

## The Choice: Bondage or Freedom

(Go To Meeting)

Lindsay Stephens—March 24, 2023

As it is close to Passover, I believe that the title is relevant to all of us. It's something for us to think about. One of the greatest blessings that God has given us is the freedom of choice. We have the freedom to be able:

- to live the way that we choose to live
- to worship God
- to do what God wants us to do

But all too often in this world, freedom has been taken away by oppressive governments. We can think of the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt.

Exodus 1:8: "And there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph."

- Did not know the children of Israel
- Did not recognize what Joseph did for them

Joseph was the national hero saving Egypt and the surrounding districts from starvation. This king did not recognize that! For some 250 years the children of Israel were put in bondage, where they have to serve the Egyptians in hard labor.

Exodus 2:23: "And it came to pass after many days the king of Egypt died. And the children of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up to God because of the bondage."

God does not like people being in bondage, in hard labor. He wants us to have the freedom to choose.

Verse 24: "And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob."

Exodus 6:5: "And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, those whom the Egyptians are keeping in bondage. **And I have remembered My covenant.**"

*God doesn't forget His people!* So many generations passed and they lost their identity with God. So, God wanted them to know Who He was!

Verse 6: "Therefore, say to the children of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rescue you out of their bondage. And I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments.... [God was going to do great judgments

on Egypt] ...And I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God. And you shall know that I am the LORD your God, Who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land concerning which I did swear to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. And I will give it to you for a heritage. I am the LORD!'" (vs 6-8). ***So, He's revealing Himself to Israel: I AM!***

Exodus 13:3: "And Moses said to the people, 'Remember this day in which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for the LORD brought you out from this place by the strength of His hand.... [not by Moses, but the hand of God] ...There shall be no leavened bread eaten'"—referring to *Unleavened Bread!*

Exodus 20:2: "'I am the LORD your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.'

This is before the mount when God was speaking to them loud thundering and loud trumpets; this is on the Day of Pentecost. This was God speaking to them personally, *making Himself known to them!*

At this stage I'm just going to give you a definition of what bondage is:

- continue of service of an enslaved person
- state of being bound, usually by compulsion by a lord or mastery
- servitude to a controlling person or boss

***This is what God brought Israel out from!***

As a result of that, God gave them the opportunity to choose to live God's way, with God's Laws as a way of life, as a free nation.

But in doing so there were conditions for them to do that. The choice is always available to choose to be free, or if you don't choose that, you're choosing bondage. It's one or the other!

Romans 6:16: "Don't you realize that to whom you yield yourselves as servants to obey, you are servants of the one you obey, whether it is of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you; and having been delivered from sin, you became the servants of righteousness" (vs 16-18).

In the Church God has called us out of bondage, the bondage of sin to the freedom of choosing His way and of knowing His Plan!

Galatians 5:1: “Therefore, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and do not be held again in a yoke of bondage.”

Before we were called into the Church we were spiritually in bondage under Satan the devil.

At this stage I’m going to provide a definition of what freedom is:

- the state of not be imprisoned or enslaved
- the right to speech or think as one wants

*The freedom of choice!*

For Israel they came out of bondage in Egypt. The second definition constantly got them into trouble. When you think about the freedom to choose, they chose the wrong way all to often!

Go through Psa. 78, it constantly got them into trouble and they partially repented. But time and again when they sinned it got them into trouble.

At this stage go into two examples of choice; one happened to be the right choice, and one happened to be the wrong choice.

### **Jeroboam—Wrong Choice:**

This is instruction from God through Ahijah the prophet:

1-Kings 11:35: “But I [God] will take the kingdom out of his son’s hand... [this is Solomon] ...and will give it to you... [Jeroboam] ...ten tribes. And to his son... [Rehoboam] ...I will give one tribe, so that David My servant may have a light always before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Me to put My name there. And I [Jeroboam] will take you, and you shall reign according to all that your soul desires, and shall be king over Israel. And **if** you will hearken to all that I command you and will walk in My ways, and do *what is* right in My sight to keep My statutes and My commandments, as David My servant did, **then** I will be with you and build you a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you” (vs 35-38).

