



## **Bondage to Babylon!**

### **Prophets of the Captivity**

**Daniel 606-534 BC 2 Kings 23-25**

**The Captivity (Reign of Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus)**

**Obadiah 587 BC 2 Kings 25**

**After Jerusalem's Destruction (Reign of Nebuchadnezzar)**

**Ezekiel 596-574 BC 2 Kings 24**

**to the Jews Before and During the Captivity, (Reign of Nebuchadnezzar)**

One of the most important events in Jesus' Bible, which also changed Jewish history forever, is the Babylonian exile.

This event left its mark on Israelite history in an unparalleled manner and played a key role in the formation of the Bible itself.

For the Israelites, the exile was the watershed moment of their history through which the entire Bible gains its significance. Everything else orbits around the gravity of this faith-shaking moment.

The entire national structure of the kingdom, which was thought to be ordained by God Himself, came crashing down.

This event fulfilled centuries of prophetic warnings, as hundreds of years of tradition, culture, and history was destroyed in just one year. This was their Day of the Lord, and it left them absolutely devastated.

Read the book of Lamentations if you want some sombre reflection on what it felt like to live through the tragedy of Jerusalem's destruction and the people's enslavement under Babylonian rule.

You can understand how it may be hard to find hope in such a situation.

That is why the book of Isaiah plays such a key role in the Old Testament, especially given its placement in the ordering of the Hebrew Bible (it's situated after 1 & 2 Kings instead of after Songs).

Isaiah's entire focus is hope on the other side of the exile. From the very first chapter of the book, this hope shines bright, and it comes right on the heels of the most devastating moment in Israelite history.

### Breaking the Covenant.



Following the Exodus from Egypt the people of Israel under the leadership of Moses entered into a Covenant relationship with God. He was to be their God and they, His people.

The Israelites were well aware of their responsibilities which were set down for them by Moses in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

**Jeremiah 7:21-26**, *Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat meat. <sup>22</sup> For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. <sup>23</sup> But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.' <sup>24</sup> Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. <sup>25</sup> Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. <sup>26</sup> Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.*

Of particular interest to us is the ultimate sanction that God threatened to use against the people of Israel.

If they refused to obey Him and went their own way, then they would find themselves scattered amongst the nations.

Although continually warned by the prophets about where their actions would lead them.

The prophetic books make clear God's charge against the people of Israel. They had broken every one of his Covenant Stipulations.

**Jeremiah 3:20-23**, *You have set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, to this day, and in Israel and among other men; and You have made Yourself a name, as it is this day. <sup>21</sup> You have brought Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with great terror; <sup>22</sup> You have given them this land, of which You swore to their fathers to give them—"a land flowing with milk and honey."<sup>23</sup> And they came in and took*

*possession of it, but they have not obeyed Your voice or walked in Your law. They have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do; therefore You have caused all this calamity to come upon them.*

## **Idolatry.**

Foremost in the charges brought against the children of Israel was that of idolatry!

The writers of Kings and the prophets were in no doubt that the Northern kingdom fell to Assyria because of the worship of other gods.

**2 Kings 17:7-23;**  
**Jeremiah 19:1-15.**

Both **Hezekiah and Josiah** had actively sought to purge Judah of idols, but the death of Josiah at the hands of Pharaoh was interpreted by many as a divine punishment for his campaign against the Canaanite deities.

Even during the third siege of Jerusalem the people worshipped other gods in the hope that they might save them from their enemies.

**Ezekiel 8:12**, *Then He said to me, “Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the room of his idols? For they say, ‘The Lord does not see us, the Lord has forsaken the land.’ ”*

At that time Ezekiel saw in a vision that an idol stood in the northern gateway of the temple.

**Ezekiel 8:5**, *Then He said to me, “Son of man, lift your eyes now toward the north.” So I lifted my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the altar gate, was this image of jealousy in the entrance.*

**2 Kings 23:6**, *And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the Lord, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people.*

While in a secret room in the Temple seventy elders of the house of Israel were engaged in a pantheistic worship, possible based on one of the cults of Egypt.

