

07/03/11

## Freedom with a Purpose

- In a recent blog post on the Biblical Counseling Coalition website, Elyse Fitzpatrick said...

"Regrets. As a mom of three and grandmother of six, I know all about regrets. Just this week I missed one of my granddaughter's birthdays, thinking it was a day later than it was. That's not unusual for me either—even though I have taken to writing down everyone's birthdays in my phone—I never seem to be able to remember everything when I'm supposed to remember it.

Yes, there's a place in my heart where I'm tempted to be filled with regret for things forgotten, regret for missing an opportunity to speak truth, or for speaking it in an unkind way. I've talked with enough parents to know that I'm not alone in this, either. In some ways it seems like regret is badge of honor for parents: you know you're really serious about your parenting if you feel really terrible about how you're doing... or how you did if your kids are grown."

- we all know about regrets, don't we?...

- wasted opportunities...squandered resources...choices we wish we could make again...

- it's just a fact of life—I don't understand anyone who says...I don't have any regrets...

- every time I hear someone say that, I feel like responding---would you like a few of mine?...how many do you want?...

- so what do we do with that?...

- well, we certainly don't wallow in our guilt...thank the Lord for the presence and power of forgiveness...

- we can be honest about poor choices and come to Him in repentance and faith...

- we can also rejoice that if we know Christ, our stand before God is based on His perfect righteousness, not our own...

- the older I get, the more convinced I become that Jesus is my only hope...

- it's not like – if the gospel is true, I'm covered...but if turns out that the Bible is wrong on that point (said, tongue in cheek of course) and salvation is by works, I've got that one covered too...

- My faith is found in nothing less...than Jesus' blood and righteousness...I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name...

- but there's something else we can do with our regrets...we can learn from them...

- because I saw the terrible effects of wasting something before...I am redoubling my efforts to not squander what has been given to me in the days ahead...

- people who face regrets in an honest and balanced way are in the best position to get to a better place...

- now I realize that you might say – happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July to you too, PV...what could this introduction possibly have to do with the holiday we're celebrating this weekend?...

- a lot...and here's why...

- God hasn't just given us freedom...He's given us **Freedom with a Purpose**...

- and the question before the house is – do we even understand biblically what that purpose would be?...and are we acting on that purpose—as individuals and as a church---in ways that will produce little or no regret in the future?...

- with that question in mind, please open your Bible to 1 Timothy chapter 2...page 163 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- each December we develop the preaching schedule for the coming year...
- so we do a lot of prayerful analysis of what we believe our church family needs the most...what do we need to emphasize...what do we need to study...how do we need to get better...
- that's how we design our annual theme...and what books of the Bible we're going to study...who's going to be speaking, etc...
- and all of that can be set aside if the Lord brings something up unexpectedly in our culture or church family...so the preaching schedule is a guide, not a god...but it is one of the more important things that our church leadership does in any given year..and we try to be very thorough and thoughtful about that process...
- but if you look at it – you'll notice that there are certain Sundays that fall under the heading of "we'll see..."
- and this Sunday is one of those...
  - this year is halfway gone...that's hard to believe...
  - but we want to think carefully about what's transpired this year and why...
  - and more importantly...to consider where we are right now---what are the big things...
  - and what is about to unfold for our church family over the next six months...and what passages of Scripture and concepts from Scripture can help us be sure that we get it right?...
  - and this year, I believe those questions dovetail especially well with the concept of the freedoms we enjoy as individuals and as a church...freedoms that come with a God-given purpose...
  - see if you can find it as I read this important passage...

**- read 1 Timothy 2:1-8**

- so we're talking this morning about Freedom with a Purpose...
- with the time we have remaining, let's look for **3 principles to help us make full use of the freedoms God had given us.**

**I. Pray for Your Freedom.**

- Paul starts this discussion by urging Timothy to be sure that the church at Ephesus does certain things...
- and I realize that statement may not make much sense if you are new to studying Scripture...
- the NT is all about God glorifying Himself by raising up a group of people called the church...we are living in what is commonly known as the church age...
- we'll have a lot more to say about that next week because we're launching into a study of the book of Acts...
  - you can't really talk about **Living Life Together** (our annual theme as a church) without seeing how that life began...so that's where we're heading next and I am more than a little bit fired up about leading us through that study...
  - but the gospels tell us the story of Jesus – His miraculous birth, His perfect life, His marvelous teaching...but most importantly His death, burial and resurrection...the good news that God has sent His Son to be the Savior...
- and then the book of Acts is all about Christ commissioning His disciples to fan out and spread that message of redemption and new life in Christ to the four corners of the earth...

