

Blessings for Curses

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[0 : 00] You're listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee. To learn more about us, visit our website at gracereformed.org.

And now, today's sermon. When Jesus came to the earth, he, as we know, brought salvation to the lost and a new life, a new way of life for those who became his followers.

If you can turn with me really quick, there's a couple of passages I want us to look at in preparation for 1 Peter. Look with me at John chapter 8. Those who live in Jesus' words will have a different experience than those who decide to live in their own wisdom.

This is how Jesus words it to his disciples as he's speaking to them. They're asking him questions. What does this new life as his disciples look like? John 8 and verse 31 says, So Jesus says to the Jews who had believed him, If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.

You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. That freedom is what our world desires but never experiences because there is only one way to true freedom, and this is what Jesus is proclaiming to them, and that is through Christ.

[1 : 32] True freedom in Christ cannot be substituted on earth no matter how hard we try. And we do try. If one is not in Christ, they are a slave to the evil, satanic forces of this world.

And it will haunt them constantly and control them and enslave them with sinful passions and eventually destroy them with death. This is what it means to be truly free.

Several passages I just want to quote to you. You might want to write them down to look at them later. But when I say evil, satanic forces, this is the result of what happens to those who are under such slavery.

This is Romans 8, 7. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot. That's what it means to be a slave.

It cannot do otherwise. 1 Corinthians 2, 14. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to them, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

[2 : 47] And if they're spiritually dead, they cannot see Christ and have His freedom. James 4, 4 gives a stark warning to the church. He says, You adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. It's not only that they're slaves, but their slavery actually produces enmity from God towards them, a separation.

So therefore, you can't love the world in its debauchery and also say you love God at the same time. Satan has definitely improved on his ability to deceive humanity.

We forget that he isn't locked in time like we are, that he continues to build his arsenal, and he gets better at it every year, changes up his tactics.

And he has improved his ability to deceive humanity, and that they are the ones, they who are in Satan's control, they believe they're the ones who live in freedom, and Christians are stuck in an old religion, keeping them from true enjoyment of life.

[4 : 04] It's twisted. He has not only blinded their minds from the prison they live in, but see us as the ones who are imprisoning them, who are keeping them from their full potential.

We are blamed for the abuse, attacking their freedom, and not showing our love by accepting their sin. We will be accused of all kinds of crimes because we call sin evil, and we call holiness good.

Christians today are tempted because the lies are so deceitful. They're tempted to celebrate sin with the unbeliever because their faith is weak, and the temptations of disapproval is a real weapon that we can feel pointed out our own psyche.

I've been using this illustration recently with the youth we met on Thursday night, had an amazing time with them, also at the men's group last week. If sin could be put on a scale of one to ten, and ten being everyone in this room would agree, this is atrocious, this is horrible, this is a disgusting sin, and one would be a sin, but not so bad.

The problem is that Satan has learned how to keep that scale at one to ten, but he keeps pushing ten farther down the row without changing the number. So what ends up happening to us?

[5 : 33] One, which used to be one, is now ten. And we as Christians fall prey to this tactic. Well, at least I'm not doing this, but we have allowed in the Christian world to be influenced to embrace certain sins that God has always called evil, crimes against the kingdom.

If what the world presents to us is contrary to our king and his word, we are to run from it, for it will enslave us from the very thing we are freed from.

Parents, this is part of the teaching that you are required to do to your children, to teach them to know and fear the Lord. What does it mean to be under his care and really to live within his freedom?

You provide for them the truth, not only at church here, but also at home, that protects them from stumbling back in to the lies. I wish this worked like osmosis.

We used to, in Bible college, call our pillows prayer. We would say, I spent four hours in prayer last night. But it didn't work that way, did it? No matter if I slept on top of the word, it didn't come into my brain and my heart this way.

[6 : 52] We have to, as it says, not only watch our minds, keep our minds pure, renewing our minds, we have to pay close attention to what our homes, our children are listening to and watching and ask yourself this question, what are they being taught?

Because there is a scale from one to ten and are they able to identify what is slavery, what enslaves a soul, and what true freedom is? When they are absorbing art, when they're absorbing what's around them that God has given us, free to enjoy, we also have to be wise that the evil one will lace what is good with what is evil and we have to be able to identify and teach our children the goodness of the freedom of the gospel.

Does it reflect God's beauty of creation or does it teach them to love and embrace that which Christ died for? The church cannot sit back.