**Ezekiel 8:7-11**, *So He brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, there was a hole in the wall. <sup>8</sup> Then He said to me, “Son of man, dig into the wall”; and when I dug into the wall, there was a door. <sup>9</sup> And He said to me, “Go in, and see the wicked abominations which they are doing there.” <sup>10</sup> So I went in and saw, and there—every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all around on the walls. <sup>11</sup> And there stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, and in their midst stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan. Each man had a censer in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense went up.*

Leading the worship was Jaazaniah, whose father Shaphan been a key member of the cabinet of king Josiah and played an important role in the rediscovery of the Book of the Law (**2 Kings 22:3-14**).



In the North Gate women mourned for Tammuz the Sumerian-Babylonian god of plant life who died during the heat of summer to be reborn during the Spring rains.

**Ezekiel 8:14**, *So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the Lord's house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz.*

While within the inner court, a place reserved for priests alone, twenty-five men with their backs to the Temple worshipped the sun (**Ezekiel 8:16; 2 Kings 23:5, 11**)

Even after the fall of Jerusalem those who had escaped to Egypt still persisted in worshipping the Queen of Heaven (**Jeremiah 44:1-28**)

Several specific comparisons are made by the prophets between earlier judgments on sin and what was about to happen to Judah.

### **Sodom and Gomorrah.**

Genesis records that the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were so great that the outcry concerning them reached heaven (**Genesis 13:13; 18:20-21; 19:13**).

The Lord completely destroyed those cities and not a living thing was left in them (**Genesis 19:23-25**) and this act was remembered by later writers.

By the days of Isaiah, he could write that the people of Judah were as reckless in their sins as the inhabitants of Sodom.

**Isaiah 3:8-9**, *For Jerusalem stumbled, And Judah is fallen, Because their tongue and their doings Are against the Lord, To provoke the eyes of His glory. <sup>9</sup>The look on their countenance witnesses against them, And they declare their sin as Sodom; They do not hide it. Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves.*

The writers of Kings and Chronicles both accuse Judah with being worse than the former inhabitants of the land (**2 Kings 21:11; 2 Chronicles 33:9**).

While Ezekiel and Jeremiah say that they are more sinful than Sodom.

**Ezekiel 16:46-50**, *“Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who dwells to the south of you, is Sodom and her daughters. <sup>47</sup>You did not walk in their ways nor act according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you became more corrupt than they in all your ways.*

<sup>48</sup>“As I live,” says the Lord God, “neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and your daughters have done. <sup>49</sup>Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. <sup>50</sup>And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.

**Lamentations 4:6**, *The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people Is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, Which was overthrown in a moment, With no hand to help her!*

## **The Rise of Babylon- Biblically**

**Habakkuk** pleads with God, asking Him to save Judah from her own wickedness. God answers, but not in the way Habakkuk expected.

To judge Judah’s wickedness, God says He will hand them over to the Babylonians, a nation even more wicked, violent, and corrupt.

**Habakkuk 1:13**, *You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?*

**Habakkuk 1:17**, *Shall they therefore empty their net, And continue to slay nations without pity?*

But God is way ahead of Habakkuk. The Lord shows him that something else is in store for the Babylonians justice:

- The Babylonians looted many nations, but the remaining ones will loot them (**Habakkuk 2:8**).
- The Babylonians cut off other families so that they could secure their own empire, but soon the work of their hands will cry out against them (**Habakkuk 2:9–10**).
- The Babylonians built their cities with bloodshed, but their work will be for nothing (**Habakkuk 2:12–13**).
- The Babylonians disgraced the nations around them, but the Lord will disgrace them (**Habakkuk 2:15–16**).
- The Babylonians crafted idols and then called on them, but all the earth will be silent before the Lord (**Habakkuk 2:18–20**).

When Habakkuk sees God’s master plan, he can only worship.

- God will correct Judah.
- God will punish Babylon.

But most importantly, God will be known in all the earth (**Habakkuk 2:14**).

