

3. Jesus Understood that Sinners Are Prisoners of Satan

If we are going to develop leaders who are becoming like their Savior, we have to help them learn to see people as Christ sees people. Sometimes, Christians get angry as they see the sins of those who are not Christians and will have nothing to do with them. In contrast, Jesus understood the condition of those who had not yet placed their trust in Him. He knew that they were prisoners in bondage and said that He had come to set people free from that bondage. In John 8:36, Jesus said, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

In Hebrews 2:14-15, we read, “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.” These verses tell us that every person that is born, is in bondage. The word that is translated “bondage” speaks of the condition of being a slave.

One day, Jesus told the Jews how they could become free. They showed, by their answer, that they did not even understand that they were in bondage. John 8:32-33 says, “‘And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’ They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How *can* you say, ‘You will be made free’?” The Jews were under the control of the Romans at that very moment. They had been under many other nations in the past. However, their answer shows that they still felt an inner sense of freedom.

In John 8:34, “Jesus answered them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.’” This verse, and the verses quoted above, from Hebrews, show that it is the devil who is holding each person as a slave. Although the Jews may not have felt they were slaves to any person, Christ made it very clear that they were slaves to sin and to the devil, who originally tempted Eve to sin.

Christ understood how the devil maintains his control over people and keeps them in slavery. Hebrews 2:15 says that only Christ can, “...Release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” People may have many different kinds of fear. However, the one fear that all people of every culture have is the fear of death. If we are going to help developing leaders become like their Savior, we have to help them understand that all people without Christ are prisoners of sin and Satan.

A second thing to understand is that this fear of death is not primarily a fear of physical death. Romans 5:7 says, “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.” Here, we see that some are even willing to die physically for another person. Romans 5:8 goes on to say, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” This verse tells us that Christ died for us while we were still sinners and prisoners of sin.

Although most people do not understand it, the fear of death that they fear, is the fear of spiritual death or eternal separation from God. That is why the Jews said they had never been in bondage

to anyone. They did not understand that they were already spiritually dead and separated from God. The same is true for the various other religions of the world. That is why the various religions can never take away that fear, because they have no way to deal with the consequences of spiritual death and set people free from their bondage to sin and Satan.

The reason why it is so important for Christians to realize that all people are in bondage to sin is so that they understand that those who are not Christians are really prisoners who need to know how to be set free from their bondage to sin. Ephesians 2:1 says that we were already in bondage to sin at the time of physical birth. That verse says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Since all people were already separated from God and in bondage to sin at birth, there is nothing they can do through their own efforts to set themselves free from the bondage of sin. The only way they can be set free from their bondage to sin is if someone will share the message that Christ can set them free.

If a person was in a building that collapsed and that person could not free himself, we would not stand there trying to determine if he should be rescued. We would not just say it was his fault for being in the building, especially if we had come out of the building earlier ourselves. Instead, we would try to do everything possible to rescue that person because we would realize that he was a prisoner of the collapsed building and he would die if we just left him there.

In the same way, we need to realize that every person, who has not placed his trust in Jesus Christ, is a prisoner of sin. Satan, and each of those who do not place their trust in Christ, will die in that sin and be eternally separated from God. If we do nothing to help a person learn that Christ came to set them free from sin, we are doing the opposite of what Christ did. Christ understood that each person is a prisoner of sin, and Satan. As a result, the Father sent Christ to this world to rescue people from their sin. Christ did His part to set people free by paying the penalty for sin by His own death on the cross. The Father showed that He was satisfied with the payment by raising Christ from the dead.

However, before Christ went back to heaven, He said, in John 20:21, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” Christ showed what it had cost Him to set people free from their bondage to sin. As the disciples looked at those nail holes in His hands and the hole in His side where the spear had pierced Him, they saw the cost Christ paid to set them free from their bondage to sin.

In addition, Christ said that He was now sending them, and all who would become Christians in the future, to join Him in setting people free from their bondage to sin. Just like the disciples, we need to realize that people are prisoners of sin, and Satan. We have been invited by the King of kings and Lord of lords to join Him in sharing this message so people can be set free from their bondage to sin. We have been invited to help people learn how they can be set free from their fear of death.

In Luke 4:18-19, Christ read from the Scriptures, “The Spirit of the LORD *is* upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to *the* poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To

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proclaim liberty to *the* captives And recovery of sight to *the* blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” As Christ began His ministry, He announced that He had come to proclaim liberty to the captives and set at liberty those who were oppressed. At the end of His ministry, He passed that same commission on to us.

Sinners are prisoners of sin, and Satan. Because they are prisoners, Hebrews 2:14-15 says that they have spent their entire lives controlled by fear. 1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” Leaders who are becoming like their Savior want to help people be set free from the bondage and fear that has controlled their entire lives.

Leaders can either be driven by their own fear, or they can be led by the love of Christ. If they are driven by fear, they will drive others. If they are led by the love of Christ, they will lead others in love. As we develop leaders, who are becoming like their Savior, they will begin to show the same love that Christ showed for those who are prisoners of sin, and Satan. They will ask Christ to give them wisdom to know how to make the message of forgiveness of sin, and eternal life through Christ, clear. They will help those who are in bondage to sin come to a true understanding of the fact that they can be set free from their bondage to sin, turn from their own way, and come to God through Jesus Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders understand that people without Christ are in bondage to sin, and Satan.