

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 15th November 2009
‘I am the Light of the World – Part 3’
‘If the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed!’
John ch.8:31-47

Introduction

Last week we saw how...

1. The Jews Challenged the Truth of Jesus’ Testimony (vs.12-20)

But then...

2. Jesus Challenged the Jews’ False Sense of Security (vs.21-30)

He told them that if they refused to believe in Him as the Great I am, then
‘they would die in their sins.’

He said *‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man then you will know that I am’*

Though they rejected him, yet we read in v.30 that
‘Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.’

Tonight we move on to the next section, and we come to that great statement about Jesus:

‘If the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed!’

That is our text for tonight...

When I was at the Irish Baptist College about 20 years ago, there were 2 students there who had done time in prison for various offences in their past. One of them, called Billy, had an amazing testimony of how God reached and saved him while he was in prison, through the unassuming work of a little old lady called Gladys Blackburn. He came to realize the truth of that verse even though he was still in prison for sometime afterwards:

‘If the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed!’

He was more free inside prison, than many a person out walking the streets is, because he had found true freedom, true liberty in Christ!

But Jesus wasn’t talking about some early release scheme when he said these words. He was talking about setting spiritual captives free. Jesus came to set men and women free from their bondage to sin. Men and women who are burdened down by their sin – who are held captive – who are enslaved by sinful habits – Jesus came to set such people free!

As Charles Wesley wrote in his hymn:

*‘Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature’s night,
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke the dungeon flamed with light!
My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose went forth and followed thee!’*

He compared his days before he met Christ to days of imprisonment – under the bondage of sin. That’s a biblical picture too. Look at John 8:31-34. The first thing I want you to notice from this passage is that:

1. Sin Enslaves

‘Everyone who sins is a slave to sin’ (v.34)
OR *‘Everyone who sins is in bondage to sin.’*

Maybe you think you’re not enslaved to sin, or in bondage to sin?

Illustration of a thread, wrapped 2 or 3 times round your body: Easy to break.

But if I wrap it about 10 times round, it’s impossible to break!

Likewise it’s easy to break out of a sin if you’ve only done it 2 or 3 times, but if you continue to do it until it becomes a habit, it’s all the harder to break free.

e.g. Alcohol, Drugs, horoscopes, telling lies, swearing, getting caught up with a gang, internet pornography, etc, etc. You can say ‘no’ 2 or 3 times, quite easily, but the more you indulge in it, the more you give in, the more in bondage you become, until you’re trapped!

If we get pleasure from sin once, it gives us the desire to do it more and more, because we are basically creatures of habit.

If we do something once or twice and we enjoy it, then we will want to keep or doing it and then we become enslaved to it – enslaved to sin.

Young people – please don’t treat temptation to sin lightly.

If you are facing pressures in school or at college or university, talk to somebody about it, don’t just bottle it all up, or try to face it yourself.

Ask someone to pray for you so that you won’t give in, because the more you do, the more it will enslave you. You’ve got to find the strength to withstand it, whenever others are trying to force you to get into sin.

But part of the problem is that...

2. People don’t realize they are enslaved.

Look at v.33: *‘We have never been slaves of anyone!’*

Well, either they were blind, or they had very short memories.

They claimed they were Abraham’s descendants.

Well, were Abraham’s descendants ever slaves to anyone?

Of course they were:

1. In Egypt – Under Pharaoh - for 400 years!
2. Israel – was taken away captive to Assyria - In 722 BC
3. Judah – was taken into Exile in Babylon - for 70 years in 597 BC.
4. Right then – they were under Roman Rule - in the time of Christ!

But they were too proud to admit that they were slaves – even as they retorted proudly: *'We've never been slaves to anyone!'*
They were in fact under Roman oppression at that very time!

Anyhow, they had got the wrong idea.
Jesus was talking to them about true Spiritual Freedom.
They could only think about Political Freedom.

But maybe you don't realize you are in spiritual slavery, enslaved by sin either? Maybe like the Jews, you are proudly saying, 'I've never been a slave to anyone!'
Well, our passage tells us that:

'Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.' (v.34)

So if there is sin in your life, and if you continue in sin, the Bible tells me that you are a slave to sin. In and of yourself you are unable to break free from its power. It's only when you try to stop doing something, and then find that you can't do it, that you realize that you are enslaved by it.

