

## true freedom

I'm free I'm free.... that's nothing, I'm four.

## Intro

### Drive so Other Survive

Why do people need to be told that?

In fact, why have road rules at all?

What would happen if we just let people free to do what they wanted?

Of course, as a culture we want freedom don't we.

### Freedom as a fundamental human right.

From France — Liberty, Equality, Fraternity ...

... To Tanzania - freedom and unity

From Aristotle — the basis of democracy is freedom

... to Braveheart — they may take away our lives, but they'll never take... OUR

FREEDOM!

From Sarte — to act authentically without social or cultural pressure

... to the Declaration of Independence

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

From Malcolm X - Nobody can give you freedom. Nobody can give you equality or justice or anything. If you're a man, you take it.

... To the Beatles ...

Free as a bird,

it's the next best thing to be.

Free as a bird.

### Franklin Roosevelt - four essential human freedoms 1941 famous speech

Freedom of speech

Freedom of worship

Freedom from want

Freedom from fear

supremacy of human **rights** everywhere. Our strength is our unity of purpose.

Well — are people really free? Have those freedoms been secured for people everywhere?

Do you feel free? Why do we think that we should have freedom? What is it that makes somebody truly free?

There was an article in the herald last week ...

sharing the stories of Adam, Katie and Alex

who left six figure salaries to start their own businesses ...  
 and so are earning significantly less,  
 but are free...

Alex says, "This is about much more than the money – I am in control of my own destiny  
 and Katie — I wanted the freedom and flexibility to be able to make smart decisions  
 well ... is that freedom?  
 a sea change?  
 freedom to make your own decisions, be in control of your own destiny?  
 flexibility?

What is freedom, do we really have access to it, what is freedom for? what's the good of it?  
 And what does that all have to do with a small turkish community 2000 years ago, who were  
 being pressured to get circumcisions... Well let's have a look.

### **It's one or the other**

Paul's first point here is that you can't have it both ways, you either need to follow the law or  
 follow Christ. Its one or the other.

vv 2–5.

In terms of being right with God

and living in this world

and continuing onto heaven, [Gal 3:3]

there are two completely different ways. They are incompatible.

Either you can get to God, and live, and continue on by LAW

or you can have Christ.

LAW here, represented by circumcision, sums up the totality of human attempts to reach  
 God on their own terms.

whether its like my school friend who said that she liked to think of God like ...

or an insitutional religion that lays out a five principles, or eight steps ...

it amounts to religion on our terms, not God's.

Pretty much every superstition, faith, religion or myth, what ever you want to call it has  
 depended fundamentally on human effort.

And sadly the church is often no different.

The language of Galatians has been slavery...

look at ... 3:22

3:23

4:3

4:8

whether its Jewish legalism  
or the Greek culture ...

The Bible's view is that human rules, regulations, principles cannot get you to God,  
cannot grant you freedom and instead are terrible tyrants.

**But Christ is no half-way hero, no token-effort saviour.**

**When Jesus Saves — he saves completely, absolutely, fantastically.**

**Its the whole package.**

**He is able to free, because he became a slave to set you free;**

**His freedom is totally liberating — because it is no longer what you do, or much you do, or  
what the church does for you, or who your parents are, but it is done in Christ.**

**But, friends, its one or the other.**

**and Paul's warning here is that if you choose to rely on what you can do, on human  
achievements, culture or religion, then you have spurned Christ — effectively given him the  
finger.**

**and he is of no benefit to you.**

**Like the dog with a bone who looks in the water and sees another bone and so drops his in  
order to get it,**

**The young church in Galatia were being offered something seemingly attractive,  
but in fact was a mirage that would rob them of Christ, salvation, and freedom.**

**I think its hard for us to imagine the strength of the appeal,**

I mean circumcision doesn't seem too attractive,  
and they probably didn't have anesthetics..  
so let me put it this way.

If I told you that I had met an angel of God, who had with him the book of life, and that  
he could write your name in it, he had authority to do so, and all you had to do was to  
pay a small fee and fill out a green card.

A guarantee — a ticket into eternity — right with God, can't be taken away.

Now imagine that the person offering that to you was from the people group who had  
had this salvation for 2000 years.

And you'd be pretty convinced wouldn't you.

And it would be nice ... wouldn't it.

That's what the reformation was all about ...

