

THE FIRST 15

Thursday, October 17, 2024

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Today is Thursday, October 17th, and this week we are reflecting on how God sets us free from guilt by the power of his grace.

OPENING PRAYER

In this season, we are praying this prayer together.

May the cornerstone of my life, and of our life together, be Christ and Christ alone. AMEN.

SCRIPTURE

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8:14-17

REFLECTION

Slavery is bad.

That's not an earth-shattering claim. In reading that, I don't expect anyone to think,

"Wow, I learned something new this morning."

But what may not be clear is that when the New Testament writers speak about slavery, they are talking about more than a lived circumstance. It's the language they use to talk about a spiritual condition. As Israel had once lived as slaves in Egypt, we too live as slaves to our sinful nature. As God delivered Israel from their Egyptian bondage through his servant Moses, God delivers us from our spiritual bondage through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Guilt is a natural byproduct of becoming aware of the full magnitude of our sin. As we noted earlier in the week, guilt paralyzes but guilt also enslaves. It seeks to have the last word, to be the final verdict, to deny us from experiencing any real sense of hope. Guilt says it's impossible for you to ever be anything other than a slave, but like everything else that comes from the mouth of the devil (our adversary, the evil one),

Guilt tells us a half-truth.

It's actually true to say that you lack the power to break free from your chains, but the message of the Gospel is that when we repent (turning away from who we have been and what we have done) and place our trust in Jesus as the Messiah, God forgives our sins and gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Through Christ, God wipes the slate clean **AND** provides the power to make us new people. God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Notice how Paul carefully articulates this in verse 15. He writes, "*by him we cry Abba Father.*"

Who is “him?”

“Him” is “*the Spirit you received.*” It’s a subtle but critical piece of what Paul is contending here. When we receive God’s Spirit, Paul says, ***The Spirit*** continually testifies to ***our spirit***. It is only by the work of the Spirit that those words can come out of our mouths and we are able to know that we are, “*God’s children.*”

In what way have you found yourself being guided by guilt’s “half-truth?” Is it possible that you might be experiencing some level of frustration in your life right now because you are still trying to break your own chains? In what ways might you allow the Spirit of God to do for you what you cannot do for yourself? What do you think that might look like in your life?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

*Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to you, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say. AMEN.*

-Prayer from Lectio 365 App