

The Kingdom of God and Eternal Life (10)

A Life of Freedom

Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Recapitulation

Brothers, sisters and friends, last time we saw that the apostle John defines eternal life is to know Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ; If we truly know Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ in the biblical way, our lives in the present age is the foretaste of the eternal life in the age to come. Today we continue to study the eternal life in the present age.

^{ESV} **John 8:36** So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

This statement is from the Lord Jesus Christ, “the Son” refers to the Lord himself, he likes to refer himself as “Son of man”, that is his preferred title. The Lord says if he sets the people free, then they will be free; that means they won’t be free if he doesn’t set them free. That means right now the people in the world have no freedom!

This contradicts with most people’s thinking; most people think that when they become a Christian they would lose the freedom, they can’t do this, they can’t do that, a lot of things they can’t do. But the Lord says exactly the opposite, you don’t have freedom until the Son of Man sets you free.

Now let’s look at the Bible to understand the Lord’s teaching on this.

People of this world are slaves of sin

^{NAS} **John 8:34** Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

The Lord Jesus says people of this world are slaves of sin. We all have sinned, everyone has committed sin, therefore we all are slaves of sin. You know what slave of sin means? That means sin is your master, you are its slave; sin has control over you, you have to do whatever sin tells you to do, even if you don’t want to.

Only when you believe in Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ, you repent of all your sins, you commit your life totally to Yahweh God and get baptized, all your sins are washed clean by the

blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are free from the control of sin, from then on you have the freedom.

Now let me tell you a true story of an elderly Vietnamese woman, she was controlled and tortured by sin to the point that her health was destroyed; Only after she became a Christian, she was free from the control of sin. She had shared her testimony in a Vietnamese church to encourage the brothers and sisters, and her testimony was put on the church's publication. Usually I don't mention peoples' name and their location, but since she herself had shared her testimony openly in the church, I don't mind mentioning her name; Her name is My, I called her Auntie My.

A few decades ago, Auntie My and her family left Vietnam to come to Canada. Shortly after her arrival, someone did something bad to her, as a consequence of that she lost the benefit she was supposed to received. She was very angry with that person to the point that whenever she heard that person's name she would feel pain in her stomach. This situation carried on for 10 years, during that time her stomach pain was getting worse and worse, on top of that she also developed insomnia. She went to see different doctors, but none could help her. Everyone thought that she had serious health problem, but she herself knew it was not a physical problem, rather it was due to the anger in her heart against that person, that caused all these problems and sickness; she also wanted to put all these things behind, but she couldn't do it. Her whole being was controlled by the anger toward that person, she became a slave of sin. At that time she even wanted to take revenge against that person. She had read a lot of books on psychology to try to ease the anger in her heart, but it didn't work; she knew that she had to let go, but she couldn't do it.

Free from the principle of sin and death

^{NAU} **Romans 8:2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Thanks be to the Lord Jesus Christ, he can give us the freedom from sin. The word "law" in this verse does not mean the the Old Testament Law, it means principle. It sounds very abstract; If Yahweh God is willing, in the future we will study the principle of the Spirit and the principle of sin and death.

When we were still slaves of sin, we were controlled by sin; whenever something aroused the anger, the jealousy, the greed in our hearts, then our whole being was filled with the sinful emotions and sinful desires; we can't control them, but we are controlled by the power of sin, we do whatever sin tells us to do. Only when the principle of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets you free, then you are no longer controlled by the principle of sin and death.

You know what happened to Auntie My? Her daughter became a Christian, she attended our church in Montreal, Canada. At that time, over thirty some years ago our church organized a joint summer camp between Toronto church and Montreal church every year; in the summer of year 1986 Auntie My's daughter encouraged her mother to join the summer camp. During the camp there was preaching of the word of God every morning, and followed by a Bible Study. Since there were quite a number of Vietnamese elderly people joining the camp that year, and they didn't speak English, so the church leaders set up a Vietnamese Bible study group for them, and they assigned me to lead this Vietnamese Bible study group (I was a Vietnamese refugee, I can speak Vietnamese, you can read my testimony "Goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life" on the CDC church website www.cdc.org). Auntie My's daughter saw that her mother was struggling with the anger and grudge in her heart, she then encouraged Auntie My to share her problem with me (I was the Bible study group leader). I myself had never experienced this kind of struggle, I didn't know that the anger and hatred in a person's heart could be so deep, I didn't know anything about psychology, I could only speak from the word of God. I told her that we should forgive all those who have offended us and mistreated us, we don't seek revenge for ourselves, we commit all things into God's hands, we trust that He would have a fare judgment; therefore we don't judge other people, but we rather self examine to see if there is any sin in our hearts, we should repent of those sins, especially the anger and hatred against other people. After Auntie My heard this, she was awoken from sin, she confessed her sins to God, and she started to unload the heavy burden in her heart. Sometime later Auntie My repented of her sin, she committed her life totally to Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and she got baptized.