We've made the mistake of going off one side too far into legalism, which is this is not legalism. And so we're afraid to go on the other side and calling sin what it is. And I, in good conscience, cannot allow people to stay in sin, enslaved in it, because it does not benefit anyone.

So how does it apply to our passage today? What does Peter have to do with this in light of us living in the darkness? Look with me if you can.

[8 : 17] Go back to 1 Peter chapter 3 and I want us to look down at verse 15 because this is where his conclusion is. We're going to read his conclusion and then we'll see how this all ties back together. If you are living in slavery to sin and you are trapped there, guess what you can't do, which is about to come up here in verse 15.

But in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason of the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect.

So this is where Peter eventually goes with all of these instructions that he's giving to us this morning. Knowing that how we treat each other and the world will produce this question.

What is it that drives your actions? What's behind this? What hope do you have that I don't have? Peter has used the gospel, how Jesus is sacrificed for us and the grace and mercy we have received as the motivation for our life in this world.

Not to earn our salvation, not to earn a reward, but to lead others to the same freedom that we have. Because of what we have received, we now spread this light, this salt.

[9 : 34] We are ambassadors. He calls us priests. He calls us living stones. There's so many illustrations of how we literally reach out and touch the world by the way in which we love and respond to them. We saw this in how he's already covered our interactions with the government.

He uses the slave master illustration. We talked about the home last week, how it is that both man and women are a reflection to each other, which then also reflects to the world. I didn't quote this verse last week, but what's interesting is that Jesus says, the world would know that you're my disciples by the love that you have for one another.

That would mean if a husband and wife are both a disciple of Jesus, the world should be able to look at their relationship and go, oh, you must be a follower of Christ. Unfortunately, a lot of our marriages don't look like that, do they?

We also forget that our spouse is our sister and our brother and the reflection of what God has done for us. So all of this is writing to the church trying to help us to understand that there is something far more significant than our current life and the world tells us.

The world believes we are the most significant part of our life. Our pleasure, our protection, our gratification is what is significant and Peter's like, that is so shallow.

[10 : 47] That is so, we are so beyond that slavery. We have been set free from that and that's why he says here in verse eight, finally. He's gonna give a final conclusion. This is what the gospel has liberated us from and to.

We talked about the government, we've talked about slaves and masters, and we've talked about, so he's talking about individual specific situations. Now he's just gonna wrap them all together. Let's just talk about everybody in the church.

Finally, all of you, verse eight, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. I want us all to pay attention, close attention, to the idea that Peter presents here.

This is written to the church and when he says, finally everyone, obviously he means the believers that are there. They live in such a way with other people that it's reflecting of their, an actual body, an actual member of a family.

Let's work through each one of these again just to stop and just ponder it. How would you apply this? So Peter's like, you who have been redeemed and set free from the slavery of sin, you have the inheritance of Christ.

[11 : 56] This is how I want you to think, all of us. Unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, a humble mind.

What is required for all of these to be practiced? You have to be in the presence of another person. I'm very humble towards myself, let me tell you.

And I really rarely argue with myself. But put me in the presence of another human being and all of a sudden we have problems. We have problems. The physical presence of the body.

Peter assumes the church would live together to accomplish the mission that they were called to do in their local city, town, wherever village that they were in. Unity of mind is impossible if they are not spending time together.

Not uniformity of mind, by the way, where everyone has to agree on the same exact thoughts and preferences. But we are agreeing on who Christ is and what Christ is for us and for others. A unity of mind.

[13 : 07] This is a common instruction given to the churches of the New Testament. You could almost see this in every epistle. To do the work given to them as a whole body so that their body is not fractured.

How we use our tongue and our time should be in such a way that we are encouraging one another, not discouraging one another. And James even goes on to say that you have to be so careful because your tongue is like a fire lit in one ear can burn a church down.

It's the illustration. It's terrifying. So the work we do in this world is so difficult. It's so complicated. It requires strength from numbers to carry out the mission for the king.

The very people our king has called us to give our lives to, to love, to care for, to show sympathy and tenderness, we find all kinds of reasons to leave them for some other worldly pursuit.

Wow, John. Seems kind of harsh. If I can let you come into the mind of John for a moment, which is very scary, this is what makes preaching very hard.

[14 : 34] My wife, unfortunately, hears me complain at times how when you commit to preaching every word of God, it's convicting because we are often blinded by our flesh.

