

GOSPEL FREEDOM – SANCTIFICATION (1)

The Gospel's message for grace – that sinners are forgiven and restored by God through the work of Jesus Christ – is not only that which brings us into relationship with God, but also that which grows us to maturity. Grace frees us from the dual temptations of despair in failure and self-centered pride in success. As Tim Keller states, "The Gospel is that you are more sinful and flawed than you ever dared believe, yet you can be more accepted and loved than you ever dared hope at the same time because Jesus Christ lived and died in your place. Salvation is of the Lord." In other words, the engine of the Christian life is the "Gospel of Grace," transforming all whom it touches. The Gospel Freedom is our central message, and the driving force behind our evangelism, growth, and service.

Romans 6.7 – 'For one who has died has been set free from sin'

Read Romans 6.1-14

Context If you are a Christian then you have had an address change. You have moved from the old country of 'Adamland,' to the new country of 'Christland.' 'Adamland' is the country that is known for its slavery, its slavery of sin unto death. 'Christland,' on the other hand, is known for its grace and forgiveness and its freedom of life. Like the children of Israel leaving the slavery of Egypt, the Christian has left the slavery of sin unto death. This is the point of Romans 6. Because the Christian belongs to Jesus, is united to Jesus, he or she 'is no longer enslaved to sin...For the one who has died (with Christ) has been set free from sin' (v. 7). Sin no longer has a rightful claim on the Christian. Freedom has replaced slavery. Now this doesn't mean that sin had been exterminated completely in the life of the Christian (this won't happen until Christ returns to set up his reign in full), but it does mean that its dominion has. Sin is still present and it can still be given into, but the truth of the gospel is that it has been dethroned. The Christian's allegiance has been shifted from sin to Christ because the Christian's location has changed from 'Adamland' to 'Christland.' And because this is so the Christian is now, by the Spirit of Christ who dwells within, to begin to live; to live by 'considering himself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus' (v. 11). Put simply, the Christian is to remember and believe the truth of who (and where) they are in Christ – forgiven of sin and freed from the reign of sin.

Apply In and through Jesus' death and resurrection you have been made alive to walk in the newness of life, i.e. to walk in the freedom of living a God-Directed Life. This is your identity as a follower of Jesus. Therefore, you are not to be like the children of Israel who longed to return to their slavery, but rather you are to live in the freedom of 'presenting yourselves to God as ones who have been brought from death to life and (presenting) your members (bodies) to God as instruments for righteousness' (v.13).

Because with Christ you have died to sin's reign and have been made alive to God and his righteousness, you are now called to live a holy life. You are to present your whole selves to God – your limbs and your organs, and for that matter your mind, memory, imagination, and emotions unto the One who graciously brought you back from the dead. Therefore, consider yourselves dead to sin, and because sin is not yet dead to you, continue to give yourself to the One who has saved you and is even now saving you.

For Reflection and Discussion – Sanctification (1) (*Romans 1.1-14*)

1. What is sanctification? In light of Romans 6.1-14, is sanctification necessary in the life of the Christian? Why or why not?
2. As a Christian, how would you define your relationship to sin? Does this relationship always ‘match up’ to the way you feel, i.e. does your relationship to sin always entail feeling free from the reign of sin? Is this feeling normal for the Christian?
3. How is the knowledge of your identity in Christ (you’ve died with Christ and you’ve been raised with Christ) to give shape to the way you live?
4. Would you tend to agree that the more the Spirit enables you to live in light of your identity in Christ the more you will know your sin and the more you will struggle with sin? How has this played out in your own life?
5. On average, how would our society define personal freedom?
6. Is ‘presenting yourselves to God’ as his slaves (v.16) really freedom? How?
7. How is belonging to a church or even to this group a means to God’s maturing (sanctifying) us?