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| **Freedom From Addiction**  ***by Doug Batchelor*** |  |
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| Before the Civil War, a Quaker walking past a slave auction saw one of his neighbors bidding for a pretty slave girl. He knew this man to be cruel and abusive, and he knew the terrible life the girl would live if this man were to become her owner. Moved to compassion, the Quaker stepped over to the auction area and began to bid for her. The bidding went up and up, and, eventually, he outbid the abusive slave owner. When he had completed the transaction with the sellers, the Quaker walked over to the girl, handed her the bill of sale, and said, “You are free to go.” He had purchased her freedom.  Jesus also was involved in purchasing freedom. After His baptism, He returned to His hometown and on the Sabbath attended the synagogue. Invited to speak, He opened the Bible and read, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me. . . . He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners” (Luke 4:18).  Jesus wasn’t talking about literally liberating people from jail. He said that “everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (John 8:34). And Solomon said that “the cords of [the wicked man’s] sin hold him fast” (Proverbs 5:22). We are all prisoners of sin. prisoners of sin.  **Prisoner of sin**  What does it mean to be a prisoner of sin? *Addiction* is a more modern word that means essentially the same thing. You’ve probably known an alcoholic who promised himself, his family, and even God that he wouldn’t take another drink; but a day or a week later, he was back drinking again. That’s slavery.  People can become addicted to all kinds of things: gambling, food, pornography, sex, and drugs, to name a few. Some people today even get addicted to computers and the Internet.  But Jesus is the Great Liberator from sin and addiction. Paul said, “Sin [addiction] shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14).  Some people think Paul meant that we don’t have to *keep* the law. It’s true that Jesus set us free from the curse of the law. When we’re saved, we’re no longer under the law’s death penalty. But being liberated Christians doesn’t mean we’re free to disobey God. That would be like a prisoner being set free from prison so he could go back to his life of crime! Jesus came to save us *from* our sins, not *in* our sins. Paul said, “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature” (Galatians 5:13).  God’s law actually provides freedom. James called God’s law “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25, KJV). And David said, “I will always obey your law. . . . I will walk about in freedom” (Psalm 119:44, 45).  The idea that God’s law brings freedom seems strange to some people. They think the law enslaves us. And it does enslave those who violate it. But the law that sends the thief to jail is the same law that protects your property and mine. The law that puts the murderer behind bars is the same law that makes it safe for you and me to walk down the street, day or night.  **Power to obey**  In other words, the law is liberating to those who obey it. The problem, of course, is that you and I don’t have the power to obey God’s law. That’s why we’re slaves to our sins. Ask any addict. He can’t say No to the object of his addiction. He’s trapped. He’s like a man who falls into a pit and breaks one arm and both legs. He’s a prisoner in that pit until someone comes down into the pit with him and helps him out.  Fortunately, God has provided you and me with a way of escape from the pit of sin into which we have sunk. God gives us the power to obey His laws. Christians call this power “conversion,” or “the new birth.” Jesus said that “no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). The Holy Spirit breaks the power of sin over our lives and gives us the power to obey God’s laws.  The key question is this: How can you and I get God’s power at the moment temptation strikes, when we want nothing more than to do what we know is wrong?  The answer is simple: ask for it. In the midst of our great desire to do what we know we shouldn’t, we can say a simple prayer like this: “God, I’m powerless over this temptation. Please come into my life and give me the power to say No.”  **What to expect**  God won’t force you to stop doing what’s wrong when you say this prayer. Rather, He will give you the mental and emotional strength to refuse to act on the temptation. There is no addiction that’s too strong for God’s power to overcome. Does this mean you’ll never yield again? That may happen, like smokers who throw their cigarettes away and never want another one. But most smokers struggle for several weeks or months, perhaps even years, before they finally gain the victory over tobacco.  You, too, may have to struggle; sometimes gaining the victory, sometimes not. But don’t give up. Keep on asking for God’s power in your life. As you do this, you’ll grow in your ability to overcome the temptation, and eventually you’ll come to the place that it seldom troubles you.  **The price God paid**  It’s important to understand that victory over addiction didn’t come cheap. God paid a heavy price to deliver us from our slavery to sin.  There’s a story about some criminals who kidnapped the son of a millionaire in South America. To prove to the father how serious they were, the abductors cut off the son’s ear and sent it to him. That father liquidated every asset he had so he could pay off the kidnappers and get his son back.  Was the price the father paid worth it? He thought so, because he loved his son that much. God completely liquidated Heaven’s bank account when He sent His Son to die so that you and I could be set free from our sins and addictions. Was it worth the price? He thought so, because He loves us that much!  **Your response**  Another story that comes out of the slave trade before the Civil War is of a kindly plantation owner in the southern part of the United States who bought a big, burly slave and took him to his home. On the way, the slave kept muttering, “I won’t work for you. I won’t work for you!” The slave owner said nothing, but when he got home he handed the man his papers and said, “You’re free to go.” When the slave realized that he truly was free, he fell at the plantation owner’s feet and said, “Sir, I’ll work for you the rest of my life!”  That’s how it is with you and me and Jesus. When we realize that He truly has set us free from our sins and addictions and that with His help victory really *is* possible, we’ll *want* to obey His laws the rest of our lives.  I encourage you to invite God into your life today. Whatever the temptation that has kept you in slavery to sin and addiction, ask Him to give you the power to say No. I can assure you that He will. | |