

The Bondage of Sin is Broken
Selected Scriptures

Introduction

Jesus is risen! What greater news could have been given on that blessed morning other than what the angel told the women, *“Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying”* (Matthew 28:5-6). How wonderful it is to gather together this morning to celebrate together the hope that we have because of that very fact. He is risen!

Happy Resurrection Day! I know that today is more commonly called “Easter,” but that is not really a good name at all for what we are celebrating today. The name “Easter” arises from the Teutonic spring goddess to whom sacrifices were offered in April. How then did this name get attached to our celebration of the Lord's Resurrection? The translators of the King James Version correctly translated the Greek term, to pascha, as “the Passover” 27 times. However, they incorrectly translated it as “Easter” in Acts 12:4, probably because both the Passover and Easter occur at roughly the same time of year. Tragically, the name “Easter” stuck as the accepted English word among Christians that designated the time of year in which Passover occurs. Since the resurrection of Jesus Christ occurred immediately after Passover, it did not take long for the term “Easter” to designate it as well. The term Easter replaced Passover and then became the most common designation in English for the period of time in which the resurrection of Jesus is celebrated.

Now you might think that I am being a bit nit-picky, yet these small things are often what cause confusion and obscure truth. In this case, Easter has obscured the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I brought a friend with me this morning to illustrate the point. I am not sure whether to name him “Roger” or “Bugs.” This little guy (gal?) was not developed as a direct attack on Christianity, and many Christians over the years have enjoyed the Easter Bunny mythology. My family did when I was a kid, and since I like candy and especially chocolate, I thought it was great at the time. What you will do with the Easter Bunny will be between you and the Lord, but I do want to give you a strong challenge this morning to deflate him.

While Easter may have in time past been a synonym for the Christian festival celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and it is still defined that way in most English dictionaries, it has become apparent that is increasingly no longer true. This bunny represents Easter, the pagan festival of Spring, not the Resurrection of Christ. While Diane and I were raising our sons, we wanted them to know the true joy of celebrating the hope given to us by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We wanted them to give praise to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, not praise to a mythical rabbit that lays eggs and brings lots of candy to eat.

Am I over reacting? I don't think so. The danger manifests itself all around us. Do your children in school get an “Easter Vacation” this week? Unless they were in a Christian School they did not. Instead, they had “Spring Break,” and that often does not even correspond to the celebration of Jesus resurrection anymore. How many of you who went out shopping saw signs saying things like, “Hallelujah, He is Risen!” I dare say none, but all of us have had our fill of the Easter Bunny peddling a lot of candy, toys, flowers and other things. People spend a lot of money on Easter paraphernalia. I looked at the websites for Party City, Walmart, Target, and Kmart, for “Easter Decorations” and out of the hundreds of items I saw, mostly bunnies, chicks, flowers and items with Spring themes with only a package of religious cutouts and a bookmark at Walmart that were related to Jesus' resurrection. Even at the Hobby Lobby

website, out of 438 items listed under “Easter Decorations,” only 9 actually had something to do with Jesus’ Resurrection.

Now in saying all this I am not suggesting that you should go home and get rid of all your springtime decorations, but I am saying in strong terms that you need to carefully consider what you do, and that does include even how you decorate. Please do not merge paganism with Christianity. Do not obscure in any way the true reason for our celebration today of the triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ when He was resurrected from the dead. This is the pivotal point of human history. Don't obscure that with Easter, the pagan festival of Spring and fertility, for that would be a dishonor to the Lord.

Now again, just to be clear, I am not saying you should do away with your springtime decorations. I am saying do not confuse the issues. It is great to be happy about the coming of Spring. If you have not figured it out by now, Spring is my favorite season. I get excited about warmer days, my crocus coming up, my first Daffodils blooming (which was actually last week, the earliest in the 25 years I have lived here!), and planting my garden. You and I should give thanks to God for His faithfulness in bringing about the seasons. His continued provision for our every need including the joy of seeing the beauty of His creation. Please, do decorate your homes with flowers. They bring beauty and festivity into the home. If you like little cutesy animals, that is great too, just don't say they are in celebration of Easter. Peter Cottontail and other bunnies are fine, but there is a problem with the mythical “Easter bunny.” Have a treasure hunt instead of an “Easter Egg hunt.” Don't confuse things. Make the distinctions. I guarantee there is more joy in celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ than there is in Easter.

This now brings me to my subject for this morning. There can be no greater joy than in celebrating what Jesus Christ has done for us. There is no greater reason to rejoice than in the fact that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead because in that resurrection is the proof that the bondage of sin has been broken. We no longer have to be subjects of Satan, slaves of sin.

The Joy of Freedom

Let me illustrate the joy that comes with having this bondage of sin broken. My brother has done quite a bit of family history research and it turns out that one of my grandfathers came to America at Jamestown in about 1617. Nothing indicates he arrived as an English gentleman, which means he came as an indentured servant. He was bound to work for a certain period of time as the slave of the person who had paid for his passage. Several other relatives arrived in similar situations in New England in the 1620's & 30's. The even more extreme case would be those of you whose ancestors arrived in America as perpetual slaves with little to no hope of ever gaining freedom. Tell me, how excited do you think those who have been slaves would be about the coming of Spring as compared to the day the shackles would come off and they would be free? What sort of things do you think they might do in celebration of that freedom? What honor do you think they would bestow upon those who purchased that freedom for them? What chance would there be for some cutesy mythology that honors something else to replace the importance of that freedom?

