

Freedom in Christ – Part 2

Last week we began the subtopic of Freedom In Christ. Today is Freedom In Christ, Part 2, December 5, 2007. This is a short series because this will be the second and last session on Freedom In Christ. The core Scripture we used last time was Galatians 5:1 – It was for freedom that Christ set us free. In other words, we are free; but we still play a role in whether we walk in the freedom for which He set us free. So free is our position; but walking in freedom is our function and we either do it or don't do it. Last time we spoke of how we are free from deception because we know truth. We are free from sin because we are free now from the penalty, eventually from the presence and presently from the power of sin so long as we work that out properly before the Lord. We're free from purposelessness; because we have a purpose. Our purpose is to bring glory to God by bearing witness of His Son while here on planet Earth. We're free from the captivity of self preservation; because for us to die is gain. We're free from being governed by self; and that includes self righteousness because we have the righteousness of Christ. We're free from self condemnation because there is no condemnation in Christ. And we're free from self consciousness because self consciousness is simply a fear of inadequacy and our adequacy is never of ourselves; but our adequacy is of God, particularly in Jesus Christ. We're free from the achievement mentality; because all we do is point to the achievement of Jesus Christ and not be rooted in our own achievements.

So today we'll pick it up with the lusts of the flesh. We are free from the lusts of the flesh because we understand true value and relative worth. God is the only thing of intrinsic value in all of existence. We have all of God through Jesus Christ, His Son. So in Scriptural terms, we have the pearl of great value; we have the treasure in the field. Everything else by comparison with what we already have follows the progressive pathway described by Paul. Relative to Jesus Christ, everything else is worthless, loss, rubbish, and dung. So we thank God for our wealth on Earth, but earthly wealth is nothing compared to the wealth that we have in Jesus Christ. The only power that we seek is the power of Jesus to overcome sin by controlling self; and thus be progressively transformed into His likeness by the renewing of our minds. The only fame we seek is to have the name of Jesus become more famous as we bear witness of Him and not ourselves.

I'm going to specifically talk about sexual lust because that's such a common problem among men in the lust of the flesh. We die to the fulfillment of sexual lust because it's rooted and grounded in the basis of self in the flesh realm. We are rooted and grounded in the Son of God in the spirit realm. So our sexuality is only expressed in means that glorify the Son of God. We regard sexual intimacy as we're told in Scripture, as the model of two becoming one in our bodies to represent the spiritual intimacy that we have in the spirit realm with Jesus Christ. That intimacy is reserved for our spouse just as in the spirit realm the spiritual intimacy is reserved for our bridegroom, our Savior, Jesus Christ. We die to all other choices except our spouse under the confines of the covenant of holy matrimony as ordained by God just as we die to all other choices in the spirit realm except Jesus Christ. That's how we glorify Jesus in our marriages; because we are never more loyal to Jesus than we are to our spouses. We cannot glorify a faithful God while being unfaithful to our spouses. Sexual adultery to my spouse is spiritual adultery to my God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We apply spiritual wisdom and discernment to assess the situation if we ever notice temptation arising. We assess our covenant with our God and our covenant before our God with our spouse. We assess our relationship with our spouse, with our children, with our extended family, with our church, with our friends, with our neighbors and with our community. We assess the impact of an illicit relationship upon the potential partner's spouse, children, extended family, friends, neighbors, and community. If the person is a Christian, of course we assess the impact upon that person's church, covenant with their spouse, and covenant before their God. We assess the trail of lies that must obligatorily be told on the front of participation and sustaining such an illicit relationship. If we do those things rather than reacting impulsively, we will assess as children of God the temptation to be worthless, loss, rubbish, and dung. We will flee from it as we capture every thought to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

When we have the pearl of great value, we covet nothing including another man's wife. When we have the pearl of great value, we envy no one. When we have the pearl of great value, we are jealous of no one. When we are satisfied in Christ, we cannot be satisfied with that which is opposed to Christ including adultery. So, in Christ, we are free from the lusts of the flesh. We are so free in Christ that even as children of God, we can still choose to walk in bondage to the lusts of the flesh. But that is not the freedom for which He set us free. Being free of the lusts of the flesh, including in the sexual realm is an upward call of God in Christ Jesus to walk in the freedom for which He set us free. But you will never be able to resist all such temptation based on your willpower. It's only when you're operating in Jesus Christ that you tap into the power of the Holy Spirit in order to resist such temptation. And that's only by fixing your gaze upon Jesus and who you are in Jesus. And that's how we walk in the freedom for which He set us free and glorify Him including in our marriages; because even our marriages are to be summed up in Jesus including the sexual expression.

