

Donnybrook

20 October 2021

Welcome

We began reading from Romans last week, a mighty letter of St Paul, not always easy to understand. Perhaps this much information might help. In chapters 1-4, Paul describes the human condition without God and without grace, pointing to the reality of death and experience of moral failure. What we may call the misery of the human condition. By contrast, in chapter 5-8, Paul unfolds all that God has achieved for us in Jesus' death and resurrection. Much of the argument is like this: our need was great but grace was always greater. As a result, the message of Paul in Romans 5-8 is deeply encouraging and life-affirming.

Topic

What about today's reading?

Steps

In his writings, Paul affirms again and again that we, as believers in the God who raised Jesus from the dead, have been set free. Free from what? First of all, from the power of death. But secondly from the power of sin, a negative force which deforms our authentic selves. Paul believe that under grace we can, if we choose, live fully the kind of lives God wants us to live.

Consequently, Paul is very concerned that we do not lose this hard-won freedom. In Galatians, he declares in ringing tones: *For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.* (Galatians 5:1)

This is exactly the reaching of today's passage. We are to make choices, great and small, which will sustain and breathe life into the freedom we have in Christ. He makes it very concrete:

you should, instead, offer yourselves to God, and consider yourselves dead people brought back to life; you should make every part of your body into a weapon fighting on the side of God.

He means that every experience, every moment of the day, every encounter, every feeling, positive or negative, can be and should be part of our relationship with God. For example, for a good night's rest: gratitude. For any help we have received: thanks be to God. For a glimpse of God in the starry sky or the the morning light: praise. And so on the whole day long.

Conclusion

In these ways, we continue to live in the grace and in the freedom we have in Jesus Christ.