



St. Michael's Church
CHARLESTON, SC
SUNDAY, JULY 5, 2020

ROMANS 7:15-25, MARK 5:35-43

INDEPENDENTS TO HUMBLE PENITENTS

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

On this July 4th Weekend, let me take you to a lesser known American Revolutionary war Battle...lesser known that is to anyone who didn't take South Carolina History. It didn't take place in Gettysburg, Lexington, Concord, or the Boston Harbah. The battle was on little Sullivan's Island, South Carolina, June 28, 1776.

435 volunteer Carolina made soldiers, 31 cannons, and some palmetto logs making up a makeshift fort under the leadership of Col. William Moultrie. Versus the most powerful military force in the world - the Famed British Navy. Thousands of trained British marines, 270 guns, and oodles of warships. Yet against all the odds, The South Carolinians would prevail... How?

First, **Thank God for sandbars.** The British fleet call for back-up, the frigates arrive but get stuck on sandbars and too far away!

Second, Thank God for Palmetto Trees! The Americans make a wall in their makeshift fort out of spongy palmetto logs, that absorb then repel British gun fire!

Thank you, Jesus, for sandbars and palmetto trees, which is why, as an aside, we have the Palmetto tree on our state flag!

The Americans would win that battle, a battle that birthed what we know to be Carolina Day, a day that would sow the seeds for permanent American freedom. Freedom...what a sweet word! It's one of those words you can't say without a smile coming across your face. It's the most beautiful of words. The absolute contrast to that beautiful word...is...Slavery.

Slavery is everything freedom is not. Full of pain, oppression, fear, abuse, danger, and death. Today on freedom Sunday, I want to talk to you about the power of freedom and the pain of spiritual slavery. And in doing so I want to address our civil unrest and help us realize that unless we move from being a nation of Individuals to a nation of Humble Penitents UNDER God, we will all live in perpetual spiritual slavery. Unless we go from a people leading our own lives independently of God, to a people living totally dependent on God with our hands out, we will remain as spiritual slaves.

Let me explain. Jesus said in John 8...whoever commits a sin, is a slave to sin. And no one on planet earth knew this more than Paul. In Romans 7, you and I have the privilege of eaves-dropping into Paul's very heart. This is what I love about the Bible, it holds nothing back, Paul in Romans 7 is as vulnerable as any human on earth. From the core of his heart Paul writes;

What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, -but then I act another...doing things I despise! Why do I do the thing I hate? I decide to do good, but I don't really do it...I do the bad thing! Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me everytime!

My friends, can you resonate with that? It reminds me of that iconic hero Harriet Tubman who said, "I freed a thousand slaves, I could have freed a thousand more if only they knew they were slaves." This is what Paul is saying..we are all slaves to sin. He has, we have, these dueling natures, of good and evil.

In the ancient day the Jews taught that every human has two natures, the Yetser Hatob and the Yetser Hara. Yetser Hatob is the Good in us. Yetser Hara is the evil in us. The evil inclination is defined as physical gluttony, aggressive emotions, and unbridled pride. So, Godly good and evil sin existing in a state of battle.

Sin, defined as anyplace where God is not in our lives. Sin is that desire to walk away from the eternal law of God. What is the eternal law of God? "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind first, **then** Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said this because He knew anything that we put **first before** him will enslave us.

Doesn't that make sense of our lives? Easy illustrations would be those enslaved to alcohol, where if alcohol comes before Jesus, before family, we end up being **ITS** slave. Anything coming before Jesus will enslave us. If money does, we become its slave. If pride does, we become its slave. If human relationships do, they bring enslavement. WE ALL HAVE THIS IN COMMON! We all have slavery of the heart problem. It began in the garden of Good and Evil with that original sin of Adam and Eve. Like a cancer, it infects our hearts to such a degree that evils like racism are born... one race trying to control another. It's why C.S. Lewis said, "Mankind is so fallen that no man can be trusted with unchecked power over another. I reject slavery because I see no men fit to be masters!"

In the spirit of Paul, we are all enslaved and not capable of controlling another! It was that Russian Philosopher **Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn who said**, "The line separating good and evil passes not through Races, States, Nor between classes, or between political parties – But through every human heart...Even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And within hearts overwhelmed by goodness, there remains...an uprooted corner of sin."

So, what's the solution? Paul in Romans 7 knew what the **Jewish solution was**. The Jews taught the solution was through obedience to the law. When the Torah is studied and when there is submission to its discipline, all evil is banished. Yes, if you kept the laws you would be free to make the right decision every time. They also taught that if you just put your mind to it, you could defeat that evil within. So, when sin within attacked, it could be defeated through the law and the mind.

Paul rejects that outright. In Romans 7 verse 17, Paul is saying, "*I need something more! For I know the law but still can't keep it...and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I need help! I don't have what it takes! I can will it, but I can't do it... I've tried everything, nothing helps.... I'm at the end of my rope... Wretched man that I am, who can deliver me?*"

That's when Paul gives the answer: **Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

Jesus is the one who gives us the process to defeat that evil within, to go from slavery to freedom. And what is that process? How do we go from slavery to freedom? Let me bring in Peter Kreeft, my favorite Roman Catholic Boston College Theologian into the picture,

He writes profoundly. "If we were saved from our slavery to sin by obeying the law, we could save ourselves and wouldn't need a Savior!"_If we could save ourselves with mind over matter...Jesus would then be reduced to just another Human Teacher-Prophet-Guru-Social Worker-Psychologist-Philosopher-Or morally good guy.