So I feel the weight of this as well. I felt it all week long. I've examined my own heart and my own mind. Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 4.

I think this will help bring us some clarity. Peter is pointing out how the work that God has commanded us to do how it's accomplished.

I'm telling you, it is a great joy when you find out that what God wants from you, He does not require of you alone. Because no one could do it.

Not even the Apostle Paul. No one is capable of carrying out these commands. So how is it that we have unity of mind?

[15 : 46] How do we apply this first command given to us? Well, Ephesians chapter 4 is something you've heard me quote, but I think it's a healthy connection so that we understand what He means by this.

So this is verse 11. He, and it says, and He, that being a reference to the Spirit's work within our lives and the Spirit's work within the church.

So He, the Spirit, gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, so they're all gifted people with gifted works to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ until we all attain the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measures and the statures of the fullness of Christ.

Peter is a man of little words. He says, unity of mind. Paul says, here's every branch to the tree that Peter references. You'll notice how Peter's letters are small.

Men of few words. This requires that we would be together and sit under the preaching and the teaching and as we do, the power of the Spirit comes and He unifies our hearts and He unifies our mind I say this with full confidence because it's been a part of the Reformation and part of really church history for as long as we know.

[17 : 15] We've interpreted this passage to say that there is something supernatural that happens as we are sitting here. The Word of God we believe is alive. It cuts to our hearts and it says according to Paul that when it's proclaimed, taught, and preached amongst the body the Spirit does something unique in our hearts and our souls where He causes us to become mature and unified in our hearts and our minds into one.

It's a spiritual act. So right now it's not for education or funnies or a nice, I'm not a motivational speaker. That's not my calling.

My calling is to proclaim Christ crucified to you to unify our hearts so that we can lay our lives down for Christ so that others might find the same rest in Christ. That's what we're called to.

So we can't just take this little command from Peter and just detach it from the rest of the letter and really from the rest of the Bible. When he's saying we must be unified in mind and heart, it's a spiritual act.

It's something we can't do in our own power. The Spirit power has to come to it. If you go to chapter 5 in Ephesians, we're not going to go there now, but we all know this phrase, grieve not the Holy Spirit.

[18 : 29] You guys remember this? Do you know what was grieving them? Not the unity of mind. They were disunified. They were starting to fight amongst each other. They were tearing each other down.

When that happens, when a church is not unified, then the Spirit's power that does its work to protect us and guide us and grow us is now grieved because it can't do its work. It's just like parents.

When we see our children bickering and fighting, what are they doing to the home? They're tearing down the peace and the unity and the love of the home, and it grieves our hearts because it's not what we're trying to teach our children to do.

I'm assuming that's what your home's like. Mine, not so much. We have many hungry, exhausted, hurting souls in our congregation who need sympathy and love.

So it's not only unity of mind, but they need a tender heart. They need somebody who is humble, not immediately telling them where they have failed, but someone who hold their hand and carry their burden.

[19 : 38] See, there's no way. And I love how Peter works with the latter here where he explains what it is we must do and you're like, man, I can't submit to the government. My marriage is falling apart and Peter just stops and says, I know.

Let me tell you where your source of strength is. It's not in your capacity to do this in your own. Likewise, remember, we have to keep backing up. Where does the likewise pointing to? He's pointing back to the gospel of Christ.

We rest in the sufficiency of what Christ has done for us and then it applies here. It's never in our own strength. It's not legalistic in nature where we're earning God's forgiveness or favor.

But instead, we are seeing it as a way to fulfill the mission of making sure that our lives are centered on Christ for the benefit of others.

And often, we find ourselves peppering in church where it's convenient for our schedules. Peter has reversed that. He's saying, no, this is your priority and if you can pepper other things in, then so be.

[20 : 46] God has used His church to prepare us for the very thing He says, to be ready to give an answer of the hope that lies within you. The confidence to do it and the knowledge to do it is right here in the body of Christ.

Another quick word to parents. By the way, we are putting a roster together, everybody in the church, so that the elders know everybody's name and all the children. There's like 116 children in this church. So what I'm about to say is pretty relevant.

More than, almost half our church, y'all. I know some of you are feeling it. Like, I know, they're all in my row with me. Parents, if we do not teach our children the spiritual power of God's word and His church, not only in our homes, but in their everyday life, they will easily be tempted to fill their life with something other than the power of the gospel.

