

# Am I Freed?

Scripture: Psalm 119: 41-45, Romans 8: 1-11

Date: March 8, 2020

## **FREEDOM IN - FORGIVENESS**

### LENTEN JOURNEY

We are in the midst of some significant life changes – daylight savings time was last night, it's a full moon this week AND its Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> this week. Maranatha has been on a journey looking to navigate through the changes in our lives as well. Lent reflects that journey in its 40 days (+ Sundays) of an inward introspection of who is God and who we are to God.

### LONGING JOURNEY

Through Lent we are looking through a specific question in the Heidelberg Catechism. A question that searches for identity and purpose, for comfort and peace in the midst of a Covid 19 world, in the midst of an uncertain economy and in the midst of turbulent relationships. The question asks – what is our only comfort in life and in death?

We began this journey by looking at the question - do we belong to God? We learned that we belong to God - despite our viral sickness of sin – because of God's grace of Christ's death on the cross.

This week looks at the question of what happens after we understand that we belong to God - through God's grace – but then continue to sin in a sin filled, broken down, pain riddled world. The catechism question declares that we are freed FROM the tyranny of the devil but what does that mean for a longing people.

## **FREEDOM FROM - SIN**

At the core we need to recognize that forgiveness is not freedom. While Christ's death on the cross for all the sins of all the people in existence would still be great we ask what happens to help us change into new people. To change from lives that were poisoned by sin into lives that were forgiven with a new opportunity to live abundantly for and obediently to God

### WILLOW CREEK STORY

There's a story that was presented through Willow Creek that might explain this. In this story a man has spent a long time in prison – years and decades in fact. It's become all he's known - the rules and regulations, the roles and responsibilities.

Yet one day, the warden comes and says that his punishment is over and he's free. There's some paperwork to do – but he should be freed in hours. The man sits in his cell – stunned at the news.

The guards come by and open the door telling him that he doesn't need to sit there anymore and that he's free to walk the hallways, but he just sits there in his cell.

The warden comes back and asks if he'd like to wait in the office, but the prisoner says he's okay where he's at. It's all he's known is this cell and this rhythm of life has been dictated by others - when to get up and when to go to bed, when to eat and when to exercise.

### ***SLAVERY TO SIN – ACTIONS***

Perhaps we too struggle with leaving our jail cells – our old selves that were driven by our sin filled natures. While we recognize Christ's work to forgive us to remove our punishment – our penalty but we wonder how to live next. Especially after we say that we accept the truths of Jesus' death on the cross for me and that we accept His grace of forgiveness. But then we know deep deep down that there are parts of our lives continue on in sin. Areas that have become so habitual, so systemic that we are in fact – slaves to that behaviour and mindset.

#### **PAUL**

The apostle Paul had this marvelous encounter with Jesus and was changed powerfully and instantly yet even he recognized the hard place that he lived. Romans 7 describes his predicament where he describes the reality that he knew what he should do and that he didn't AND that he knew what he shouldn't do and continued to do. He describes his condition as wretched.

#### **JOHN**

Last week we looked at a letter written by the disciple John. A letter written to Christian believers. Yet a letter challenging them not to deny the slavery of sin that remains in their lives. In denying that they are still sinning – John writes – they are not only lying to themselves they also make God out to be a liar.

### ***STRONGHOLDS OF SIN - ATTITUDES***

Like the prisoner in the story - our life in our own prisons have become so routine that any other way of living seems inconceivable. The catechism speaks of these habits as being part of the world and it speaks directly as being under the tyranny of the devil. The strong man that we spoke of earlier this year is identified as Satan or the Devil and he still has authority in this world. The sin that we looked at last week continues its depravity in this world

In our 'old' way of life attitude and habits were made that have become a type of prison in which we live. Attitudes and actions of sin that have become cemented so that sin and evil have become a stronghold.

#### **JACKI MAGINAULT PICTURE**

Jacki Maginault a pastor at The Road CRC but is also a chaplain at Mount Royal university and she posed a question for the students there. The students were invited to respond to the question - What do you wish to be free from? Those responses illustrated that there are many strongholds of sin in our worlds – for those students and us as well. Strongholds that show how we can falter in our weakness and we can fail in our lives.

## **FREEDOM BY JESUS - SALVATION**

But Paul and John don't end their letters with defeat. Paul writes in today's text of Romans 8 that you are controlled by the Holy Spirit who lives inside you. Believers are not just accepted God's truth into their hearts and beings – they are also inviting the power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit within them as well.

The power and presence of God is accomplished by His grace and for His glory. His Son - Jesus Christ lived amongst us as one of us. Yet despite the frailties of this world lived a life – a sinless life – that was to the full. A life lived in obedience to God's perfect and pleasing will and in loving kindness to all those around Him. Jesus became our saviour when he was crucified on the cross as a sacrifice for the penalty of our sins. This accomplished forgiveness – once and for all. In addition - Jesus' resurrection from the grave defeated sin – evil and even death itself

## **FREEDOM FOR LIFE - SANCTIFICATION**

### **ATTITUDE**

In the years of my growth in faith I came to appreciate the distinction between saved from and saved for. We can recognize that we've been saved FROM sin – it's slavery and strongholds but we also need to recognize that we've been saved FOR salvation.

That the life and death of Jesus has given us the freedom to live for God in a manner filled with the power and glory of God residing within us. Therefore, we don't need to live in the manner of our 'old' selves but are called to live with our 'new' selves. A new self that is forgiven of sins and freed to live in God's power moving forward.

The text from Psalm 119 speaks of knowing God's truth gives us freedom. There are many scripture texts speaking into our lives regarding our freedom that follows forgiveness:

Romans 8: 1

*There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus*

Romans 8: 26

*If the son sets you free - You are free indeed*

Romans 6: 6, 7, 11

- *our old self was crucified with Christ - so we should no longer be slaves to sin*
- *anyone who has died has been set free from sin*
- *count yourself dead to sin and alive to Christ Jesus*

2 Corinthians 3: 7

*Where the spirit of the lord is - there is freedom*

John 8: 32

*God's truth will set us free - and we will be free indeed*

Galatians 5: 1

*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free  
Do not let yourself be burdened – again – by a yoke of slavery*

## ACTION

Consequently, in this 'new' life we are called to live in accordance with a life of freedom. Not a freedom that allows us to sin but a freedom that allows us to live as Jesus did – in obedience to God's calling of worship and service – in love.

Romans 8: 6

The mind governed by the flesh is death [but] the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace

Romans 6: 13

*Do not offer any part of yourself as an instrument of sin  
But rather offer yourself to God ... as an instrument of righteousness*

Hebrews 12: 1

*Let us throw off the sin that so easily entangles*

2 Corinthians 10: 5

*Take every thought captive*

## ABUNDANCE

And in this new life and new attitude and new actions we find an abundance of life found in Jesus. John 10: 10 speaks of Jesus coming that believers would have life – full and abundant life. A life found in the forgiveness from the slavery of sin in this world and a life found in the freedom for living out God's kingdom calling in all we are and in all we do.

The only thing between slave and save is the letter "L". God's love – in His power and in His grace is which saves – that forgives and that frees

Therefore – we do belong to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We belong in our body and soul as well in our lives and in our death. We belong because of who Jesus is and because of what Jesus did for us. We belong because of how we respond in a faith founded in a forgiveness and in a freedom that allows us to live a new life – in Him and for Him.

AMEN and AMEN