Illustrate: New Year's Resolutions – trying to turn over a new leaf.

Have you ever, in all your years of trying, been able to keep them?

No. That's because you are a slave to sin.

'Everyone who continues to sin is a slave to sin' (literal translation)

If you continue to sin, what will happen?

Well, sin is the hardest of all task-masters.

- It brings misery and disappointment along the way.
- It brings despair and hell in the end.
- These are the only wages that slaves to sin are ever paid!
- *'The wages of sin is death'* (Rom 6:23)

It is my duty as I preach the Gospel to you, to try to get you to realize your true condition. That if you are outside of Christ that you are in bondage to sin. In a sense it is my duty to show you your chains, and then to point you to the One who holds the key to set you free from those chains. Otherwise, as we were hearing last week, if you continue as you are, *'you will die in your sins!'*

The only one who can release you is Christ (v.36)

'If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!'

That is the Truth that you need to know (v.31-32)

'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'

Have I convinced you of your slavery to sin? Are you still not convinced?
Just read Romans 14:7-25 – For even Paul knew he was enslaved to sin!

Illustration of the Laws of Gravity and Aerodynamics acting on an aeroplane.

1. Sin enslaves, even if...
2. We don't think we're in slavery, but...

3. Jesus Liberates

(v.36) as the Son of God he can set us free, he can liberate us from our sin.

'If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'

How can Jesus free us from our bondage to sin?

Well, in the Roman world a slave could be freed if he could raise enough money to pay his master for his freedom. He could buy back his freedom himself.

Or, someone else could buy his freedom for him.

Someone could go along to the slave market, and pay the price for the slave to his master. The slave then became his, but he then had bought the rights to let him go, if he wanted to. He had the right, the authority, to give the slave back his freedom, because he had paid the price for him!

And that's exactly what Jesus did for us!

The words 'redeemed', 'redemption', 'ransom' are all found in the New Testament, and they all come from the slave trade of the Roman World. They come from the slave market.

To Redeem: means *'to secure freedom by the payment of a price.'*

The Redeemer: is the one who is able to pay the price of a slave's freedom.

The Redeemer went to the slave market, and he paid **'the Ransom'** – the price of freedom, and having **'redeemed'** him from the slave market, having bought back the slave's freedom, he sets him free!

Jesus, our Redeemer, went to the cross and there he paid the ransom price for our sins, to set us free from our slavery to sin. The price he paid was his own life's blood.

1 Peter 1:18-19 *'For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were **redeemed** from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.'*

John 10:45 – *'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a **ransom** for many.'*

Ephesians 1:7 – *'In Him (Christ) we have **redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.'*

In John ch.10 Jesus laid down his life as the ransom price **for our sins**, not for his own sins, because he had done nothing wrong.

In Ephesians 1:7 it was by the shedding of his blood, that we have been redeemed. We can know freedom from our sins, because he has purchased forgiveness for us.

Conclusion

1. Are your sins forgiven?
2. Do you know what it is to be freed from the burden of your sins?

I hope that tonight you have been brought face to face with the fact that you are a slave to sin.

That until you realize you're enslaved by sin there can be no hope for you. But if you have realized tonight that you are enslaved by your sin, that you are a sinner, then why not come to Jesus now and seek his forgiveness?

In the Roman world, a slave could reject the ransom price for his freedom. He may have loved his master so much that he wanted to stay with him and not go free. Maybe you love your sin too much, to let go of it, to be set free?

But it is our prayer tonight that you will not reject the price that Christ has paid for your freedom, because remember at present that your master is Satan himself – John 8:44 – If God is not yet your heavenly Father, then you belong to your father the devil. There are no other alternatives. It's one or other!

Do you love your sin and your master so much that you don't want to leave it all behind?

Or will you come to Jesus tonight, utterly detesting the sin that has held you captive for so long, and desiring to know freedom from your sin, and the forgiveness that only Christ can give you? Well then, come to Jesus now...