

*In Christ Jesus, my fellow freed children of God***Live Free!**

- I. As Christ lives in you (vv.1-4)
- II. As you live for Christ (vv.5-10)

INTRODUCTION

I'm free! I'm free! What would lead you to say something exuberant like that? Would it have been when you had reached a certain point in your schooling, you had completed all the requirements and were ready for graduation? Would you feel free after you had finished paying off a car or a mortgage? Would you maybe feel free after you had conquered a sickness or disease? For some those words maybe were even said after they had gotten out of jail or had resolved a brush with the law. There are many situations in our earthly life that would lead us to say, "I'm free".

But how about using those words in a spiritual sense? What would lead you to say "I'm free" in your spiritual life. Haven't we all experienced that feeling whether it was freedom from a guilty conscience or some other spiritual challenge which we overcame? That is exactly what the Apostle Paul addresses in our text for today. He encourages us to **Live Free!** He shows us that we can do that 1) As Christ lives in you and when that happens, then we also live free 2) As you live for Christ. Our sermon text is the first 10 verses of chapter 8 of Paul's letter to the Romans.

I. As Christ lives in you (vv.1-4)

For just a moment I would like to take you back to the Prayer of the Day. You may remember that a few minutes ago we prayed "Almighty God, we confess that we deserve to be punished for our evil deeds." If you think about it, that is not exactly something which we like to talk about. We don't walk around telling people "Do you know what I did?....I deserve to be punished for what I have done." Don't we instead try to hide our sinful thoughts, loveless words and selfish actions? We hope that no one ever finds out the deep dark secrets of our sins.

Then you go to the opening words of our text and the Apostle Paul tells us "*There is now no condemnation*". What a stark contrast – going from "I confess that I deserve to be punished for my evil deeds" to "*There is now no condemnation*". There reason for the stark contrast is that the first statement is God's Law in its sternest sense, while the opening words of our text are pure, sweet Gospel.

Paul then goes on to explain how we can go from condemned to free with 3 simple words "*In Christ Jesus*". Paul wants us to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God set you free in Christ Jesus. It means first of all that the change from deserving to be punished to not guilty has nothing to do with us. It never can or never will depend on who were are, what we do or will do. It depends fully on what Jesus does in our place. Even some well-meaning Christians don't fully understand what that means. Some have the idea that it is like God takes our sins and just sweeps them under the rug or that he simply puts them in a back room and forgets about them. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Paul goes on to tell us exactly what it means that we are not condemned because we are "*in Christ Jesus*". "*For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.*" In simple words, what Paul says is even though I deserved to be condemned, God condemned Jesus in my place. God couldn't and didn't just push my sins aside, he took the full weight and punishment of all my disgusting thoughts, hateful words and loveless actions and placed them on the shoulders of his Son,

Jesus and made him pay the price. Because of that and only because of that, each one of us as a child of God is declared not guilty of sin.

It would be like one day getting a letter from the bank which says that an anonymous donor has written a check and your car loan or mortgage (you chose) has been paid in full. You don't owe the bank a penny more. It wasn't that the bank just sort of forgot about your loan – no they needed it to be paid and someone else paid it off on your behalf.

I don't know about you, but I know that just comprehending the spiritual blessings of the fact that God punished Jesus in my place and that because of that I am free is enough to think about and praise God for quite a while.

II. As you live for Christ (vv.5-10)

But not only does Paul tells us that we are free because it is Christ who lives in us, he also tells us that when we are freed because when Christ lives in us, that now frees us to live for Christ.

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires.” We all understand that all too well don't we? Even though we have Jesus as our Savior, we still struggle with those desires to live for me, myself and I. We still are tempted to think first of all, *“What makes me happy or pleases me.”*

Paul goes on to tell us how we are freed to change from that *“but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”* One of the blessings of being freed by Christ is that we now have the ability to set our minds on what the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) desires. That gives us the opportunity and the strength to ask ourselves in a few minutes *“Do my offerings to my Savior reflect a life which desires which the Spirit desires?”*. Living for Christ causes us and challenges us at every turn in life to ask ourselves *“Am I doing what the Spirit desires?”*. It helps us to evaluate every use of our time, our resources and our abilities from the perspective of how can this be a demonstration to God and others that this shows that I am living free in Christ.

Paul reminds us of one last aspect of living free for Christ *“but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace”*. When we have Christ living in us and in turn we are living for Christ, Paul reminds us that we have a life filled with peace because we know that we are in tune and in step with God.

CONCLUSION

As you read through the pages of history, you can find account after account of people who were captured as prisoners of war and then later were freed. And in just about every account you will hear how that person learned to realize that you never take your freedom for granted and that they were going to live their life with a renewed sense of appreciation and gratitude.

By the same token as you read through the pages of the Bible, you will find account after account of people who were formerly not children of God by faith, but by God's grace became believers in the grace and promises of God. You can start with Adam and Eve and the promise of the Savior in the Garden of Eden, then go to King David and his life of repentance after his sin with Bathsheba. Follow the story through the pages of the New Testament as you stand in the courtyard and hear Peter deny his Savior, but then turn around and preach a powerful sermon on Pentecost. Even the story of the Apostle Paul who wrote the words of our text today – from persecutor of Christians to God's chosen missionary to the Gentiles.

Your story and mine may not have been recorded there on the pages of Scripture, but is ours any different? Like Adam and Eve, David, Peter and Paul we have been set free from sin only because Christ lives in us and like them we now also have the privilege to let our lives be ones where we live for Christ. May God keep us in that blessed freedom until we see its perfect completion in heaven. Amen.