

# Bondage Breaker - Part 4

by Neil T. Anderson

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*Neil T. Anderson's sermon emphasizes the importance of resisting temptation through dependency on God and the truth of Scripture.*

**Duration:** 48:41

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 23:21-24, Romans 8:31-35

**Topics:** "Spiritual Freedom", "Resisting Temptation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of finding fulfillment in God rather than in the world. He highlights the cycle of sin, confession, and giving up, and explains that the missing element is resisting temptation. The speaker shares a powerful testimony of a pastor's wife who was trapped in this cycle but found freedom through the truth of God's word. The sermon also discusses the temptation of Jesus and how Satan tried to get Him to use His divine attributes independently of the Father. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the need for the church to live a holy life and not steal God's words from each other.

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## Transcript

What is the intention of Satan here to do? Well, he's to draw us away from the will of God and to distort the very Word of God itself. It's interesting, when Satan said, really? Has God said that you can't eat from any tree? Is that what God said? No, God said we couldn't eat of that tree. Is that same temptation taking place? Well, if you're a parent, you know that it is.

How many have heard your child say that I can't do anything? Is that what you said? No, you said you couldn't do that thing. I can't go anywhere. Is that what you said? No, they can't go to that one particular place.

I can't see any movies. No, you can't see that movie. So, that same track is still there.

Somehow or another, our needs are going to get met in Christ, or they're going to get met in the world system. And we're going to be tempted to fall into those patterns of the world instead of God's answer. Then comes the last Adam, Christ.

He was tempted in every way, such as man. And so, we are told in Scripture that he fasted for 40 days and was hungry. Isn't that incredible? I fasted four hours once and was famished.

But anyway, he came back. He was on the verge of starvation. And the devil said to him, if you are the Son of Man, why don't you turn that rock into bread? Now, what is the issue of that temptation? It was an attempt by Satan to get Jesus to use his own divine attributes independent of the Father.

And I want to say that that is the heart of temptation. It's an attempt to get you and I to live our lives independent of God. And the life that Jesus modeled on planet Earth was a life totally dependent upon God the Father.

He said, I don't even come on my own initiative. I don't speak on my own initiative. And the same is true of the Holy Spirit.

They only responded to that which their Heavenly Father told them to. And even in the Trinity, there is that sense of unity and dependence upon God the Father. And the Lord, in every case that he was tempted, he quoted right out of the book of Deuteronomy.

In this case, he said, man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God. And so immediately, he declared his dependency upon God the Father. Then let's look at the lust of the eyes.

What's the intention here? When the devil tempted Jesus, he took him up to the temple and he offered him that the Lord would bear him up if he would throw him off. In other words, he was going to put God the Father to the test. And I see this as the great religious temptation today, that we're going to put God to the test.

I said, it doesn't work that way, people. We are being tested by God. We're being tempted by the devil.

The intention is to destroy our faith. We are being tested by God. The intention is to strengthen our faith.

I remember several years ago, when I was a pastor, I had a man who joined our church. He was a nice guy and recovering from a pretty debauched life, actually. Through it, he had gone through a divorce and had come to Christ.

He just wanted to serve the Lord. He had actually been a mayor of our town at one time. Here is a committed man.

Unfortunately, an awful lot of the rebellious living of his past had caught up with him. Eventually, he got sick and they took a long time diagnosing it, but finally it was discovered he had cancer. He was a pretty solid guy.

I wish I could say the same for his wife at that time. She just kind of lost all sense of rationality and started to grasp for any straw that came along. Next thing I know, some bizarre religious figures were coming into their life.

I went over to their house and she said, I am not going to let you pray for my husband if you are going to conclude the prayer if it be according to God's will. I had to be honest with her. I said, I bow to a higher authority.

I think that there is nothing that I would want more for your husband than for him to have God's will. I am convinced that God's will is good, acceptable, and perfect. We are even told to pray in the Lord's Prayer that thy will be done.

I want God's will for his life because I believe it is best for him. Well, that ended that relationship for a while. Then the word got out in our church that four independent witnesses all testified that God told them that he was not going to die.

Isn't that great, Pastor? Well, that would be great. I like this man and I did pray for him and I was concerned for him. But I knew in my own heart that four independent witnesses had not heard from God and three weeks later the man died.

Now, what happened here, people? Did God tell those four people? And if God did, what would that make God? That would make God a liar. I believe those four people were doing nothing more than paying attention to a deceiving spirit. What is the intention of this temptation? It is to destroy our confidence in God and to undermine the actual word of God itself.

