



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“IS FREEDOM WORTH THE PRICE?”

John Galbreath
Bible Study Series

Text: I Peter 2:9-17, John 8:32, II Corinthians 3:17, Galatians
5:15

Date: February 13, 1949

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on February 13, 1949.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passages (I Peter 2:9-17, John 8:32, II Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 5:15).

The hymns that week were "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past," "When All Thy Mercies," and "O God of Love."

There was an interesting note in the bulletin that week. It said:

"Again this week, I was advised that a visitor attended worship several times without being greeted by members of our congregation. Nothing can be more deadly for the growth of a church than the reputation of being unfriendly. We work under serious handicaps, and it requires a special effort on the part of both our members and visitors to keep ours a friendly church. This is your personal responsibility."

While not specifically related to the sermon, keep that in mind as you complete this Bible Study.

You should begin by reviewing the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would "fill in" the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

I. What is Freedom?

A. The present worldwide ideological conflict is said to be between the free peoples and the tyrants of the earth.

1. Not only in the US-Russia dispute, but in India, Indonesia, etc., men are fighting for freedom.

B. No absolute freedom.

1. "Freedom" is the absence of restraint.

2. Even in primitive civilizations, restraints of property, of tribal custom circumscribed to some extent the activity of the barbarian.

3. In modern society, we are hedged about with restraints from traffic laws, social custom and family responsibility.

C. Freedom is found in limited fields -- to limited degrees

1. Four freedoms -- from want, fear, religions, speech
2. We are free to own property, but limited by cash as to how much, and limited by zoning as to how it shall be used.
3. I am free to drive my car -- just so long as I obey certain rules of the road.

D. Freedom is the absence of external restriction

1. There must remain the restrictions of conscience within the man.
2. Freedom from external restrictions can last only so long as the restrictions from within make them unnecessary.
 - a) *We give a drivers' license to those of the age where they presumably have good judgment, and even then deny it to those of weak mentality.*

E. The freedom we enjoy

1. The military situation demonstrates the absence of freedom.
 - a) *Freedom to deal with fellow men as equals*
 - b) *Freedom to criticize -- or quit.*
 - c) *Freedom to write vs. censorship*
2. Tyranny of foreign lands
 - a) *Dachau, Buchenwald -- men who held dangerous thoughts and convictions*
3. The American spirit is identified

II. The Cost of Freedom

A. Freedom is a dangerous thing.

1. Give a child freedom, and the dishes are smashed.
2. Give freedom to the criminal psychopath, and no one in the community is safe.

B. The right of freedom is purchased by a disciplined conscience and sound judgment.

1. Education is essential.
2. Religion must be at the heart of a democracy.

C. Our democratic process cannot be inflicted upon others -- others must be led to it.

1. The Fascist's reason why democracy would not work in Italy.
2. Democracy is strong meat -- a people must be prepared to receive it.

D. Industrial freedom

1. Freedom of enterprise has its antithesis in monopoly and trusts.
2. Labor must earn its right to be free.
3. Just as those on capital's side must be curbed from excess, so also must labor.

E. Academic and religious freedom

1. Those who in the name of academic freedom would advocate a system that would deny that freedom to others.
2. Those who in the name of religious liberty, would advocate special privilege that would in the end restrict the religious freedom of others

F. Freedom must be shared

1. Ku Klux Klan claims to advocate the democratic way of life, but denies the rights of government can be shared by those of contrasting race.

2. He who denies freedom to his countryman undercuts his own rights, and the bigotry that he holds toward others will eventually be turned upon himself.

a) *Lincoln -- No nation can long exist half slave, half free*

b) *We each belong in one minority group or another. None can afford bigotry.*

G. Freedom must be protected from those who would deny it to us.

1. Let there be no pangs of conscience when we are called upon to arms, if necessary, to protect our God-given liberty.

III. The Alternatives to Freedom

A. The tyrant asks that freedom be sold for bread.

1. The Dr. Faustus story all over -- to sell one's soul to the devil.

B. We have seen tyrants rise and fall, even within our decade -- and discovered that even the bread rots, and men go hungry.

