

The Chains That Bind Us

Introduction. On October 31, 1999, a full airplane took off from JFK International Airport in New York on a routine flight to Cairo, Egypt. Shortly after takeoff, the relief first officer waited for the pilot to leave the cockpit; then he disengaged the autopilot. He moved the throttle levers from cruise power to idle, cutting the engines. The airplane began to pitch nose-downward and then descended into a freefall.

In the final moments before impact, the horrified pilot dashed back to his seat and battled the copilot for control of the plane. The pilot pulled back on his controls, desperate to bring the nose of the Boeing 767 up, while the suicidal first officer pushed his own controls forward to keep the jet diving. EgyptAir Flight 990 crashed into the Atlantic Ocean south of Nantucket, Massachusetts. All 217 people aboard were killed.

The battle in that airliner's cockpit is like the inner life of a Christian. Each day, we choose either to hijack control of our lives — plunging ourselves into sin — or to remain locked in the direction of God's will.

In Galatians 1:6-11, Paul described the "chains" which keep those who are trying to do God's will in bondage. In v. 6, Paul normally finds a point on which to commend his readers but here he is astonished. What conduct on the part of the Galatians is it that so moves him? Not gross moral lapse, but a desertion of the gospel of Christ through the Judaizing teachers (cp. 3:1). Their revolt was something they were freely doing to themselves. The only ray of hope is that they were still in the process of deserting and could be reclaimed.

These are very common and dangerous chains, but he also presents the keys that unlock those chains. I would like to guide you through a study of the chains and the keys which will unlock them to a strong relationship with God.

I. The Chains That Bind Us

A. The chain of deception (v. 7).

1. A lot of good and honest people are led astray by religious deception.

Mankind has the habit of following many doctrines (Ephesians 4:14; Hebrews 13:9). Christians in the first century needed constant exhortation to stay in the faith (Acts 20:27-32; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 4:1-3).

2. In Matthew 22:15-17, the Pharisees wanted to deceive Jesus. People will still try to do the same to you today. The habit of being pulled away from the pure doctrine of Christ is a strong one (2 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:6). Also, you do not need to be deceived about sin. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 to not be deceived because people in sin will not inherit the kingdom of God; they are of the devil (1 John 3:7-8).

B. The chain of humanity (v. 11).

1. Humanity can be wonderful. The good Samaritan demonstrates the good of which humanity is capable (Luke 10:30-37). However, anytime you introduce the human element into the Bible, you greatly increase your chances of error. The gospel that Paul preached was not according to man (v. 12; 1 Corinthians 12:3).

2. All too often, we are chained by men's interpretations of the scriptures. Humanity is the direct cause of division (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Paul admonished about the effects of the chain of humanity (1 Timothy 6:3-5).

II. The Keys To Unlock Them

A. The key of truth (v. 8).

1. Truth is composed of statements that accurately reflect facts, such as accurate and trustworthy witnesses. If you wanted to graphically depict falsehood, you would draw a line with a zig-zag. If you wanted to depict the truth, you would draw a straight line. The gospel is that straight line; it travels straight to God.
2. God abounds in truth (Exodus 34:6), and since God is true, so is His word (2 Samuel 7:28; Psalm 119:142, 151; John 17:17). The gospel is equated with the truth (Galatians 2:5, 14; Ephesians 1:13), and the truth is equated with the gospel (Galatians 5:7). The pure or sound gospel of Jesus Christ can unlock all of the chains that bind you (John 8:32; 18:37-38; 1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1).

B. The key of spirituality (v. 10).

1. Paul taught the Galatians that the key of spirituality was worrying about pleasing God instead of pleasing men (Acts 5:29; Colossians 3:22; 1 Thessalonians 2:4).
2. John sadly concluded a long section of Jesus' teaching in John 12:35-43 by saying that the Pharisees "loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God" (cp. Jeremiah 38:1-5; Acts 12:1-3).

Conclusion. It is easy to be bound by one of these two chains. You can break free if you have realized that one of them has you in its grip. Hebrews 10:38 says, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Those people who witnessed Jesus believed in Him, but they did not have the great self-discipline to stand up and be counted (cp. Mark 14:50).