



THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

' FREED TO SERVE '

July 22, 2012

Fellow Redeemed in Christ,

What does it mean to be free?

Is the Christian free? True, in Galatians 4:7 we read: *"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."* And in John 15:15, as we read the words of Jesus to His disciples we learn the wonderful truth that He no longer considers us servants, but His friends.

Yes, and yet it is equally true that while Christians are indeed Christ's friends, we are also yoke-bearers of Jesus. For we read in Matthew 11:28-29, our Savior bids us... *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."*

And Saint Paul, who writes so extensively throughout his epistles concerning the wonderful liberty, which is given the Child of God through faith in Christ Jesus, again and again in these very same epistles, he refers to himself as a bondsman and servant of the Lord.

Now the children of this world have but one common opinion of the Christian. They view us Christians as not being free to do as we will – but foolishly 'brainwashed' – bound by what they consider to be the chains of unnecessary religious restrictions and silly precepts created by a bunch of up-tight, forgotten men of a forgotten, unenlightened age.

And so, the children of this unbelieving world take great satisfaction in belittling the Christian who, as a fruit of faith, strives to live a life of quiet soberness and godly moderation. The Christian is ridiculed for denying his sinful flesh and foregoing the fulfillment of its every base desire, for keeping his body under subjection. For refusing to become a partaker of other men's sins, whether it be joining them in drunken and riotous behavior or the unseemly support and joining together with false teaching churches and anti-Christian organizations, he is castigated. After all they declare, the Christian cannot be truly objective in his evaluation of the things of

this world. For the true Christian refuses to subject his life to the changing morals and values of present day society. To the ilk and ire of the unbelieving world, the Christian does not accept vain humanistic philosophy and reasoning as the basis for his behavior. Rather, in humble thanksgiving produced by God-given faith for all the blessings God has bestowed upon him, the Christian steadfastly attaches and anchors his mind, his will, and his conduct in life to the Word of God alone.

At the very mention of the world being freed from sin and death only by the Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the children of the world are offended. They find such an idea to be utter foolishness! Stubbornly they emphatically assert, as did the self-righteous Jews of Jesus' day, that they are *NOT* and *never have been* in bondage to anyone or anything and therefore have no need of a Savior. (John 8: 33) Furthermore, they assert that as their conduct in this life is not governed or limited by a belief in anything but what they can accomplish in and of themselves; it is *they*, and not the Christian, who is really unencumbered, unchained, and truly free to do as they will with their bodies and their lives.

But are the children of this world – the unbelievers – truly free?

Indeed, those who live without the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their lives think if they have political and social freedom, then they are free. But is this freedom, of which much of the world boasts, real or is it merely an illusion – a mirage – which like the faint shadow of man's wisdom fades away when the Light of God's Word is cast upon it?

What is the answer?

Is the person without Christ free, or is he a servant?

Is the Christian free, or is *he* a servant?

The answer to both these questions is this: *Both* are free and *both* are servants.

Our Sermon Text: Romans 6:19-23

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In our text for today, St. Paul readily admits that the natural unregenerate man – he who has not laid hold of and received the unmerited gift of the forgiveness of his sins, life and salvation through faith alone in Christ Jesus – is a *servant to sin*...and is free.

But free from what?

Paul says, they are "*free from righteousness*".

Now this righteousness of which Paul speaks is not the imagined work-righteousness of those who reject Christ and so remain under the Law, condemned to fail in all their attempts to fulfill it's demands. For by the deeds of the Law shall no man living be justified, made righteous, in the sight of God. Rather the righteousness of which Paul speaks is that pure Righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is the Christian's *by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ Jesus*.

So then, such a one who is *free from righteousness* is free also from the consequences of that righteousness. For so long as the unbeliever remains without Christ in his life, that person remains dead in his trespasses and sins. He is free from the Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and hence free from the only way to true everlasting freedom found therein. Yes, the unbeliever is free from the power of God's grace, completely free from the undeserved gift of eternal life in heaven.

Yet, while the unbeliever is free from possessing this free gift, he is actually a servant of sin – yea, a *SLAVE to sin*. Neither can he be or do otherwise. *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* (Rom.3:23)

As Jesus so plainly told the arrogant, self-esteeming Jews of his day: “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*” (John 8:34)

And this slavery to sin is a *willing* servitude on the part of the unbeliever. As verse 19 of our text reveals, “*...ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity...*”

To be sure and as may be increasingly observed in our immoral society, unregenerate mankind either secretly or openly revels in fulfilling every evil lust of his sinful flesh. Thus his condition only grows worse, as he exercises his freedom from righteousness, continually yielding himself and his body to impurity and to greater and greater iniquities in thought, word and deed; each sin against God, his neighbor and his own body, the cause and instigation of yet another. Indeed, there be many of the children of this world who actually boast of their willing and active participation in forms of debauchery more vile than that they had previously committed. And so natural unregenerate man's bondage – his *freedom from righteousness* – as evidenced by his unrepented and willing slavery to sin, remains.

