

Because of the Covenant I Am Free

Genesis 12:1-3

“Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. ² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Far too many Christian are stuck in spiritual quicksand.

The harder they struggle to progress in their walk with Christ, the faster and the deeper they appear to sink. Having become frustrated by the inability of their increased efforts to produce the joy, peace, power, and victory they have heard so much about, many believers have simply given up the struggle and have allowed themselves to sink in the quicksand of spiritual defeat, accepting it as their lot in life.

These well-meaning believers go to church faithfully, they read Christian books, listen to Christian radio, and watch Christian television. They dedicate and rededicate their lives to the Lord until they are tired of walking the isle, crying and begging God for help. Some have fasted and prayed and even sought Christian counseling to deal with their frustration, yet there seem to be little payoff for their efforts.

Far too many of God’s precious children are stuck in sins and circumstances they know they should be delivered from, but while they honestly desire deliverance, it continues to elude them. The question today is one of major importance: **Has God really made a way for us to experience victory?**

We have been doing a series of messages concerning the Covenant Relationship that we have with God. In our text tonight, we looked once more at the covenant that God made with Abraham, because we need to know the tremendous impact that it still has on our lives today. **When God says to Abraham in Genesis 12:3,** “I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.” **Christ is the promise here.** The Lord was born to this chosen

people and thereby the man, Abraham, blessed the earth. To see the impact of the covenant and our freedom, look at Luke 4:16-19, "He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them. Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Please remember that although Jesus was causing a major stir among the people, He was Joseph's son - a carpenter - and He came to His hometown synagogue that day and was given the privilege of reading the Scripture and speak. Now, nobody gets any respect when there are in their hometown, at least, not until they go away for a while and get famous. Then, if they come back, everybody loves them! But that was not the case with Jesus.

His ministry was just beginning and they did not have a clue about who He was. In fact, verse 22 says those who heard Him asked, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

I want to draw your attention to verse 20 where we have been told, "And he closed the book..." **What did a closed book symbolize?** An **ending of one dispensation and the beginning of another.** The **closed book** symbolized that **Judaism** and all it represented with its **priests, prophets** and **temples** was now a **closed chapter** in history. Something new was beginning and the world would never be the same.

For thousands of years, people had been waiting for the Messiah. Suddenly, a **Man stands up in His hometown and reads a passage that shocks everybody.** And to make sure that no one misunderstood Jesus makes it very clear, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." And with those words, "he closed the book." Therefore, the **closed book** was a symbol that **the Old Covenant**

was being replaced with a new and better way.

We have been talking about the covenant relationship, and we have been reminded in Hebrews 9:15, “For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.” So with our *covenant with Jesus Christ*, through the new birth, He is simply saying, “Bring me your pain, your depression, your guilt, your failure, your discouragement, and your addictions. Bring me your broken homes, your rebellious children, and your messed-up marriages. Bring me your sin and your circumstances, and I will exchange them for salvation, healing and deliverance!

God is calling His people to break the chains of sin and bondage in our lives through our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. It was Jesus Himself that said in John 8:32,36, “You shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free,” and “If therefore the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” The message of Jesus Christ is very simple: *God wants to set His people free.* I am not talking about salvation here, although it is the will of God for all men everywhere to be saved. **But I believe the Father is truly concerned about those of us who are saved.**

Why is it that we try so hard and don't go very far in our spiritual lives? Why do we leave church Sunday on a spiritual high, only to return to the pits on Monday? And why, at other times, do we do the very things we do not want to do?

What is holding us hostage to problems like these? In Romans chapter 7 Paul deals with this same scenario and draws this conclusion in verses 24-25, “Oh, wretched men that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So, then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin.” Therefore, we have this solution in Galatians 5:16-17, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one

another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

Listen, being a Christian is not natural. That might sound like a strange thing to say, but it is true. The Christian life *defies what is natural to the person who has never been saved.* The Christian life is not natural, it is spiritual.

For example, in the natural, did you give if you wanted to get? Were you taught that *giving* was more fulfilling than *receiving*? When did you ever *treat those who mistreated you with love and mercy*?

It is our nature to get all we can, do anything we have to do to get it, run over anyone who gets in our way, and hold on to everything we accumulate. And yet, Jesus says in Luke 6:38, “Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that you measure it shall be measured to you again.” And He says this in Matthew 5:44, “But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

It is not natural to relate to someone you cannot see. We cannot see God. Therefore, we must relate to Him by faith, and that is not natural. 1 Corinthians 2:14 tells us that the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God.

