Kingdom Life: Sufficient Freedom

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

Revelation 14:6-7 6 Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. 7 And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

John 8:31-36 31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 33 They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. 37 I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.

***So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.* – John 8:36**

Freedom! What is this freedom that John clings to? What did John hear Jesus saying that set him free? And free from what?

For John this is the heart of it. He uses the word, 'free,' five times as he writes his experience of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John. Four time right here in these 5 verses. And as you might guess it was a big word for Paul too. 11 times in Romans, 14 times in the Letters to the Corinthians, 9 times in Galatians. And if it was big for Paul you can almost guarantee that it was a big topic for Luther and the Reformers. As Paul says in Galatians, for freedom's sake you have been set free.

Galatians 5:1 - ***For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.***

In chapter 8, John highlights this interaction with the Pharisees because he not only likes the idea of Freedom, but because He was – in hearing these words… Set Free!

***So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.* – John 8:36**

So, what is this freedom that the Bible not only describes to us but makes real to you and I this morning in real time? What is the good news that sets us free? What is the Gospel? What does abiding - hearing God's word and trusting it - free you from?

It is more than just political or national freedom. The Pharisees actually get that part right. You can be free in Christ, or your religion, even if you are held captive by a government or in prison. You can be set free - as is our experience – even if you remain in bondage to a broken and sinful world that seeks to define you.

That is to say – You can be free! Beholden only to God, even in the grips of death, illness, peril or sword. Because what sets you free is Spiritual, not physical.

So, what then is the freedom that Paul and Luther and John are so enthralled with?

It is the confidence that nothing in all of creation can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39).

Confidence, Certainty, Assurance … knowing that when your day comes Jesus will take you to himself. Confidence that in each day and moment Christ is present despite the accusation of your sin, or the fear of death, or the lies of the evil one.

You can and you should know that you will be and are even now experiencing God's salvation! This is the hour (Revelation 14)!

According to the 2025 American Worldview Inventory by George Barna and the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University: Only 39% of all U.S. adults (and 52% of self-identified Christians) actually expect to spend eternity specifically in the presence of God; many view heaven simply as a state of peace, rest, or bliss without God necessarily being there.

While Barna's 2025 data* shows a significant increase in general commitment to Jesus, specific tracking on the mechanics of eternal security shows that most Americans actively reject or hedge their bets against the idea that Christ's sacrifice alone secures salvation.

Key Findings on Salvation and Worldview (2025 Study)

- ***The Majority Reject Sufficiency: The study reveals that Americans typically believe Jesus Christ's death on the cross and resurrection are not sufficient to secure eternal salvation. Instead, they believe experiencing eternal peace requires a blend of personal works and God's grace.***
- ***Self-Identified Christians Are Divided: Even among those who call themselves Christians, a striking number "hedge their eternal bets" by integrating multiple non-biblical means of salvation into their personal security plans rather than placing exclusive confidence in Christ.*** **[good person]**

The freedom that John, Paul, Luther and, I dare say, many of us at key moments in our lives, if not each time we receive the Sacrament have received… The freedom that the Bible proclaims is the complete assurance that not only is Jesus

death and resurrection sufficient for your salvation… God has gone to great lengths to assert this truth upon you.

The ability of the Bible to assert God's salvation upon you is the key debate in the reformation. In the history of man this reality is captured clearly in two places. And both of these places in history involve some of the most duplicated publications (books, pamphlets, papyrus and sheepskin scrolls.) The Bible and the works of Martin Luther.

And Luther's defining document on the topic was a *On the Bondage of the Will* published December 1525. Written as a sharp, passionate reply to Dutch humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus's 1524 work *On Free Will.*

The whole debate can be summed up on this notion of confidence. When I hear Jesus, in the words of the Bible, declare me forgiven, or treasured, or what ever the promise may be… Can I take Jesus at His word. Can I be confident that what Jesus says about me is true.

There were actually 3 main competing schools of thought.

First, there was the superstitions of the Dark ages that had come to dominate the Catholic Church in practice if not in policy. These superstitions revolved around rules and laws. If you do this, God will respond in such and such a way. Some of these superstitions were based on laws described in the Bible, many were not.

The church as we know it was reformed back to the practices and theology of the early church by two different schools of thought.

One was the *Evangelical* movement. The term used by Luther and the Reformers to differentiate themselves from Roman Catholicism. Evangelical literally means the Gospel. Not just the 4 canonized Gospel's of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but the general idea that the Bible captures the good news that sets people free. Namely that Jesus death and resurrection are sufficient for your salvation.

The other reform was also a fledgling movement called *Scholasticism* that was just beginning to take root as Thomas Aquanis's dialectical method was spreading across Europe. Each big city got their own version of the Medieval University. The basis of our post-modern education system that dominates the Western world today.

In this historic debate on free will Erasmus argued that we cannot be certain what God is saying to us simply by hearing the words of the Bible. Erasmus defended the emerging view that words are relative. Words might be interpreted in different ways according to our own personal background. We need a Pope to tell us what to believe because truth, knowledge, values, and moral norms are not absolute or universal, but instead depend on a specific framework, perspective, culture, historical period, or individual.

