

Yahweh appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him, **I have heard your prayer**, and have **chosen** this place to myself for a **house of sacrifice**. If I shut up the sky so that there is **no rain**, or if I command the locust to **devour the land**, or if I send **pestilence** among **my people**; if my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now my eyes shall be open, and my ears attentive, to the prayer that is made in this place. For **now have I chosen** and made this house **holy**, that **my name may be there** forever; and **my eyes and my heart** shall be there **perpetually**. (2 Chronicles 7:12-16)

*If **my people**, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now my eyes shall be open, and my ears attentive, to the prayer that is made in this place. (2 Chronicles 7:14-15)*

*I will walk among you, and will **be your God, and you will be my people**. I am Yahweh your God, **who brought you forth** out of the land of Egypt, **that you should not be their slaves**; and I have broken the bars of your yoke, and **made you go upright**. (Leviticus 26:12-13)*

My people **belong to me**, not anyone else.

My people are **not slaves**; I broke the bars and brought them out of slavery.

I make my people **go upright**, not stooped down under fear, depression, guilt, shame etc.

*They lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but **Ruth joined with her**. She said, Behold, your sister-in-law is gone back to her people, and to her god: **return you** after your sister-in-law. Ruth said, "**Don't entreat me to leave you**, and to return from following after you, for **where you go, I will go**; and where you lodge, I will lodge; **your people shall be my people, and your God my God**;" (Ruth 1:14-16)*

What **motivated Ruth** to become part of God's people?

Obligation to a marriage covenant?

Fear of being left **alone**?

Guilt for leaving her mother-in-law alone?

Loyalty to her dead husband's family?

Ruth was a **Moabite**, a people especially hated by Israelites linked to the story of Balaam.

Ruth had been **exposed** to something **greater than the pain** caused by loss of her spouse.

Ruth **rebuffed** her mother-in-law's instruction to **go back** to her past and people of origin.

Ruth was **tenacious** to **embrace a new identity** as a God person. **Why?**

Ruth was not acting out of obligation, guilt and certainly not coercion. This was opposite.

Ruth had **tasted something better**, a **true freedom**, and nothing would dissuade her from pursuing it passionately.

Ruth demonstrates what it **looks like to be God's people** – love awakened by **being loved**.

God has **no interest in acquiring slaves** of any kind, unless it is to **set them free**.

Freedom is at the heart of what it means to **be a God person**. God is love, and without **freedom to choose** for ourselves with no threat involved, it is impossible to enter into a **relationship of genuine love**. Freedom of choice for everyone is an **essential** part of defining **how to trust God**.

For you, brothers, were called for freedom. Only don't use your freedom for gain to the flesh, but through love be servants to one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

But if you bite and devour one another, be careful that you don't consume one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, that you may not do the things that you desire. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (Galatians 5:13-18)

Freedom is high risk, which is why we so easily **gravitate** back to wanting to **live under the law**, for it feels safer and simpler to **follow a list of duties and obligations** rather than relying on an **invisible Spirit to lead us** in real time. The issue is not merely whether or not we can **live free of outside control**, but rather **what kind of leader** we will trust to direct our thoughts, influence our motives and access our imagination, which is our faith.

Because as humans we are designed to be **reflectors** of whomever we **choose to be our God**, the difference is in **where we get our identity** and learn what it means to **act like ourselves**. **Slavery actually can feel safer** than living free, but it **defaces the image of God** we were created to reflect.

Slavery is not merely about being **forcibly subjected** against our will to do things we hate doing. Slavery is the **hijacking of our mind and heart** and can take us by **deceiving us into enjoying** things that **exploit** and destroy us.

God does not want slaves, for He **created us to be His family**. Any **other options** always **end in slavery**, regardless of how enticing or exciting it appears.

The **next verses** by Paul here in Galatians list all sorts of **ways we live in slavery**, but as he already said previously, we are **called to freedom, not slavery**. Living life **controlled by our feelings** rather than resting in the truth as God's children is called **living in the flesh**. The **byproduct of defining ourselves based on believing our feelings** more than believing what God says is **opposite** the fruit that naturally results from **embracing and cooperating** with the **Spirit of truth**.

Now the works of the flesh are obvious, which are: adultery, sexual immorality, uncleanness, lustfulness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousies, outbursts of anger, rivalries, divisions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these; of which I forewarn you, even as I also forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. If we live by the Spirit, let's also walk by the Spirit. Let's not become conceited, provoking one another, and envying one another. (Galatians 5:19-26)

Living by our feelings is to live as a **slave**, readily **manipulated and exploited** by anyone able to **affect our emotions** or even influenced by our own physical condition. This is slavery, and only God can break the bars of **this kind of yoke** that **traps us under bondage** to shame, fear, guilt, lust, addictions, depression and any other slave master that captures our spirit.

How may we break free of the control of our strong feelings and passions assisted by demonic influence that dominate our lives, yet are stealing our happiness, our peace and that hold us hostage?

The answer is in one thing we all have in common – the **freedom to make a choice** despite our circumstances, despite our feelings, despite what anyone around us might think or say or do to us. It is **impossible to set ourselves free**, yet without our **consent** the One who is ready and eager to set us free does is not given the **required authority to rebuke** the father of **lies** who holds us in bars and chains called feelings and lies.

