

LESSON 10: THE BELIEVER'S TESTIMONY

"THE BALANCE BETWEEN OUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD OTHERS"

Now that all of my sins have been forgiven, am I free to do whatever I want to?

The Bible declares that God has delivered us from the control, the guilt, and the penalty of sin. Now, as God's children, we enjoy His magnificent and overabundant grace. Jesus delivered us from the power of sin when He freed us from the law, so that we now have freedom to say "no" to sin and "yes" to holiness. Unfortunately, some believers wrongly assume that their freedom is an opportunity to sin, arguing that they are free to do whatever they want to do.

The Bible exhorts us to try to reflect Jesus Christ in our conduct and to be very careful of our testimony before others, seeking the edification of other believers and the conversion of those that have not received Christ.

In this lesson, we will study the importance that the Bible places on our testimony. We will understand how our responsibility as mature believers should affect the decisions that we make. We should try to achieve the delicate balance that exists between our personal holiness, the freedom we enjoy in Christ, and the responsibility to take care of the conscience of those who are weaker in faith.

I. What does the freedom we receive when we have been forgiven from our sins imply?

- A. It implies that in the future God will deliver us from the presence of sin.
 - 1. As long as we are in this body, even though we are believers, we will continue sinning. As we have already learned, when his happens, we should confess it to God immediately. **1 John 1:8-9**
 - 2. But when we are taken to heaven, it will literally be impossible to sin, because we will no longer be in the presence of sin. **1 Corinthians 15:54-56**
- B. It implies that God has already delivered us from the penalty of sin.
 - 1. The eternal penalty of sin is condemnation in Hell. **2 Thessalonians 1:8-9**
 - 2. When we believed in Christ, he delivered us from that condemnation. **John 3:18** declares it: *"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*
- C. It implies that God has delivered us from the power of sin.

1. Before we were converted, we didn't have the capacity to decide to "not sin" since we were slaves of sin. **John 8:34** teaches: *"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you; Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."*
2. But when we were converted, Christ delivered us from the bondage of sin. Nevertheless, the purpose of delivering us was to make us servants of righteousness. **Romans 6:17-18**
3. Therefore, even though we are free, this doesn't give us the liberty to do whatever we want to do. We are limited by the desires of God, who is our new Master. We should conduct ourselves according to how He instructs us in **1 Peter 2:16**: *"As free, and not using [your] liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."*
4. **Galatians 5:13-14** establishes that our freedom makes us responsible to love those around us, being careful that our decisions, and therefore our conduct, don't affect them negatively.

II. What does the responsibility that we have for having been forgiven of our sins imply?

- A. Our responsibility implies that we should live according to the holiness that the Bible demands.
 1. To be holy is not accomplished through the process of canonization by a church. To be holy means that we have been separated unto God, who says in **Leviticus 20:26**: *"And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD [am] holy, and have severed you from [other] people, that ye should be mine."*
 2. Given that God sees all of us who are believers as saints, we should seek to live that way. **1 Corinthians 1:2** says: *"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called [to be] saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:"*
 3. **1 Peter 1:16** says also: *"Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."* As we can see, being holy is a commandment for every believer. When the moment comes to respond to temptation, think about what would please God, your new Master. **Romans 6:20-22**
 4. Unfortunately, for many it's easy to confuse holiness with legalism. Be careful to not fall into this trap! Legalism is a cancer that begins when man's opinion about what is or what isn't sin substitutes God's precise instructions. **Colossians 2:20-23**

B. Our responsibility implies that we should live according to the holiness our conscience demands.

1. Every one of us has in his own conscience values that indicate to him or her that some things are wrong. The conscience is the alarm against sin that God has put inside of us. **Titus 1:15** declares that: *“Unto the pure all things [are] pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving [is] nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.”*
2. When something is doubtful in your conscience, don't do it, because for you, it is sin; **Romans 14:14** warns us: *“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that [there is] nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him [it is] unclean.”*
3. Sometimes the Bible is silent about whether something is right or wrong. We call these situations “gray areas”. You can help yourself out to determine if something is right or wrong by reviewing the following questions:
 - a. Does it have control over me? Let's see what **1 Corinthians 6:12** says about it: *“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”*
 - b. Does it edify others? **1 Corinthians 10:23-24**
 - c. Do I feel guilty? The apostle Paul, said this in **Acts 24:16**: *“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and [toward] men.”*
 - d. Is it a stumbling block for someone else? **Romans 14:13-15**
 - e. Could it cause someone else to reject the Gospel? **2 Corinthians 6:1-3**
 - f. Would I be ashamed if Christ came back and found me doing it? **1 John 2:28** says: *“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”*

C. Our responsibility implies that we should live according to holiness with the purpose of caring for the conscience of weaker brothers and sisters in Christ.

1. According to **1 Corinthians 10:23-24**, which we just saw, love towards another believer is demonstrated when we put his well being before ours. The opposite of love is not hate, it is selfishness.

2. Therefore, because of love, don't be selfish and avoid doing or saying anything that would cause those that still aren't mature to stumble in their conscience. We shouldn't be responsible for inciting them, for any reason, to return to their sins that they left behind when they were converted. **1 Corinthians 8:9-11**
 3. It's a sin when we don't have enough love towards other brothers and sisters in Christ to avoid things that "appear" bad. **1 Corinthians 8:12-13**
- D. Our responsibility implies that we should live in holiness preserving our testimony before those that still don't know Christ.
1. Our lifestyle should serve to motivate the lost to establish a relationship with God. **1 Peter 2:11-12**
 2. According to **Colossians 4:5-6**, it is very important to be careful even with the way we speak to them and treat them.
 3. We should be careful not to wrongly use the liberty we have in the Lord. The Bible commands us to not be a stumbling block for anyone whether they are a believer or not. **1 Corinthians 10:32-33**

SOME POPULAR BELIEFS

1. Since we are free, we can do whatever we want and nobody should get involved in our private life.
2. The only ones who are saints are those that have been so proclaimed by a church authority.
3. So that we as believers can please God, our church's leaders are in charge of defining a system of rules that we should obey.

From what we have studied in this lesson, we should understand the reason these teachings are completely false.

Write in your own words the spiritual principle from this lesson that has made the biggest impact on you.

PUTTING IN PRACTICE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

1. Check to see if in your life there are customs, habits, or activities that would qualify as “gray areas”.
2. Discuss with your discipler how you can best deal with them.

HOW MUCH HAVE WE LEARNED?

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| 1 | Our testimony is relevant for the conversion of others. | T | F |
| 2 | We as believers sin because we decide to sin. | T | F |
| 3 | In addition to the Bible, my conscience and the conscience of others determine the validity of my actions. | T | F |
| 4 | If I have doubts about whether something is sinful or not, I should abstain from doing it until I resolve my doubts. | T | F |
| 5 | When I know that something is going to damage the conscience of my brother or sister in Christ, I should abstain from doing it out of love for him or her. | | T |
| | F | | |
| 6 | Holiness and legalism are the same thing. | T | F |

Before beginning lesson 11, memorize

Romans 14:14-15

“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.”
