

Alderwood Community Church
November 20, 2016

Complete Freedom in Christ
 Colossians 2:11-15

Big Idea: As a follower of Jesus, you are free from the power of sin and Satan, live as free men and women.

Intro: It was on New Year's Day 1863 when the Emancipation Proclamation was publicly stated, but it was not until 3 years later, on December 18, 1865, that the constitution made those convictions official. Though dead by then, Abraham Lincoln still spoke. At last his dream was realized. The word swept across Capitol Hill and down into the valleys of Virginia and the back roads of the Carolinas and even deeper into the plantations of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Headlines on newspapers in virtually every state trumpeted the same message: "Slavery Legally Abolished."

And yet, something happened that many would have never expected. The vast majority of the slaves in the South who were legally freed continued to live on as slaves. Most of them went right on living as though nothing had happened. Though free, the Blacks lived virtually unchanged lives throughout the Reconstruction Period.

Shelby Foote, in his monumental, three-volume work on *The Civil War*, verifies this surprising anomaly.

...the Negro – locked in a caste system of "race etiquette" as rigid as any he had known in formal bondage...every slave could repeat with equal validity, what an Alabama slave had said in 1864 when asked what he thought of the Great Emancipator whose proclamation went into effect that year. "I don't know nothing bout Abraham Lincoln," he replied, "cep they say he sot us free. And I don't know nothing bout that neither."

I call that tragic. A war had been fought. A president had been assassinated. An amendment to the Constitution had now been signed into law. Once-enslaved men, women and children were now legally emancipated. Yet amazingly, many continued living in fear and squalor. In a context of hard-earned freedom, slaves chose to remain as slaves. Cruel and brutal though many of their owners were, black men and women chose to keep serving the same old master until they died. There were a few brave exceptions, but in many parts of the country you'd never have known that slavery had been officially abolished and that they had been emancipated. That's the way the plantation owners wanted it. They maintained the age-old philosophy, "Keep 'em ignorant and you keep 'em in the field."

Now if you think that is tragic, I can tell you one far worse. It has to do with Christians living today as slaves. Even though our Great Emancipator, Christ the Lord, paid the ultimate price to

overthrow slavery once for all, most Christians act as though they're still held in sins bondage. So many have bought into that lie and live under the dark shadow of such ignorance, pinned down in shame, guilt, ignorance, and intimidation.

***Read: Colossians 2:6-15**

1. Freedom from the power of sin. (2:11-12)

A. Personal faith in Jesus Christ' death on the cross renders sin powerless over you.

Vrs. 11 - *You were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature...* just as physical circumcision “cuts away” a portion of flesh on the male anatomy, so this spiritual circumcision, “cut away” the sinful nature. This *putting off* or “cutting away” means it is no longer present.

The *sinful nature* refers to a characteristic way of acting that was sinful. Paul says that when we placed our faith in Jesus, Christ put off our evil tendencies.

Vrs. 12 – *having been buried with him in baptism* – talks about our experience with Christ because of our union with him. When we place our faith in Christ, we experience a death, burial and resurrection with Christ. We literally die to our old self, our old way of living our sinful nature, we are buried with Christ and we are resurrected to a new life. This is what Paul means when he says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come.*”

In these two verses, Paul uses two different metaphors that essentially refer to the same condition, before conversion we are dead in our sins and uncircumcised in our hearts, enslaved to sin and dead toward God.

In saying this, Paul was probably challenging the false teachers who were also requiring Christians to follow the law as a means of salvation, and that included circumcision. We see that Jewish laws were a part of this cult in 2:16-17, “*Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.*”

It seems that Paul was attacking this deceptive Philosophy by declaring that when God saved us, Christ circumcised our heart. He cut away the sin nature and delivered us from the power of the sin. We are no longer slaves of sin. Certainly, we still battle sins and the lusts of the flesh, but we are no longer slaves to it.

***Read: Romans 6:5-7**

Paul taught that we were unified with Christ in his death. In Christ's death, he not only took the penalty of sin for us, but he crucified our “old self”—our sinful nature—on the cross. He broke

the power of sin. Therefore, we no longer have to be slaves to it. When Paul said in Romans 6:6–7 that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, he was talking about this event, the circumcision of the flesh in verses 11-13.

We don't need legalistic laws or spiritualism to conquer sin because Christ is sufficient. Our old man died with him, and therefore we can start to walk in that freedom. Paul was declaring to the Colossians and to us, "Christ is enough!"

If Believers have been freed from sin's power why do we still give in to sin?

It is a matter of faith, we are to consider it true, and yield ourselves to God. We are no longer slaves. We now have the freedom to choose, but we still have to choose. If not, we will succumb to the sinful desires within us and around us and become enslaved again to sin.

B. Consider yourself dead to sin.

***Read: Romans 6:11-13**

C. Consider yourself alive to God.

2. Freedom from the guilt of sin. (2:13-14)

A. Personal faith in Jesus Christ' death on the cross renders you "not guilty" before God.

People who are drawn into cults or other false teachings are often people who are bound to sin and guilt and don't truly know their forgiveness in Christ. Scripture declares that false teachers feast on people loaded down with sin and guilt, and they use that guilt to bring them under further bondage. Look at what Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:6: "*They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires.*"

Peter says the same thing about false teachers. "*For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.*" 2 Peter 2:18–19

These teachers promise freedom when they themselves are actually slaves of sin. If we are to be protected from cults and secular wisdom that promise freedom, then we must know Christ is sufficient. He is enough to deliver us from sin and give us complete forgiveness.