- and the plan worked...and men and women from all walks of life and from a variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds repented of their sin and allowed Jesus to redeem them of their sin...and those men and women were subsequently organized into churches...groups of people who had been called out by God to know and to worship and to serve His Son the Messiah...
- well, then there had to be some systematic way to understand what these men and women were to believe...and how they were to function in their church, and their communities, and God's world...
- so we have all these epistles...letters in many cases written to literal local churches or groups of churches...
- so Philippians is written to the church at Philippi...Ephesians to the churches in Ephesus, and so on...they are all about the establishment and mission of Christ's church...
- that's why when someone says – I'm a follower of Christ but I have no place in my life for the church...they have no idea what they're talking about...
  - if you took the concept of the church out of the NT, there were be practically nothing left...
  - because that is so true – we even have some books of the Bible written directly to pastors...we call them – the pastoral epistles... 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus...
  - so these verses we just read – are the apostle Paul telling his son in the faith Timothy how things are to be done in the churches of Ephesus where Timothy is serving as pastor...
  - that's one of the reasons information like this is so helpful to us...we don't have to sit around and guess about the mission...
- and notice how significant this is...Paul says – I urge you...
  - **parakalew – para – alongside, kalew – call out**
  - the word literally means, **beg, entreat, urge, encourage...**
  - interestingly, it's related to the same name God gave to the Holy Spirit – the paraklete...
  - so what we're talking about this morning isn't some passing idea that we might want to consider some day...
  - Paul's point is – get on this right now...if you're really part of the church, you're going to care about this...you're going to care about the way you pray...and that's to be done...

#### **A. In a variety of ways.**

- there are at least seven different words used in the NT for prayer—four of them actually occur in this text.
- and the goal isn't so much trying to ferret out each little nuance the various words that are used as much as to grasp the overall argument...this is an a context of outreach—of evangelism...of the mission God has given the church to tell the world about the Savior...
- Paul says that starts by individual believers and churches developing a faithful heart and life of evangelistic praying...

**One thing more, *the soul-winner must be a master of the art of prayer.* You cannot bring souls to God if you go not to God yourself. You must get your battle-ax, and your weapons of war, from the armoury of sacred communication with Christ. If you are much alone with Jesus, you will catch His Spirit; you will be fired with the flame that burned in His breast, and consumed His life. You will weep with the tears that fell upon Jerusalem when He saw it perishing; and if you cannot speak so eloquently as He did, yet shall there be about what you say somewhat of the same power which in Him thrilled the hearts and awoke the consciences of men. My dear hearers, especially you members of the church, I am always so anxious lest any of you should begin to lie upon your oars, and take things easy in the matters of God's kingdom. There are some of you—I bless you, and I bless God at the remembrance of you—who are in season, and out of season, in earnest for winning souls, and you are the truly wise; but I fear there are others whose hands are slack, who are satisfied to let**

me preach, but do not themselves preach; who take these seats, and occupy these pews, and hope the cause goes well, but that is all they do. (*The Soul Winner* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989], 246–47; italics in original).

- now, the passage also makes this very clear...this prayer is to...

### B. Including our governmental leaders.

- **1 Tim. 2:1 – for kings and all who are in authority...**

- it was very appropriate for us to do what we did on memorial day...to honor those who have sacrificed to protect and preserve our freedoms as a nation, and to express thanksgiving for those who continue that important task...and to pray for our governmental leaders whatever their political party or persuasion...

- and if you say – well, I don't think I could bring myself to praying for (whomever), you need to repent...because when you consider the political climate in which these words were written---we experience far greater freedom than Paul and the early church...

- we don't have a biblical record of this—but church tradition suggests that the apostle Paul was martyred for his faith not too many years after these words were written...at the hands of a governmental leader...

- that's why, by the way, the leaders of Goshen College are wrong...

- there's a letter by a Mennonite pastor that has been on the CNN website this week explaining why they won't sing the national anthem at their sporting events...  
- that is unfortunate and wrongheaded...

