



BIBLE STUDY SERIES

# *Free Indeed*

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LESSON 1

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## **Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land**

**Leviticus 25:10**

*“...Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof...”*

Among the vast array of our country’s collection of memorials and iconic pieces of history, perhaps one of the most famous is the Liberty Bell. The bell once sat atop the steeple of the Pennsylvania State House, now known as Independence Hall. Originally commissioned in 1752, the Bell summoned lawyers to official meetings and marked important public announcements.

Emblazoned upon the mighty bell is a quotation from Leviticus 25:10, “*Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all inhabitants thereof.*” The bell’s vibrant tones echoed

throughout Philadelphia in 1774 as it called the first Continental Congress together. It rang again after the Battle of Lexington and Concord in 1775. However, it rang most notably on July 8, 1776, when it called together the people of Philadelphia for the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence. Today, the Liberty Bell remains a symbol of freedom and a reminder of our nation’s humble beginnings.

Liberty is inseparable from the American experiment. From our earliest days, freedom has been the heart-cry of our nation. America was forged by those willing to stand firm in the belief that God gave all people the gifts of life and liberty. America is free because it was founded upon faith in God and reliance upon His Word. Christians of Colonial America were committed to liberty. Although they faced cruel opposition, they refused to settle for anything less because they understood that liberty is from the Lord, that liberty is to be protected by the law, and that liberty is for life and living.

## **Liberty Is From the Lord**

In Leviticus chapter 25, God instructs Moses concerning the Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee. The Sabbath Year provided an opportunity for the land to rest. Every seventh year, the children of Israel could not plough their fields, sow grain, or organize harvests. Instead, they had to trust God and rely upon the natural growth of the fields. During the Sabbath Year, servants and animals alike rested. All of them ate from the fields as guests at God’s Table. During the Sabbath Year, debts were remitted, and indentured servants were set free.

Every seventh Sabbath Year was called the Year of Jubilee. The word *jubilee* appears five times in Leviticus 25:8-17 and means *to sound the trumpet*. Every year in Israel, the trumpet blasted to mark the start of a new year. Ten days later, the trumpet blasted again to mark the Day of Atonement. But every fiftieth year, the ram’s horn blasted to close of the Day of Atonement and mark the beginning of the Year of Jubilee. This year, which followed immediately after a Sabbath year, required faith to observe. Because, like the Sabbath Year, they could not plough their fields, sow their fields, or organize harvests. For the second year in a row, they ate only what grew naturally and harvested it as they needed it. During the Year of Jubilee, debts were remitted, indentured servants were set free, and any land that had traded hands since the previous Jubilee was returned to the original family and tribe. The trumpet blast signaled hope and freedom to all who heard.

We must not miss who designed and declared such an event. *What* this passage commands is not as important as *who* commands it. In fact, these instructions are important because of *who* gives them. Note again what we read in Leviticus 25:1. The Law of the Sabbath Year and the Law of the Year of Jubilee were God’s idea. Freedom is only possible because liberty is from the Lord.

When God created Adam in the Garden of Eden, He immediately gave mankind two gifts. The first gift was life. The second gift was liberty. Adam and Eve experienced freedom like no one on this earth has ever known it. They were truly free. The very first reference to freedom is found in Genesis 2:16. The Bible states, “*And the Lord God*

*commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.”* True freedom is from the Lord and found in the Lord. The Founding Fathers understood this to be true. In 1774, Thomas Jefferson published *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, in which he affirms, “The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time.” In 1785, Jefferson authored *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in which he asks, “Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure, when we have removed their only firm basis—a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God?” Do you believe that our liberties are a gift from God? Just as Moses declares in Leviticus 25, liberty comes from the Lord. He is both the Author and Dispenser of true liberty.

## **Liberty Is Protected Within the Law**

The passage before us perfectly illustrates this reality. The promise of liberty and the security it gives are both guaranteed in the Law and guarded by the Law. The Book of Leviticus is part of the Pentateuch, the first Five Books of the Old Testament, collectively known as the Books of the Law. Contrary to common belief, liberty is not freedom *from* the law; liberty is freedom *within* the law. Freedom without accountability is tyranny. Freedom without responsibility results in anarchy. True liberty provides freedom with equal parts of accountability and responsibility. True liberty comes from obeying the law. This is such a simple yet profound concept!

This concept was not foreign to our Founding Fathers. Consider these famous lines from the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

The Framers of our republic recognized that liberty came from God, and that government was instituted for its protection. This is truth seemingly escapes the collective reasoning of many American citizens and elected representatives today. Some of the political and social unrest that plagues our nation stems from those who believe that freedom is without law and that they are above the laws that govern the nation.

Unfortunately, too many Christians have adopted that same mentality regarding the liberty found in Christ. Some professing Christians appear to give little or no thought to their responsibilities outlined in God’s Word. They demonstrate little or no thought of their accountability to live in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead, too many Christians choose to live for themselves. Because of our sinful nature, we are prone to view God’s Word as binding or burdensome. However, God’s Word creates a safety net, a security fence that protects us from the allurements and enticements of the world. True liberty in Christ embraces our accountability and responsibility to live for God and obey His Word. The child of God has been set free by the Lord Jesus Christ and should live a holy life for the glory of God (Titus 2:11-14).

