

January 19, 2020

"Christ has set us free..."

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1

"So, I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict..." Galatians 5:1-17

Choosing to follow Jesus, to become his disciple, is both way less demanding than we are typically led to believe, and way more demanding than we ever thought possible. For centuries we have been led to believe that following Jesus demands that we 'join' the right church where we will do all of the right things in the right ways and thereby win our salvation through our own perfection.

Hopefully we are beginning to understand that salvation cannot be earned by our own perfection. In fact it cannot be earned at all. Salvation through grace is, as Paul states clearly in Romans 6, ***"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** Our Father and God freely gave us eternal life when Jesus died on the cross and satisfied once and for all the requirement of the law of sin and death. Grace has already happened and there is nothing we can do to change that.

The question is not, "What must we do to make grace happen?" But, "What will we do because grace has happened?" God allowed his one and only Son to die horribly on the cross because you are a sinner; because I am a sinner. That terrible death was made necessary by my self-serving, sin-filled life and by yours. I made it necessary for Jesus to die on that cross and so did you.

So then, what are you going to do about it? What am I? I am not going to 'join' a church and try to live by a set of rules so that I can earn grace. I cannot earn grace. Not now; not ever. God has presented me with salvation through grace. It is mine for the accepting. But, what will I do with grace?

Jesus makes the answer to that question absolutely clear for us in Matthew 16. ***"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."*** The only reasonable response to the grace that God paid for on Golgotha is my life; all of it. My only reasonable response to the horrible death of God's Son on the cross is my all; a life for a life.

Jesus tells us to lose our lives for him; to give up our sinful, selfish lives for him. His grace demands complete and total surrender now and for the rest of my life of the one thing I actually possess; my existence. The lyrics to the old song say it well, "All to Jesus I surrender. All to him I freely give." The only reasonable response I can make in the face of God's overwhelming gift of grace is my all. Nothing less and nothing more.

So, what does a surrendered life look like? Paul will tell us that the entire law is summed up in a single command: ***"Love your neighbor as yourself."*** Jesus commands, ***"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."***



(Matthew 7:12) As I surrender my entire existence to God the change that will produce in me will be obvious in the way I treat others. The loudest testimony to the reality of my faith will always be demonstrated in the way I treat those around me.

