I Am the LORD Your God, Who Brought You Out…

When God gave His list of 10 commandments, He began with a simple prologue:

> I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery (**Exodus 20:2**, ESV).

God asserted His right to command the Israelites. If not for Him, they would be enslaved to the Egyptians. If not for Him, they would live and die in the squalor of slavery. If not for Him, they would be a dominated people. Because of Him, they were able to thrive. Because of Him, they had their own land. Because of Him, they were free.

But there is more than this assertion in this statement. At the beginning of this covenantal list of commandments, God explains why He set them free. He did not set them free so they could go anyplace possible and follow any course possible. He set them free to serve Him.

God took them out of the Egyptian bondage to slavery and would bring them into the land He would give them so they could serve Him properly. Of course, there was more to their service than these 10 commandments. But these give a good summary of His will for them. They were to serve Him and no other Gods. They were to remember Him with honor and devote their lives to Him. They were to serve each other in a God glorifying way, neither murdering, stealing, lying, nor coveting. Jesus points out that all of this is summed up by the two commands: 1) Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind and 2) Love your neighbor as yourself.

Fast forward to our deliverance. We were just as bound, just as enslaved. God set us free. His truth sets us free (**John 8:32**). But why? Why did God set us free? Did He set us free so we could go about pursuing any possible behavior? Going anyplace possible? No. He set us free so we would be free to pursue Him, so we would be free to obey Him, so we would be free to serve Him.

As **Galatians 5:13** says: "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (ESV). Then again, Peter adds in **I Peter 2:16**: "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God" (ESV).

"But that means I'm not free," we cry. The thing we need to understand is that no one is ever free in the sense of living in any possible way and then choosing the consequence of those actions separate from behavior. The fact is we are either slaves of sin or we are slaves of God. That is, we either let sin be our master and dictate our behavior or we let God be our master and dictate how we behave. Notice what Paul says in **Romans 6:20-23**:

> When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (ESV).

If someone wants to sin, they are free from God's will. But they are not free to choose an eternity in God's presence while they surrender to sin's lead. On the other hand, if someone longs to obey God, through Jesus Christ (cf. **Romans 7:25**), they are freed from sin's domination. They are also freed from the consequences of that domination. I can't imagine anyone surrendering to God's control and wanting to choose the consequence of hell, but I know plenty who fear it will happen. It cannot. When we become a slave to God and to obedience, it necessarily leads to righteousness (**Romans 6:16**).

These are our options. Stay enslaved to sin or let God set you free from sin so you are free to be enslaved to Him. "Some choice," we might be tempted to say, "I want to be my own master." To be honest, that is simply not an option. Read what Paul said in **Romans 7:7-25**. When we strive to be our own masters, sin ultimately takes control. I suggest you make the choice not based on trying to be free from a master rather than enslaved. I suggest you make the choice based on the better master. Sin is a terrible taskmaster. It wants to destroy and dominate you. It leads to death and only death. God, on the other hand, is a phenomenal master. He is not arbitrary, but loving. His rule is for your good. And ultimately, His will leads you to abundant and everlasting life. What could be better?

So, understand this. God hasn't delivered us to live in any way possible. He has delivered us to walk in His good works (**Ephesians 2:8-10**). Let's let God be in control. He deserves it. And ultimately, we want what His control has to offer.

—Edwin L. Crozier