

*John 8:21-25*

Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come." So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Jesus said to them, "What have I been saying to you from the beginning?"

I am not sure if this is a continuation of the conversation Jesus had while He was in the treasury or if this was a whole new day and a whole new encounter. Jesus, however, seems to carry over much of the previous conversation He had with the religious leaders. But now Jesus starts to press in and turns up the intensity of this conversation. Imagine, there is the pack of priests, in all the formal regalia, demanding respect and homage, and Jesus tells them they are going to die in their sin. Can you imagine the faces of those in the crowd when Jesus said that? Of course, they just pass over that comment and focus on where He might possibly be going. So Jesus presses in again and tells them that they are from below and are from this world, but He is not, and if they do not believe that He is the "I Am," the one from above, they will die in their sins. In the English translation they have added the personal pronoun "He" but the Greek literally reads: if you do not believe I am, then you will die in your sins.

This is extreme and we cannot skip over it. The implications are a matter of life and death. This passage is once again pointing out the absolute exclusiveness of the claims of Christ. This is where people who might otherwise be interested in the

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gospel of Jesus start to jump ship. Jesus simply does not leave any room for any other belief system and in calling Himself the “I Am” and saying that if you do not believe in Him you will die in your sins, He leaves no room for us to consider Him merely a good man, a great prophet, or even a holy man of God.

I have talked to so many people who want to include Jesus amongst the pack of great religious leaders: Buddha, Muhammad, and others; however, if you think about what Jesus said such a position lacks intellectual honesty. The problem is that Jesus made radical and exclusive claims about Himself and in so doing He forces everyone to come face to face with who He is and make a choice about what they will believe. You see, Jesus did not just wax on about good religious philosophy and principles for living; rather, He said that He is the very source of eternal life and unless you want to die in your sin you had better believe that He is the ever existent one; God in the flesh.

This radical claim forces us into the position where we must conclude that He was either telling the truth, was intentionally lying, or was a very delusional man who had serious psychological issues. If He was telling the truth, then the only way you will not die in your sins is if you believe that He is more than a man. If, however, He was a liar or severely deluded, how could you consider Him to be holy man? It simply makes no sense. At best, He could have been a prophet of God, but not even a holy prophet like Samuel; rather, a prophet in the order of Balaam who, although he spoke the words of God, was himself quite evil. Do you understand? Jesus’ claims do not give us the liberty to play this off and pretend He did not say it. He says He is God and we must conclude that either He was or He was not. Both conclusions require radical and drastic responses on our side.

Here is the thing, if He is God, then we need to give the highest priority and authority to what He says. He said that He is the living manna that will absolutely

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satisfy our deepest needs. He said that He is the water of life which quenches all our thirsts. He says that He is the light of the world that breaks through and removes the darkness in our hearts. He said that if you do not know Him you do not know the Father. He said that He is the One who came from the Father and is going back to the Father. Thus, if what He is saying is true, He becomes our only hope for life, for peace, for the forgiveness of sins, for eternity, and for a relationship with God. There is just no way around His claim. If, however, He is a not telling us the truth, then our rational response would be to have nothing to do with a man who boasts of things He could never fulfill. After all, who would want to associate with a either a pathological liar or a crazy man? So is He or isn't He?

### ***John 8:26-30***

"I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world." They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

If Jesus wanted He could have unloaded on these religious leaders, peel back their religious wrappings, and reveal to everyone their jealous ambition, their selfishness, their hate, their lust, their scheming, their pride, their insecurity, and every bondage of sin that controls them—the very reasons they are deserving of

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judgment. But He does not do it and He makes it clear why He restrains His tongue. He is always submitted to the will of the Father and will only speak what He has heard from His Father. Then He says that His father is true and in so doing He uses the Greek adjective: “*alethes*” which means to make manifest. This is different from the word “*alethinos*” where true is used in the sense of something being real or genuine. This is important. Consider the makeup of this word “*alethes*”--“a” which is the negative and “lethos” which means to forget. In other words, Jesus does not need to speak judgment for the Father does not forget and one day all will be brought to light. That is actually a scary thought.