The Bondage of Sin & the Price of Redemption

Each of us was born in bondage to sin according to the sin nature we received from Adam. Ephesians 2:1-3 makes this reality clear. *“¹And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”* Other passages also describe the desperate and hopeless condition every human is in before they are freed from their bondage to sin by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ. According to Colossians 1:13 and 1 John 5:19, every person begins under Satan's power within his kingdom in which they are blinded by him according to 2 Corinthians 4:4 and have minds that are darkened according to

Ephesians 4:18. The result of this according to Romans 3:12 and 6:16-20 is that they cannot do right for they are slaves to sin. That remains the wretched condition of everyone who has not yet become a true Christian.

Jesus Christ left the glory of heaven and became a man in order to free man from that bondage to sin by paying its price for us. That is the high cost of our sin. As 1 Peter 1:18-19 explains, it took the greatest price that could ever be paid to free us from our bondage to sin . . . *“you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, [the blood] of Christ.”* Never forget that. Never diminish it.

The cost of sin is high because God is holy and He instituted the penalty for violating that holiness at the very beginning when He commanded Adam, *“From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die”* (Genesis 2:16-17). Because God is just, once Adam has sinned, He could not just overlook it. There had to be satisfaction for sin. Its penalty had to be paid. Death had to occur. The problem for man was that death would leave him under God’s condemnation and eternally separated from Him. Man cannot pay the price of sin for himself. Animals were sacrificed as substitutes, but they are not equivalent, so they could not actually pay the price. As Hebrews 10:4 states, *“For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”* In addition, only someone who was not guilty could pay the price as a substitute, so no human could be qualified either sin all humans sin. Only Jesus Christ, who is both Son of Man and the Son of God could meet the requirements. He is human as the son of the virgin Mary, but since He is without human father he did not inherit Adam’s sin nature, and He lived His life in complete submission to God the Father and never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). Since He is God in human flesh, His life is also of infinite worth and a sufficient substitute for all mankind and not just one individual. Jesus willingly paid the price of sin for by His death as the sin sacrifice on Golgotha’s hill. He was not forced or coerced. He did it out of love for us whom He created. There could be no higher price paid.

That price does not reflect how valuable you are, because frankly you and I carry no intrinsic value. Humans have worth only in their relationship with God. Humans are above the animals only because we were made in the image of God and they were not. It is that reflection of God that gives us worth. In addition, God has no need for us that forced or compelled Him to redeem us. God is totally self-sufficient. There is nothing in us or that can be given by us that God needs. All that God has done for us has been done out of His selfless love for us. He does not even need a relationship with us because the relationship within the Triune Godhead is completely satisfying. There was nothing about you or me that could even be attractive to God, yet as Romans 5:8 states, *“But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* The price of Jesus' life which was paid for our sins demonstrates both the incredible love of God and utter depths of our sin.

If God did not redeem us because we are worthy, then why would He pay this incredible price? Was it to save us from suffering in eternal hell? No! That thought also arises from the pride of man that centers everything around himself. The focal point is not man. We are simply beneficiaries who receive a blessing as a result of something that is not actually focused on us. The focal point of salvation is God, not man. It is His glory that is important, not man’s. The whole means of salvation through Christ was so that He could be both the just and justifier of those who have faith in Jesus (Romans 3:26). All that has been done and will be done is done for the purpose of the praise of the glory of His grace (Eph. 1:6).

The Purpose of Redemption

A quick look at Ephesians 1 shows that salvation is all of God for His purposes. In 1:4 we find that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Did you have anything to do with that? In 1:5 we find that God predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself. Did you have

anything to do with that? In 1:7 we find that redemption has come through the blood of Jesus Christ by which He has granted forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace. Did you have anything to do with that? In 1:11 & 14 we find that God has promised those He has redeemed an eternal inheritance and given the Holy Spirit as a pledge. Did you have anything to do with that? No, no, no and no. We had nothing to do with it. We did not discover Christ for ourselves. It is God that revealed Himself to us (1:9). And why? Something in us? No. Because of His love (4), the kind intention of His will (5), the riches of His grace (7), and the intention of His own purposes (8 & 11).

Why did God do all this? For what reason would He do all this for us? The praise of the glory of His grace (6 & 12, 14), the fulfillment of His own will and purposes in Christ (9-11). In specific He did not save you to keep you from hell but so that you might be *“holy and blameless before Him”* (3), a part of the inheritance of Christ (10, 11), and so that you should be to the praise of His glory (12, 14).

Salvation is not about you. It is about God. Its focus is His glory, not your comfort. Salvation is not from hell unto heaven, it is from sin unto righteousness and that is made clear in Romans 6:18. The eternal destination of the individual is the result of that person's relationship to either sin or righteousness. Who is your master?