What is the result of this ‘freedom’? And what is its “pay-off”?

Verse 21 of our text says the result is shame...And more importantly, the payoff is death – spiritual, temporal, and eternal separation from God. For indeed, *the wages of sin is death!*

So is the unbeliever – the person without Jesus Christ – really free?

No! Rather he is a slave of the deepest dye, a willing servant to sin, a stranger and enemy of Christ, justly rewarded for his unbelief with an eternity suffered in the very bowels of hell, where, as the Scriptures declare, *there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* (Matthew 8:12)

Now what about the Christian? Indeed, he too, is both free and servant.

Each and every one of us... whether we be man, woman, boy or girl, old or young...as Christians, we are all become servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, are we not? For not by anything we have done or could possible merit, but solely by the suffering and death of the Son of God on that accursed Cross of Calvary, each and every one of us have been freed from the guilt and power of sin in our lives. As a new creature in Christ, then we are dead to sin and made alive to God. No more are we willing servants to sin. We are become, instead, willing servants to God by His mercy and grace in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yes, each of us has been given power by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of Christ Jesus to successfully resist the temptations of the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh. As we read in Romans 6:14, "*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*"

Now, it is undeniably true, so long as we Christians are here on this earth, we still have our Old Adam clinging to our flesh. And because of this, we will *yet unwillingly* sometimes stumble and fall victim to the temptations of the Devil, the world and our own sinful flesh. For, indeed, our sanctification will never be wholly complete until we reach our heavenly home. So, when we stumble, let us in godly sorrow over our sin and in true repentance, humbly confess our sins unto God our Father. And forsaking all thoughts of work-righteousness and trusting only in Him, let us take our refuge only in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For, indeed, as God has promised, He is faithful and true to forgive us our sins for the sake of Jesus Christ, His dear Son.

Dear friends, Jesus took the chains of bondage to the Law and with it the power of sin and death and utterly destroyed it. Christ Jesus fulfilled all the demands of the Law perfectly in our place. He met the Adversary of our souls who so deviously led our first parents into Sin's slavery in the Garden of Eden and single-handedly sent him to his defeat. Jesus' victory over sin, death and the Devil is *our* victory. As the angel freed Peter from his chains of bondage and led him out of his prison, unseen and untouched by the prison guards; so our Lord Jesus with His innocent blood frees all that are enslaved in sin and under the power of Hell.

This is real freedom!

For we have the Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and we know this Truth of the unmerited forgiveness of our sins, life and salvation we have through Him has set us truly free. (John 8:32)

Yes, we are free in Christ to grow in our sanctification – in true holiness. For through Christ alone, we are made alive in Him, empowered and at liberty to do that which is truly pleasing to God. Dear friends, we can now live our lives, after the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in humble service to our fellow man here on earth and to God our Father in Heaven!

This being Truth, let us endeavor by the power of the Holy Spirit to yield our members – our eyes, ears, hands, feet, tongue, our reason and all our faculties, along with all our talents and earthly blessings – no longer servants to Sin – to uncleanness and iniquity – but willing, humble and animated servants to righteousness and true holiness.

Just imagine the increase to God's Kingdom, the wayward souls we could reach with the Gospel message, if we Christians would but serve our Savior Jesus Christ with the same degree of

eagerness, bold initiative and zeal with which we see the children of this world serve the way of Sin, which leads only to eternal punishment and death!

So having been freed from the power of sin and death, let us in true thankfulness serve the Lord our God most heartily; knowing that of the Lord Jesus we have the unmerited forgiveness of our sins and that we shall receive the inheritance of everlasting life.

How can I thank thee Lord, For all Thy loving kindness,
That Thou hast patiently Borne with me in my blindness?
When dead in many sins And trespasses I lay,
I kindled, holy God, Thine anger every day.

It is Thy work alone That I am now converted;
O're Satan's work in me Thou hast Thy power asserted.
Thy mercy and Thy grace That rise afresh each morn
Have turned my stoney heart Into a heart new-born.

O Father, God of Love, Hear Thou my supplication;
O Savior, Son of God, Grant me Thy full salvation;
And Thou O Holy Ghost, Be Thou my faithful Guide
That I may serve thee here And there with Thee abide.
Amen.

(TLH 417, v 1,2,7)

And now may the Peace of God, which surpasseth all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds "*freed to serve*" Christ Jesus, Our Lord. Amen.