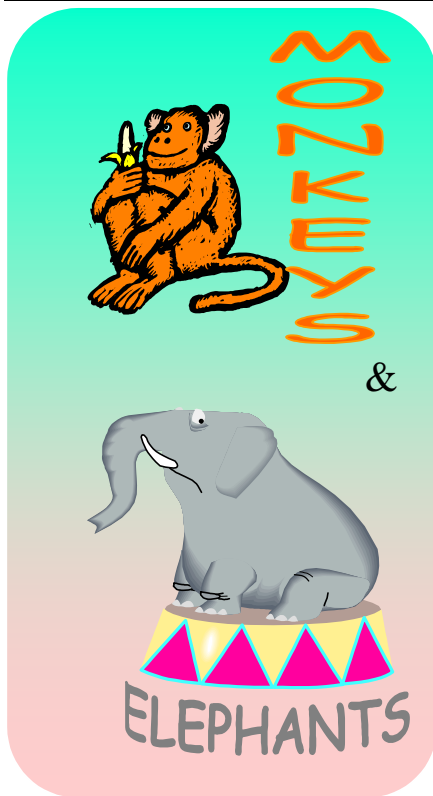


SET FREE!

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After being taught for years that we need to be in charge of maintaining our righteous state with God through continuous soul searching and pleading for forgiveness, it is very hard for some people to come to learn to walk the grace walk.

Some folks get very upset with me when I tell them that Jesus has done **all** that needs to be done for our eternal salvation and that we have no part in it. **The Work was finished at Calvary!**

All that we can do is, **by faith believe and accept that fact.** That's what justification by faith is. We are and remain justified before God simply by believing that Christ took all of our sins upon Himself and that there is nothing we can do to add to that.

For years we have heard and in turn quote back such phrases as: "Ask God to forgive you of your sins and He will come into your heart and save you."

You will not find that statement anywhere in the New Covenant. What you will hear is what was said between Paul and the Philipian jailer.

Acts 16:30-31 (Contemporary English Version) ³⁰After he had led them out of the jail, he asked, "What must I do to be saved?" ³¹They replied, "**Have faith in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved! This is also true for everyone who lives in your home.**"

It's all about faith. No works involved. If we could keep in right standing through our actions then we don't need the blood of Jesus – we can do it all on our own!

Remaining in a state of righteousness is also a matter of faith. It's how we live. "The just shall live by faith." Not by works of contrition.

Breaking free of these old teachings that involve our daily maintenance by seeking forgiveness, is hard for some folks to do.

Years ago, in the circus, they had a conditioning thing they did with elephants. When the elephant was very young they would chain one of its hind legs to a post in the ground. The chain was about three feet long so the elephant became conditioned to living and moving within that diameter.

After a few years they would take away that chain but the elephant by then was so conditioned to staying in that small circle he would never even dream of just walking away.

Another story is about hunting monkeys in the Congo. There the monkey is eaten as a part of their diet. Now don't get so judgmental about that – we eat what we have around us too – rabbits, chickens, bulls and sheep.

The hunters relied on the stubbornness of the monkey to use it against him. They would build a cage – not to put the monkey in, but to put a stick that looked a lot like a banana. The cage had bars on it that were large enough for the monkey to reach in and grab the stick but not large enough to get it out.

The monkey was so determined not to let go of what he believed was true that he would not let go of it for anything. The hunters then would come along and beat the monkey on the head all the while the monkey was tenaciously hanging onto that stick.

Jesus said, **John 8:32** *Then you will experience for yourselves the truth, and the truth will free you.*"

The truth is that the work of Calvary is complete. Sin has been dealt with – forever!

The elephant, if he would just realize it, is actually **set free**. The only thing that holds

him is **what he believes** – not what actually exists.

The monkey too could be free if he would just let go of his wrong thinking.

We all act and live according to what our minds believe to be true. Try watching a scary movie in the dark at home alone one night. You know that you are sitting on your couch safe in your living room, but your mind is being fed information that is telling it there is something to fear and will in turn cause your body to respond in fear. Your mind is telling you that there is a possibility of harm coming to you and yet you are in a safe and secure place. How strange!

We are not born again, nor do we retain our right standing with God through what we do or don't do, but rather by **what we believe**.

When we hear the truth of the liberty that is ours in Christ Jesus we have a choice to believe it or to reject it.

The elephant is free but he keeps walking around in that little circle refusing to believe it.

