

Liberty in Christ Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, June 25, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

NOTE 1 – Independence Day draws near. There is benefit in considering the freedoms we enjoy in this nation. We are truly a blessed people! Yet I posit that it is of greater benefit to consider the freedoms afforded those who believe upon Jesus Christ. In this multi-part series, I would like to consider the topic of Christ our Liberator.

NOTE 2 – The themes of liberty, freedom and deliverance pervade the teaching and earthly ministry of Christ. Let us explore the words of Christ Jesus on the matter, noting this account recorded within the Gospel of Luke:

Luke 4:14–21 (NIV, Emphasis Mine) [Subsequent to His Temptation in the Wilderness]

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18 “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**,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” [Isa. 61:1–2 cf. 58:6]

20 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. 21 He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

NOTE 3 – Those who would understand the ministry and purpose of Christ must contend with this selection, for it is here that He first announced His mission. As the Spirit-empowered Emissary of the Father, it was His task to do the following: **a)** proclaim good news to the poor; **b)** proclaim freedom for the prisoners; **c)** proclaim recovery of sight to the blind; **d)** set free the oppressed; and **e)** herald the dawning of a season of divine grace!

KEY – How wonderful to note the theme of liberty herein! Yet we do well to ask:

Q. What type of freedom would Christ bring? From what prison(s) would He deliver needy men and women?

#1 – SICKNESS

Let us note that Christ brought release to the ill and the infirmed (i.e., that they might know “physical” healing):

NOTE 1 – Did you know that Jesus Christ is recorded to have worked thirty-seven signs in the Gospel record? No doubt you are aware of some of them (e.g., walking on water, multiplying food to feed thousands, etc.). However, Scripture abounds with accounts which demonstrate His authority over sickness and disease. In fact, of the thirty-seven signs of Christ, some twenty-plus center specifically upon healing. Consider this illustration:

Luke 13:10–13 (Emphasis Mine)

10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, 11 and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are **set free** from your infirmity.” 13 Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

NOTE 2 – Consider His words herein (v. 12b, Emphasis Mine): “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” The word “free” speaks to the release and deliverance of one held captive or bound. For nearly two decades, this poor woman was quite literally trapped in her own body, being unable to move according to her desires. How terrible this condition would seem to the healthy; our bodies being unresponsive to the intent of our will.

KEY 1 – Yet in an instant, Jesus brought sweet release!

NOTE 3 – Let it be known that this scene is NOT an isolated, one-off event. Rather, such scenes fill the Gospels! Rather, He brought healing to the blind, the lame, the mute, the deaf, the leper, the paralyzed and the invalid. I love the following selections which speak to the working of Christ:

Luke 4:40

40 At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.

Acts 10:38 [Testimony of the Apostle Peter]

38 . . . God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and . . . he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

Q. Do you have a favorite instance of divine healing in Scripture? Which miracle of Jesus touches your heart?

A. I do! Let us consider the following sign of Christ (i.e., recorded in the Gospel according to Mark). Please note:

Mark 5:24b–34 (Emphasis Mine)

24 . . . A large crowd followed and pressed around him. 25 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26 She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. 27 When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” 29 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. 30 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” 31 “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’” 32 But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. 33 Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and **be freed** from your suffering.”

KEY 2 – Yet I have another question for your consideration:

Q1. To what degree do we believe that Christ is still able to heal our mortal bodies?

Q2. To what degree do we, like the saints of old, have any belief in His healing power?

NOTE 4 – Time and again, Jesus the Christ set the captive(s) free in accordance with their faith (cf. Mark 5:34). If He remains the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8), why do we discount the place of miracles? We still have sick men, women and children, do we not?

NOTE 5 – Of course, I will cede that there is mystery herein, and the need for humility. I have prayed with many who remained physically unchanged despite their faith. Do I understand why? No. Yet I do know this: you and I often have not because we ask not (Matt. 7:7–8; James 4:2), and that those with no faith can expect to receive nothing from the Lord (James 1:6–8). Lest you think I am OVERSELLING the role of faith, please note:

Matthew 13:54–58 (Emphasis Mine)

54 Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked. 55 “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? 56 Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” 57 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home.” 58 And he **did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.**

Q. Are you imprisoned by sickness, infirmity or some physical affliction?

A. Press in to Christ, for He yet sets the captives free from the bonds of sickness!

#2 – DEMONIZATION

Let us also note that Christ brought release to the demonized and those spiritually oppressed:

NOTE 1 – Time and again, the power of Christ over the demonic realm and sinister spiritual forces is evidenced:

NOTE 2 – Consider two of the excerpts we have already touched upon this morning through this particular lens:

Acts 10:38 (Emphasis Mine) [Testimony of the Apostle Peter]

38 . . . God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and . . . he went around doing good and healing all who were **under the power of the devil**, because God was with him.

