

OCTOBER *God's Leaders are Free*

Read Exodus 3:7–15, Galatians 5:1, and Ephesians 2:1–10. What similarities do you see?

In the late 1850s, a successful businessman from England visited St. Louis. As he walked around the city, he came upon a slave auction on the courthouse steps. Among those chained to be auctioned, he noticed one man, much bigger and stronger than the others. Unlike the rest, this man held his head erect, looking straight ahead—as still as a statue. And a statue he might have been, except for the great tears that traced shiny rivers down his face. When the man stood to be sold, the price quickly went to a thousand dollars. The Englishman called out “Fifteen hundred dollars,” and other bids stopped.

After paying the accountant, the merchant, followed a few paces behind by his new “property,” walked off. After they turned a corner and were out of sight of the crowd, the Englishman turned. “You can go now,” he said. “You are free.” The other man stood still, gazing at him through narrowed eyes. He did not seem to understand.

“I said you are free. I have bought your freedom. You are no longer a slave.” The man continued to stare at him in silence.

“Please, you are free,” the merchant said again. “You can do what you want to.” The former slave finally smiled. “Don’t you see?” he said. “I want to serve you.”

Much of what passes for religion in our world has to do with duty, obligation, guilt, and rules. Sometimes people take offices in the church because they feel obligated or

are made to feel guilty if they don’t. Sometimes people try to please God by following the rules and “doing their duty.”

Martin Luther struggled with the idea of religious obligation. He saw God as strict and demanding and almost killed himself doing acts he thought would satisfy God. But whatever he did was never enough. Finally he heard the gracious word: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Suddenly he knew what it meant to be free. He was free—not to live for himself, but to live for a loving God who gave the gift of salvation.

The people enslaved in Egypt were delivered by God’s grace and freed. God’s people today continue to be set free by God’s grace and called to willingly follow, joyfully serve.

Jesus said and continues to say, “You did not choose me but I chose you. . . .”
(John 15:16)

**As God’s chosen ones,
freed from the bondage
of guilt and death, we
are free to serve, free to
be what God is calling us
to be, free to celebrate the
life we have been given
in Jesus.**



For reflection and discussion

How do you experience God’s gift of freedom? When does freedom seem elusive? What helps you share God’s freedom?

Prayer

Lord, help us live out our freedom in joyful service to you and to all. Give us hearts that overflow with thanksgiving, voices that fill with your praise, and hands busy at the tasks you give us. We pray in the name of the one who chose us and set us free. Amen.