

Norman C. Schwab
Yacolt EV Free
March 5, 2000

Freedom! Revelation 18

Have you ever felt trapped, imprisoned, suffocated with no quick way out? Some have experienced jail. Your freedoms have been stripped away. It is no longer up to you where you can go and when you can go and what you can do. Your captor decides all that. What you will eat and when you will eat it. When you will get up and when you will go to sleep.

Some here have felt imprisoned in a job that they felt there was no easy way out. Your oppressive boss dictated what you would do and when you would do it and offered only complaints cut downs when he was having a bad day.

Some have been imprisoned on a freeway. It's gridlock. Backed up for miles and miles. No off ramps. No side roads. You are imprisoned with thousands of other hot and angry prisoners, stuck to be in their cars imprisoned by this freeway. About this time you are wondering why they call this road a free-way. Some here have felt imprisoned in a career. Imprisoned in a relationship. Imprisoned in a school situation. Imprisoned by poor life choices, imprisoned by sin...and we wonder, How can we ever get out of here. In jail one longs for one thing. FREEDOM! What are the keys to true freedom? What are those things that lock us up, shut us down and imprison us. Maybe some of those things that initially look a lot like real freedom to us. Maybe some of those things we don't even realize we have locked ourselves inside the jail bars. Locked ourselves up and we don't even realize it.

This morning we read a passage of the Bible that describes on the favorite pastimes of the Evil One. Leading people to jail and making them think once they are in that they are actually free. They become so convinced what they are doing leads them to freedom that it will not be until they walk into the cell; slam the door shut, toss away the key and sit down on that hard wooden bench, that they realize they are unable to leave. They are trapped imprisoned. Ever felt imprisoned?

Turn with me to the 18th chapter of Revelation. We have been studying the value system, the priorities of the leaders and the vast majority of people who will live on this earth during the tribulation. The values will be severely influenced by Satan, and its influence is represented by the great city called Babylon. Many people believe that there will be a literal city of Babylon that will be rebuilt in the final days of tribulation on the earth. This literal city of Babylon rebuilt on the ancient site of Babylon in Iraq, along the Euphrates River at the head of the Persian gulf, will be a headquarters for the One world Religion that will display a glaze of religiosity but actually be driven and empowered by the very pit of hell. This city will also house the One world ruler or Antichrist. We discovered in Revelation chapter 17 that the antichrist and loyal nations and leaders will grow tired of this Religious harlot and when she is no longer convenient for him, he will destroy her. The antichrist will then present himself as the one that all should worship instead. Here evil destroys evil. While Revelation 17 revealed the failure of the religious Babylon, chapter 18 unveils the imprisonment and failure of political, cultural and economic collapse of Babylon. Babylon a literal city, representing a system of corrupt values. Babylon thinking is even now invasive in society and represents mans best attempts to make life work apart from God. It is self. It is live for the moment. It is happiness at all costs. It is materialism. It is me-ism. It is using people. It is imprisoning. When man attempts to live life apart from God the only possible outcome is imprisonment, collapse and ultimately judgment by Almighty God.

The world longs for freedom. Yet how can we be truly free? (READ) Look at verse 1. John the author of this book, see another angel. This angel is probably not Christ, because the Greek word for "another" is allos, another angel of the same kind as before. This angel has great power and illuminates the earth with his glory. V.2 Cries out in a megaphone voice a loud voice pronouncing doom on Babylon. The literal city as well as the morally corrupt value system.

Look at the imprisoning this Babylon thinking does. V. 2 Babylon is a dwelling place for demons, a ghost town for demons. Overrun by Satan's system of values and priorities, it has become a literal hell on earth. It is a prison of the unclean spirit. A prison of the unclean and

hateful bird. Jail birds. These are the carrion birds that feast on the helpless. That feed on the corpses of the dead. They are all in prison. The evil are imprisoned and they don't even know it. They think they are in power in the earth. Don't they even today seem overwhelmingly strong and in power and can do whatever they want? They march for freedom of expression. Freedom from the terrible constraints of morality. Freedom to do as they please and express as they please and rule as they please. They think they are free. They think they are their own, But they are not. They have walked into the prison, slammed the door shut, and thrown away the key. They are in prison and they don't even know it.

