

Freedom

Third Series – Sermon Twenty-Nine

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Freedom, like Truth, is found solely in Jesus. To some of us, freedom would be the loss of all that is familiar. All that we have become comfortable within. We have learned to survive in our slavery and are afraid of the unknown beyond. Freedom would be to be thrust into the unknown world of trust in one we do not know. "Better the devil we know than the one we don't!"

It is the freedom of flight to the bird that has only known the life of the nest. But we were never intended for anything else! It is love that pushes us out into the vastness of space. Love that calls us up to the heavens of flight's freedom and Life. There is a time for the nest, but we must become what we are, become what we were created to be. There comes a time to let go of the security of the familiar, and rest in the breath of God!

Outline

Slaves – Slaves are doing it their way.

Sons – Sons and daughters are taking sides with God against this independence.

Relationships – The reality of living in relationship with Them!

Jesus - Jesus is the sole source of our freedom and being like Him is what it looks like.

Ourselves – We are ourselves when we are one with Them!

John 8:32,34-36 KJV

"The Truth shall make you free.... Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Slaves

As this passage has been translated, I have been unable to make sense of it. No one by virtue of being a sinner could be in the house of the Father. Yet this verse states that this person is a servant in the Father's house. The passage, as translated, is confusing, and its reasoning is faulty. This person must be in the house on some other grounds other than sin.

What I believe is a better interpretation is, "Everyone who sins is a slave. But the slave does not remain in the house forever, but the Son does. If then the Son makes you free, you are, in reality, free." The small but significant difference is the change from "... is the servant of sin." to "... sins is a slave." as the apostle Paul says in Galatians 4:1-11 NAS, which makes a significant difference.

The point here of the Lord's words is not that he who sins is the slave to sin, which is true, but that he is a slave, a slave to God. This reading is perfectly consistent. It is his sin that makes him a slave instead of a child. His slavery to corruption will be his ruin. His slavery to God is their only hope. No amount of slavery to sin can make someone as much the slave of God as God chooses in His mercy to make him. God does not love slavery. He hates it. He wants children, not slaves, but He may keep someone a slave in His house for a long time in hopes that they will awaken and aspire to their sonship, which is their birthright.

Those to whom God is not the all-in-all are slaves. They may not commit great sins, but they are only serving Him, as they call it, to try and do what is right. But, to serve God only from duty and to not know Him as their Father and the joy of their being is to be slaves, good slaves perhaps, but slaves.

If they were not trying to do their duty, they would be bad slaves. Bad slaves serve from fear, and they cannot fulfill righteousness or do their duty perfectly. **They are always serving from their weariness and pain, knowing that if they stopped trying, they would be lost. But the source of their slavery is that they do not know God as their Father!**

Sons

Where are the sons? I know of none who are fully sons and daughters. There may be some, God knows. I have not seen them, or I cannot recognize them. However, I do know many who are on the journey of sonship who are not content to be slaves of their Father and are at war with the slave within.

Nothing I have seen or known comes close to the glory of sonship. But there is a remnant, thousands of sons and daughters siding with their Father against themselves. Siding against all that divides them from their origin by recognizing in whom they live and move and have their being. These are slaves no longer but true and imperfect children who are fighting alongside their Father against this evil division. They are breaking down their wall so that all that is left are the wrist bands from their chains. And they are struggling out of them as well.

These are children with a dying slave in them. They have recognized slavery for what it is, hated it, and desired to see its death. However, a blind slave does not seek to be a child nor desire to end their slavery. They look upon the right of childhood as presumption. They hold fast to the traditions, forms, and ceremonies and do not know the Creator's will or seek to obey Him. They do not lift their hearts and cry, "Father, what would you have me to do?"

They constantly expose their slavery by continually complaining, crying out like Jonah "Are we not right to be angry?". And being slaves, how could they help but complain. When they become sons and daughters, they will no longer complain about their hardships, miseries, and troubles. They will no longer grumble at their aches and pains, the pinch of their poverty or the hunger that threatens them, nor be mad about their rejection by so-called Society. And those who believe in their good and perfect Father will cease to blame Him for everything that is difficult. Ah, friends, it may be true that you and I are slaves, but there is hope because there are sons and daughters of God!

