



BEAUTIFUL TRUTH

Lesson 3

The Truth of our Freedom from Sin in Christ

Introduction & Prayer

How do the world and the sinful flesh in us define “freedom”? What is the tragic irony in the freedom sin promises?

- Sin blinds (creates the illusion of freedom, goodness, etc.) and binds (holds captive in slavery).

Lesson Objectives:

- Participants understand more deeply how sin blinds and binds.
- Participants deeply value the gospel of Christ as true freedom from sin.
- Participants contrast this worldview with contemporary ideas about the human condition.
- Participants are equipped to engage difficult questions/concerns with the freeing truth of Christ.

To Start Out

The ideal of freedom is woven throughout the history and culture of the United States, from its founding to the civil rights movement to the sensibilities of our modern day. And while political and ideological divides mean different groups have different concerns and agendas when it comes to the pursuit of freedom, there’s a common thread woven throughout most, if not all the varying perspectives: self-determination and independence. Such emancipation from oppressive outside control and the opportunity to follow one’s own path in life is a valued and cherished right in America and free nations around the world.

Yet that ideal of freedom assumes that individuals are, in themselves, *free*. That obstacles to personal freedom come from the outside only. But is that true? Consider *cognitive bias*, or the errors in the way people reason due to their subjective perception of reality.¹ How does the existence of cognitive bias in every human being argue against the idea that we are naturally free to pursue what we want?

¹ “Cognitive Bias,” *Britannica*, 10 March 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/science/cognitive-bias>.

THE DECEPTION OF SLAVERY

1. Cognitive biases are just one example of how we've been affected by the fall into sin. The truth is, we're not only impaired and constrained in our ability to understand and make decisions; this same condition applies to our very motivations, desires, and passions. While it seems we are free to do what we want and want what we want, in reality our very impulses are deceptive. How does scripture teach us that such deception is the very nature of sin?

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

2. Simply put, God's word reveals how sin blinds people to its true nature and outcome. Since our first parents listened to Satan's lie, sin has deceived generation after generation, all the way to today. What are some specific ways that the deceit of sin show itself in our culture, place and time in history?
3. The deceit of sin runs deep. Not only does it fail to deliver promised freedom, it actually brings slavery to a cruel master. Jesus made this clear when he said, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:34). How do the following Scriptures show us what a terrible master sin is?

Ephesians 2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

John 8:44 "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him."

4. How does honest self-reflection prepare us to be effective stewards of the truth in our own lives and sharing the truth with others?

Romans 7:11, 14-15, 19, 24-25a Sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. ...We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ...What I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to

do—this I keep on doing. ...What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?
Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

5. 1 John 5:19 says, “The whole world is under the control of the evil one.” Why might sin’s nature as an internal and external *deceptive force* be important in communicating the truth to our modern culture that prizes autonomy?

THE TRUTH THAT FREES

6. Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). For each of the following passages consider 1) what each reveals about sin’s slavery; and 2) what truly good gifts God gives through Christ.

Luke 4:18-19 “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.”

Acts 26:17-18 “I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

7. The good news of Christ’s freedom from sin’s deceptive slavery is for all—a truly beautiful truth. But so is what that means for the individual, personally. The message of the gospel is beautifully *inclusive*, encompassing each person and his or her experience of sin’s deception. Consider the following two groups of passages; how does each speak to the very personal freedom Christ brings?

Psalms 51:7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Galatians 2:20 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.

Galatians 5:24-25 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:22-24 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

ENGAGING OUR CULTURE WITH FREEING TRUTH

8. The church must engage people with God's where and as they really are with all their sins and doubts. How should we react to questions like, "Why do we believe this?" or "What's wrong with _____?"
9. Why must we carefully distinguish between doubts/questions and denial of faith?
10. What is the likely outcome if a person's doubts/questions are simply shut down instead of thoughtfully answered?
11. Scott Keith from *The Thinking Fellows* podcast has observed the following regarding the teaching of Christian truth within the home: "We treat our children like children, and not like people that are smaller than us and live in our houses and that we're supposed to interact with like they're people. Other people you wouldn't expect just to follow your lead because you're there... for their entire lives. You would expect to have to talk to them, convince them, bring them along with you through the process, study with them, read with them, worship with them." Put another way, Keith is contrasting a "this is true because I said it is" approach to passing on the faith with "let me show you why I'm convinced of the truth, and how you can be too."²
 - Do Keith's observations resonate with you? If so, how?
 - What are some implications of Keith's perspective regarding the faith of parents (or other adults) that seek to pass on the truth to the next generation?

² Caleb Keith, Scott Keith, Adam Francisco, Bruce Hilman, hosts, "How Do You Establish Christian Values?" *The Thinking Fellows* (podcast), 5 February 2024.

12. Christopher Esget highlights how sin makes false promises of satisfaction, “Those without the knowledge of God seek a paradise of their own making, only to see it become a prison.”³ Later he adds: “Autonomy, the dream of self-rule, ended up being the nightmare of anarchy (lawlessness, *anomia*). Since God’s Law is good, and His Word is life, to follow the way of autonomy/*anomia* disconnects the person from the source of life; he finds only death.”⁴ That is, there may be times where sin’s deceptive nature becomes clear, at least in-part, for those who don’t know Christ. What insight does this provide in your own efforts to steward the truth among those who don’t yet know Jesus?

NEXT WEEK: THE TRUTH OF OUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST

³ Esget, 41.

⁴ Esget, 75-76.