT SERVICE.

A famous poet once said, "I have on my table a violin string. It is free. I twist one end of it and it responds. It is free. But it is not free to do what a violin string is supposed to do—to produce beautiful music. So I take it, fix it in my violin and tighten it until it is taut. Only then is it *free* to be a violin string."

Each of us is free, if we choose, to be an untightened, unhampered piece of violin string and flop around or lie around and produce nothing. Or we are free, if we choose, to be tightened, constrained and tuned by the will of the Master and only then are we *free* to be what He can make us and produce what we were made to produce.

## C. REGENERATION OF ZION, CHAPTER 62

### 1. NEW NAME

TEXT: 62:1-5

- 1 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.
- 2 And the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name.
- 3 Thou shalt also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Jehovah