**My Chains are Gone!**

One night, while I was still living with my mother and before I was married, I had gone to bed and was just about to drift off to sleep, when I heard the dog padding down the hall toward my room. I had my back to the door and heard his panting and footsteps as he followed the hall. He trotted in and jumped on my bed next to my back. …The trouble was …we didn’t have a dog…

Hi! I’m Pastor Randy’s wife, Sharon Blankenship.

Let’s pray.

“God, I pray that you would speak through me this morning and that Your Name would be glorified and that many would be set free, just as you have set me free. In Jesus name, Amen!”

**God is a God of Grace and a God of Order.**

We can see this in God’s creation, where natural laws (such as those we discover in Physics, Chemistry, and Biology) govern the world in which we live.

There are penalties for violating these laws. For example:

We will pay the consequences if we try to break the law of gravity by stepping off the roof of a building. unless, of course, God intervenes.

## Just as natural laws govern the natural world, spiritual laws govern our spiritual lives.

## Spiritual laws – like the Ten commandments in Exodus 20:1-17:

*“You shall have no other gods before me.*

*“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below…*

*“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God…*

*“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy…*

*“Honor your father and your mother…*

 *“You shall not murder.*

*“You shall not commit adultery.*

*“You shall not steal.*

*“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*

 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house, …or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

##### And Jesus’ two commandments in *Luke 10: 25-28 says,*

*… “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

*…Jesus replied. “Do this and you will* ***live.****”*

**Jesus also said…**

*“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.****“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free****.”* ***John 8:30-32***

These spiritual laws reflect the spiritual order and the unchanging nature and will of Jesus, who is “the same yesterday, today, and forever **(Hebrews 13:8)**.

1. **Sin is Real –**

Sin is the breaking of any one of God’s spiritual laws, which means the violation of God’s order for our lives. When we break God’s law, parts of us dies, or we are placed in bondage or slavery to that sin. Romans 6:23 says “The wages of sin is death”.

The definition of **Slavery or Bondage** is **servitude to a controlling person or force.**

**That’s what happened when Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating of the Fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.**

***Deuteronomy 30:19***

*“This day I call the heavens and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.”*

**God gave us a choice: Life or death.**

Randy has talked about the Trees in the garden of Eden and how God told Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He did say they could eat the fruit of the tree of Life.

**God wants us to choose Life not sin and death.** That’s what the Freedom Small Group is all about. Being set free from the things in our past. I’m going to plug that group. We will be starting another Freedom small group in the fall, so if you want to acquire tools to use and learn how to be set free from the past or if you have friends that could be helped by such a group look for it in the fall.

I had to learn about the grace of God and His blessings. I lived too long in the death that wrong choices lead to.

1. **Ignorance of God’s Word -**

I grew up in a wonderful home. I had two older brothers and two younger sisters. Sheryl is my baby sister by 6 minutes. My other sister is just three minutes younger than me. Anyway, we spent a lot of time with extended family – aunts, uncles and cousins. I also had good friends at church and school.

I went to a church that really didn’t teach the Bible. We had a new pastor every two to three years. Over the years we had a couple of pastors who tried to preach the Word of God. Sometimes they would get in trouble for this, but praise the Lord they did it anyway. During one of those times (at the age of 10) I learned what the Bible said in John 3:16 that *“…God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*  I learned that I was a sinner in need of a savior, so I asked Jesus to be my Savior.

But with no real strong Biblical teaching, I was ignorant of the deceitfulness of sin and the enemy (the devil). Because of this lack of knowledge, I didn’t realize I shouldn’t get involved in certain activities.

*I Peter 5:8 says to “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*

Our spiritual opponent is real, present, intelligent and active. Satan works either to **prevent** us from receiving God’s grace altogether, or to **neutralize** us if we have chosen to follow Jesus.

When we would go over to my cousins’ house, sometimes our parents would play cards in one room and we would play games in another or we would spend the night with cousins and play games. One of those games was the Ouija Board. I’m sure some of you are familiar with that “game”. Our parents just thought that it was an innocent game, but it was anything but innocent.