### **Timeline of the Babylonian Captivity/Exile**

- 612** Babylonians and Medes conquer Assyria
- 609** Josiah killed by Egyptian army, Jehoahaz is king  
Jehoiakim becomes king after 3 months
- 605** Nebuchadnezzar becomes king of Babylon  
The Babylonians invade Judah  
First wave of deportation of Jews to Babylon  
Daniel is taken captive and begins to prophesy
- 601** Babylonians battle Egypt, both sides suffer losses  
Judah decides to realign itself with Egypt
- 597** Jehoiachin becomes king of Judah  
Babylonians capture Jerusalem  
Second wave of deportation to Babylon from Judah.  
Ezekiel is taken captive to Babylon  
Zedekiah becomes king of Judah
- 593** Ezekiel begins to prophesy
- 586** The Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the Temple  
Jerusalem’s walls and gates are burned with fire  
Third wave of Jews deported to Babylon  
The end of the monarchy in Judah  
Babylonian Exile begins
- 539** The Fall of Babylon

Beginning of the Persian Period to 332

The Decree of Cyrus II allowing Jews to return

**516** The Jews rebuild their Temple (70 years)

## The Rise of Babylon-Historically

Babylon had always proved a thorn in the side of the Assyrian Empire.

In 689 **Sennacherib (704-681)** destroyed the city, which was rebuilt and repopulated by order of his successor Esarshaddon (681-669), only to be destroyed again in 648 by Ashur-banipal (669-633).

Following the death of **Ashur-banipal Nabopolassar**, king of the marshland, took the city in 626 and repulsed the Assyrian force sent against him.

The Assyrian Empire continued to decline due to weak leadership and the continued attacks of the Medes. For the period from 623-616 we know little on events in Babylon, but in 615 the Babylonian Chronicle records that Nabopolassar made his move against Assyria, attacking the city of Ashur.

The assault was repelled with the help of Egyptian forces and the Babylonian king fled the field, narrowly avoiding capture. Ashur fell to the Medes the following year and shortly afterwards the Median king Cyaxares and Nabopolassar made a treaty against Assyria. The treaty was sealed with a wedding of State between the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar and the Median princess Amytis.

The Babylonians and Medes joined forces with the Umman-manda, a marauding Scythian tribal people from the steppes of Southern Russia. They harried the Assyrians along their borders, further weakening the Empire.

Despite Egyptian support under the combined threefold assault was too much and Assyria collapsed.

In 612 Nineveh fell and Sin-shur-ishkun perished in the flames of his palace (**Nahum 3:12-19**). His army fled westward to Haran where Assur-uballit reigned briefly as the last king of Assyria.

The Egyptians, recovering after a long period of weakness, had sought to support their old enemy Assyria.

Apparently, they thought it better to have a weakened Assyria as a buffer between them and the growing power of **Nabopolassar**, but even their combined forces were no sufficient to stay the Babylonian advance.

Haran fell in 610 and the following year Pharaoh Necho II marched North to assist Ashur-uballit in his attempts to retake the city. The campaign was a failure and from this time Assyria ceased to exist as a world power.

Pharaoh Necho had faced Judean opposition on his northward march and had fought and killed Josiah at Megiddo. When he returned in defeat three months later, he took control of Judah, deposing Jehoahaz taking him away into exile in Egypt.

There followed a brief period of Egyptian control in Palestine until the year 605 when Necho was defeated at Carchemish by Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabopolassar.

Nebuchadnezzar pursued the Egyptians southwards, defeating them yet more convincingly at Hamath, but was forced to turn back at the border of Egypt when he heard of his father's death.

Nebuchadnezzar made a swift return across the desert to Babylon to be made king.

In his absence his army took control of Judah replaced the Egyptians as the ruling power in that region.

### **The First Deportation.**

We have little information regarding the siege of Jerusalem and the subsequent deportation as no extrabiblical source mentions the event. What little we do know is derived from **Daniel 1:1-6**.

It would appear that the city surrendered fairly quickly and Jehoiakim reluctantly became a vassal of the newly crowned King Nebuchadnezzar.

The victors deported members of the royal family as well as some of the golden articles from the temple. Included in the deportees were DANIEL, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah who were to be trained in the Royal academy of Babylon. In this way Nebuchadnezzar sought to enrich his Empire with the best minds that his empire had to offer.