We're also free from what I call the tyranny of time. This is a poster that I don't want you to try to absorb; I want you to only look at the three units of time—past, present, and future. There is only one time that I can worship God. And that is right here and right now in the precious present. We can't worship God in the past. We can't worship God in the future. We can only worship God right now. We recall the past only to recall what God has delivered us from. I Samuel 17:37 and David said – the Lord Who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine. So we recall our sins to remind ourselves of the grace of God for forgiveness of past transgressions, and the grace of God for deliverance in anything that is in opposition to Him in the present. Beyond that we follow the counsel of Isaiah as God spoke through the prophet in Isaiah 43:18-19 – Do not call to mind the former things nor ponder things of the past; behold I will do something new. Now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? The quickest way to miss the new thing that God is doing in your new creation self to express it on planet Earth is to be living in the past. We are free in Christ from life in the past. Matthew 6:34 – Do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. So we're told not to live in the past and not to fear the future. We cannot glorify our God in the precious present if most of our thoughts are locked in the past and contemplating something in the future. The future has a role. We worship God moment by moment in the precious present in the light of our sustaining view of tomorrow including eternity future. And that sustaining view is our vision and it's made up of the accumulated promises of God and all the promises of God are yes in Jesus. So the

vision is summed up in Jesus and gives us the illumination as to how to function in the precious present with no anxiety for the future. We're free in Christ from the tyranny of time. Every moment lived in the past or every moment lived in the fear of the future is a moment of rejection and refusal of worshipping God in the precious present. And we are free from that.

We're free from the captivity of the mind. And I spent thirty years here; so I can speak to this. We've learned that he who worships only what he understands will always have his mind be bigger than his God. Thus, he'll always be worshipping his mind and not worshipping his God. That's why God never allows men to come to Him by his intellect. Remember, we don't come to God by logic; although it is logical to come to God. It is hard to impress omniscience with our intellect. God tells us simply in Isaiah 55:8-9 that My thoughts are higher than your thoughts. After all, how can the creator of human reason be smaller than human reason? So we come to God only by faith, not by human reasoning. And according to Hebrews 11:1, faith is the conviction of things not seen. That means the absolute certainty within ourselves of things not seen in the physical realm and often not even seen by the eyes of our human understanding. We worship a holy God, an other than God, a transcendent God including a God Who transcends our understanding. We come to this holy God to get understanding, not to impress Him with ours. We're so free in Christ that we can continue to operate in the limits of our understanding in the captivity of our minds if we choose to do that. But that is not the freedom for which He set us free. That's why you hear me commonly phrase it this way that we have begun to understand, when we seek to understand, without having to understand, in order to stand in faith in our sovereign holy God. We are free from the captivity of the human mind.

We're free from hard-heartedness. Hebrews 10:25 – Not forsaking our own assembling together as is the habit of some. One aspect of hard-heartedness in the life of the Christian is the refusal to come together with his brothers and sisters in Christ. The household of God is a family and a community and no one is to play solitaire in the Kingdom of God. We are a body and the body is incomplete without each member. Each person is to contribute to the overall function and well being of the body. Here's the key revelation. If someone believes that the church has nothing to offer him, then by definition that means he has everything to offer to the church. So saying the church has nothing to offer me as an excuse not to participate in church, is simply missing the other side of the coin because if they have nothing to offer you, that means you have everything to offer them.

Empathy is to feel what the other person feels. I Corinthians 12:26 – And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with him. Compassion I think of as empathy that's moved to act on behalf and for the well being of the object of the empathy. In contrast you can pity without responding to do anything or being moved to action. The Bible tells us repeatedly that Jesus had compassion on them. He suffered as they suffered to a point of being moved to action on their behalf. So we are free in Christ from our hard-heartedness; and we're free unto action on the behalf of those that are the object of our empathy. The love of Christ controls us and when it does so more than our cocoon of carnality, then we are walking in the freedom for which He set us free. But when we build the walls around our compassion, refusing to engage, then we're remaining in the bondage of self, controlled by our cocoon of carnality where everything is assessed in terms of cost, comfort, convenience, and control. We are free from that cocoon of carnality.