When Pastor Bentley and I were preaching the gospel in Philippines, every other Monday Pastor Bentley would go to the prison to preach gospel to the prisoners. Some of them were waiting for the sentence, while some of them were serving life sentence, and some were waiting for the death sentence; Their hearts were filled with hatred, anger and despair. But thanks be to Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ, some of them became Christians, and they were set free from the power of sin. Even though they were still in prison, but their hearts were free from the power of sin, they could sing gospel songs to praise God, some of them even started to preach gospel to other prisoners.

In Acts chapter 16 it mentions apostle Paul and Silas were put in prison for the sake of the gospel, even though their bodies were in prison, but their spirits were free from all burden and sins; they were happily singing hymns to God while they were in the prison cell to the point that other prisoners all want to listen to them.

^{ESV} **Acts 16:22 – 25** The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

Freedom from sin is not just a theory or fairy tale, but it is something all Christians can experience right now in this life. The word of God is very practical and real, but only when you live according to the word of God, then you know His word is real and He is true. If you don't live according to the word of God, even if you do all the research, but there is no way for you to know whether the word of God is true or not.

Freedom from the the bondage to decay

Let's continue to study the word of God to understand more about the freedom of the children of God.

^{ESV} **Romans 8:19 – 21** For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

The word "creation" refers to everything created by Yahweh God such as stars, earth, mountains, seas, human being, animals, trees etc; all these things would decay, actually they are decaying fast, we look around we see all things are decaying; and they are all longing for the children of God to be revealed.

Why? Why all things in the universe are longing for the children of God to be revealed? Because when the children of God are revealed, all creation would be free from the bondage to corruption, that means they would no longer corrupt, they would live in freedom and glory.

Then when would the children of God be revealed?

^{NAU} **John 6:40** "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Here the word “beholds” doesn’t mean that to just take a look, just one glance, it means to fix the eyes upon. The Lord Jesus says according to the will of Yahweh God the Father, everyone who fixes the eyes upon him, that is the Lord Jesus, and believes in him will have eternal life; the Lord will raise him up on the last day. Last day is the day the Lord Jesus returns to earth, it is also the day the whole creation would be set free from corruption, from then on they would no longer decay.

The true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ are children of God, even if their physical bodies die, but when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth, they would be resurrected, they would come back to life and be given a new body; this new body would not be corrupted, and they would have eternal life in heaven.

How should the children of God live in this world?

Are you excited about this? If you want to be free from the bondage to decay, you want to be resurrected when the Lord Jesus comes back, you have to prepare, you have to follow the instructions that the Lord Jesus gives you. What are the instructions?

1. You have to live in the word of the Lord Jesus Christ

When you repent of your sins and commit your life totally to Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ, you are free from the power of sin and free from the bondage of corruption, but you have to keep this freedom. If you go back to the sinful life, you would once again become slaves of sin, you would lose the freedom you have. What can we do to keep this freedom?

^{ESV} **John 8:31** So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

The Lord Jesus says we have to abide, to live in his word, then we are truly his disciples and we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free.

We maintain our freedom by living in the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, that’s not simply studying his word and understand the meaning; these thing are very good, but not sufficient. We have to live according to his word.

Some Christians only live according to some parts of the word that they like, but not everything. If you don’t live according to all of the Lord’s word, you are not living in his word; it is either you are in his word or you are not in his word, you cannot live half in the house and half outside the

house, it doesn't make sense. That's the first point, we have to live in the word of the Lord Jesus Christ.

^{NAU} **Hebrews 10:26 – 27** For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,²⁷ but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

“Sinning willfully” means committing a sin knowingly, we know it is a sin to do certain thing, but we still do it, it is different from sin of omission. This passage is a warning to us, if we go on sinning willfully after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there is no more a sacrifice for sins, that means no more forgiveness of sins, our sins will not be forgiven, we will face the judgment and the fire will destroy us. If you are a Christian, but you still live in sin, you should repent right away, otherwise you would face the fire of judgment.

2. You follow the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 3:17** Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

The second point is you have to follow the Spirit of the Lord, He will lead you to freedom from sin. When we commit our lives totally to Yahweh God, He will give His Holy Spirit to live inside us.

When the Holy Spirit lives in us, He will teach us, encourage us, but He will also rebuke us when we sin. If we follow the guidance of the Spirit, we would not go on to the wrong way. On the contrary, if we keep on rejecting the guidance of the Spirit, eventually it would come to a point He doesn't lead us anymore. It is just like the situation when you talk to me, but I keep on ignoring you, it will come to a point you don't want to talk to me anymore. That is a very dangerous situation, it would be like not having the Holy Spirit. The Bible says where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, but if we don't have the Holy Spirit, we have no freedom, that means once again we become the slave of sin.

Conclusion

Now let's sum up everything; we saw that the eternal life in the present age is a life free from the power of sin. When you repent of your sins and commit your life to Yahweh God and get baptized, you are set free from the power of sin and free from the bondage to decay. But you have to keep this freedom by living in the word of the Lord Jesus Christ and following the guidance of the Holy Spirit.