Now God can't be trusted. And when Eve responded to the temptation of Satan at that time, she said, No, God didn't say that. He said we couldn't eat or touch that tree.

Oh, what did she add, people? She had a touch. Now, what if she touched that tree and she didn't die? Well, again, then God would be a liar. And then Satan comes along and says, You surely shall not die.

He's trying to question the very word of God. The last one is the pride of life. And here the devil offered him to have half the kingdoms of the world if he would only bow down and worship Him.

Now, people, the Lord did not respond and say, You don't have half the kingdoms of this world. He knew who the God of this world was. But this temptation was immediately rebuffed by our Lord because He knew that there was only one He should worship and He said, You shall fear only the Lord your God and you shall worship Him.

You see, what he confronted him with was the ultimate lie. It goes right back to the Garden. You will be like God.

And that temptation is still true today. The New Age is trying to tell us, You don't need a Savior. You don't need to repent from your sins.

You just need to realize that you're God and all you need to be is enlightened. Isn't it amazing that a child comes onto this world, he readily accepts the notions of God. If they had a godly mom or dad, they would believe in God.

They just seem to naturally do that. And now what's happening now is they grow up a little bit older, get involved in the public school systems and they don't believe in God anymore. And now they grow up a little bit further and they think they are God.

That's like me as a child saying I believed in Santa Claus and I grew up a little bit and did believe in Santa Claus. Then I grew up a little bit more and I was Santa Claus. Well, what's the intention of this temptation? It's to pull us away from our obedience to God and our worship of Him.

We are not God, but we are children of God. So how do we stand up against that temptation? We have to realize it's really a battle for our mind. When we see the opposite sex or something out there, it isn't the apple, that isn't the issue, it isn't the object of our temptation.

The intention here is to draw us away from the will of God, from the word of God and from the worship of God to get us to live our life independent of God, to destroy our confidence in God so we will no longer obey Him. And so when that tempting thought comes, we stand against it immediately. No, I do not need that opposite sex.

That is not God's answer for my fulfillment in my life. God provided for that in my marriage and my spouse and so I'm going to commit myself to that only. But we have to stop that thought immediately.

And you do that by choosing the truth. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is light, right, whatever is lovely, think on those things. And so that threshold thinking, you take every thought captive to the beatings of Christ.

And the world and the devil in the flesh is going to try to say, you can get your knees met out here. And I'm saying, no sir, my knees are met in my relationship with God for my God will supply all of my knees according to His richness and glory. And I do not have to be tempted to find those knees met in this world.

Well, we're all subject to temptation. What happens here is if we get into that temptation, we sin. And so we confess it.

Then we give in again and we sin. And we confess it. And we get into that sin, confess, sin, confess, I give up cycle.

What's wrong with that? It's not complete. There's something missing here. It's supposed to be sin, confess, resist.

I want you to hear a remarkable story of a girl, a pastor's wife, who attended our conference who was caught in that sin, confess, sin, confess, I give up cycle. Listen. Dear Neil, I can't begin to tell you all that the Lord has done in my life through the truth you shared with us at the conference.

I am now more aware of the deception of the enemy, and this makes my gratefulness for my powerful and gracious Savior real. I was bulimic for 11 years, but now I can be in the house alone all day with a kitchen full of food and be in peace. When a temptation or lie from Satan pops into my mind, I fend it off quickly with the truth.

I used to be in bondage to those lies for hours and hours each day, always fearing food. Now I'm rejoicing in the freedom which the truth brings. It's that truth that we have to choose in our own minds and to realize how God has provided for everybody a way of escape.

It seems like it may not be there, but it is there, and if we want to know it, we can have it. Temptation. We're all subject to that.

All of us have the power in Christ Jesus to stand against that temptation and realize the basis of temptation are legitimate needs in our life, but those needs can be met in Christ. So how do we get out of the sin, confess, sin, confess, I give up cycle? We realize that sin, confess, resist. We're to submit to God, then resist the devil.

We have to take into account that reality. For instance, suppose you open the door. Now you were told don't open that door no matter what.

On the other side of the door, the tempter is saying, come on, you can do it, you'll get away with it. All the other people in the church do it, so you might as well too. And you open the door, and the dog comes in and glonks onto your leg.

Do you beat on the dog or beat on yourself? Well, unfortunately, as soon as you open that door, and he glonks onto your leg, do you know what he says? You open the door, you open the door, and the accuser of the brethren takes over, and you throw your hands up in the air, and you cry, oh God, forgive me. Guess what God does? He forgives you, but the dog is still there. You've taken into account half of reality, but not all of it yet.

