

Be Free  
Jan 11, 2015

When my sons were younger they liked to wrestle with dad. Often my youngest son would get a hold on my leg, and say, "I've got you." And I would smile, hold my legs tightly together, and say, "On the contrary, I've got you." He would get this shocked look on his face, and then try to get his arm free and realize that, indeed, he wasn't in control, I was. He was trapped and did not know it. Now he wanted to be free. He would tug and tug and tug, to no avail. He only discovered he was trapped when he tried to get away.

Have you ever heard someone with an addiction say, "I'm in control of this. I can quit any time I want,"? Maybe it was someone who smoked. Maybe it was someone who had a problem with alcohol. Maybe it was someone with a drug problem. The person would deny that there was any problem at all.

Maybe that person is you. And maybe one day you did decided to quit and found that instead of controlling this substance, it actually controlled you. You found you were trapped, had been living trapped, and did not know it. You discovered that you were enslaved by this thing.

This idea, of being controlled by something, is a picture of the human condition when it comes to sin. More than likely you are under the control of some sin today. When we allow any sin to be a regular part of our lives, the power of that sin grows until it takes control. It starts determining our overall behavior. It affects every part of our lives. It is when you try to resist that sin that you discover you are trapped.

The missionary Paul discovered this about himself. He writes of this in one of his letters.

**Romans 7:15-19 (NLT)** I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature (flesh). I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.

Paul learned through trying to obey God's law, rules, and commandments, that he, Paul, was a slave to sin. In fact we all have been slaves to sin. Earlier in this same letter he refers to this condition in connection with what Jesus did for us.

**Romans 6:6 (NIV)** For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--

This is normal human existence. All humans, all people are enslaved by sinful desires. Every human has sinful desires. And it is those sinful desires that cause us to sin. We will only be free from sin's power when somehow those sinful desires are turned into godly desires. That's part of what Jesus came to make possible.

Jesus died so that we could become free from sin. All of us need to be freed from sin. Every person on this planet is a slave to sin. Freedom is possible, but only through Jesus. Freedom from sin is one of the benefits for us who trust in Jesus' death for the forgiveness of our sins. Let me explain this freedom. There are three aspects to it.

**In Jesus, we ARE freed from the penalty of sin.**

The human problem of sin is that sin earns us death and hell. We are lost in our sins. Because of our sins there is no hope for us. Even if today, you could become perfect, it would not be enough to make up for all the sin you have already piled up. And the likelihood of you becoming perfect isn't very great.

We could define perfect as doing all the right things at all the right times for all the right reasons. Right now, none of us is perfect, and even if we could become perfect it would not do anything about our past sins. Doing what is right today does not erase what I did yesterday.

Let us imagine that you killed someone. You murdered someone. Following that sin, you lived a perfect life for a decade. But then you were discovered, arrested, and brought to trial. You told the judge, "Your honor, I've lived a perfect life for the last ten years. Surely you can overlook that murder of ten years ago." Would the judge agree? Of course not. No one would, especially the family of the person you killed. Justice demands a penalty for that crime.

Every sin is a crime against God. So justice demands a penalty for all of our sins. And there are a lot of sins. As much as we sin against each other, it is a drop in the bucket of our sins against God. Our biggest sin is failure to recognize God for who He is and live accordingly. He is the creator. He created us and this world for HIS purposes. But we live each day for our own purposes. We live OUR plan, not His. This is our chief sin and the one we commit most of the time. It is worse than any sin we commit against other people.

We are buried in a huge pile of our own sins. Our only hope is that someone else pay the penalty for those sins. This is exactly what Jesus did for us on the cross. Sinless Jesus, perfect Jesus, was accused with trumped up charges and murdered on the cross. But God accepted His death as the full penalty for all of OUR sins.

Jesus says there are books in heaven in which are being recorded your every life deed, good or bad. In addition there is another book, called The Lamb's Book of Life. Jesus is the Lamb of God. This book contains the names of Jesus' followers. This book ALREADY contains the names of those who have put their faith in Jesus. Jesus did not die so you could work up to forgiveness. By your faith in Jesus, you have already been granted forgiveness. Your sins have already been forgiven. You have been declared free from the penalty of your sins.

First, we believe that Jesus has set us free from the penalty of our sins. Secondly, **In Jesus we WILL be freed from the presence of sin.**

As forgiven followers of Jesus Christ, we will live with Him forever. We will no longer have these bodies and the lusts of the flesh. We won't need smart phones, houses full of furniture, or televisions. We won't strive for material goods or compete with each

other. There will be no more trying to make a name for ourselves. There will be no more place for ego or pride or conceit or contempt. All the things that lead us to sin in this life, will be gone. We will be free from the presence of sin in us and others.

What a great day that will be. What a relief that will be. What a freedom that will be. No one will sin against us. We will no longer sin against each other. Nor will we sin against God. We will be able to fully love and experience to the full the joy of our salvation. We will be free from the penalty of sin and the presence of sin.

