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A Christian Worldview Perspective on Freedom
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Freedom has a much deeper root than most people conceive. Usually when the topic of freedom is discussed, the context relates to a nation not being under the control of another, one class of people not being dominated by another class, or even an individual not being enslaved by a master. But those are only the outward expressions of freedom. In truth, freedom's root is not in the outward expressions that we see in the culture. Rather it is in the hearts of individuals. Freedom progresses from the individual to the culture.

Possible Worldview Perspectives on Freedom
A common belief in American culture is that many different kinds of beliefs can support freedom. However, that is simply not true. The only worldview system capable of actually producing freedom is the one which represents the truth about reality – the Christian worldview. Let's look at this a little more carefully.

Those who hold to Naturalism seek freedom, but have no way to even get at what that means. A naturalistic point of view doesn't even allow for the human spirit to exist as anything other than electrical and biological functions. Thus, internal freedom can only be conceived of as feelings of personal pleasure. As for freedom in the culture, a naturalistic point of view inevitably leads to a restriction of the freedom of others.

Animists can never be free as they are restricted to the rules of the universe (whatever that is). They must always be concerned with what pleases the spirits/gods, and they necessarily live in

fear that they will misstep and create havoc in their own lives and in the lives of others.

Far Eastern Thought believers are unable to be free as they believe their very existence in the material universe prevents it. There can be no freedom for them until their part of the life force escapes the bondage of their illusory material existence. To get freedom, they believe they must escape to the place where there is no personality and no consciousness.

Non-Christian Theism also does not produce freedom. True freedom can only be known in a relationship with God, and any representation of God which does not correspond to what the Bible teaches separates individuals from him – and thus from the source of freedom.

Freedom Begins in the Heart of the Individual

In its most basic form, freedom is rooted in the heart of individual human beings. It is liberty from the power of guilt and sin. In Galatians 5:1 we read these words: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. The focus here is on internal, not external freedom.

In this passage, the apostle Paul tells individual believers that since they have found this kind of internal freedom in Christ, they should be determined to remain free – to stand strong against the things that can enslave the heart. These things which enslave the heart are all material concerns related to religious practice, worldly activities and personal habits.

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The Progression of Freedom - Individual to Culture

As we have already noted, freedom does not start in the culture. It starts in the hearts of individuals. Then, when it has conquered the heart, it gets expressed through people's lives out in the culture. When a person's heart is in bondage there are two places it tends to get expressed.

The first expression is seen in the way it destroys the individual from the inside. Emotions such as anger, pride, jealousy and fear rob a person of joy in life and can even lead to physical and mental breakdown.

The other possible expression is seen in the attempt to dominate other people. In the workplace we see it in bosses who beat down those working under them. We also see it with politicians who will stoop to unethical and selfish behavior and executives who are willing to walk over others to advance their own careers. We see it in church leaders and members who needlessly or maliciously stir up controversy, and in situations where individuals literally enslave other people for their own profit. It is only when the hearts of individuals have become free that it is even possible for there to be freedom in the culture.

What Freedom Is Not

There are numerous ways people conceive of freedom, and not all of them actually correspond with the true meaning of the word. Some think of freedom as the ability to just do anything they wish. However, freedom is not merely the living of life without accountability. It is very possible for people to have the means to live life according to their own selfish desires, yet be slaves inwardly. It is not freedom when an individual lives with broken relationships, loneliness, anger issues, un-

satisfied greed, self-centeredness, and the like. Authentic freedom does not relate to the ability to express personal indulgence or license, or to have power over others.

What Freedom Involves

Ultimately, freedom begins with putting aside personal sin (the root of internal bondage). From there it moves out into the life of the individual and is expressed as freedom of conscience. Finally, when enough of the citizenry know this kind of personal freedom, it is able to move out into the culture to create freedom from oppression. This is seen when all citizens have the ability to freely seek their own opportunities. It exists as the freedom to fail as well as to succeed.

For those who base their lives on non-Christian worldview platforms, understanding the foundational basis of freedom is nearly impossible. In the minds of most people, an understanding of freedom comes only from its material expression out in the culture. But this totally misses the true nature of reality. True freedom is rooted in the hearts of individuals. Thus, it is very possible to be outwardly free yet still be a slave. It is also possible to be a slave outwardly yet be free inwardly.

True freedom begins when people are able to release the bondage of sin based on a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. That is of ultimate importance as we live our individual lives. If we want to see freedom in the world, it is necessary that the culture be dominated by people who know true inward freedom. It is only when this exists that a culture is able to have a moral environment that supports authentic external freedom.

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