The Importance of the Resurrection

This question of lordship is critical and adds to the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Jesus had died and remained in the grave, then there would be no evidence that His payment for sin was sufficient. In addition and much worse, without the resurrection Jesus would have been proven to be liar because He did not keep His promise to rise from the dead on the third day. If Jesus remained dead, then none of His other promises could be believed either and He would be simply another dead liar who stirred up a religion. There would not be redemption and forgiveness of sin. Sin's bondage would not be broken and it would remain our master. Every human would have remained in sin's bondage acquiring more sin debt.

I recognize that there are those that suggested that the resurrection is not important. They claim that it is a side issue to salvation and that it is not crucial whether people believe it or not. That is not what the Bible states. Romans 10:9 is clear that salvation is only granted to those who *“believe in [their] heart that God raised Him from the dead.”* Paul is even stronger in 1 Corinthians 15 where he answers those who were challenging the resurrection.

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. 15 Moreover we are even found [to be] false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (1 Corinthians 15:13-19).

It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that gives hope for it is the demonstration of His power to make sinful people into new creatures. Jesus' resurrection proves His claims, as Roman 1:4 puts it, Jesus *“was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead . . .”*. The resurrection proves that Jesus is now our master and that *“He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son”* (Colossians 1:13).

What practical difference should all this make in your life? Paul explains in Romans 6. The bondage of sin has been broken so those who have placed their faith in Jesus how live with a new master. Notice the contrast between death and life throughout this section. Died to sin, alive to God. Let me read this for you adding some comments as I go. *6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?* (For the Christian to continue in sin is contrary to what he now is in Christ).

3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with [Him] in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also [in the likeness] of His resurrection, (Our identification with Christ is death, burial and resurrection. Note in the next verses the importance of the resurrection in the practical issue of daily living).

6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with [Him,] that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Your identification with Jesus' resurrection makes you into a new creature. You are not what you once were so don't live like you once did).

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin [as] instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members [as] instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone [as] slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members [as] slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in [further] lawlessness, so now present your members [as] slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us hope. Hope for tomorrow and today. We have hope for the future because Jesus is the first born from the dead (Colossians 1:18), and that assures us that we too will one day have glorified bodies just as He does as stated in 1 John 3:2. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:13-17, those who are alive at His coming will be immediately transformed, and those who have physically died will have their bodies resurrected.

Christians have hope for the present because we are new creatures in Him. We are no longer slaves to sin, but walking in newness of life, we are slaves of righteousness. The bondage is broken. Live in freedom.

Sermon Notes: *The Bondage of Sin is Broken*
Selected Scriptures

Introduction

“Easter” is from the name of the Teutonic Spring goddess - and a mistranslation in the KJV in _____
“Easter” became a _____ of the Christian celebration of Jesus’ resurrection
“Easter” is returning to its roots as a _____ celebration of the arrival of Spring
Springtime decorations are fine, but please do not _____ pagan Easter with the Resurrection of Jesus
There is more joy in celebrating the _____ of Jesus Christ than there is in Easter

The Joy of Freedom

Could the celebration of a slave _____ from his bondage be compared to celebrating the coming of Spring?
Would a freed slave be willing to _____ its celebration with an unrelated, cutesy mythology?

The Bondage of Sin & the Price of Redemption

Ephesians 2:1-3 - every human was dead in their trespasses and _____
Unredeemed man is under _____ power, in his kingdom, blinded, has a darkened mind and a slave to sin
The price of redemption was the precious _____ of Jesus Christ - 1 Peter 1:18-19
_____ has been the penalty for sin from the beginning - Genesis 2:16-17
Animal sacrifices are _____ - Hebrews 10:4
Only Jesus, fully man, fully God and without sin, is _____ and worthy to pay sin’s price
Humans have _____ only in their relationship with God - made in His image
The focal point of salvation is _____ and His glory, not man

The Purpose of Redemption - Ephesians 1

_____ chose, predestined to adoption, redeemed & forgave, promised an inheritance & gave His Spirit to us
He revealed Himself out of His love, kind intention, riches of His grace & intention of His _____
He saved you to be holy & blameless, a part of the inheritance of Christ, to the praise & glory of _____

The Importance of the Resurrection

If Jesus had died and remained in the grave, He would be a proven _____ and there would be no hope in Him
Salvation from sin requires belief that God _____ Jesus from the dead - Romans 10:9
1 Corinthians 15:13-19 - without Jesus’ resurrection, Christians of all men would be most to be _____
The resurrection _____ Jesus identity as the Son of God and that His claims and promises are true
Romans 6:1-2 - For the Christian to continue in sin is _____ to what he now is in Christ
Romans 6:3-5 - The Christian is to personally identify with Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection in _____
Romans 6:6-11 - Your old self is _____ and you are now alive in Christ, so live for Him
Romans 6:12-23 - Sin is no longer your master, you are _____ - so live for your new master, righteousness
Jesus’ resurrection gives us _____ for tomorrow and today - sin’s bondage is broken, live in freedom