The slaves of sin rarely grumble at their slavery. It is their slavery to God that they grumble about, and of that alone, they complain. They grumble at the pain caused by the messengers of God sent to deliver them from their slavery to themselves and sin. These slaves must choose to be sons because they cannot rid themselves of their Master. They deny or mock Him by not acknowledging and heeding Him or simply treat Him as an arbitrary and irrelevant monarch. They go to no trouble to find out what pleases Him. Therefore, they do meaningless things in His service. Things He cares nothing about, or try to win favor from Him by strenuous effort carrying a yoke Jesus never wore nor was asked to wear. They are slaves, slaves of God who do not seem to care to get out of their slavery by becoming His sons and daughters and finding Life in Him!

Could a creator make a creature who would not be dependent on Him? And if He could, would the creature be better off because of it? For nothing can come closer to us than our creator. The strongest, nearest, and dearest relations possible are between the creator and the created. Where this is denied, the distance is greatest. Where this is acknowledged and fulfilled, the closeness is unspeakable.

To deny the rock of your foundation is to regard yourself as your own. That is to say, the created, the lesser rules, rather than the greater. If he says, "At least I have it my way." I answer, "Do you even know what your way is and what it is not?"

Relationships

The whole question of freedom rests and turns on the relationship of the Creator to the created, of which few seem to be interested in developing. To live without the eternal Creator's Life is impossible. Freedom from God can only mean the inability to see the facts and truth of our existence, the failure to understand the glory of the creature who makes common cause with His Creator! The one who wills the lovely will of He who gave him choice and calls him into Life and completes his making. The one who draws him into the circle of His creative heart to the joys of knowing he does not live by the weak power of his will. But is one with the causing Life, in the essential breath of oneness. One who is in the Life of all life.

This creature knows the infinite Father as the very fire of his life and rejoices that his Father will make him a sharer in all that He does. If you misunderstand this, I doubt if you have seen the God manifested in the face of Jesus!

But all will be well, for the little god of your bankrupt self will starve you into misery, and your fear of a false eternal death will compel you to seek your Father. Oh, you book-bound Christians, the Lord is not restrained by the book, but you are by your narrow unwilling souls! Some of you need to be ashamed of yourselves. Some of you need the fire. But those who hear the truth can call out in their agony and thirst; I am bound in Lazarus's grave clothes! What am I to do? Here the answer is drawn from the words of the Lord. The answer appealing to our consciousness and heart is, "You are slaves. Only sons and daughters abide in the house of the Lord forever. Give up your slavery and be free!"

Jesus

If I make you free, you are free indeed. I can only do this by your becoming what you are, sons like me. This sonship is alone how the Son works. But it is you who must become sons. You must will it, and I will help you. You can have the freedom of my Father's universe. Be free of yourselves, and you will be free in His heart. You are your own slavery. This slavery is the darkness you love rather than the light. You have honored yourselves and not your Father. You have sought honor from men and not from God! Therefore, even in the house of the Lord, you have been sojourning slaves. We are all one in His family, and there are no divisions. There is no self-seeking in God. Choose oneness with Me, and you will be free.

If His poor starved children cry, "How Lord?" His answer will depend on what we mean by how. "What is the right plan? What is your program for cutting my bonds and setting me free?" The answer may be the deepening of the darkness and the tightening of the bonds.

But if we cry, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" the answer will come quickly. Give yourself to do what I say, to understand what I mean. Be good, obedient little brothers, and I will awaken in you what my Father has placed there. The same heart as mine that will grow to love the Father entirely as I do until you are ready to die for Him. Then you will know that you are at the heart of the universe, at the heart of the secret, the heart of the Father. Not until then will you be free, free indeed!

I died to save you, not from suffering, but from yourselves. Save you not from injustice or even less from justice, but from being unjust. I died that you might live, live as I lived and die as I died to myself that we might live unto God.

Ourselves

If we do not die to ourselves, we cannot live in God, and he who does not live in God is dead! "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." I am the truth, and you will be free like me. To be free, you must be sons like me. To be free, you must become what you are and were created to be. To be free, you must yield as sons to your Father who calls you. To be free, you must fear nothing but evil and care only for the will of your Father. Hold onto Him in absolute confidence and infinite expectancy, for you can trust Him alone.

Jesus showed us the Father not only by doing what the Father does and loving His Father's children as the Father loves them, but by His joy, satisfaction, and obedience to Him. He has revealed the Father by His absolute devotion as a perfect son.

He is God's Son because He and the Father are one. They are of one thought, mind, and heart. Upon this Truth, I do not mean dogma, but the Truth of Himself and His Father hangs the universe. And upon the recognition of this Truth, that is, upon becoming true, turns His children's freedom and the redemption of the world. "I and the Father are one." is the universe's central truth, and its corresponding truth is "that they also may be one in us."

