

**7- Freedom in Christ**  
**Pastor Joe Oakley - GFC - 5-26-24**

Shoichi Yokoi spent 28 years of his life in prison. It was not a prison of bars and locks and wardens, but a self-imposed prison of fear. He was a Japanese soldier on the island of Guam during World War 2. When the American forces landed in 1945, he fled into the jungle and found a cave in which he hid because he was afraid of being captured by the Americans. He hid in the cave for 28 years!

He learned that the war was over by reading one of the thousands of pamphlets dropped into the jungle. But he was afraid because he thought it was just American propaganda. So for 28 years he lived in the cave, coming out only at night to look for bugs and rats and frogs and mangoes on which he survived. Finally, in 1972 some people found him and convinced him that the war was long over and it was safe for him to come out of his jungle prison.

We think, "What a waste! Imagine, spending 28 years living as a prisoner of fear." Yet, there are a lot of people here who are prisoners of fear or addiction or some other prison. What is holding you captive?

We're in a sermon series entitled: Greater Freedom and last week I preached on Setting Captives Free. I mentioned 1 John 3:8 which says:

***For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.***

What are the works of the devil? In John 10:10, Jesus said,

***The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.***

Satan wants to kill us, but Jesus came to save us and give us life. This includes going to heaven when we die, but it also includes abundant life here on earth. We can only live an abundant life when we are free from the bondage of the enemy. And Jesus Christ came to set us free! So I'm preaching a message entitled Freedom in Christ.

This is Memorial Day weekend were we honor those who have given their lives in service to our nation. Without their sacrifice, we would not have the freedoms we enjoy today. And we need to remember that on Memorial Day.

What is true in the natural realm is also true in the spiritual realm. We usually want freedom without cost, but freedom always has a cost. And Jesus paid the ultimate price for our freedom by dying for us on a cross.

Colossians 1:13-14 says:

**God has rescued us from the power of darkness and has brought us into the kingdom of His Son, whom He loves. His Son paid the price to free us, which means that our sins are forgiven.**

Ephesians 1:7 says:

**God is so rich in kindness and grace that He purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son and forgave our sins.**

That's amazing, but listen - we receive freedom because Jesus died for us, but we maintain that freedom by dying to ourselves.

I've taught you many times that we have 3 main enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil. Not all of our battles are with demons. Some are and that's why we need to understand spiritual warfare. But we also have another enemy to fight called the flesh. Our flesh is not just our bodies – it is the unrenewed part of our soul – our self-centeredness – that wants to: live for self rather than God - go my way rather than God's way - live by my truth rather than God's truth.

We are in a lifelong battle between the spirit and the flesh. And there's only one way to deal with the flesh. You can't improve your flesh or make it better – You must die to it! Spiritual warfare overcomes the devil. But dying to self overcomes the flesh! We find several keys to freedom in Romans 6:2-4.

**Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined Him in His death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.**

Paul's is teaching here what we call positional truth. It is truth about our position with God. Positional truth is about who and where we are spiritually.

To be in something is to be surrounded by and contained by it. For instance, if you are in a car, you are contained by that car. Wherever it goes, you go. If it stops, you stop. Turns, you turn.

The Bible teaches that our position as believers is in Christ. This is important to understand. Mankind was originally created in the image of God. We know the fall occurred in Gen. 3 before Adam and Eve had any children. Genesis 5:1-3 says:

**This is the written account of Adam's line. When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, He called them Mankind. When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.**

When Adam fell into sin – everyone since then has been born in his fallen sinful condition. Psalm 51:5 says:

***Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.***

All of us are born in Adam – born sinners. Sinning is our nature, our natural condition. We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. We don't have to be taught to sin; it comes naturally.

I once found Brianna had sneaked into the kitchen pantry and was eating cookies. She had cookie smeared all over her shirt and face. She had a cookie in her hand and her mouth filled with cookies. I asked her, Brianna, did you get into the cookies?" She shook her head no. I asked who did. She said, "You did." At that moment I kind of figured she was lying. No one had to teach her to lie. It came naturally. It's that sin nature with which we are born.

We have it because we are born in Adam – in his fallen, sinful condition – doing what he did. 1 Corinthians 15:45-49 says:

***The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.***

In other words, when we are born, we are born in the image of Adam. When we are born again, we are born in the image of Christ. We are no longer natural, but spiritual; no longer of the world, but of heaven. We are new creations in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says:

***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!***

We need to realize we are new creations in Christ – we are not now who we once were. That was then; this is now! We used to be in Adam, now we are in Christ. Jesus said in John 14:19-20

***Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.***

This is vitally important because Romans 5:12 says:

***Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned...***

In theology, this is called imputation – which is the act of charging to an account. Adam’s sin and death was imputed – charged to – passed on to all people. People say, that’s not fair. But the other side of imputation is this: Romans 5:15 and 19 say:

***For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one Man the many will be made righteous.***

When we are born again, we are taken out of Adam and placed into Christ and His righteousness is imputed to us.

### **FREEDOM PRINCIPLE 1: Realize who you are in Christ!**

2 Corinthians 5:21 says:

***For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.***

Where we used to be in Adam, we are now in Christ.  
 In Adam we were guilty, in Christ we are now not guilty.  
 In Adam we were sinful, in Christ we are now righteous.  
 In Adam we used to be filthy, in Christ we are now clean.  
 Romans 6:5-13 says:

***Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin... When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. So you also should reckon yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus. Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.***

### **FREEDOM PRINCIPLE 2: Reckon yourself dead to sin!**

The word reckon is an accounting term meaning to calculate, to count. It means we should count ourselves, consider ourselves, dead to sin. Galatians 2:20 says:

***I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in***

***me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.***

When we are born again, Christ lives in us and through us. When we understand this our whole life will be changed. Romans 6:6-7 says:

***For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.***

When you were saved your tendency to sin changed. It was nailed to the cross. It's dead. The old you – the one that wanted to sin... died – and a new you was born. Nothing can affect or influence a dead person.