Because Satan is that good. This is why we're constantly told to be warned about the evil that awaits us.

In 20 years of pastoring, I have seen so many children struggle. I was a young adult pastor and college pastor for six years before I came here. And the amount of kids that really struggled with their faith because they were never really taught to see the power and the wonder of Christ in their life to make it a priority above all else, including their career and their college experience, that they became enslaved to sins that they didn't even know were even possible before.

[22 : 23] And let me tell you, you put kids around other kids, they'll introduce them to sins they didn't even know existed. The solution is not to keep your children away from those children. That's impossible.

The solution is to teach them where the power of real life comes from. So, we have been called out of darkness into this marvelous light.

We live in a community of those who love the light. Our lives are centered around those words and missions and if anything hinders it, we want to remove it.

We want to get rid of it. This is, if you turn with me to Hebrews chapter 12, this is the very thing that the writer of Hebrews is worried about. Not just sin, but also distractions, things that weigh us down from what really matters, which is what Peter is addressing.

So, this is true freedom. True freedom is to lay aside not only our sin but the distractions of the world and do so with joy and do so with significance in our life and understand we don't need it because what we are for God is more important than anything else that this world can be.

[23 : 30] That's true freedom. He says this in Hebrews 12, 1. Remember that, therefore, is a reflection to those already in chapter 11 who proved that they were failing, faulty people but by faith they trust the Lord and they ended up serving Him in ways that were commendable.

And he said not because of their obedience but because of their faith. By faith, Abraham. By faith, David. By faith, a harlot. So, Hebrews 12, 1 says, therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses of faith, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings to us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us and where are we setting our eyes looking to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy, he's got to do it, the gospel, that was set before Him endured the cross despising the shame and seated at the right hand of God.

the command given to our obedience is never with a rod to abuse you or punish you. The command to call you to obedience is an arrow pointing to the cross and says He was beaten for your sins.

He was put to shame for your guilt. So, lay your sin aside and lay, get rid of the weight because it's slavery and enjoy the freedom of running the race of Christ.

It's very, very different. Listen, I can feel the weight of these words this morning and it's hard to hear, it's hard to preach. But I think Peter makes a logical step for us in helping us understand the significance between the flow.

[25 : 17] We really need the body of Christ for this help of being unified in mind and humble and patient and merciful towards each other because that's where we find strength and renewed.

Many of you are feeling this. You're feeling it in your home, you're feeling it in your souls, you're exhausted and I wish our church was perfect but it's not. All of you have complaints about something.

I have more complaints than you do, trust me. I see all the problems from my perspective but my solution I have come to is a greater vision of Christ and he draws us all closer together so that we learn how to love sacrificially and care for one another in our homes and in our communities.

This is exactly what Peter's doing. He draws us closer together. Be unified in your thoughts and your faith. See that as your priority. Likewise, what Christ has done for you, he laid his life down.

You, lay your life down, get your schedules out of the way and put Christ at the focus so that you can care for one another for this next verse. Look at verse 9. So 1 Peter 3, 9.

[26 : 26] Because what he's calling us to is really hard. Do not repay evil for evil, reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless for this, for to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing.

This is, I think the Net Bible maybe have a little bit, it orders the words in I think a little bit more helpful way trying to get at the heart of what Peter is saying because it can make it sound like there's more of a blessing coming our way if we do this, but that's not really how I think the Greek is being presented.

Let me read it to you. This is from the Net Bible. It says, do not return evil for evil or insults for insult, but instead bless others because you were called to an inheritance of blessing.

You see how the difference is there? We're going to show people or give people a blessing. We're going to put a blessing upon them when they are doing evil towards us, when they insult us.

Why should we do that? Because Jesus says, you've already been given everything that you could possibly want. You already have an inheritance. If you turn back with me up to chapter 1 and verse 3, it's just healthy to be reminding because this is what he's referencing.

[27 : 44] He's already mentioned this in his letter. This is 1 Peter 1.3. He says, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ according to his great mercy, not our performance, but according to his great mercy, he caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept for you in heaven.

That's our blessings, the favor of the Lord forever. That's our blessings that he has promised to us. So, when someone comes and does evil towards us, insults us, what Peter is stating here, because remember, later on in verse 15, it's coming, you're setting the stage for the hopeful, eventual question of, so what hope do you have?