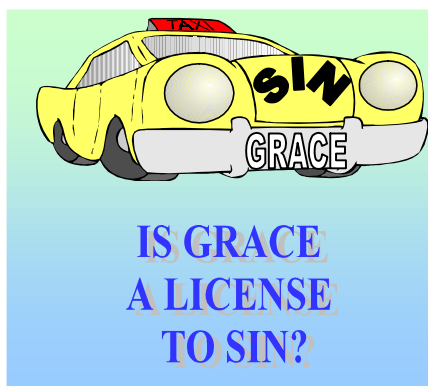
The monkey is held captive by error because he refuses to believe that that stick is not a banana.

Sin has been dealt with once and for all it, has no more claim on your life– do you believe that?

Colossians 2:13-14 ¹³When you were stuck in your old sin-dead life, you were incapable of responding to God. **God brought you alive--right along with Christ! Think of it! All sins forgiven,** ¹⁴the slate wiped clean, that old arrest warrant canceled and nailed to Christ's Cross.

Quit trying to get free from sin. Sin has all been forgiven once and for all. Stop going to God everyday trying to be forgiven. You are forgiven - both now and forever!

Let's all learn from the elephant and the monkey and let go of that old thinking that has kept us bound when all the time we are set free!



Over the years as I have taught on the grace of God and the freedom that is ours "in Christ Jesus", I've often had people react to that teaching with this statement: **"But isn't that just giving people a license to sin?"**

I've also noticed that most people don't need a license - they just do it!

Paul anticipated that question. **Romans 6:1-3; 15-17** ¹So what do we do? Keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving? ²I should hope not! If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? ³Or didn't you realize we packed up and left there for good? That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, **we entered into the new country of grace--a new life in a new land!** ¹⁵So, since we're out from under the old tyranny, does that mean we can live any old way we want? **Since we're free in the freedom of God, can we do**

anything that comes to mind? ¹⁶**Hardly.** You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and **the freedom never quits.** All your lives you've let sin tell you what to do. ¹⁷But thank God you've started listening to a new master, ¹⁸**one whose commands set you free to live openly in his freedom!**

There is an account of David and Mephibosheth recorded in **2 Samuel 4.** Mephibosheth was the grandson of King Saul. I won't tell the whole story here, but in the end David invited this lame boy to speak with him and this is what David told him: **Vs. 7** ⁷"Don't be frightened," said David. "I'd like to do something special for you in memory of your father Jonathan. To begin with, I'm returning to you all the properties of your grandfather Saul. Furthermore, from now on **you'll take all your meals at my table.**"

What if Mephibosheth had replied to David, "Thank you, but I was wondering if it would be okay for me to go back to my home in the desert and just get by on scraps of food?"

That would seem very silly, wouldn't it?

Here is another way of putting that story.

Let's say that you owned a great cafeteria. One day you heard this commotion out in the alley behind and you went out and saw this man fighting with the cats and dogs for some scraps of food from the dumpster.

You decided to take compassion on this frail looking mess of a man and you said to him; “from today on I want you to be my guest in this cafeteria – every day I want you to eat all of your meals here.”

The man might say to you: “but I can’t afford it, I have no money.” To which you reply: “You are my guest, you will never have to pay – it’s on me.”

The man walks into the cafeteria and sees more food than he’s ever seen in his life. He asks, “Can I eat anything and all that I want?” “Yes,” you respond, “anything and all that you want, you have the freedom of this place”.

The man at first is stunned by your generosity. Then he asks you this very strange question. “**Can I still go out to the dumpster and eat some garbage sometimes?**”

When people say to me, “now that I’m under grace and all my sins past, present and future are forgiven, can I still go out and sin all I want to?” That’s like saying, “can I go back to the alley and eat garbage?”

The fact is, you can go out and sin again if you really want to, but why would you want to?

So much teaching is centred on “not sinning”. It’s like yelling out to that poor man in the dumpster, “Stay out of the garbage! Do you hear me? Don’t eat garbage! You stay out of there!” Well, when you are truly hungry you will eat anything – even garbage. Trying to get people to live holy lives by teaching them Old Testament condemnation instead of New Testament justification, will never work.

When we begin to truly enjoy the good food we will never want to go back to

garbage. Sin will lose its appeal. Sin no longer is just a wrong thing to do – its just plain stupid!

We now have the life of Christ living in and through us each day. What an exciting adventure to be used by God to express His life and His love to the people around us.

