

Fil-Am Community Church  
Pastor Rolly Estabillo  
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Key Verse: Romans 8:1-28

## **“HOW TO EXPERIENCE REAL FREEDOM”**

We are in the last part of our series we’re calling “Real Life 360”. This series is based on the words of Jesus in John 10:10 where he says, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”. What Jesus is saying is that if he is in your life, if you accepted him as your Lord and Savior, his intention is for you is to live a life that is free from the many fears, anxieties, worries, nervousness, and unease that many people in the world experience. Now, Jesus did not promise that he will free you from troubles, problems, crises, disasters, difficulties, but he promised to give you joy and peace and comfort in your heart in the midst of all these.

And yet, many Christians don’t experience this and instead are living such defeated, stressed-out lives rather than the full abundant life that Jesus spoke about in John 10:10. They are still trapped in a mental and emotional quagmire. They feel imprisoned, locked up within themselves. You may say, “I must not be experiencing the freedom that Jesus talked about here or otherwise I would not be struggling so much--falling for all of the temptations that come down the road or feeling guilty because of my past or being anxious because of my fears. I am not the Christian that Jesus wants me to be.”

This morning, we’re going to look at the last area of our lives that we need to work on with the help of God to be able to experience real life. We’re going to talk about experiencing real freedom. As we’ve mentioned in the past weeks, our life is like a circle which has four points – North, South, East, and West – corresponding to Friendship, Finances, Faith, and lastly, Freedom.

In John 8:36, Jesus says, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”. Jesus promises that a life that is full is also a life that is free.

What does freedom mean to a Christian? I believe it goes beyond the freedom to attend church or not. It goes beyond our freedom to read the Bible, to choose the denomination we prefer, and to speak out about our faith. When Jesus sets us free, it makes a much greater impact on our personal lives in that we are FREE INDEED to live overcoming, productive lives. We are not just barely hanging on as Christians. Just how does this idea of freedom apply to us today? Do we even know we are free?

At a farmer’s market in a little village there was a covey of quail walking in circles around a pole. They had strings attached to their legs, and they continued to walk around and around the pole hour after hour. A man came into the market and asked, “How much will you take for all of them?” He paid the owner the agreed upon price and then began to cut the strings off of their legs.

“What are you doing?” the seller asked in disbelief.

“I’m setting them free,” said the new owner.

But in spite of the strings being cut giving the quail their freedom, they continued to walk around the pole in the same old circle. They didn’t even realize that they were free and that they could go in a different direction. Not until the man began shooting them away did they move from this set routine.

Jesus says, “If the Son sets you free you are free indeed.” We need to realize that we are free today from all kinds of things because of His freeing us. We need to go in a different direction. We don’t have to continue to march around in circles of guilt and worries and fear and so on. We are free indeed. What does this freedom include? This morning, I’d like to give four things that this freedom includes and how we can experience these. Firstly, it includes:

## 1. FREEDOM FROM CONDEMNATION

Romans 8 begins with *"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* If you have your Bible you can encircle the word "no" there. In the original Greek, it's the strongest word for "no" you can use in Greek. It means absolutely, positively, no, no! There is absolutely no condemnation if you are a Christian. God does not condemn you.

That is a hard truth for us to grasp. Intellectually we can get it. But emotionally it's just too good to believe. No matter what I do, God doesn't hate me. That is too good to believe.

Fact: God is not mad at me. If you're a Christian and you blow it, God does not reject you. He does not kick you out of His family. When you're inconsistent, He does not get impatient and scold you. When you sin, He does not hold a grudge and stop loving you. Why? Because your sins have already been paid for. That's what Jesus Christ did on the cross. If Jesus paid for your sins, you don't need to pay for them too. That's double jeopardy. Jesus said it Himself in John 3:17, *"I didn't come into the world to condemn the world. I came to save it."*

There's only one condition for you to meet: to be "in Christ". For those who are in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation. It's already been done for you. You can't earn it, you just accept it. So many people I meet are walking around in self condemnation, beating themselves continuously for their past. They won't let themselves go, they won't forgive themselves, much less accept forgiveness from God.

In the Philippines, during holy week, you'll see a lot of men beat themselves up literally, whipping their backs with a palm branch. When I was a kid, I would go out on the street curiously watching these men all lined up, walking bare feet slowly in the middle of the street, their heads covered with a black cloth, wearing

only loose black pants as they flogged themselves continuously. And some of them even end up being nailed on a cross. They do this because they want to atone for their sins.

But Jesus Christ has atoned for our sins already. Amen? God has made it possible for us to have freedom from condemnation.

Now, obviously Christians still sin, they fail, they make mistakes. But, as a bumper sticker says, "Christians are not perfect, only forgiven". If we just stopped right here, closed our Bible and went home, that's enough reason in the world to be positive. Christians are free from condemnation.