The only free man, then, is one who is a son of his Father, the God of the universe. This son is the servant of all and the slave of none, and in this relationship is freedom! He is then in himself a king. Jesus rested His kingship on this relationship and was born and came into the world to witness this Truth.

CLIFFNOTES WITH ORIGINAL MACDONALD QUOTES

Slaves

Those to whom God is not all in all, are slaves. They may not commit great sins; they may be trying to do right; but so long as they serve God, as they call it, from duty, and do not know him as their father, the joy of their being, they are slaves—good slaves, but slaves.

But must ever be trying after it wearily and in pain, knowing well that if they stop trying, they are lost. They are slaves indeed, for they would be glad to be adopted by one who is their own father!

Sons

Nothing I have seen or known of sonship, comes near the glory of the thing; but there are thousands of sons and daughters, though their number be yet only a remnant, who are siding with the father of their spirits against themselves, against all that divides them from him from whom they have come, but out of whom they have never come, seeing that in him they live and move and have their being. Such are not slaves; they are true though not perfect children; they are fighting along with God against the evil separation; they are breaking at the middle wall of partition. Only the rings of their fetters are left, and they are struggling to take them off.

The slaves of sin rarely grumble at that slavery; it is their slavery to God they grumble at; of that alone they complain—of the painful messengers he sends to deliver them from their slavery both to sin and to himself. They must be sons or slaves. They cannot rid themselves of their owner.

Relationships

The whole question rests and turns on the relation of creative and created, of which relation few seem to have the consciousness yet developed. To live without the eternal creative life is an impossibility; freedom from God can only mean an incapacity for seeing the facts of existence, an incapability of understanding the glory of the creature who makes common cause with his creator in his creation of

him, who wills that the lovely will calling him into life and giving him choice, should finish making him, should draw him into the circle of the creative heart, to joy that he lives by no poor power of his own will, but is one with the causing life of his life, in closest breathing and willing, vital and claimant oneness with the life of all life.

Such a creature knows the life of the infinite Father as the very flame of his life, and joys that nothing is done or will be done in the universe in which the Father will not make him all of a sharer that it is possible for perfect generosity to make him. If you say this is irreverent, I doubt if you have seen the God manifest in Jesus.

But all will be well, for the little god of your poor content will starve your soul to misery, and the terror of the eternal death creeping upon you, will compel you to seek a perfect father. Oh, ye hide-bound Christians, the Lord is not straitened, but ye are straitened in your narrow unwilling souls! Some of you need to be shamed before yourselves; some of you need the fire. But one who reads may call out, in the agony and thirst of a child waking from a dream of endless seeking and no finding, 'I am bound like Lazarus in his grave-clothes! what am I to do?' Here is the answer, drawn from this parable of our Lord; for the saying is much like a parable, teaching more than it utters, appealing to the conscience and heart, not to the understanding: You are a slave; the slave has no hold on the house; only the sons and daughters have an abiding rest in the home of their father. God cannot have slaves about him always. You must give up your slavery, and be set free from it. That is what I am here for.

Jesus

If I make you free, you shall be free indeed; for I can make you free only by making you what you were meant to be, sons like myself. That is how alone the Son can work. But it is you who must become sons; you must will it, and I am here to help you.' It is as if he said, 'You shall have the freedom of my father's universe; for, free from yourselves, you will be free of his heart. Yourselves are your slavery. That is the darkness which you have loved rather than the light. You have given honour to yourselves, and not to the Father; you have sought honour from men, and not from the Father! Therefore, even in the house of your father, you have been but sojourning slaves. We in his family are all one; we have no party-spirit; we have no self-seeking: fall in with us, and you shall be free as we are free.'

Ourselves

If we do not die to ourselves, we cannot live to God, and he that does not live to God, is dead. 'Ye shall know the truth,' the Lord says, 'and the truth shall make you free. I am the truth, and you shall be free as I am free. To be free, you must be sons like me. To be free you must be that which you have to be, that which you are created. To be free you must give the answer of sons to the Father who calls you. To be free you must fear nothing but evil, care for nothing but the will of the Father, hold to him in absolute confidence and infinite expectation. He alone is to be trusted.'

He is the Son of God because the Father and he are one, have one thought, one mind, one heart. Upon this truth—I do not mean the dogma, but the truth itself of Jesus to his father—hangs the universe; and upon the recognition of this truth—that is, upon their becoming thus true—hangs the freedom of the children, the redemption of their whole world. 'I and the Father are one,' is the centre-truth of the Universe; and the circumfering truth is, 'that they also may be one in us.'

