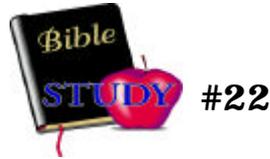


Journey Into God's Word



I Kings 1-12

Jeremiah 11-20

Galatians 1-6

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”(Gal. 5:1) Sin enslaves. Yet like prisoners, who have been set free only to walk back into jail-cells, refusing to leave, many are freed from sin but then return to it later.

Solomon had it all. God had granted him wisdom and wealth beyond measure. Yet “as Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods” (I Kings 11:4) and he lost his freedom to the bondage of sin. As we journey through God’s Word this week, let’s learn how we can really experience freedom in Christ and remain in that freedom for the rest of our lives.

Paul wrote the book of Galatians to stress the fact that faith in Christ results in true freedom. He was pointing out this fact because some were saying that it was necessary to also obey the Jewish laws to be saved. “Know that a person is not justified by obeying the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law because by observing the law no one will be justified.” (Gal. 2:16) It is by faith in Christ that we experience freedom. Yet this freedom is not a license to sin, nor is it an excuse to not care about the poor. In fact Paul said earlier in Galatians 2:9, 10, “James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.”

Absolute freedom results from a dying to ourselves, and being resurrected in Christ Jesus. “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved

me and gave Himself for me.”(**Gal. 2:20**) Such death to one’s sin nature causes God to look at us as if our sins have died with Christ. “He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them by the cross.”(**Col. 2:13-15**) This means that we are freed from the power of sin. “If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”(**Rom. 6:5,6**)

Hate enslaves. Bitterness destroys. But God is love. When the Living God of Love comes to live in a person through the power of the Resurrected Christ freedom takes place. Freedom to love one’s enemies. Freedom to not compromise but courageously stand up for what is right, knowing God is in control. Jesus provides this freedom from hatred, sin death and the devil.

The key to experiencing this freedom is faith. “Consider Abraham: ‘He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness’”(Gal. 3:6) “The righteous will live by faith.”(Gal. 3:11) “By faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.”(Gal. 3:14) “But the Scriptures declare that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.”(Gal. 3:22,23) Before faith in Christ freed us, we were beaten down by sin and the guilt of mistakes from the past. God, knowing we were slaves of sin, out of love sent “His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”(**John 3:16**)

The freedom that Christ provides translates into liberty and justice for all. In Christ there are no second class citizens. The rich and powerful are not given special treatment. “You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”(Gal. 3:26,27) “Because you are children, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba Father.’ So you are no

longer a slave, but a child; and since you are a child, God has made you also an heir.”(**Gal. 4:6,7**)

But in spite of such freedom being offered, some still insist on living in the slavery of sin and disobedience. “I warned them again and again, saying, ‘Obey Me.’ But they did not listen or pay attention; instead they followed the stubbornness of their evil hearts.”(**Jer. 11:7**) Many give up and return to the slavery of sin resulting in disobedience to God as a result of difficult circumstances. To those who are thinking of giving up, God would say, “If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan.”(**Jer. 12:5,6**) In other words, if you give up now, what are you going to do when things really get tough? We see the environmental destruction becoming more prevalent with each passing day. Creation destroyed at the hands of sinful self-serving humanity. “Many shepherds will ruin My vineyard and trample down My field; they will turn My pleasant field into a desolate wasteland. It will be made a wasteland, parched and desolate before Me; the whole land will be laid waste because there is no one who cares. Over all the barren heights in the desert destroyers will swarm, for the sword of the Lord will devour from one end of the land to the other, no one will be safe.”(**Jer. 12:10-12**) “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery,”(**Gal. 5:1**) “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”(**Gal. 5:6**) You are free to let the love of Christ flow through you as you reach out in compassion to the poor, fatherless, elderly, homeless and others who are in need. “You were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command; ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”(**Gal. 5:13-15**)

“Hear and pay attention, do not be arrogant, for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before He brings the darkness, before your feet stumble on the darkening hills.”(**Jer. 13:15,16**) What happened to King Solomon when he “did evil in the eyes of the Lord”(**I King 11:6**) according to **I Kings 11:9-40**? What lessons can we learn from Solomon’s life? What do you think caused Solomon to be enslaved to sin? How could these mistakes have been avoided?

“So I say live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”(**Gal. 5:16**) According to **Galatians 5:19** what are the acts of the sinful nature? According to verse **21** what happens to those who engage in these sinful activities? What are the fruits of the Spirit described in verses **22** and **23**. “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”(**Gal. 5:24-26**)

According to **Jeremiah 17:5,6** what happens to those who trust in man? Now what is the result of trusting in the Lord according to **Jeremiah 17:7,8**? Who do you put your trust in? “Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for You are the One I praise.”(**Jer. 17:14**)

How does **Galatians 6:1, 2** say that those caught in sin should be dealt with? “ ‘So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions. But they will reply, ‘It’s no use. We will continue with our own plans; each of us will follow the stubbornness of his evil heart.’”(Jer. 18:11, 12) In the case of those who refuse to repent, what does Jeremiah 18:13-17 say will be the end result? In the first 19 chapters of Jeremiah we see five object lessons that God uses to tell the people of Judah what will be the results of their persistent sins. What are these object lessons and the significance of each of them? #1. **Jer. 1:11,12** #2. **Jer. 1:13** #3. **Jer. 13:1-11** #4. **Jer. 18:1-17** #5. **Jer. 19:1-2**. What opposition does Jeremiah encounter in **Jeremiah 20**? Please examine Jeremiah’s complaint to the Lord in **Jeremiah 20:7-18**? How does he express his frustrations and still reveal his faith in the Lord? Note the promise in verse **13**, **which** declares; “Sing to the Lord! Give praise to the Lord! He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked.” In spite of his difficulties Jeremiah does not give up. He refuses to let fear consume him and by faith continues to proclaim the word of the Lord. “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” (**Gal. 6:9,10**) What do these two verses mean to you? Please explain what you think Paul is saying in his declaration of freedom found in **Gal. 6:14**: “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Please join me in reading this week **I Kings 13-16, Jeremiah 21-31, and Philippians 1-4**. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”(**Gal. 6:18**)

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice