

Freedom From Sin Parts 1-5

Freedom From Sin Part 1

Jesus came to set us free from our sin.

In this article I would like to look at verses which tell us that Jesus sets believers free from their sin. Being set free from sin does not mean a believer becomes sinlessly perfect. It means that he does not have a habitually sinful lifestyle. At one time or another a Christian may sin because of weakness or circumstances but his sin is not wilful or ongoing. That is, sin is not a part of his normal way of life. 1 John 2:1 tell us that Christians might sin occasionally while 1 John 3:9 says that they don't make a practice of sinning.

In Matt. 1:19-21, an angel told Joseph that he was to name his son Jesus, meaning 'the Lord saves', because *"he will save his people from their sins"*. Notice that we are told that Jesus came to save His people from their sins; not IN their sins nor WITH their sins but FROM their sins. The word *"save"* means to keep safe or rescue from danger while the word *"from"* means separation, departure and cessation so Jesus came to rescue us from the danger of hell by separating us from our sin; we depart our sinful lifestyle and cease from habitual sin.

Many people say that we are only human and that sin is part of our nature so we will always sin. It is true that we have a sinful nature but Jesus is greater than our nature and He says that He can free us from slavery to sin. In John 8:34, 36 He said, *"I tell you the truth, everyone who sins [continually] is a slave to sin ... if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* Jesus has made it clear that continuing in sin is nothing less than slavery to sin but He can set us free. In Rom. 6:22, Paul said, *"you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life."* Like Jesus, Paul tells us that Christians are freed from slavery to sin and become slaves to God which results in eternal life.

The following are some other verses which speak of freedom from sin:

- 1 John 3:5 tells us that Jesus appeared to *"take away our sins"*, that is, to remove our sins.
- In Rom. 7:24-25, after talking about his sinful nature, Paul said that Jesus *"rescued"* him from his sinful body of death. *"Rescue"* means to deliver or set free so Jesus can set us free from our sinful nature just as He did with Paul.
- Titus 2:14 tells us that Jesus gave Himself to *"redeem"* us from all lawlessness. *"Redeem"* means to release or to liberate so Jesus gave Himself to liberate us, to free us, from all sin.
- Rom. 6:14 says, *"sin shall not be your master."* Obviously, if we continue in sin then we are still in slavery to it and it is still our Master.
- Col. 1:13 tells us that Jesus has, *"rescued us from the domain of darkness."* As already stated, *"rescue"* means to set free so once again we are told that Jesus sets us free from sin.

The verses quoted so far clearly show that Christians are set free from their sins. 2 Cor. 5:17 says, *"if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."* If I say that I'm in Christ but I'm still wilfully sinning then what's new about me? Absolutely nothing at all! I'm still a slave to sin. To be freed from slavery to sin, and become a new creation, my old self must first die just as Rom. 6:7 tells us, *"anyone who has died has been freed from sin."*

The aim of this article has been to show that Jesus frees His people from their sin. Part 2 is about how we die to obtain freedom from sin. Amen.

Freedom From Sin Part 2

How do we die and become free from sin?

In Part 1, we looked at many verses which show that Jesus came to set us free from sin and, if we are to be freed from sin, then we must die to it. If we are dead to something then it no longer has an influence over us - we are free from its control. Being free from sin doesn't mean we are free from temptation; it means that we don't give in to temptation. In the same way that a man in the grave is no longer influenced by the world, a believer who is dead to sin is no longer controlled by sin.

On the other hand, to be alive to something is to be totally dedicated to it. The Lord wants us to be dead to this world of sin and alive to Him and that is why we are told, "*count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 6:11). So, how do we become dead to sin?

One thing is certain: we cannot keep from sin in our own strength. Rom. 8:7 makes this clear where it says, "*The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.*" However, God wants us to live righteously so He empowers us as the following verses show -

2 Pet. 1:3-4 say, "*His divine power [the Holy Spirit] has given us everything we need for life and godliness ... so that ... you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*" So we can see that, through the Holy Spirit, we have Divine Power to live godly lives and escape the corruption of this sinful world. This is verified by Rom. 8:4 which tells us that through the Spirit we can fully meet God's righteous requirements.

Dying to sin and being free of its power does not happen automatically the moment we are saved. Neither is it a simple matter of quoting a couple of verses about being dead to sin. If I say, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal. 2:20), but in reality I'm still sinning then I'm only kidding myself. Crucifixion is a slow and extremely painful process and so is dying to sin. Gal. 5:16-17 tell us there is a war raging within us, between our sinful nature and the Holy Spirit, and to win that war we must live according to the Spirit.

Living according to the Spirit is responding to the Spirit's conviction by confessing and repenting of our sin. Php. 2:12-13 tell us, "*work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God [the Holy Spirit] who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*" Notice that the Holy Spirit does not force us to do anything but He works within us, convicting us, and willing us to act in a righteous manner. He works on our conscience to get us to turn away from sin. The following verses also show that we have our own part to play in dying to self -

1) Col. 3:5 says, "*Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*"

2) Eph. 4:22-24 say, "*... put off your old self ... be made new in the attitude of your minds ... put on the new self ... created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*"

So, to be freed from sin, we must "*put to death*" our earthly nature, we must "*put on the new self*", and we must "*be made new*" in our minds and this can only be done through a determined effort to be obedient to the Holy Spirit. This process of dying to self is called sanctification and, as already shown, we can't do it alone and neither does the Holy Spirit automatically do it for us. It is through our persevering obedience that the Holy Spirit empowers us to resist temptation and in this way our sinful nature is crucified and we are freed from the power of sin.

Part 3 will be more on living according to the Spirit. Amen.

Freedom From Sin Part 3

Living according the Spirit.

Living according to the Spirit is the same as walking in the Light, abiding in Jesus and following Jesus etc. It simply means having a relationship with Jesus by listening to and following the Spirit's voice. In John 10:27 Jesus said, *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."*

We can see from this verse that there are two things which Jesus' disciples do:

- 1) Listen to His voice and
- 2) Follow Him.

To know how to listen to and follow Jesus, we first need to know how the Spirit 'speaks' to us. John 16:8 tells us, *"When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment."* From this verse we can see that when we sin the Spirit 'speaks' to us by convicting our conscience; He takes our peace away by making us feel guilty. We follow when we respond to this conviction and confess our sin - then our peace returns. This is what is meant by listening to and following Jesus' voice. The fact that the Spirit guides us by controlling our peace is confirmed by Rom. 8:6 which says, *"The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace."* There is no peace in sin, only death, therefore when we lack peace we know that we need to get right with God for one reason or another.

Of course there is a false peace. I heard of a Pastor who said that God told him to leave his wife and marry another woman and I guess he had some sort of peace because he did it. However, any peace that he may have had was false peace because adultery is not Biblical. It goes without saying that the Spirit of God will not give us peace to go against His own Word.

If we faithfully listen to and follow Jesus then we will die to self and be freed from sin. 1 John 1:7 confirms this where it says, *"if we walk in the light ... the blood of Jesus ... purifies us from all sin."* Likewise, 1 John 1:9 tells us that if we confess our sins God will *"purify us from all unrighteousness."* So, God's promise is clear: if we walk in the light and confess our sins then we will be purified from all unrighteousness – we will be freed from slavery to sin.

As mentioned in Part 2, the pathway to dying to self is not easy because our sinful nature wants to continue in sin and it fights against the Spirit's leading to repent (Gal. 5:16-17). Even when we know that we need to repent, we may still tell ourselves, "It's OK, everyone does it anyway," or we may try to convince ourselves that it's just not possible to stop. "I'm only human" is a common excuse but many a Christian has been delivered from the exact same sins that may plague you or I. 1 Cor. 10:13 tells us, *"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man,"* so we are not fighting something unique but something that is common to mankind. And, just like those who have persevered and overcome, we too can overcome through the Divine Power of the Spirit.

The Bible tells us, *"It is God's will that you should be sanctified,"* and that we should *"make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him"* (1 Thess. 4:3 & 2 Pet. 3:14). If we are habitually sinning then we are neither sanctified, spotless or blameless and certainly not at peace with God. Sin is a burden which leaves us without peace but it's Jesus' promise to each and every one of us that, if we come to Him, He will give us rest from our burdens. In Matt. 11:28-30, He said, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* There is rest and peace to be found when we live according to the Spirit.

Part 4 will be about the security we have in Christ. Amen.

Freedom From Sin Part 4

Our security in Christ

There is no doubt that a believer is secure in Christ but the question is, “Is our security conditional or unconditional?” That is, once we are saved, will we get to heaven no matter what we do or can we lose our salvation? In Luke 13:3, Jesus answered that question very clearly in just three words: “Repent or perish.” In the Greek text, these words mean that a believer must continue to repent or he will perish. This simple statement by Jesus has left no room for debate; the plain meaning of these three words cannot be refuted; we must continue in repentance otherwise we will be lost and perish.

Two common arguments against salvation loss are -

1) In John 10:27-28, Jesus said that no one could snatch a sheep from His hand but it does not say that we can't walk away from Him. He said that His sheep listen to and follow His voice but sheep can be lost and that happens when they stop listening to and following their Shepherd. Likewise, believers must continue to listen and continue to follow Jesus otherwise they may be lost.

2) Rom. 8:35-39 tell us that nothing in creation can separate us from the love of God. In these verses, each situation, such as persecution, famine and sword, is external to a believer. God's promise is to protect us through these troubles, however, sin itself is not an external influence but is the result of an internal act of our will – note Jam. 1:13-15. It is true that nothing in creation can separate us from God but we can choose to sin and this will separate us from His love. In John 15:10 Jesus said, “*If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love,*” so we can see that we must continue to obey God's commands to remain in His love.

