

May 21, 2017

Saved by Grace

Transformed by Spirit

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free...You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

"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 with each other, so that you do not do what you want."

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit let us keep in step with the Spirit."
Galatians 5:1-26

The concept of grace is difficult for us to grasp and accept, but the Apostle Paul will tell us that because of grace, we have been set free. Set free from what, you might ask. In Romans 8, verses 1 and 2, the Apostle writes, ***"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."***

Paul wants the Galatian believers to understand what he wants all of us to understand. Jesus' death on the cross as a perfect and complete sacrifice for your sins and mine has not only brought us God's forgiveness, but it has also set us free from the ***"Law of Sin and Death."*** If we were talking about the Law of Gravity, being set free from that law would mean that I could leap off the pinnacle of the roof on this building and I would not hit the ground. I would be free from the Law of Gravity.

In the same way the death of Jesus on the cross has set me free from the ***"Law of Sin and Death"***. It no longer applies to me, if I choose to respond to God's grace by surrendering my life to him, or as Paul would write, if I am ***"...in Christ Jesus."*** If I am in Christ Jesus, when I sin, I do not die. I have been set free.

How, you might ask, can I be in Christ Jesus? Again, in Paul's letter to the believers in Rome he writes, ***"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."*** (Romans 6:1-4)

If, as Jesus' explained, I have taken up my cross and followed him to death, letting my old sinful nature be crucified with him, and if I have let that old me be buried with him in baptism, then I am in Christ Jesus and God gives me a new life. Just as Jesus died, and was buried, and was raised again, so have I been.

So, as the Apostle asks, how can I go on sinning? And the simple answer is, I can't, but I do. But, because I have been set free from the ***"Law of Sin and Death"***, my sin no longer leads to my

death. That being true, what should my life look like; how should I be living as one who is in Christ Jesus?



Paul would tell me that I should "...*live by the Spirit...*" and if I am doing that, I will no longer seek to gratify the sinful nature that lives in me. The Holy Spirit of God will, when I have surrendered my entire existence to the God of grace, begin to produce in me, his fruit; the products of his presence in my life.

What will those changes look like?

Paul would write, that the entire law is summed up in "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*"

The Spirit at work in me then, will begin to produce those things that go with loving my neighbor and being a servant. They will include "...*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...*". When I live surrendered, the Spirit of God produces those qualities in my life. They are his fruit, not mine.