C. To some, the alternative of bread or freedom, leaves little choice, but to take the bread.

1. That is why the American Revolution was such a miracle.

D. Today's alternative is not freedom or bread, but freedom and bread, vs. tyranny and hunger.

IV. Conclusion

Freedom can be our only choice. But it must be paid for. It was purchased at a high price -- DeWalt's body returned this week. It can be maintained only if we will pay the price of keeping America -- and so, ourselves, strong in mind, clean in soul, strong in arms.

Study Questions -- Part I

Bible Reading:

I Peter 2:12 says: "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."

- Think of this verse in the context of those serving as missionaries. Why do you think it speaks about works and actions rather than words?

I Peter 2:16 says: "Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. "

- This verse says to live *as* free men. What might that have looked like for someone who was, in fact, a slave?
- The same verse admonishes those who are free to live as servants of God. How would a believer likely have been a different master than a non-believer in those days?

John 8:32 says: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

- This verse is often quoted in a non-religious context. How has that impacted the way we think about the actual verse as it was originally written?
- How might the meaning of this verse differ for someone who faces religious persecution?

II Corinthians 3:17 says: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

- Because Corinthians was written by Paul, this is now the third writer to speak about what it means to be free and the responsibilities it brings. What does it tell you that so many different authors speak of freedom?

Galatians 5:15 says: "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."

- What does this mean in an international context?
- What does it mean within our own country?
- What about within our own families?

Study Questions -- Part II

Sermon :

I.A. This sermon was delivered in 1949. What, if any, changes do you think have occurred since then in terms of the struggle between the free and the tyrants?

What nations and peoples who were not free in 1949 are now? What nations and peoples have lost their freedom since then?

I.B. What restraints on your freedom do you willingly accept? What restraints on your freedom do you resent? How does your faith help you to deal with those restrictions?

I.C. For you, what is the order of importance for the four freedoms mentioned?

I.D. What is the difference in how you feel about external restrictions vs. internal restrictions?

Do you look at God's requirements of you as restrictions? How would you characterize them?

I.E. Knowing that this sermon was delivered within a few years of Dr. Galbreath's return from Iwo Jima, how do you think that impacted his thoughts on the military's role in providing freedom to believe and to write?

The sermon refers to the tyranny of foreign lands. Where do you see tyranny today?

What role do you think our Christian heritage has in identifying the American spirit that he mentions?

II. A. What dangers do you see in a free society? What role can faith play in avoiding those dangers?

II. B. Dr. Galbreath talks about the essential role education plays in the right to freedom. What is your view of westerners who work to build schools in other countries? In what ways do you think that helps to foster freedom?

He notes that religion must be at the heart of democracy. Would you agree? Or, in light of the current situation, do you think that his statement would need to be more narrow now to focus on Christianity?

What role can non-fundamentalist Islam play in promoting democracy?

II.C.2 What role do you think Christians and Christian missionaries can have in preparing people to receive democracy?

Can that happen without focusing on evangelism?

II.D. How might the excesses of corporate and personal greed been different in the economic meltdown of the 2000's if people lived their faiths in their business dealings?

II.E. What are your feelings about the politics in Texas that impact school textbooks across the country?

What role should religion play in academic choices?

Would your answer be different if sharia law came to America rather than Christians making these decisions?

II.F. The second Ku Klux Klan used a burning cross as a symbol of intimidation and terror. How do you think its members reconciled the use of a Christian symbol to decidedly unchristian actions?

If the klan appeared again today, what actions do you think the mainstream church should take to combat their claim of a Christian foundation?

Are there groups today that concern you because of their claims to doing things for Christ?

III. In today's world, where do you think people are trading freedom for bread? What can the world's Christians be doing to eliminate the choice they need to make?

IV. Look again at Dr. Galbreath's final notes. It seems that the DeWalt boy's body was just being returned from World War II.

Freedom can be our only choice. But it must be paid for. It was purchased at a high price -- DeWalt's body returned this week. It can be maintained only if we will pay the price of keeping America -- and so, ourselves, strong in mind, clean in soul, strong in arms.

To what extent do you think this holds true today?

What role do you think the church should appropriately play in maintaining our freedom? What about the freedom of others around the world?

What about people of faith as opposed to churches as a whole?