The reason why Ahijah was telling him this was because of the sins of Solomon who did not do what God instructed him to do.

So, Ahijah and Jeroboam had this great opportunity to... He was given instruction by Ahijah and what did Jeroboam do? Once he became king over the ten tribes of Israel he made his choice.

1-Kings 12:25: “And Jeroboam built

Shechem on Mount Ephraim and lived on it, and went from there and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, ‘Now, the kingdom may well return to the house of David! **If** this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem... [keep the Passover, Unleavened Bread and the other Feast days] ...**then** shall the heart of this people turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me and return again to Rehoboam king of Judah” (vs 25-27)

So, would the people go back to Rehoboam and pay the high taxes that he demanded of them? *Maybe they didn’t think about that!*

Verse 28: “Then the king took counsel, and made two calves *of* gold and said to them, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold your gods, O, Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’.... [here we are with the golden calf again] ...And he set the one in Bethel, and he put the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, even to Dan” (vs 28-30).

So, he put people in authority who didn’t know any better. They wouldn’t ask questions:

- Is this the right thing to do?
- What would God say if we did this?

Doesn’t that remind you of our leaders today and political parties where they put people in the party that wouldn’t ask questions. They just did what the party wanted them to do. So Jeroboam made the wrong choice.

Verse 31: “And he made houses *of worship* on the high places and made priests of the lowest of the people, who were not the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordered a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast that *is* in Judah.... [certainly **not** God’s Feast] ...And he offered upon the altar.... [did it himself] ...So, he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places, which he had made” (vs 31-32).

So, Jeroboam made the wrong choice. He was given the blessings of what he would do, what would happen if he made the right choice. But he made the wrong choice and there are consequences for that. Consequences to himself, to his family and for Israel and that led to bondage, the bondage of not knowing God’s way and ultimately it led to the physical bondage of exile.

### **Jehoiada and his wife Jehosheba or Jehoshabeath—Right Choice:**

This is a husband and wife team. Just to give

you a little background. Jehoshaphat was a righteous king. Unfortunately, he did make mistakes. He made the mistake of having Ahab as an ally or friend. Ahab was wicked! Ahab had Jezebel and evil queen as his wife. What happened was Jehoshaphat's son was Jehoram who married the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.

2-Chronicles 21:6: "And he [Jehoram] walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like the house of Ahab, for he had the daughter of Ahab for a wife. And he did *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD."

2-Kings 11:1: "And Athaliah was the mother of Ahaziah..."

Son of Jehoram who was evil as was His son Ahaziah who only reigned for a year. This is the result of Athaliah, the wife of Jehoram.

"...Now when she saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed of the kingdom" (v 1).

This is David we're talking about. What it was she wanted to take the throne for herself. The house of David was without a king, without anyone on that (in audible) for a period of six years.

There were three times in history when the house of David did not have anyone on the throne for a short duration of time. The last time was during the time of Oliver Cornwell. At this time Athaliah was the first of those times.

Verse 2: "But Jehosheba the daughter of king Jehoram, sister of Ahaziah, took away Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him from among the king's sons *before they were* killed. And they hid him from Athaliah in the bedroom, him and his nurse, so that he was not killed.... [Joash was only one-year-old when this was done] ...And he was hidden with her in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah reigned over the land" (vs 2-3).

*This is a corresponding Scripture;* 2-Chronicles 22:10: "And Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, and she arose and destroyed all the royal seed of the house of Judah."

It's a different name here, but it's the same person:

Verse 11: "But Jehoshabeath... [same person: Jehosheba] ...the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him from among the king's sons who were killed. And she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. And Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah) hid him from Athaliah so that she did not kill him. And he

was with them six years, hidden in the house of God. And Athaliah reigned over the land" (vs 11-12).