We would ask questions and it would answer – we didn’t touch the device. You see it had a board with letters across it and you would hover your fingers over a device, being careful not to touch it, yet it moved by itself stopping on the letters, forming words, and talking to us. Fear started to creep in. The chains of bondage to an enemy I didn’t know were being placed upon me.

I was also fascinated with scary movies and shows and would watch them whenever I could. I would go to friends’ houses and we would have séances. One time we saw John F. Kennedy’s face on the screen of the TV, the TV wasn’t on, but we saw blood running down the screen. We would see things and hear things that were totally demonic.

Our church youth group would even levitate tables in the church sanctuary! I can’t believe we did this, but we did… the tables lifted by themselves. I know the enemy really loved that! And I’m sure God was very grieved. But, I believe, as I dabbled in these activities, I opened myself up to a spirit of fear.

If that wasn’t enough, during this time my father became ill. He had a prolonged hospital stay. During those days they wouldn’t allow children in to see patients. So, we would stand down in the yard below his hospital window and wave. He was in what is now called Howard Regional hospital for about three months, off and on, and finally died. Sheryl, Shirley and I were 13. It was terrible and we still miss him to this day. Fear of losing other loved ones took hold of me. I would pray, but those prayers were faithless – repetitious – and powerless.

## Hebrews 11:6 says*,*

## *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*

## *Hebrews 2:14-15 says,*

***“****Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—****15****and free those who* ***all their lives*** *were held in slavery by their* ***fear of death****.*

## Because of my ignorance of God’s word, I was breaking God’s spiritual laws even though I knew Jesus. Sin was generating a series of obstacles to me receiving the grace and freedom I so wanted and needed. There was a wall of separation in my relationship with God. It was hindered, although throughout this time I loved the Lord, followed Him, prayed and read the Bible, because I opened myself up to sin, I was becoming bound and chained because of the deception of the enemy.

## The Bible tells us that we live in a fallen world, suffering from the effects of sinful rebellion. We can also suffer because of other people’s disobedience as well as our own.

## When my father died I missed him terribly. I longed for someone who could fill that void. I thought I had found that in an older man I knew at church. He had a wonderful wife and family and they became like a second family to me. We spent a lot of time together. But he violated the trust I had in him and sexually abused me. I was sure this was an isolated incident, so I decided I would go to my grave with it, because I loved his family and didn’t want to hurt them. In addition to that he threatened me and said it would be his word against mine and since he was well respected in the community people would believe him and not me. I later found out this was very typical of abusive people. I also found out that this was a pattern for him and it wasn’t an isolated incident. …I was becoming even more bound in the chains of fear.

## Fear of losing loved ones, fear of abuse, of attack, of the devil and his demons. They were all very real and I became obsessed.

## After I finished college and was on my own, I lived with Sheryl. But after she married Gary, I lived by myself. At night I would pray, lock doors and check and recheck them. I would lock the doors and lie down and then wonder if I had really locked them, so I would go and check them again. I finally began putting a two by four under the door handles as added security. I had no peace at night and didn’t sleep well. I needed to find the keys to unlock this nightmare. The chains were becoming tighter and tighter.

## You Shall Know the Truth -

I now was attending a church that consistently taught God’s Word. The Bible says *“You shall know the* ***truth*** *and the* ***truth*** *shall set you* ***free****.”* ***John 8:30-32***

As I grew and studied God’s Word, my eyes were being opened to the truth.

Jesus said, *“I am the****way****and the****truth****and the****life****. No one comes to the Father except through me. (*[John 14:5-7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14:5-7&version=NIV)**)**

Jesus came to put things in order for the Father. **Receiving Jesus** **begins the process of healing.** He came to **give us the gift of abundant life** and to **show us how to confront the enemy of** our lives. **He died to take away our sin.**

I was learning that with God’s help and knowing who I am in Him, I could become free from the fear and chains that bound me.

