

We are in the middle of a series of sermons about the promises of God. In the first sermon we learned two things. First, if you believe God's promises He will change your character to match the character of Jesus. So you will become more loving, kind, patient, wise, compassionate, and humble as a person. Second, God will keep you from the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. As Christians live out their belief in God's promises, God makes these changes in us.

Two weeks ago we looked at the promise of righteousness. We need righteousness to enter heaven. I defined righteousness as having a right relationship with God. This righteousness comes from God. It is not something we earn or work for. It is promised to us when we put our faith in Jesus.

Last week I spoke about the promise of heaven, about the things that will be ours when we arrive in heaven. If you missed any of these first three sermons you can read them on our website.

This morning we are looking at the promise of freedom. This is a freedom that we all need. You may think you are already free,... unless you are a teenager. You teens know you are not yet fully free. Likely you are dreaming of the freedom you will have when you obtain a driver's license and have access to a car. Maybe you long for the freedom to live somewhere other than in your parent's home. Maybe you long for the freedom to have a job and earn your own living and decide what to purchase with your money.

But there is a more important freedom that you need, which we'll examine today. We learn of this freedom in the book of John in the Bible.

John 8:31-33 (NIV) To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

The adults Jesus was speaking to were thinking along the same lines you adults may be thinking. They thought of freedom in political terms or civil freedoms. While Israel was ruled over by the Roman Empire, the Jews were not slaves of Rome. They were free to travel. They were free to start and carry on businesses. They were free to move and live in a different city. They were free to marry as they chose. They had freedom of religion. In the everyday sense of the word free, they were free.

John 8:34-36 (NIV) Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son (of God) sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Jesus is speaking of slavery to sin. The world says most people are good, but despite that commit some sins. The Bible says that all people are sinners, but despite that do

some good. We are sinners. That is why we sin. We are enslaved by sin. We have no choice about sinning because we are sinners. And as sinners, we cannot please God with our lives. The good we do is not pleasing to God because it is not enough to overshadow the sins we do. We are slaves to sin. But Jesus came to set us free from sin.

One day, Jesus will free His followers from the presence of sin. This is part of heaven. The Bible does not state specifically that we will be free from the presence of sin. But it is implied that there will be no sin in heaven.

The Bible does not state this specifically. But it is implied. Let me give you three quick reasons why I believe this is so.

First, we will not have physical needs and desires in heaven. (1 John 2:16-17) The desires of the world will pass away with this world. We won't be pulled by desire for food, for sex, for prestige, for fame, for power.

The second reason I believe there will be no sin in heaven is that the devil won't be there. The devil will be in the lake of fire, so he won't be trying to get you to sin. (Rev. 19:20)

Third, since there is no pain or grief in heaven, no one is sinning against us, a cause of much of our grief. (Rev. 21:4)

In the future, Jesus will free us from the presence of sin. Right now, in the present, **Jesus can free us from the power/pull of sin.** This is temptation. I'll speak more about this promise in three weeks.

That's the future and the present. For those who are already Christians, **Jesus has freed us from the penalty of sin.** There are several negative things associated with sin. Maybe you are suffering from one of them today.

Maybe **you are feeling the weight of your guilt** this morning. If you are, I have good news for you. Jesus died so you could be cleansed from guilt. Look at the following wonderful truth. The writer is comparing the Old Testament sacrifices under the Law of Moses, to the sacrifice Jesus made for us in heaven.

Maybe you, like I used to do, struggle with sinning the same sins over and over and so your guilt is compounded. You wonder if God can possibly forgive you. Or maybe you have some sin that is so bad you find it hard to forgive yourself. Look at the following marvelous truth.

Hebrews 9:14 (NIV) ...the blood of Christ... (will) cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

When you become a Christian, God forgives your sin. That is a fact based on His promise. God wants you to live in the joy of your salvation. He doesn't want you plagued by feelings of guilt. He wants you full of joy.

If you don't believe you are forgiven, you will still feel guilty. But if you claim your forgiveness in Jesus, you can push feelings of guilt aside and replace them with joy.

God wants you to live in the joy of your salvation. Believe it and live it. You don't have to live defeated by feelings of guilt.

Do you think there is no hope for you to serve God because of your sin? You are mistaken. See the truth. Jesus died to cleanse your conscience so that you can serve the living God. God saves all who put their faith in Jesus, not just people who are mostly good. No matter what sin you have committed, God stands ready to forgive. Jesus pays the debt of ALL sin, yours included.

Some suffer from guilt feelings. **Others suffer the fear of death.** Maybe you suffer from this. When I was in seminary I took a course in pastoral counseling in human crises. One assignment was to make out a death certificate on ourselves. The professor had obtained blank death certificates from the state of Kentucky. We were each to decide how we had died, and to fill out the form.

A friend of mine couldn't do it. He could not even write his name on the form. The thought of his death paralyzed him. This assignment became a crisis event in his life. He wrote a term paper about his experience.

Maybe you fear your death. He avoid any thoughts of your death. You refuse to think about it at all, possibly because you are afraid of what comes next.

But I have good news for you this morning. For those who put their faith in Jesus, the other side of death holds the promise of heaven. What happens after death is no mystery.

1 Corinthians 15:54 (NIV) When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

Christian, you have no reason to fear death. It is just the passing from this life to the next, to heaven. Jesus died to free you from your fear of death.

Some suffer from the feeling of guilt. Others fear death. Maybe, instead, you are **focused on the consequence of your sin.** You know you are deserving of hell and wish for some rescue. For those feeling the weight of coming hell, I have good news. You can be freed by Jesus.

One day we will all stand before God to be judged for our lives. All will be found guilty of sin. But before God pronounces the sentence of condemnation to hell, Jesus will stand up for His followers. His followers will not be condemned to hell. Paul writes this wonderful truth in his letter to the Christians in Rome.

Romans 8:1 (NIV) Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

That is one of my favorite Bible verses. I memorized this one a long time ago. I encourage you to memorize it too. It is so comforting when you sin. It is so comforting when you give in to feelings of guilt. It is so comforting when you fear that you are not

saved and instead are bound for hell. It means that no true Christian will be condemned to hell.

If you are suffering from any of these penalties of sin, then hear the good news that is yours in Jesus today. Jesus came to free you from sin.

But it is not only that we are freed from guilt, fear of death, and hell. We are **Not just free from, but free to.**

The non-Christian, because of his sinful state, cannot please God. You can't do enough to please God because your sin is so unpleasing. Paul writes of it this way.

Romans 8:6-8 (NIV) The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Those controlled by the flesh, by sin, cannot please God. Even the good things this person does is not pleasing to God because the person is really serving self, not God. It is only when we become Christians and receive the Spirit of God that we can please God with our lives.

So one new freedom we have is that we can live to please God. A second is seen also in this chapter.

Romans 8:16 (NIV) The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

When you become a Christian you are adopted into God's family. So we now have the right to address God as Father.

In all of these ways Jesus frees us from slavery to sin. But you have to want to be set free.

Slavery to sin is like an addiction. Lots of people are addicted to a specific sin.

Are you enslaved to sin? Jesus can set you free... today... right now.

Admit to God you are a sinner. Admit your slavery to sin.
Confess your faith in Jesus as your Savior from sin.
Turn your life over to Him as Lord.

You will have instant freedom. God will forgive your sin.
God will begin the work of reshaping your character.