

**Devotional Thoughts :: The slave is free and the free man is in bondage****The slave is free and the free man is in bondage - posted by lylewise, on: 2011/10/14 12:01**

There may not have been a person of greater freedom during the reign of Nero than Onesimus. To have been set free by the good news of Christ while seeking worldly freedom in Rome, he comes to find himself in chains once again, but this time voluntarily. This time he serves a new Master. In the service of this new Master he is led by conviction to make amendments with the the old one he is still obligated to. Now however, he returns a free man spiritually speaking. What difficulty there must have been for him to return to Philemon, having now begun a new life and new work with Paul. Can we imagine the discipleship and growth that came from this mentor under Christ? Yet that growth would bring Onesimus to the conviction that he was still bound to the prior obligation that preceded this new one. This was now part of his new found testimony, a living testimony. A testimony that speaks to honoring that which might even bring him back to bondage if the apostle's appeal to Philemon is not sufficient in granting his freedom so that he might continue his work back in Rome. Even if he did find himself back in service to Philemon, it would now be something totally different than it was before, for now he would be working with his brother in Christ in Philemon's household. He was a free man anyway you look at it, and his ministry would be lived out whether that be as a slave brother to Philemon or a freed brother with Paul.

At this same time and in sharp contrast, Nero should serve as the example of the most free man in the world. Having power, possession, and fame, he would feel the world in his hand. However, he was plagued by a bondage he could neither see nor understand. How sad to not know the freedom of God. How enticing the search for happiness through what the world affords.

There is one more bondage that bears addressing not covered by these two examples. That is the bondage that the one reborn can suffer. It is the tragic placement of oneself back into the world he has been freed from. Having received freedom only to subject himself to the chains of the world once again, is to be relieve the conditions of captivity, but this time with a knowledge of what freedom truly is. To have been born captive, one can only imagine freedom in a vague sense, never having truly experienced it, but to have been captive and set free and then find oneself back in bondage is the worst sort of conditions. How awful it is to not enjoy a sunset in its brilliance or any other evidence or show of God's creation, encumbered by the guilt of unrepented sin. How terrible it is to be restricted by sin, holding a key to others freedom but not being able to share it being in bondage. How pathetic to know truth and be held back, being a vessel of it, unable to pour the contents out on those who need what is held within. How sad to be the one who is incapacitated by sin and unable to war when God calls one to armor. To be commanded to supply the provision of one's family and be held back in that provision by the burden of guilt that comes by sin unrepented. This form of bondage is extreme and highly incapacitating. It shows virtually no signs of it's bindings except to the most discerning of men. It is a bondage typically camouflaged by the one enslaved, and though its chains be invisible, they are most efficient in their restrictions. Many will face in some form or fashion a like encumbrance, just as David in his nine months of captivity.

Having experienced the fullness of a life in Christ, let us not turn our heads back to the bondage that once held us from the truth. Let us not fail this privileged discernment, by not recognizing the freedom the world puts on display. The world's freedom is bondage to us no matter how well it is packaged. We can be sure that its marketing will be the best devised.

**Re: The slave is free and the free man is in bondage, on: 2011/10/14 15:01**

Great post brother, tremendous insight.....brother Frank