



Sermon Title: Embracing Freedom (1 John 2:1-2) – Part 4.

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. Tell a time when you have had to 're-educate' yourself in a skill? How long did it take for you to feel absolute freedom in using your new skill?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. What does John say is his purpose in writing this section? (1 John 2:1)
Read through 1 John 1:5-10. What do these verses indicate about John's original readers? How were they 'managing' sin in their lives?
2. Pastor Henry observed that Paul gives a more balanced perspective of the problem of sin. What do Romans 7:15 and 7:22-23 tell us about Paul? Both Apostles Paul and John point to Christ for freedom from their sin. (Romans 7:24-25 and 1 John 2:1-2). Why is it not up to us to do this?
3. Paul in 2 Cor 4:18 speaks of two realms: Seen and Unseen.
Pastor Henry said, 'Both realms are real, and co-exist. As Christians, we have the privilege of living in both realms. Both are vitally important to God, because He made both of them.'

ETERNAL (unseen)
EARTHLY (seen)

To clarify the picture, put the following words and Scripture verses in the appropriate 'realm/s' --

-- natural realm, past/present/future, I am, I am becoming, ultimate reality, salvation, visible, sanctification, God's absolutes, temporary, changeless, completeness, this age, creation, good and evil are present, invisible, timeless, finished, settled, justification, sowing/growing/reaping, and Romans 3:23; 6:2, 23; 8:1-2; Hebrews 10:14.

4. Read Romans 6:11-14 and Eph 4:22-24. In the Romans passage, Paul personifies sin as an entity, separate from us, coined by Pastor Henry as 'Mr. Sin.' Mr. Sin is contrasted with the believer in Christ, the New You who says, 'I wish I hadn't done that.' How do the verses encourage the long-term spiritual transformation in a Christ-follower?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. Explore the three aspects of 'No condemnation' (Romans 8:1 – see summary). Which one is most important to you? Why?
2. In what situations will you embrace the freedom, power and opportunity to say 'yes' to God this week?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

THE WORD (NIV)

1 John 2:1-2

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Romans 3:23; 6:2, 11-14, 23

²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...^{6:}²By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?...¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.¹³Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.¹⁴For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace...²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 7:15, 22-23

¹⁵I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...²²For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

Romans 8:1-2

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

2 Corinthians 4:18

¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Ephesians 4:22-24

²²You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Hebrews 10:14

¹⁴For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

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One of the reasons John wrote the letter of 1 John was to bring clarity around the issue of sin (1 John 2:1-2). In his day many were claiming to be Christ-followers yet they were not following Christ in their behaviors (1 John 1). The issue was around how they looked at 'sin.' What is it? It is doing what I want to do rather than what God wants me to do. While we find some kind of pleasure in sinning it is fleeting (Heb 11:25). There is always a price to pay for sin. Sin is costly (Rom 6:23). Whatever we try to call it, be it failure or dysfunction, one look at what is happening in our world and in the lives of people we know tells us that there is often a high price for sin.

No matter our maturity in our faith we all struggle with sins – those things that steal our affection away from Christ. Paul too experienced this (Rom 7:15) although pointed the way in which we can be free (Rom 6:8). Paul made the point that it was not a 'procedure or path' but a person – Jesus (Rom 7:24-25). John pointed to Christ as well (1 John 2:1). John says that our freedom from the power of sin and self-condemnation hinges on Jesus Christ. How can we be free? (See Romans 5-8).

Freedom from the power of sin and self-condemnation comes to those who know and embrace their identity in Christ. What you believe about yourself and what you believe about how God sees you will dramatically impact the way you live your life and deal with sin. There are only two sources for the development of your identity: Culture and Christ. Culture consists of what you do and what others think of you. This is a fickle foundation to be on. Athletes and actors are typically judged on the last thing they did be it good or bad. Who are you when the source of your identity is gone? Culture will disappoint you. A Christian has a foundation that cannot be taken away – that you are a Child of God. You may wear many hats in your lifetime but the core source of your identity is your relationship with God.