We're free from grumbling—what I call the gremlin of grumbling; because in essence grumbling is to shake your fist at God and to declare that you deserve better than you're getting at that moment. But every Christian knows that he deserves Hell, yet he's getting Heaven. So no Christian for a single moment ever is justified in grumbling because he's never getting worse than he deserves. So if you ever think that your present conditions are worse than Hell, then you're simply admitting you have a limited revelation of Hell. If you ever think that your past conditions were Hell, then you're simply admitting that you have no revelation of Hell itself. So we are free in Christ from such grumbling because Christ is the difference between Heaven and Hell. When we have Christ, the pearl of great value, the only thing in existence that has intrinsic value, it's hard to believe that we're ever getting worse than we deserve at any moment. So when you understand these truths to the point of ceasing grumbling, then we're beginning to walk in the freedom for which He set us free. When you compare your past or present circumstances to Hell, then you diminish Hell. And when you diminish Hell, you diminish the price that Jesus Christ paid on the cross because He paid the price for you. When you diminish that, you diminish your revelation of the love of God. And when you do that you will continue to grumble and tomorrow will be like today only more so; but you will drive people away from your witness as you're rooted and grounded in grumbling rather than being rooted and grounded in the freedom for which he set you free by knowing the worth of Jesus Christ and responding to that worth and acknowledging that you can give only praise because there's never a moment you're getting less than what you deserve. It's amazing. So you're free in Christ not to grumble. You're so free that you can continue to grumble; but that's not the freedom for which He set you free.

So we're not only free from things, we're free unto other things. You've heard it said that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Knowing that alone helps us to understand what we are free unto. But as usual with any thought process, if we don't begin with God, it will be a misguided thought. The hardest truth for men to swallow is that God created everything in order to display Himself, not to display man. In Biblical terms this holy God did this in order to display His glory. Recall that holiness and glory are words that transcend human comprehension because they get at the very transcendence of God—the Godness of God. So to borrow John Piper's phraseology, holiness is glory concealed and glory is holiness revealed. Holiness is the other thanness of God. Glory is the manifestation of that other thanness. Glory then is the manifestation of the other than, infinite, intrinsic, eternal perfections of our holy God. To glorify means that we respond appropriately to the glory of God and to reflect that glory onto planet Earth.

We enter His gates with thanksgiving and come into His courts with praise. Why is that? Because those are the appropriate responses to having seen the glory of God. We respond appropriately when we praise His glory because it is entirely worthy of all praise. We respond appropriately when we thank Him for the manifestation of His glory because we could not know His glory except He reveal it to us. And we respond appropriately when we accept that our chief end is to bring Him glory. That's to join in the purpose for which everything was created including ourselves. Then we're free to fulfill our purpose which is the purpose of God, which is to display Himself and not to display us; and specifically to display Himself by displaying His Son Jesus Christ.

So I go through these concepts because they must be understood in order to understand freedom in Christ. In an ultimate sense no man has ever been free. All men are slaves. God makes it simple. All men are slaves to one of two things. We can be slaves to self; thus functioning in self determination. That's the root of man judging God which is the root of all sin. That's the root of what the Bible calls the flesh and men functioning in the flesh make up the system of this world and since Satan is the god of this world as we're told in II Corinthians 4:4, then men in slavery to self are ultimately serving Satan and everything that Satan does is anti-Christ. Most do so through being deceived; but it is a deception that they insist on by insisting on self determination and resisting being God determined. The other option about slavery is to be a slave to Jesus Christ. That's to deny self and follow Jesus.

And that brings us to another paradox. We must become a slave to escape slavery. We must become a slave to become free. Since all men are slaves to either self or to Jesus, the only way to escape slavery to self is to become a slave to Jesus. You might ask the question, if we're slaves either way, what difference does it make? Well, when one is a slave to self, death results. For the unsaved, that means the eternal lake of fire. For the saved one, the child of God who remains a slave to self, the death that results is a functional death—dead works, dead testimony, dead abundant life, bringing no glory to God. Thus Romans 8:6 simply tells us – for the mind set on the flesh is death. But thankfully the reverse is also true. The mind set on the spirit is life and peace. And the mind set on the spirit is functioning with Jesus as the basis, Jesus as the source, and so on. So when one is a slave to Jesus, life results. We access the abundant life that He came to give. That legitimizes our testimony and brings maximum glory to God. A slave to Jesus is free to enjoy God. A slave to self opposes Jesus and thus, can never enjoy God. And enjoying God is the root of all joy. So when we speak about the absence of the abundant life, in particularly the absence of joy in ourselves and in the church, it's just an acknowledgement that we're choosing to function in large part in slavery to self in which there will never be joy. We are free into this joy—so free that we are free to continue functioning in slavery to self. But joyless slavery to self is not the freedom for which Christ set us free. Self wars against Jesus. And we can never enjoy that which we war against. It's obviously contradictory to be living in self, warring against Jesus while praying for the abundant life that Jesus came to give including joy. We are free to joyful warfare on His behalf as slaves. We are also free to continue a joyless warfare on our own behalf. But that's not the freedom for which He set us free.