**Romans 2:16** says He will judge the secrets of men. **Matthew 12:36-37** says that we shall give account for every careless word we speak: "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." And **Revelation 20:12** paints a picture where all who have not believed in Jesus to be their Lord and Savior are standing before the throne of God and He opens up His books and before all of creation He reveals everything, every word, thought, motive and action. So the day for judgment is coming, but until then Jesus will only say the things His Father has told Him to say. His absolute surrender is beautiful.

There are so many times when I have wanted to unload on others and just go off on them and say what I think about their character, their attitudes, and their behavior and so on. I just know it would feel great (at least for the moment). But it seems God has always told me no. Believe me, I have had plenty of justification for letting my tongue fly; but there is no justification for doing or saying anything that does not come from the Father. Like Jesus, we are to always submit our will to the Father and only say what He wants us to say; oh, and by the way, when you need to know what to say, He will tell you. He won't leave you hanging.

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***Matthew 10:17-20***

But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. "For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

Isn't this awesome? Once again we see that the way in which Jesus lived and was in intimate fellowship with His Father is the way we are to live in Him. He is not only our example He is our provision. What I find fascinating is that He is the one who will literally be speaking through you. He will use your body but He will speak for Himself. Our responsibility is to always be in a place where our minds, our emotions, and our bodies are submitted to His rule and authority. This is so powerful. This is the secret to true Christianity—Christ living in you (*Colossians 1:27*). This is what makes true Christianity unique, distinct and exclusive from any other religion or philosophy for life.

Why do you think Jesus said: ""When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me"? Jesus is speaking prophetically of an event that will usher in real changes in our ability to understand and believe that He is who He says He is and that He does nothing—absolutely nothing—on His own initiative. The phrase "to be lifted up" was a common expression for death; but in choosing these words, Jesus is also prophesying about the manner in which He is going to die—lifted up on the cross. But still why does His death on the cross convince us of the truth?

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Let's think through this for I believe there are a few ways to consider the answer to this question. Perhaps when this prophetic event takes place they will remember and believe. But that will not necessarily convince them that He is the "I Am" for they could conclude that He was just a prophet. Maybe this is a statement on the powerful reality of the resurrection. It could be a reference back to His statement, "you will search for me but not find me," because there will be no body to find and that will convince everyone that He is the "I Am." That might be a little more likely. But maybe this statement is not so disconnected from what He had just said about judgment and all things being made manifest. In other words, maybe this statement is an allusion to the coming of the Holy Spirit and His role in the life of both unbelievers and believers.

