

Setting the Captives Free

By Bill Scheidler

When Jesus inaugurated His ministry, He read His mission statement from Isaiah 61:1-2 (See also Luke 4:18-19). You can't read this passage without being impressed by the fact that Jesus came to bring freedom to the captives. Jesus came to bring good news. The Good News is that no matter what may trouble, bind or restrict you, Jesus can set you free.

Jesus came for the brokenhearted (Is. 61:1). Jesus used a word here that literally means "broken into pieces". It can be translated "shattered, trampled upon, crushed and bruised."

Many people's lives are fragmented, shattered and broken by the effects of sin and Satanic harassment. Jesus came to "bind up" (literally "wrap up") the broken hearted. He came to bandage those hurting areas of our lives and wrap His arms of love around us bringing us to a place where we will not be the abused or oppressed, but we will, in fact, become the abuser and the oppressor. Jesus wants to get us to the place of freedom where instead of being the object of Satan's bruising we will administer abuse to Satan as he is bruised (same Greek word) under the feet of the Church (Rom. 16:20).

Jesus came for the captives (Is. 61:1). A captive is someone who is brought under the control and domination of another. The word here literally means "to subjugate, bring under control or to take captive one's mind." Before coming to Christ, sin had dominion over us (Rom. 6:6, 9, 14). Sin, Satan and the lusts or passions of the flesh literally controlled us and all of our thought patterns. We were in fact the slaves of sin.

Jesus came to give us power over Satan and sin and to give us the ability to bring our thought life under the subjection of Christ (II Cor. 10:5). In Christ's death, burial and resurrection He made it possible for us to be free when He led captivity captive (Eph. 4:8).

In Luke 4:18 it indicates that Jesus came to preach "deliverance" (literally, remission of sins) to the captives. There is nothing that captivates us and ties us to the past more than lacking a sense of forgiveness. In Christ we have been freed from the restraints of past sins, God Himself has declared us holy and whom the Son sets free is free indeed!

Jesus came for those in bondage and spiritual prison houses (Is. 61:1). He came to set at liberty the "oppressed". This word "oppressed" is used only once in the New Testament and literally means those who are "broken by calamity". The negative circumstances of life have a tendency to beat us down and rob us of life. Jesus came that we might have life and that we might have it abundantly (John 10:10). Jesus was lifted up on the cross so that we could be lifted up and out of poverty, depression and despair.

Jesus set us at liberty. The word liberty here also is tied to the concept of forgiveness. Forgiveness from God and forgiveness toward others seems to be the message that the oppressed need to hear. Why? Because we cannot be totally free from the negative circumstances of the past until we forgive those who were responsible for those negative circumstances. Those who refuse to forgive others as they have been forgiven live in a spiritual prison house (Mt. 18:21-35).

Jesus came for the grieving and downcast (Is. 61:2). While the Luke passage does not include this phrase, Isaiah tells us that the Messiah will comfort or console all

who mourn and He will give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. What a tremendous deal!

Jesus takes the broken areas of our lives, He takes the regrets of the past, He takes all of the mistakes, the messes, the sorrows and replaces them with that which is beautiful. He was a Man of Sorrows so that we could be full of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Jesus came to announce our year of Jubilee (Luke 4:19). For the Israelite, the acceptable year of the Lord or the year of the Lord's favor was a much anticipated and glorious time. The year of Jubilee only came around once every 50 years, but it meant freedom and restoration to the people of God. It was a time when all debts against them were canceled, their slavery was lifted and they could return to the original inheritance that had been lost by them and/or their predecessors.

Jesus proclaimed that Jubilee is here. It is now! It can be entered into by anyone who receives His message. You can be free from your debts. Your slavery can come to an end. You can be restored to the inheritance promised to your spiritual fathers. All that is "in Christ" is yours. This is very Good News!

Jesus is our physician, comforter, deliverer, savior, redeemer, rescuer, emancipator, liberator, defender, protector, guardian, champion, peace, preserver, restorer, and sanctifier. He has the answer to every one of man's needs. He came to set us free and He wants us to live a perpetual life of freedom (Gal 5:1).

How do we insure that we are walking in that freedom? How can we appropriate all that Christ has done for us? How can the believer get free and stay free from the things that seek to ensnare us?

Christ has provided all that we need to succeed. Once we have encountered Christ, the Bible puts some responsibility on us to wrestle, to fight and to overcome with the tools that we have been given. Steps to freedom include the following:

1. **Repentance.** Repentance involves giving up all controversy with God on each and every point. It includes renouncing past works of darkness, turning away from sinful behavior patterns and turning to God (Rom. 13:12).
2. **Receiving God's Forgiveness.** This involves accepting the fact that when Christ died He died for your sins; He paid the price in your place. On the basis of that fact and your trust in that fact, God extends to you a full pardon. You need to reach out and take it and accept your brand new start (II Cor. 5:20).
3. **Confessing Christ's Lordship/Obedience.** In Christ, sin and Satan are no longer your masters. However, self cannot be your master either. You have been bought with a price and belong to God. This step involves consciously turning the reins of your life over to God and becoming His slave or a slave of righteousness (Rom. 6:13).
4. **Water Baptism.** In water baptism God gives special grace to assist in breaking the power of sin in a believer's life (Rom. 6:3-4). In baptism you die to sin, you identify with Christ in His burial and you rise with Him to walk in newness of life.
5. **Receive the Holy Spirit.** The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the empowerment that the believer needs to be a witness for Christ. In addition, at this time you receive the manifestation of speaking with other tongues which is one way believers can build themselves up in the faith (Jude 20).
6. **Changing Your Fellowship.** In the past you have spent most of your time with people who were living lives that are not consistent with the Christ-life. While you always want to be open to all people for the purpose of witness and testimony, you want to reserve your fellowship life for those that are going the same direction as you (II Cor. 6:17).

7. **Feeding on the Word.** The Bible is the Word of God and is the sword with which the believer fights against the “wiles of the devil”. Knowing the word and filling your mind with the word helps the believer to renew their mind (Eph. 4:23), to put on the mind of Christ and to resist the devil’s deception.
8. **Praying Daily.** Prayer is communication with God. A consistent prayer life is vital if we are going to tap into all of the resources that God has placed into our hands. This involves praying in the Spirit and praying with our understanding. Prayer is the pipeline of the Holy Spirit into our lives.
9. **Putting on the Armor of God.** God has given us armor to protect us from the attacks of the enemy (Eph. 6:11). These pieces of armor include righteousness, truth, the Gospel of peace, salvation and faith. Every believer must take active steps to ensure that his armor is in place or the believer is not guaranteed protection.
10. **Resisting the Devil.** The devil wants to ensnare you once again. He will seek to bring you back into bondage. Every believer must fight the fight of faith and stand their ground against the enemy (Jam. 4:8; I Pet. 5:9). In Christ we have the power to overcome the flesh and the devil. We must be willing to exercise our faith and follow New Testament admonitions.

Hebrews 2:14-15

*“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, **that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**”*