Does this sound familiar. Erasmus, way back in 1520's was articulating what defines our politics and education system today – relativism.

Martin Luther, as many before him, was defending the source of our freedom. And we as Christians are still the only ones who stand up for that freedom today. We are the only movement, family of people, tribe … who will openly declare that you are free in Christ because Christ says you are.

When did he say it?

Romans 8:39 - ***38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

John 8:36 - ***So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.***

John 8:31-32 - ***"When you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."***

It is your confidence in what God has done and has to say about you… that you are set free!

There is nothing new under the sun. The Church stands up for our freedom against the same age-old debate of relativism and legalism. The desire by human beings to hedge their bets and in doing so return to the yoke of slavery. We actually do believe experiencing eternal peace requires a blend of personal works and God's grace. All of us are unbelievers in need of a word from God.

And so, we come once again to God's table to hear what God has done for us. And this was Luther's final appeal to Erasmus as it is to us this morning.

When Jesus comes to you in worship and says that His blood sacrificed on the cross is a new covenant that forgives your sin

(Luke 22:20). You can be certain that God's assertion for you is indeed setting you free.

***[As the] Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.* – John 8:36**

Your freedom is your confidence in Jesus' sufficiency for you!

*American Worldview Inventory 2025-26: The Annual Report of the State of Worldview in the United States. George Barna.

On The Bondage of The Will – Martin Luther - 1525

Sect. 1.-FIRST of all, I would just touch upon some of the heads of your PREFACE ; in which, You somewhat disparage our cause and adorn your own. In the first place, I would notice your censuring in me, in all your former books, an obstinacy of assertion; and saying, in this book,-"that you are so far from delighting in assertions, that you would rather at once go over to the sentiments of the skeptics, if the inviolable authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the decrees of the church, would permit you: to which authorities You willingly submit yourself in all things, whether you follow what they prescribe, or follow it not."-These are the principles that please you.

I consider, (as in courtesy bound,) that these things are asserted by you from a benevolent mind, as being a lover of peace. But if any one else had asserted them, I should, perhaps, have attacked him in my accustomed manner. But, however, I must not even allow you, though so very good in your intentions, to err in this opinion. For not to delight in assertions, is not the character of the Christian mind: nay, he must delight in assertions, or he is not a Christian. But, (that we may not be mistaken in terms) by *assertion,* I mean a constant adhering, affirming, confessing, defending, and invincibly persevering. Nor do I believe the term signifies any thing else, either among the Latins, or as it is used by us at this day. And moreover, I speak concerning the asserting of those things, which are delivered to us from above in the Holy Scriptures. Were it not so, we should want neither Erasmus nor any other instructor to teach us, that, in things doubtful, useless, or unnecessary; assertions, contentions, and strivings, would be not only absurd, but impious: and Paul condemns such in more places than one. Nor do you, I believe, speak of these things, unless, as a ridiculous orator, you wish to take up one subject, and go on with another, as the Roman Emperor did with his Turbot; or, with the madness of a

wicked writer, you wish to contend, that the article concerning "Free-will" is doubtful, or not necessary.

Be skeptics and academics far from us Christians; but be there with us assertors twofold more determined than the stoics themselves. How often does the apostle Paul require that assurance of faith; that is, that most certain, and most firm assertion of Conscience, calling it (Romans 10:10), confession, "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation?" And Christ also saith, "Whosoever confesseth Me before men, him will I confess before My Father." (Matthew 10:32) Peter commands us to "give a reason of the hope" that is in us. (1 Peter 3:15) But why should I dwell upon this; nothing is more known and more general among Christians than assertions. Take away assertions, and you take away Christianity. Nay, the Holy Spirit is given unto them from heaven, that He may glorify Christ, and confess Him even unto death; unless this be not to assert-to die for confession and assertion. In a word, the Spirit so asserts, that He comes upon the whole world and reproves them of sin (John 16:8) thus, as it were, provoking to battle. And Paul enjoins Timothy to reprove, and to be instant out of season. (2 Timothy 4:2) But how ludicrous to me would be that reprover, who should neither really believe that himself, of which he reproved, nor constantly assert it!-Why I would send him to Anticyra, to be cured.

But I am the greatest fool, who thus lose words and time upon that, which is clearer than the sun. What Christian would bear that assertions should be contemned? This would be at once to deny all piety and religion together; or to assert, that religion, piety, and every doctrine, is nothing at all. Why therefore do you too say, that you do not delight in assertions, and that you prefer such a mind to any other?

But you would have it understood that you have said nothing here concerning confessing Christ, and His doctrines.-I receive the admonition. And, in courtesy to you, I give up my right and custom, and refrain from judging of your heart, reserving that for another time, or for others. In the mean time, I admonish you to correct your tongue, and your pen, and to refrain henceforth from using such expressions. For, how upright and honest soever your heart may be, your words, which are the index of the heart, are not so. For, if you think the matter of "Free-will" is not necessary to be known, nor at all concerned with Christ, you speak honestly, but think wickedly: but, if you think it is necessary, you speak wickedly, and think rightly. And if so, then there is no room for you to complain and exaggerate so much concerning useless assertions and contentions: for what have they to do with the nature of the cause?