That's why if you confess to God, you submit to God, then you resist the devil. We have to learn how to do that. When he's on this side of the door, he becomes the accuser, and he puts us down day and night.

Accusation. That's the other side. I want you to hear a remarkable letter that was sent to me.

My old feelings that life isn't worth the trouble keep coming back. I'm scared, lonely, confused, and very desperate. I know deep down that God can overcome this, but I can't get past this block.

I can't even pray. When I try, things get in my way. When I'm feeling good and I begin putting into action what I know God wants me to do, I'm stopped dead in my tracks by those voices, and a force so strong I can't continue.

I'm so close to giving in to those voices that I almost can't fight them anymore. I just want some peace. I want people like that to have peace, and I'm sure you do too.

But can you imagine the frustration of that being down time and time and time again? How do we stand against the accuser of the brethren? In Revelation it says he accuses the brethren day and night. Well, there's a remarkable passage in Zechariah 3. Let me read it to you. Then he showed me Joshua the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

And the Lord said to Satan, The Lord rebuke you, Satan. Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you. Is this not a brand plucked from the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel.

And he spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, Remove the filthy garments from him. Again he said to him, See, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with festal robes. Then I said, Let them put a clean turban on his head.

So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the Lord was standing by. What a remarkable picture. This is a vision given to Zechariah, but it's been totally fulfilled in Christ.

Take a look at it. Let's reconstruct the course of heaven here. See, Joshua is standing before God.

He's the ultimate judge, and he's in filthy garments. This is not a good thing. The high priest would go into the Holy of Holies and the Great Day of Atonement in the early church.

Before he went in there, he went through elaborate procedures to become ceremonially undefiled. He could not go in there unless he went through those procedures. Even then, it was an awesome experience.

They used to tie bells around the hem of his garments and a rope onto his leg. And you say, Why did they do that? Well, as he went in by himself once a year to atone for all the sins of Israel, at least he didn't go in there right. The other priests would stand outside.

They'd listen for the bells. And they would say to one another, Do you still hear the bells? Yeah, I still hear them. I don't hear them anymore.

Well, go in and check it out. No, you go in and check it out. Well, that's what the rope was for.

Pull them out of there, see? And so here is Joshua, the high priest, standing before God in filthy garments. Not a good thing. And the Lord says, The Lord rebuke you.

Who? Satan. Isn't that great to know that in the face of Satan's accusations, the Lord himself is saying, The Lord rebuke you. Do you realize right now you have two members of the Trinity praying on your behalf? Romans 8, 26.

I don't know how or what to pray for, but the Holy Spirit does. And Jesus always liveth to maketh intercession. He's standing there at the right hand of the Father himself right now, interceding on your behalf and my behalf.

Look at those courts of heaven. Who's the judge? It's God the Father. Who's the accused? It's you and I. Who's the prosecuting attorney? It's Satan.

Who's the defense attorney? It's Jesus. Are you going to lose this court case? You could lose it if you wanted to. What power does the prosecuting attorney have? Can he determine a verdict? Absolutely not.

Can he pronounce a sentence? No, no way he can. All he can do is bring accusation. But boy, it is effective.

It is amazing how many people are relentlessly pursued by that accuser of the brethren, beaten down, entertaining thoughts like, I'm stupid, I'm dumb, I'm ugly, God doesn't love me, God doesn't care for me. And I've seen that at the highest level of the church to the lowest level of the members. It seems to be that all of us are subject to the voice of the accuser of the brethren.

Now the question is, how do I know whether that struggle in my mind is the accuser of the brethren or whether it is really the conviction of the Holy Spirit? That's a great question. And I believe it's answered in 2 Corinthians 7, verse 9 and 10. Let me read it.

He said, And I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance. For you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation.

But the sorrow of the world produces death. Now what is he saying? He's saying, I'm glad you were made sorrowful. Not that you were just made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss.

In other words, God is going to bring that conviction to us. And if it's coming from God, that conviction will lead to repentance without regret. And so if I've sinned, I've done something wrong, I go before God, God brings a conviction, I confess it to Him, it's over with.

It's done. It's passed. But the sorrow of the world produces death.

What's interesting is the same word is used for both. Sorrow. In other words, it may feel the same.

What's the difference between the two? The end result. One leads to life, the other one leads to death. For instance, Judas betrayed Christ, and he went out and hung himself when he came under the sorrow of the world.

