

Sermon by Don Emmitte, Grace Restoration Ministries

One of the great biographical movies of our time was "The Hiding Place," the story of the courageous life and testimony of Corrie Ten Boom. One scene in particular stands out in my mind as I recall the film. Corrie Ten Boom was standing outside the barracks of the concentration camp with her fellow captives, the snow is falling, and the ragged clothing issued by the Nazis cut none of the bitter cold of the German December winter storm. Up to this point in the story, her sister has sustained her hope, though now she has been executed. Already she has witnessed the death of her father. Each prisoner is numbered, more like animals than human beings. Gathered in their ranks, an officer begins to callout the numbers of the prisoners -- to a destination unknown. They begin to wonder, is it to the gas chambers, a shallow grave, the medical and experimental labs? She doesn't know. The fear is etched upon her face and her number is called. Many images begin to flash through her mind. Images of her childhood, her faithful parents, her sister, all that she held dear; then she discovers she is being set free! Oh, the great joy that is hers fills the screen, it is the climax of the movie!

Corrie Ten Boom was set free from the grip of the Nazis. Though that was not the first moment of her freedom. She was set free long before that experience. Betsy, her sister, had given the knowledge of real freedom, when she said, "No matter how deep a pit we are put in, God is there beside us." That's freedom! When we know that no matter how dark or difficult the hour God is with us, that is freedom! This is the impact of Paul's message to the church at Colossae. There were those who would have convinced these early Christians that their freedom was only partial. These legalistic heretics had tried to shackle the Colossian Christians with rules and regulations. Paul comes to them and reminds them that Christ paid the price in the death of the cross to set them free from the law. God purchased this freedom through the Roman cross, and that freedom flowed from Calvary to all those who had come under its power. **This freedom is complete freedom. It is freedom from guilt brought by sin. It is freedom from the law. It is freedom from the dark powers of evil that enslave men.** Though multitudes are still bound by these enslaving powers, all of those who are in Christ Jesus are able to enjoy freedom from them. All of us who have been born again have had our number called by the Lord of the universe and we are set free! I want us to look closely at this freedom today.

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See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (Colossians 2:8-15 ESV).

First, We Have Freedom from the Guilt of Sin through the Cross the Cross of Christ (v. 13).

Recently I was watching a special at Sea World of Texas on television. As a part of the entertainment there were vignettes of the performers from Texas talking about the bigness of the state. One talked about the Texas millionaire who had a house so big that he had a trolley to take folks from the dining room to the den. His swimming pool was so big that he had a light house installed at one end to keep people from getting lost. His ranch was so big that he had to have an airplane to get from one end to the other in a day!

Texans do have a way of bragging a little about the state. Of course, all of it's the truth. I overheard a story about two men arguing about their states. One of the men in frustration, trying to convince the Texan that his state was better, said, "Well, what's the death rate like in Texas?" Thinking surely that he had him, he smiled and waited for the reply. The Texan took a breath and looked him square in the eye and said, "Same as where you live, one to a person!"

There is a truth there in the midst of all the foolishness. We all do die. The Scripture affirms it is appointed to all men once to die. We cannot avoid that day. The great fear that so many have of this time is rooted in their guilt. All of us at some time or another face the question of their guilt as we come to a knowledge of our breaking the laws of God. There have been many solutions offered to this guilt. Some have tried to balance the guilt with good works, others with personal punishment and sacrifice. The apostle Paul gives us the real answer to guilt. We have freedom from guilt through the cross of Christ and His blood which was shed on Calvary!

As Paul points to the cross as our answer to this guilt, he uses some very interesting words. Look at verse 13: *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.*

"The tense of this verb, "forgiven," is past tense. It points to the fact that it has already taken place. We have been forgiven in the death of Christ that has already been accomplished. We don't need to wait for something, else to happen to be set free from guilt. Jesus has already done it! The word itself is special. "Forgiven" is not the usual word used in the New Testament, which translates a concept meaning "to send away," or "to cancel." It is a word that means "to give," or "to do a favor." It is from the same root word as the word translated "grace." Here the word means to graciously forgive, to pardon. It calls attention to the fact that God has forgiven our sins as an act of grace. We receive it as a gift. It is not something we earn, or merit.

