

# Liberty in Christ Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, July 2, 2023

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## SETTING THE STAGE

**KEY** – May God bless you as the Fourth of July draws near!

**NOTE 1** – The theme of liberty is especially relevant at this time of the year (i.e., in light of Independence Day). We do well to revel in the liberties afforded us as citizens of this great nation. Of course, I posit we do even better to revel in the liberties afforded us as those who believe upon Christ Jesus. Christ is our Great Liberator!

**Q. What did Christ say of Himself at the outset of His earthly ministry?**

**A.** Let us note His **TIMELY** words with **TIMELESS** impact (cf. Hebrews 13:8):

**Luke 4:18–19 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)**

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]

**Q1. What types of freedom does Christ offer?**

**Q1. From what prisons does our Lord yet deliver?**

**NOTE 2** – Last week we noted the liberty Jesus provides from the bonds of both sickness and demonization. Please review said sermon and its accompanying notes online at [www.NewLifeBarre.org](http://www.NewLifeBarre.org) at your convenience. What other types of liberty does the Lord bring? Let us continue with the following:

### #1 – FEAR

Let us begin by noting that Christ Jesus brings release to those bound by fear.

**NOTE 1** – This is a theme of special 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 or 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 suffers from anxiety and fear!

THIS IS SIGNIFICANT (I.E., BOTH INDIVIDUALLY, COLLECTIVELY AND SOCIETALLY):

**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. It is no wonder our homes, churches, communities and society at large seem to be on the decline accordingly, as so many in our age have yielded to the manifold manifestation of fear—fear(s) concerning: **a)** circumstance; **b)** opposition; **c)** daily provision; and **d)** matters of death and judgment!

**KEY** – To the fearful I would say the following: consider both the power and promise of Christ:

### **1) re: Uncertain Circumstances**

#### **John 14:27**

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.”

### **2) re: Adversaries (e.g., Human & Spiritual)**

#### **John 16:33b**

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

### **3) re: Daily Needs and Provision**

#### **Luke 12:22b–32**

22 “ . . . 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.”

### **4) re: Death and Judgment**

#### **John 3:16–17**

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

#### **John 14:1–3**

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.

**NOTE 6** – Note how each instance indicates a degree of fear in Peter. Now contrast this w. the following scene:

**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)!

**Q. And what of Simon Peter in the midst of adversity unto the point of death?**

**Acts 12:1b–6 (Emphasis Mine)**

1 . . . King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. 2 He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. 3 When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. 4 After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. 5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. 6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, **Peter was sleeping** between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance.

**Q1. What was the condition of Peter amidst this life-or-death situation?**

**Q2. Can we not learn to find rest or repose in Christ in 2023 and beyond?**

**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 bondage of fear.

**NOTE 7** – What He did in and through Simon Peter can be done in and through you!

## **#2 – SHAME**

Let us continue by noting that Jesus Christ brings release to those who are bound by shame.

**NOTE 1** – Many wallow in a spirit of shame. Many suffer from a condition of ongoing guilt and self-condemnation, crippled and overwhelmed by the weight of disgrace, humiliation and embarrassment (i.e., even in the Church). Allow me to establish two critical elements concerning those who are given to shame:

**1)** Such Languish Due to Personal Failings; Past or Present (i.e., Ashamed Before God and Men)

**2)** Such Languish Due to the Erroneous Conviction that Personal Failings are Predictive of the Future

**Q. Can I note that Jesus Christ offers gen. release to those who so wallow, suffer and languish in shame?**

**NOTE 2** – Let us consider the following selection from the Gospel of John:

**John 8:2–11**

2 At dawn he [Jesus] appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. 3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4 and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” 6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.

10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

11 “No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

**Q. What do we see in this selection?**

**A1.** It was NOT the desire of Christ to shame this woman for her sin. Rather it was His desire to free her from the penalty and power of sin, and the shame it brings! Could it be that His heart remains the same even today?

**John 3:16–17**

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

**QUOTE** – “The only One qualified to throw a stone didn’t.”

**A2.** We witness her release from the bondage of social stigma and shame. By the time the Lord was finished addressing those who would have her dead for her crimes, they were made to feel the weight of their own! Since everyone was exposed as broken and in need of mercy, they could no longer judge her without judging themselves! There is an invaluable lesson herein for those who love to point the finger at their peers! This is affirmed by the apostle Paul as well (cf. Rom. 2:1, PJV): “at whatever point you judge another you [condemn] yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.” Be wary and be free!

