

### A. NEW FREEDOM FROM OLD BONDAGES

- God says the Old Covenant is obsolete. However, many people born anew under the New Covenant still think and act as if they are under obligation to the Old: Heb 8:13 NLT--When God speaks of a “new” covenant, it means he has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.
- Much of Galatians is spent urging the church to recognize the outdated and erroneous mindsets keeping them from a new, free life (Old Wineskins): Gal 4:4-8 AMP--When [in God’s plan] the proper time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the [regulations of the] Law, so that He might redeem *and* liberate those who were under the Law, that we [who believe] might be adopted as sons [as God’s children with all rights as fully grown members of a family]. And because you [really] are [His] sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba! Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave (bond-servant), but a son; and if a son, then also an heir through [the gracious act of] God [through Christ]. But at that time, when you did not know [the true] God *and* were unacquainted with Him, you were slaves to those [pagan] things which by [their very] nature were not *and* could not be gods *at all*.
- Let be aware that there are still places where we are still believing and living like slaves. Instead let’s discover and enjoy the New Freedoms that are ours in Christ!
- Insights:

### B. BOUND TO THE LAW

- Although we understand that we are united to Christ by our faith, it is very common for the believer to rely on their efforts (works, law, etc.) to achieve spiritual growth.
- In effect, this keeps us tethered to the Law and the Old Covenant vs. being made free from the Law: Rom 7:6 NAS--But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.
- Human beings don’t like being weak and dependent. We much prefer to do our duty, roll up our sleeves, and get to work to accomplish things for ourselves.
- Though a good work ethic is desirable in our school and career lives, it is *not* helpful in our lives of faith! Our attempts to work for God use the flesh, our Old Nature.
- “This power of the religious flesh is one of the great marks of the Old Covenant religion; it misses the deep humility and spirituality of the true worship of God – a heart and life entirely dependent upon Him.” (Andrew Murray)
- We’ve been freed from keeping the rules and regulations of the Law so that we might have the Spirit bring forth good works and fruits for us: Rom 7:4 NLT--So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the One who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:  
*Do you find yourself gravitating toward a to-do-list of duties more than drawing near to the heart of Jesus?*

*Lord, show us why we would ever prefer rules to relationship:*

- Insights:

### C. BOUND TO SIN

- Even though we have heard and believe the Good News that Jesus has freed us from sin and death, we often revert back to old patterns of behaving. (Rom 7:21-25)
- The problem we encounter when we embark on our new lives in Christ is our well-trained flesh with its thoughts, desires, and habits that we've practiced for a lifetime.
- These are the Old Wineskins that cannot hold the New Wine that Jesus offers. That is why we must diligently and courageously identify and replace them.
- We may feel as if we are in bondage, but the truth is that this part of our inner being has been removed and replaced by our New Nature: Col 2:11 NLT-- When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure – the cutting away of your sinful nature
- New freedom is ours to enjoy only as we wholly rely upon the power of the Spirit that lives inside of us: Gal 5:16 AMP--Walk *and* live [habitually] in the [Holy] Spirit [responsive to *and* controlled *and* guided by the Spirit]; then you will certainly not gratify the cravings *and* desires of the flesh (of human nature without God).
- What a relief to know that Christ has freed us from the penalty and the power of sin!
- LISTENING EXERCISE:  
*Do you feel disqualified from boldly approaching God's throne of grace because you find yourself falling short every day?*

*Jesus died so that we may run into the Father's arms to receive His "yes" to our prayer for mercy. Do you regularly take advantage of this access?*

*Do you believe that God has a way forward (grace) for the sin habits that you have yet to overcome?*

*God wants you to know Him and all that He has in store for you. Will you take time at Jesus' feet this week to pray for His specific grace for the specific issues in your life?*

- Insights:

### D. BOUND TO LESSER THINGS

- In Christ, we are connected to Jesus with healthy bonds of relationship just like those seen between Him and the Father: Jn 17:21 NLT-- I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you.
- God designed us with the legitimate need of being in intimate relationship where we are seen, heard and understood. He alone can perfectly meet those deepest needs.
- If we *only* see the New Covenant as a means of salvation, we will continue to be inappropriately bound to the other people and things we think we need to be okay.

- God calls us to be healthily connected in our community, friendships and marriages. But if Christ is not our #1, these other bonds are not always healthy: Col 2:19 NLT-- They are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.
- Unhealthy relational bonds (where we look to lesser things to meet our deepest needs) are another type of Old Wineskin that we need to recognize and replace.
- They form when we give someone or something the power to define us or to determine our well-being. (Ex: I'm okay only if my people are okay.)
- Whenever we promote a person, organization, idea or thing above God's call for them in our lives, an unhealthy bond is present.
- We can spot these inappropriate bonds in our lives when we find ourselves:
  - Serving or pleasing this person or thing without consulting God
  - Feeling insecure or afraid when this bond is potentially threatened
  - Allowing this bond to come between us and our relationship with the Lord
  - Experiencing jealousy or anxiety when someone else gets the attention or affection that we desire
  - Becoming angry, depressed or hopeless when new distance affects the bond
- Only by trusting God to 1) provide for our deepest needs and 2) show us how to healthily relate to these lesser things will be truly free.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:  
*As you look back over the characteristics of inappropriate bonds, does anything or anyone come to mind where you may be caught up in unhealthy relating?*

*Are you willing to let the Lord guide you to make the necessary changes so that the bonds become healthy instead?*

- Song 4:12--A garden enclosed *Is my sister, my spouse*, A spring shut up, A fountain sealed.
- Insights:

#### E. PERSONAL APPLICATION

- ONE THING  
 The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:
  
- PROCESSING THE TRUTH

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- Set aside time this week to examine those people, places and things where you invest most of your time and energy. Ask Him to show you anything in the way you relate to them that indicates an inappropriate bond:
  
  - Prayerfully put each of these bonds before the Lord and entrust it into His care. Ask Him to give you wisdom on how to sever the unhealthy part of your connection and also how to move forward in new bonds of love and freedom. Keep a record of your processing:
  
  - Try adding this question to your devotional time on a regular basis: *“Lord, who do I need to forgive?”* Use these suggested steps to guide your prayer to forgive:
    - Lord, thank you for forgiving me completely and unconditionally.
    - In obedience to Your command to forgive others as You have forgiven me, I choose to forgive [name of person] for [list their specific words, attitudes, or actions that have been hurtful].
    - As I calculate what this person has cost me [name the costs and long term effects], I want to release them from anything I think they owe me.
    - Please forgive me for harboring [confess specific judgments, thoughts, emotions or other sinful responses] toward this person.
    - I choose to release him/her into Your hand. By faith, I receive the cleansing, healing and freedom that You have promised to those who forgive.
    - Fill me now, I pray, with your love and mercy as I move forward in this relationship.
  
  - Prayerfully consider which Old Wineskin to tackle and then work through it prayerfully:
    - Name It: Take time to consider how best to describe the mindset you’ve targeted
    - Identify Its Source: Let the Spirit take you to a time or repeated situation that contributed to the Old Wineskin being present in your life
    - Short Term Strategies: Practice abiding, prayer, praise, gratitude, and meditation. Try different strategies based on where you are on any given day.
    - Long Term Strategies: While your New Wineskins (mindsets) are being formed, seek God’s help in pursuing surrender, waiting on Him and greater faith and trust.