

## How Much Freedom Do You Enjoy?

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PHILEMON 8-22; LUKE 15:11-24

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### Using This Study

#### ❶ EXAMINE His Word

Notice how God wants our relationship with Him to be mirrored in our relationship with each other.

#### ❷ EXPLORE His Word

God's love and how He cares for us is clearly seen in how much He values us.

#### ❸ EMBRACE His Word

Discover the personal impact of His love in the relationship of intimacy which is ours to enjoy.

### Introduction

Freedom has a wonderful sound to it. The sound that we love and story to which we are drawn tells us we have no restraints. We can independently do and say whatever we think will help fulfill the desires of our hearts. That is our own distorted definition. To understand what freedom actually is, we have to begin with the fact that the one and only person who is truly free is God Himself. Therefore, He is the only reliable measure for our own freedom and how it is to be expressed.

Because we are created in God's own image, we need to understand how He exercises freedom in order to understand the freedom we have. We know that God designed Adam and Eve to be incomplete so that each of them would need a relationship with Him, and a relationship with each other. Valued relationships are of primary importance to God and thus, His desire is for us to enjoy the satisfactions of intimacy in them. The essential elements for continuing growth in the intimacy of our relationships are love, trust, humility, and vulnerability, specifically as they are expressed in servicing and sacrifice. Think about it... These are the basic characteristics of God's expression of freedom toward us. Therefore, they are also the measure and the limits of our freedom.

## ① EXAMINE His Word

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What does God SAY? The words God uses to communicate really matter, so pay close attention to the details emphasized or repeated in these passages:

### I. Example # 1 – Read Philemon 8-19, 21

<sup>8</sup> Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do,

<sup>9</sup> yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—

<sup>10</sup> that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.

<sup>11</sup> Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

<sup>12</sup> I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you.

<sup>13</sup> I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel.

<sup>14</sup> But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary.

<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever—

<sup>16</sup> no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

<sup>17</sup> So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.

<sup>18</sup> If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.

<sup>19</sup> I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self.

<sup>21</sup> Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

### II. Example #2 - Read Luke 15:11-24 – The Parable of the Lost Son

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons.

<sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup> “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

<sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

<sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

<sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!’

<sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

<sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ So he got up and went to his father.

<sup>20</sup> “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion

for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>21</sup> “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

<sup>22</sup> “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

<sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate.

<sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

## **2 EXPLORE His Word**

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### **Example #1**

1. *As a run-away slave on the streets of Rome, Onesimus found that he had not gained control of his life.*
  - Have you experienced this startling recognition at a time when you were trying to gain control of your life?
  
2. Have you felt like you wanted to run away and escape in a time when you felt discontented, resentful, and shame?
  - What did you do? How long did it take to gain freedom through Christ?



### **③ EMBRACE His Word**

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### **④ LIVE His Word**

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### **SERMON NOTES**