

Bound or Free? Our Identity in Christ:

April 17, 2010

Last week Pastor Viars opened a new series entitled “Who are You?” by having us all reflect on the reality that the forgiveness available in Christ removes the shame from our lives.

- From Zechariah 3 he explained the metaphors of forgiveness such as the brand plucked from the fire or removing filthy clothes to receive clean ones instead.
- God’s forgiveness thus makes it possible to think of ourselves through the grid of forgiveness rather than the grid of shame. Or to use his sunglasses illustration to look at my identity through all of the filth of my sin or the clean garments given to me in forgiveness.
- Rather than ashamed, I can gladly say, “I AM FORGIVEN.”

You have surely noticed the chains symbolizing bondage. In addition to our singing we have a drama that will highlight what it is like to be in bondage and what it is like to find freedom in Christ. Notice carefully the harmony found in Jesus and the chaos associated with the temptations ... the temptations will be present on the screen to help with understanding. It is called “Everything”.

- Everything Drama

The picture is powerful.

- With Jesus there is safety, security, harmony, and freedom.
- With the powers of this world there is harm, fear, chaos, and bondage. The chains in the auditorium picture bondage, but the shackles are open representing freedom.
 - o As the woman was bound by romance/promiscuity, as she was bound by materialism/money, as she was bound by self image/bulimia, and as she was bound by cutting/thoughts that life was not worth living she saw how none of those ultimately satisfied – there were no answers!
 - o When Jesus came she who was once was bound was set free.
 - o We can all relate to her can’t we? You may not have been bound to the bottle, to an image of yourself that was wrong, to the thoughts of cutting, or to promiscuity, but you were bound. You were bound by your sin. Jesus stepped in and opened these shackles and set you free.
 - o With her we can say, “I once was bound but now I am FREE!”

Tell your neighbor, “Praise God, I am Free.”

That leads us to the very logical questions of “What am I free from? I am free to do what?” With that in mind please turn in your Bibles to Romans 6; that is on page 122 of the back section of the Bible in the chair in front of you.

With the time I have remaining we are going to consider two truths from this passage about our Freedom.

[Read vv. 1-11]

I. WE ARE FREE from the power and penalty of sin (vv. 1-11).

There are several contrasts found in this passage. This first portion of the text emphasizes the freedom from sin and the power that sin exerted over one's life. That freedom is described using several key ideas.

A. Free not to act or think in sinful ways based on our Union with Christ (vv. 1-7)

This truth needs to sink in just a bit! Paul's argument is very simple. In Chapter 5 he had explained justification.

- [my favorite Justification illustration].
- It simply means a legal declaration whereby God declares a sinner righteous before Him.

But Paul anticipates an argument here. Well, if grace is able to reach to the deepest and darkest of sinful places and overcome those places then it would seem that the best way to get grace is to sin some more.

- Surely we all can be tempted to think that as we are often enamored by testimonies of how God worked in the lives of those who were literally spiraling out of control.

God says, that this line of thinking [sin to get grace] makes no sense.

- I might get in trouble for saying this. It is kind of like the phrase the more you spend the more you save. I always thought that the more you don't spend the more you save! I am all for discounts, sales, coupons and all that but at some point we can ask whether it would be better to get a 50% discount on something I don't need or a 100% discount by not buying it in the first place!

That is why he says rhetorically, "if we have died to sin, why should we live in it?" The very nature of this question explains that that we do not have to sin.

- Is that a wonderful idea or what?
 - o When someone in my life does something that I don't like, I don't have to respond sinfully!
 - o When I am tempted through the various struggles associated with life on earth I don't have to give in to those temptations.
 - o Even when I do sin I don't have to throw in the towel and willingly launch myself into deeper and darker sin just because I blew it once!

I DO NOT HAVE TO LIVE UNDER THE POWER OF SIN!

God's word then gives the reason that you and I do not have to sin even when tempted.

1. Because we have been united in Christ's death (v. 3)

This Easter we reflected on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and we thought about its significance. As powerful as the cross is, this text reminds us that we have been united with Christ in his death. We share something wonderful with our savior.

2. Because we have been united in Christ's resurrection (vv. 4-5)

Not only are we united in death, but more importantly in the resurrection. I who was once dead, am now raised to walk in the newness of life.

- I get new sunglasses to look through. I see myself not as the rotten sinner that I am but as the one who is united with Jesus, clothed in his righteousness.

Now check out the next point in the argument because it is so wonderful.

3. Since Christ has overcome sin I also can overcome sin by virtue of my union with Him (vv. 6-7)

I was bummed with Butler missed those two chances they had to win the game. Not because I am a Butler fan per se, but because it was a great story. I would have been jumping up and down, going crazy with excitement.