Because I have been evil and mean towards you, I have insulted you, and you, in return, do not respond, but with kindness and forgiveness, and you bless me, which means you have prayed.

There's two ways you can translate this, is to speak favorably of someone, or it is to, in this case, I do think it means to call upon the Lord to bless them, meaning that to show favor upon them.

Why? Well, God showed favor upon me when I was a reviler, when I was the enemy of God, when I was under his wrath. He showed a blessing upon me by giving me mercy.

[29 : 20] So, he's saying, those of you who have an eternal blessing, you get to show, in a very small way, what it looks like to receive mercy, or to give mercy, and it, hopefully, God might use it as a seed, or a way to till up the heart so that the seed might be planted, that they may ask, okay, you've got to tell me about your life because the way you act is very, very different.

What hope do you have? Because I don't have that hope. This is where he's leading. So, now you understand, there's no way in the world that we're going to be able to endure the constant onslaught of evil and insults if we're not being refreshed and renewed amongst each other.

We're being renewed in our minds. We come in and say, can you believe what this person has done to me? And someone wraps their arm around and says, that was wrong. That was evil that they did to you. But let me tell you that your suffering is not in vain and God uses it to draw people to himself.

You've become a reflection of grace and mercy to them that they too may have the same repentance that you have. So sometimes I need to hear that. My wife reminds me of this every time I drive and she says, you know they can't hear you, right?

I went and I felt so justified the other day. I was with one of my children so I ask for forgiveness now. And this person was driving foolishly and was very angry and I thought to myself, I may have said all that, I hope they get a ticket.

[30 : 48] And unfortunately, they did. And at that moment, I felt justified and ashamed because I'm a bad driver too. I just happen to not be driving as bad as them at the moment.

But you see, when we don't live in a culture that's under the gospel, grace and mercy all the time, we can be quick to withhold that from each other and from the world.

And when we do that, we back up and read to you a verse. It says, to this you have been called. It's not like this is an option or a good idea.

It is the purpose of your life. Look up at verse 21. 221. For to this reason you have been called because, again, the gospel, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you may follow in his steps.

Christ's suffering produced the salvation of those whom he is saving. He is saying, our suffering will lead them to the same Christ that saved us. I'm going to speak to those who are graduating and have graduated.

[31 : 58] I'm sure you are exhausted of the question, so what are you going to do now? And their answer is crawl in a hole until everyone's done asking me that question. It's hard.

Somehow, at the age of 18 or 17, I have to know what the rest of my life will look like. It's terrifying, right? And often, the culture pressures us to tell us what is significant and what is not.

What's important and what is not important. And so, sometimes we feel ashamed because I'm not going to some big name university or I've got some big career pecked out. You know, I was like, oh, I'm going to be a doctor. Wow, you're going to be a doctor.

I just say that because I'm like, you must be smart because I'm not. You don't want me looking at your body. It's a bad idea. I don't care what age you are.

I don't care what your gender is, what your nationality. I don't care what your experience has been. I don't even care how well you can talk. Every human being can respond with this calling.

[33 : 04] When they are insulted, they show mercy. When evil is done against them, they give grace. Knowing that God is not doing this in vain. God.

Our calling never changes no matter what stage of life we are in. Dear graduates, think about what God is already doing in your life. It does not matter what you do for a career because that's not what you've been called to.

Your career is not what you've been called to. Some of you may need to even significantly consider, maybe I should pursue ministry. Maybe I can do something on a field or in my local town.

It doesn't matter because if you do that as I am, I still have to do the same job you are. I just do it a little bit different. Our callings remain the same.

You see, what's interesting is that we lose sight of our calling and we can become anti-cultural when the culture is our mission field. The very people we mock and get angry at because they're sinners, Paul's like, you too were once this.

[34 : 11] How many times does he have to say it? You also, likewise, were once like this. You were one of those and now you're not. How do you think that happened? You were smarter than everyone else?

How foolish do you have to be? No, you were dead in your trespasses and sins. He made you alive. Now take that life and put it in the presence of other people that they too might be brought to life.

But no, our calling is not that. Our calling is much more significant and we can put whatever we want in that place and it is a shame because money and fame and career and children or whatever, entertainment and sports become our calling and it is not our calling.

Before we proceed, I want to point out or conclude, I should say, I want to point out some of you are like, proceed? Aren't we almost done? I want to point out where we are not called to remain.