Paul visually pictures this forgiveness in verse 14. He says that because of Christ, God canceled the written code. *Written code* literally means "something written with the hand" or "an autograph." It was used to refer to a certificate of debt acknowledging that one owed something.

The word canceled means “wipe out, or erase”. It is like when asked “*Do you want to permanently delete this?*” And God clicks, “Yes.” In those days the certificate of debt was written on parchment and the ink could easily be wiped away to use the parchment again after it was paid in full. Paul says that the believer’s debt has been washed away like the ink on a whiteboard.

Paul illustrates this complete forgiveness further. He says God not only wiped away our certificate of debt, but he wiped away the means to that debt—the regulations of the law. The reason we are in debt to God is because of his law. God is a holy God and he has given his law to his people. In the Old Testament, God gave his people the Mosaic Law with the Ten Commandments. However, at Christ’s death, God wiped away the certificate of debt each person owed and the law that was against us. God did this in dramatic fashion by nailing it to the cross.

In ancient times when a person was taken to the cross, his crimes were nailed above him. We saw this with Jesus; on the cross it said “King of the Jews.” He was not crucified for any sin he had committed but because he claimed to be the messiah—the coming king.

In a similar way, God has forgiven us by getting rid of the two things that stood against us. He nailed all our sins to the cross that were on our certificate of debt, and he also put our accuser on the cross—the law. Christ paid the penalty for our sins and abolished the law and its decrees against us. In Ephesians 2:14-15 Paul said about the law: “*For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.*”

When Christ died he wiped out every accusation against us and every accuser. Romans 8:33–34 says, “*Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*”

B. God’s forgiveness is gracious.

When you were dead in your sins... Just as a corpse is unresponsive to physical stimuli, so we too were dead to God, unable to respond to him. Unable to please him. Unable to do anything that could merit God’s favor. Our forgiveness is totally an act of grace on God’s behalf.

Having cancelled the written code, the certificate of our debt, that was against us... he nailed to the cross. He forgave us of a debt we owed, but could not pay. Jesus illustrated this when he told the story of the king who forgave his servant of a debt that was impossible to pay. (Matthew 18:21-35). This is grace my friends.

C. God’s forgiveness is complete.

He forgave us of all our sin. When Christ said on the cross, “*It is finished*,” it literally meant “paid in full.” Everything that was needed for us to be forgiven, and therefore saved, was taken care of on the cross.

D. God's forgiveness is rich.

"Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit." Psalm 32:1-2

- (1) The blessing of the joy of forgiveness.
- (2) The blessing of spiritual rest
- (3) The blessing of a clear conscience
- (4) The blessing of peace with God.

E. God's forgiveness is motivating.

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

Illus: Jesus' point in the story about the King who forgave his servant of an impossible debt... is that we too are to forgive the debt (offense) others commit against us. (Matthew 18)

3. Freedom from the intimidating power of Satan. (2:15)

A. Personal faith in Jesus Christ's death on the cross renders the devil powerless over you.

Understanding our complete forgiveness in Christ will protect us from Satan's enslavement. Many Christians are enslaved by Satan's lies and condemnation. He keeps them out of church, he keeps them from reading their Bibles as he continually reminds them of their sins, and he draws them into something else that promises relief but only brings bondage. In order to remain free, believers must know their complete freedom and forgiveness in Christ.

A paradox occurred. Jesus hung naked and disgraced, dying publicly for sinners. The evil forces assumed they had triumphed. In reality, through this act of both sacrifice and triumph, God disgraced these evil beings. The tables were turned. God triumphed in the redemptive work of Christ.

Paul ended this section on a triumphant note. His arguments countered his opponents at every point. The sovereign Savior disgraced his enemies on the cross, exposing them to public shame. Clothing was the visible distinguishing mark of an authority figure. He could afford the best clothing, and he was obligated to wear the best to represent the people subject to him. When defeated or demoted, the first symbolic act was to remove the royal garments. The image Paul used here portrayed that action. God stripped his enemies of their "royal facade," exposing them for what they really were. No one should follow them. They were defeated, disgraced, and powerless because of the work of Christ. The passage recalls the kingly rule of Christ presented in the Christ hymn. Jesus is a sufficient Savior (2:9–14), and he is a sovereign Savior (2:15).

Christ disarmed the demonic powers and authorities, triumphing over them. As a result believers are delivered from these evil powers which inspire legalistic rules about foods and festivals.

B. You no longer need to live in fear.

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them (false prophets, spirits), because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.” 1 John 4:4

C. You can stand up to his accusations and temptations

“Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark work and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 6:11-13

Conclusion:

1) Do you believe that Jesus Christ’s death on the cross offers your complete forgiveness?

Have you received Christ’s forgiveness by expressing your faith to him?

Admit – that you are a sinner and need forgiveness.

Believe – that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and He can forgive you of your sins.

Choose – to follow Him.

2) Are you living like you believe this?

Are you living like a slave to sin or a voluntary slave of God?

Are you living like a forgiven person or are you still trying to earn God’s forgiveness?

Are you forgiving those who have wronged you as Jesus has forgiven you?

Are you standing up to Satan’s accusations and temptations by rehearsing God’s Words?

3) This is how “every day followers of Jesus” live a life of Worship: forgiven and willing to forgive...tempted and accused by the evil one, but standing firm by faith in God’s Word.