

Following Jesus – Part 3: “No Obligations Please”

Introduction

Good evening, welcome to our Saturday evening Christian education program. So glad you can join us as we explore the secrets of following Jesus. We began some two weeks ago with the subject of taking up the cross. We recognize that we cannot follow Jesus until we realize we need to die to ourselves. And then we realize also that it is important to understand the concept of faith. Because without faith, it is impossible to please God. And faith is seen in how we die to self to obey God's word. Today, I'd like to share with you a third secret, I've entitled this subject rather cheekily, as “No Obligations Please”. What do you mean by that? Explore with me.

Romans 6:1-7

Romans chapter six. And we're going to look at verses one to seven in a very quick way. “What shall we say, then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we will no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died, has been set free from sin. Now, that's a lot of verses. But in CEP, we want to keep it short, punchy, concise for you.

Union with Christ

And I would like to remind you that verses one to seven really teach us this theological point about union with Christ, we are so joined with Jesus. You say how united are we to Jesus? Now the Bible says, “we are united with Him in a death like this. And we shall certainly, therefore be united with Him in a resurrection like his”. So, our union with Jesus is so tight, it is through death and resurrection. How does this make an impact upon my life?

Let me give you a little test. All right. This is a picture of the cross. When we look at the cross, we immediately could think about how Jesus died for me. I mean, that's, that's the central teaching of the gospel, isn't it? That we can't save ourselves. So, God sent His Son to die, to pay for our sins. So, Jesus died for me, to do for me what I could never do for myself, that is to cleanse me from my sin. And this is actually what is spoken of in Romans chapter five, that Jesus is the one who will pay for the penalty of our sins. So, this aspect of the cross teaches us about salvation or substitution in paying for our sins. Now, is there more to the cross? There is, and I think this is where a vast majority of people do not realize, or at least, do not actively remember. I like to you to maybe take 10 seconds here and ask yourself, what else can I see in a cross of Jesus Christ?

Hard to wait 10 seconds on video like this. So not only must we know that Jesus died for me, the other aspect of the cross that is so important for you to grasp is that I died with Jesus. And that's what we were reading in Romans six. Yes, Romans five tells me Jesus died for me but Romans six tells me also that I died with Jesus. And that's what is necessary for you to understand in order to be freed from the power and from the dominion of sin. So, if Romans five, Jesus died for me speaks about salvation, then Romans six I died with Jesus speaks about sanctification. That word sanctification is a word that means to be cut off. Sanctification means to be cut off from sin, to be nearer to God. If we want to live a life that is nearer to God, if you want to follow Jesus well, I think you need to understand what it means to die with Jesus, according to Romans six.

Reality

So, the first thing we must grasp in Romans six is the reality. What is the reality? The reality is that our union with Jesus, by faith, means that we know our old self was crucified with Him. That is to say, we echoed the words, "I died with Jesus". And so when you realize that the old man who used to be enslaved to sin, has died with Jesus when Jesus died on the cross, then it means we sin today not because we have to, we are no more slaves, because that old slave of sin has died with Jesus when Jesus died on the cross. But because we chose to.

Now, I was in the Army once, all of us, Singaporean males who have to go through army, and I remember a particular sergeant, his name is Sergeant Yong, I hope, Sergeant Yong you're not listening here. But Sergeant Yong used to be our tormentor. I remember, there were times when he was training us, he would make us do 100 Push-ups, our hands were all swollen and painful. Sergeant Yong also like to pick on me and have no choice to but to listen to him because he's a Sergeant, and I'm just a recruit. He will make us do exercises, do silly things. But there is no way I could say no, because I am under his authority. One day, however, I got out of army, I went back to study. And so, my green IC during army is now swapped for my pink IC as a normal citizen of Singapore. Suppose one day along the streets, I meet with Sergeant Yong and he says, "Ah, Jason, knock it down, do 100 pushups for me." What would I do? Well, I could say, "Yes, Sergeant" and go down and do 100 Push Ups. Or I could say to Sergeant Yong, "Sergeant Yong, that old Jason is no more, I have a new identity of a pink IC. I do not need to listen or to obey you anymore."

You see, that's a picture of you and I, before we came to know Jesus, we are under the authority of sin, we are under the authority of Satan. He is our king. But you know something. When Jesus died on the cross, those who believe in Him also were joined with him in his death. So those who believe in Jesus are those who have died to their old lives. So now I'm no more having the identity of being under the authority of Satan. I'm no more under authority to sin, I now have a choice. I could listen to Sergeant Yong and do it still. Or I could say I don't have to. And so today, when you know this reality that I died with Jesus, then you sin not because you have to, but because you chose to. And so that's why we have this title, "No Obligations Please". Let's realize that the secret to not living in sin is to first realize we don't have to anymore because Jesus died on the cross and we died with him.

Response

Now, Romans six tells us not only about the reality of dying with Jesus, but it also gives us the response we are to have as a result of this reality. So very simple words, three words for you. What is our response? Number one, to “know”, that's found in verse six, verse nine, number two, to “consider” or to reckon it to be true. And then number three, we are to “present” ourselves. So know, consider, present.

