



Run Freely

Heidi Truitt, July 2023

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” Col. 2:8

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by the yoke of slavery...You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?” Gal. 5:1,7

Read: Col. 2:8-10; 1 Pet. 2:15-17

As itinerant ministers, offering weekly worship services in group homes, our theme for the month of July is freedom in Christ. In this month our country commemorates and (still, thankfully) enjoys freedom of speech and worship. Naturally, my mind considers those who do not enjoy these freedoms - the persecuted church. Today Taiwan is under threat by China. In preparation for pending persecution the underground church has formed. Thousands of Taiwanese Christians have crossed denominational barriers to organize and worship in small groups, underground.

During times of persecution the church grows rapidly. The church becomes real. Traditions and trappings fall away. The church becomes one (**John 17:21-26**). The church remembers the model from the first century. (**Acts 2-4; Rom. 16**).

There are many things we have come to accept as “church” that are merely nonessential traditions and practices that have developed over the centuries – denominations, a building, offices, various traditions, etc. The church *does* need: to increase our faith, fast and pray, memorize Scripture, repent of our sins, and worship the Lord first and only (**Mt. 6:33**). In the

face of persecution, when all is stripped away, who still worships? Who serves? Who is willing to risk their lives for the cause and Name of Christ? *This is the church.*

Do not be fooled. In many worship contexts we've replaced the model of the first church with heaviness and hierarchy; ease, comfort, and entertainment; and the culturalization of the Gospel. The Bible warns about self-seeking false shepherds. "These people are blemishes at your love feasts...shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted – twice dead. (**Jude 1:12; Rom. 16:17-18**). Be aware. To hold onto position, power, or compensation false shepherds offer congregants what their tickling ears want to hear (**2 Tim. 4:3**) whereas the Gospel of Christ offers freedom *through the path of faith and repentance*. There is no shortcut. There is no easy street. To be a disciple of Christ, we follow the way of Christ: "pick up your cross daily and follow me" (**Luke 9:23**).

This is an appeal to the church in North America, as it is in China and Taiwan. Throw off the hindrances, traditions, and falsehoods – run freely (**1 Pet. 2:13-17; Jude 1:17-21; Col. 2:8-23**). Prepare to be the church during uncertain times.