

Grace

Living testimonies from a pilgrim's journal.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2006

God the Son gave us the world. *For by and through Christ all things were created (Colossians 1:16).*

God the Father gave us the Son. *For unto us a child is born, a Son is given (Isaiah 9:6).*

In the confines of the manger and human flesh, the Son of God appeared bound. The MIRACLE OF CHRISTMAS is that Jesus had perfect freedom in His walk to the cross for us. *The Pharisees tried to throw Jesus off a cliff, but Jesus simply walked away from them in His princely majesty (Luke 4:30 paraphrase). Jesus said, "No one takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself (John 10:18).*

In the confines of the cross and human flesh, the Son of God appeared bound again. The MIRACLE OF THE CROSS is that Jesus exchanged His freedom in righteousness for our bondage in sin, and He arose to give us His life of freedom. When a person becomes a Christian, he or she can hardly take in the new-found freedom. We are tempted through our old ways of thinking to believe that this freedom is too good to be true. We actually fear freedom (see "Truths about Freedom" below).



I hope this newsletter will be a fresh reminder of the reason Jesus came: *The LORD has sent Me (Jesus) to proclaim liberty to the captives (Isaiah 61:1)! We are likewise sent.*

I was recently sent to mentor freedom to an associate pastor for 40 hours as part of his Masters in Counseling requirements at Luther Rice Seminary; this included him sitting in and observing two of my counseling sessions. Let me know if you know of anyone who might desire this kind of training. This is my heart for ministry.

I am also mentoring 6 people once a week in discipleship sessions, and working with a team of volunteers to mentor several young boys once a week at a Boys Home chapel.

My wife, Joy, and I wish you a very Merry Christmas!

TRUTHS ABOUT FREEDOM

On the back are a few of the many fears of freedom I have witnessed in my life and in the lives of precious friends God has given me. Each fear adds burdensome weight to the pure freedom Christ has given us. I believe the added burden is the weight of a seed of doubt regarding the finished work of Christ. The weight of this seed is sooooo enormous.

This added weight is often in the form of the qualifying word "but," either stated or implied. This added weight always requires us to do something to live up to our end of the bargain with God to be free, which we can never really do. This added weight cannot steal our freedom, but it sure can steal our experience of freedom and growth in freedom.

Oh to be as a child to simply believe that when God says I am free in Christ, I am free period...with no theological qualifications! The heart of our Father is for us to lay aside every weight that burdens our race looking unto Jesus (*Hebrews 12:1-2*). This is a race to proclaim true freedom to the world! Oh how our world needs to hear truths about freedom!

Jesus promises that the truths He reveals to our hearts "will set us free indeed"...no ifs, ands, or buts (*John 8:32, 36*). For each fear listed on the back, a truth is provided. These are truths I sense God revealing to my heart for freeing His children from fears of freedom. More and more, I find myself bowing my head to contemplate receiving truths personally from Christ. After I pray to receive truths from Christ, I lift my eyes to begin adjusting my eyes of faith to the glorious beauty of His freedom (His very Life) all in and around my life...God's answer to my prayer.

My motive is not to convince people that I've got the corner on truth and I know what they should believe. My motive is to simply share my heart, trusting my heart to be a testimony of Christ Himself. My honest sharing is from my seeking to hear God first-hand. For years I lived by hearing from God second and third-hand through the doctrines of men. That was part of God's pilgrimage for me. Now, seeking to hear from God first-hand is the most exciting adventure of my life! There are gifted teachers I love to listen to...but my deepest desire is to personally hear God through the teachers, not to depend on the teachers. I hope my sharing will encourage others to further seek their personal truth revelations from Christ. ☺

Fear of Freedom	Living Truth
I'm so ashamed of my past and all my "scars."	Jesus took all of your shame to the cross. Then God placed you in Christ; and because Christ is eternal life, you not only have a new present and a new future, you have a new past! Don't be ashamed of your scars, for they tell a resurrection story! You are free to tell others. <i>Jesus said, "Thomas, look at the scars on my hands. I am not ashamed of these scars for you...for they tell a resurrection story. Please tell My story, my dear Thomas, through your scars." (my paraphrase of John 20:29)</i>
I'm just a beggar simply telling other beggars how to find bread.	You are one with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! You have both the means and the authority to feed the whole world with the Bread of Life! <i>You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings! (1 Corinthians 4:8).</i>
I know I'm free, but I also know that I have an important responsibility to do my part.	Did you know that you and I had no part in establishing the New Covenant? The New Covenant is between the Father and the Son. We failed our part in the Old Covenant. However, we have been given ALL the inheritance of the New Covenant! Yes, we have a responsibility...to live out of our inheritance, not out of our own resources. This is our response to God's ability, not to our own abilities. <i>In Christ we have obtained an inheritance... ..sealed by the Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance. I pray that you may know what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...according to the working of God's mighty power in Christ (Ephesians 1:11, 14, 16-20).</i>
Too much freedom (grace) encourages passivity.	There may be times you may appear passive. However, rest assured that our majestic Lord Jesus Christ is living and active in you (Hebrews 4:12-13)! Grace can change the world through you! <i>By the grace of God I am what I am...and I labored...but not I, but the grace of God with me (1 Corinthians 15:10).</i>
Too much freedom (grace) encourages freedom to sin.	Freedom TO SIN actually is not good news. The great good news of the gospel is that we have been freed FROM SIN through our identification with the death and resurrection of Christ! That's true freedom! <i>For he who has died (with Christ) has been freed <u>from</u> sin (Romans 6:7).</i>
I must have more faith to live the abundant life in Christ.	It is not the size of your faith that is important, it is the object of your faith. Seeking more faith is actually "faith in faith." Jesus is the true object of your faith, and He says He has already given you His abundant life! You are now free to believe in Him! <i>We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, we shall be saved by His life (Romans 5:10).</i>
I've been told that I need to get out of debt before I can effectively minister to others.	Financial debt is tough, but it cannot steal your freedom. Instead of a liability, entrust your debt to God as an asset, as an opportunity for Christ to be manifested through your life as He leads you out of debt. Christ is your ministry, not your finances. <i>I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:12-13)</i>
God has put me on a shelf because I have fallen from grace.	You can never fall from God's favor of you! What happened is that you fell into self-righteousness. Feel the embrace of God's everlasting arms around you. Entrust your failures to God for Him to redeem for His glory. Stand tall as a trophy of God's grace through the cross! <i>You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:1).</i>
I have summarized 22 additional fears and corresponding truths on my website at www.ChristMyHeart.org .	