Who are we, though, as human beings? We are not just physical bodies and souls but we are also spirit (2 Cor 4:18). Paul speaks of there being a visible yet temporary realm and an unseen yet eternal realm. Both are real and co-exist. Christians live in both realms. The eternal realm is invisible, changeless and timeless, one of God's absolutes. It is in the realm of positional truth – what God says about whom we are – where we are justified and set free from the penalty of sin in order that we can begin a relationship with God. It is the realm of 'I am.' In contrast the earthly realm (also called the natural realm or 'this age') is temporary. It and we as well, has a beginning and an end. Here we see good and evil. It is the realm of sanctification where we are set free from the power of sin so that we can grow in our relationship with Christ. It is the realm of 'I am becoming'.

Often, we get confused of which realm Scripture is speaking and can often read a passage and feel guilt and question our faith and whether we are a Christian (ex. Rom 6:2). Yet here Paul is speaking of the eternal spiritual realm. Some speak of both realms (Heb 10:14). Here in this passage it speaks of how, in the spiritual realm when we put our faith in Christ, God takes the sin that is on our account and places it on Christ and takes Christ's righteousness and puts it on us (2 Cor 5:21). Righteousness (right standing before God) is a gift. It is not earned or deserved. We can only accept or reject it (Rom 6:6-7). Before coming to Christ we were physically alive in the earthly realm but spiritually dead in the spiritual realm. Yet when you put your trust in Him, in the spiritual realm you died to sin (Rom 6:2) and were made alive in Christ and became a new creation and person in Christ. God sees us forgiven, righteous and perfect in the spiritual realm – not because we live perfectly here but because we are in Christ who is righteous and perfect.

We also live in the earthly realm where we are still being sanctified (being made holy) and growing in Christ. Here the spiritual part of us is no longer under the control and power of our sinful nature – even though that nature resides in us still. The earthly nature battles against the new person we are in Christ (Rom 7:22). Through practice we need to re-educate our earthly nature (soul and body) by allowing the Holy Spirit to live the new life we have in Jesus through us. This will lead us to freedom from the power of sin and into the victorious life that Jesus longs for us to have (Rom 8:1). Embrace your identity in Christ (put your faith in it) and act on it (Rom 6:11). Count on it to be true. Don't doubt God on this – a transformation has occurred in your life! Sin is no longer your master.

What does 'no condemnation' mean? It means:

1. God does not reject you. In the eternal realm you are already righteous and acceptable because you are in Christ.
2. God is not upset with you when you struggle with sin. He is patient with you. If the direction of your heart is right your attitude and behaviors will eventually follow.
3. God does not punish you when you sin. In the spiritual realm you are no longer under judgment. Christ took that on Himself on the Cross. God is no longer judge but loving Father. He still challenges us not to sin because we will see consequence of sin in this earthly realm, and limit God's power in your life (John 15:4). It will bring loving discipline from the Lord (Heb 12:5). Punishment is to enact judgment on wrongdoing. Discipline is to correct and promote growth so that we may be all that God created us to be.

Freedom from the power of sin and self-condemnation comes to those who offer themselves to God (Rom 6:12-14). Will we offer ourselves to Christ (our minds, wills, emotions and bodies) to live His life through us or to the temptations around us and which are still in our souls and bodies (vs 13)? Here Paul personifies sin as a separate entity. The real you (the spirit you) does not want to sin, but the separate 'old' nature calling to you does. The real you will either offer yourself to the life and desires of the Lord Jesus or to the temptations of your mortal body and soul. It is not you against God. Rather it is you and Christ against your sinful nature (Mr. Sin). The voice in you that says 'I don't want to do this' is the real you. The voice that says 'I want to do this' is your earthly fleshly nature. If, when we are tempted, we believe our desire to sin is the real us we conclude that there is something wrong with us and our devotion to God. But you are a brand-new person and you have that choice (vs 13). You will still feel the lure of temptation because Mr. Sin is still a part of your body but your spirit is now in Christ and therefore you have the freedom and power and opportunity to say yes to God. Spiritual transformation is a long-term process were one (Eph 4:17) replaces old habits with new habits. Christ is alive in you. Surrender your life to His control.