Jehosheba/Jehoshabeath was the sister of the king that was killed, daughter of Jehoram and the granddaughter of Jehoshaphat. But she was also the wife of Jehoiada the priest.

This is unique, because as far as I know in Scripture, there was nobody else who was ever in both royalty and the priesthood at the same time.

Jesus Christ is our High Priest, and He's also going to be King of kings during the Millennium. We during the Millennium are going to be both kings and priests.

What Jehosheba/Jehoshabeath did was courageous, because she was of royalty and in line to be killed, as well. She went into the palace and captured Joash and her life was in danger all this time to do that. It was a courageous effort what she did to hide him for six years in the House of the Lord. Because Athaliah was pagan and worshipping Baal, she wasn't likely to go into the House of the Lord. So, they were able to bring Joash at that time, he had a fair amount of influence in his upbringing and learning of God's way.

2-Kings 11:4: "And in the seventh year Jehoiada sent and brought the rulers over hundreds, with the commanders and the guards, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD. And he made a covenant with them and took an oath from them in the house of the LORD, and revealed to them the king's son. And he commanded them, saying, 'This *is* the thing that you shall do. A third part of you who enter in on the Sabbath *shall be* keepers of the watch of the king's house'" (vs 4-5).

Eventually what happened the plan was put into place and:

Verse 12: "And he brought forth the king's son [Joash], and put the crown and the testimony upon him. And they made him king and anointed him, and clapped their hands and said, 'Long live the king!'"

Verse 17: "And Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they should be the people of the LORD; also between the king and the people. And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal and demolished it. They broke his altars and his images completely in pieces. And they killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD. And he took the rulers over hundreds, and the commanders, and the guard, and all the people of the land. And they brought the king down from the house of the LORD and came by the way of the gate

of the guard to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings. And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet. And they killed Athaliah with the sword *beside* the king's house" (vs 17-20).

This is the result of making the right choice: Jehoiada and his wife Jehosheba/Jehoshabeath.

2-Kings 12:2: "And Joash did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD all his days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him."

2-Chronicles 24:15: "So, Jehoiada became old and was full of days when he died. He *was* a hundred and thirty years old when he died."

All the days that Jehoiada lived he did what was right.

### **Josiah—Right Choice:**

Josiah was another king who made right choice, and what he did with reforms, he did in the temple and re-instituted the Passover and they did a Passover service that had not been done right since the days of the judges and Samuel. *Now we're looking at is spiritually!*

Luke 4:17: "And there was given Him *the* book of the prophet Isaiah; and when He had unrolled the scroll, He found the place where it was written, '*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; for this reason, He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor... [in spirit] ...He has sent Me to heal those who are brokenhearted, to proclaim pardon to the captives... [it says in Isa. 61:1 it says 'liberty to the captives.'] ...and recovery of sight to the blind, to send forth in deliverance those who have been crushed... [put in bondage] ...to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord*'" (vs 17-19).

John 8:29—*Christ speaking*: "And He Who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, because I always do the things that please Him."

*That is part of conversion, doing what pleases God!* Abraham pleased God, because Abraham ***obeyed His voice!***

Verse 30: "As He spoke these things, many believed in Him."

He was talking to the scribes and Pharisees. "...believed in Him..." was really a superficial belief, not really from the heart.

Verse 31: "Therefore, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, '***If*** you continue in My Word, you are truly My disciples. And you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free'" (vs 31-32).

What Truth was Jesus referring to? *The Truth of:*

- human nature
- repentance
- baptism
- forgiveness of sin
- conversion
- grace
- love

Verse 33: "They... [these scribes and Pharisees] ...answered Him, 'We are Abraham's seed, and have never been in bondage to anyone. What do You mean by saying, "You shall become free"?"'

Never been in bondage? Who controlled Judea at that time? *They were under Roman rule, and there was a Roman garrison right near the temple!* They could spy on the everything that was going on in the temple area.

Verse 34: "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, everyone who ***practices sin*** is a servant of sin'" — *as a way of life!*

The scribes and Pharisees had a way of life and were servants of sin!