In fact, the only ones who are successful at it are people who learn to walk in the Spirit. You will always fail if you do not rely on God’s strength to live a godly life. And Jesus says that is why He came - *to set us free!*

Listen carefully to this statement: the blood of Jesus Christ has set you free, but if you are going to live free you must realize the strategy of the one who wants to keep you in bondage. Paul said this to the believers at Corinth, in 2 Corinthians 11:3, “I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be

led *astray* from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”

Paul knew that the same crafty serpent that had duped Eve in the Garden of Eden was messing with the Corinthians’ minds. What seared Paul was *not that the serpent was in control of their circumstances*, but *that he was in their heads*. He had **coiled himself around their thinking processes and their emotions!**

Now that is bad because Revelation 12:9 says we are talking about “the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who destroys the whole world.” **Listen; if Satan ever coils himself around your mind, there are not enough pills in the world that you can take to fix the problem.** There is no number of *seminars* you can attend, or *vacations* you can take, to get free if he is messing with your mind. Paul said the Corinthians were being deceived.

So, what is the nature of Satan’s deception? What is this trickery that he has brought about? Paul points us back to *Satan’s deception of Eve*, but he didn’t bring up Eve just to teach us a history or theology lesson. Paul is saying, “Understand what the deceiver did to Eve, and you will understand what he is trying to do to you.”

What happened to Eve is important because Satan is still using the same destructive techniques today. Since that is true, we need to review the temptation that plunged *first Eve* and *then Adam* into sin. Genesis 2:15-17 says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” **Therefore, when the serpent came to Eve, that was the issue that he wanted to discuss with her.**

Eve knew exactly what God had commanded, but then the serpent hit here with this, as seen in Genesis 3:4-5, “You *surely* will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it (the forbidden tree) your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” The deception worked. **Being like God had a nice ring to it.** Therefore, verse 6 tells us that Eve not only ate the fruit, but she served some to Adam and he ate it too. And God’s judgment fell on

them.

You see, Satan's greatest trick is to get us to live our lives independently of God.

Satan's goal is to keep sinners from going to heaven and to keep saints from enjoying the trip to heaven by tying them up in spiritual bondage and defeat. When a Christian lives in *perpetual defeat*, Satan wins. Every time the enemy gets us in a position where our lifestyle contradicts what God says in true, he wins by deception!

Of all the tricks that Satan has in his bag to promote self-sufficiency and independence from God, he has one that is a favorite because it is so effective. Satan wants to keep you spiritually off balance and defeated by confusing your identity.

The devil wants sinners to think they are saints and saints to think they are sinners. If he can confuse your identity, you won't know who you are, and once that happens you won't know how to act.

Although I spend most of my days (and some nights) working with a computer, I don't really know much about them. There is one thing that I have learned from reading and that is there is a device called an "emulator." An "emulator" causes incompatible programs to run on the same computer.

The "emulator" can make one program look and perform like the other, but it does not change the basic nature of either program. Satan is the great "emulator." He has *sinners* who act more saintly than saints even though they are on their way to hell, and he likes to see *saints* who act more sinful than sinners even though they are on their way to heaven.

In other words, they have been deceived, and they live in their deception as if it were the real deal when it is not! James 1:15 is an amazing scripture that says, "Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." You see, Satan has a *process* that he introduces into your life! And this is how it works: he starts with your mind, moves to your emotions, and the result is your actions.

Satan always begins with your thought-life. When Satan said to Eve, "You will be like God," whose thought was that? Eve didn't

come up with that thought! That thought came from the mouth of the one who said, “I will make myself like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:14).

And he does the very same thing today! He plants his thoughts in your mind until *his thoughts* become *your thoughts*. Satan repeats them over and over until you begin to believe they are your thoughts.

When a believer says, “I can’t make this marriage work.” **Whose thought is that?** When a believer says, “I can’t get rid of this habit,” **Whose thought is that?** When a believer says, “I am a nobody. I am nothing, and I always will be nothing,” **Whose thought is that?** When a believer thinks he has to go outside of his marriage to have his needs met, whose thought is that? And the problem is that Satan has been programming his thoughts into the minds of many Christians for so long that they can’t tell the difference anymore.

Once Satan gets your mind, he will transfer those thoughts to your emotions. Our thoughts do not simply stay on the *intellectual level*, because we are *emotional beings*. We begin to feel what we think.

Satan wants to capture our emotions because feelings are so dominating. Most people *live* and *make decisions* by their *feelings*. There is nothing wrong with our *emotions*, but **they can lead us in the wrong direction.**

The next logical step in this satanic progression is our actions. And that is where some of you are today. You and I have made some stupid decisions based on what we thought was right, and it has virtually destroyed our lives, and too many of us have been ready to give up on life.

Listen, God did not want your life to turn out the way that it has, but He hasn’t given up on you either. The Christian life is a life of new beginnings. And today is the first day of the rest of your life!

