

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

July 4

2021

"FREEDOM"?

In John 8:32 Jesus told the Jews, "and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". These arrogant, self-righteous Jews replied, "We are Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (John 8:33). They considered themselves to be free however Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin" (John 8:34).

I was reminded of this exchange between Jesus and the Jews as I watched a news report of a protest. The reporters were interviewing some of the people (mostly women) who had made a trip to Washington to march in protest against any effort to change the law which now makes abortion on demand legal. The statements made by these individuals indicate that they have about as much understanding of "freedom" as did those first century Jews.

One young lady, when asked why she had participated in this march said she thought "every woman should have the freedom to decide whether to have a child or not have a child." This is an example of how those guilty of sin seek to cloud the issue. The issue is not whether a woman should have the freedom to decide if she will or will not have a child. The real issue is whether a woman, or anyone else, has the right to take the life of a child AFTER its life has begun within its mother. If the mother's "freedom" includes the right to terminate the life of her unborn child because she doesn't

want a child where does this "freedom" end? Is it limited to just the first few months following conception? What about this woman's "freedom" after she experiences all the responsibility of feeding, bathing and changing diapers following the birth of a baby? What if she decides then that she doesn't want a child? Surely we can see that once that child is conceived the woman has passed the time of deciding whether she will or will not have a child. From time to time we read or hear about the body of a newborn baby being found in a dumpster or some other trash container. The community is outraged that any mother would discard her baby in such a manner and criminal charges are placed against her. However, if this same mother had done the same thing three or four months earlier she would have been simply exercising her "freedom." How inconsistent can we be?

Another lady, when asked why she joined in this march, said, "It's about freedom; a woman's freedom to do what she wants to do." This is the attitude many have concerning freedom. The thought of God or right and wrong does not even enter the picture. Self is "god" and personal desire is the only standard of right and wrong. As Jesus stated to the Jews of His day, this is not freedom at all but is in fact the greatest bondage of all, bondage of sin.

The only real freedom is the freedom we have in Christ, i.e., freedom from sin. Paul said, "Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered" (Romans 6:16,17).

In Romans 1:28 Paul tells us why men would engage in such ungodly acts. He said "they refused to have God in their knowledge." It remains so today. When man rejects God he turns from the only source of true freedom.

✍ James Hahn

Draw Near To God

The inspired Psalmist declared, "...it is good for me to draw near to God..." (Psalm 73:28). You see, we should all strive to draw near to God, for when we draw near to God...

We Draw Away From Ourselves.

Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). What must one do if they desire to follow Jesus? They must draw away from self. Therefore, we must not conform to our thoughts and ways, but rather we must submit to God's thoughts and ways. Why? Well, in Proverbs 16:25 the wise man penned, "There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." So may we all draw away from self and draw near to God.

We Draw Away From The World.

In Romans 12:2 Paul advised, "...do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Here, Paul is saying, draw away from the world and draw near to God. John, also gave instruction concerning drawing away from the world when he wrote, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). You see, the world in which we live in is passing away (1 John 2:17). Therefore, let us all draw away from the world and draw near to God.

We Draw Near To One Another.

When we draw near to God and His will, we will also draw nearer to one another. God is very pleased when His children are of one accord, and Jesus even prayed for unity among all believers (John 17:20-21). In Psalm 133:1, David revealed, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!" Therefore, let us draw near to one another, and let's take heed to these words of Paul, "...if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Philippians 2:1-2). Brethren, take these words of Paul to heart, and draw near to God, and to one another.

We Draw God Near To Us.

James wrote, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you..." (James 4:8). Just as James said, when we draw near to God, He is near to us.

However, we must do so with a true and honest heart, just as the Hebrew writer advised in Hebrews 10:22-23 which reads, "...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." Draw near to God, and remember, when we draw near to Him with a true heart, He will draw near to us.

We Draw Others To Consider.

As Christians we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-14). Therefore, we all need to whole-heartedly draw near to God, and let our light so shine before men so that they may see our good works and glorify God (Matthew 5:16). For, when we draw near to God and let our light shine before others, we can positively influence them to likewise do the same. Therefore, apply these words of Paul to your live, "Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world..." (Philippians 2:14-15). Once more, let's draw near to God, for by doing so we may draw others to consider to do the same.

The fact of the matter is, my friend, God is as near to us as we want Him to be, therefore draw near to God and He will draw near to you!

✍ Brad Phillips

Belleville church of Christ

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Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

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