Kreeft continues, "Consider this analogy. The law is like an x-ray. Sin is the cancer. Jesus is the surgeon conducting the operation of salvation. Faith is consent to the operation." The law - that x-ray - helps us see our need!

For example: The two greatest commandments...Love God, love your neighbor. Are we?

Take the X-rays of the 10 commandments. Thou shalt have no idols...an idol is anything I love more than Jesus.

Idols can therefore be great things like family, like your job, your hobby.

Thou shalt do no murder. Remember, you can murder another with your tongue, through gossip.

The purpose of these laws is not to condemn or save us, but to identify the sin so we go to Jesus and say: Lord forgive me, restore me to the **freedom** you died to give me! Through your Holy Spirit give me every strength to reject addictions like pornography, pride, unforgiveness, racism, entitlement, and anger. All these earthly desires that will only put me in slavery.

The greatest need in our lives, the way to freedom is to see our need, to audit our lives on the heart of God. Unless we see that sin within, two things happen: We will never be free. On the outside we will look like we're free, but on the inside total oppression and slavery, Second and on this July 4th weekend, we just won't understand what's truly happening in our nation right now. So, let's apply Paul's words to our hurting nation.

Years ago, a Theologian named Reinhold Niebuhr wrote a book called Moral Man-Immoral Society. This book was studied by generations of clergy, and taught in seminaries. The problem is that the book is half right. Paul bares his soul to tell each and every one of us that we have a sin problem. It's why our prayer book says there is no health in us apart from Christ. We have to start there...with **my** sin, **my** sin of anger, **my** proneness to wander FROM God. BUT: As you and I see all the civil unrest in our nation right now, what we see are generations of men and women who say..

I'm inherently Good...I'm moral. I'm independent and don't need God.

It's the structures that are bad. I'm good...the system of racism in our country is evil.

Again, it's half right. We all have a sin problem. There will never ever ever ever be a statue we can put up of a thoroughly good person. We will never have perfect people, politicians, priests and police! If we live the I'm good, the structures are bad viewpoint, we will always live as victims in a place of continued spiritual slavery, and will be tempted to think if we can just set up little autonomous zones, little Communes of nice people who want to change the system, all will be well. **IT'S NOT TRUE.** Original sin showed up quickly in these autonomous zones, in the form of violence and they had to be closed.

One nation **UNDER** God means one nation acknowledging our own individual sins, repenting and saying Jesus only you can make this right. All have sinned, every human-every human that has a statue in their honor-and every future human with a statue is a sinner. ALL who call on the Lord will be saved! That's TRUE freedom. Moving from a nation of Individuals, to a nation of Humble Penitents UNDER God.

So..can you imagine a picture with me? What if all Democratic and Republican Senators and Representatives left their offices to go outside onto the Mall in Washington and said: "Jesus, the problem begins with ME. Forgive me for **my** sins, whatever they are. And Forgive our collective actions!" What if that happened with Democrats and Republicans on Marion Square?

Jesus the problem begins with Me. Forgive me for my sins, whatever they are. And forgive our collective actions. From a nation of Individuals, to a nation of Humble Penitents UNDER God.

Back to C.S. Lewis - I reject slavery because I see no men fit to be masters! Jesus is the ONLY master of us all, Only He can save us. The good news is that the last word always belongs to God.

Going from Slavery to Freedom

In our Reading from Mark, Jesus goes into the room of the dying little girl and says, "TALITHA CUMI! Rise Up!" My friends, that last phrase "talitha cumi" is not just for the girl and her parents, it is for us! It's a call to action! Theologian Dr. David Garland writes, "Faith is always embodied in action. It kneels, it begs, it reaches out to touch!"

Church it's time to rise up! It's time to tell others that spiritual slavery is the only option for all of us if there is no Jesus! Why would we expect our culture to live any differently if individually we've never communicated this? WE NEED a RISE UP REVIVAL! A tipping point of people who say Jesus, it was you all along, you are the ONLY source of our true freedom!

How? My friends, the times we are in now are not so different from the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century. Many people had become disillusioned with spiritual things.

Agitation over the slavery issue had bred much political unrest. Civil war seemed imminent.

Financial institutions were failing. On September 21, 1857 Jeremiah Lanphier, a businessman, began a series of prayer meetings in New York. Perhaps Lanphier took a page out of the book of Theologian Graham Scroggie who said, "There never has been a spiritual revival which did not begin with an acute sense of sin." These prayer meetings were full of repentance, and prayer.

By the beginning of 1858 the congregation was crowded, often with a majority of businessmen.

Newspapers reported that over 6,000 were attending various prayer meetings in New York, 6,000 in Pittsburgh. Even in Washington DC! Daily prayer meetings were held there at five different times to accommodate the crowds! Other cities followed the pattern. Soon, a common mid-day sign on businesses doors read "We will re-open at the close of the prayer meeting".

By May, 50,000 of New York's 800,000 people were new converts.

True Freedom! Talitha Cumi! God is calling us to a new level of passion, a new level of prayer, a new conviction of the heart. The acknowledgement of these two natures OF GOOD AND EVIL within us. Slavery to Freedom. From Individuals, to a nation of Humble Penitents UNDER God. Jesus bring revival and begin it with me. My friends don't we want to be free and see a nation free? It begins with us, giving our hearts to Christ right now.