If we have the potential or the opportunity to remove ourselves from a dangerous situation, there is nothing in Scripture that says we must remain.

[35 : 18] For instance, multiple times, Paul escaped cities and people because he understood the danger that was there but eventually he got caught and was killed. But you do not see the church using force.

This is why he tells Peter to put the sword down. We're not using force against those who are persecuting us because the very people who are killing us could one day, and I'll give you a great example, is Acts chapter 7.

Acts 7 and 58 and following. Who is this story about? Stephen. And Stephen is calling out the people's sins and saying, this is what you have done to your king and you need to turn and repent to the king.

And they got very angry with him. This is what it says, Acts 7 and 58. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And falling to his knees, he cried out with a loud voice. He gave them a blessing.

[36 : 24] He asked God to show favor upon them. He says this, Lord, do not hold this sin against them. And when they had said this, he fell asleep.

I love how Luke says he fell asleep because he was not dead. He was merely just waiting to be renewed. Who was Saul?

That became Paul. In Stephen's death, Luke records who was there. Very important. It wasn't just a happenstance detail.

In the use of Stephen's life, we end up learning more about a man who ends up writing the most significant books of the New Testament.

We don't know what God is doing. You don't know who he's using you to influence. That's what's exciting. You have no clue what God's doing with your suffering.

[37 : 19] None. You don't know how it's going to influence your spouse, your children, your neighbor. We just don't know. And it's really exciting to think that we don't have to know because God says it's not in vain.

Your labor is not in vain. It's not without cause and purpose and significance. So we seek first the kingdom of God and he provides for us all that we need for our comfort to do so and then takes us home.

This is what it means to enjoy the love and freedom of our king. We don't need to pleasure ourselves with this world. We sing to each other. We build one another up.

We lift each other up. We give hope when we're hopeless. We pray to one another on behalf of each other and the prayer is a supernatural blessing which is just really hard for us to understand but as we offer up a request to the father he hears it and supernaturally comes down to the person.

I use this with Knox when we pray at night. Who are we sending a prayer to? Because I literally believe it goes up to the father he hears our request and he blesses those people. It's encouraging to know that our father cares for have us to be involved with the encouragement and the salvation of others.

[38 : 42] This is why we pray for the souls of others so they might hear the gospel and change. What is amazing about our calling is that everyone in this room can participate today in our homes and our jobs and our communities.

We take Christ everywhere with us. This is why he's already used this illustration that you're a mobile temple. God's presence lives within you and you are clothed not with your accomplishments but with the accomplishments of Christ.

You are a robed priest with Christ's priestly robes so that you can be a perfect representative to the people. Not because of what you have done but because of what Christ has done. Last week at the men's group I was deeply impacted by a lot of the hurt and struggles that our men are going through.

I was also encouraged by their faith. I was reminded that our work is not in vain. I saw men care for men and pray for them and encourage them and I know for a fact that we may not see the fruits and the results of it immediately but this is the work that has to be done.

It doesn't seem like it's significant to show up and sit around a fire but we're not just talking about sports. We're expressing the significance of Christ's love for us and then showing that love to one another.

[40 : 12] But what if you're here today and you you don't know where to start. How do I even begin to live this way, John?

I feel like my life is a mess. My calendar is a mess. All my priorities are wrong. How do you just change? Will you start always where you finish?

The gospel. So I want to encourage you there's a whole article that I read this week on what is freedom in Christ and I stole a couple of points from this article. I'm not going to do all 16 of them.

They were very encouraging. We're just going to do a couple. So if you're here this morning and thinking I can't apply what Peter is saying like prioritizing the church and then living in this way in our world it just seems too much.

It is too much in your own strength and your own power. So let me encourage you in your freedom. First of all you are freed from the guilt you're feeling right now. You're freed from that. This is Romans 8.1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ.

[41 : 14] God does not condemn you. You sit here and know that you are a failure. We all do. We have failed to live up to the expectations of the New Testament. And he says yeah don't worry you are not condemned.

I don't understand. That is why the gospel is so radical. Paul goes yeah it's hard to understand and I'm not ashamed of it. Now you need to obey. What?

Secondly you are free from shame. Oh this is so hard. Don't raise your hands but just look at me. How many of you felt your shame this week? You know the secrets of your heart and they just feel like they are pulling you under.

And it makes you even more sick to your stomach because you hide your shame from everyone else around you. Satan uses that to destroy us.