Verse 35: "And the servant does not live in the house forever; ***but the Son lives forever.***"

Ephesians 2:1—*this shows what we came out of:* "Now, you were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you walked in times past according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working within the children of disobedience" (vs 1-2).

If we walk in sin we're under the control of the 'prince of the power of the air'!

Verse 3: "Among whom also we all once had our conduct in the lusts of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and by the mind, and were by nature *the* children of wrath, even as the rest *of the world*. But God, Who is rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in *our* trespasses, has made *us* alive together with Christ. (*For* you have been saved by grace.)" (vs 3-5).

Verse 6: "And He has raised *us* up together and has caused *us* to sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages that *are* coming He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves... [we had nothing to do with it ourselves] ...***it is the gift of***

**God**” (vs 6-8).

- What did Paul mean here?
- What did he mean by this?

Galatians 5:13: “For you have been called unto freedom, brethren; only do not *use* this freedom for an occasion to the flesh; rather, serve one another with love.”

***We don’t take advantage of this freedom to do what we want!***

Galatians 1:6: “I am astonished that you are so quickly being turned away from Him Who called you into *the* grace of Christ, to a different gospel... [changing the Word of God for your own agenda] ...which *in reality* is not another *Gospel*; but there are some who are troubling you and are desiring to pervert the Gospel of Christ. But if we, or even an angel from heaven, should preach a gospel to you *that* is contrary to what we have preached, LET HIM BE ACCURSED! As we have said before, I also now say again. If anyone is preaching a gospel contrary to what you have received, LET HIM BE ACCURSED!” (vs 6-9).

Freedom is not to be taken lightly! Time after time Israel wanted to turn back from worshipping God *His way!* An example of this:

Numbers 11:1: “And the people complained about *their* distress, speaking evil in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD heard it, and His anger was kindled....”

Human nature what it is, people are going to complain until they get their own way!

“...And the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some in the outermost parts of the camp. And the people cried to Moses.... [they don’t cry to God] ...And when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched. And he called the name of the place Taberah because the fire of the LORD burned among them. And **the troublemakers in their midst** lusted with *great* lust....” (vs 1-4).

It wasn’t a case of seeing the situation and the reality of where they were. It wasn’t a case of just asking a question: ‘Oh, wouldn’t it be nice to just have some good food?’ No, they turned with “...*great* lust”!

“...And the children of Israel also turned and wept, and said, ‘Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic’” (vs 4-6).

All of that is good food, but they

conveniently forgot that they were in bondage to Egypt! They did not know God; they only knew the gods of Egypt!

Verse 6: “But now our soul *is* dried away. There is nothing at all besides this manna *before our* eyes.”

Manna was all they needed to stay alive. It was what God provided for them throughout their journey through the wilderness. They had manna everyday, and they had water. But they craved flesh! So much so that they had a bad attitude. But God provided them quail for a month. They had so much quail that it made them sick because of their bad attitude!

Galatians 4:7: “So then, you are no longer a servant, but a son. And **if a son, you are also an heir of God through Christ**. Now on the one hand, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to those who are not gods by nature.... [in Egypt] ...But on the other hand, after having known God—rather, after having been known by God—how *is it that* you are turning again to the weak and impotent elements, to which you again desire to be in bondage?” (vs 7-9),

If we turn from God’s Way, we would be going back into spiritual bondage!

Titus 3:3: “For we also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving all kinds of lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful *and* hating one another.”

Before we were called by God, what was on our mind? *We think about the way of the world operates!*

Verse 4: “But when the graciousness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness, which we practiced, but according to His mercy He saved us, through *the* washing of regeneration... [of baptism] ...and *the* renewing of *the* Holy Spirit” (vs 4-5).

At the Passover we renew the covenant that we made with the Father and Jesus Christ.

Verse 6: “Which He richly poured out upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior; so that, having been justified by His grace, we would become heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life” (vs 6-7).

