

Can Freedom Last Forever? Our Civilization's Forgotten Question, and How We are Doing Today

Freedom is at the very heart and soul of the modern world, especially in the West. With our free-thought, free-speech, free-choice, free-vote, free-market societies, freedom is today's highest virtue, its grandest possibility, its last absolute, its most potent myth, and – with the power of love limited to the private world – one of its only self-evident public truths. How else are modern people to be themselves other than to be free? Yet in fact free societies are rare and fleeting, though few people have given any thought to what freedom is, why it never lasts, and why the greatest enemy of freedom is so often freedom. Ironically, we Christians have long been attacked as the enemies of freedom, but once again we may end up as its last great defenders. This talk will analyse freedom, its complexities, its stern demands, and above all the challenge of how best it is to be sustained.

Os Guinness is an author and social critic. He was educated in England, receiving his undergraduate degree from the University of London and a DPhil from Oriel College, Oxford. He was a Guest Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Studies and a Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution. From 1986-1989 he was the Executive Director of the Williamsburg Charter Foundation, one of the drafters of the Williamsburg Charter. He is the founder and was the Senior Fellow of the Trinity Forum and most recently was Senior Fellow of the East West Institute in New York. Some of his influential books include *The Dust of Death; In Two Minds; The Gravedigger File; The American Hour; Dining with the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity; Fit Bodies, Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think; The Call; and Time for Truth: Living Free in a World of Lies.*

Introduction

1. Understand what it takes to establish a free society
 - A. Winning

 - B. Ordering

 - C. Sustaining

2. Appreciate classical realism about the menaces to freedom
A. External

B. Corruption of customs

C. Time

3. Face up to the grand paradox of freedom
A. Historical

B. Political

C. Moral and spiritual

4. Explore attempted antidotes to decline
A. Freedom/Virtue

B. Virtue/Faith

C. Faith/Freedom

5. Assess the problems that started to undermine such a solution
 - A. Privatization

B. Proceduralism

C. Postmodernism

6. Be clear about contemporary menaces to freedom
 - A. Alienation of leaders

B. Transmission

C. Corruption of customs

7. Tackle the challenges of what must be done to foster such a renewal

A. Restore civic education

B. Rebuild a civil public square

C. Renewal of faith

Conclusion

‘Going forward by going back’