While we **cannot liberate ourselves** from the power of sin and selfishness, fear and depression, pride and apathy, **we can cry out to God** for deliverance and He will certainly answer. He is faithful and His love is both powerful and unrelenting. Our **choice to believe** what He **says about Himself** and His love for us is what is needed to **allow Him** to set in motion processes that can **extricate us** from anything that holds us in bondage to fear.

*Since then the children have shared in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death he might **bring to nothing him who had the power** of death, that is, the devil, and might **deliver all of them** who through **fear** of death were all their lifetime **subject to bondage**.*
(Hebrews 2:14-15)

Jesus has already set us free – free to be **able to choose** who we will serve, **who we will believe** and follow and trust with our will. Like Ruth, we are being **drawn toward freedom**, but as Paul warns us, we must **not take this lightly**. Living free involves **making choices to stay free**. It is **not enough** to be **liberated** from slavery, but as we enjoy the wonderful **privileges and blessings of freedom**, we must also **continue choosing** to focus on God and stay **in tune with His Spirit** continually so that we may **remain free**. The result of living in freedom is that the **power working inside us produces the fruit** of the Spirit of truth, love and freedom.

*If **my people**, who are called by my name, shall **humble themselves**, and **pray**, and **seek my face**, and **turn** from their wicked ways; then will **I hear** from heaven, and will **forgive** their sin, and will **heal** their land. Now **my eyes shall be open**, and **my ears attentive**, to the prayer that is made in this place.*
(2 Chronicles 7:14-15)

I am **free from fear of punishment**, but **not free from consequences** of my choices.
I am **free to choose to believe** God is good all the time, and the **effect** will be and **increase of faith, peace and joy**.

My People

*Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat meat. For I didn't speak to your fathers, nor command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but **this thing I commanded them**, saying, **Listen to my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people**; and walk you in all the way that I command you, **that it may be well with you**. But **they didn't listen** nor turn their ear, but **walked***

*in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: yet **they didn't listen** to me, nor inclined their ear; but **made their neck stiff**: they did worse than their fathers. You shall speak all these words to them; but **they will not listen** to you: you shall also call to them; but **they will not answer** you. You shall tell them, This is the nation that has not listened to the voice of Yahweh their God, nor received instruction: **truth is perished**, and is cut off from their mouth. (Jeremiah 7:21-28)*

*Thus says Yahweh: Behold, I will turn again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have compassion on his dwelling places; and the city shall be built on its own hill, and the palace shall be inhabited after its own manner. Out of them shall proceed **thanksgiving** and the voice of those who **make merry**: and **I will multiply them**, and they shall not be few; **I will also glorify them**, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as before, and their congregation shall **be established** before me; and I will punish all who oppress them. Their prince shall be of themselves, and their ruler shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach to me: for **who is he who has had boldness to approach to me?** says Yahweh. **You shall be my people, and I will be your God.** (Jeremiah 30:18-22)*

*Behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that I will **make a new covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they broke, although **I was a husband to them**, says Yahweh.*

*But **this is the covenant** that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says Yahweh: **I will put my law in their inward parts**, and in their heart will I write it; and **I will be their God, and they shall be my people**: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Yahweh; for **they shall all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says Yahweh: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-34)*

*Therefore say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: **I will gather you** from the peoples, and **assemble you out of the countries** where you have been scattered, and **I will give you** the land of Israel. They shall come there, and they shall take away all the detestable things of it and all the abominations of it from there. **I will give them one heart**, and I will **put a new spirit within you**; and I will **take the stony heart out of their flesh**, and will **give them a heart of flesh**; that they may **walk in my statutes**, and keep my ordinances, and do them: and **they shall be my people, and I will be their God**. But as for them whose heart walks after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will **bring their way on their own heads**, says the Lord Yahweh. (Ezekiel 11:17-21)*

***I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am Yahweh**, says the Lord Yahweh, **when I shall be sanctified in you** before their eyes. For **I will take you** from among the nations, and **gather you out of all the countries**, and will **bring you into your own land**. I will **sprinkle clean water on you**, and **you shall be clean**: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will **I cleanse you**. A **new heart** also will **I give you**, and a **new spirit** will **I put within you**; and **I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh**, and I will **give you a heart of flesh**. I will **put my Spirit within you**, and **cause you to walk in my statutes**, and you shall keep my ordinances, and do them. **You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.** (Ezekiel 36:23-28)*

*Sing and rejoice, daughter of Zion; for, behold, **I come, and I will dwell in the midst of you,**' says Yahweh. **Many nations shall join themselves to Yahweh** in that day, and **shall be my people;** and **I will dwell in the midst of you,** and you shall know that Yahweh of Armies has sent me to you. (Zechariah 2:10-11)*

*Thus says Yahweh of Armies: "Behold, **I will save my people** from the east country, and from the west country; and **I will bring them,** and they will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and **they will be my people,** and **I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.**" (Zechariah 8:7-8)*

*I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "**Come out of her, my people,** that you have **no participation in her sins,** and that you don't receive of her plagues, (Revelation 18:4)*