**A3.** We learn that past and/or current failings do not have to be predictive of the future. The moment Christ told this woman to “go” and “leave her life of sin” (v. 11b), He showed His grace does not just secure pardon, but both transformation and the enablement to live a whole new way in Him! Note the following:

**Titus 2:11–14 (Emphasis)**

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say “**No**” to ungodliness and worldly passions, **and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives** in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to **purify for himself a people** that are his very own, **eager to do what is good.**

**KEY** – Our lives do not have to be characterized by the acts of the flesh, but can abound in spiritual fruit! Amen.

### #3 – RELIGION

Let us close by noting that Christ sets us free from the bonds of religion (i.e., arguably the WORST of them all)!

**NOTE 1** – Many are bound by the trappings of religion. By religion, I mean not the variety esteemed by God, which is the outflow of saving faith (cf. James 1:27). Rather, I mean that which supplants faith in Christ with a system of endless observances, rituals and traditions; a system which prioritizes externality v. inward renewal; a system where our connection with God is predicated upon personal behavior and good deeds v. God’s grace.

#### **Q. How many are bound in such a “faith”**

**NOTE 2** – How many Muslims believe they will attain favor with God by observing the five pillars of Islam (e.g., Profession; Prayer; Alms; Fasting and Pilgrimage)? How many of our Catholic brethren believe they will find favor with God through their ordinances (e.g., Baptism; Communion; Penance; unto an Earthly Priest, etc.)? How many good Protestants profess that faith in Christ saves, but they work as though it all depends on them?

#### **Q. How many are ultimately trusting in themselves v. in Christ alone?**

**NOTE 3** – The apostle Paul was liberated from such a religion and came to argue against it during his ministry! Of course, there was a time wherein Paul would have prided himself on matters of man-made religion (Phil. 3); a time when he would have placed his faith in his Judaic practice, circumcision, lineage/tribal affiliation, religious associations, and zeal for the traditions of his people. Yet he came to know that such faith was folly compared to faith in Christ (i.e., for Christ saves whereas human religiosity could not and will never). Consider:

#### **Philippians 3:2–9**

2 Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh [i.e., the religious class of Judaizers].  
 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—  
 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:  
 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee;  
 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.  
 7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.  
 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ  
 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

**NOTE 4** – Do you wish to know righteousness (i.e., right-standing with God)? Do NOT bind yourself to religion! To tether yourself to religion is to tether yourself to a harsh taskmaster that only serves or works to condemn. After all, how good does one have to be to save oneself? Perfect, which we cannot achieve (e.g., 10 Comm’s)! How awful it would be to suffer under the burden of saving oneself via works! It is from such that Christ saves:

#### **Galatians 5:1**

1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free [i.e., IN CONTEXT – NOT the freedom to do as you and I please, but freedom from trying to save ourselves by good deeds based upon personal capacity AND the corr. condemnation thereof].

**KEY** – Yet those who are freed from such bondage come to know the wonder and mercy of Christ and His work!

**FYI** – Max Lucado articulates these sentiments noting two (formerly) religious figures who appear in Scripture: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Let us close with the remarks of this gifted author on the topics of religiosity and freedom in Christ (cf. *No Wonder They Call Him the Savior – A Candle in the Cavern*).

**QUOTE** – They are coming as friends—secret friends—but friends nonetheless. “You can take him down now, soldier. I’ll take care of him.”

The afternoon sun is high as they stand silently on the hill. It is much quieter than it was earlier. Most of the crowd has left. The two thieves gasp and groan as they hang near death. A soldier leans a ladder against the center tree, ascends it and removes the stake that holds the beam to the upright part of the cross. Two of the soldiers, glad that they day’s work is nearing completion, assist with the heavy chore of laying the cypress crosspiece and body on the ground.

“Careful now,” says Joseph.

The five-inch nails are wrenched from the hard wood, freeing the limp hands. The body that encased a Savior is lifted and laid on a large rock.

“He’s yours,” says the sentry. The cross is set aside, soon to be carried into the supply room until it is needed again.