I believe God will reveal things in your life that may be keeping you from experiencing the freedom of following Christ. I challenge you to ask the Lord to reveal any obstacles that may be hindering you from living the life of abundance Jesus wants you to live.

#### *Isaiah 61 says,*

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
  because the LORD has anointed me
  to preach good news to the poor.
 He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
  to proclaim* ***freedom*** *for the captives
  and* ***release from darkness for the prisoners****,*

## *1 John 4:18 says,*

*There is* ***no fear*** *in love. But* ***perfect love drives out fear****, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

I learned that **two obstacles in particular** can be the source of great problems in our lives:

First, **Unforgiveness** can come in the form of not forgiving others, ourselves, or even God, and that secondly, **fear** paralyzes, neutralizes and keeps us from living life abundantly.

I knew I needed to forgive the man who had used me in such a terrible way and I also knew I had to forgive myself. I felt I was at fault and that I should have been able to do something to prevent what had happened. I knew that my dabbling in the occult had also opened me up for the enemy to abuse me as well.

I learned I had to **stay** in God’s word and **pray** in the **power of the Holy Spirit**, having **faith** that **God was greater than the enemy**. I had to **seek out godly counsel** **and fellowship**. I also knew I had to **starve the cravings of the old nature by** **staying away from the things that would bring fear and sin** upon me. No more movies that might cause me to fear. I stay away from them to this day. I have to.

## I want to quote *Hebrews 2:14-15 again.*

*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that* ***by his death*** *he might* ***destroy*** *him who holds the power of* ***death****—that is,* ***the devil****—****15****and* ***free*** *those who* ***all their lives*** *were held in* ***slavery by their fear of death****.*

I **now** knew I could also be free from the fear that had held me in bondage “all my life". I was asked if I would like to have prayer for deliverance from that fear and I said yes! They prayed for me that I would be delivered from the spirit of fear. They didn’t have to yell or say a long flowery prayer. They simply prayed in **the power of the Holy Spirit** that I would be set **free**. **And I was!** Peace flooded over me and I slept for two hours straight! And from that day to this I have had no fear! (Except for maybe standing here in front of all of you!)

Praise the Lord!

*“…thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* ***(I Cor. 15:57)***

1. **Freedom! –**

Remember the story about the dog I told you at the beginning?

That took place after I had been delivered from fear. When I heard that dog (or demon) come walking down the hall and when it jumped on the bed, fear started to come over me again. You see the enemy will try to come back and rear his ugly head. The scripture says,

*“When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’  When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order.  Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.” - Luke 11:24-26*

I knew that was the truth, but I also **now** knew that ***…”greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world’*! - 1st John 4:4** I knew I could take authority over the fear that was trying to come back on me, so I took authority and rebuked it **in the name of Jesus** and just like that, it was gone!

I had been bound for most of my life. The chains had bound me and were getting tighter and tighter. I was so bound I couldn’t find any peace. But God had the power to **“*free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”***

**I AM FREE!!!**

My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love, Amazing grace!

**And I know He can do the same for you!**

**Could the prayer team come up and get ready, please.**

**Everyone please bow your heads. I would like to give you the opportunity to ask Jesus to forgive you of your sin and to accept the free gift of Eternal life that Jesus offered to everyone when he died on the cross. Remember that’s where the healing begins.**

**Pray with me if you want this. If you have already accepted Jesus just pray along as a renewal of your commitment.**

**“Father in heaven, I believe you sent Jesus to take the punishment for my sins. I ask you to forgive me and to help me to live for you. In Jesus name, Amen.”**

**Now, if you have fear, been abused is some way, have lost a loved one, have an addiction or are dabbling in the occult, had an abortion or any number of things that can hold you captive. God, in His grace and mercy, can set you free!**

**Come if you want to be free or if you have a need.**

**“Lord Jesus I ask that Your Holy Spirit would reign supreme in this place today. I rebuke the enemy and bind him. Jesus set people free right now in the name of our almighty Savior, Jesus!”**

**\*Turn service back to Randy**