V.4 The nations have become drunk, they are consumed by the immorality. They not only have taken in an immoral value system, they have acted out on it. They have committed acts of a Babylon thinking person. They have traded in belief in the One True God for belief in an earthly god. One they feel like they have more control over. One they feel will be less oppressive. One they have made in their own image. The result, end of verse 3. Material wealth. Stuff. They have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality. Babylon's values says that sensuality sells. Do you think businesses today have bought into that principle? Just look at the commercials and advertisements. They are so convinced in this Babylon principle, they are betting millions on this principle that sex sells. That sensuality will capture your attention, seduce you to buy their product and make them wealthy. Does it work? Absolutely. They have grown wealthy. Does the wealth bring them the freedom they hoped? Not at all. Trading in the values of the One True god for a self made worldly god never brings freedom, it brings imprisonment and oppression.

This is point number one this morning. Ready? True freedom comes only from living for Christ. Live in freedom...you will be living in Christ. Some may say. But Christianity has too many rules it feels oppressive. It feels like I can't have any fun. It feels like I will never be able to express myself and be who I am. I feels like I will be stuffed in a cardboard box and smothered. It feels like jail, not freedom. And guess what? That is exactly what the deceiver, the father of lies wants you to believe. That is what he is trying to ridicule through TV. shows, teachers, books, philosophies. He doesn't want to experience the freedom that is found in Christ, so he must make it appear that following Christ is

oppressive. That Christ is a sergeant, concerned only about himself, His ego and keeping you locked up. That is a big lie of the evil one.

Freedom doesn't mean the absence of constraints. True freedom is never found without moral absolutes and values. Suppose a skydiver at 10,000 feet announced to his group. "I want total freedom. I'm not going to be held back by a parachute this time." The fact is, that skydiver is held to a greater law, it's called the law of gravity. But when the skydiver chooses well to be held back by the constraints of a parachute, she is free to enjoy the exhilaration of an exciting ride. God placed moral laws to hold us back. Not to jail us, or keep us from fun. They hold us back being absolutely necessary for us to enjoy the exhilaration of true freedom.

We don't have to buy in to the worlds system of values, that will only bring imprisonment. Folks, don't walk in that jail and lock yourself up. Live in freedom by living in Christ. For true freedom comes only from only from living for Christ. John 8:31-36 (READ) Abrahams offspring thought they were free and didn't even realize their imprisonment. "If the son shall set you free you shall be free indeed" If you are not feeling as free as you would like, then it's probably because you are still captured by too many of the world's values. Too entrenched in Babylon thinking. Not willing to obey the restraints of Biblical truth, the parachutes, in order to enjoy true freedom. True freedom comes from living for Christ.

Verse 4 Another voice, says Come out of her my people. Don't participate in Babylon's sins, don't get so close that you too incur the punishment intended for others. This angel is probably speaking to tribulation saints who have come to Christ during the tribulation and are in danger of becoming imprisoned in a worldly value system and living out Babylon thinking. This is a call to holiness for the believer. Do not have close intimate fellowship, literally do not koinaneia with them. Do not join yourself in a close relationship with them or their sins.

We are asked to do a difficult thing. We are left here in this world to live in the world, but at the same time not become of the world. We cannot spread the love of Christ and attract our unsaved friends and family to Christ without spending time with them, but at the same time we must be wise and love them without beginning to love their sin and join in with them as well. This requires great discernment for your

spiritual health is at stake. You will probably find yourself in this very situation. You may ask the question of yourself "What sort of impact can I make here in this situation." Or maybe the question for you should be, "How long can I maintain an effective witness here?" I have found as time goes by and the situation doesn't change, your impact potential for Christ goes down, and the likelihood for you to be dragged down by evil goes up.

This is not a call for isolation. If we have not one unsaved friend, then how are we doing what God calls us to do? Come out means for us to stand apart from the world's systems and values and priorities. We are to live separate from the system. We will live in freedom and that will be so attractive, they will want to join. There is a time to take a stand and also a time to leave. Live in the world, but not of the world. II Corinthians 6:14-18. (READ) Don't walk into the prison cell and lock yourself up. True freedom is found in living for Christ. Enjoy the loving, and wise restraints of God the parachutes of God, and experience the exhilaration of true freedom.

Look at verse 5 with me. Here we see the sins of unbelievers are piled up as high as the heaven. Sin stinks. It stinks to high heaven. And sin committed by the unbeliever is never forgiven or forgotten by God. For there is no bases for forgiveness. They have refused to join to Jesus to pay their sin debt for them. Their sins are stuck together in a huge pile. Literally the Greek word here it means they are glued together to form a huge tower. This reminds us of the tower of Babylon, or Tower of Babel, where people rebelled against God, the people said, We can be like god, we don't need god."