1. Know

First one, know. We know that our old self was crucified with him. So important to know this isn't it? Many years ago, I like to bring my older son Shawn, for activities: father-son time, and I will bring him to Jacob Balas Garden, it's a beautiful garden, it's for children, beautiful place. And we will walk by this little pond or this little creek and we will see this beautiful Lily pads, big spreads of leaf upon the water. And it was quite near us. So, I wanted to sort of feel it. It's hairy on the surface. I want to pick it up for my son to have a feel as well. Oh, so I, this is a bigger picture of what that lily pad looks like. So, I went down, I picked it up at all, I felt a sharp pain on my fingers, my thumb. So why? And then when I looked more closely, when I saw the underside, I realized, oh no, there are sharp thorns there. And so this is a picture of my poor thumb that was poked by the thorns there. And I said, this is terrible. Why would they have something like this and not tell anyone about it until I walked a little bit more, and I saw this sign “The Giant Water Lily. I'm one of the biggest water lilies on Earth. I have thorns on the underside of my leaves, they each can grow up to about one meter wide.” I said, I should have read this. If I had known this, I would not have committed this.

I'm glad you're joining us today for CEP because herein is a secret many people don't know; they do not know that the old man is crucified with Jesus. So, they still live under the bondage of sin because they didn't realize they have been set free. So, the first word is to know, this fact is given to you.

2. Consider

But just knowing this is not enough, because secondly, we see that we must consider. Now what does it mean to consider, it means to be reckoning this truth, this reality to be also real for you. Have you ever woken up in the morning by your alarm clock? It rings, you take a look at it. It says 7am. But when you look out, it doesn't feel like 7am and you feel so tired, it doesn't feel like 7am and you say you must be wrong, and you shut it out? Have you done that? Well, because somehow you don't reckon this reality to be true for you, you still think it's not 7am. Or if I may give another example there are many, many people who smoke. And when they buy a cigarette pack, they will see images of cancer or diseases on the pack itself. But they still smoke. Now that is reality, smoking can cause cancer, smoking can cause disease, but they still smoke. Why? Because even though they know this as a fact, they do not reckon it to be true for themselves. They do not consider that to be applicable to their life. And so, what I'm saying is knowing that the Bible teaches, “I died with Jesus”, needs to be applied to our own lives by considering it true for ourselves. John MacArthur, he says “Until a believer accepts the truth, he's reckoning it to be true, he is considering it to be true for himself. Until a believer accepts the truth that Christ has broken the power of sin over his life. He cannot live victoriously because in his innermost being, he does not think it is possible”. Now we must understand that as Christ died on a

cross, we died with him. And the old man that used to live under the authority of sin need not be the one identity we live by today. We have a new identity in Christ. John Owens, once wrote that his biggest challenge as a pastor was persuading non-Christians that they were slaves to sin and Christians that they were dead to sin. This is such an insightful statement. Fantastic. And as a pastor, I couldn't agree more. One of the hardest things is to tell non-Christians that they are slaves to sin. It's hard, isn't it? But the double whammy is to persuade Christians that you are actually dead to sin. You've got to consider this to be true for yourself. So, know, consider.

3. Present

Lastly, present. "Do not present your members to sin, as instruments for unrighteousness but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life." (Romans 6:13) At the end of the day, Christian living boils down to choices we make. Whether we will succumb to our appetites, our lusts or will we know we are set free, reckon it to be true for ourselves, and then decisively say no to sin, but to live ourselves, live our lives for the glory of God. There used to be a story told of two brothers one of them became king and the other usurped his throne. The older brother therefore lost his kingship. Now the older brother was a very overweight, obese man. The second brother who usurped his throne, threw him into a castle, locked him in a room, but ironically, a room without doors. But because he was so obese and so fat, he could not squeeze out of the door. The younger brother said to the older brother, if you could get out of this room, I will return the kingdom to you. But every day, the younger brother feeds him, passes him beautiful food, delicious food. And this older brother was a victim of his own appetite. He had every opportunity to get out. But he chose not to, because he presented himself to his hunger, appetites.

What a picture it is of you and me. We can be set free from sin, we are. But we can choose also today, tragically, to live for sin, or my dear friends maybe today by God's grace, hearing God's word, today you would say I want to reckon these realities to be true for me. And I want to present myself, my life, my members to God as instruments for righteousness. So, the reality is that I died with Jesus. The response is to know this to be true, consider it to be true, and live my life, presenting myself because this is true.

Conclusion

And finally, I want to encourage you by the result. In Romans six we read, "For the wages of sin is death. But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord. (Romans 6:23)" The word 'wages' here is interesting. The Roman soldier is paid daily, by amounts that would sustain his daily life. And then of course, at the end of the month, or at the end of his tour, he will be given a larger sum. So, the word used here 'wages' is about that daily provision. So, the idea Paul is saying is that when you serve sin, it pays you every day. So, this is not so much about the eternal damnation or separation from God. But it focuses on the daily alienation from God. So, the idea is when I sin, I lose intimacy, I lose joy, I lose the power of prayer. So, when you choose, not because you have to, but if you choose to live in sin, something dies in us spiritually. But the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Eternal life is not just about the life we will live after we die. According to Jesus in John 17, eternal life is knowing God and His Son, Jesus Christ. So, when you live a life that knows, considers and presents,

you would enjoy this knowledge, this life of knowing God and His Son. It speaks I think of joy and intimacy and power in prayer. And so, may the good Lord today lead you to follow Jesus well, by remembering to die to self, remembering what faith really is all about and applying it to here to “No Obligations, Please”. I died with Jesus. I reckon it to be true for me. And I'm going to yield my life not to sin, but to God. This is life.

Prayer

Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your word. Thank you for the interest, the hunger of your people. Lord, may they be blessed, may they be strengthened. May they make wonderful spiritual decisions in their daily lives, that they may enter into the joy into the intimacy with you. And so, build us up in the faith for your glory. Thanking you in Jesus name. Amen. God bless.