One key that I've learned what this: when I am tempted by something – tell myself and the enemy, "I'm dead to that!"

Col 3:3 says you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Ezek. 36:26 says you have a new heart and a new spirit.

2 Peter 1:4 says you have a divine nature.

So, reckon your old self dead to sin and your new self alive and free in Christ! That means to say no to ourselves, to discipline ourselves.

Deb and I have been out of debt twice in our lifetime. Once was instant and once was a process. The instant time was when I worked for a company that got sold. I had stock options that the new company bought out and that provided the money for us to get out of debt instantly. The other time we got out was the long slow way. Disciplining ourselves. Cutting back on spending. Budgeting. Saying no to ourselves.

We need to understand that instant deliverance is from God, but so is discipline or self control. It is listed as one of the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 says:

***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.***

Do you see that? Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Sometimes the way to lay the ax to the root is through self-control. I don't know why God does 1-step deliverance sometimes and at other times makes us go through steps of disciplining ourselves. But I do know that Galatians 5:24 says:

***Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.***

And I also know that we can trust the way God works. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 says:

***Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.***

The Spirit of God has the supernatural power to transform us. But change happens “from glory to glory.” No – you’re not perfect – but you are in the process of change. You are becoming more and more like Jesus – little by little – day by day - from faith to faith – from glory to glory. So reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to righteousness.

**FREEDOM PRINCIPLE 3: REST in what Jesus has done for you.**

This shouldn’t surprise us – but we cannot set ourselves free! I know it almost sounds anti-American to not encourage you to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps - But salvation and freedom come from what Jesus has done for you, not from what you do for Him! Freedom comes when you truly rest in what Jesus had already done for you! Hebrews 4:9-11 says:

***There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest...***

The King James version says to labor to enter that rest! Isn’t that interesting? Our work is to learn to rest! We tend to not want to give up on ourselves! We want to trust in our own goodness and our own works. But you will never find rest until you come to the place of no trust in yourself and total trust that Jesus paid it all! There’s nothing you can add to what Jesus accomplished! When He said “It is finished” – it was finished! Colossians 2:13-14 says:

***He has forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.***

The debt we owed for our sin was nailed to the cross. In Bible times, when someone owed a debt – it was written out as an IOU - written contract, which remained in force against until the bond was cancelled. That was done in some places by blotting out the names, or by drawing lines through it, or, by driving a nail through it and affixing it to a post. The laws we broke are represented here as such a contract, an IOU that binds us because it is more than we can ever pay.

Jesus took that IOU – everything we ever did wrong and nailed it to the cross.

Our sin causes all of us to owe a debt we can never pay. But on the cross – Jesus paid a debt He did not owe. He took our debts – nailed them to the cross and paid them in full! So, stop trying to add to the finished work of Christ. There’s nothing

more you can do! Trying to do that is like having your car paid off – yet you want to keep making payments.

The bank says, “It’s already paid in full” – but you want to pay more. None of us would do that. None of us would want to pay more on a paid off debt.

Yet many people are trying to do that spiritually. Christ has already paid for every sin you have ever or will ever commit. When Jesus died He said, “It is finished.” What was finished? The phrase “it is finished” means paid in full – the debt is cancelled. Jesus paid the price and the penalty for all of our sins! So, stop trying to make yourself pay for what is already paid in full!

When we are born again, we are totally forgiven of any and all wrong we have ever done. Everything that is against us is wiped out, erased, taken away, nailed to the cross and no longer remembered!

Freedom comes from reckoning ourselves dead to sin and resting in the finished work of Christ on the cross. So, lay the ax to the root and refuse to live in bondage one day longer! Keep fighting for freedom!

On top of the Capitol Building of the United States in Washington, D.C. stands a statue known as the Statue of Freedom. This statue was sculpted in Rome, then brought to America aboard a ship in 1858. During the trip across the Atlantic Ocean, a fierce storm developed. The Captain ordered cargo thrown overboard to lighten the load. The sailors wanted to throw the heavy statue overboard, but the captain refused, shouting, “No! Never! We’ll sink before we throw Freedom away.” And so, “Freedom” was saved, and the statue stands lifted up above the dome today, because one man stood for “Freedom.”

And one day – lifted up on a cross on a hill called Calvary – a man named Jesus Christ stood for freedom. And He declared in John 8:36,

***“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”***

With three spikes, a thorny crown and an old rugged cross, Jesus conquered the devil and disarmed him of all power over us. With His blood Jesus purchased sinners and recreated us into saints.

So – when Satan tries to defeat you – remind him he’s already defeated!

When Satan brings up your past – remind him of his future!

And tell him that person you used to be is dead and buried and you have become a new creation in Christ!

You’ve been saved by His blood!

You’ve been filled with His Spirit!

You’ve been fitted with His armor!

You’ve been given authority in His name!

You’ve got the power of God’s Word of God!

You are a blood bought Child of God!

His power flows through you, His grace enables you, His love sustains you, and His mercy upholds you and Jesus died to set you free indeed!