While God will judge those who sin and have imprisoned themselves with their sin. God in Christ has promised to forgive all those who believe in him. God has chosen to forget forgiven sin of those who are in Christ. He has removed our sin from us. Psalm 103:12 says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." Is 43:25 "I will wipe out transgressions for my sake and I will not remember your sins." Do you feel in bondage to your sin? Then know that total forgiveness comes from God in Christ. Point number two this morning. Enjoy the freedom of forgiveness. Enjoy the release that freedom from forgiveness brings. For those who are in Christ, believers

we have the privilege of access to Him. I John 1:9 says that "if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God wants us to confess our sins for it releases us from the prison of those sins. It renews our relationship with God. Remember for the believer, for those truly in Christ, confession of sin is not an issue of salvation, but of fellowship. If we miss confessing a sin and get run over by a car, God is not going to send us to hell. We have been given salvation because of what God has given us, a free gift. If you are in Christ, you are in Christ...you may not always be in fellowship as you should, but you are in Christ. We must ask God to reveal sin that needs to be confessed, and confess it. Confess it. Deal with it and then we can enjoy the freedom of forgiveness.

A young boy visiting his grandparents was given his first bow and arrow. He practiced all day in the woods but could never seem to hit his target. On the way back to the house, the boy spied Grandmas pet duck. On impulse, he took aim, let it fly. the arrow struck home. The boy panicked and hid the duck in the woodpile, only to look up and see his sister watching. Sally had seen it all but said nothing. After lunch that day, Grandmas said, "Sally lets wash up the dishes" But Sally said, "Johnny told me that he wanted to help in the kitchen today. didn't you Johnny." As Sally passed by him, she whispered, "remember the duck." So Johnny did the dishes. Later Grandpa asked if the children wanted to go fishing. Grandma said, "I'm sorry but Sally has to help me make supper." Sally smiled and said "O that's all taken care of Grandma, Johnny wants to do it." Remember the duck she whispered to Johnny. johnny stayed and Sally went fishing. After several days of doing both he and Sally's chores, Johnny couldn't stand it any longer. He finally confessed to Grandma that he had killed her pet duck. Grandma looked down at Johnny and said "I know..I was standing in the window and saw the whole thing, I love and forgive you...I just wondered how long you would let Sally make a prisoner of you." Unconfessed sin imprisons you. It breaks relationship. It stinks to high heaven. But you can enjoy the release and freedom of forgiveness right now. Total forgiveness comes from God in Christ.

In verse 6-8 we see that God's perspective of Babylon thinking is quite a bit different from Babylon's own self evaluation. V. 6 God is ready

to judge. They will reap what they sow. V.7 We see that Babylon thinking glorifies self. Lives sensuously. Lives for the moment. She just wants to be happy. Babylon thinks she is above it all. She calls herself a queen who will never be a widow, never see mourning. Why will she never be a widow? Because she has never been married. Never committed in vow to a relationship. She has taken great effort to protect herself from the pain of a committed and intimate relationship. So she thinks, "If I never give my heart in commitment, then I will never have to mourn the loss, the pain of a close loved one. I can never be hurt by another. So she lives for the moment, the sensual, the relationships of convenience. Relationships that last only as long as they are convenient. She lives for business relationships. Relationships that last only as long as they are still a good deal for her. She runs after happy, where ever she thinks she can find happy. She is a queen and expects others to serve her, to please her. When they no longer serve her or please her, they are disposable. She has woven kevlar armor around her heart thinking she is free, she is protected, she is invincible from pain and hurt.

Sound familiar? Sound like the Babylon thinking of the world? Convinced that if she avoids committed relationships she will be free, she will not be hurt and mourn. She instead is left in the prison of herself and very lonely. For people who use people, will be used by others in return. When things go bad they will leave you very lonely. They will distance themselves from you.

V.7 God has exposed her sin and she will meet with judgment. All that she held onto and valued will v.8 go up in smoke. Look at verse 10 all who were once close friends, business partners....they stand at a distance. V. 15 The merchants who became rich from her..."stand at a distance" V.17 the ships merchants..."stood at a distance." She was once rich and sensuous and exciting everybody wanted to be near her and be her friend. But you find out who your real friends are when things go bad. If you have based all your friendships as relationships of convenience or business. Then they will respond the same way to you. When you are not longer a good deal, they distance themselves. When you are no longer convenient, they leave. Those types of relationships are Babylon relationships. They no nothing of commitment. They no nothing of what it means "till death do us part."