Peter also betrayed Christ, came under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and he became the spokesperson for the church. Now the question is, which one is going on in our minds today? Well, if you are constantly being beaten down, never seems to be any resolution, no matter how many times you confess it, people, that cannot be God. Why can't it be God? Listen to Romans 8, verse 31 and following.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? Can't be God, people. Why not? Because the next verse says, He who did not spare his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things? Well, who will bring a charge against God's elect? It cannot be God. Why not? Because God is the one who justifies.

Well, who is the one who condemns? Can't be Christ Jesus. Why not? Because Christ Jesus is he who died. Yes, rather, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

Well, who is going to separate us from the love of God? And the answer is, nobody is, people, because you are a child of God. I've often been asked, well, can a Christian commit the unpardonable sin? The answer is, no way. The only sin that is unpardonable is the sin of unbelief.

When the Lord told about the unpardonable sin, He was saying that in reference to the fact that they were accusing Him of doing His work by the power of the devil. And so He said, that cannot be. Then He goes on to say that any blasphemy against the Son of Man would be forgiven, but any blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would not be.

Well, what is the difference between those two members of the Trinity? Well, the difference is their respective work. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to conviction, to draw all people to Christ. If you reject that witness, you never get to Christ.

But if you're in Christ, you're a child of God, there is no condemnation. And so the only unpardonable sin is the sin of unbelief that never allows you to get to Christ in the first place. But Christ died once for all.

That's your sins, my sins. And so if you're in Christ, you are forgiven, and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Let's go back and look at the door illustration again.

And let's say there's a little girl there. And you are her parent. And you told the little girl, don't open the door, don't open the door.

But she does. She opens the door. Imagine, if you would, some hovering, ugly presence hovering over this little girl and just putting her down and accusing her and bringing temptation.

Is there not a parent listening who wouldn't rush over immediately and try to drive off that ugly stranger to get rid of that presence and then grab that little girl and say, now honey, don't open the door again. But I wish I didn't have to say this. But unfortunately, oftentimes, the church joins the accuser of the brethren.

And we go over to that and we start putting it down. You open the door. You open the door.

That's the role of the accuser of the brethren. Let's resist the devil. Let's chase off that.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And then sit down with one another and say, now don't open the door again. And by the grace of God, we won't have to do that.

And so we're all subject to temptation. We are all subject to the accusing work of the God of this world. All of which we have all the grace we need to stand against.

The most subtle schemes of the devil, however, are deception. He is the father of lies. Deception.

We are confronted in our world today with a deceiver. We are false prophets, a false teacher, deceived people, a wrecking havoc in our church. But we are not just subject to that that is clearly occultic.

We are vulnerable and we can deceive ourselves. We can deceive ourselves. And there are a number of scriptures that allude to that.

Listen to some of them. We deceive ourselves when we hear the word of God, but don't do it, according to James 1.22. 1 John 1.8 says, We deceive ourselves when we say we have no sin. Now people having sin and being sin are two radically different issues.

So if a Christian thinks that they can't sin or somehow don't choose to do that, then we are really setting ourselves up to be in a bad position. Romans 12.3 says, We deceive ourselves when we think we are something we are not. So we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think.

1 Corinthians 3.18-19 says, We deceive ourselves when we think we are wise in this age. We are to lean not in our own understanding, but in all ways acknowledge God. James 1.26 says, We deceive ourselves when we think we are religious, but do not bridle our own tongue.

Unfortunately, the tongue can be set on fire from hell, he writes in the book of James. So we have to watch over our tongue. We deceive ourselves when we think we will not reap what we sow, according to Galatians 6.7. 1 Corinthians 6.9-10 says, We deceive ourselves when we think that the unrighteous will inherit the kingdom of God.

I had that driven home once when a young gal who had come to see me had been led to Christ by her sister. She was now unfortunately living in a lesbian relationship. And somehow or another she justified that before God, but she missed this passage that says that is not possible.

Somehow or another she was either horribly deceived herself or could not have been a Christian to enter into a belief like that. 1 Corinthians 15.33 says, We deceive ourselves when we think we can continually associate with bad company and not be corrupted. Because bad company will corrupt even the best of morals.

Well, that's sobering to realize that we can deceive ourselves. We have to live our life out of denial, live in a real world, stay in touch with reality, and choose the truth because we can just deceive ourselves. But we are also very, very subject to false prophets and false teachers.

