

Prayer & Fasting

MAKING ROOM FOR GOD'S PRESENCE

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. - 2 Corinthians 3:17–18

FREE TO BE

By: Bob Hamp

The child was born ... completely unaware that he was in a prison camp. His parents had been herded here while he was still in his mother's womb. As a result, the only world he had ever known was a dark landscape surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers. As he grew, he saw others look longingly towards the areas beyond the fences. He picked up on the desires of his fellow residents to be on the other side of the bars. Although he had never known the other side, he knew he wanted to leave the place where he was. He knew that "out there" was something called freedom.

He had never chased a soccer ball across a green field. He had never rushed into the waves on an ocean beach. He had never left his home and gone on a picnic to a remote mountain valley. The boy's picture of freedom was limited—it was exclusively composed of things he wanted to leave behind. In other words, he knew what he *didn't* want and where he *didn't* want to be, but he had no idea what he truly wanted and where he truly wanted to be.

Like that child, every single one of us entered the world *after* Adam and Eve enslaved the human race to sin. We were created in God's image and given dominion over His creation; however, since Adam and Eve, creation has instead ruled over us. We have no way to remember what it was like in the Garden of Eden. No one has ever stood on a mountain and helped God name animals. We've never sat alongside the Living Word and learned how the universe runs. We have yet to experience what it truly means to reign and rule over creation. We don't have any option but to think like prisoners.

When we think of freedom, most of us think about the changes we wish for: "I want to stop being so angry." "I wish I could stop drinking." "I need to be a better father." We stand behind the bars of our own humanity and longingly dream about what it might be like if our circumstances were different, if we could control our thought life or bring our habits into alignment with God. We know what we want freedom *from*, but we have no idea what living in freedom truly is.

Ironically, the Bible doesn't describe freedom in terms of getting free *from* something. 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." According to that verse, freedom is not the *absence of something*; it is the *presence of Someone*—the Spirit of the Lord.

Freedom is when you can respond to your Maker as the man or woman He created and redeemed you to be. Freedom is when you can function in your heart, mind and relationships as a living *representation* of God here on earth.

For the man in jail, freedom isn't when the doors are opened; it's when he can absolutely be the man he was made to be, even while still behind bars. The Jews in the Nazi death camps demonstrated this when they said among themselves: "They can make us march to our death, but they cannot make us hate." A man who carries God in his soul can go through the valley of the shadow of death and still fear no evil (Psalm 23:4).

When your heart is set free to worship, it's difficult to still harbor evil. When you are empowered to love deeply, fear loses its grip. When you drink

deeply from Living Water, it's unlikely that you'll crave lesser pleasures. The things that once gripped you—the bars of your old prison—disappear or lose their grip in the real and living presence of the Source of all that nourishes your soul. And in the presence of the One who made you who you are, you can once again be the man or woman He has created you to be.

Freedom isn't about our ability to overcome obstacles; freedom is about becoming the fulfillment of God's design. It's not *what we do*; it's *who we are*. For this reason, freedom looks different for *every* person. When you realize that you aren't made to be like anyone but yourself, you become free from the stranglehold of trying to be like others. While a musician may find freedom alone with a guitar, a physician might find freedom in a remote country surrounded by those in need of healing.

Trying to be like anyone else is futile ... it will only leave you frustrated and discouraged, because you *can't* be anyone other than *you*. And trying to get your attitudes and behavior under control is only a distraction from the deeper, more valuable goal of letting the Spirit of God who is within you to be unleashed. Remember, wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *freedom* ... and the Spirit of the Lord is in you!

Become yourself. Dare to discover the unique fingerprint of God that is who you are. You are without comparison and without equal ... there is *no one* like you.

To be or not to be, that is the question.
~ William Shakespeare

Memory Verse

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Corinthians 3:17