### **The Second Deportation.**

In 598 Nebuchadnezzar launched his long-awaited assault on Jerusalem and the city was besieged for three months (24:10-11). During the siege Jehoiakim died, perhaps assassinated in the hope of more lenient treatment from the Babylonians and Jehoiachin his son succeeded to the throne (24:5-6).

As no help was forthcoming from Egypt (2 Kings 24:7) the city surrendered on 16th March 597.

The new king Jehoiachin, his mother and his captains, officials, craftsmen - ten thousand in all - were deported to Babylon, together with the rest of the larger golden items from the Temple (**Jeremiah 22:24-27**).

Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah (renamed Zedekiah) the new vassal (2 Kings 24:17).

### **The Third Deportation.**

**Zedekiah** was put in a difficult position. On the one hand he had lost most of the experienced men who had served in predecessors. On the other he was never accepted as the legitimate ruler by the people, who continued to look upon Jehoiachin as their king.

By the fourth year of his reign, he had given in to the pressure of the pro-Egyptian party at court and was plotting rebellion with the rulers of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon (27:3-7). It is probably that he was summoned to Babylon at this time to reassure Nebuchadnezzar of his loyalty (Jeremiah 51:59).

Rejecting the advice of Jeremiah to remain loyal (**Jeremiah 27:1-22**) Zedekiah broke his covenant with the king of Babylon.

In 588 a Babylonian army marched westwards and Nebuchadnezzar consulted his augers to decide whether to deal first with Judah or the Ammonites (**Ezekiel 21:18-29**).

Jerusalem was besieged for almost two years from January 587 until July 18th 586.

Despite Jeremiah's counsel to surrender (Jer. 21:8-10; 38:17-23) the king refused to do so and just as the last of the food in the city was exhausted the

Babylonians broke through the wall (**2 Kings 25:2-4; Jeremiah 52:6**). Zedekiah fled with remains of his army but was overtaken and captured near Jericho.

A large part of the population of Jerusalem was put to the sword and everything of value plundered. The bronze articles from the Temple were cut up and removed and the building together with the palace and the important houses were set on fire.

In order to ensure that the city would never rebel against him again Nebuzaradan, the commander of the Imperial Guard, ordered that the walls be demolished.

All who survived in the city were carried off into exile in Babylon, with the exception of the very poor of the land (2 Kings 25:8-21; Jer. 39:8-10; 52:12-23; cf. 9:11; 26:18).

The book of Lamentations paints a sad picture of Jerusalem at this time.

The starving population exchanged whatever riches they had left for food (Lam. 1:11), its leadership and priesthood were gone (1:19) and the Temple burnt (2:6-12; 4:3-10).

The Babylonian soldiers oppressed the survivors and forced them to work for their food (5:11-18). We find the first clear prophecy of this Babylonian captivity in the Book of Leviticus.

**Leviticus 26:34-39**, *Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths. <sup>35</sup>As long as it lies desolate it shall rest— for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it.<sup>36</sup> 'And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a shaken leaf shall cause them to flee; they shall flee as though fleeing from a sword, and they shall fall when no one pursues. <sup>37</sup>They shall stumble over one another, as it were before a sword, when no one pursues; and you shall have no power to stand before your enemies. <sup>38</sup>You shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. <sup>39</sup>And those of you who are left shall waste away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; also in their fathers' iniquities, which are with them, they shall waste away.*

**Leviticus 26:43**, *The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; they will accept their guilt, because they despised My judgments and because their soul abhorred My statutes.*

The Babylonian captivity is therefore described in 2 Chronicles as the fulfilment of the prophecy in Leviticus.

**2 Chronicles 36:20-21**, *And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, <sup>21</sup>to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfil seventy years.*

## **Conclusion:**

Eve, thinking she and Adam were in bondage by not having a "knowledge of good and evil," exercised their "choice" and ate of the forbidden tree (Genesis 3:16).

The Serpent represented the tree as the source of freedom from their restraints but in fact it was the source of their ultimate bondage.

By exercising their freewill, but in the process disobeying God, they became joined to sin and death. Romans 5:12,

They placed themselves under the subjection of the Serpent. Therefore, just having a freewill and the ability to choose is not the same as being free.

