

Freedom

Ephesians 1:7-8

Turn with me if you would to the book of Ephesians. We will be continuing on in our study of the book of Ephesians and look at the what Paul tells in verse 3 are the “spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms” which are ours because we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Things that we need to remind ourselves of when we think that we don’t possess much, yet in reality we possess much more.

When we last left off we looked at the fact that these blessings are the result of the work of the trinity. That our wealth are the results of Father God, Jesus Christ, and now the work of the Holy Spirit. We looked specifically at the work of the Father and how his plan from before the beginning of this universe was to put a plan in place that would restore our relationship with him. We can see evidence of this in **Genesis 3:15** when God spoke to the Serpent:

“From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

God put this plan in place so that we could handle our sin in the appropriate way with the forgiveness available through Jesus Christ, and so that we could be given the ability to choose differently from our Adamic Heritage, and become a Son or Daughter of God giving us the ability, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to choose and live as a child of God. Taking on the family traits.

God chose us not to condemn us but to be with us. His desire is not to be distant but to be close. **John 3:16** is a verse that we all know yet we need to be sure to express the words of verse **17**:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.

God wanted to be with us so much that he established a course throughout history that would allow each of us sitting here to be with him and experience his undeserved blessings in our lives. So the next time you think that no one is thinking about you or concerned for you, or looking out for your good, remember your father in heaven who has been thinking of you since the beginning of time.

We now come to our text this morning that switches gears and looks at the work of the Son, Jesus Christ. Paul writes **Ephesians 1:7-8**:

He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our freedom through the blood of his Son, and our sins are forgiven. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

In verse 7 we first find the Son accomplishes for us **(1) freedom**. In some translations it uses the word “**redemption**” which simply means liberation, to let one go free on receiving the price: a releasing effected by payment of ransom. The picture presented by this word is that of a slave market, a common sight in the Roman Empire, where human beings were offered for sale to anyone who could pay the price. **1 Corinthians 1:30** tells us:

God alone made it possible for you to be in Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made Christ to be wisdom itself. He is the one who made us acceptable to God. He made us pure and holy, and he gave himself to purchase our freedom.

Through his death, Jesus paid the price to release us from the slavery to sin. He has now restored us to usefulness. A slave is no use at all until he is purchased and for us that means that because of our freedom from sin, we can once again be useful to God. Because of what he has done in our lives we can once again do what he has created us for.

In my freedom I find fulfillment in life because I can once again live the way I was created to live. That is why so often in our own society we still find people wandering in life looking for fulfillment in things, in achievement, in experiences. When the reality is that they have been created by God for his work and pleasure. And if they aren't willing to embrace the work of Jesus Christ and the freedom that he purchased for them they will always be looking.

There is something within all of us that knows that we have been created for something more. **Colossians 1:16** tells us:

Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see – kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him.

When we embrace the freedom available through Christ, we open the door to fulfillment because we begin to function the way God has always intended us to function. In our natural humanity we are essentially useless for the purposes that God has designed for us.

As a result of our purchased freedom we are told by Paul that our sins are forgiven. The second work of Jesus is **(2) forgiveness**. The Greek word for “**Sins, or trespasses**” is defined as **missteps or stumblings**. As we have seen before the term forgiveness is defined as being acquitted, or to be dismissed. When Jesus comes into our lives he dismisses all of our stumblings. Just like he did to the adulterous woman in **John 8:10-11**:

Jesus stood up and again said to her, “Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?” “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

Because of the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross we have forgiveness. Blood shows us the severity of our penalty for sin. It's not pleasant, it's messy, it is sickening. And in fact, some of us can't stand the sight of blood. But our sin isn't pleasant, it is messy and it is sickening to us as well. But **Hebrews 9:22** tells us:

Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

Blood shows us the reality of our guilt. Jesus died because we deserved to die. Jesus took our place, he took on our guilt and shame and sin. And when Jesus became what we are, God put him to death because that is what we all deserve. **Galatians 3:13** tells us:

But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrong doing.

The Good News is not that we are not guilty or not to blame. **It is that even though we are guilty God has paid in full, by his choice and love to take care of our guilt with his Sons blood.** God fully accepts me. I can look my guilt in the face and acknowledge it, admit it and then point to the cross and say, "it is taken care of and it is settled." But look at **verse 8** in our text because it adds even more emphasis to God's forgiveness and freedom. Paul tell us:

He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

The word "showered" here in this verse means to be given in repeated portions, again and again. God's forgiveness and freedom is not given to us only at our point of conversion to Christianity, but it is given all the time, over and over. This word is in the present tense, meaning that it is happening all the time.

Whenever guilt strikes, the accomplishment of Christ is available to me, has already availed me, and I step once again into a full sense of the acceptance of God my father. God has never ceased accepting me at anytime. His forgiveness was and always is present. It is my ability to receive it that makes the difference. Once I do, I experience freedom. I don't know about you, but I need forgiveness everyday, I need to be set free and restored to God's purpose and intentions for me.

God accepts me. **The reason why some of us continue to struggle with guilt is that we fail to accept and forgive ourselves.** And if you haven't forgiven yourself, then maybe you have never accepted God's forgiveness. The moment I understand that God, who sees everything in exposed light and reality, the way I really am, when he says to me, "I am satisfied with you in the blood of Jesus Christ. You are acceptable to me," then I have no right to say anything less about myself, and I can accept myself.

That in turn means that I can accept you. I can accept the fact that you, like me, are not perfect, and that you need forgiveness at times, and I can extend it to you and say "That's okay, I'm not going to hold it against you. I am glad to forgive you because I've been forgiven." We cannot give away something that we haven't experienced ourselves.

God's freedom and forgiveness should change my perspective about myself and others. David wrote in **Psalm 119:5**:

"Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your principles!"

That as I understand what you have done, that it would then show in how I live. However, not only should it change our perspective about Christians, but also in regards to the lost and hopeless state of those who don't know what is available to them.

At one point in time, the Foursquare church in Healdsburg was not a place where freedom and forgiveness flowed and showered upon all who entered in. People were still choosing to remain and live in a place that they were granted freedom from, people were judging and condemning each other, replacing freedom with fear, weighing down all who came in Sunday after Sunday.

Forgiveness and hope was conditional and granted only if human expectations were met, instead of allowing people to be in process and having the Holy Spirit (Not people) to come and teach and lead them. But we aren't that anymore. You know why? Because this morning we truly do understand what God has done for us.

We have experienced it for ourselves. Now it is time for us to show others the Good News. There is too much work to be done for us to be pointing fingers at each other. There are too many people who need freedom and forgiveness than for us to sit and evaluate each others lives and determine what people should and shouldn't do.

At the beginning of time, God put a plan in place. He showed his willingness to restore to us our heritage as his son or daughter. He showed us that he had more in store for us than to simply exist in frustration in this world, but that he created us to live in freedom and forgiveness, and to restore to us a sense of fulfillment in our lives.

His plan has been revealed to us, yet how many more need to here his plan for them? How do we do that? How do we share the good news of freedom and forgiveness? Be yourself, let your life shine, experience his freedom and forgiveness, and share with others what that has done in your life. Let's pray!