As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs  
a guarantee

adding something to the message so that we can be sure

that is — in actual fact, come to God on our own terms, and so, return to the slavery of  
principles of culture, superstition and godless religion.

a mirage.

Its about going on in the Christian life and the truth is its always by grace  
no matter what you've done or how long you've been a christian  
getting into heaven, having eternal life, being right with God  
is always about grace

In the next little section Paul explains why it was attractive.

Here we can reconstruct the historical situation. It seems that new missionaries from Jerusalem had arrived and were saying that they needed to get circumcised, and that even Paul taught about that.

But Paul didn't.

and here he speaks to them about

### **A scandalous message that is worth sticking with.**

7-12

Paul appeals to them to see the truth.

If he was preaching the same message as these others  
that you needed to get circumcised

why is he getting persecuted?

But he is being persecuted. 6:12

Why?

Because he preaches a gospel that is God centred and which glorifies God and which takes all glory away from humanity and removes all futile and arrogant attempts of people to come to God on their own terms.

The Bible reserves its harshest judgement not for the atheist but for those who arrogantly presume upon God, and who, though they should know otherwise, approach him in pride, and presume upon him, but do not listen to him. [and false teachers]

The basic point here is that the Christian Message is actually very offensive.

Not in the sense that it says mean and unkind things about people.

But it does say that humans are hopeless in the face of God's judgement, and that they are unable to save themselves.

And as such — they take offence.

Australia is a meritocracy.

We value and respect people based on how hard they work and what they have achieved.

We hate old money and privelege, but give kudos to those who've battled and done it tough  
the lazy bludger we hate

often when you read articles in the paper, it is not enough to say that something tragic or

good happened to someone, but it'll be a doctor, or lawyer, or banker ... as if that someone makes it better or worse ...

and yet Jesus said all that stuff doesn't matter.

Paul calls it rubbish, waste, dung.

grace means freedom from needing to achieve and to attain to a certain level and to be respected by ones peers.

that article I read about Alex, Katie and Adam who gave up incomes of 150K or more to start their own business — would it be written about Jo, Bob and Bryan who gave it up to do nothing, or Sam, Sharon and Dazza who have packing and checkout jobs and ...

the gospel says those people matter. And those on disability pensions. And those who are retired and can't point back to a life filled up with achievements, and those who are in the bottom class at school, and those who are just mums and dads and sons and daughters.

Because the offence of the gospel of the cross is that those awards, achievements and merits mean absolutely nothing.

I've got a 200 page document about the NT to hand in — doesn't make me closer to God. I have a degree in divinity (first class), work overseas in mission, have run a bible college, seen many people saved, translated a christian book — its all meaningless in the face of the cross.

That's what gets at people.

IT means that they face God with a spiritual nakedness — without a long list of achievements to show

It means that they can't have one over God — the ticket, the guarantee, the mark on the body, the membership, the tax deductible donations that say — I've got you sorted.

You know when the police stop us here, I'm pretty calm. Rego papers in order. check.

Driver's Licence in order. Check. Haven't been drinking. check. [Actually when Katie was in labour with Sammy we got pulled over for a RBT - and, I kid you not, I said to the copper - can't stop, my wife's in labour!]

But in Tanzania - we just have no idea what will happen. That's what is so offensive about the gospel - that we can't hold one over on God, and calmly say - I've got you sorted, mate.

An offensive message.

Wycliff.

But the point isn't that we can't have assurance.

We can.

Just on God's terms, not ours.

So its not through human achievement, but by God's grace.

look at vv. 5-6

we wait for Righteousness

by the Spirit

by Faith

because that's the only thing that matters.

makes us truly free because we belong to another world

and in Christ we have a guaranteed future

I'd have thought that means we are free to make decisions about work, house, lifestyle, education that actually make a difference and are free —

— not about serving that ever accumulating savings account.

and to say sorry; and take responsibility,

because what we do doesn't put a black mark against us

I can take responsibility for my actions

not like politicians and celebrities who say ... I'm sorry if any offense was caused

but I'm sorry, I did a stupid thing, and I offended you.

that's freedom - because we are saved by grace.

but that means, the person who has done good all their lives, gone to church religiously, given money to charity, started a school for orphans, fought for asylum seeker justice, supported their local netball club, .... but who doesn't trust in Jesus ...

is worse off than the pedophile who puts his trust in Jesus.

It attacks our human sentiments and values.

Its why Paul was attacked and they tried to kill him.

