

Pastor Writes

Greeting to you! The theme for our morning's meditation is that 'God is called us to be free'. You may be saying to yourselves, 'What does he want me to be free from? Am I not in a free country? Just ten days ago we celebrated our Nations Independence day and I have the freedom to do what I want. But are we indeed so free as we imagine ourselves to be? G.K. Chesterton in one of his essays remind us about freedom saying, 'your freedom ends where my nose begins'. Freedom has to have its boundaries and parameters. When God promises to set us free he wants to deliver us primarily from sin which is the root of all bondage. Sin keeps us bound in its clutches and we find it difficult to get out.

In the reading from Luke's gospel we note that Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on a Sabbath and there was a woman who had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and was unable to stand up straight. Luke describes both the physical and spiritual condition of the person concerned. She was either possessed or at least influenced by an evil spirit which had left her in this terrible condition. Jesus takes the initiative in reaching out to that woman. He calls her to the front and said, 'Woman, you are set free from your infirmity'. Then he put his hand on her and she straightened up and praised God. Because Jesus had healed her on the Sabbath the synagogue leaders said to the people that there were six days in which work could be done when they could come and be healed and not on the Sabbath day. The ruler of the synagogue was angry because Jesus has flouted the rules of the Sabbath rather than enter into the thrill of the woman's restoration. The keeping of the law had become more important to him than rejoicing over the healing of a person. He resented that his synagogue service had been disturbed. He had lost control over his little kingdom. His spiritual pride blinded him from rejoicing in this healing. Our own spiritual pride can also blind our eyes making us lose sight of God's wonderful doing in the lives of others.

Jesus answered him saying, "'You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" The hypocrites were the synagogue rulers who made elaborate traditions to make sure that their animals would get enough water and food on the Sabbath day but when it came to a human being who had to be released from her bondage in which she had suffered for the past eighteen years, they were not willing to do so. This woman is a 'daughter of Abraham,' one of God's chosen people. Satan stands behind all the afflictions of life. The role given to him in illness here draws all healing into the orbit of the sentiment that the 'kingdom of God has come upon you' (Luke 11: 20). The woman's restriction is compared to that of an animal that is not free to get to the drinking water that it needs. The animal is not left tethered for *one day*; the woman has been restricted in this way for *eighteen years!* And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?" Satan is understood to stand behind all such afflictions. Jesus' word had the authority to reverse the condition from being under the rule of Satan, to be under the rule of God.

The people rejoice as Jesus said all these things and at all the glorious things that were done by him. Jesus confronted the powers of darkness and released them. God has sent his Son Jesus to release each one of us from the bondage of sin. God will reverse the distortions of his image in his time. We all have the hope of the resurrection, because when Christ comes back, then the imperfect will become perfect and all distortions will be put right. God has called us to be free from all kinds of bondage, from sin which makes us a captive to Satan. But if the Son sets us free we will be free indeed. I don't know what bondages that you are struggling from, but remember that God is watching over us and he has sent his Son to set us free from Sin. He has also given his Holy Spirit to sustain us in our walk with him and not to fall back into a life of bondage. May God help us to be free indeed as he wants us to be.

Paul Swarup

25th August 2013