### ***John 16:5-11***

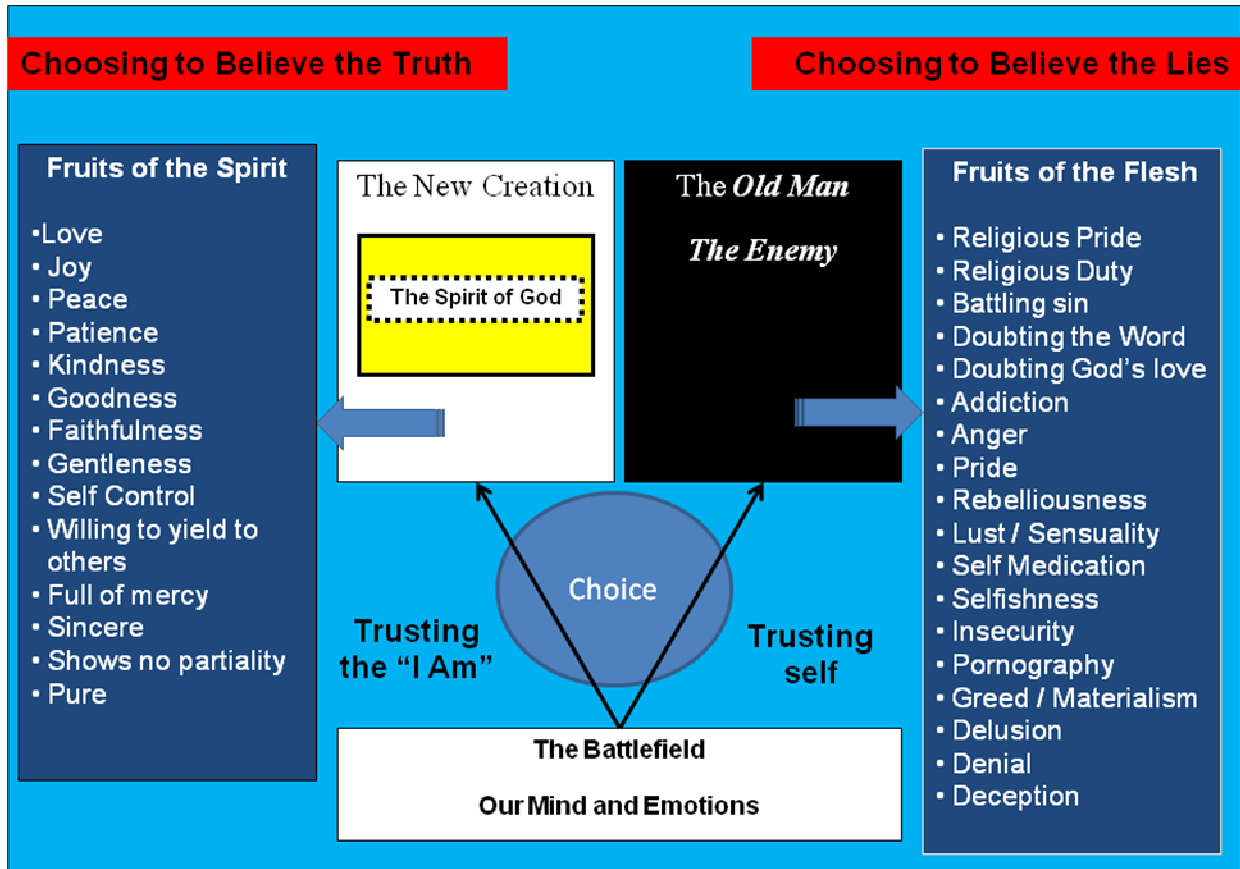
"But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

Jesus did not come to judge us but to give us life in Himself through the person of the Holy Spirit. It was always His plan that after He died He would send the Holy Spirit to do a new work amongst humanity. In fact, He had to die or the Spirit

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would not have been released in this way where He would convict the hearts of men and women about their unbelief in Jesus. This is the sin about which the Spirit is concerned. But keep in mind, this is not just a conviction of unbelievers regarding salvation, but is a conviction for believers regarding living and experiencing eternity now.

Sadly, many in what I call the *religion of Christianity* have missed this entirely. They believe that the Holy Spirit comes to convict us of sinful behavior. Thus, they work really hard to extinguish sinful behavior from the lives of believers. However, even the most casual review of the history of the religion throughout the ages reveals that few have been successful at controlling sin. The problem is they misunderstood the scriptures. Experiencing eternity now is about true belief—not knowledge, not understanding, not agreement or intellectual ascension, not good intentions and wanting to do it right, not trying hard, but a belief where you are willing to bet your life, every single decision, on the truth about Jesus.



In this diagram I show that the behaviors which flow from our lives are merely the fruit of our decisions to not trust ourselves entirely to God—not believing that He is our living manna, our fountain of living water, our one true light, the “I Am” or the solution of everything and our provision for every need. This is why focusing on behavior has never solved the problem of sin; for when we think we have overcome some area of sin, the fruit of our unbelief just mutates into a new expression of sinful behavior. Further, it is always not very long before we are once again struggling with the very sin we thought we had overcome. Honestly, living this way is a futile never ending cycle of religious torture.

Sin is about unbelief in Jesus and the battle to believe is fought in our soul (our mind and emotions). Each of us must continually choose to trust either ourselves, and follow the desires of our old nature (which will let loose sinful behavior in our



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lives) or God which will let lost His life and His righteousness in our lives. Hence, *Galatians 5:16*: “But I say walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.” This is what the battle of sin is really about. And it is in our soul where the Spirit works to convict us and convince us that if we let Jesus be our “I Am” we will, like Jesus, always be surrendered to the Father and do nothing of our own initiative; but we will only do what He tells us to do, say only what He tells us to say, and go only where He wants us to go.