- the freedom from the sin of this world
- the hope of eternal life and blessing
- rewards
- choice of freedom through the blood of Christ
- living God’s Way

***The alternative is being in bondage to this world and Satan!***

2-Peter 2:12: “But these—as irrational brute beasts, born to be caught and destroyed—blaspheme those things of which they are ignorant, *and* shall be utterly destroyed in their own corruption.... [unless they repent] ...They are bringing upon themselves *the* reward of unrighteousness, while finding pleasure in satisfying *their lustful* desires day-by-day. *They are* stains and blemishes, reveling in their own deceptions, while feasting together with you. Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, *they are engaged in* seducing unstable souls, having a heart trained in *lustful* cravings—cursed children” (vs 12-14).

Those are the consequences! It’s so bad in today’s world, heading toward:

Genesis 6:5: “...**every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**”

You think about the people in the world, when they wake up, what do they think about? *If it’s the stage of Gen. 6:5, it can’t be anything good! It’s:*

- What can I get today?
- How can I use someone today?
- What’s in it for me?

***For us who have been called into the Church, it’s the exact opposite of that!***

Romans 8:2: “Because the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has delivered me from the law of sin and death.” *That’s the operation of the God’s Spirit!*

Verse 14: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are *the* sons of God. Now, you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, ‘**Abba, Father.**’” (vs 14-15).

*That’s a term of endearment*, which is very precious to us! We have this special relationship with God the Father, through Jesus Christ.

Verse 16: “The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit... [the spirit in mankind] ...*testifying* that we are *the* children of God. Now, if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer together with Him... [we have to go through trials, and make the right choice with each trial] ...so that we may also be glorified together with Him. For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory that shall be revealed in us” (vs 16-18).

Verse 21: “In order that the creation itself might be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of

God.”

The destiny of this world does depend on us! It depends on what we do, what our choice is in life. This is real freedom, the transfer from the bondage of sin and Satan the devil, ***through the destiny of freedom in Christ through His shed blood!***

Hebrews 2:14: “Therefore, since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, in like manner He also took part in the same, in order that through death He might annul him who has the power of death—that is, the devil; and *that* He might deliver those who were subject to bondage all through their lives by *their* fear of death” (vs 14-15).

Satan has his will in bondage, but we have the choice in our lives: either bondage with Satan the devil or freedom in Jesus Christ by His shed blood. This is tremendous when you think about it and what’s ahead of us, our destiny!

We have this great opportunity before us into eternity, but we do have a warning:

Deuteronomy 6:12: “***Then beware lest you forget the LORD*** Who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage.”

We think about this in the Church, spiritual Egypt was of this world!

Deuteronomy 30:19: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, **choose life, so that both you and your seed may live.**”

We apply this spiritually in our case, spiritual life is for eternity into the ages of eternity! ***We are blessed to be given this opportunity of the Church of the Firstborn! Freedom is for eternity!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) Exodus 1:8
- 2) Exodus 2:23-24
- 3) Exodus 6:5-8
- 4) Exodus 13:3
- 5) Exodus 20:2
- 6) Romans 6:16-18
- 7) Galatians 5:1
- 8) 1 Kings 11:35-38
- 9) 1 Kings 12:25-32
- 10) 2 Chronicles 21:6
- 11) 2 Kings 11:1-3
- 12) 2 Chronicles 22:10-12
- 13) 2 Kings 11:4-5, 12, 17-20
- 14) 2 Kings 12:2
- 15) 2 Chronicles 24:15

- 16) Luke 4:17-19
- 17) John 8:29-35
- 18) Ephesians 2:1-8
- 19) Galatians 5:13
- 20) Galatians 1:6-9
- 21) Numbers 11:1-6
- 22) Galatians 4:7-9
- 23) Titus 3:3-7
- 24) 2 Peter 2:12-14
- 25) Genesis 6:5
- 26) Romans 8:2, 14-18, 21
- 27) Hebrews 2:14-15
- 28) Deuteronomy 6:12
- 29) Deuteronomy 30:19

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Psalm 78
- Isaiah 61:1

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