The second freedom Christians experience is

## **2. FREEDOM FROM DOMINATION**

Verse 2 of our text says *"Because through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit has set me free from the law of sin and death."*

Fact: I don't have to be controlled by anything anymore as a Christian. When the Lord is in control of my life, I don't have to be controlled by anything else. I am set free.

Many people complain, "My life is out of control. I just can't get a handle on my life. I want to do right, but I don't. I know what I ought to be doing, but I just can't seem to change. I can't break free." Maybe it's a way of thinking, a way of acting, a way of responding. In other words, we're talking about those habits that you just can't control. How many times have I heard this phrase: "I just can't stop!" I hear it all the time. "I just can't get control. I just can't stop eating... drinking... reading pornography... I just can't get control of my anger... get into the habit of exercising... I just can't stop lying." Whatever. Name it. What's your pet habit? Or pet sin?

The Bible says that Jesus came to set us free from our own desires. He's talking about bad habits, wrong thoughts, strong desires.

There's a philosophy going around today. It says, "Do your own thing! If it feels good, do it. Whatever you want to do, do it." Jesus says anybody who sins is a slave to sin.

There are certain laws that are always in action -- physical laws and moral laws. If I were to take you up on top of the Empire State Building and you look down over the side and you say, "I'm free to jump off." You are exactly right. You are free to jump off. Nobody's going to stop you. So you jump off. But I think it's a foregone conclusion that you wouldn't survive that fall.

When you jump, you break a physical law, the law of gravity. Physical laws are like that. You break them and they break you. The same way with moral laws. Some people don't mind breaking moral laws which are God's laws. They take moral laws for granted. But as they break God's laws, they themselves get broken. So, you are free to choose any lifestyle you want. But you are not free from the consequences of that lifestyle. Regardless of what it is.

Years ago there was an article about Ernest Hemingway. The article talked about how Hemingway had no regard for God. He lived his life any old way he wanted to. He was quite a licentious man. He drank too much. He smoked too much. He had many illicit relationships. He pretty much did anything he wanted to do. At the end of the article it was bragging on how this guy lived his lifestyle ignoring common standards of society and was a tremendous, smashing success. The closing line of the article was this quote from the Bible. It said this, "*The wages of sin is death.*" But obviously for Earnest Hemingway it paid off." And it left it like that. It wasn't six months after that article that Hemingway put a shotgun to his head and blew his brains out. He committed suicide.

His last words were, "My life is as empty as in a vacuum tube in a television with the plug pulled out." He wasn't free. He was a slave to his own desires.

Look at what the Scripture says. Romans 8:5 and following says *5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. 7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.*

*9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.*

*12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live."*

So my question for you this morning is, What's controlling you? Without even knowing who you are, I can tell you what's controlling you: Whatever you think about the most is what controls you.

You see, you are going to be controlled by something in life. Either your own nature, the devil, or the Lord, or something. But the amazing thing is, the more I let God control my life, the more freedom I experience. When I'm mastered by Him, I become the master of my circumstances. God has made it possible to be free from domination. I gain control of my life and circumstances by giving it to the Lord.

Jesus wants us to live a life that is full. And a full life means freedom from condemnation, from domination, and

### **3. FREEDOM FROM DESPERATION.**

Henry David Thoreau said, "Most people live lives of quiet desperation." They're overwhelmed, discouraged. Life is not easy. Life is tough. God has not promised a stress-free, problem-free life for believers. However, Christians do have a hope that helps us keep on going.

Fact: *"Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."* Paul says, I know how the story's going to end. There's going to be rewards.

Sure I'm going through tough times right now but I've read the last chapter in the Bible and I'm going to win in the end. The fact of life as a Christian is I have a hope to hold onto even in my problems, even with things going wrong, even when things fall apart. I have a hope that unbelievers don't have.

There are two things that give us hope. First, v. 23 says someday you're going to get a new body. Our greatest desperation at present maybe our bodies that grow old and become wrinkled. And so we do all kinds of stuff to turn back the hands of time. But a time will come when we don't worry anymore about our bodies. Because we will have perfect bodies. We'll all be a '10'. Isn't that good news? Another thing that gives us hope is in v. 26 where it says that the Spirit prays for us when we're going through trials. The Holy Spirit is our advocate. He is our #1 promoter. He's got our back. And that gives us hope. We don't need to feel desperate.

We have freedom from condemnation. From domination, from desperation and finally, we have

### **4. FREEDOM FROM CONFUSION.**

One thing that's true is that God never makes a mistake. He even takes the mistakes you make and weaves them into His plan for His purpose. Nothing comes into my life by accident. Everything fits into His plan.

v. 28 *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."*

Fact: God has a purpose behind my problems. That helps me to be free from thoughts of worries, negativity, anxieties. He has a purpose behind every problem that I face.

Notice what it does not say. It does not say that all things are good. There's a lot of bad in the world.

It does not say that everything will have a happy ending on this side of eternity.

But It does say that all things work out though it may be hard for me to understand.

