

# St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups Mar 25<sup>th</sup> 2007

## Set all free! – Following in their footsteps

### John 8:31-36



#### Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Read the story of 'Black Tom' David Spears in the Churches Together 'Set all free' notes.

Today we conclude the Churches Together Lent Course – 'Set all Free' in which we have discovered more about the Transatlantic Slave Trade of 200 years ago and its abolition; the existence of slavery across the world today and the Church's primary role in campaigning for justice, healing and reconciliation. In this last session John's gospel takes us back to the true source of all freedom – Jesus Christ, "if the Son sets you free you will be free indeed" 8:36.

Taking the passage (John 8:31 -36) in the context of the previous two chapters we find that after the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 people attempt to make Jesus King. Jesus reveals to them that he is the bread of life (6:38). There are grumbles, many turn their back on Jesus and leave him. His brothers goad him (7:1) before Jesus eventually goes to Jerusalem to attend the feast of Tabernacles. Here he is accused of being demon possessed (8:20). On the last day of the feast Jesus stands up and proclaims "if anyone is thirsty, let them come to me...whoever believes in me streams of living water will flow within" (7:37). He goes on to state that he is the 'light of the world' and invites people to walk with him and to experience 'the light of life' (8:14). Some believe Jesus but many do not and after Jesus' invitation to hold on to his teaching, to be his disciples and to experience the truth that will set them free he faces a new attempt on his life and slips away from the Temple.

Jesus was rejected by the majority because they were stuck in slavery. Despite their protests (read 8:33) they were enslaved by a legalism and way of life that would not accept the new life that Jesus brought. Slaves to sin, they turned their back on the one who would have brought true freedom and sonship. This can be true for us - even in the Church! It is all too easy to become 'slaves to sin' and stuck in a way of life that has self firmly established as our god, a way of life that sees us enslaved to forces that can take over our lives – work, ambition, money lifestyles, unhelpful sexual behaviour etc. We may know Christ but still not know freedom and feel enslaved by elements of our lives that seem to have taken over. We need the fresh touch of Christ's call upon our lives, his forgiveness and the empowering of his Holy Spirit to live for him.

Paul writing to the church in Galatia which was struggling between excessive legalism and excessive permissiveness called the church afresh to the freedom that comes from knowing Christ. Read Galatians 5:1. This is the good news of a gospel of Amazing Grace! There is nothing that God cannot forgive us for, there is nothing that God cannot free us from, there is nothing we can do to make God love us more or less. We are God's beloved children and not slaves.

This was the freedom that David Spens knew was his "I am now by the Christian religion liberate and set at freedom from my old yoke, bondage and slavery." Still a slave in the eyes of the law he was a free man in Jesus Christ. May we too know that freedom for our selves and proclaim it to a world so often bound in chains.



#### Witness: Questions to discuss

You could use the words of Amazing Grace as a focus for worship and prayer. Please use the material in study five of the set all free booklets. Extra questions could focus on the following: In what ways do you feel that Christ has brought you freedom? Are there areas of you feel that you feel you are enslaved by? As appropriate: minister/ Pray for one another for: Forgiveness, Freedom from strongholds and for a fresh touch of the Holy Spirit.