Luke 13:10–13 (Emphasis Mine)

10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, 11 and a woman was there who had been **crippled by a spirit for eighteen years**. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” 13 Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

KEY – Once again, such an event was not a one-off or isolated moment, but an ongoing element of His ministry:

Q. Do you have a favorite illustration of Christ setting a demonically-oppressed captive free? I DO:

Mark 5:1–20

1 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. 2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. 3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. 7 He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” 8 For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

9 Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” 10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. 12 The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” 13 He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. 15 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. 17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19 Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” 20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Q1. To what degree do we believe that Christ is still able to bring such deliverance?

Q2. To what degree do we apprehend the power of the Lord over sinister spiritual forces?

Q. To what degree do we even see the need for such liberation? How many believe in such elements in 2023?

QUOTE – “The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn’t exist.” –Charles Baudelaire

Q1. To what degree do you see the influence of Satan in your life? Influence you need broken by div. power?

Q2. To what degree do you see the influence of demonic forces in your family (i.e., family history)? Consider.

ILL – My first encounter with a genuine demonic presence and the power of Christ Jesus at work!

Q1. Are you oppressed by some satanic, demonic or sinister spiritual force?

Q2. Do you feel that there is a “darkness” that transcends natural explanation?

A. Press in to Christ, for He yet sets the captives free from the bonds of Satan’s power!

#3 – FEAR

Let us note that Christ brought release to those trapped within the imprisoning walls of fear:

NOTE 1 – This is a theme of particular relevance in our day and age (i.e., even in the church):

Q. How many have spent time languishing in the bonds of anxiety, worry, dread and trepidation?

IF SO, YOU ARE NOT ALONE...

NOTE 2 – Our culture is currently overrun by matters of fear (i.e., many are trapped within its wearisome walls).

NOTE 3 – Do you not believe me? Try to find a therapist these days! Our system is utterly/completely overrun (i.e., particularly in light of the worsening numbers). Did you know researchers estimate that some 33.7-percent of Americans will have an anxiety disorder at some point in their lives? Some believe the actual number is closer to some 50-percent? At any given time, 1 in 5 Americans 18–54 is suffering from anxiety/fear.

THIS IS A BIG DEAL...

NOTE 4 – If faith is an enlivening force that fosters spiritual strength, vitality, abundance and breakthrough, fear (i.e., its opposite) is a deadening influence that brings forth weakness, depletion, regression and paralysis! In our age many have yielded to the manifold manifestation of fear—fear(s) of: **a)** circumstance; **b)** opposition; **c)** provision; and **d)** fear of death and judgment. Such should heed the words of Christ!

John 14:27 (re: CIRCUMSTANCE)

27 “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

John 16:33b (re. OPPOSITION)

33 . . . “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Luke 12:22–32 (re: PROVISION)

22 . . . “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. 24 Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! 25 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? 26 Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? 27 Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 28 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! 29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. 32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”

John 14:1–3 (re: DEATH & JUDGMENT)

“1 Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Q. Can I show you a stunning example of Jesus' power to deliver from the bondage of fear?

NOTE 5 – You may not recognize this, but much of the life of Simon Peter is marked by the spirit of fear:

Matthew 8:23–27 (Emphasis Mine)

23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" 26 He replied, "You of little faith, **why are you so afraid?**" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. 27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

Matthew 14:22–33 (Emphasis Mine) [Post-Feeding of the 5,000]

22 . . . Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, 24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. 27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. **Don't be afraid.**"

28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." 29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of **little faith,**" he said, "**why did you doubt?**" 32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Matthew 26:69b–75 [Amidst the Trials of Christ]

69 . . . Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said. 70 But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

71 Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." 72 He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"

73 After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away." 74 Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. 75 Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

KEY – Note how each instance indicates an element of fear in Simon Peter. Now contrast this w/ the following:

Acts 2:1–14a (Emphasis Mine)

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? . . . we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

14 **Then Peter stood up** with the Eleven, **raised his voice** and **addressed the crowd** . . .

Q. What was the end result of this?

A. Some three-thousand salvations (v. 41)!

Q1. Are you oppressed by anxiety or some element of worry?**Q2. Do you live burdened or hindered by an undesired spirit of fear?**

A. Press in to Christ, for He yet sets the captives free from the bonds of fear!

NOTE 6 – What He did in and through Simon Peter can be done in and through you!

SUMMATIONS**Q. Do you feel oppressed and ensnared by sickness, satanic powers or the spirit of fear?**

A. I invite you to look to Christ and let Him bring you to a place of faith, renewal and vitality!

KEY – We will continue this next Sunday morning (i.e., as we consider the liberty Jesus Christ brings)!

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – Check out our website for any of our beyond Sunday ministries (MM, WM & CYC).

NOTE 3 – Membership Packets are Ready for Distribution Following Service Today (i.e., See Pastor).

NOTE 4 – Potluck Supper this morning immediately following our Service. I am hoping you all stick around!

2 Corinthians 13:14

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.