Relationship freedom comes only from God-centered committed relationships. Everything else may look like freedom, but it is imprisonment in disguise. That is point number 3 this morning. Pursue God-centered committed relationships. Relational freedom is forged only through the iron of commitment. For it is only in the fire you really find out what kind of love you have. Babylon says relational freedom is free to go and do as I please with whomever, whenever. Free love. Free sex. Stay as long as your happy. If your happy and you know it clap your hands. If your unhappy and you know it hit the road. Sometimes I wonder if god gave us marriage, no so much that we would be happy, but that marriage would forge into us holiness. God may well have given us marriage more for developing our holiness than our happiness. We cry out "I deserve to be happy..Gods says. "I want you to become holy" In our disposable relationships we want God to give us what we want. God wants to give us what we need. For He knows that relational freedom comes only from God-centered committed relationships.

Practically how can we better pursue God-centered committed relationships when the world is pulling us in another direction? First recognize your own selfishness. The biggest threat to oneness and unity in marriage is our desire to be served rather than to serve. We want it done our way in our time or get out. Isaiah 53:6 "We like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way." We go our own way. That is the 50-50 relationship deals of the world. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. If you stop scratching the way I like, I'm out of here. We don't have to play those games. Look for how you can meet the needs of your spouse. Look to serve rather than be served. Jesus said in mark 10:38 "The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve." We look out for number one. It is a selfless person that will enjoy an intimate relationship. Remember God is more concerned about your holiness than your happiness. For a holy person will actually be a joy filled person. While Babylon thinking offers freedom, true freedom comes from living for Christ. We can enjoy the freedom of forgiveness that He alone offers. Relational freedom comes from pursuing God-centered committed relationships.

Point number 4 this morning. Freedom is found by living for that which lasts forever. As we read through this list of luxury items. Gold,

silver silk, exotic woods, perfumes. commodities. Wealth and luxury. This is what drives our culture. Here we see kings, and businessmen and ship merchants who have made millions exploiting their moral values for more money. They didn't care if it was right or wrong as long as it made money. They did or did not act based on whether it was good for business or not good. It was purely economic, never bothering to ask whether their action, it may grieve a holy God. Keep God out of my business. They were in it for what they could get out of it. Relationships of convenience of business. They didn't care about people. Look at verse 13 they treated people as mere commodities to be bought and sold along with the sheep and cows. People users for their own buck.

We read that these merchants and businessmen are weeping. Why? Their system. Babylon has collapsed. System shut down. Verse 11. The city is gone. The economy is shot. No one can buy their goods. Nothing to sell. So while they hated the religious Babylon and destroyed her in the last chapter. Here when it affected their own wallets and life of luxury. They wept at the loss. For it is gone...all gone. woe. woe. woe. Everything they lived for is gone. Its up in smoke. Their possessions were more important than people. They specialized in using people to get rich. They were willing to sacrifice their character on the alter of the almighty dollar. What a legacy to leave.

What drives you? Are you tempted to buy into Babylon's value system. Getting into a bigger, better house. Getting a bigger raise. A promotion. Finding a better vacation spot. Nicer clothes. A more expensive car. Stuff isn't necessarily bad, as long as it is not what is driving you. But far too many people are imprisoned by stuff. In bondage by credit card debt and payments. Forced to work several jobs just to keep afloat. They aren't free to give and go. They have stuffed themselves in a prison filled with stuff. That is short term thinking. It is Babylon thinking. Look where it ends up. v.22 Gone is the music. Gone are the artists. Gone are the businesses. Gone are the bright lights. Gone are the sounds of many happy people. Gone are some of the highest joys on earth. No marriage sounds. Gone. The city of Babylon is silenced. Its all gone up in smoke. The only thing left of Babylon. The legacy that is left? Look in verse 24. is blood. The murder of Christians and saints. What a legacy. What legacy do you want to leave when your gone?

True freedom comes by living for things that will last forever! I'd rather spend my time on that which will last forever. Think about your life. What things are you doing right now that will last forever? There is great freedom in knowing your values go far beyond this world and have eternal perspective in view. Let me read Matthew 6:19 "Don't lay up treasures on earth. but heaven, for where your treasure is there your heart is also."