Adam's choices became greatly restricted once he disobeyed.

To truly be free one must have a source of liberty (God) and exercise their freewill within the parameters of that liberty.

"With freedom comes responsibility." Since the fall of Adam, however, an ugly side has been manifested in man's quest for freedom, in pursuing their own liberty many attempted.

Cain took his brother Abel's life thinking that would free him from the reproach of Abel's righteous life, but he was mistaken. Cain was cursed for seeking his freedom at the expense of another or seeking it from the wrong source.

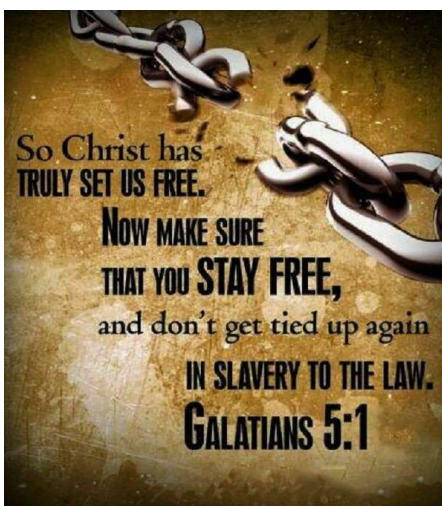
Joseph's brethren, wanting to free themselves from his presence and influence, stole Joseph's freedom by selling him into slavery. However, while in bondage and even in prison, Joseph was freer in his heart than his brethren who were bound by the guilt of selling him.

True liberty is more of an attitude than a physical reality. The bible is filled with accounts of individuals and groups of people stealing liberty from others.

**Galatians 5:1**, *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage"*

Paul wrote the book of Galatians to explain to the Galatians the preciousness of the liberty they have in Christ.

There was a group of Jews who were insisting the Galatians must keep the law to become and remain as Christians. Paul spent six chapters explaining to them how they are free in Christ and cannot be perfected by the bondage of the Mosaic Law.



Paul told them they were "foolish" for so readily giving up the liberty they have in Christ and "not obeying the truth"

**Galatians. 3:1-2**, *"You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? <sup>2</sup>This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?"*

*you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?"*

Jewish "friends" were in fact false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.

**Galatians. 2:4**, *And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),*

## **1. Pride.**

The Pharisees are the most notorious advocates of bondage found in the Bible.

**Matthew 23:4**, *For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*

They developed legalistic, man-made traditions such as meticulous hand washing and tithing of flower seeds which placed great burdens on the gullible and the impressionable public. Christ held these self-righteous hypocrites in the utmost contempt. He directed towards them some of the most scathing words in the Scriptures.

Many of the traits of the Pharisees can be found among many professing believers today. The Pharisee syndrome is the source of pain for many people today.

- They have the right "Bible,"
- They believe the Bible as the very word of God
- They believe the promise of the coming Messiah Jesus Christ, and
- They were devout, dedicated, godly, and "orthodox."

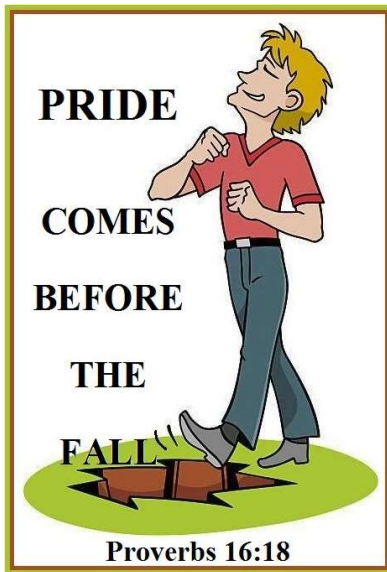
Ironically, but when God who they claimed to serve came to them in person, they didn't recognize Him. Less than four years they were so opposed to Him they directly caused His death!

Their "godly" and "devout" appearance did not reflect the truth. Even though they had a reputation of being extremely consecrated and devout, Christ reserved for them His most remarks and criticism.

**What power or influence lead them astray?**

**What caused them to be so harshly castigated by their Creator?**

Knowledge of the bible without the heart of God is foolishness.