- because Romans 13 could not make it any clearer that God ordained government...and that the institution of government ...**Romans 13:4 - ...it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.**

- there is such a thing as “just war”...and individuals and organizations and colleges that enjoy the blessing of freedom ought to be ashamed of themselves for not doing what Paul says later in this exact same text...

- **Romans 13:7 – honor to whom honor...is due.**

- and you might say – won't that confuse the flag and the cross, or won't that suggest that Jesus' kingdom is of this world...

- those are valid questions...but Scripture helps us think carefully about the priority of our allegiances...it doesn't have to be one of the other...that's why Jesus said...**Luke 20:25 - And He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.”**

- that's not that hard to figure out...now, please don't spend the rest of our time thinking about how goofy Goshen College – think about how shameful it is that you and I don't pray as thankfully as we should for our governmental leaders,, and as evangelistically as we should for those the Lord has placed around us...

- that's the headline here...

- and please also add this from verse 3...

### C. God is pleased when we do this.

- **1 Timothy 2:3 - This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,**

- and of course when it's lacking, it's...bad, and unacceptable to Him...

- so the Lord wants us to pray, especially for those who are in a position to decide how much freedom the church will have to accomplish our mission...

- now how do we know that's the emphasis?...because that's the underlying theme in the verses...

- not just pray for kings and others in authority in a general, ethereal sense...but for a reason...which helps us...

## II. Understand and Seize the Purpose of Your Freedom.

- what is the argument of this text?...
- what's all this...so that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life business in verse 2?...
- why is the Lord referred to as "God our Savior" in verse 3?...
- what about God desiring that all men might be saved in verse 4?...
- or Jesus being the mediator between God and men in verse 5?...
- what does this have to do with that prayer we're to make for kings and others in authority over us?...
- here's the point...it's all about the mission God has given us as individuals and as a church...
- it's freedom with a purpose...

### A. So that we may have the freedom to accomplish our mission.

- Please don't read those words...**v. 2 – a tranquil and quiet life?**...and think hammock and iced tea while the government protects our borders...
- that may be nice, but it has nothing to do with this passage...
- it is a tranquil and quiet life, free from governmental intervention if possible so we can focus on accomplishing what God has given us to do...which this text helps us clarify if we'll let it...it starts with...

### B. Growing in Christ ourselves

- **v. 2 – so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.**
- none of us could say – well, I would have read the Bible more if the Sherriff had confiscated all the copies...
- or, I would have spent more time on my knees in prayer but there was that threat of imprisonment...
- or, I couldn't work on being a better husband because they arrested all those guys at the Point Man group...
- no – we have been given incredible freedoms to focus on growing Christ likeness...and some day we will have to give an account for whether we embraced those freedoms in a missional fashion...from the perspective of personal sanctification and growth...
- if you've been following the news, you may have noticed that a judge set aside our state's recent decision not to fund planned parenthood...and then the lawmakers in NY legalized same sex marriage in their state...
- and you might be pretty wound up about that right now...but let me just remind all of us that our central mission is not to force people who don't God or believe His word to act as if they do...
- we have a participatory democracy and we can all our say about the kind of culture we believe is best...
- but judgment begins at the household of God...
- and we will be much more effective focusing the bulk of our energies in becoming what the Lord wants us to become as individuals and in our families as the people of God—and being amazed that we have such great freedom to do so—then all the political posturing is ever going to achieve...

- but now let's dig into the meat of this text...what helps us see and remember the purpose of this prayer-preserved freedom for the church...

### C. Remembering God's grand purpose of redemption.

- v. 3 – **God our Savior...**

- that particular description of the Lord is what sets up a cascade of truth that puts all of this into perspective...the purpose is...

**D. Flowing out of His compassionate desire.**

- **1 Timothy 2:4 - who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

- and the more we pray to the Lord about these very matters, the more like Him we become...it provides focus to the way we think about and exercise our freedoms...

**E. Based on His gracious provision.**

- **1 Timothy 2:5-6 - For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *given* at the proper time.**

- that's why we pray that the church will enjoy a political climate that is quiet and tranquil...so we can focus all our attention on telling others about the mediator, about the ransom, about the good news of Jesus Christ...and yes...

**F. This mission can ultimately be accomplished in any political climate, but we should pray and be thankful when we can walk out our mission with great freedom.**

- that is the take away of this text for people like you and me today...
- there is a huge difference between appreciating our freedoms, and using our freedoms for their God-given purpose...

