

I'm a dog lover. Our first Christmas as husband and wife I surprised Nancy with a Dachshund puppy. Since then, other than for about a 4 month span between dogs, we've always had at least one dog in our household.

Probably our most mischievous canine was a Cockapoo named Fluffy. He was bad, but he was also so loveable! I could tell a number of Fluffy stories, but perhaps my favorite is one of the days he got loose on us. We normally kept him tied to a leash because of his propensity to run away if the opportunity presented itself. Well, this particular day, he got free, and off he went. Sprinting around the parsonage lawn, cavorting all over the church's spacious grounds.

We tried everything to get him back in tow. We smooth talked him. We enticed him with dog treats. We'd slowly walk up to him, smiling, coaxing, begging him to stay put. He would let us get so close, then off he'd run, romping around in a playful, "I'm in charge here" manner. Several times he sidled up to us, then just as we were about to grab him, he darted off again, racing around, tail wagging, enjoying every second of his glorious freedom.

This went on for quite some time. We were out of ideas. Desperate, Nancy offered a suggestion. At that point I thought, "Why not. It's worth a try." She went into the house and came out with his leash, and yelled, "Fluffy, let's go for a walk!" He immediately stopped, looked at us, then ran up to us, and sat obediently by her side, waiting to be chained to his leash, ready for his walk.

I can't tell you how many times Nancy and I have laughed over that incident. And you know, I think there's a spiritual lesson to be learned, or at least reminded of. Somehow he chose being chained to a leash and experiencing the limited freedom of a walk over the sheer delight of romping around all over creation, footloose and fancy free.

When we submit our life and will to Christ there is a freedom and power available to us far beyond our own limited resources. 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." When our life is firmly rooted in Christ and His Spirit lives in us, there is an expansive freedom to overcome destructive attitudes and behaviors, a freedom and power to love and to live unselfishly.

Sadly, however, many of us humans choose to live life "our way" over surrendering to Christ's claim on our life and will. The irony is we think we are "free" when we live by our own standards and desires rather than submitting to Christ, but we're not. 2 Peter 2:19 picks up on this irony when it speaks of those "who promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of sin and corruption."

True freedom is found in Christ. George Matheson's classic hymn picked up on this: "Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free."

Even now I'm smiling as I recall Fluffy's willingness to give up his joyful freedom for the limitations of a walk chained to his leash. Duh!

Pastor Harry