And its why thoroughout the history of most churches in most parts of the world that they have slowly shifted away from this message to evaluating people and thinking their salvation depends on how good a christian they are.

IT might make for obedient and peaceful and profitable christian communtieis

but its not the message of the Bible.

Its on or the other,

if you trust in man Christ is of no value to you whatsoever.

a scandalous message — but one worth sticking with.

So we come to the last point

### **a Topsy-Turvy World**

We've been talking about freedom.

I've tried to suggest that Christ offers freedom because he sets us free perfectly and puts us right with God as a gift not by anything we do

and that this grace means this is for everyone who trusts in him, no matter what they have achieved in life, in religion, or in education and work.

Freedom, free for all, you might say.

So the last point is actually to clarify what freedom is

and this is one of the most persuasive things I find about Christianity

its moral vision

not just its diagnosis of the problem of slavery and sin

but its vision of freedom,

but I think its upside down from the way most of us see it.

let's have a look

vv. 13-15.

The Bible's vision for freedom is a freedom from self in order to love

**A freedom from self in order to love**

Don't use your freedom to serve yourself

to satisfy your desires

but to enslave yourself to others in love for them.

**See — I think that most of us think of freedom as self-rule**

**and that's the Bible's view as well.**

but the bible's view isn't a sea-change

its not no obligations

its not any choice whatsoever

Australia wants a freedom that says I can

marry who I want

look at what I want

eat what I want

Go where I want

do what I want

live where I want

educate my children where I want

buy what I want

The Bible turns that upside down

and gives people freedom from 'I want'

It changes it from what I want to what you want

In fact, by God's spirit, over time, what I want starts to become to give you what you want.

**Freedom is self rule.**

**True freedom is self rule with the purpose of enslavement for the sake of another.**

**So can I suggest to you,**

the clearest picture of freedom in all of history,

not the declaration of independence,

not the rich A-lister who can do whatever they like,

but a man on a cross — being mocked — he saved others, let him save himself,

not a man, but God

perfectly free.

yet enslaving himself in love.

Listen to the language of slavery and freedom in Phil 2:6-9

**Freedom from self.**

**Next week this will be explored more**

**Freedom to Love**

True Love !

Love in the Bible is an Action not a feeling

It means acting for the good of another

not feeling good when they are around

but doing good - like at the cross.

**Freedom from those desires that burden me**

that I'm important because of my job, house, income, how I look, way I dress and how far I can ride my tricycle.

those desires that tell me to click onto websites that are not very suitable

those desires that tell me, like at the Thai restaraunt the other day and they got the amount wrong to shut up and accept the windfall

those desires that tell me to do something nice for my wife because I might get something back later

those desires that mean I give to a charity because it makes me feel good

those desires that mean that I vote based on them fixing up belmore rd-M5 ramps, not on the plight of asylum seekers and education and hospitals,

those desires that mean I am enslaved to myself

and live to self

and in fact - isn't that what the Bible calls sin.



### **And Christ has set us free**

if you believe in him - you are free from yourself  
and you can truly live for other people  
and for God — because that is what he is like.

### **a Couple of thoughts for how this moral vision plays out**

free to live and not serve your bank account parents, expectations of colleagues,  
pressures of culture, to live — not even for yourself but in order to love  
free from middle class aspirations - to live for the goal of a family 2-3 kids house, car  
and nice retirement plan

Sabbath - work six days, rest one; man not made for the sabbath, but the sabbath for  
man, rest for the sake of the other; not indulgent but loving so that you can be a kinder  
colleague and harder worker

maybe reconsider your lifestyle - maybe you both don't need to work, if you are married,  
or you can reduce your days, because you aren't living for you but for others; and  
people matter

and spend the time volunteering; teaching ESL, scripture, visiting people in  
retirement and nursing homes ... doing good.

Roosevelt talked about the supremacy of human rights everywhere,  
but Jesus says, not my will but yours be done,  
son of man came not to be served but to serve  
not rights - but love; faith working through love.

### **Martin Luther**

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.

A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

### **Friends — can I encourage you today to think seriously about this vision of freedom**

Freedom in salvation — not by human efforts

Freedom for all — not a measure of how good you are

Freedom from self — to truly LOVE

If you don't know that freedom - I think that it's worth checking it out

If you do know Jesus - are you enjoying that freedom??

**Gal 2:20**