So that was my way of explaining that I believe Jesus was sticking very close to His prior statements regarding the Father revealing all not only in judgment but also through the Holy Spirit. This is why Jesus prepped them for His death; He wanted them to understand that it would be a good thing for the Spirit will come and convince us that Jesus is God and only spoke the things of the Father.

### ***John 8:29-30***

"And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him"? As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

People want to kill Jesus, and they will eventually kill Him. People have tried to set him up to catch Him in some error. They have conspired against Him and they have come against Him privately and publically. They have ridiculed Him and mocked Him and refused to even listen to what He says. They just walk over Him and interrupt Him with some ridiculous comment that reveals the darkness in their hearts and the reality that they really do not care about truth; they just care about their own agenda and their desire to malign, misrepresent, and disparage Jesus.

To the casual observer, this was horrible; they must have thought that God turned His back on Jesus. After all, most people have this belief imbedded into their DNA that says that if things are going well, if people love you, and if you are materially blessed, that God must be with you; and if just the opposite is happening, you must be the one with the problem and God has abandoned you. But again, that is not the truth. The Father is with Jesus and has not left Him.

***Luke 6:26***

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

I love the fact that the religious leaders always engaged Jesus publically. This gave the crowds a chance to see for themselves the difference between the corruptness of their own religious leaders (remember, the people were afraid of their own priests), and the righteousness of Christ. It is funny; the priests intended to discredit Jesus but each time they did the crowds heard His words, saw His actions, understood the unique way He stood in the truth, and they believed. It was clearly evident that He always did what pleased the Father. What was intended for evil God used for His own purpose to bring glory to His Son. I love it!

Jesus now takes the conversation away from the religious leaders and engages those Jews who believed.

***John 8:31-37***

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word,

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you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

This is a critical passage of New Testament theology regarding our lives in the Spirit. In this passage there are 4 contrasting realities plus 1 agent of freedom, for a total of 5—the number our absolute inability and the number of God's mercy and unmerited grace poured out for us. We have true disciples who are contrasted with the offspring of Abraham. We have slaves who are contrasted with sons. We have abiding in the house contrasted with enslavement. We have the slave master which is sin contrasted with the Word. And, finally, we have the agent of freedom which is the truth.

Absent the freedom from sin, which can only be provided by the truth of God, everyone is a slave and sin is their master. They can only do what their master requires of them, which explains the horrible condition of our world and the downright destitution and depravity within the depths of our own hearts. This explains why religion, government, philosophy, or self guidance has never been, or ever will be, the agent of true change in this world.

The interesting thing is that a person may consider themselves part of the household (in this case a Jew—a son of Abraham—who is part of the chosen nation of God, or in our case a person who has been raised in some branch of Christianity and holds to the religion with fervent conviction), but that does not matter unless they are a son they are a slave. And a slave does not remain in the

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house forever. On that one fearful Day of Judgment the slave will be removed from the house and only true sons will remain—only those who have personally accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior will live forever with God.

You see, there must be emancipation. There must be a breaking of the bondage to sin. There must be a permanent separation from the slave master. This is why Jesus died. He died so that He might live; and, in so doing, overcome the power of death. He died so that He can provide the way for us to become sons. He died so that we no longer have to live as slaves, but we can live and experience eternity now. Our emancipation is in Jesus and in Him alone.

So what is the implication of this truth to the life of a believer? First and foremost, we are free from sin and its power to control our lives without our giving it authority. This is a truth that so few believers have even begun to comprehend on a practical day-in-and-day-out reality.

### ***Romans 8:2-5***

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Do you understand? God did the work for us so that we can walk in the Spirit and not according to our flesh. You might be thinking that that is wonderful, but then be wondering why you don't feel so free and why you continue to sin

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(especially because so many times it seems as an automatic response and not even something you deliberately chose). This is easily explained. You have been set free from sin, God removed the chains of bondage, but you are not a puppet; you still have the ability to choose to present yourself back to your old master and let Him rule you if that is what you want.

### ***Romans 6:7-14***

For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. So you also should ***consider*** yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

***Do not*** let sin control the way you live; ***do not*** give in to sinful desires. ***Do not*** let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

Do you understand it is now a choice—your choice. No one can force you into sin. You have the ability to live absolutely free from its power! The issue comes down to whether or not you are presenting yourself completely to God.