All men also walk by faith. Again, God makes it simple. They'll either walk by faith in self or faith in Jesus Christ. To walk by faith in self is to be anti-Christ because all men are either Jesus determined or self determined. Self determination brings no glory to God. Jesus determination brings maximum glory to God because the plan of God is to sum up all things in Jesus, His Son. All men also will eternally glorify Jesus. The man who walks in slavery to self considers himself free, the greatest of all deceptions. The truth is he's not free. He's a slave to self and thus a slave to sin. No man can be called free when all of his choices result in death. A man who was truly free and truly self determined could self determine what the choices would be and self determine what the consequences of the choices would be. But no man gets to do that. The man who insists that he is free is in total deception. He will eternally glorify God, but not in the way that he self determined that it would occur. Because truth is not what he self determined to be truth; truth is how God views reality. This man who insists on self determination until death will

eternally glorify God by eternally displaying the justice of God in the lake of fire. The man who walks by faith in Jesus will eternally display the glory of God by displaying the grace of God while singing holy, holy, holy first in Heaven then eternally so in the new Earth. Thus God is never mocked over the long term. In His forbearance and in His longsuffering, He will be mocked for awhile; but it is a transient stage because all men will glorify God in eternity future. It's just a matter of which of the essences of God you will glorify; His love essence expressed as grace or His justice essence expressed as the lake of fire. No man is free to self determine that he will not glorify God over the long term. That's simply not one of the choices. And man is not free to determine what the choices are and he is not free to determine the consequences of those choices.

So ultimately we are free from summing up anything in anything other than Jesus Christ. We are free to sum up all things in Jesus Christ. That is our upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Our upward call is to sum up all things in Jesus. We are so free in Christ that we have the freedom to continue to live in bondage by choice as a functional reality by summing things up in something other than Jesus Christ while remaining a slave to self. But we can't have it both ways. It's either—or. Even as Christians, even as children of God; we choose one or the other every moment of our lives and that's why we're told to capture every thought to the obedience of Christ. To sum anything up in something other than Jesus is to continue to live in bondage to that other thing, to miss the abundant life, to be contrary in our operation to the purposes of God, to continue dead works, to make our testimony impotent by opening ourselves to the charge of overt hypocrisy, to refuse to glorify God while glorifying some other thing, to remain in slavery to self, and joylessly so while warring against Christ as a child of God.

But to sum all things up in Jesus is to access the abundant life, to give credibility to our testimony, to fulfill the purposes of God, to glorify God, to walk in the freedom for which He set us free, including our freedom to enjoy God which gives glory to God to the maximum. That's what the Trinity of God does. This is My beloved Son, listen to Him. The Holy Spirit will bear witness of Me and bring glory to Me. So if the Trinity of God does that, sums all things up in Jesus, it would seem reasonable that we would adopt that as a course of life. When we do then we'll fulfill the upward call of God in Christ Jesus to operate in the freedom for which He set us free. The upward call is to sum up all things in Jesus. When we do that we walk in the freedom for which He set us free. So being free is our position; but operating in the freedom is a functional reality that we choose to do or not do.

And here's a point which will segue into our next subject. Unity will flow only in those who do what I have just described. Unity will never occur in those who do not do what I just described. So unity is a fruit, not an achievement. As a fruit, God gets the glory. As an achievement, man gets the glory. And God will share His glory with no one, nor should He. Understanding this propels you to walk in the freedom for which He set us free; the functional reality superimposed on the position. In other words, it's operating out of the position to be expressed and lived as a functional reality and that is to be free indeed. And unity only occurs in those who are free indeed because people who are slaves to self as a functional reality even as Christians, can never have unity occur unless it's unity in something in opposition to the purposes of God. And that unity will be our subject for the next time when we come together. And remember after the

holiday break, that next time we come together is going to be January 9, 2008. So my time is up and I thank you for yours.