From this we can see that our security in Christ is conditional upon our obedience to Him. If we continue to live a repentant life, by listening to and following Jesus' voice, then there is nothing in this world that can separate us from God's love.

Repentance is not works; rather, it is the key to our salvation. In Luke 13:3, Jesus commands us to repent otherwise we will perish so repenting to be saved is not works, it's a command. So, because repenting to become saved is not works then continuing in repentance to remain saved cannot be considered works either.

A point to note is that the Bible doesn't say that we must be sinlessly perfect to be saved. The fact is, Christians may sin occasionally through weakness or circumstance. That is why 1 John 2:1 says that we might sin and 1 John 1:9 tells us that we will be forgiven if we confess our sins. However, if we reject Jesus' command to repent and instead wilfully continue in sin then we face the possibility of losing our salvation (Heb. 10:26-27).

There is no doubt that believers can struggle with sin, especially the newly saved, but it can happen to long term Christians as well. It should be noted that there is a vast difference between struggling with sin and deliberate, wilful sin. The wilful sinner either doesn't care about his sin or makes excuses for it while a struggling sinner is convicted by his sin and wants to be freed from it's power. The fact that a Christian is struggling with sin shows that they have a genuinely repentant heart but they don't yet have the self control to resist because they don't hate their sin enough. If they wholeheartedly continue in repentance then, when they have come to the point where they hate their sin as much as God does, He will deliver them from it's power.

Finally, a very good book which refutes the Once Saved, Always Saved (OSAS) doctrine is “Life In The Son” by Robert Shank. After studying the Greek texts to prove to himself that salvation could not be lost, his belief was turned around and he wrote the book in which he reveals how the Greek verb tenses clearly show that the OSAS doctrine is false.

Part 5 will about repentance, justification and sanctification.

Freedom From Sin Part 5

Repentance, justification and sanctification

Being justified means that we are right with God, that is, we are righteous in His eyes. It means that our sins are totally forgiven. A good definition of justified is “Just-as-if-I’d-never-done-it.” A person is justified the moment they repent of their sins and put their trust in Jesus and they remain justified by continuing in repentance.

Personal sanctification is the process of growing in the Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit. Even though we may be justified in God's eyes we are not necessarily Christlike in all our ways. Sanctification is the process of being cleansed of our sinful ways and becoming more Christlike. If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that we are in need of sanctification in one area or another: areas such as love, humility, patience, kindness and self-control etc.

Rom. 15:16 tells us that we are “... *sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*” The goal of the Spirit's work within us is to continually guide us to perfection in Christ. In Matt. 5:48 Jesus said, “*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*” In this verse, “*perfect*” means mature and the context is maturity in love. As we seek to be made perfect in love, we become more like Jesus - more humble, patient, kind and self-controlled etc.

Sanctification is a simple process to understand but it can be very hard to endure. The steps are -

- The Spirit convicts (John 16:8).
- We confess our sins (1 John 1:9).
- God forgives us and cleanses us of our unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

#1 and #3 are guarantees because they are God's work but #2 often brings the process to a stop because confession naturally includes turning away from the sin (repentance) and this doesn't always come easily. Real repentance requires genuine, godly sorrow and this can be difficult with issues that our sinful nature wants to hold on to. For example -

- How can we be genuinely repentant over a sin that we don't really want to give up?
- How can we be repentant over our lack of humility when we want to be first?
- How can we be repentant for being unloving towards those we don't really want to love?

We all know the areas we need to repent of, even though we may not like to talk about them.

We will only be truly repentant, and cleansed, when we come to hate our sin as much as God hates it and have a wholehearted desire to be obedient to His Word. We must humble ourselves and seek God's grace to grant us repentance and cleanse us from our ungodly ways. God's method of sanctification is outlined in the following two passages -

James 4:6-10 say, “... *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*”

1 Pet. 5:5-10 also talk about being lifted up after resisting the Devil and humbling ourselves. This passage says, “... *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*”

Both of these passages speak of the spiritual war and suffering we go through as we struggle against our sinful nature and seek to become more Christlike. The Devil will give us many reasons why we should not be repentant and the fact is we are often more inclined to listen to him than to the Spirit's conviction. However, these passages tell us that if we exercise self-control, resist the devil and submit to God then, in His time, He will lift us up and make us strong, firm and steadfast. Through this sanctifying process we are cleansed of our unrighteousness and become dead to sin; Jesus sets us free.

The road of sanctification is not easy. Heb. 12 tells about our struggle with sin and the hardship of discipline but v.11 encourages us in saying, *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”* The road may be hard but the goal is priceless.

Finally, The Calvary Road, by Roy Hession, is a great little book on sanctification. It is free to download from my site at - <http://www.christianissues.biz/pdf-bin/sanctification/thecalvaryroad.pdf>

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