

Set Free – Part III: Set Free to Transform

Sunday Morning, October 1, 2017

Over the last couple of weeks, we have been focusing on the fact that we have been set free in Christ. The first week we looked at the fact that we have been set free to live in Christ so that we bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Our personal lives are changed when we are set free. Then last week we looked at the fact that we were set free, not to please ourselves, but to serve others. This means that our new liberty in Christ will change members of our new family in God's lives. This week I want us to focus on the fact that we have been set free in Christ to transform the world around us. This will have an effect on our world in general and/or the lost in the world. We need to remember that God has set us free for a reason. Turn to **(Ephesians 2: 8 - 10)**

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

God has created us for good works and has already prepared good works for us to do.

We have been set free for a purpose. It isn't about what we gain by being saved from eternal separation from God. It is about Jesus. It's not about what we want. It is about what He wants. His desire is for us to reach out and to love people who do not know Him. Jesus is radically inclusive. He wants everyone to be set free. He wants everyone to be a part of what He is doing. As His church our role is to help make that happen. We bring people to Jesus so more people can experience His love and salvation in their lives. We teach Jesus so people can grow in their relationship with Him and become more productive in the work they do for His kingdom.

The purpose of the individual Christian and the Church as a whole is to love Jesus, and to share His love with the world. It is not enough for us to just gather together with other people who love Jesus and talk about how great He is. We need that, but that is only half the battle. We need to reach out to others and tell them about how great Jesus is as well. We meet inside the four walls of the church to prepare ourselves to take Jesus love outside of those walls. We see in **(Luke 10: 1 – 3)** Jesus sending his disciples out in to the world.

1 After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

2 Then He said to them, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

3 Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.

Jesus knew the work in the world would not be easy, but He still sent his disciples out because many others were waiting out in the world to hear the good news of how to be set free.

Did you know that this is still true today? There are over 6,500 people groups including at least 2 billion individuals still unreached today. The harvest is truly great. His disciples did go out as He commanded into the fields to harvest and had an effect on the world around them.

(Luke 10:17)

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”

Can you imagine how much better this world be even today if we put demons in subjection to Jesus name. What a way to transform the world around us.

In **(Acts 17: 6)** we see the disciples after Christ’s ascension were still having a great effect on their world.

6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

Many people were receiving Christ as their Savior and giving up idol worship, which affected the local idol economy. What evil economies could we affect in our world if we were actively witnessing and reaching people for the Lord.

One of our classic and favorite Hymns, “Amazing Grace” was written by John Newton, in the 1700’s. He is a Christian that turned his world upside down economically and for Christ. After a brief time in the Royal Navy, Newton began his career in slave trading. The turning point in Newton’s spiritual life was a violent storm that occurred one night while at sea. Moments after he left the deck, the crewman who had taken his place was swept overboard. Although he manned the vessel for the remainder of the tempest, he later commented that, throughout the tumult, he realized his helplessness and concluded that only the grace of God could save him. These incidents and his 1750 marriage to Mary Catlett changed Newton significantly. On his slave voyages, he encouraged the sailors under his charge to pray. He also began to ensure that every member of his crew treated their human cargo with gentleness and concern. Newton eventually renounced his trade and became a prominent supporter of abolitionism, living to see Britain's abolition of the African slave trade in 1807. One of the main reasons it took so long for the slave trade to end in England, was because too many people’s wealth and ways of earning an income would be affected. Sounds much like what the disciples faced in their day.

Pastor David Platt in our Counter Culture study that we recently completed said this, *“Do you realize that there are more slaves in the world right now, as you read this, than the total number who were seized from Africa in four centuries of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade? More people live in slavery today than at any other time in world history. Millions are being bought, sold and exploited for sex in what has become one of the fastest-growing industries on earth.”*

And as David put it in our study, *“Our gospel demands action. We can’t be silent”.*

We must turn this world upside down. We must be part of the change. We must help reach the lost and the hurting in this world. All people are created equal and in God's image. All people are loved by God. Jesus died for all people. We need to have the same compassion for the lost, enslaved, widowed, orphaned, poor, lonely, and entrapped in sin as Jesus did. We are to be like Him.

Billy Graham said, *"It is often asked, "How could the early disciples turn the world upside down when millions of Christians can't even keep it right side up. The answer is they didn't conform their faith to match the world. They had the truth, and they refused to water it down. They had a faith that would not compromise."*

We need to all ask ourselves, "Do I have the truth? Do I have faith that cannot be compromised?" _____

With a faith that is uncompromised and God's truth found in His Word we can be like the disciples or John Newton and transform the world around us. We can have an effect on the evil in this world. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave some very simple instructions to the listeners to help them spread the transforming gospel message. Turn to **(Matthew 5: 14 – 16)**. **14** "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. **16** Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Jesus made it absolutely clear that he wants his followers to radiate his love to those around them. That's why he talked about light. Jesus anticipated that some believers might choose to limit their candlepower, to refuse to shine their lights. He knew that they would feel safer securely hidden "under a bowl" (or in a stained glass sanctuary), where they could bask in their anonymity and escape the accountability associated with "going public" with their faith. He anticipated this and forbade it. "Let your light shine!" he commanded. He did not, and he does not now leave believers the option of letting their worlds remain in undisturbed blackness.

Jesus made it obvious that he wants us to spread his influence to every corner of this dark, fallen world. It's not enough that we simply take our lights out of hiding. He wants us to put them on a lamp stand where everyone can see them! God wants the light of his love to be held high so it can permeate every bit of darkness. How long will it take for us to realize that we are his agents of light? It is through the channels of our daily lives that God shines the light of his message of love.

How do we become agents of light? How do we penetrate and transform this dark world? How can we bring glory to God and touch the lives of the people we meet in a positive life-changing way? How can we set men and women free like us? Here are just a couple of ideas:

1. Take on the 'unseen' Partner

Live as the psalmist who wrote in **(Psalm 16:8)**.

I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.

For example, before you go to work, school or the store, take time to pray about where you are going and who you will see. Pray for the people you'll be meeting with and those who you'll be serving. Remember, God is the "unseen Partner" in all of life. He is with us wherever we are. And we need his presence, especially in the world we live in each day.

2. Transform Your Attitude - Work like Paul who wrote in **(Colossians 3:17)**

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

At your work, school or out in the community have an attitude that reflects the positive nature of God's grace on your life.

3. Find a way to minister or serve others outside of the Church.

Reach out and help your co-workers, friends, neighbors or those in the community or world who are hurting, poor, lonely, or enslaved. Do short term missions in Disaster Relief or through Baptist Global Response. Or financially support missionaries helping the hurting and lost in the world. Help at Herb's Kitchen here in Coalinga. Mow a neighbor's yard. Etc...

Remember you have been set free to live for Christ as you bear the Holy Spirit's fruit and serve others in the family of God and seek to transform the world of darkness around you by the light of Christ shining out of you brightly.

Invitation and Lord's Supper Service

(Matthew 26: 26 – 29)

The Bread:

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

The Cup:

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."