In Jesus we are freed from the penalty of our sins and we will be freed from the presence of sin. There is one more freedom we need. **In Jesus we CAN be freed from the power of sin.**

Right now, we need freedom from the power of sin. This morning I want you to think about a particular sin. Right now, there is one sin, more than all others, that has you in its control. Maybe it is lust. Maybe it is a lust for power, trying to get control over your life or the lives of others. Maybe it is a lust for fame. You want everyone to know who you are. Maybe it is a lust for sexual experience. Many people have come under the power of this sin today. Maybe the sin that most dominates you is a lust for tastes or smells or experiences. You are pursuing thrills. You are pursuing danger. Maybe the sin that most controls you is the desire to beat the system, to get around the law and remain uncaught.

Maybe the sin that controls you is hate. You are controlled and driven by your hate for another person, maybe someone who sinned against you. Maybe the person is dead, but you still hate that person, what they did, what they failed to do. And that hate drives you each day.

Maybe your sin is worry. Instead of living in submission to God, you are worried about all the things that might happen to you. You worry you won't get well. You worry your child will make a really bad, life-altering choice. You worry about the stock market crashing. You worry about your family, your friends, your church, yourself. Instead of living by faith in God to meet your every need according to His plan for the world, you worry that your plan will not be fulfilled.

Maybe it is greed. You have a lust for money or things. You are not content with the good things God has already provided you.

Maybe the sin that controls you is simply self-will. You don't mind being religious, but you are not about to submit your life to God. I knew a young woman nearly 40 years ago who had grown up in the church. She knew all the answers to the frequently asked questions about Christianity. She was active in her church, participating in the young adult group, in worship, and in the choir. No one suspected that she was not a follower of Jesus Christ. Church was a part of her life, but submission to Jesus was not. The issue for her was submission. She admitted to me that she was not going to submit her life to God. No one was going to control her life but her, she thought. She was revealing her slavery to sin.

There are such people in many churches. People join churches for different reasons, not always for the right ones. We are warned of people who may be part of a church,

but not really be followers of Jesus Christ. The missionary Peter warns one church of such people.

**2 Peter 2:19 (NIV)** They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity--for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

What has mastered you? All men are slaves to sin. But when you become a Christian, God puts His Spirit in you to start changing you, start freeing you. God wants to free you from the power of sin. It won't happen in an instant. This is a process. It won't happen in a day, or a month, or a year. It isn't a quick process because sin doesn't want to give up control of you. It fights against the Spirit of God in you. And many sins are so much a part of you that you do not even recognize that they are in control until you try to change your behavior. Try to live for Jesus and you will discover just how trapped by sin you are.

Christian, you are a slave to whatever sin has mastered you, whatever sin has control over you. So what sin is that? Maybe it is many sins that are controlling you today. Many sins run your life. My goal today is to help you to be free from sin's control.

The last two Sundays I have preached about reaching spiritual goals in this new year. If we want to reach the goals this year that we failed to reach last year, we have to discover the causes of our failure. Sin is the cause of your failure, because Jesus died to free you from sin.

So what sin are you enslaved by?

**I am enslaved to the sin of \_\_\_\_\_.**

Whatever good goals you have set for yourself this new year, reaching these goals will be hindered by this sin. This is especially true of the spiritual goals you have set for yourself. The sin or sins that control you will hinder you from reaching the goals you have set.

If you have set goals of greater obedience to Jesus, this sin will keep you resisting God's will. If you want to grow deeper in prayer this year, this sin will keep your prayers shallow. If you want to serve others with Jesus more this year, this sin will keep you self-centered and resisting service. If you want to be a greater witness for Jesus this year, this sin will keep you silent.

It may be that for some years you have failed to reach your goals, but you have not connected that failure with sin having control over you. If you have been setting good goals for your life, goals that are in line with God's revealed will (in the Bible), then it is a good bet that sin is the problem.

Until you discover this sin, and do what needs doing to be free, you will continue to face defeat in your spiritual growth.

Maybe you already know what this sin is. You know the name of the sin that you have been excusing, the sin that you have made allowances for, the sin that you do not want to face, the sin that you want to ignore, the sin that has enslaved you. Until you face up to this sin in you, you will continue to fail for God.

Or maybe you don't know what sin it is that has enslaved you. I don't pretend to know. Others may know. It may be obvious to your friends or family members. God certainly knows. And God can reveal this sin or sins to you.

I will speak more about how to deal with this sin, next week. But the first step is admitting to God and yourself that there is a problem at all, and identifying the sin that has enslaved you. You don't have to tell me, though you can if that will help you to. I will keep your confidence and will pray for you. But you need to own up to it to God. You need to admit to yourself that the good you want to do, you have not been able to do because of sin in you. You need to know what this sin is so you can deal with its source. It is feeding on some desire in you.

So let me give you a prayer to begin praying. **Start praying this:** *"I believe You have provided me freedom from the penalty of sin, the future presence of sin, and the current power of sin. Teach me to see the sin that has power over me. Show me what I must do to deal with this sin."*