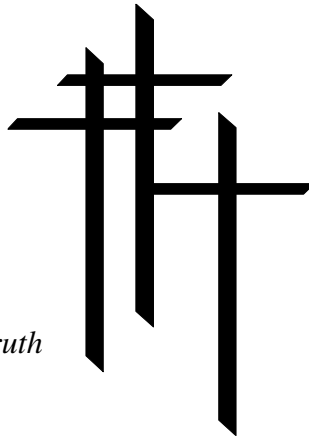


# Timely Messenger

*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth  
Speaking the Truth in Love*



Volume 65 No. 9

September 2005

**FREE**

By Charles Mays

I've heard that research shows the best word in advertising and marketing is "FREE." It gets everyone's attention. People perk up and listen to hear what is free. Well, this is no marketing ploy, but I hope to have your attention, for I would like to point out five "frees" that are found in the Scriptures.

## **Free From Righteousness**

*"For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." (Rom. 6:20)*

We don't anticipate "free" being used in the negative, but here it is. In our natural condition, we are void of righteousness. In Romans 7:18, the Apostle Paul wrote that no good thing dwells in the flesh. Also, consider the fact that God never calls the unbeliever to change his way of life. For the unbeliever, his daily conduct is not the issue. His need is salvation. The unbeliever is free from subjection to the will of God. In his commentary on the book of Romans, Ernest Campbell stated it this way:

"The truth revealed for the members of the Body of Christ is never superimposed upon (lost) sinners. God never tells (the lost) sinners how they are to live. They have no obligation to live righteously and holily. God's sole interest in (them)...is their salvation and not their lifestyle."

The lost are free from any responsibility to be conformed to the image of Christ. This is the condition in which we are born. This gives a whole new meaning to "free born"—and not in a good way. Matthew Henry wrote: "Freedom from righteousness is the worst kind of slavery." When you are free from righteousness, you are a slave to sin. There is no middle ground.

We live in a culture of self-improvement. In fact, it's big business. All types of physical and mental fitness products are peddled to us on a daily basis through every type of advertising possible. Self-improvement is not bad. It's good for us to keep an

eye on our physical and mental health, but there is no self-help remedy for sin. Romans 3:9-19 paints a dismal picture of mankind, ending with all the world being guilty before God. This is reinforced by Romans 3:23: *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* The end result is that we are all condemned to death (physical and spiritual); *“For the wages of sin is death...”* (Rom. 6:23a).

### **The Free Gift**

*“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Rom. 6:23)

Death is the sentence. Death is what we deserve. Death is our just reward; Not only physical death but spiritual death, which is eternal separation from God. But God offers us a gift. A gift is something that is free; it cannot be earned by merit. Sinners merit hell, but saints do not merit heaven. Eternal life, therefore, is a gift that cannot be earned. Romans 4:1-

5 is just one passage that makes it clear that grace is how we are accepted by God, not by works. Clearly, as Christians, our conduct should demonstrate to others that the Holy Spirit is working in our lives, but God does not save our soul based on our conduct. He does so based on our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. Notice this eternal life is *“through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* For contemporary Christian music fans, Stephen Curtis Chapman summed it up well when he penned the song *“Jesus is Life.”*

Salvation through the cross of Christ is not a popular message in our society today. In fact, it never has been. But that’s exactly what the Word of God teaches. Consider the following passages:

*“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”* (1 Cor. 1:18)

*“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews*

*a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.”* (1 Cor. 1:23)

*“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”* (1 Cor. 2:2)

These passages, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, and others make it clear that Paul taught salvation through faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Paul was not ashamed of this gospel message (Rom. 1:16). And he made it abundantly clear that God’s provision for salvation through the cross of Christ is offered as a gift, meaning FREE. Romans 3:24 says we are *“justified freely by (God’s) grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* How could it be stated any clearer than Ephesians 2:8,9? *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

When we are born, we are identified with Adam. We inherit death. But when we accept salvation by be-

believing that Jesus Christ died for our sins (faith), we are no longer identified with Adam but with Jesus Christ. These two conditions are contrasted in Romans 5:12-21. In describing our new position in Christ, the word “gift” is used six times in four verses (15-18, KJV). It is hammered home that God wants nothing, nay, will accept nothing as payment for our salvation. It’s all or nothing. Take it or leave it. It’s a free gift.

Many have the image in their heads of a repentant sinner reaching toward heaven while God reaches down. It’s a beautiful picture, but it’s poor doctrine. It presents the idea that we somehow meet God halfway in changing our destiny. Romans 5:6 says, “*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*” “Without strength” means we are totally powerless to change our situation. Picture an athlete as he lifts weights from the floor. The weights do nothing to aid him. They have no power to do so. The athlete does the lifting of this

dead weight on his own. In our natural condition, we are dead weight—dead in our trespasses and sins. God reaches down, doing all the work, and lifts us to a new position in glory through Jesus Christ our Lord (Eph. 2:1-7). Next time you sing such hymns as “*He Lifted Me*” or “*Love Lifted Me*,” I hope you remember this illustration and sing it with a new zeal and understanding.