Jesus said in **John 10:10** “.... I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.”

In the face of a “cafeteria of abundance”, why would one even ask the question, “Can I go out and eat garbage” or in other words, “**Does grace just give me a license to sin all I want to?**”

Paul answered that so well: “Since we’re free in the freedom of God, can we do anything that comes to mind? Hardly.”

SET FREE FROM COMMITMENT!

We are often challenged to be “**more committed.**” To be committed to our family, our marriage, our church, our work, our life as a Christian.

If we fail in any of these areas we are admonished to try and try and try again - to re-commit ourselves.

How many times in a church service have you been challenged to “come down to the front and re-commit yourself” to do, whatever is being talked about, better? And

down we all go, promising God that we will try to do better next time.

With all sincerity we get up, all weepy eyed, and stagger out the door determined to be more committed. Then a few weeks later we suddenly find ourselves down front again, pledging to be even more committed this time.

What a hopeless cycle! Like hamsters on a wheel, never arriving.

Am I reading your mail here?

When we decide that we are going to commit to something then it is **we** determining in our own strength to do something. Should we be successful we wind up getting the credit for being so strong in ourselves. It’s really a form of self-righteousness.

Romans 10:3 ³*For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish **their own righteousness**, have not submitted themselves unto **the righteousness of God.***

We can’t be righteous on our own merits we need to submit to God’s righteousness.

Let’s take marriage here for a moment. Fifty percent or more of marriages in North America fail and end in divorce. When we hear that statistic we often hear, “people are just not committed to each other anymore.”

The Scripture **doesn’t** teach us to be “committed” to each other in marriage. It doesn’t? Let’s look at what Paul wrote about it:

Ephesians 5:21-25 (KJV)
²¹**Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.** ²²**Wives, submit yourselves unto your own**

husbands, as unto the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body. ²⁴Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. ²⁵Husbands, **love** your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and **gave himself** for it;

Notice that the word “commitment” is not even mentioned here. The words are: **submit, love and gave.**

Verse 21 on it's own is really the whole key here: **“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”** If husbands and wives truly submitted to each other in love, the marriage would be strong.

I hear the term “they need to work on their marriage.” There is no “work” in submitting. There is in **trying** to be committed, but not in submitting. Submitting is total surrender of your own rights to the other person. In that submission there flows a total love, a giving of ones self.

This applies to all of our relationships with other people.

1 Peter 5:5 (KJV) *Likewise, ye younger, **submit** yourselves unto the elder. Yea, **all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.***

Hebrews 13:17 ¹⁷*Obey them that have the rule over you, and **submit** yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

Now about our relationship with Christ, did He ask us to be committed to Him?

James 4:7 ***Submit** yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

Our life is one of submission.

John 15:4-5 (KJV) ⁴*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

The branch is totally submitted to the tree for its life. The branch can't do anything on it's own. It can't produce fruit; it has to submit to the life of the tree.

A branch spends its time receiving life from that stalk. The life of the tree then flows out and produces the fruit. The branch is totally submitted to bearing the fruit. On it's own it can't even live. It is totally submitted to the life of the tree.

The word, “abide” means: to live in. As we “live in” Christ we are totally submitted to His life living and flowing through us. We then bear the fruit of the spirit. Not through trying to be committed to fruit productions, just submission.

Stop trying to be committed to living like a Christian. Instead, in total submission, let Christ live His life through you.

Living life set free from commitment – now there's a concept you don't often hear!



We may have prayed at some time for God to move that mountain (a problem) in our life. Sometimes that happens.

There are other times when we take our authority over it. Mark 11:23 *And nothing will be too much for you. This mountain, for instance: **Just say,** "Go jump in the lake"--no shuffling or shilly-shallying--and it's as good as done.*

I've seen many mountains move doing that!

Then one day there was a mountain and neither asking God to move it or me speaking to it seemed to get any results.

Then the Lord reminded me as to where I was sitting. Ephesians 2:6 (NKJV) *And raised us up together, and made us **sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.***

Instead of facing the mountain, I was looking down on it from my position “in Christ Jesus.”

When you see that the mountains are really under your feet, they just don't seem very imposing anymore!

Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.” Gal. 5:1 MSG

SET FREE

Is a complimentary ministry, prepared for you, by: Ray Sargent

All Scriptural passages used in this article, except where noted, are taken from The Message Bible.