**Proverbs. 16:18**, *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*

Today many are in the yoke of bondage to traditions and doctrines of their family denominations which they were born into that never bring liberty but only bondage.

Every person is likely to be influenced by pride.

Since the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden there is an inherent desire in man to exalt himself or make himself appear better than he really is.

That pride is always present, however, does not mean a believer must let it have its way. All true Christians have a new nature!

**2 Corinthians 5:17**, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

For all practical purposes the terms "pride" and "self" are interchangeable.

It has often been said "self-preservation" is the strongest human trait and man will resort to nearly any means to protect himself.

## 2. Obedience

**Psalms 119:44-45**, *I will always obey your law, for ever and ever. I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.*

Obedience creates freedom while disobedience leads to bondage.

Our predisposition to seek understanding and application of God's word is a liberating path.

It's when we get off track and try things contrary to the ways of the Lord that we become entangled like a walk through a brush of thorns.

Keeping our choices within the confines of Christ's heart may open additional doors of opportunity.

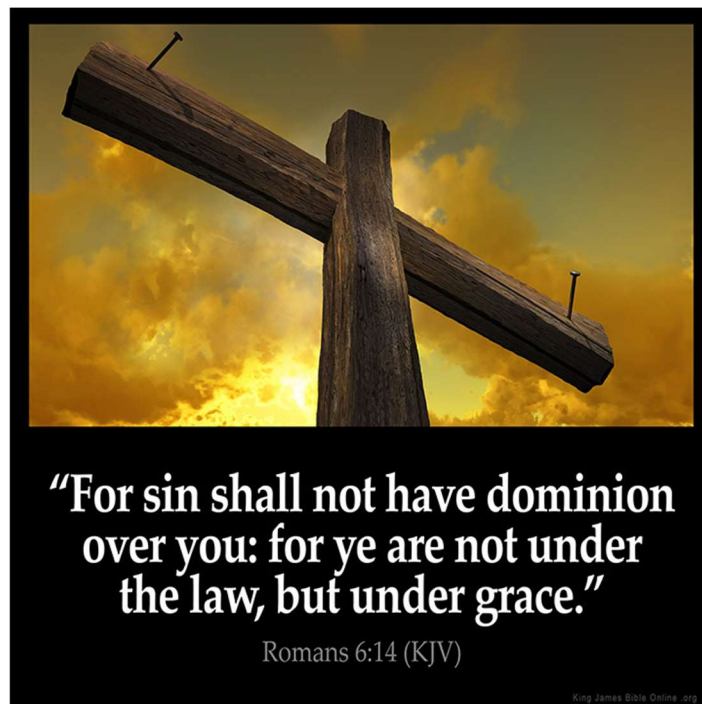
Obedience to God positions us to experience freedom with God.

Obedience is free from the guilt of going against the Lord. We have a clear conscience having followed by faith the teachings of Holy Scripture.

God's words are profound, but simple.  
His word is wonderful, but it works.  
His law is lofty but loving.  
His decrees denounce sin but give grace to overcome sin.  
His statutes are a high standard, but they point to salvation.

Obedience creates freedom found in the word of God.

**Romans 6:14**, *"For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace"*



Not unlike an earthly father who gives additional freedom to a compliant child, so our Father in heaven extends privileges to His obedient children.  
Obedience opens doors that disobedience closes.  
A selfless person can be given added responsibilities because they will use their elevated role to serve others.  
Obedience creates freedom to grow.

Furthermore, we obey the Lord by grace through faith. It is not a rigid and cold compliance, rather a joyful privilege motivated by love.

How can we not obey the One who gave us His son?  
We love God because He first loved us.

We show our love to our heavenly Father by following His commands.

Indeed, we humble ourselves under the Lord's mighty hand and He lifts us up to glorify Him in our actions.

In spite of our imperfect obedience, we can enjoy the freedoms of our gracious heavenly Father. Freedom in Christ comes from obedience to Christ.

**Prayer:**

**Take time to seek God to show the pride in you!**

Repent and be right with God.

**Take time seek God to show the disobedience in your life!**

Repent!

Ask for Forgiveness from our Lord.

Restore the relationship with God.