#### **Free From Sin**

*“Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” (Rom. 6:18)*

When we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, we do not become immediately sinless. The old sin nature is part of our flesh and can only be eradicated by the death of this body that is corrupted by it. “*For he that is dead is freed from sin*” (Rom. 6:7). Even a casual reading of Romans, chapter seven, demonstrates the struggle the saved Apostle Paul had with the sin nature that dwelled in his body of

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*Gregg Bing — Editor*

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#### **Sunday Services:**

10:00 AM Sunday School  
11:00 AM Morning Worship  
6:00 PM Evening Worship

#### **Mid-Week Services:**

Tues. 10:00 AM Ladies Class  
Wed. 7:00 PM Bible Study

flesh (7:22-23). The struggle with the flesh is something we all endure. Paul states it directly, or alludes to it, no less than seventy times in his epistles. The conclusion is that in this earthly existence of ours, we will never be totally free from sin. That is, in our daily experience.

Positionally, we are

free from sin. In Colossians 3:3, our flesh is viewed as dead, and our *“life is hid with Christ in God.”* We are *“in Christ,”* and in Him is no sin. Ephesians 1:3 says we are blessed *“with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”* Paul continues to elaborate on some of those blessings, including our complete forgiveness of sins (1:7). Colossians 2:13 states: *“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”* The effect is that we are given a new position. Ephesians 2:6 says that God has *“raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* This is known as Positional Truth. The struggle that we face is making it a reality in our daily walk; this is Practical Truth. But this has no effect on our position in Christ.

### **Free From the Law**

*“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for*

*ye are not under the law, but under grace.” (Rom. 6:14)*

Most people think of the Ten Commandments when they think of the law. But it was much more than that. In fact, there were over 600 individual laws contained in the Mosaic Law. These laws governed every aspect of daily life for the Hebrew. It was God’s holy, righteous standard. This might initially be thought of as a blessing, but instead it was a curse. Not that the law was wrong. It was holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12). The problem came in the weakness of the flesh. Read again Paul’s struggle in Romans 7:7-25. Man is simply not able to keep God’s righteous standard under the power of his flesh. So we read:

*“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Rom. 3:20)*

The law could not save. It could only condemn. It

pointed out the weakness of man’s flesh and magnified his need for a Savior. What we could not do by the power of our flesh under the law, Christ did for us (Rom. 8:1-4). We also read, in Colossians 2:14, that Christ “blotted out” the law, “took it away” and “nailed it to His cross.” Yet many, even in our present day, fail to recognize this fact. I can only echo the words of Galatians 5:1:

*“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”*

Consider the words of Philip Bliss in the well-known hymn *“Once For All”*:

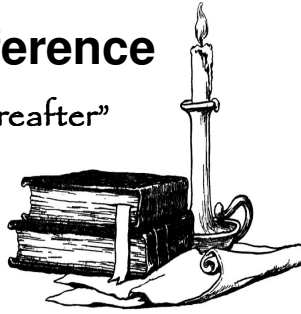
*“Free from the law,  
O happy condition.  
Jesus hath bled, and  
there is remission.  
Cursed by the law and  
bruised by the fall,  
Grace hath redeemed us  
once for all.”*

*(Continued on page 8)*

# Bible Prophecy Conference

“Things Which Shall Be Hereafter”

October 21-22, 2005



Hosted by



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*Speaking the Truth in Love*

1450 Oak Hill Road  
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## Conference Schedule

### FRIDAY — October 21

- 6:30 PM *Conference Begins*
- 7:00 PM Principles for Understanding Prophecy
- 8:00 PM God's Framework for Israel's Future
- 9:00 PM God's Future for the Body of Christ

### SATURDAY — October 22

- 8:30 AM *Fellowship—Coffee, Juice, Donuts*
- 9:00 AM The Man of Sin Revealed
- 10:00 AM The Time of Jacob's Trouble
- 11:00 AM The Day of the Lord's Wrath
- 12:00 PM *Lunch Break—Catered in Fellowship Hall*
- 1:30 PM The Revelation of Jesus Christ
- 2:30 PM The Millennial Kingdom
- 3:30 PM *Fellowship—Snacks and Drinks*
- 4:00 PM The Final Judgments
- 5:00 PM The New Heavens, Earth, and Jerusalem
- 6:00 PM *Conference Ends*

## CORRECTION

The last name of the author of the poem, “No Ordinary Man,” which ran in last month’s *Timely Messenger*, was spelled incorrectly. The correct spelling is:

Dennis W. Blankenship

We apologize to Dennis and to our readers for this clerical error.

