

**Make me a captive, Lord - 06/03/2016**

***Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (2 Cor.3:17)***

Beloved in The Lord,

Deep in the heart of every person is the desire for freedom. Life itself, begins with a struggle to be free, to break out of the womb into the world. This struggle for freedom is more or less a part of our lives till we are finally free from this body.

Not only do individuals crave freedom, nations and peoples that have been enslaved or overtaken by foreign powers strive to be free. Today in our service, we are commemorating General Oskars Kalpaks, who is the symbol of all freedom fighters for Latvia.

We thank God for Kalpaks, for the freedom fighters, for all who have ever fought to make and keep Latvia free and independent. Today we are grateful to God, that Latvia is free and that our flag blows gently in the breeze of democracy, and we pray that it would continue that way.

There is however, a but, and that is, that in Latvia, as indeed here, and everywhere around the world, there are multitudes of people who are not really free. So many people are slaves. Slaves to many and varied masters, but slaves none the less. For example some are slaves to religion; to money; to pleasure; fame; drugs; alcohol; sex. The list goes on and on. So many are striving and seeking for something they cannot attain. They run like mice on a wheel. They spin round and round but don't get anywhere. In the end it is all for nothing.

Real, true freedom is found in a paradox, namely that when are captives then we are free. This is spelt out in the words of a famous Hymn, by George Matheson:

***Make me a captive, Lord,  
and then I shall be free;  
force me to render up my sword,  
and I shall conqueror be.***

It is only when we allow God to make us His captive, that we truly experience freedom. True freedom is closely linked to Truth. When we know the Truth, the Truth sets us free. A person who is enslaved by possessions, or fame, or power, or drugs, or any other thing has bought into a lie. In seeking pleasure and fulfilment, in striving to be free, man has actually done the opposite and become a slave of the kingdom of darkness.

Jesus said to some Jews who had begun to believe in Him:

***<sup>31</sup> So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." <sup>33</sup> They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?"***

**<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. <sup>35</sup> The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. <sup>36</sup> So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:31-37)**

You see, true freedom comes from believing in The Lord Jesus Christ. This freedom did not come without a struggle; without a fight. Jesus contended with the Devil, with sin and death and all the powers of the darkness. This battle did not take place on a battle ground, but at Golgotha. In fact, it started in the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed intensely that if it were possible that He would not have to drink of the cup of suffering. Knowing that there was no other way, Jesus surrendered and made Himself a captive to God's will. Jesus surrendered first to the Father and then to his captors. He did it by praying: "Not my will, but Yours be done."

The Father's will was Calvary, because the cross was the only path of salvation. By shedding Jesus innocent and holy blood, God was able to wipe out the sin debt of mankind. Jesus opened the way for all who would, to come to the Father. Heaven is open to all who come via the cross, via Jesus.

By making Himself a captive, Jesus set us free. He did it because He loves us.

***"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. <sup>18</sup> He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. " (John 3:16-18)***

To believe in Jesus, is to willingly submit to Him in faith. As we do we become truly free. When you surrender all to Him, He breaks all the cords of sin that ensnare you, He redeems you from slavery with His own blood and gives you the right to become part of the family.

***"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13)***

So when we become willing captives of God, He sets us free and receives us as His own child, That is true freedom, real freedom. As children, we can come to the Father at anytime, knowing that He loves us, knowing that He provides for us, knowing that after this life on earth, we have a permanent place in His Kingdom.

We have a Father who is ever present, who leads us, advises us, guides us throughout life.

Even though, in Christ we are free, we still have to fight. Life is a battle. We have an enemy who is clever, cunning and very persistent. He is always trying to rob us of our freedom. We need to resist him and we need to fight against him.

No soldier ever goes to battle without armour and arms. So too, we need to be ever armed and ready. We should not try to face the devil with no armour in place.

Paul describes our armour in his letter to the Ephesians:

***<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup> in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.***

***<sup>18</sup> With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. “ (Eph.6:10-18)***

This describes the armour worn by a Roman soldier in Paul's day. The two main parts I would like to highlight are the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit – The Word of God.

The shield that the Roman soldier used was large. It was like a door that the soldier could use to cover his whole body. Faith is our shield and faith is a strong reliance upon God for all things and in all things. We need to completely trust God and His Word. God is true and all His words are truth.

I believe that we are all concerned about the welfare of Latvia and our people. If we really want to help Latvia then we must allow ourselves to be taken captive by God. When we are His captives we are salt and light. We are bearers of truth – the real truth. Where the truth is borne, there is freedom.

As we remember General Kalpaks, and all who have fought for our freedom, may we stand up in God's army and hand in hand may we bring the truth to all people.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.***