

## Freedom for Real

**‘If the son of Man makes you free, you are free indeed’ – but what freedom!**

God experiences what it’s like to be totally free. He’s free to do whatever he wants and be whatever he wants to be, constrained only by the nature of his eternal Being, which is love.

What does it mean, though, when we say, “God is love?” Well, it can’t be compared to human love, which is given and received as an outward relationship between people, because God’s love is internal and fully contained within his nature and being. If it was simply that God loved, then it would be the same as the love we as people have for each other, but God *is* love. He’s not just motivated by love; he’s *actually* love.

God eternally existed, as far as we can understand, as an internal relationship of love as Father, Word and Spirit, evidenced by all being involved together as one God at the creation of our world. And as this God of love, he decided to do something new; he would share his life and freedom by creating a physical realm and physical beings who, over time, would share his very being, even bringing them into and within the internal relationship which he is in himself, **John 17:20-24**.

But how can God share his holy life of love with sinful humanity when he cannot accept the presence of sin? And how can we, as sinful humanity, stand in the presence of such a holy God? Both are impossible. So, for us to share in the internal life and love of God as he intends, we would need to be redeemed and re-created, and God came to us personally in Jesus Christ in order to bring this about.

Our nature is not God’s nature, because we chose enmity against God, creating a breach which we humans could not repair. So God did another new thing; he came personally to his human creation as one of us to redeem us from our hopeless condition. He took our fallen, de-humanised nature into his own sacrificial life, and within this life, death and resurrection of Jesus, he sanctified it, restoring it back to the Father in total obedience and faith, even to death on the cross. Then through this death and subsequent resurrection and ascension, Jesus Christ became the firstfruits of a new creation, a renewed humanity which is open to all, each at his own time, **1 Corinthians 15:23**.

What we could not do, God did for us in Christ Jesus. Substituting his perfect life for our broken sinful lives, he took sin to the cross where it was destroyed. Jesus then took his victory to the throne room of God the Father and was fully received as our substitute and humanity’s only presently acceptable response to God. He remains there now as our Mediator, ministering for God toward us and ministering for us toward God, until the time comes for him to hand all things to the Father and everything will become new - new Jerusalem, new heavens, new earth, a totally new creation.

The new humanity, meanwhile, is hidden with Christ in God, invisible and awaiting the consummation of the age when “the sons of God” will be revealed and all that is now hidden will be made manifest. The Church, the Body of Christ, “born from above” and reborn into this new creation, is the shadowy genesis of the new humanity on earth yet to be fully manifested, that’s totally free from sin (**1 John 3:9**).

And, thankfully, none of this depends upon us. We are free from this responsibility. What a relief! God, in ungrudging love for us, freely and passionately wills and acts to be with us and to have us with him. He did, and is still doing, all that is necessary to bring his new creation to fruition. We are all, therefore, liberated from the constraints and resulting guilt of trying to achieve something which is already accomplished. We've been released from the anxiety of self-preservation and the burden of being "good enough." We can, therefore, be what God originally intended for us all to be, his adopted children, free to express ourselves before God without any ulterior motive or self-deception. We are free to be ourselves.

But this is exactly what Jesus promised when he said in **John 8:36** that "If the Son of Man makes you free you are free indeed." The word "free," used twice in this verse, is translated from two similar but slightly different words - from *elutheroo* meaning "liberated," and from *elutheros* meaning "unrestrained, free to come and go at pleasure as a citizen, exempt from obligation and liability." Using these meanings, the verse would now read like this: "If the Son of Man liberates you, then you are free to come and go as a citizen, exempt from obligation or liability."

This is what Jesus means by free. It's the same root word used to describe the freedom from the law of marriage of a wife whose husband has died (**Romans 7:3**). There is no further obligation or liability whatsoever. And as "citizens of the household of God" we are just as free. We are as free as God to do what we want and be what we want to be, constrained only by the love of the Holy Spirit, just as God is constrained by the love that he is.

God created us to share in his freedom. He passionately desires it for us - for all of us - and he made it possible in Jesus Christ. Because of him, we are "free indeed!"