We appreciate Dennis sending us his booklet of poems, *Poems Inspired by God and Portions from His Word*, and giving us permission to print them in the *Timely Messenger*.

Sing unto the  
LORD a new  
song, and His  
praise in the  
congregation  
of saints.

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## ONE NEW MAN

by Jim Roberts

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In the first chapter of the book of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul enumerates many of the spiritual blessings that believers possess today. Then he makes the glorious announcement that the Lord Jesus Christ now serves as the Head over all things to the Church which is His Body.

In Ephesians, Chapter 2, Paul reminds Gentile believers of two things that used to be the case in regard to their spiritual state. In addition to being at one time dead in trespasses and sins, Paul says that Gentiles were also aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise.

In response to our lethal state of sin, Paul concludes that God now makes us alive in Christ and has raised us up to sit in the heavenly places in Christ. In response to the fact that we were at one time strangers from Israel's covenants of promise, however, Paul

does not conclude that we have now been made partakers in those covenants. On the contrary, Paul concludes that we have now been brought near to God apart from the covenants by the blood of Christ. Beginning in verse 11, we read:

*“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Eph. 2:11-13)*

Paul goes on to say that

when Christ died on the cross, He abolished the law of commandments contained in ordinances. In other words, Christ abolished the rituals of the law which had caused such a wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles.

When God instituted the temple worship at Mt. Sinai, He made it clear that no one could participate without being circumcised. Now Paul says that the shed blood of Christ has abolished that requirement. When Christ died on the cross, He fulfilled all of the righteous requirements of the Law and abolished the rituals of the Law which were but a shadow of things to come.

It is particularly interesting to note, however, that even though the rituals of the Law were abolished at the cross, they were practiced by the Jews all the way through the Acts period. In Acts 15, it is recorded that the Apostle Paul appeared before the Jerusalem church to discuss this very issue.

Paul declared before the elders in Jerusalem that God was saving uncircum-

cised Gentiles, and he maintained that it was not part of God's plan or purpose for the Gentiles to be circumcised. The Jerusalem elders agreed and sent out a letter stating that the Gentiles would not be required to observe the rituals of the Law. Thus, the wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles was reinforced at this meeting.

In Acts, Chapter 21, Paul was accused of teaching Jews that they did not have to observe the rituals of the Law, but since that was not the case, Paul agreed to go into the temple at Jerusalem and participate in some of the rituals of the Law.

Clearly, the rituals of the Law were very much a part of Israel's covenants, and they drove a wedge between the Jews and the Gentiles. This was true during the Old Testament times, and it was also true during the Acts period, as God offered Israel the New Covenant Kingdom.

The rituals of the Law, which had created this wall of separation, were abolished at the cross. How-

ever, it was not until Israel's covenants were set aside that Paul was free to reveal this monumental truth. In Ephesians 2 he said:

*“For (Christ) Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” (Eph. 2:14-16)*

During the Acts period, the Gentiles were grafted into Israel's New Covenant hope (Romans 11:17). As a grafted branch, they maintained their own identity and yielded their own particular fruit. Therefore, the Gentiles could never be one with Israel under the terms of Israel's covenants (Romans 11:27).

However, when Israel's covenants were temporarily set aside at the end of the Acts period, the Apostle Paul was free to announce the glorious truth concerning the Church which is the Body of Christ. Paul said that Christ had abolished the rituals of the Law at the cross so that He could create in Himself one new man in one body through the cross.

When we consider the overwhelming consequences of this revelation which was given through the Apostle Paul, we have to say with the apostle:

*“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ... to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Eph. 3:14-15, 21)*

Jim Roberts is Associate Pastor of Peace Church in Indianahoma, Oklahoma.

(Continued from page 4)

### Free To Choose

*“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” (2 Cor. 5:20)*

The word “beseech” is not one we use in our vocabulary on a regular basis. It means to beg or plead with someone. If we are begged and/or pleaded with to be reconciled to God, then there is more than mere implication that man has a choice in the matter. Man is free to choose whether or not to accept

God’s offer of eternal life.

The same holds true of our Christian walk. We do not save ourselves. It is God who saves us through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary; by faith in His death for our sins (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Again, our conduct has no bearing on the matter. The only issue in salvation is faith. But true faith should stir a desire in us to live a life that is consistent with our profession of faith. That is the thrust of Romans 12:1-2:

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,*

*acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

(See also Romans 6:12-13.)

God desires all men to accept His free gift of salvation and to live a life that is free from the slavery of sin and free from the bondage of the law. But clearly, we are free to choose.

Charles Mays is Associate Pastor of Eleventh Avenue Church in Mineral Wells, Texas.

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