

Military Life
June 16, 2013

We were shocked last month by the breaking story of the three women who had been held captive for ten years. The women admitted that the man did not grab them, but simply offered them a ride as they were walking down the street and they accepted.

This is what sin does. It offers us something tempting and we do not realize that it will have long-term consequences. Every time you intentionally sin, you are pulled into sin a little deeper until one day you realize that you are trapped.

We were created for God,... to know God, love God, enjoy God. But mankind was offered something else by sin, and we accepted, not knowing that we would become slaves of sin. That is the picture Paul paints in his letter to the church at Rome. That is the picture painted for us in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

We accepted a ride from sin and became enslaved to it. Sin has enslaved all of mankind for nearly all of human history. But God did not give us up. He did not create us only to lose us. Though it cost a lot, God paid the ransom. More specifically, Jesus paid the ransom price. It cost Him His life.

We speak of what Jesus did for us with several different terms. We speak of Him saving us, rescuing us, justifying us, reconciling us to God, or redeeming us. Redemption means Jesus paid the price to get us back. As part of the redemption word picture is the word ransom. Jesus paid the ransom for us. Etymologically, the words redeem and ransom are connected. While we use ransom strictly for kidnapping, the word originally referred to purchasing a slave.

We were enslaved to sin, but Jesus purchased us to Himself. The price was His life. He paid the ransom price, the redemption price when He died on the cross. Look again at what Jesus says about what He came to do.

Matthew 20:28 (NIV) "... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

(Acts 20:28; Romans 3:23, 24; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Galatians 3:13; 4:4, 5; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19)

Christ's death purchased us. Our faith in His death frees us. But we aren't freed so that we can serve sin again. No, we are freed to serve God. We have been freed from enslavement to sin so that we can fulfill the purpose for which we were created. We were created to know God, love God, and serve God. We could not do that while we were enslaved to sin. Jesus purchased us from sin to God. We belong to Him.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV) You are not your own; you were bought at a price.

This is a big deal. You have to understand that you belong to Jesus. He paid for your life with His. So you are not your own. You belong to Him. This has huge ramifications for how we view our lives, how we live our lives. It will help us understand this if we compare it to something more common to us.

How many of you first came to live in this area of the country because the military brought you here? Several of you did so. We have known others over the years who were brought here by the military and then the military sent them elsewhere or they retired while here and then moved elsewhere to live.

The military moves people around the country and the world all the time. In fact, when you enter the military, you expect that this will happen. You do not expect to be stationed in one place for your entire military career unless you are only in for a couple of years. Even then you are most often trained one place and then stationed somewhere else for your tour of duty.

When you are in the military, your life belongs to the military. They decide where you are stationed and the work you do. They may even decide to send you into combat, or near places that you have a greater chance of injury or death. Your life is not your own.

Civilian life, life not in the military, is very different. When you are a civilian, you can do what you want with your life. You can choose where to live. You can choose to move to a different city or state, or even country. You can choose what to do for a living. You get to decide all of these things and more. Your life is yours.

Now here is the point this morning. Christians, **We are not civilians**. The problem with too many Christians is that they think of themselves as civilians. In their relationship with God they think they are civilians. We are not civilians. We are soldiers for God.

We are not civilians. We belong to Jesus. Jesus is our commander. We answer to Him. We belong to Him. This has huge ramifications for your life. Let's look at a few of those.

Your body is not yours to do with as you wish.

Your body belongs to Jesus. We've looked at the statement Paul wrote about our status. Now look at the context of that statement.

1 Corinthians 6:15 (NIV)

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!

The context here is sexual immorality. The city of Corinth had a huge temple to the Roman goddess, Aphrodite. Worship in that temple involved paying for the services of a prostitute, male or female. This practice was common for these Christians before they came to Jesus. Paul is writing, in part, to instruct them away from engaging in these previous practices. Sexual immorality has no place in the life of a Christian.

1 Corinthians 6:16-18 (NIV)

Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

The New International Version of the Bible uses the two words "sexual immorality" to translate the one Greek word, "porneia". Porneia, as used by the Greeks originally meant prostitution.

The use of the word evolved, just like use of English words do, to include adultery, and eventually to include any form of immoral sexual activity.

Note he draws a distinction between sexual sins and other sins you commit against your body. That is because there is an emotional and spiritual connection between our spirits and our bodies when it comes to sex. Sex is not simply a physical act cutoff from the other aspects of who you are. You can eat ice cream and it doesn't affect your spirit. You can use cocaine, and while it is illegal, it doesn't affect your spirit. But sex affects your spirit. Immoral sex affects the spirit of a Christian in a negative way because of this connection, because of the one who is in you.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Christian, you belong to Jesus. Your body belongs to Jesus. Your stomach, your mind, your heart belong to Jesus. So Jesus has a say in how you express yourself sexually. He has a say in who you date and marry. He has a say in what you put into your body, mind, and heart.

You are not your own. You belong to Jesus. He paid for your life on earth with His blood. In becoming one of His disciples, you enter His service and will receive the joys of heaven when you die. But this life, this life is to be lived in His service. You are not a civilian.

A second ramification of our redemption is that **Jesus watches over you.**

Jesus promised His disciples that He would be with them always. By the power of the Holy Spirit in us, Jesus watches over His own. When He was on earth, Jesus protected His disciples. Now Jesus is in heaven, but has sent the Holy Spirit. He is still protecting us. Just as you guard the things you own and the people most important to you, so Jesus guards those who are His own.

Therefore be assured that no harm can touch you apart from His will. No enemy, no criminal, no other person can do you harm apart from the knowledge and will of Jesus. You are protected. He is responsible for your life.

