



BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Free Indeed

LESSON 5

The Spirit of Liberty **II Corinthians 3:17**

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

When we trace liberty to its source, we find it comes from God Himself. The Bible records in II Corinthians 3:17, "...*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*" When our forefathers founded the United States, they stood courageously against the world's mightiest military force and waged war to secure liberty. How can we explain their incredible zeal and sacrifice? Their unwavering resolve has no natural explanation.

In the days of our country's beginning, churches were among the leading sources of influence on both common people and political leaders. The voices of Bible believers

echoed strong, proclaiming that liberty is God’s gift to all people, and that governments which do not recognize and protect liberty must be righteously opposed. These believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, stirred the heart of a nation to secure God-given liberty. The principle from God’s Word was proven true: “...*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*”

The freedoms of our land came at a great cost, and we should value them as precious treasures and defend our liberties from those who desire to take them away. However, God’s Word speaks of a spiritual liberty that exceeds even the value of our national liberty. It is a liberty that only comes from the Spirit of God working in a person’s life. God’s Spirit supernaturally provides and secures this freedom. Let us look into the Scriptures and discover more about the liberty we have received by the Spirit of God.

The Spirit Gives Life.

II Corinthians 3 teaches concerning the superiority of the new testament, or new “covenant.” The Bible says in II Corinthians 3:6, “*Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*” The “letter” refers to the Law of Moses. That was the old, or former, testament. The Law could never bring life; it only brought the sentence of death, because no one could measure up to the perfection of God’s law.

This passage continues in II Corinthians 3:7-9,

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

Notice the contrast between the “*ministration of death*” and “*condemnation*” and the “*ministration of righteousness.*” The giving of the Law was a glorious event, but its glory was short-lived, because the Law could only minister the sentence of death. But, in the new covenant we see a greater glory, because the new covenant ministers righteousness and life.

The Bible teaches that the new testament, or new covenant, is one which has been sealed by the death of Christ on Calvary. Hebrews 9:14-15 says,

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

In this Scripture, we see clearly that the death of Christ provides “*for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament.*” The Law reveals man’s sinfulness, but Christ shed His sinless blood on the cross and offered it to God the Father as a redemption payment for our sin. Christ mediated a new covenant. The new covenant is that all who

come by faith in the Son, the Father will give to the Son (John 6:37). The former covenant promised death; but the new covenant offers “*the promise of eternal inheritance*” to all who place their faith in Christ and His precious blood that was shed to redeem us.

Looking back in II Corinthians 3, we find in verses ten and eleven that the glory of the Law has been “*done away*” and pales in comparison with the glory that is found in Christ. The Law brings the sentence of death, but the Spirit of God gives us life! God’s Word states in Romans 8:2, “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*” All who come by faith in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, enter into the new covenant between the Father and Son. They are set free from sin and death and given eternal life in Christ by the Holy Spirit. They are forever free from the penalty of sin by the work of salvation wrought by the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit gives life.

The Spirit Removes the Veil.

The Holy Spirit is co-equal, co-existent, eternally-existent with God the Father and God the Son. The Bible teaches that everyone who has been born again by faith in Christ is indwelt by the blessed Holy Spirit. (See John 14:16-17.) The Spirit makes His abode within the believer at the moment of salvation, and He abides there forever.

When He comes to live in the child of God, He brings an amazing freedom that cannot be experienced without His presence.

II Corinthians 3:12-16 continues,

Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.

Notice the emphasis in this passage upon the “*vail*.” In the Old Testament, a veil was put over Moses’ face when he came off the mountain. The children of Israel were afraid to see his face because it shined, reflecting the brightness of God’s glory. The Scripture says that, “*even unto this day*,” those who try to attain righteousness and life by the Law, have a veil “*upon their heart*.” They are spiritually blinded to the truth. However, if they “*turn to the Lord*,” then “*the vail shall be taken away*.” This is what happens when we turn to Christ, placing our faith in Him, not in our own works or religion.

Verse seventeen affirms, “*Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*.” Religion is bondage. Religion says, “You must do more. You must measure up. You must work harder. You must sacrifice again.” But when we come to faith in Christ, the Spirit of the Lord comes to dwell within and sets us free from the bondage of religion. We are no longer blinded by religion. The veil is taken away. We now see clearly that righteousness and eternal life are not found by what we “do.” We find salvation in what Christ has “done” in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Have you experienced the removing of the veil by the Spirit of God? Simple faith in Christ liberates us. It releases us from the blindness of thinking that we can merit salvation because of what we do or who we are.

The Spirit Changes the Believer.

Notice II Corinthians 3:18: *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* In Moses’ day, they could not look upon his face because it reflected God’s glory. But, the Scripture says that now, *“...we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord...”* What an amazing contrast! Under the Law, no one could look upon God’s glory. In Christ, we can behold His glory just as openly as if we were looking into a mirror and seeing ourselves in the glass. We are now free to look upon our Lord and see Him in all His fulness!

This reminds us of an important event that took place at the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. When Christ died upon Mount Calvary, something mysterious but wonderful took place within the temple. The Bible records in Mark 15:38, *“And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”* This was the veil that separated man from God. It was the veil that set apart the Holy of Holies so that man could not enter in. But when Christ shed His spotless blood for our sin and paid the price for our

redemption, God the Father rent the veil from top to bottom, showing that we now have access to God through Christ.

The Bible assures us in Romans 8:15, *“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 full and complete access to our heavenly Father. We are no longer kept out of His presence because of our sin. We can boldly enter in without fear, and cry, “Abba, Father!” The Spirit of God has given us liberty to enter in and commune with our God, just as children come confidently into the presence of their loving earthly fathers. We never experienced this liberty and freedom before we came to Christ. By His Spirit, He has set us free to approach Him, to know Him, and to worship Him.

What happens when we exercise this freedom that we have been given? II Corinthians 3:18 says that we *“...are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* When we look upon our Lord, when we enter into His presence as one set free, when we commune with Him as a child with his Father, the Spirit of God performs an amazing work in our lives—He changes us! He transforms us into the image of the precious Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is God’s purpose for us, that we be *“conformed to the image of His Son”* (Romans 8:29).

Are you experiencing day by day the transforming work of the Spirit of God? As a child of God, you have not only been set free from sin, but you have also been set free to become everything that the Lord saved you to be. He desires for you to be like

His Son. Enter into His presence. Commune with Him in His Word. See Him in all His glory. Allow the Spirit to change you and conform your life into the image of Christ.

Let nothing hinder His working in your life. “...*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*”