- now let's turn all of this to you and me...because we have some very important things coming up in the second half of this year that we will only successfully navigate if the concepts in this text are resonating deeply in our hearts...

- for example, have you been thinking and praying about how much our area is changing?...

1. The construction of both hospitals, but especially IU Clarion is already having a dramatic impact...
2. Then there's new elementary school that is being built just ½ mile south of us on 50 south...it will open next month...
3. McCarty Lane is being extended to run parallel to SR 26 and will come back around and connect to 26 a little over a mile from us...that creates a huge loop of land prime for development...

- that's already happening...two high density development plans were just approved by the APC on June 15<sup>th</sup>...

- both of them are less than a mile from where you're sitting...

- the first is Hawthorne Villas...

- highlight our church, the new Wyandotte school, Arnett...and then the new subdivision...

- there's going to be 88 duplexes there...being planned by a developer who has proved he and his company have the ability to make things happen...

- that's housing for 176 families...even assuming an average of 3 people per unit, that's 528 people...

- adjacent to that is Hawthorne Gardens...show map...

- 14 buildings...200 apartments...math is math – but if that's an average of even 2 people per unit – that's another 400 people...

- then there's Hawthorne Lakes...just across the road...another 147 single family homes...

- and that's just that particular company...we're talking about the likelihood of over 100 people moving in right down the street from this church...
- and that's not even touching on all the opportunities to serve the new public school families, and on and on...

- here's what I'm asking you – what do the freedoms we have as individuals and a church have to do with that?...
- and are we going to embrace those freedoms in a way that places us in a position where some day we have few or no regrets for the way we stewarded what was entrusted to us?...
- now, how does verse 7 fit into this?...

### III. Identify and Act on the Specific Reason God Gave You Freedom.

- do you see what Paul did in verse 7?...
- **1 Timothy 2:7 - For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.**
- do you see what Paul just did?...it's the same thing we need to do if this is going to be of any real benefit...
- he personalized it...
- for this reason...I was appointed to something...
- well, how would complete that sentence for you?...
- there are three major issues coming down the pike that are critical to the accomplishment of our mission this year and in the coming years...but all of them are going to require that we very carefully have our eye on the ball...in a very strategic, focused way...
- 1. The establishment of a fourth service on August 14<sup>th</sup>...
  - why?...especially because about 20 of the Sundays of the year, we could by without it...
  - the answer is – because our auditorium is becoming more crowded—our church is larger than ever before...and guests will not continue to attend a church where they feel crowded...that's a statistical reality...
  - and those 1000 plus people who are going to be moving here...we want to tell them all about Christ...
    - so this new service will be over in the CC Multi-purpose room...
    - we are in the midst of dramatically upgrading that spot so it is conducive to worship...
    - it is designed for people who do not have child-care or youth ministry needs...
    - there will be ABF's before and after...
    - it will all be live, both worship and preaching...
  - what's the take away for you?...
    - if you attend the 9:30 or 11:00 now and don't have childcare needs, consider changing...communicate with Pastor Dutton
    - be flexible as we work out the kinks...
    - redouble to efforts to invite those the Lord has placed around you to church now that we'll have additional room...it's all about the mission...freedom with a purpose...
- 2. The decision regarding the name change...
  - approved by our church family back in 2008...
  - why?...for the very issue we're studying this am...

- not changing our doctrine...
- but we think the name Baptist conveys a different image to many we are trying to reach...it needlessly detracts from the accomplishment of our mission
- it's a man made word (Jesus wasn't a Baptist, neither was John the Baptist—not in the way we use it...)
- the name served us well when it communicated something in culture...
- but many Baptists have changed, or misbehaved, or both...
- and many people equate all Baptists – as if we're a denomination...
  - a. cf. theological liberals who still retain the name Baptist
  - b. cf. people who do goofy things – Westboro Baptist in Topeka Kansas...
- many people in this culture would not give us a second look because of what they wrongly associate with our name...
- that's why our church family said that we need to look at this issue this year...not because it's comfortable, or even our preference...but because it's most consistent with the accomplishment of our mission...
- process moving forward – e-mail me with thoughts, concerns—input nights if there is interest – vote August church family night, August 7<sup>th</sup>

### 3. Launching our capital campaign for the Purdue project

- describe where we are in the process...
- ask folks to be praying about 3 year commitments...
- looking for those who would like to be involved in a leadership way now
- all about using our freedoms to accomplish the mission...