



Cape Coral Church of Christ

1010 S.W. 20th Avenue

Cape Coral, Florida 33991

(239) 283-4880



<http://www.thelordsway.com/capecoralfl>

Schedule of Services

Sunday: Bible Study: 9:30 A.M.

Worship: 10:30 A.M. and 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday: Bible Study: 6:00 P.M.

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The Cost of Freedom

The fourth of July is a national holiday which calls our attention to the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The thirteen original colonies were declaring their independence from England, and thus their freedom. I'm afraid that although we enjoy the holiday, because it means a three-day weekend, we have to some degree lost sight of its significance. Freedom isn't free. It never has been nor will it ever be.

The cost of freedom for the fifty-six original signers of the Declaration was significant. Five were captured by the British, tortured, and then put to death. Twelve had their homes sacked, looted, occupied by the enemy, or burned. Two lost their sons. One had two sons captured. Nine died in the war from either hardship or wounds. (*The Rebirth of America*, The Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation, p. 15). Our founding fathers knew the price of freedom.

In the spiritual realm, freedom is not free either. It came at a tremendous cost – the death of the spotless, sinless Son of God. Jesus left the portals of glory and robed himself in human flesh, subjecting himself to life as we experience it (2 Corinthians 9:12; Hebrews 2:9,

16-18). He was abused, mistreated, misunderstood, rejected, and eventually crucified. Why? So that we could be free from sin. There is no freedom to be obtained apart from the atoning death of the Son of God. "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

To enjoy the spiritual freedom that Jesus Christ offers, you have to be willing to give up personal freedom and become a slave to Christ (Romans 6:16-18). Jesus put it like this, "For whosoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:25). The cost of freedom is the death of personal freedom. It involves subjecting our will to the will of Christ. When one does that, he is truly free.

Spiritual freedom cost God His only Son (John 3:16). Freedom cost Jesus his life (Romans 5:8). Spiritual freedom will cost us. The price of freedom - discipleship - voluntary slavery to the will of God. Jesus said it best, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:34, 35 ESV).

What Reward Have Ye?

"For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" (Matthew 5:46).

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us that we should love our enemies as well as loving our neighbors. To give greater force to the need for our loving those others than our neighbors, he asked this question: "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?" In the question, several things are implied. Let us note some of these.

We can expect a reward. Often someone says that we should not expect any reward for service. We ought to just do good for goodness sake. But Jesus always promised a reward. He asked us to take His yoke because His burden is light and He will give us rest (Matt. 11:28). He said that the one who believed and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16). Those who visit the sick, hungry, and imprisoned will be welcomed into everlasting life and those who do not will be sent away to the place prepared for the devil and his angels (See Matt. 25:31-46).

Our reward will be according to what we have done. Those who do more can expect more. This is taught here in the Sermon on the

Mount; it is taught in Jesus' Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30), and in many other places. When one claims to be a Christian, his friends expect more of him, his God expects more of him, his enemies expect more of him, and he should expect more of himself. Does this remove God's grace? Not at all. "So likewise ye, when ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10).

It is impossible for us to do enough to earn our salvation or to know what to do to earn it. We need, we must have, God's grace. But one of the most fallacious things ever sold mankind is the idea that he must not try to do anything in order to be saved lest he destroy God's grace. Neither Paul nor any other true servant of God ever taught such.

To receive a better reward, one must live a different kind of life. "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable to God" (1 Peter 2:20). When one has learned the gospel of Christ and accepted it, he does not teach that all one has to do is just accept the grace of Christ and glory is his regardless of how he lives. He will rather love more, serve more, and complain less. He will be happy to serve even in the face of suffering and hardship.

"And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?" If we would receive more, let us do more. If we would have God and/or man treat us differently, we must live differently. This is the teaching of the Son of God.

The Blessing of Affliction.

God's man manifests a marvelous spirit in regard to affliction, particularly that which he has been called upon to endure. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes" (Psa. 119:71).

At a time when so many complain so much about adversity, it is refreshing and uplifting to witness such a spirit of contentment. While hardships can help in the building of character, it is also true that such reveal the stuff of which a man is made.

The psalmist, in the spirit of a true believer, expressed thanksgiving for the blessings affliction had brought to his life.

1. Affliction Had Turned His Erring Feet to God! "Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep your word" (119:67).

2. Suffering Had Led to a Greater Knowledge and Understanding of God's Word! "It has been good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn your statutes" (119:71).

3. Hardship Had Strengthened His Commitment to Remain True to God! "The proud have forged a lie against me, But I will keep your precepts with my whole heart" (119:69).

4. Affliction Had Increased His Appreciation for the Righteousness of God! "You are good, and do good; teach me your statutes" (119:68).

The Psalmist's struggles with the enemies of God were not that different from those faced by many Christians today. His encounters with adversity brought him closer to God. They taught him humility, trust, and greater fidelity to God's Word. The Christian needs to learn these very lessons if affliction is to be a blessing to him.

Just as I Am

Back in 1822, Caesar Malan was visiting in the home of the Elliots in Brighton, England. One day he said to the daughter of his host, "I wish you were a Christian, Charlotte." This statement did not receive a very favorable response and so he dropped the subject. However, the next day she admitted to being disturbed by what he said and told him she would like to be a Christian but didn't know how. He explained it to her but realized that she thought her life must be cleaned up first, before obeying. So finally he said, "Charlotte, Charlotte, you must give yourself to the Savior just as you are! JUST AS YOU ARE." Not long after, her response was forthcoming and she wrote her famous hymn, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that they blood was shed for me, and That Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!"

Each must come to grips with the fact that "I cannot save myself" (Acts 4:12). Saying we will not come to Jesus until we are good enough is like saying: "I'll go to school when I know enough." Jesus wants me to come just as I am! JUST AS I AM! It is His power that can make me what I ought to be; it is His blood that can cleanse my soul and make me free. With joy we give thanks "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."