And I realize that that has clearly been taught us in the New Age. That we are told that there is going to be an apostasy, a falling away from the faith in the latter ages. And that people are going to pay attention to

deceiving spirits.

In Matthew 24, when he warns us that in the days preceding the second coming of Christ, that there will be many false prophets and false messiahs who will rise and show great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 2 Peter 2 talks about false teachers and false prophets who will rise from amongst you. Now, this is not the Maharishi, Mahesh Yogi, or the Rajneesh, or Sun Yung Moon, or Baggy Pants Sneeze, or some false teacher like that.

He's talking about people who will disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. They will rise from amongst you. They will probably be professing Christians.

And the scripture says they will secretly introduce destructive heresies, eventually denying their own master. And many people will follow after their sensuality. They won't follow their teachings so much.

They'll be caught up with a charismatic teacher. And the next thing you know, they'll be denying their own master. How do we know them? Well, 2 Peter 2.10 says that they will despise authority.

They have an independent spirit. They will just do their own things. I tell you, this is so sobering to me, personally, because in the last church that I passed before I went on to teach at seminary, my wife's best friend, who sat under my teaching, who is very closely related to us, is now living with a man, all in the name of Christianity, answering the phones for an obvious false teacher.

Our best friends, from ten years ago, who sat under my ministry, who were very close to us, got caught up with a false teacher. They eventually lost their ministry, and somehow or another wanted to justify this very, very obvious false teacher. Well, how will we know them? Well, we've been warned.

Listen to Jeremiah 23, verse 21 and following. He said, I did not send these prophets, but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they prophesied.

But if they had stood in my counsel, then they would have announced my words to my people, and would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds. So what's the intention of a prophet? Well, a prophet in the Old Testament would be much like an evangelist in the New Testament. The intention of God sending a prophet was to reveal unrighteousness.

You see the same thing in the gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14, was to disclose and reveal unrighteousness. The intention was, in the Old Testament, was to draw them back to the law, to bring them again under conviction, and to have a right standing with the Lord. The false prophet won't do that.

They'll announce their own words. And the intention is, is to get them off that direction and to lose that sense of a righteous relationship with God. And God responds, Am I a God who is near, declares the Lord, and not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him, declares the Lord? Do I not fill the heavens and the earth, declares the Lord? Well, I've heard what the prophets have said, who prophesy falsely in my name, saying I had a dream.

How long, the Lord asks. Is there anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood? Even these prophets of the deception of their own heart, who intend to make my people forget my name by their dreams, which they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot my name because of Baal. Verse 28 says, The prophet who has a dream, he may relate his dream, but let him who has my word speak my word in truth.

What does straw have in common with grain, declares the Lord? Well, I'm an old farm boy. I understand the value of straw. It has no nutrition in it at all.

You can feed straw to horses or cattle, they won't eat it, they'll sleep on it. So where does the nutrition come from? It comes from the grain of God's word. And then he says, Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord? Like a hammer which shatters a rock? See, the church is under the conviction of God.

And judgment begins with the household of God. God's not going to come by and give us some pious platitude and tell us that he loves us. If we've got people sitting in our fellowship that are living in immorality, and if judgment came upon that church, it would cause them to confess their sin and to cling back again to the holiness of God because it's required of all of us that we live a holy life.

Then he says, Therefore behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who steal my words from each other. That's plagiarism. You see, that is God's word, but he gave it to somebody else.

And so we ought not to steal the work of another person, but to give them credit where it is due. Then he said, Behold, I am against the prophet, declares the Lord, who uses their tongues and declares the Lord declares. Oh, this is subtle.

And it's even in our evangelical churches when somebody comes and says, Boy, the Lord told me that I'm supposed to marry you. I've seen this happen. And I just had the privilege to marry my daughter to a young man.

And when he came to me, he asked for my daughter's hand. He didn't tell me the Lord told him he was supposed to have it. If he'd have said that, I'd have driven him off.

And so it better be a request, not a mandate. Then he says, Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams, declares the Lord, and related them and led my people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting. So we've been warned, there will be false prophets and false teachers, and they will arise from amongst us and secretly introduce destructive heresies.

The point of it is, get back to the Word of God. Get under the authority of a good, godly church where a man has a servant leadership. And if he's got an independent spirit and he won't answer to anybody, get out of there because he is highly suspect in that regard.

Well, how can we know? Well, I'm calling for discernment. We've got to learn to discern. Hebrews chapter 5 says, Solid meat is for the mature who have had their senses trained to discern good and evil.

