

From Slavery to Becoming Heirs of Lord
Romans 8:12-17

Last week we heard news that a medical doctor who practiced abortion was killed in a church by an unknown man who seemed to be an extreme anti-abortionist. That was terrible news in relation to religious belief. We live in a multi religious and multi cultural society.

Surprisingly, the suspect is known as faithful Christian by neighbors. It is hard to believe it. There must be something wrong. Many Christians don't get along with other religious groups. Korean Christians don't get along with Buddhists in Korea.

There is an episode about the two conflicting religious groups in Korea, between Christians and Buddhists. The two groups, a Christian church and a Buddhist temple were in a small town in Korea. The Christians treated Buddhists as if they were Satan, or the devil spirit, and prayed that the Buddhist temple would move away from that town. This hate became known to the Buddhist temple. The Buddhists were very upset when they learned this rumor.

One day, the Buddhist temple caught aflame and its wooden buildings were mostly burned down. When Christian church members got this news, they thought this was the will of God. This rumor was also delivered to the Buddhist temple. The Buddhists were so mad at the Christians attitude that they filed a law suit against the Christian church. The Buddhists insisted that the fire at the Buddhist temple was caused by Christians' hate against the Buddhists.

At a court hearing, the Buddhist members witnessed what they heard the Christians had prayed for—that the Buddhist temple be destroyed. This was the evidence of their hate toward the Buddhists, and the Buddhists claimed that this hate caused the Buddhist temple to burn down.

The judge in the courtroom was a wise, good Christian. The judge asked the Christians if they had been praying for the destruction of the Buddhist temple. The representative from the church admitted that they had prayed for that. But, the witness insisted that the prayer would never have affected the fire which broke out at the Buddhist temple.

After hearing from both sides, the Buddhists and Christians, the judge concluded and ruled: "There is no evidence that the Christian group set a fire to the Buddhist temple. However, I give penalty to the church group because they committed two sins against God. First, they do not love their neighbors but hate them. Second, they do not believe that their prayer will be accepted by God, while the Buddhists believed that the Christian prayer was as the cause of the fire at the temple."

Hate is a problem in our society .It became social phenomena as hate-ism.

We must believe in God and the truth of God earnestly, but we should not hate the people who are different from us religiously, racially, culturally and in political viewpoint. We don't have the right to kill or harm the people who do not agree with us.

There are many laws, from traffic laws to the laws of nature in our life. There are rules and principles in the laws that we should follow. Today's scripture reading,

Romans 8:12-17, teaches us three aspects in dealing with the Law of Spirit.

First, there are two kinds of laws in life: the law of death and the law of life.

This scripture Romans 8:12-17, shows us that there are two kinds of laws in human life. One is the law according to flesh, the other is the law according to spirit. If we hate somebody because of their different opinion, we are still living according to the law of the flesh that leads us to destruction.

The scripture said, "To live according to the law of flesh comes to death, but to live according to the law of spirit comes to life and glory. The law of the flesh makes you a slave, but the law of the spirit brings you glory, heirs of God." This scripture reminds me of other two scriptures: John 8:31-36, and Luke 15:11-32 to reflect on the spirit of truth.

In John 8:31-36, there was an argument between the Pharisee and the Lord on the topic of slavery. To the Jews, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. If the son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:31-36)

Jesus sees the life of sin as the life of slavery, which has no right, nor freedom. This is because through sin, those who sin are sold to their debts, and so don't have any right to determine the course of their lives. According to Roman law, a slave was defined as a "living tool." Slaves had no rights of any kind. During the time of Jesus, one Roman writer on estate management recommended that the farmer should examine his implements every year, throw out those which were old and broken, and then do the same with his slaves! Like these slaves, those who sin are slave to their sin. Without forgiveness of their sins, they are not free.

Second, the essence of Christian salvation is the forgiveness of sin.

Let's recall the story of the prodigal son in dealing with the life of slavery. The Parable of the Prodigal Son in the Gospel of Luke is familiar to most of us. That is the story of a rebellious son who rejects his father's upbringing. Pridelful and strong, the son heads-off to a far-away land, leads a wild life of adventure, and squanders everything of value (literally and symbolically). That is the life of the flesh, according to the law of the flesh.

Not until he's confronted with failure and despair does he return home, repentant and willing to do anything to win back his father's favor. The prodigal son realized that he was so stubborn and stupid that he lost everything of value for greed. In the end, he was even worried about what to eat, what to wear, and where to sleep.

He recalled the life of the workers in his father's farm—how even the workers never have to worry about what to eat, what to wear, and where to sleep. He realized that his status in life was now lower than even his father's workers. He was the son of his father, the heir of a lord, but he dropped in the ranks of life to a level lower than even the laborers of his father.

The son got up and went to his father and said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." To his surprise, and the surprise of others, he was welcomed, without question, into his father's loving and forgiving arms. No amount of time, no amount of money, and no amount of rebellion could get in the way of the father's patience and unconditional love for his son.

The father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and now is alive; he was lost and now is found."

So the prodigal son recovered his life and the son-ship of his father. He could call his father, "Abba, Father." Of course, the awesome message of this parable is that God is patient and gracious with all of His children. He is willing to welcome each of us home into His loving and forgiving arms.

Thirdly, true freedom is spiritual freedom, free from sin and death.

A little boy named David got into trouble one day some years ago. His dad, who owned the grocery store in his little town, had saved money for years, and the family had just purchased a brand new Buick. It was their prize possession. Even though David was only eleven years old at that time, he loved to drive the car around in the yard.

One morning, David's mother announced that she needed to take some clothes to the cleaners. "I'll move the car around front for you, Mom," said David. This particular morning, the car was in the garage. David was so excited as he rushed to bring the car out that he forgot to close the car door, and as he backed out, the open door smacked against the garage, ripped completely off, and fell with a sickening thud to the ground!

Can you imagine? David had knocked the door off their brand new Buick! His mother was not happy! She was upset, and she said, "Look at what you've done, young man! You just wait till your father gets home. That car is the apple of his eye, and you've ruined it. I'll intercede for you the best I can, but that car is so precious to your father that I don't know what in the world he's going to do to you!"

David's dad arrived home just in time for supper. David chose not to eat that night. Somehow, he just didn't have any appetite! Rather, he stood sheepishly out of sight, just outside the door of the kitchen, and listened as his mother told his dad what had happened.

David was braced and ready, expecting the worst; but to his amazement, he was surprised by his father's response: "Well, you're right, Ruby. The car is precious to me, but not as precious as David Leroy. Just as you said, he didn't mean to do it. He was trying to help. We can get the car fixed. The main thing is that no one got hurt. He's our son, and he must feel awful right about now. We just need to love him through this."

In conclusion, one half of your freedom comes from forgiven by God and other half from your forgiving for other that is the teaching of Jesus.

The boy learned from their parents that day the meaning of grace, the forgiveness of God. And he learned the obligation to forgive others. The boy grew up to become one of the great preachers of America, Dr.D.L.Dykes. The Spirit of life is the spirit of forgiving that sets others free from their bondage.

Someone said, "Jesus' saying is too hard to apply to daily life." Yes! That is right. Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you... Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." He meant us to love unconditionally, to forgive unreservedly, to serve unselfishly – what a challenge! But that's what the Christian faith calls us to do, and that's what makes it great! That is the greatest spirit of Jesus.

The Bible says, "No one has seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." This Spirit of forgiving testifies that we are God's children. Now, if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heir with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.