

6. Depend on the Lord

An ancient Hebrew fable goes like this:

Once there was a small leaf attached to the upper limb of a tall tree. The leaf was very content with its good life until it saw the birds flying above the forest. The leaf, then, yearned to be "free like the birds," free to fly and experience many different things. The leaf struggled and struggled to be free - just to be free. Then one morning, just at sunrise, a strong gust of wind jerked the leaf from the limb and sent it sailing above the forest. It was free! At last it was free! It could now flit about as it pleased! It finally got its way! How exhilarating it was for the leaf to see all the strange, new sights! It was great! What an experience! What a life! Soon, however, the leaf began its journey downward and, eventually, it joined the other dead and dying leaves on the forest floor. There the sun's lethal rays struck the leaf. As the leaf withered and died, it cried out, "This is not freedom! This is not freedom! This is death!" Too late the leaf realized that freedom does not mean SEPARATION AND COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE. How wrong it was!

There are people and groups of people who think that only complete liberty with license to do anything one desires is freedom. They are set on doing "as they please." They will listen to no one. They are only interested in "doing their own thing." They are proud, conceited, stubborn and selfish. They will trample others to get their way. They will lie, cheat, betray, slander. "Each one must be free to do his/her thing," they insist. And this kind of "freedom" - independence from the holy Lord God, His way, His will, His Word - always marks the beginning of the journey downward. It cannot be otherwise. *Galatians 6:7f* reminds us, "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that he will also reap. Those who sow to their own flesh will reap corruption; but those who sow to the Spirit will reap eternal life."

As people of God, we know that the answer to real freedom is definitely not in "doing our own thing". True and lasting freedom does not mean complete INDEPENDENCE, but rather complete DEPENDENCE on the Lord our God - having a heart that cries out, "Lord, what would YOU have me to do?" Only as we DEPEND on God for His love, mercy, grace and strength, which He gives us through Christ Jesus, do we have freedom - especially the forgiveness of all our sins.

Only when we DEPEND on the Lord God to provide us with spiritual food, His Word and Sacraments, do we have the strengthening of our faith in His Son our Savior who reminds us, "If you continue in My Word, then are you MY disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you FREE." *John 8:31*. Only as we DEPEND ON THE LORD can we hope for that life which can never be separated from God, that life in Him Who declares, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believes in Me though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." *John 11:25, 26*.

In *John 8, 36* we are reminded, "If the Son therefore shall make you FREE, you shall be FREE indeed." Oh yes, Christ Jesus FREES us so that now we can live to Him, with Him and for Him and "we can do all things through Him Who strengthens us."

Depend on the Lord

We Begin

Leader (L) and Group (G)

- L: We begin in the name of our loving Lord Jesus,
G: On Whom we depend for strength and forgiveness, life and love.

We Search Scriptures - John 8:31-36

Three readers: Narrator, Jesus, Jews

- Narrator:** To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said,
Jesus: If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
Jews: We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?
Jesus: I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

We Meditate

Follow this outline as the meditation is presented

- An ancient Hebrew fable
- Freedom
 - to do "whatever you want" is not true freedom
 - from God's will is not true freedom
- Dependence on God
 - is not independence from God
 - is true freedom
- We have freedom to live with Christ and for Christ.

We Respond

- L: O God, we pride ourselves on our independence.
G: Help us to depend on You always.

- L: In our pride and self-seeking we pull away from You.
G: Help us to depend on You always.

- L: Through Your Son, Jesus, You have set us free,
G: Free from our sinful selfishness and pride,

- L: Free from the punishment for all our sinfulness.
G: Help us to depend on You always.

We Pray

Father in heaven, in times of trouble we've been told, "You're not in this alone." How comforting this is! What a relief it is to know that we can depend on You at all times. What assurance it gives to know that You are with us always, our "ever-present help in trouble." Lord, we need You and we know it, and this is not a disgrace. Give us the humility to cast our cares upon You and to lay our lives in Your hands. As we depend on You we will not be disappointed. Amen.