Friends, Jesus overcame death ... He has united himself to me ... and it is by virtue of that union that we too can overcome sin in our lives.

We now have a new sphere of existence. We used to be trapped in the bondage of sin. We were bound by a cruel taskmaster. The domain of sin and Satan is that of destruction

1 Peter 5:8 ⁸ Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

But the domain of freedom in Christ frees us from that power and bondage. It offers harmony, purpose, and value as the woman in the drama understood.

Mark 5:1-5 They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. ² When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, ³ and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; ⁴ because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵ Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones.

If think about that demoniac very long we recognize this – Jesus set him Free! While I don't have time to develop this theme, the reality is that the OT pictures a coming messiah who gives sight to the blind, makes the lame to walk, makes the deaf hear, and who sets the captives free! The gospels picture Jesus doing all of those things.

I think we have all been taught well enough around here to know that we will not reach sinless perfection this side of heaven. But this passage helps us avoid a different extreme:

- The extreme that says, "I blew it, I guess it doesn't matter anymore." This is an identity question the bound person looks in the mirror and says "forget it," "I can't do anything about it." That person, if they are a genuine follower of Christ has been deceived.
- The person who recognizes their freedom understands that their union with Christ is so wonderful, so significant, and so meaningful that they can choose to say "no" next time.

- At my conversion I was buried with Christ ... in the likeness of his death.
- At my conversion I was raised with Christ ... in the likeness of his resurrection.
- At my conversion I was brought into union with my savior – Jesus. and so were you!

So this attitude of “I blew it, I guess it doesn’t matter anymore” is a lie from the pit. It makes you a voluntary slave to sin and it does not recognize the wonderful power of our union with Christ.

Let me say a word about habits...

- I realize that we are creatures of habit. Some areas of sin seem to be easier for us to commit than others. It is possible that we need some additional guards in particular areas of life. But let’s make sure not to push the “habit” thing too far.

Let me illustrate: Last weekend one of my boys and I participated in the 5K Homeward Bound run/walk to support VOH. I decided about 2 months ago that a 5K would be really difficult without some exercise before the event especially since running from the couch to the refrigerator during the winter Olympics occasionally required mouth to mouth resuscitation from my wife ... okay, I admit it sometimes I faked it!

- So I began a little training regimen. You know what, this habit thing is not all it has cracked up to be! It is a racket! I have been working to do something 5-6 days a week for 2 months and I hurt everyday! Getting ready for my next exercise is hard. It is not natural. I would much rather eat some bon-bons.
- Yes, we might be creatures of habit but it seems to me it is much easier to form a bad one than a good one. Maybe that is why Paul told **1 Timothy 4:7-8** Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; ⁸ for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come.
- Here is my point ... never let “habits” be an excuse to minimize your union with Christ and to remain in sin!

Friends, we are free from the power of sin in our daily lives. So, the question we need to ask ourselves is this – Do I function as if I am free from sin or still bound to it?

Young people ...

- Do you seek to honor and obey your parents with a happy heart or would you admit this morning that you struggle?
 - o Is that struggle being read through the grid of “well I blew it yesterday so what does it matter?” or through the grid that God put you in union with Christ and that next time you can choose to do right?
- Do you seek to do your best in school in order to honor the Lord? Or is your attitude a bit more like “I am doing fine so what difference does it make?”

In your home ...

- Do you have a “whatever” attitude toward your spouse, child or roommate?
 - o Have you had 100 outbursts of anger and think that is always the way it will be?

- Have been frustrated about a billion times?
- Friends, your union with Christ makes it clear that you don't have to live in the habitual pattern of sinfulness anymore! You have been set free.

James MacDonald in his book, "I really want to Change" encourage us to do this...say in our minds or even out loud, when we are tempted to sin, "I am DEAD TO THAT" we could say it positively and say "I am freed from that!"

Praise God, I am free! Not only am I free from the power of daily sin, I am also ...

B. Free from the penalty that sin brings based on our Union with Christ (vv. 8-11)

The argument in vv. 8-11 has a slightly different emphasis. Notice that Paul explains that if a person has died with Christ then they will also live with him! While the future casts a shadow on the present the reality is still a focus on the future.

1. We have a Glorious Future

Sin, as we know already in Romans and we will see later brings with the penalty of death - more specifically the eternal separation of the person with God. Scripture gives clear warnings about this...

2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 ⁶ For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸ dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

If you have repented from your sin and trusted in the finished work of Jesus then you are rescued from this. This is not your future. Yours is so much better! Peter describes it this way

1 Peter 1:3-5 ¶ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ *to obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

2. Because Jesus died once for all

Hebrews 9:11-14 ¹¹ ¶ But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; ¹² and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of

goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

We are free from the power and penalty of sin. That is why Paul can summarize these first eleven verses with the simple phrase, “dead to sin and alive to God.”