In the last century, Hannah Whitehall Smith wrote, There are the voices of evil and deceiving spirits who lie in wait to entrap every traveler entering these higher regions of the spiritual life. In the same epistle that tells us that we are seated in the heavenly places in Christ, we are also told that we shall have to fight with spiritual enemies. These spiritual enemies, whoever and whatever they may be, must necessarily communicate with us by means of our spiritual faculties.

And their voices, as the voice of God, are an inward impression made upon our spirit. Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit may tell us by impressions what the will of God is, concerning us, so also will these spiritual enemies tell us by impression what is their will, concerning us, though not, of course, giving it their name. Well, we've realized that throughout 2,000 years of church experience that this kind of battle is taking place, and so we're not sharing anything that is new with you here.

I've had people come up and tell me, well, God told me that I was supposed to do so and so. And I've often cautioned them, I don't think so. And they say, well, why not? I mean, God did tell me that.

And I say, well, I'm not so sure He did. I say, if God told you to tell me to do something, then what would that make you? Wouldn't that make you a medium? But the Bible says that there's only one intermediary between God and man. Now, don't throw out the baby with the bathwater here, because God has provided an abundance of counselors and teachers who will help one another.

But the intention of a prophetic voice of any kind is to draw us to God where God will lead us, where the Holy Spirit will guide us in our life. Even when God sent Nathan to David, it wasn't to tell him how he was supposed to conduct his work as a king, or where he was supposed to go next, etc. That prophet was brought to him to bring conviction, to disclose unrighteousness, so that his relationship with God would be made right, and then God would be his guide, as He would be for all who would hold to a priesthood of believers.

I want to share another little letter that was sent to me that really drives home again how important it is to realize we can have that freedom in Christ. Dear Dr. Anderson, I will always remember the day I came to you for counsel and prayer. Ever since that day, I have felt such freedom.

There are no more voices or feelings of heaviness in my brain. I'm even enjoying a physical sense of release. Satan has returned many times, trying to clobber me with those old thoughts, but his hold on me has been broken.

I'll never forget what you told me. You said that those negative thoughts about God and myself were lies that Satan planted in my mind. You said I have the power, through Jesus Christ, to rebuke Satan and get rid of the evil thoughts.

It has taken me a while to really believe that with all my heart, but lately I've decided to fight back, and it works. It's been wonderful to deal with my problems with a clear head. Thank you for helping me and so many others find peace and learn to trust, love, and believe in the Lord.

See, I'm convinced that every church in America can help somebody like that. I'm not the deliverer. I'm certainly not the Messiah.

He's already come, and this is not based on any sense of giftedness or special indulgence that God has given me. We are all children of God. We have this danger.

We can't lose control if we surrender our will wrongly. Before we look at what God's answer for this is and how we help people find their freedom in Christ, let me share one more story with you that was shared with me. Dear Neil, I have been set free.

Praise the Lord. Yesterday, for the first time in years, the voices stopped. I could hear the silence.

When we sang, I could hear myself sing. For the first 14 years of my life, I lived with an oppressive, abusive mother who never said, I love you, or put her arms around me when I cried. I received no affection, no kind words, no affirmation, no sense of who I was, only physical and emotional abuse.

At 15, I was subjected to three weeks of air-hard seminar training, EST, which really screwed up my mind. The year which followed was pure hell. My mother threw me out, so I went to live with another family.

Eventually, they also threw me out. Three years later, I found Christ. My decision to trust Christ was largely based on my fear of Satan and the power of evil I had experienced in my life.

Even though I knew Satan had lost his ownership of me, I was unaware of how vulnerable I still was to his deception and control. For the first two years of my Christian life, I was in bondage to a sin I didn't even know was a sin. Once I realized my sin, confessed it to God, and received forgiveness, I thought I was finally free of Satan's attempts to control me.

I didn't realize that the battle had only begun. I suffered from unexplainable rashes, hives, and welts all over my body. I lost my joy and closeness to the Lord.

I could no longer sing or quote scripture. I turned to food as my comfort and security. The demons attacked my sense of right and wrong, and I became involved in immorality and my search for identity and love.

But that all ended yesterday when I renounced Satan's control in my life. I have found the freedom and protection which comes from knowing I am loved. I am not on a high.

I am writing with a clear mind, a clean spirit, and a calm hand. Even my previous bondage to food seems suddenly foreign to me. I never realized that a Christian could be so vulnerable to Satan's control.

