

- Rev. Grant Mangold, Riverside Evangelical Free Church, [www.RiversideChurchIowa.com](http://www.RiversideChurchIowa.com)

## TRUE FREEDOM

What does it mean to be “free”? Was it the great theologian Red Green who said that’s when the last kid leaves and the last pet dies?

Or is it as someone else said she grew up in a home where everything was forbidden except for what was compulsory?

Consider this definition of freedom: “the ability to make a different choice.”

That’s how it’s presented in today’s passage from 1 Peter 2:13-25.

Peter reminds his readers that believers in Christ have been set free from sin and have divine power to live out God’s purposes.

In 2:16 he says “live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.”

Now, his readers ~2000 years ago were mostly slaves who depended completely on their masters. Many were women married to unbelieving men.

All lived under the control of the Roman Empire. Two years after Peter likely wrote this letter, Emperor Nero turned Christians into human torches.

Yet, Peter says they are “free” and therefore should live as servants of God.

He’s telling them they now have a new choice to make.

Remember, God’s truth is eternal, unchanging, like

Him. It’s true for all people in all times and all places.

Though we in the U.S. live in a different time from Peter, we endure many similar problems.

And many if not most believers elsewhere around the globe live in a world more like the 1<sup>st</sup> century, as they put their lives on the line each day.

So what’s the principle that worked for Peter – and us?

It’s freedom in Christ!

Believers in Christ are no longer controlled by the passions of sin, so they no longer HAVE to retaliate, or revile, or hate, or live in perpetual conflict.

If you are in Christ, and you’re oppressed by a tyrannical government, exploited in the workplace, or harassed at home, you no longer have to respond the way people do who do not know Christ.

Christians can cut through conflict by responding to life’s difficulties in ways that shine Christ’s light in the world’s darkness.

This even invites people who live in darkness to come into the light of Christ – by showing them a better way to live, survive and even thrive. In freedom.

But freedom is never free. In verse 21 Peter says Jesus was our example in this. We have been called to follow in His steps – steps of suffering.

Jesus endured the suffering of the cross in order to pay for sin and give new life to all who believe and receive Him.

Jesus said His followers also would experience trials and persecution – but that He has overcome the world, and so can we.

That’s because Jesus is not just an example of suffering – He’s the energy source of our life. Christ is the Savior. He’s the sin-bearer, who did away with the penalty and power of sin – to set us free!

That’s the good news of 1 Peter 2:24 - “Christ himself bore our sins in his own body on the cross, so that we can die to sin and live to righteousness.”

We are free, because Christ paid the penalty for sin by giving His own life. Believers in Him receive the same victory over sin, and we too are free from the power of sin.

We live this life for Him, as we look toward an eternity without the presence of sin.

We can make a different choice – BECAUSE Christ is alive, and His power, the Holy Spirit, indwells all true believers.

This gives us the power, the moral ability, to obey Him - and live as servants of God for righteousness.

So let’s live in His freedom – as we share this good news with others!

-  
-