**Christ Has Set Us Free**

 ***28****Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.****29****But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.****30****But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.”****31****So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.*

*For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

***2****Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.****3****I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.****4****You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.****5****For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.****6****For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. (Galatians 4:28-5:6, ESV)*

 Christ set us free so that we would have a faith-filled life, and not one of slavery.

 Greetings to you dear brothers and sisters on this second Sunday in July, as we continue to speak about topics related to freedom. Christ freed us when we accepted Him and decided to follow Him as our Savior. Paul the Apostle ties this salvation process to the promise that God made to Abraham in the Old Testament. God had given Abraham a promise, it was God’s will that Abraham continue in the hopes of the fulfillment of that promise. We all know, of course, that because of his weakness, Abraham first tried to fulfill God’s promise through his own human efforts. The fruits of that wrong act are something that the world suffers from ‘til this day. Thus, today we are going to talk about the importance of God’s promise, which gives us as the people of freedom our status (in Christ). Again, Christ set us free so that we would have a faith-filled life and not one of slavery. Let us talk, then, about this life defined by God’s promise, God’s freedom.

 Being free in Christ means to live according to God’s Word and with faith in it. Abraham, even as the “father of faith,” faltered and had a son through his handmaiden, something that was not part of God’s promise for him. God, however, being merciful, still allowed the child of promise to be born through Sarah, and therefore both the children of promise and unbelief continued on in human history to today. The Apostle Paul wants to warn the new believers, especially those who were from a Jewish background and trusted their circumcised status, or Gentiles who were interested in the ritual, to remember the utter importance of trusting in God’s promise. If God sent His Son and He suffered, died, and rose from the dead, then nothing else could take the place of the power of those events, since God had promised through Jesus’ mouth about Jesus’ Resurrection. Jewish circumcision or Gentile uncircumcision was completely irrelevant from now on in the life of a believer – on the contrary, if the believer began to trust in their circumcised status, they would be putting themselves out of the life of God’s grace by their own doing. Not one Old Testament law or pagan practice was relevant or important for the Jesus people anymore. The Christian’s calling was to walk this life believing only in Christ and expressing that faith in love.

 Once upon a time, the famous Daniel Webster of the American Dictionary, among other things, was out to a meal with some writers. During the conversation, the subject turned to Christianity, and Webster openly expressed his faith in Christ’s divinity and his trust in Christ’s atonement for his sins. One of them questioned him, “Can you understand how Christ can both be God and human?” Webster said, “No sire, I cannot comprehend that. If I could, then He would not be greater than me. I feel that I am need of a superhuman Savior.”

 Today, we have countless means to step out of faith and to feel good about ourselves by our own human (albeit limited) efforts. There are many places to have fun and to rest in this world – they are so many that if you went somewhere every weekend, the locations would never end. There are games, races, programs on TV and various pastimes. These are all, however, human activities that give us temporary enjoyment, but not lasting spiritual peace. They are a human attempt to live well in this world.

 We, however, as Christ-followers are not called to such things, which look a lot like metaphorical Ishmaels. God’s promise is His Savior – the Word of God become Flesh who saved us and then sent His Holy Spirit from the Father so that we could be people of the Promise, the Word.

Therefore, let us be careful not to produce Ishmaels through our human attempts to live this life well. Let us be wary that our human (limited) understanding, and desires are not more important that God’s promise, which we receive and grow in through a life lived by faith.

If Christ has truly freed us, then we are living according to God’s promise and not according to our own efforts. Christ freed us to have a life of faith and not slavery. May the Lord give us this tenacious faith, and may we recognize His will and wait for its fulfillment as we remain in it. The Lord bless you all. Amen.