

FREEDOM 55
ROMANS 9:1-11; 12:9-15, 21
2025-11-16

“What’s the Big Deal About Jesus, Anyway?” In the first of the series, Paul was distressed about all the false gods in Athens, including the statue to “an unknown god”. Paul told all who would listen, that Jesus Christ was that unknown god, who needed to be known. For Jesus had determined our places and times and wasn’t restricted to places built by human hands; He’s the God who made the world and everything in it. Paul spoke of God in lofty terms and taught us to:

- 1) look up to God the Father and power up with Him,
- 2) then look in and plug in to God by inviting Jesus Christ into our hearts to take control of our lives and cultivate that personal relationship with Christ.
- 3) Then look out and reach out to others with the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Last week we spoke of the two worldviews—the Christian worldview and the natural world view that are at war with each other. It’s WAR OUT THERE! Jesus has qualified us to share in the inheritance in the kingdom of light—having been rescued from the power of darkness. We’ve been redeemed IN Christ, BY Christ, and THOUGH Him our sins have been forgiven. ALL things are created BY Him and FOR Him and ALL things HOLD TOGETHER THROUGH Him. Because of Jesus we’re no longer enemies of God but are reconciled—made right with God. We’re presented to God as being HOLY, without fault—WOW!—through the blood of Jesus shed for you and me.

Then we went on to compare the two worldviews on the three questions—Where did we come from and who are we? We compared the Christian worldview of design versus the natural world view of chance. Second, concerning the Fall—What has gone wrong with the world? The Christian worldview says we have a sin nature and have to address evil. The natural worldview says that people are basically good. Third, concerning Redemption—What can we do to fix it? The Christian worldview says Christ is restoring us. The natural worldview says that humanity is evolving to become better and better, but as we remembered the atrocities of war, it’s obvious it’s not so.

We spoke of not just living the Great Commission to go and tell about Jesus, but to also live the Great Cultural Commission, to live Christ’s way in the world 24/7. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We are to go and live and speak boldly and joyfully for Christ every day! To today’s message. Do you remember years back, a big ad on TV was “Freedom 55”? Banks and investment companies contended if you invested wisely with their company, you’d enjoy the easy life because of interest gained on your investing so you could retire without any worries at age 55 and spend the rest of your life drifting carefree on your yacht from exotic island to exotic island. The recession put a huge dent in that pipe dream for most people. Besides, who wants to be put out to pasture like that with no purpose? It reminds me of the wealthy farmer in Scripture who had such a bountiful crop that he decided to build bigger barns, take life easy —eat, drink

and be merry—Except God had other plans and called his life in that night. Surely, we need to recognize our present work is an extension of God's ministry. *"Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him"* (Colossians 3:17). Your work or your retirement is ministry, an offering to and for God.

So, while the Freedom 55 notion is badly flawed, look at the awesome and flawless thing Christ has done for us—more of the Big Deal About Jesus. Paul continues to expose the drastic difference between life IN Christ as opposed to life OUT OF, WITHOUT, DENYING, IGNORING Christ. The first eight chapters of Romans is heavy theology. Roman 8:1, though, starts the wrap up. "Therefore" is a swing point in the whole letter. 2 verses earlier make our plight clear: 3:23 says, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (including you and me), and 6:23 says, *"For the wages (the cost, consequence) of sin is death."* Since we've all sinned and the payment for sin is death (according to God's law and judgment), then we're all guilty and deserve to die. This death is both physical, which we understand and experience every day—but it's also spiritual, which is **much** more important! Dead spiritually means we're not alive to God and cannot be in relationship with Him. Aren't you glad 6:23 doesn't stop where I paused, but goes on to say, *"but the gift of God (it cannot be earned) is eternal life **in/through** Jesus Christ our Lord!"* Yahoo!

Back to verse 1: *"Therefore" there is no condemnation for those who are **in** Christ Jesus, because (verse 2) **through** Christ Jesus **the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*** Did you get that? Laws are laws—When you're speeding and get pulled over you're fined because you broke the law. When you jump off a roof, you fall because you cannot break the law of gravity. There are consequences for breaking the law! We've all broken God's laws. But this makes "Freedom 55" look like a very bad deal by comparison! We're **truly set free** by the Spirit of life—forever!—something the text says the Law is powerless or incapable of doing.

This must have made for some heated debate with the Jewish religious leaders who clung to the Law only—though they too were unable to keep it. James (2:10) says, *"For who-ever keeps the whole law, yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."* Before you think that's too harsh, imagine a murderer claiming in his own defence that he only murdered one person, one time! We would demand justice, and so does God.