And notice, Paul says, *"... and we know..."* we don't hope, we don't wish, we don't desire, we don't think, we don't imagine. We know. We have absolute confidence.

What do we know? That all things work together for good for those who love God. All things. What does all things include? Does that include losing your job? Does that include an illness? Does that include a divorce? Does that include a miscarriage? Does that include a death? All things work together!

And notice it doesn't say, all things by themselves are good. It says they work together, they're inter-related. Individually there are many bad things that come into our lives. But they work together. We must look at the whole picture.

If you've ever cross stitched, or seen a completed cross stitch project before it is framed, usually the back side is a complete mess like that one. But you turn it over and you see a beautiful picture. We may only see the back of the cross stitch,

but God sees the entire beautiful picture that is creating in us, through us and in what looks like a big mess is His beautiful plan. It's the perspective that you're looking at that makes the difference. All things work together for good.

Question: Can God bring good out of evil? Can God take even the sins that I've done in my life -- even the wrong things, bad, dumb, stupid decisions -- and somehow fit them into His plan? Yes!

Example: Matthew 1. The genealogy of Jesus. From Abraham all the way to Mary. Outside of Mary, there are only four women mentioned in Matthew 1. In Jewish history, you see, they did the genealogy, the family tree, by the man. But there are four women mentioned in the lineage of Jesus. They are Tamar, who was seduced by her father in law and bore a child; Rahab, who was a prostitute; Ruth, was a Moabitess foreigner who married a Jew; and Bathsheba, and we all know her story. The point is, God even takes the mistakes we make and weaves them into His giant, grand design and brings good out of them.

Isn't that incredible? Isn't it good news to know that you don't have to be perfect the rest of your life to be in God's plan? Isn't it great to know that even though you make mistakes, that God will fit it in. And there's no question that because of a mistake in your past you'll have to settle for God's second best the rest of your life? The phrase "second best" just isn't in God's word.

God has made it possible for us to have freedom from confusion. That means everything works together. For everybody? No. This is a promise only for believers. For those who love Him, for those who have been called according to His purpose.

The fact is everything does not work together for good for unbelievers, for people who have not put their life in control of the Lord. Everything does not

work together for good. Things work out wrong. But it's a beautiful promise for us.

These are the four wonderful freedoms that God makes available to us in Jesus Christ. What should be my response? If you're already a believer, a Christian, Paul urges you *“to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”* (Ephesians 4:1) For one thing, I think you ought to say, "God, forgive me for ever being negative. Take the critical, negative spirit out of my life." Regardless of what's going on in the world, look at the wonderful things God has done for you.

If you've never opened up your life to Christ I encourage you to do so today. 1 John 5:11-12 *“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 The one who has the Son has this eternal life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have this eternal life.”* You have everything to gain. Don't wait. Some of you have been thinking about making your decision for months, for years. Don't put it off any longer.

Are you bothered by regrets? Do you have things in your past that you feel guilty about, wish you hadn't done? You feel condemned and you condemn yourself. You say, I wish I could get rid of this guilt and get a clear conscience. Jesus Christ offers you freedom from condemnation.

Would you like to break free of the things that bind you up? Those bad habits, those situations, those things that tend to control you and you tend to respond in a way that you wish you could change, you wish you could be different. Jesus Christ offers you freedom from domination. The more you give yourself to Him, the more freedom you find.

Are you facing a situation right now and you think it's hopeless? It's not going to work out. Jesus Christ offers you freedom from desperation. He says, there's hope!

Are you confused by the problems that you are having and you think it doesn't make sense, you don't know why it's happening, what's going on? God says, "I have a purpose behind those problems. And I'm working them into a grand design." Jesus offers you freedom from confusion.

Let me tell you a story before I end. A young girl was being sold at auction one day. She was a beautiful girl, tall and slender. The bidding was keen, and quickly mounted higher and higher until at last only two men were left bidding for her ownership: the one a low, uncouth foul-mouthed fellow who raised his bid every time to outbid the other, a quiet man of refinement.

Finally the bidding stopped, and to the gentleman who had bid so very earnestly were given the papers which made him the lawful owner of the young girl.

With a shove the auctioneer presented her to her new master. Proudly, defiantly, she stood before him, hating him with every part of her being.

Suddenly, a change came over her face: first there was a look of pure amazement closely followed by one of utter disbelief.

Her new owner was ripping up the papers of ownership, and, with a smile of kindness said to the now trembling girl, "My dear, you are free. I bought you that I might free you. You are set free."

Too stunned for speech, the girl merely stared till finally, with a cry of happiness too deep for words, she cast herself at the man's feet, and through her tears exclaimed, "Oh, master, I will love you and serve you for life!"

What the papers of ownership could not do, the man's kindness had won completely.

God loves you so much. You can't even imagine how much He loves you. He is for you! That's why he set you free in Jesus. Will you take up his offer and love and serve him for life?

Let us pray...