I know. My shame is like a loud Doberman pincher who is right here in my face and I can't get him to go away. Romans 10 11 whoever believes on him will not be put to shame.

[42 : 31] There is in our heart like yeah I know I want to believe the gospel but what if it's wrong? Paul's like it's not wrong. You will not bring your shame into the new heavens and the new earth because it's been covered under the blood of Christ.

Your shame is removed from you. It was put on Christ. This is why his death was so violent which leads us to you're freed from God's wrath.

1 Thessalonians 5 9 for God did not appoint us to wrath but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. It's important that that through be ringing throughout your ears not through your obedience not through the way in which you love to this church not through the way you've organized your schedule not through the way in which you reviled you have failed in all these areas but what keeps you confident to keep getting up morning after morning to pursue that which you love and long for is that I am not under God's wrath.

I'm not under his thumb but I'm in his hand. His foot is not on top of me ready to smash me when I fail but I live in his arms. Listen to how Jesus says it no one can take you out of my palm.

He's right here because this is I love you. You're mine. It's healthy to remember this because if you try to apply anything I've told you today and you don't remember this you're doing it in your own strength.

[44 : 00] We're free from fear. We have not a reason to be afraid and we're free from the fear of death. 2 Timothy 1.10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ who abolished death brought life immortality to light through the gospel.

We don't have a reason to worry about what our life is going to be facing because we can die in the peace. This is why we can lay our life down. This is why Stephen isn't afraid to be stoned outside this.

Many of the early believers were not afraid of dying because they understood it was just a temporary transition to the real home that they live in and that their life this is why he's like count it in honor if the Lord chooses you to suffer for his sake because he's using that as an advancement of the gospel.

Just a couple more. Freedom from the bondage of sin. For sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under the law but under grace. We live in the constant reminder of his grace.

It's so much easier to wake up every day and try harder to be the very person God has called us to be when we know that we're not living under his law we're living under his constant benevolent love.

[45 : 19] That's his grace. As a loving father puts his hand around his children and guides them and says children this is the way to walk. That's what Paul is speaking of. And we are freed from Satan's dominion which is powerful and the world is still under his dominion.

This is why he says in Colossians 1.13 he has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed or conveyed us or moved us into the kingdom of his son.

Which means when we failed so you want to know where you start well you've just heard the gospel and now you can see who your God is towards you and now apply this freedom that you have which is you are free to approach your God.

Therefore brothers having boldness to enter in the holiness by the blood of Jesus Hebrews 10.19 Right now or when you get home or whenever you can tell your father I have failed.

My life does not reflect my calling. And your father wants to hear it and bless you child and forgive you this is the last one.

[46 : 38] You are freedom. You are freedom to relate to God as a child. Don't pull a prodigal. We've all done this. I did it this week and I reminded myself how foolish it was.

Lord I'm going to try harder in this area as if that would impress him. And I stopped and I was like what a fool. That would mean the cross was not necessary if I could actually pull that off.

I was very impressed with myself thinking like I think I could pull this off. And then I realized now how many times have I made this promise to the Lord? I can't seem to remember. And it was at that moment God's grace is upon me and his favor is upon me and his strength is upon me because I'm his child.

When the prodigal son finally came to his senses and he came to the father and he was going to come with the father with a plan he says father I will no longer be your son I will be your what? Servant.

And when the son got there the son started to talk and the father interrupted him put his arm around him and said please bring the son's robe bring his ring kill the fatted calf he's not a servant he's my son.

[47 : 42] This is the point is that we have to remember that God is not expecting you to do this in your own strength to re-earn the position of child that you lost because of your disobedience.

You're always his child. He wants to restore you by his grace and his mercy he's calling you to this so where do you begin? Begin at the gospel repent of your sins know that he loves you and know that he wants to hear your struggles and do not do this alone allow your brothers and sisters to encourage you in the process of this that's how you apply 1 Peter 3 8 and 9 let's pray Father we are thankful that you do not leave us alone but you give us the strength by the means of the spirit and the hope of the gospel for it is the power of you Lord may each of us repent of our sins today look to Christ and be renewed and renew each other in Christ's name Amen Thanks for listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee where everyone is in equal need of grace to plan a visit or to learn more about us visit our website at gracereformed.org the Microbial Sh depths saut Whip of the rips and vulnerable pure for the sure at gracere lane shown in youtube perfectiff asso ■öyle and for the today