

**THE STATUTES OF LIBERTY**  
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In a message delivered in His home town synagogue, Jesus irritated those who thought they knew Him. He claimed to be the anointed messenger of God, the Messiah. He claimed to have come to set not one, but many kinds of captives free. That is good news indeed to those of us in prisons. That promise and prophecy can be found in **Luke 4:17-21**, which also describes the captives. America's promise to the world is found at the Statue of Liberty. It goes something like this. "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" God's similar promise to those of us seeking a better life is found in **Matthew 11:28**. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." He came for those who are bound.

The first captives are the poor, and they are in a prison all their own. Extreme poverty locks the sum total of our existence into a search for ways to meet our basic needs. Those seeking their next meal will have little interest in the bread of life. Those looking for a safe place to sleep overlook the rest wherein the weary find refreshing. The poor are never satisfied, no matter how much we have, because we cannot trust God for provision. God offers a way in **Matthew 6:30** out of our worry over sustenance, but few open that door. Few are willing to make the kingdom of God and His righteousness the main priority in our lives. **Hebrews 13:5** instructs us to be content and trust God for our needs.

Another kind of prison surrounds the broken-hearted. Some dared to have dreams, but have picked up too many pieces too often to dare to dream again. Every situation, we just assume the worst, because that way, we are never disappointed again. We have been let down by everyone we ever depended on and hoped we mattered to. What would it take for us to dream again? Dreams are of the future, but can we imagine one worth hoping for again? Is there a dream that would not crush or break our hearts again? **1 Corinthians 2:9** speaks of that kind of future. What is the key to truly being able to dream again and risk our hearts? **Joel 2:28** tells of dreams and visions resulting from a baptism of God's Spirit. Hope results from intimacy with a God who can be trusted in to keep His word. We again become free to dream.

Some prisoners are captives of our past. This captivity has little to do with locks, but instead we are held by the consequences of our actions. No matter what we do after our mistakes, we are already labeled, and opportunities, the trust of others, the love of others seem forever suspended. In this jail, addictions, words we never should have spoken, or past mistakes prevent us from changing. Every foolish decision we made when we thought we were only living for our own pleasure, haunts us and forces us in the same direction in a vicious cycle. God said we could have freedom from our past. In **2 Corinthians 5:17**, He said, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The price tag is too high for some, unwilling to sacrifice control over our lives in return for salvation. But Jesus said in **Matthew 10:39**, "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." It is more like a change of life than a loss of one. It is like trading rocks in for jewels.

There are many blind, some held captive by arrogance. Too "enlightened" to learn anything about or from God, we have determined how much truth we are willing to admit, exactly what price we will give, and exactly what we will do to be saved. We have the answers and will let God know. We are willing to serve God, but only as an adviser. In **John 9:39-41**, Jesus told the Pharisees their unwillingness to see truth kept them unseeing and in sin. When we refuse to open our eyes, God is willing to let us remain blind. **Romans 1:28** warns of the eternal consequences.

We are also imprisoned by bruises. The first time someone says "I love you," its bells and whistles. Next time is a cautious "I love you too." Third time is, "What do you want?" Someone took hold of our hearts, our arms, our trust, and now we are bruised to the point where we shy away from being touched again. They say it is better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all. Those already bruised do not willingly let others grab hold of the wounded area again. We have come through the school of hard knocks and have the marks to show for it. We keep everyone at a distance to keep from being hurt again. We sure are not going to be the first to lay our hearts on the line again, not even with God. I think He knew that.

In **1 John 4:18-19**, it is written, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear ... We love him, because he first loved us.” God’s idea of freedom from bruises is to let us try out His love risk free. He chanced rejection and committed His love to us first, according to **Romans 5:58**, even while we were still sinners. It is really okay to love Him. Jesus also knows what it is like to be bruised, and love again. Just read **Isaiah 53:5**. We can check out His love first, try it on for size, then decide if it is safe to say “I love you” in return.

The last statute of liberty Christ came to establish is found in preaching the acceptable year of the Lord. This refers to the year of jubilee, occurring every fifty years, established in Old Testament Law. This was the year in which property and land, owned by an individual but lost through bad choices or bad breaks, was restored back to the ownership of that person. With Christ, this is the time in which everything lost to bad decisions can be regained through His mercy and provision. He promised in **Joel 2:25** to restore the years eaten by the cancer worms. They were only sent to correct us and turn us back to God anyway.

No matter how we find ourselves bound, by circumstance, past mistakes, or by poor choices, we can find liberty through Christ. We have His Word on that. We can be free again.