Do you see what Paul is saying? We are set free! Praise to His wonderful name... we are free! The old hymn, "At Calvary," says it so well:

*Years I spent in vanity and pride,
Caring not my Lord was crucified,
Knowing not it was for me he died! On Calvary.
Mercy there was great, and grace was free;
Pardon there was multiplied to me;
There my burdened soul found liberty! At Calvary.*

Second, We Have Freedom from the Bondage of the Law through the Cross of Christ (v. 14).

Jesus did much more than just fulfill the law, He took it to the cross of Calvary with Him, ...having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (v. 14).

The word Paul uses here is very important. "Handwriting" is a word that indicates a "handwritten document." It would be much the same as our bank note today. It is a note that was signed by our own hand. It is an obligation that we have personally assumed. Here is so large that none of us could ever have begun to pay it. This document was "against us." It was "contrary to us." We could not in any way keep the obligation. We have been set free from the guilt of the law, but more, we have been set free from the bondage of the law. It is one thing to be forgiven when we break the law, it is another entirely to be set free from the obligation of obedience. We have been released from the law. Do you see the significance of this act on the part of Christ for us? We no longer are under an obligation that is impossible to pay. He paid it all for us!

Please understand this principle from God's word. It very well could mean all the difference in your life. This does not mean that the moral aspects of the law are no longer principles by which we seek to live. They are. Rather it means that the law is no longer the rules and regulations by which we seek to gain acceptance before God. We will not be condemned because we have broken the law, or be accepted because we have kept them. We could not keep them anyway. All the law did was condemn us. Now, however, we are set free from the bondage of the law to love the Lord and our fellowman as never before. We can obey the law now. We need not cringe before it. The law no longer holds us in bondage. We walk before the Lord in love and liberty! There is yet more that Christ has done for us in the cross. We are indeed free from guilt. We are free from the bondage of the law, but we also have been given freedom from the power of evil through the cross.

Third, We Have Freedom from the Power of Evil through the Cross of Christ (v. 15).

Satan is no joke. He is real. He does go about "like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Now, however, we have freedom from his power over us. The apostle Paul uses military language in this verse. It is the language of conquest and victory. Through the cross Christ wrestled away every weapon the enemy possessed. Further, he made an open show of the enemy. He exposed Satan for what he really is, He mocked him with boldness, openly.

The cross was a desperate effort on the part of Satan to defeat the plan of God. Doubtlessly Satan thought when Christ had breathed his last on the cross that he had won the battle. Indeed it looked to many that evil had won the victory. Instead, it was Christ who triumphed. This word Paul uses for "triumph" is very rich in meaning. It indicated the victorious return of a general from battle. Jesus is pictured as such. He is the victorious general returning from war with all the captives in tow.

While we may not know all of the spoils that Christ won for us that day, we can know this for sure... **SATAN NO LONGER HAS THE POWER OVER US AS HE DID BEFORE THE CROSS!** John says it this way: "Greater is He that is within us, than he that is within the world" (1 John 4:4). No matter what the great liar may be saying to you, he has no claim on your life

when you have been set free by the power of the blood. The cross of Calvary stands as a great monument to the defeat of Satan at the hands of the Son of God!

A Final Thought:

Are you free? If as a Christian you are enjoying spiritual freedom, then remember that it came to you through the cross. You are free from guilt because he bore your guilt on the cross. You are free from the law because he nailed it to the tree. You are free from the oppressive power of evil only through the cross. This freedom is not your work, but the work of Christ. All you do is stand boldly in faith in the liberty that is yours in Him. Do you long to be free? You can be. If you find yourself laden with a weight of guilt, Christ can make you free. If you feel condemned by your own sense of guilt, Christ can set you free. All you need do is come to Him by faith. Will you today? The decision is yours.