

When Mankind Meets Its Maker

5—Freedom—Won and Given

The people of God are born free. This is observable in the new born church at Pentecost (Acts 4:13). It remains necessary to life and godliness, and to our witness (Gal. 5:1).

- ▣ It is a top down freedom. It comes from understanding what our Creator is about.
- ▣ It can only be restored by redemption—God paying a price to reinstate our freedom.
- ▣ Freedom is God’s gift—not an ‘inalienable right’.
- ▣ It’s an inward to outward freedom. A free society is sustained by free people.
- ▣ This contrasts with the narrative that says our life is the result of structures which must be overcome by personal choices.
- ▣ Attempts at freedom take many forms, such as ‘doing it my way’, removing oppression, avoiding responsibility, ‘living the dream’, and many others.
- ▣ But these do not speak to our actual situation.

Our Bible is a narrative of God bringing us to freedom.

- ▣ The Lord sets Israel free—or redeems them—from Egypt.
- ▣ This is so they can serve the Lord (Exod. 7:16).
- ▣ Without this revelation, our attempts to understand and live in freedom may seem like virtual images on a screen—that can disappear at the flick of a button.

Sin is using freedom for ourselves—as Israel discovered.

- ▣ Outside of obedience to God, we lose our freedom.
- ▣ Freedom must be restored by redemption—a cleansing from sin (Zech. 3:9; 13:1).

Jesus comes to establish our freedom.

- ▣ Jesus will fulfil God’s promise of liberation (Luke 4:18-21).
- ▣ He will rescue his people ‘from their sins’ (Matt. 1:21), so they can serve God in holiness (Luke 1:68-75). Notice the ‘from’ and ‘to’ again.
- ▣ What does it mean for Christ to remove the sin of the world (John 1:29)?
- ▣ Ideologies try to do this, but miss what is really needed—the defeat of false lords.
- ▣ Whoever commits sin is a slave to it (John 8:31-36).
- ▣ A new ‘exodus’ or ‘departure’ is needed (Luke 9:31)—freedom from sin, and for God!

Jesus accomplishes freedom for us.

- ▣ Jesus death is the hour belonging to his enemies, and to darkness (Luke 22:53).
- ▣ He personally engages what binds us—sin, with its futility, pollution and shame, the law’s accusation (guilt) and judgement, the world, and death.
- ▣ Satan himself comes. But cannot rule Jesus. He does his Father’s will (John 14:30-31).
- ▣ This is opened up for us by the word of the apostles and by the coming of the Spirit.

Through Christ’s blood, we receive *forgiveness* (Eph. 1:7).

- ▣ The apostles announce forgiveness to Christ’s murderers (Acts 2:38). The relief of this is palpable. Freedom before God pours out in a freely giving community.
- ▣ Guilt binds us up in self-justification, self-promotion, self-excusing and busyness.
- ▣ We are released from our sins through Christ’s blood (Rev. 1:5).

- ▣ We are released from a life of self-accomplishment—or a law-based obedience (Acts 13:39; Rom. 8:1-4; Gal. 4:3-5).
- ▣ It's worth asking—at any time, 'Is my life starting with guilt or forgiveness?'

Through Christ's blood, we have *cleansing*.

- ▣ Peter must find a new way of seeing himself. He *is* clean (John 13:10).
- ▣ Peter must find a new way of seeing others (Acts 15:9).
- ▣ Circumcision signifies cleansing from defilement. Israel will not do this. So, God will do it for them (Deut. 30:6).
- ▣ This is what happens when Christ dies (Col. 2:11-14). What is unclean in us is attributed to Christ, and, in his flesh, cut off. We are clean—and able to enjoy God.
- ▣ We must cease trusting ourselves and cast ourselves on God's mercy. We must learn to see ourselves as God has decided to see us—in his Son, and no longer unclean.
- ▣ Christ washes his whole church to make her pure—as a bride for himself (Eph. 5:26).
- ▣ Paul, like Peter, must find a new way of seeing himself (Acts 22:16).
- ▣ He calls it regeneration—a whole new life (Tit. 3:5).
- ▣ We can live with a clear conscience (Heb. 9:14; 10:2).
- ▣ This is a settled state—enduring our failures (1 John 1:7-9).
- ▣ This cleansing is what lands us among the exultant saints in heaven (Rev. 7:9-14).

Through Christ's blood, we have *a change of master*.

- ▣ We are transferred to Christ's kingdom—redeemed and forgiven (Col. 1:13-14).
- ▣ Our *old humanity* is no longer in charge (Rom. 6:6-11).
- ▣ God joins us to Christ's death and resurrection. Our 'body of sin' is disabled (v. 6).
- ▣ We are freed—actually justified (v. 7). Where the guilt of sin is removed, its power is decisively broken. Notice, Paul at this point is talking about what we are to believe, not how we are to behave.
- ▣ *Sin* is not in charge (Rom. 6:15-23). We have become obedient to the gospel. We need to live *from* this new life—not *up* to it.
- ▣ *Desire* is no longer out of control. We have been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20—passive). So, through faith, we have crucified our flesh with its affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24—active)—a reference to Christ's cross in which we have shared.
- ▣ We now see what God means by saving us from sin. He's taught us to not *want* it.
- ▣ The *world* is not in charge. It has been crucified to us (Gal. 6:14—passive). The world doesn't think it needs us. We don't need the world—but we've got plenty to give!
- ▣ *Death* is not in charge (Heb. 2:15).
- ▣ Because sin is condemned in the flesh of Christ, we are freed to walk by the Spirit in new Christ-life (Rom. 8:1-9).

If there is no cross where Jesus dies, freedom dies—in a restlessness of guilt, a quagmire of pollution, and a collision of rival powers. But freedom lives and thrives for God's people because it has pleased him to unite us to his Son, in whom freedom is granted as a gift.

We should treasure and guard his gift, with hope, and faith and love.

In all of these studies on the cross of Christ, we've seen that God speaks and acts for the whole world.

- ▣ The whole world has been judged.

- ▣ The whole world has evidence before it that God gets his creation right—starting with giving righteousness to us who believe.
- ▣ The whole world is addressed with God’s message of reconciliation or peace.
- ▣ The whole world has been loved.
- ▣ The whole world needs to find his freedom.
- ▣ A further study—to appear as a blog article—will show that the whole world is ruled by this crucified Lamb. Nothing has been left unaddressed by Christ’s cross.
- ▣ For the blog article, visit grantataberfoyle.com