## Liberty Is for Life and Living

When that trumpet blew, and freedom rang out, it was a welcome sound to the ears of all those living in Israel. It was the announcement of liberty! Independence had come to those in bondage. Deliverance was granted to those enslaved. The invaluable treasure of freedom came to the impoverished. The sound of the trumpet signified a new beginning, signaling the start of a new life. The chains of bondage were broken, and every weary heart was set free.

This freedom is the glorious gift that God Himself gives. Paul warns in Galatians 2:4 that, apart from Christ, every philosophy, ideology, and religion under the sun – though it boasts many things and promises much – can only yield bondage. Mark it down. Every false doctrine that circulates under the banner of Christendom, though it promises freedom, generates bondage.

Liberty can only be found is in Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul makes this the focal point of his letter to the Galatians. As God’s people, we are to live in the liberty Christ has given us (Galatians 5:1). In Romans 8:21, Paul describes the present possession of the saved as the “*glorious liberty of the children of God.*” This glorious liberty is in Christ.

Jesus Christ alone makes us free. Jesus promises in John 8:36, “*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*” True freedom is found in the Lord Jesus. We are free to live for Him and free to serve Him. We are free because we are adopted into the

family of God. Romans 8:15 proclaims, “*For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*” In Christ, we have liberty for life and living.

We can live free because of Jesus Christ! Like the people in Leviticus, we are slaves to sin. We need to be set free. Christ can set us free! Today, hear the gentle tones of freedom ringing out. Respond in faith to the proclamation of new life in Christ. Come to Him and be made new. Dear Christian, if you have become entangled again with a yoke of bondage, Jesus Christ, the Great Emancipator, can set you free today. There is freedom in Jesus Christ!

Liberty in Christ not only gives new life but also a new purpose in living. Those who are set free desire to see others set free. In his pamphlet, *Common Sense*, written in 1776, Thomas Paine argues that freedom had been hunted around the world because men desire liberty. He understood the global significance of America’s quest for independence. Paine declares, “The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind.” Upon gaining her freedom, America quickly became the world’s strongest advocate for liberty. While our representative form of government has served as an example to many nations, America’s greatest export has been the multiplied thousands of missionaries who have taken the gospel of Christ around the world. Our greatest commodity is the hundreds of thousands of local churches across our land, proclaiming liberty to those still bound in sin.

All those set free seek to set others free. Every liberated child of God shares the same responsibility expressed by the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:14-16,

*I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

Dear Christian, since Christ has set you free, you are a debtor to those who are still in bondage to sin.

The prophet Isaiah declared that the coming Messiah would proclaim liberty to the captives (Isaiah 61:1), a prophecy fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 4:18-21. As God’s people, local churches continue all that the Lord Jesus began both to do and to teach (Acts 1:1). We have the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming liberty to the captives. The Lord Jesus commissions every local church and every individual member of His Body to preach the gospel. Our liberty in Christ affords us a new purpose in living. Are we living up to that high calling?

For decades, the Liberty Bell could be heard throughout Philadelphia. But one day, the belltower fell silent. The final ringing of the Bell came on February 26, 1846.

The *Philadelphia Public Ledger* picks up the story of that day:

The old Independence Bell rang its last clear note on Monday, in honor of the birthday of Washington...It gave out clear notes and loud, and appeared to be in excellent condition until noon, when it received a compound fracture in a zig-zag direction through one of its sides, which put it completely out of tune and left it a mere wreck of what it was.

Today, the Liberty Bell remains silent, preserved behind a protective barrier from the populace. No longer fulfilling its original purpose, the Bell stands as a monument to its glorious past. The inscription, “*Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all inhabitants thereof;*” can still be seen, a testament to its designer's intent.

Across America, in every state and county, in urban and rural communities alike, reside multitudes of muffled bells—congregations and individual Christians who no longer proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof. Their witness has ceased. Their voice is quiet. Contrary to their Designer’s intent, they remain silent as multitudes in bondage to sin die without Christ and enter eternity separated from God. Consider the Apostle Paul’s admonition to the church at Corinth afresh. In II Corinthians 4:1-5, he explains,

*Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*

Are you living up to your Designer’s purpose? Are you actively proclaiming liberty, or have you chosen to remain silent, hiding the gospel from the lost? May God help us to be faithful to proclaim liberty throughout the land to all the inhabitants thereof.

## APPENDIX

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### Select Quotes from America’s Founding Fathers

“Christianity is the only true and perfect religion, and that in proportion as mankind adopts its principles, and obeys its precepts, they will be wise and happy.”

**-Benjamin Rush, Founding Father**

“The Bible is the best of all books, for it is the word of God, and teaches us the way to be happy in this world and in the next. Continue, therefore, to read it and to regulate your life by its precepts.”

**-John Jay, Founding Father and Supreme Court Justice**

“Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

**-John Adams, Founding Father, 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. President**

“A watchful eye must be kept on ourselves lest, while we are building ideal monuments of renown and bliss here, we neglect to have our names enrolled in the Annals of Heaven.”

**-James Madison, Founding Father**

“The hope of a Christian is inseparable from his faith. Whoever believes in the divine inspiration of Holy Scriptures must hope that the religion of Jesus shall prevail throughout the earth.”

**-John Quincy Adams, 6<sup>th</sup> U.S. President**

“It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

**-Patrick Henry, Founding Father**