I was deceived, but now I am free. Thank you. Thank you, Jesus.

A lot of Christians really react to the possibility of the fact that a Christian can lose control like that. Well, if you believe a lie, that will happen. You see, our relationship with God is secure.

We are in Christ. He will never leave us nor forsake us. But the protection that He has provided for us is really dependent upon our participation.

We are told to put on the armor of God. What if you don't? We are told to take every thought captive through the obedience of Christ. What if you don't? We are told to make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lust.

What if you do? We are told to resist the devil. Again, what if you don't? You see, it requires an act of participation on our part. There is a sobering passage in Luke 22, verse 31, when the Lord comes and says, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat.

But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. And Peter responded, and he said to him, Lord, with you I am ready to go to both prison and to death.

And he said, I say to you, Peter, the cock will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know me. Now, what right does Satan have to demand to sift him like wheat? By the way, that was the heart of Peter. It was his intention that he would stick with Jesus to the end.

But he did exactly what the Lord said. He went out and denied him three times. Well, if you look at the context, you'll find out what the problem was.

They were all arguing amongst themselves who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom of God. Pride is a killer. It was a killer then, and it's a killer today because God is opposed to the proud.

Well, how do we help people find their freedom in Christ? And oftentimes, we as Christians say, well, if this is true, how come there's not some statements in the epistles that would tell us how to cast a demon out of somebody? And indeed, it's a good question because there are no passages like that. I struggled with this several years ago because I had had some direct encounters with things that were demonic, and it really bothered me. I realized, God, there must be a better way than this.

How do we deal with these kind of people? I had a gal in my office jump across a desk, grab a pencil, and rake it across her wrist. And I realized, Lord, you've got to have a better answer than what I have right now. And so I started searching for that.

I started a class at Telma School of Theology where I taught as a prof for about 10 years and saw something rather phenomenal happen. It grew from a THM elective of 15 students the first year, then 23, then 35, then 65, then 150, then 250. All of those years, I was gaining an understanding of what God had to say, much less a greater appreciation for the reality of the spiritual world that we're living in, and our own spiritual identity, and the importance of what it means to walk by the Spirit.

So where are the instructions in the epistles? Well, it takes a perceptual change that we have to understand. Prior to the cross, Satan was not a defeated foe. Therefore, it would take some specially endowed authority agent to bring about that kind of an effect and change.

And that's why you will read in Luke 9, verse 1, Behold, I have given you authority and power over the evil one. And then when the 70 came back, Lord, even the demons are subject to that. But after the cross, you don't see that.

And you wonder, why not? Because it's no longer the outside agent's responsibility. It's the individual's responsibility. You see, I can't put on the armor of God for you.

I cannot take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ for you. I can't forgive for you. I can't confess for you.

I can't renounce for you. I really can't do anything for you. But I can help you.

Now you have a very, very definitive passage right in the pastoral epistles. 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verses 24 through 26. Listen.

And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wrong, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance, leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. But you see, that's not really a power model. It's not really a confrontational model.

It's a kind, compassionate, able to teach model. The classic model that I had attempted to follow years ago was pretty much like this. Call in the exorcist, or the pastor, or the missionary, or the counselor.

He will call up the demon, get his name and rank, and then cast it out. But if you look at that picture, who's the deliverer? Well, I guess it would be the pastor or the counselor. Where are they getting their information from? Demons.

Why would you believe them? We are clearly told in John, chapter 3, that they are all liars, and they speak from their own nature, which is to lie. I think there's a whole different picture that's given to us in the instructions to the church. I think the deliverer is Christ, and he has already come, and I think what we ought to do is to get our information from the Holy Spirit.

He is the Spirit of Truth, and he will lead us into all truth. The key to this whole thing is to help that individual assume their responsibility. Look at James 4, 7. Submit to God, resist the devil.

You try to resist the devil without first submitting to God, you're going to have a dog fight. That's the classic error of many deliverance ministries. On the other hand, you can submit to God, not resist the devil, and stay in bondage.

The tragedy of our day is that the vast majority of recovery ministries aren't doing either one. Look again at that picture there. Sin in our life is a little bit like garbage, and garbage attracts flies.

The tendency is to try to get rid of the flies, and the answer is no. Get rid of the garbage. Because if you get rid of the garbage, the flies will have no right to be there, and they'll just lose interest and go someplace else.

What we've got to do is to help our individuals assume their responsibility in a loving way, be the Lord's bond servant, correct them if they're in opposition, able to teach, patient with wrong. It takes a lot of patience to help these kind of people. But help them assume their responsibility.

