

# Truth as its base

By Bobby Ratliff

“Liberté, égalité, fraternité,” was the slogan of the French Revolution. It translates to, “Liberty, equality, and brotherhood.” During the French Revolution, freedom was espoused as the solution to the problems of the existing government. Take a hard look at what that “liberty” resulted in: 40,000 dead during the Reign of Terror.

The Bible says that truth will free us. Will this freedom result in the same sort of chaos that the French Revolution resulted in? It will not, for the freedom of the Bible is of a different sort. Look at John 8:32: “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (NIV). The freedom offered to followers of Christ has truth as its base.

(In a previous article entitled “Truth will free you” I explained where this truth and this freedom come from. The article was published in the December 21, 2007 issue of “The Lion’s Roar.”)

The disciples were confused when they heard Jesus’ declaration. They said, “We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean, ‘You will be set free’?” (8:33, NLT). Jesus replied, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin” (8:34, ESV). Sin is what enslaves us before we know Christ and know the truth.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul agrees that sin is what enslaves us. “Who will set me free from this body of death?” he asks (7:24, NASB). “This body of death” that Paul refers to is “the body of sin, the old man, the corrupt nature, which tends to death, that is, to the ruin of the soul” (Matthew Henry’s Commentary). Or, as J. C. Ryle puts it, “Sin is indeed the hardest of all task masters.”

Romans 6 speaks of all of us, saved or unsaved, as slaves. We are either slaves of sin, which leads to death, or slaves of obedience, which leads to righteousness. “Don’t you realize that you

become the slave of whatever you choose to obey?” (6:16a, NLT). “Either [you are slaves] of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness” (6:16b, ESV).

Praise the Lord for the reward of being slaves to righteousness! “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life” (6:22, NIV). This, certainly, is a different result than that obtained by the French Revolution.

The citizens who began the French Revolution wanted freedom from oppression. They received death and more oppression, this time from Napoleon. The unsaved man needs freedom from sin. When we look to Jesus, and the truth of his word, we receive freedom and a new slavery—this time, slavery to righteousness. This slavery has the best reward: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:23, ESV).

#### **Author’s note**

I must credit my World History class at Schaeffer Academy with the idea of incorporating the French Revolution in this discussion about freedom. We studied Francis Schaeffer’s “How Should We Then Live.” Francis Schaeffer contrasted the French Revolution with the Bloodless Revolution in England in 1688. The English Revolution had the Reformation as its base, but the French Revolution had nothing but humanism. After writing this article I also noticed that our world history textbook mentions John 8:32 in its conclusion to the chapter on the French Revolution.