The same is true with illness. You can't get cancer apart from God's will. You can't die of a heart attack apart from God's will. You can't lose your life to the flu apart from God's will. There are germs floating in the air all around us, going in and out with every breath. They can't harm you without His permission.

He watches over your body and also over your faith. He guards you from those things that would mess with your faith. You can't win the lottery without Jesus' permission. I'm not saying He controls which balls get picked each day. But if you have a ticket and are trusting in it instead of Him to meet your financial needs, He can make sure you don't win the lottery. He can make sure the publishers clearing house prize doesn't come to your door. He can protect you from the problems that come with winning.

A Christian man once told me he was lucky to have such a good wife for so many years. I pointed out that he was not lucky, he was blessed. It had nothing to do with luck or chance. He was blessed by the Lord with that good wife.

There is no such thing as luck. There is only God. There is no principle of luck running through the universe casting good or evil upon people. God is in control of this world. God is in control of your life. If you are not a Christian, the devil is messing with your life. He would rather you believe in luck than in God. But there is no such thing as luck.

Christian, God is watching over you, protecting you. Sometimes He has to protect you from the bad guys. Sometimes He has to protect you from the devil. Sometimes He has to protect you from yourself. In doing this He may allow things you would rather avoid.

Thirdly, **God may need you to go into battle at the cost of your life.**

Just last month, a Christian husband and father was murdered in Canada. On the evening of May 6, Tim Bosma of Ancaster, Ontario, disappeared. He had advertised that his 2007 Dodge Ram pickup was for sale and two men had responded. His wife watched the truck pull out of the driveway as Tim took them on a test drive. She would never see her husband alive again.

Eight days later police confirmed that they had found Bosma's remains in a field, burned beyond recognition. Two men, Dellen Millard and Mark Smich, both residents of nearby suburbs of Toronto, have been charged with first-degree murder, but no one has been able to determine why they killed Bosma or why they would even want to. Millard was independently wealthy and had no clear financial need to steal a 6-year-old truck.

So now, a Christian wife and mother is left without her husband. She has young children to support. Why would God allow this to happen? We may never know. Or we may find out in heaven.

You have to keep in mind that we aren't living for this life on earth. Despite the fact that we get married, have children, buy or build homes, this place temporary. This place is combat. And we aren't civilians. We are part of the invading Kingdom of God. So don't make even marriage, family and such your treasure. We are living a tour of duty for God. Our life here is TDY. Some of us have safe assignments and some of us have dangerous assignments. And some of us will die for the cause, well before we grow old.

Some months ago I was watching a war movie. I have not been in battle, but I think it did a good job of depicting what it was like to storm the beach. The men were pinned down by a machine gun nest. The captain orders three men to leave cover and charge the machine gun. They are all shot. He orders the next three, and they are all shot. He orders the next three, and they are all shot down. He orders the next three and two are shot down. One makes it through. A commander sometimes has to send men into battle even though he knows they will die.

Of the first men who followed Jesus, He chose 12 for a special assignment. It would be more dangerous for them than for others. They were going to be the key leaders in His church after He returned to heaven.

Yet, not too long after the church was established, one of these men was arrested and executed by the Romans. James, the son of Zebedee, did not serve Jesus very long. Did Jesus pick the wrong guy? No. Did Jesus fail to protect him? No. No, he died serving the purposes of his commander. Jesus used James as a martyr, early in the history of the church.

We don't know all the ramifications of that. We can only believe that God used it in great ways in the days that followed that, to build up the Christians then, to call them to greater faith, greater dependence on God. I'm sure after that that they prayed like they had not been praying.

We look back at the brave missionaries who dared to try to present the Gospel to the Auca Indians in South America in the 1950's. They lost their lives to the Auca's without making much progress with the Gospel there. It was a great tragedy. But God used it to challenge many more people into full-time missionary service.

But not all the reasons Christians die young are so evident. When we were in seminary, there was a student helping out at a local church, up the street from the seminary. He was mowing grass and the mower hit a guy wire for a telephone pole, and for no reason that anyone could figure out, the guy wire was live with electricity and he was electrocuted. A young man, studying to be a pastor, tragically killed. What good came of that for the Kingdom of God? I do not know of any. Maybe one day Jesus will share the rest of that story with us.

Jesus certainly could have protected Him. Jesus could have alerted someone to the danger before anyone got hurt. Or maybe he died so a child didn't get killed. We do not have those answers.

All we can do is live put our faith in the commander. Jesus doesn't promise us health, safety, or long life. Even Christians die sooner than they want to. Even Christian parents sometimes die sooner than they want to, or than others want to allow them to die. Despite that, keep trusting in the commander.

We do so because He died for us. Jesus gave His life for your life in eternity. Is it too much, then, to ask that you give your life now in service to Him? After He died to free you from sin, aren't you willing to die for the Kingdom of God?

So I leave you with a prayer this morning. Can you pray this prayer today and mean it? Can you pray it again tomorrow, and the day after, and every day for the rest of your life on earth?

Prayer: "Lord, Jesus, I am not a civilian. I live to serve You. Do with me as You need."

If you are not a Christian, you may choose not to become one, seeing what the Bible says about being a disciple of Jesus. But if you realize you are a sinner in need of a savior, Jesus is the savior you need. Jesus is the savior God sent to rescue you. There is no other.

So, knowing the cost of being a disciple, if you are ready to receive Jesus as your Savior today, and turn your life over to Him as your Lord, then you now is the time to do so. Now is the time to pray a prayer such as this:

"Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner against God. I know my sin deserves death and hell. I need a rescuer, a savior. I believe You are the Savior I need because You died for my sins. I now receive You, as my Savior and turn my life over to You as my Lord."