- You see friends, God wants all of you to understand very clearly this morning that you have been rescued from the power of sin in your daily lives and from the penalty of sin that results in eternal separation because you were brought into union with Christ.

Anger ... You are not bound to anger, you are free from its power

Anxiety or Despair ... You are not bound to that, you are free from its power

Sinful Communication ... You are not bound to that, you are free from its power

You are not bound to life dominating sins of

- materialism,
- self image and the sinful approaches to food and exercise that can result,
- cutting,
- promiscuity.
- Instead, You are free.

In the moment of the battle, when the temptation is the strongest, you can say “I AM FREE” because Jesus made me free. I died with him, I was raised with him, and now I am FREE. Based on the truths of vv. 8-11 you can even add in the reality that you are free FOREVER!

Tell your neighbor, “Praise God, I am free”

SONG: Amazing Grace by Christ Tomlin

You thought we were done didn't you! You were thinking Rob rocks ... we're not done 😊 Scripture teaches that all those who trusted Christ as their personal Lord and Savior are free from the power of sin in their daily lives and free from the penalty that sins brings! We have answered the first question this morning. “I am free from what?”. Now we need to answer a slightly different question, “What am I free to do?” If vv. 1-11 were good news check out vv. 12-23!

[read vv. 12-23]

II. I AM FREE to live my life for King Jesus (vv 12-23).

Not only am I free from the power of sin, but this passage actually helps me understand What I am supposed to do with my freedom! Or to put it another way, the truth that I am free makes me ready for the command to use my freedom well. In a more scholarly fashion, the gospel indicatives serve as the foundation for the practical living imperatives.

To organize this point let's consider 3 emphases in this passage

A. Command: Present Yourself to Your King

In Bible study there are times that the repetitive nature of a word seems to jump off the page. Notice, in v. 13 “Presenting” is found 2 times (1 negative and 1 positive), in v. 16 we find it again, and v. 19 two more times (1 negative and 1 positive). In other words, 5 times we see this same word usage. If we were to expand the issue to the place of concept we see the command in v. 12 is not radically different.

Thus, 6 times in 11 verses we find the command.

- Present Yourself to your King.

When this word is used I often have the imagery of military service.

- In Israel they stand at Masada and pledge the Masada will not fall on their watch.
- In America soldiers pledge to protect the U.S. and to obey their commander in chief.
- It is an oath that is taken where everyone understands that death may result. In the last several years thousands of soldiers have not returned home alive.
- In film we see this in the Lord of the Rings when the Hobbit Merry promises, to the death, his allegiance to the king of Gondor.

What God’s word is doing here is challenging us to use our freedom in order to serve King Jesus. Earlier we read a bit from Mark 5. After the man was set free, Scripture records.

Mark 5:14-19 *the people* came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened. ¹⁶ Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and *all* about the swine. ¹⁷ And they began to implore Him to leave their region. ¹⁸ As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. ¹⁹ And He did not let him, but He said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and *how* He had mercy on you."

- This man’s response to being set free was to do nothing short of follow Jesus!
- This man was using his freedom in order to follow Jesus, not to accomplish all the things he had not done in life during his captivity!

That is what you and I are being called to do. Use our freedom to please and honor the Lord. It is a willingness to allow your gifts, your abilities, all that you are in service to the one who paid for your freedom.

We do not believe we work for our salvation, instead we work in response to it.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

This portion of the text provides the positive side where as vv. 1-11 presented the negative side.

- Yes, we are free from the power of sin so we can choose not to sin, but there is more to it than that.

- We have the option and privilege of living life in order to please God.

It should also be noted that v. 13 says, “members of your body,” “members as instruments” sometimes we are told to simply “present ourselves” in v. 19 we see “present your members”.

- I would like to suggest to you that the argument in this text is not that merely our hands, feet, arms, and legs are given to the Lord, but our whole person.
- All we are, all our gifts, our talents, our dreams, everything is offered as a sacrifice to the Lord.

Earlier I asked if you lived bound to sin. Willingly giving yourself to sin even though you were free from it. Now I want to ask you are you using your freedom – all you are and all you have to offer – to serve and honor the Lord.

Husbands....

