

Free Indeed

John 8:31-36 (NLT)

31 Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. 32 And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 33 "But we are descendants of Abraham," they said. "We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean, 'You will be set free'?" 34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. 35 A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.

Insight

The debate that started in John 7:25–27 over Jesus' identity and whether He was the Messiah intensified in chapter 8. The people asked Him, "Who are you?" (v. 25). John tells us that "many believed in him" (v. 30). Then Jesus clarified the identity of His true disciples: those who not only know Jesus, but also obey Him (v. 31). Jesus also cautioned the Jews that their privileged status as God's chosen people and their heritage standing as descendants of Abraham had blinded them. They refused to see that they too were slaves to sin (vv. 31–36). Only when they accepted and believed the truth that Jesus is their Messiah—that He's "the way and the truth and the life" (14:6)—would they be truly set free. "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (8:36).

The film *Amistad* tells the story of West African slaves in 1839 taking over the boat that was transporting them and killing the captain and some of the crew. Eventually they were recaptured, imprisoned, and taken to trial. An unforgettable courtroom scene features Cinqué, leader of the slaves, passionately pleading for freedom. Three simple words—repeated with increasing force by a shackled man with broken English—eventually silenced the courtroom, "Give us free!" Justice was served and the men were freed.

Most people today aren't in danger of being physically bound, yet true liberation from the spiritual bondage of sin remains elusive. The words of Jesus in [John 8:36](#) offer sweet relief: "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." Jesus pointed to Himself as the source of true emancipation because He offers forgiveness to anyone who believes in Him. Though some in Christ's audience claimed freedom (v. 33), their words, attitudes, and actions regarding Jesus betrayed their claim.

Jesus longs to hear those who would echo Cinqué's plea and say, "Give me freedom!" With compassion He awaits the cries of those who are shackled by unbelief or fear or failure. Freedom is a matter of the heart. Such liberty is reserved for those who believe that Jesus is God's Son who was sent into the world to break the power of sin's hold on us through His death and resurrection.

Reflect & Pray

How has Jesus set you free? What can you share with others about God's liberating power?

Jesus, help me to believe that You can set me free.