

SEPTEMBER 2017

† Set Free – The Christian Life! †

Get a hair cut. Shave and shower. Wash the supper dishes. Listen to Pastor's sermon. Pick up sticks in the yard. Water your flowers. Things that take about 20 minutes or so. Ok – maybe the sermon thing might be a little longer!

If you read the New Testament book of Ephesians in one sitting, it takes about 20 minutes. The first 3 chapters announce the power of God's scandalous, rescuing grace or undeserved love. The last 3 chapters invite you into a life of Gospel freedom, empowered by God's sanctifying, renovating grace. It's all the same grace, the same undeserved love. It is amazing in its power to accomplish the purpose for which God uses it!

The Christian life is Spirit propelled, not self-generated. This letter to the Ephesians is to be read, preached and understood in that context.

Chapter 4 begins:

“ . . . walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called . . . ”

Ignore the context of the letter and it is easy to naturally conclude that Jesus started something that you finish. OOOPS!

“Walk in a manner worthy” is a divine invitation, not a divine guilt trip! Paul is not asking you to act a certain way in order to make yourself something. He is announcing: *you are free to live according to who you are now by the grace of Jesus!*

Yes, you are still a sinner (DUH!), BUT you are not slaves to your sin. You do not have to be self-centered. You can, by God's amazing grace, His undeserved love -- love others! You are united to Jesus and outrageously – God calls you His child!

The cross of Christ is not your starter kit. The grace of Jesus is not something that gets you in and then 'poof' it disappears and you are on your own. God's grace in Jesus Christ is the power of God to enter the Christian faith AND the power to live it out! As I have heard it said – It's not the ABC's of the Gospel, but the A-Z!

We sing “amazing grace” not “pending grace”!

Preach Christ and Him crucified -- and transformation, reform happens.

Preach transformation, reform -- and exhaustion happens.

Jesus' work saves – not yours!

Jesus' work secures – not yours!

Jesus' work earns – not yours!

He received your judgement so that you may receive His reward!

It is not IF you do this, THEN God will accept you, bless you, give you favor.

It is BECAUSE of Jesus God has already accepted you, blessed you and gives you favor – THEREFORE you are freed and empowered to live according to who you actually are – in Christ!

To “*walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called*” is not a prescription for you to take and choke down. It is a description of the new you!

You are set free to live your Christian life!

The peace of the Lord be with you!

Pastor Bert