- How are you doing at using all of you (your mind, your money, your abilities, your person) to lead your family to a greater place of Loving the Lord Jesus?
 - o Or are there some secondary issues that own first place at this point?
 - o One thinks even of issues like FCI ... just 6 weeks left before a summer break.
 - o One thinks of ABF and the importance of Psalm 1
 - o Is your leadership in your home moving your entire family to a more meaningful, joyful, and wonderful relationship with the Lord?
- Are you intentional with your correction and loving with your instruction to your children?
 - o Or is your correction really about your kingdom being violated? Your comfort being disrupted? Your rest being interrupted?
- Do you encourage their strengths and help them with their weaknesses?

Men ...

- How are you doing with your purity this time of year? Are you seeking to offer your eyes and the things you look at as an instrument of righteousness?
- How are you doing at your job? Are you offering our skills and abilities first and foremost to the Lord and also to those who supervise you? Or would you say that you could get a lot more done if you just worked it bit harder?

Ladies ...

- Are you offering the members of your body as an instrument of righteousness? Is the way you use your tongue honoring to the Lord?
- For those whose vocation remains within the walls of your own home, do you work in your home as if the home really matters? Is that part of presenting yourselves to the Lord? Is that part of the using your freedom for righteousness sake?
- Are you taking advantage of faithful women’s groups, ladies ministries, the conference here starting on Friday?

God says, “I have set you free, therefore, present yourself and all you are to him as an instrument of righteousness.” Let’s also see that this text highlights our condition.

B. Condition: Willing Slaves to Someone

There is something else very important in this section. We see that all of us are slaves.

- Thus, our freedom from sin has given us the opportunity to have a new master.
- Instead of the master that seeks to destroy me I have a master that loves me.

vv. 16-18 makes it clear that we are slaves. We were freed from one master (sin) and we were give a whole new master (righteousness). Thus, God is saying that I want you to live consistent with your real condition.

- If you are a freed from sin to be a slave to righteousness then present all of you to the Lord as an instrument of righteousness. This same truth is found in so many other passages of Scripture including Ephesians. After explaining our wonderful salvation the Word reads:

Ephesians 4:1-3 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Unfortunately they were not always successful for the text later says,

Ephesians 4:17-19 ¹⁷ ¶ So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

Obviously, the Lord wants our practice to be consistent with our new condition. To say it another way, your action needs to keep pace with your knowledge!

A logical point of application is how you view God's commandments.

- When the Scripture says to present yourself, when it says not to sin in your anger, when it says to speak truth in love, when it says to forgive, to be compassionate, to love always, to abound in the love, and to obey those who oversee you - do you bristle under the commands? Are you tempted to think that you have a better way?
- When you think of a command of Scripture you think "Don't, I am so sick of don't". I want to encourage you to think of something else, when Scripture says "don't" take it as "Don't hurt yourself!"

If you have little ones, or when your children were little you established certain rules to protect them. To keep them from getting hit by car or taken by a kidnapper.

- Isn't it possible that the loving, gracious, and compassionate God understands all that. His commands were not meant to be burdensome but were rather designed for his glory and your protection?
- His commands, His warnings are radically different than those of sin/Satan whose goal is to crush you.
- God's commands and his warnings are designed for your good.

Presenting yourself to God and all of you as an instrument of righteousness is merely consistent with your condition ... instead of being a slave to the things that harm you and bring you death... you present yourself as a slave to the Lord who gives blessings, good gifts, and is the rewarder of those who seek him.

Let's highlight that point in the third emphasis.

C. Benefits: Sanctification and Eternal Life

The benefits of freedom and presenting yourselves as a slave to righteousness are pretty clear are they not? In v. 19 and v. 22 we see that the benefits are sanctification and in v. 23 eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- The benefits of being freed are none other than the opportunity to be more and more like Jesus.
- He rescued you and now he is making you like him.

Your identity is no longer that you are bound (like the girl was) to all kinds of things that don't satisfy. Your identity is freedom in Jesus Christ!

Tell your neighbor, "Praise God, I am free"

Song, "I am free"

Friends, if you know Christ as your savior, then the words of Jesus are for you, "if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

- One of my concerns as one of the pastors is there are folks here today who have yet to be set free because there are folks who have yet to repent of their sin and trust in the D/B/R of Jesus Christ for salvation.
- So this message that has come in song, in drama, and in word has not been applied to you. But I want you to know that it can be true for you today. You can go from bound to the power and penalty of sin to be free in Jesus.
 - o Scripture is clear ... you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead and you shall be saved!
 - o You can do that today. If you would like to meet with one of the pastors please get in touch with us and there is nothing more important than talking to you about how you can have a saving relationship with Jesus – the one who sets captives free.
- For the rest of us, let's use our freedom to live free indeed. Free from the power of sin, free to use all of me and all of my members (from my mind to my hands to my heart) for righteousness, to the praise and glory of Jesus, the one who set us free indeed!

[Final prayer]