

LifeGroup Study

Date: July 16, 2023

Text: Genesis 22:1-14; Romans 6:12-23

Theme: id—A Closer Look at Romans 6-8

Freed...for obedience

Belong

- What are some things that you would use to prove your identity?
- How are they similar/different?
- What are some situations in which your proof of identity is critical?

Who do you think you are? No really...who do you think you are? What's your identity? How do you know? We live in a culture that seeks to tell us who we are based on what we do, what we own or who we know, but God's Word says that we will know who we are when we know whose we are. We are "Christian," people who are "in Christ" by grace through faith. Our identity is wrapped up in Jesus. Day by day we are challenged to live out this new identity, to allow God to shape our hearts, minds, and behaviors to reflect our true identity as children of God.

- How do you describe who you are to someone else?
- How do you describe whose you are to someone else?

Prayer...

You are a God of amazing love and mercy. We are in bondage to sin, but we are free in you. We are dead in our sin, but we are alive in you. We are held captive by our human condition, but our chains are gone and you have set us free to live for your purposes in Jesus' name. Amen!

Believe

Read Romans 6:12-23. This passage is asking this question: "Will we choose obedience to sin or to Christ?" We have a choice of who and what we will obey. And is this obedience in response to the law of God or the grace of God?

The legalism of the Torah was seen by Jewish people as the pathway to right relationship with God. However, a twisting of the Torah produces a set of rules for earning God's love. Giving us the Torah

was in itself an act of grace on the part of a loving God. In Jesus, we are freed from sin which is Jesus' fulfillment of the law (*Matthew 5:17*).

Here Paul is describing a new kind of slavery. This calls for our allegiance to the One who has set us free, which is a new kind of slavery—one that leads to joyful obedience.

- How comfortable are you with the word "slavery" being used in a new context?
- And what about the word "obedience?" What images does this word bring to mind?
- Can both of these words take on new meaning for us?

Essentially, we have two choices:

- 1) Take on the yoke of Jesus (*Matt. 11:28*) or
- 2) Take on the yoke of legalism (*Act 15:10-11 circumcision*)

We are all "slaves" to something (*John 8:31-38*). Slaves to sin get no benefit but earn wages of death, but a slave to righteousness gets a free gift of God; this form of slavery is true freedom.

- To what are you a slave? Why? What would change that?

Become

This week, live in relationship to God's grace; not the "slavery" of trying to do the right thing. Identify those things in your life that are keeping you from being "free." Spend time in prayer, confessing your needs to God. Focus on the cross of Christ. Take on the "yoke" of Jesus and learn from him about how obedient life is lived.

Prayer...

Father God, I know that I cannot earn your love. Help me to live my life in response to grace rather than response to law. Teach me how to be obedient to your purposes and plans so that I can truly be free. Amen.



Devotionals: Daily Walk on the Rock

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Day 1: Monday —Watch the Father Our new series' theme centers on our identity in Christ. We truly understand who we are only when we realize whose we are. And comprehending whose we are becomes clear only as we reflect on the Bible's revelation of the unconditional, lavish, merciful, relentless love of our Father God. With eyes only on the father, read the story Jesus tells in Luke 15:11-32. Did you see the father waiting, watching, and longing for his son's return? Did you notice how he ran to embrace his wayward child? Now read John 3:16; Romans 8:31-39; and Ephesians 3:14-21. Do you know God as your loving Father, a Father who longs for relationship with you? Talk with your Heavenly Father.

Day 2: Tuesday —A Slave, a Child, and an Heir Slavery is an abomination! In the U.S., we just celebrated Independence Day. God's people Israel have been enslaved numerous times, and slavery still exists in our world today. So, having said that, what do we do with our call to be slaves of God (*Romans 6:22*)? Can we get past old images and create new ones in our hearts and minds? Are we willing to yield our lives to God (*Romans 12:1-2*)? How can we be God's slaves and also God's children and heirs (*Romans 6:22; 8:16-17*)? Read *Romans 6:12-23* and *Philippians 2:5-8*. Pray you will trust God's heart and yield to God's love.

Day 3: Wednesday —Real Freedom How do you define freedom? Many see it as license to do as they want. But is license true freedom? Consider that we find true freedom only under the umbrella of God's love, protection, and authority. Because God created us, God knows what is life-giving, purposeful, and able to fill us with true joy. Did the son (*Luke 15:11-24*) find true freedom in living for himself or in the father's presence and under the father's loving authority? Do you really trust that God knows/wants what is best for you? Read *John 8:31-36; 15:9-11; Romans 6:12-23; and 2 Corinthians 3:17-18*. Talk to God about what it means to embrace your identity as one who lives under God's grace-filled lordship.

Day 4: Thursday —A Right Perspective Read *John 14:31; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 10:5-7; and 1 Peter 1:18-20*. As you reflect on Jesus' obedience, read *Romans 6:12-23*. Eugene Peterson reminds us that we cannot treat God as our equal or as one who bows to our dictates and allows us to define life's parameters. Rather, God is "the God of exodus and Easter, the God of Sinai and Calvary. If we want to understand God, we must do it on his terms. If we want to see God the way he really is, we must look to the

place of authority—to Scripture and to Jesus Christ" (*A Long Obedience in the Same Direction; Intervarsity Press, 2000; 63*). Pray you will have a right perspective as you ponder obedience to God.

Day 5: Friday —Celebrating Our Freedom

Grace is unmerited favor; it is God's riches at Christ's expense. Read *John 6:28-29; Romans 6:12-23; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; and Ephesians 2:8-9*. We have just celebrated our nation's freedom, but our far greater joy should be in the freedom we have in God's amazing grace. Sing or pray Newton/Tomlin lyrics: "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed...My chains are gone, I've been set free. My God, my Savior has ransomed me. And like a flood His mercy reigns, unending love, amazing grace" (2006, *sixsteps Music*). In prayer, ask God how you can share grace with others.

Day 6: Saturday —Free From, Free For As you read *Romans 6:12-23* again, notice what we are freed from and what we are freed for. We are saved by grace through faith (*Ephesians 2:8-9*); what insight does *2:10* add? In *Romans 6*, we learn that sin is not to reign in us; what is to reign (*6:13,16,18-19*)? Who is to reign as Master/Lord (*6:13,22*)? What is the gift (*6:23*)? Does Jesus, in *Mark 12:28-31*, help us understand true freedom and how it is lived out? What insights does Peter add in *1 Peter 1:22-25; 2:1-5,9-10*? Read *Revelation 4:8-11; 5:9-13*; pray, and tell the Lord you want him to reign in you.

Day 7: Sunday —"Thy Will Be Done" Can we call Jesus "Lord," and still do as we please? Consider that true freedom is experienced as we live in response to God's grace; real liberty is living in humble submission to the One who loves us perfectly and eternally. Look into the face of Jesus (*John 12:44-46; Hebrews 12:1b-3; and 1 John 4:9-10*), and ask yourself if you can trust God's love. Remembering Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, read *Matthew 6:9-10*. Do you really want God's will for your life? As you read *Galatians 2:19-21*, allow it to form your prayer. Embrace the truth of *Isaiah 64:8*.



St. Paul Lutheran Church

"Your Refuge from the Storm"