***Romans 6:16-17***

Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

Giving yourself completely to God is believing that He is your “I Am,” that He is everything you need (no exceptions); and then betting your life on that reality. You must choose to live as if the intangible God is as real to you as your Old Man is to you. In so doing, by definition, you will ignore the voice of your old master. ***Galatians 5:1*** says: “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”

It is clear that we are to walk as free men; but the “how” is found not in any scripted set of behaviors, but in knowing and choosing to believe the truth. That is why here at Pathway Fellowship we focus so hard on studying the scriptures to make sure we understand the life that is to be ours. We need to know what to believe so we can choose to believe the truth that will set us free and bet our lives on it. So what does this freedom actually look like in the life of a believer? The scriptures speak very authoritatively to this issue.

1. The Truth will set us free from Our Old Nature

***Galatians 2:20***: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

***2 Corinthians 5:17***: “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

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*Ephesians 4:22-24*: “that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

You see those Christians who make excuses for not experiencing eternity now by saying things like Jesus will change me in His timing or that it is a process of overcoming and conquering sin (meaning sinful behavior), are flat out wrong. You have been made new. The work is done. The issue is now about trusting that Jesus is your “I Am” and then living as if He is your “I Am.” That is it! Now this is a process to some extent in that we must learn the truth that will set us free. But once we have learned the truth (and most of us who have been in Christianity have heard it for years), it is no longer a “process” it is a matter of decision. If you have heard the truth, if you know the truth, now you must choose it.

Are you going to present yourself to God trusting that He will be everything that you really need (which by the way, as God, He is the only one who really knows what you need—you don’t even know what you really need), or are you going to trust yourself believing that you know best.

## 2. The truth will set us free from the world

*1 John 5:5-7*: “Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.”

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Notice that the Spirit is truth, which is why when we walk in the Spirit of God by giving ourselves to Jesus we experience true freedom from anything that wants to control us.

3. The truth will set us free from fear

**1 John 4:15-18:** “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”

**Philippians 4:13-14:** “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

4. The truth will set us free from condemnation

**Romans 8:1:** “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

5. The truth will set us free from man in order that we might freely serve others

**1 Corinthians 9:19:** “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.”

This aspect of freedom is one I have truly begun to experience. In the past, when someone misjudged me or misrepresented me it would eat me alive. This was the



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Achilles heel of my soul. It used to rip me apart and just consume my being with stress, anxiety, and tremendous pressure. But recently I went through a horrific situation where I was judged based on slander, gossip, assumption and lies. After I shook off the sense of being personally violated, I realized that I was actually free. This situation and the things said to me did not control me; it did not even roost in my being. It was external to me and I was not held in bondage. Praise God, the truth does set us free.

6. The truth will set us free to love

***Galatians 5:13***: “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

***1 Peter 1:22***: “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.”

7. The truth will set us free to be offered to God

***James 1:18***: “Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

***1 Peter 2:16***: “Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.”

I came up with 7 aspects of freedom, but I am sure there are more. In closing, however, I want you to understand this truth. ***2 Corinthians 3:17*** says: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Thus, the

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indication that you are walking in the Spirit of God is when you are experiencing freedom and liberty in all these areas. If you are not experiencing this real time, it means there are areas where you still chose to listen to the voice of your old slave master and have not trusted yourself to the truth.

Our life is to be a life of liberty free from the worlds desires and expectations of us; free from the bondage that comes when we give power to the things said about us or done to us by those in the world and by those in the household who do not live as free people; and free from ourselves and our old slave master who has never brought us liberty but has always wrapped us in chains of powerlessness. This is eternity now. This is true Christianity. Don't let anyone convince you of anything else that compromises this truth; remember, the truth will set you free.

One last comment on that phrase in *verse 31*: "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples." The explanation for what I am going to say is a bit technical and if anyone wants the details just let me know, but the best way to read this is not as if you must abide to prove you are His disciples (as many read it which sets off a list of to-do's) but that if you abide you are His disciples. In other words, it is evidence of a reality not a conditional statement. The good news is that you are free to abide; it is a privilege of the Spirit and a reality of the one who lives in the Spirit.

Let's Pray.