The two are not accustomed to this type of work. Yet their hands move quickly to their tasks.

Joseph of Arimathea kneels beside the head of Jesus and tenderly wipes the wounded face. With a soft, wet cloth he cleans the blood that came in the garden, that came from the lashings and from the crown of thorns. With this done, he closes the eyes tight.

Nicodemus unrolls some linen sheeting that Joseph brought and places it on the rock beside the body. The two Jewish leaders lift the lifeless body of Jesus and set it on the linen. Parts of the body are now anointed with perfumed spices. As Nicodemus touches the cheeks of the Master with aloe, the emotion he has been containing escapes. His own tear falls on the face of the crucified King. He pauses to brush away another. The middle-aged Jew looks longingly at the young Galilean.

It’s a bit ironic that the burial of Jesus should be conducted, not by those who had boasted they would never leave, but by two members of the Sanhedrin—two representatives of the religious group that killed the Messiah.

But then again, of all who were indebted to this broken body, none were as much as those two. Many had been freed from the deep pits of slavery and sickness. Many had been found in the darkest of tunnels, tunnels of perversion and death. But no tunnel was ever as darker than the tunnel from which these two had been rescued.

The tunnel of religion.

They don’t come any darker. Its caverns are many and its pitfalls are deep. Its subterranean stench reeks with the spirit of good intentions. Its endless maze of channels are cluttered with the disoriented. Its paths are covered with cracked wineskins and spilt wine.

You wouldn’t want to carry a young faith into this tunnel. Young minds probing with questions quickly stale in the numbing darkness. Fresh insights are squelched in order to protect fragile traditions. Originality is condemned. Curiosity is stifled. Priorities are reshuffled.

Christ had nothing but stinging words of rebuke for those who dwell in the caverns. “Hypocrites,” he called them. Godless actors. Fence builders. Inflexible judges. Unauthorized hedge trimmers. Hair splitters. “Blind guides.” “White-washed tombs.” “Snakes.” “Vipers.” Bang! Bang! Bang! Jesus had no room for those who specialized in making religion a warlord, and faith a foot-race. No room at all.

Joseph and Nicodemus were tired of it, too. They had seen it for themselves. They had seen the list of rules and regulations. They had watched the people tremble under unbearable burdens. They had heard the hours of senseless wrangling over legalistic details. They had worn the robes and sat at the places of honor and seen the Word of God be made void. They had seen religion become the crutch that cripples.

And they wanted out.

It was a sizable risk. The high society of Jerusalem wasn't going to look too kindly on two of their religious leaders burying a revolutionist. But for Joseph and Nicodemus the choice was obvious. The stories this young preacher from Nazareth told rang with the truth they had never heard in the cavern. And besides, they'd much rather save their souls than their skin.

So they lifted the body slowly and carried it to the unused tomb. In so doing, they lit a candle in the cavern.

Supposing these two have been observing the religious world during the last two thousand years, they have probably found things to be not too terribly different. There is still a sizable amount of evil that wears the robe of religion and uses the Bible as a sledgehammer. It is still fashionable to have sacred titles and wear holy chains. And it is still often the case that one has to find faith in spite of the church instead of in the church.

But they have also observed that just when the religious get too much religion and the righteous get too right, God finds somebody in the cavern who will light a candle. It was lit by Luther at Wittenberg, by Latimer in London, and by Tyndale in Germany. John Knox fanned the flame as a galley slave and Alexander Campbell did the same as a preacher.

It's not easy to light a candle in a dark cavern. Yet, those of us whose lives have been enlightened because of these courageous men are eternally grateful. And of all the acts of enlightenment, there is no doubt which one was the noblest.

"You can take him down now, soldier. I'll take care of him."

## SUMMATIONS

**KEY** – Looking for freedom from physical affliction, demonic oppression, the manifold manifestation of fear, shame before God and men, and the burden of earning favor with the Lord through religious performance? I would point you to Christ, who yet offers liberty and deliverance (i.e., that we might know life and eternal)! The following words of Jesus, spoken so long ago, remain in effect to this today and forevermore:

### **Luke 4:18–19**

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."



## CONCLUSION

**NOTE 1** – Feel free to give either in person or online at [www.NewLifeBarre.org](http://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** – Take note that we will be moving the date for the Men’s Breakfast from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday!

### **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.