



Life Together

From the Pastor's Desk....

Do or Done?

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

Freed Friends in Christ,

This is God's will for you: your freedom. God sent his Son into the world "to proclaim liberty to the captives" (Luke 4:18).

If you acknowledge Jesus as your King and Savior, you are free from sin's penalty and power — and soon you will be free from sin's very presence in glory.

Though you die, yet you shall live! Though you sin, yet you are righteous, and shall be declared NOT GUILTY when you stand before God your Judge.

Right now you are free from bondage to fear and crippling guilt because you don't have anything to prove in the presence of God. You can sing with confidence, "Jesus, thy blood and righteousness, my beauty are, my glorious dress. Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head!"

You are also freed right now from sin's dominion. You are able now not to sin. You can kiss your sin goodbye and walk in the joy of loving God and loving your neighbor. Sin cannot take control of you and boss you around any longer, "for sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

For freedom Christ has set us free! It's a fact.

But it's also something we can practically relinquish. You would think that someone who has been set free from slavery would never again desire to return. But that's not always the case. A man had been incarcerated in England for terrorist offenses on the basis of evidence that was later found to be unsound. He was set free. Yet astonishingly, he said in an interview:

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SPRING is Almost Here!
We've made it to MARCH!

For the Entire Month of March

Pray for a breakthrough of relational renewal and reconciliation

- Old animosities being removed.
- Marriages being reconciled and renewed.
- Wayward children coming home.

Day of Prayer & Fasting: March 23



For the month of March, our church will be praying for breakthroughs of relational renewal and reconciliation. If you would like to read a good book on the topic, my wife and I highly recommend *Unpacking Forgiveness* by Chris Brauns. The book will be available in the church bookstore.

- Pastor David Sommer

**To bring glory to God
through Spirit-transformed lives
by the beauty and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ**

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Pastor's Desk continued.....

"Not a week goes by when I don't wish that I was back in prison."

How is it that those who have been freed in Christ would ever return to slavery? It happens all the time. It could happen to us. And one of the ways it could happen is by turning our Christianity into a *DO* religion instead of a *DONE* religion.

Is your Christianity about what you do, or about what Christ has done?

The gospel says,

1. Believe in Jesus
2. You are saved
3. Therefore you do good works

The enemies of freedom say,

1. Believe in Jesus
2. Do good works
3. You will be saved

In other words, is Jesus enough to make you acceptable before God? Or must you add something to what Jesus has done to either get into God's favor or to keep yourself in God's favor?

The gospel says, "Jesus plus nothing" is what makes sinners acceptable in the sight of God. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing plus the blood of Jesus.

If we attempt to add anything to the finished work of Jesus Christ, the consequences are disastrous (see Gal. 5:2-15). John Calvin said that if we add anything to Christ, we lose Christ altogether: "Whoever wants to have a half-Christ loses the whole" (John Calvin).

And Martin Luther memorably compared the one who is trying to attain righteousness through works of the law to an oxen tied to a yoke: "Just as oxen that work hard under the yoke receive nothing but forage or pasture and are sent to slaughter when they can no longer pull, so those who seek righteousness by the law are captives and are oppressed with the yoke of slavery – that is to say, with the law. And when they have tired themselves

for a long time in doing what the law requires, with great and grievous toil, in the end this is their reward – that they are miserable and perpetual servants. Why? Because of sin, death, God's wrath, and the devil. Therefore, there is no greater or harder slavery than the slavery of the law. It only increases and aggravates sin, accuses, frightens, condemns, and engenders wrath, and finally drives poor consciences to despair" (Martin Luther).

Christianity is not a do religion. It's a done religion. When Jesus says, "It is finished," it's finished, and you and I need to rest in his complete sufficiency.

Christianity isn't about our works, it's about Jesus' work. It's not about our morality, it's about his perfection.

Of course, the gospel is not against good works. But you will never do anything purely for God – just because you love him – until you accept the fact that he loves you and accepts you purely because of what Jesus has done, and not because of anything you do.

Let us love the perfect law of God! But let us rejoice in the fact that Jesus has perfectly fulfilled the law on our behalf so that we can be set free from guilt and bondage, and walk in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Only when we are freed from the law can we go on to walk in the Spirit, and thus bear the beautiful fruit of righteousness (see Gal. 5:22-23).

Let us rejoice today and always not in what we do, but in what Christ has done!

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay
fast bound in sin and nature's night;
thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray;
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
my chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.
Amazing love! How can it be
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

Freed through the finished work of Christ,

Pastor David Sunday

Special Event

The Marriage Retreat is this weekend. *All of you that plan to attend remember that you can check-in as early as 3:00 p.m.* Dessert, coffee & tea are being served at 6:30 p.m. Program to begin at 7:00 p.m. Any further questions contact David or Kris Sommer.

The Church Office will close at 3:00 p.m. on Friday to help accommodate staff members that are attending.

"A Man, His Faith and His Work"

What? Beginning on March 19 we will present a series of meetings for men focusing on how they can best live out their Christian faith in the workplace.

Where? Church gym

When? March 19, May 21, September 10, November 5 from 7:00-8:30 a.m.

Who? All men that call NCBC home, sons, and any guests they would like to invite.

Food? Absolutely! A manly breakfast will be served free of charge!

First Meeting? Justin Taylor will introduce our series with a talk on, "Work Matters: What God Has to Do with Your Job".

Stay tuned...more info to follow.....