

Are You Dragging a Ball and Chain?

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,”
Hebrews 12:1

Some people are transformed overnight when they surrender their lives to Jesus. They throw their drugs out the window, apologize to the people they’ve wronged, break off unhealthy relationships and make a 180-degree turnaround. I love dramatic conversions.

But the process of change is slower for most of us. While the new birth is indeed an immediate experience, the change in spiritual growth is not. Most converts aren’t just “changed” in an emotional moment at a church altar; we are “being changed” on a daily basis. Like Lazarus, who emerged from his tomb wrapped in grave clothes, we can experience the miracle of salvation and yet remain bound.

Jesus told those standing near Lazarus, **“Unbind him, and let him go”** (Jn 11:44). We too need someone to unwrap us.

I’ve minister to many Christians who struggle with various forms of brokenness. Some are addicted to behaviors or substances; others are emotionally crippled because of their upbringing; still others are haunted by childhood trauma. Often our advice to them is as insensitive as it is unrealistic. We say: “Get over it. If you’re a Christian, you can’t struggle with those things.”

That’s crazy! Christians stumble. While I would love instantaneous change, **the Bible speaks of both regeneration; a rebirth which happens at the moment of conversion and the “renewing by the Holy Spirit,” which is a process** (*“Jesus saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,”* **Titus 3:5**).

Jesus promised He would take us through the steps toward healing. When He began His ministry in Nazareth, He opened the scroll and read: *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners ... to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes”* **Isa. 61:1, 3a**.

You may be a Christian—and yet you may be dragging a ball and chain behind you. **Many believers who struggle with secret sin(s) or emotional baggage stuff their problems under the proverbial rug and pretend to be free.** But their masquerade usually does not end well.

If you are still a captive, please don’t hide in the shadows. Identify your sin and then recognize that Jesus has provided the grace to overcome anything that binds you. I challenge people to take this quick inventory of sinful practices:

1. Unforgiveness. Are you nursing a grudge? You’ll never know the true forgiveness of Jesus if you hold resentment in your heart toward others. Bitterness is like acid. It will corrode your soul until you forgive those who hurt you.

2. Fear and anxiety. Everyone has natural fears. It’s normal to stay away from snakes or spiders, for example. But other fears are unnatural. Many people have been traumatized by past experiences such as sexual abuse, bullying, poverty, family breakup, rape, accidents or war. The Holy Spirit can bring supernatural peace to your troubled mind and deliver you from the shackles of post-traumatic stress.

3. Sexual immorality. A large percentage of Americans today have engaged in sex outside marriage. And while society says this is totally acceptable, the psychological damage caused by such things as: abortion, homosexuality, adultery and pornography is real. The chains of sexual sin are strong, but Jesus can shatter them when we confess our sins and choose purity.

4. Occult involvement. Participation in any form of witchcraft will open the doors of our spirits to demonic influence. These chains can only be broken by the power of Jesus.

5. Addiction. You may have fallen into the trap of using alcohol, nicotine, illegal drugs or prescription medicines to numb your emotional pain. Yet the Holy Spirit can go to the root of your brokenness and heal your soul.

6. Dishonesty and pride. This is often the reason many Christians remain captives. We want to cover up our problems rather than bring them into the light. Remember: Healing requires full disclosure. **1st John 1:8** says: ***"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us."*** It is often **hypocritical pride** that holds us captive to other sins we won't admit to anyone.

God wants to liberate you, but freedom requires brutal honesty and a willingness to talk to someone about your brokenness. You may need to join a Christian recovery group, find an accountability partner or connect with a Christian ministry that specializes in inner healing and deliverance.

Today God is calling His army to assemble. But we cannot march in step with Him if we are dragging **Ball and Chain of SIN** behind us. It's time to break free.

" let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles." Hebrews 12:1

Hampering sins are overwhelming to Christian progress. In the case of most people, there is some sin either from their situation, disposition, or other circumstances--that are more powerfully tempting than others.

Satan knows very well what in every case this is, and skillfully adapts his temptations to it. **Satan is an expert angler**, and never chooses his bait, or throws his line, at random! Independently, however, of him, the very tendency of the heart is in that direction, so we do not need Satan to sin!

That one sin, whatever it is, while indulged, will hold you back! You cannot make progress in holiness, until that sin is crushed. Even its partial indulgence will hinder you!

Study your **situation, circumstances, and disposition**. You cannot be ignorant which temptation and sin, you are most liable to succumb to. You must know in what way you have most frequently wounded walk in Christ, and caused to yourself shame and sorrow.

Is it an uncontrolled temper?
Is it impure thoughts?
Is it a proud heart?
Is it a conceited mind?

Is it envy and jealousy?
Is it a love of money?
Is it a tendency to exaggeration in speech? **LIE !**

Study yourselves! Examine your own heart! You must find out this matter, and it requires no great pains in order to know it.

It floats upon the surface of the heart, and does not lie hidden in its depths.

There is your danger! As long as that one sin, be it what it may, is indulged, you cannot advance in the Christian life!

Sins are like a ball and chain hampering your walk with Christ!

Ask the Lord to forgive... **Repent... turn away from the sin and.... **have faith in God's Mercy.****

Augustine might have put best... he said:

Trust the past to God's **mercy**,
The present to God's **love**,
and the future to God's **providence**.