And when they do that, they're submitting to God. It's really kind of a piece of cake to resist the evil one. What we've done to facilitate this process, and it's really being used all over the world, is to develop a procedure called Steps to Freedom in Christ.

And what we're really doing there is to help this person assume that responsibility. And we just assist. We want to be the Lord's bond servant, the one who comes alongside, trusting in God, and help them resolve their issues.

As I tried to develop this years ago, I realized that the answer was Christ in us, the hope of glory. What I had to do was to help this person make that connection with God, get the wonderful counselor involved in the process, so he was the one that was doing it, because I can't set anybody free. Only God himself can do that.

So what we've done is to develop basically seven issues that we help people look at and understand something. The Steps to Freedom don't set you free. Who sets you free is Christ.

What is going to set you free is your personal response to God. And so we want to look at seven issues. One is the counterfeit versus the real.

In what way have I involved myself in false religion, false prophets, false teachers? I need to renounce that and to confess my confidence and trust in God. Secondly, we want to try to expose as best we can the deception versus the truth. In what way have I believed a lie? How have I deceived myself? In what way have I attempted as a Christian to defend myself as opposed to trusting in Christ as my personal defense for my life? And then we have them read through a doctrinal affirmation.

It's just a public declaration of this is what I believe, I choose to believe. Our third step is to help them work through the issues of bitterness versus forgiveness. It is our experience that in all the people that we've helped over the years, the number one access that Satan has to the church today is the Christian's unwillingness to forgive.

Why is this so important? It's the cross. We're to forgive as Christ has forgiven us. Jesus said, you forgive from your heart because he himself may turn us over to the torturers or to the tormentors.

Paul warns us in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 10 and 11, I urge you to forgive for we are not ignorant of Satan's schemes. You forgive people for your sake. It's between you and God.

You forgive because that's your ticket to free yourself from your past. If you don't, the past or person or events will continue to have a hold or an effect upon your life. So you bring that before the Lord and you work through the issues that are keeping you in bondage.

Rebellion versus submission. Well, rebellion is like the sin of divination. If you've got a rebellious problem, you may have the worst problem in the world.

And to renounce that, ask God's forgiveness that you've ever rebelled against his established authority and get under his protection and submit yourself to God and let him be your protection. Pride versus humility. We said earlier pride is a killer.

It really is. Humble yourself before the almighty hand of God. There are just several issues that we encourage people to work through there.

Let me suggest some. Do you have a stronger desire to do your own will than God's will? Are you more dependent upon your own strength and resources than you are upon God's strength and resources? Do you sometimes believe that your ideas and opinions are better than others or heaven forbid, better than God's? Are you more concerned about controlling others than developing self-control? Do you sometimes consider yourself more important than others? Do you have a tendency to think that you have no needs? We all have needs. And only God can meet those needs in our life.

Do you find it difficult to admit that you were wrong? Do you have a tendency to be more of a people pleaser than a God pleaser? Are you overly concerned about getting the credit that you deserve? Are you driven to obtain recognition that comes from degrees, titles, positions rather than finding your worth and your identity in Christ? Do you often think you are more humble than others? That's subtle, but it's possible. And there are other ways that we may allow pride to slip in and to destroy our sense of dependency upon God. Bondage versus freedom.

We find a lot of people are in bondage. The most common one is sexual bondage. But there are eating disorders and alcoholism, etc.

The answer is to get out of that by choosing the truth. Recognize the lie. Renounce those uses of your body that have been offensive, that have allowed sin to reign in your mortal body.

And the last step is to really declare your position in Christ. There are intergenerational problems. There are family problems, corporate problems that have been passed on from one generation to another.

You don't have to be a part of that. But you need to do something about it. You need to renounce that stuff that was in your past or in your family.

Declare your position in Christ. Commit yourself to Him. Those are the steps that we help people walk through to find their freedom in Christ.

And once they're established firmly in Christ, resisting the devil, they can find their freedom in Christ. We want to share with you that there is hope. There is an answer.

There is freedom. Does Christ want you free? Well, Galatians 5:1 says, it was for freedom that Christ set you free. Don't return again to the yoke of slavery.

Find your identity in Christ. Find your freedom that He purchased for you on the cross. Become the person God has called you to be.

And by the grace of God, you will bear fruit. And in your bearing fruit, you will bring honor and glory to your heavenly Father who loves you. God bless you as you take this walk with Him.

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