But the blood of the sinless Christ covers us and satisfies God that we may be set free, be-cause **in Christ we can** meet the righteous requirements of the Law (verse 4). To say it another way, Christ has intervened in our lives in a way the Law never could, while at the same time up-holding the righteous requirements of the Law, setting us free from its perfect standard that we could never meet. Christ has conferred on us His perfect standard **and** stood in our place of judgment as our substitute. So we're free of the judgment and condemnation of sin! Hallelujah!

Notice: we either follow “*the law of sin and death*” OR we follow the “*law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*”. There’s no third option, no middle ground. You’re either **in** Christ or **without** Christ—remember last week’s focus on the two worldviews, Christian or natural. This is the same.

In verse 5 the Greek verb “phranoursin”—“think” is better translated “set their minds on” and the verb is continuous, so its “those who continue to live according to (something) set their minds **habitually** on the same good (the Spirit) or the same bad (the world). The mind of the sinful man is **death** but the mind controlled by the Spirit is **life and peace**. Which would you rather choose—life or death? A hard question! Notice that the mind set on the flesh/the world isn’t just neutral, it’s **hostile** to God. Notice in verse 8 it’s **impossible** to please God by the sinful nature.

From verse 9 and 11, if the Spirit of God lives in you: you’re controlled by the Spirit, not by the sinful nature (the cravings of the world). The Greek “oikei” translated as “living” is really more like God setting up home or making Himself at home in you. Now that’s a phenomenal claim!

The whole of chapter 8 is a chapter of triumph of the whole victory Christ has achieved for those who believe in Him—no condemnation (verse 1), our possessing the indwelling Spirit of God (verse 9, 11), being declared righteous by God (verse 10), being declared heirs of God the Father and coheirs with Christ (verse 17), the Spirit interceding (stepping in for us) on our behalf (verse 26), Christ interceding for us (verse 34), the assurance that absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God that’s **in** Christ (verse 39). And, we’re more than conquerors through Christ who loves us! What did we do to deserve all this? Absolutely zilch! God even gave us our faith (Ephesians 2: 8, 9).

This is the clearest picture in Scripture of who we are before God, who He is and what He’s done for us. It clarifies our position in Christ and should cause us to live joyfully! We’re obligated not to live by our sinful nature but by the Spirit of God. This is the reality of God in any Christian’s life. The presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in believers guarantees that the God who raised Christ up from the dead will bring to life our mortal bodies. A body made alive by the Holy Spirit becomes immortal. God’s gone to extraordinary pains to keep His relationship with us alive! All of it’s accomplished through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Now that’s relationship! Now that’s freedom! Now that’s the very big deal about Jesus! All initiated by God for His fallen creation! We are the benefactors; the entire cost is borne by God. This unconditional love for us is why the Father had to abandon His Son at the cross and why Jesus emptied Himself for us.

God is restoring/has restored creation through Jesus Christ and His life giving, indwelling Holy Spirit. The great-and-only dividing line between a life of sin and death versus a real life that is life and peace is Christ. With Him, you have this gift of God; without Him, you don’t.

Given all this, how shall we live? Romans 12:1 *...in view of God's mercy, offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is our spiritual worship.*” Amazingly, the only way to become totally free is to choose to become a servant of Jesus, using our spiritual gifts to His glory for the benefit of His Church and all people by behaviour worthy of a Christian. (Romans 12:9-15:13).

Let's review: 1) Christ has set us free from the Law—including the law of sin and death. 2) The Law—good living—cannot redeem us—only Christ and only faith in Him can. 3) Because of Christ, the Spirit of life and peace dwells in us—makes Himself at home in us.

In spite of this, we often reduce Christian living to nothing more than a set of rules. How many times have you heard people say they follow (or try to) the Ten Commandments (THEY CAN'T!) rather than delighting in a real relationship with Christ? Too often, just one example, we focus on small denominational differences rather than on bonds of brotherhood in Christ!

So here are some applications. First, if you're glossing over sin, there's an urgent call to repent. Too much emphasis on the “love of God”, without acknowledging the judgment of a perfect God may leave people unconcerned even to the point of ignoring a personal need for salvation. This is urgent above the din of all other religious and non-religious noise.

Second, can you imagine the clout we would have if all Christian churches collectively work-ed together? Knowing Christ has life-changing implications that a dying world needs to hear!

Third, we need to get our message out without worrying about the opposition. The cross is offensive to those who are perishing.

Fourth, however, we can be the “oil” that works its way into the lives of others, 1 person at a time. Tell the story—it is, after all, **truth**, and gives life. Stop apologizing for it and expect opposition, but don't shrink from it. Do this in a winsome, not overbearing way. After all, we are beggars who've found more than enough food—that others need!

Fifth, yes we are free! So live freely and wholeheartedly for Christ, our only King! What will you do with this freedom from sin and death that you have been given? What does it look like to have Christ's Spirit make Himself comfortably at home in you? Live that way this week.