

I. Introduction

- A. Question: if a person is held hostage, what is the word for the money paid to set that person free?
 - 1. Answer: Ransom
 - 2. We'll come back to that.
- B. Welcome to part two of our series, Under Construction.
- C. We view our lives as God's continuing construction project. If you are a Christian, God is hard at work building something in you.
- D. God is building your heart to be a suitable home for Christ.
 - 1. *that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love...* (Ephesians 3:17)
- E. There is a literal, physical construction project in the Bible that we are using to illustrate how God makes your heart a spiritual construction project to be a suitable habitation for Christ.
 - 1. That is the construction of the Tabernacle. We introduced the Tabernacle last time.
 - 2. The Tabernacle was a tent, built as a portable worship center for God's people, when they wandered in the wilderness, back in the days of Moses.
 - 3. Every part of it symbolized something important. The colors, materials, fabric, textures, the layout, the rituals, everything. It was all very precise and very exact.
 - 4. Last time we talked about why.
- F. That's because...
 - 1. The Tabernacle represents on earth the whole body of TRUTH that originates in heaven.
 - 2. **1 - The first part of God's construction project is to anchor your life to truth.**
 - a) Anchor your mind to truth, anchor your emotions to truth, anchor your instincts to truth, anchor your choices to truth.
 - 3. Body, soul, and spirit, mind, will, and emotions... everything inside of us constantly pinging the eternal truths that flow from the heart of God.
 - 4. That's what the tabernacle stands for, and that's the first part of God's mystical, spiritual construction project in your heart. To deliver you from the lies, from the matrix, from the deceptions of a world gone mad... and to re calibrate you to... truth.
 - a) True truths. Absolute truths. Eternal truths. Transcendent truths. Reality stays real. Truth stays true.
- G. Jesus said, this is the difference between building your house on the rock vs building your house on sand.
- H. Truth comes first.

II. What comes next

- A. After truth, the second thing we need to reconstruct in our society is our topic today.
- B. I invite you to meditate with me on the topic of: **Freedom**
- C. I want to develop this with you today. In theology it is called dominion, or reigning in life. The founders of our country called it Liberty.
- D. If you're going to construct a life...
 - 1. A marriage, a family, a society, a country, a church
 - a) Any institution... or person... or group...
 - b) If you are going to make it a great home for Christ, then, alone with truth, you have to make freedom a core, central, constituent, non-negotiable foundation.

III. Freedom

- A. Let's go back to the tabernacle and see how this is worked out.
- B. One of the most important activities that took place at the tabernacle was a succession of sacrifices.
- C. There are different kinds of sacrifices. They were offered for different reasons and at different times. They were offered by different priests. They offered different animals. And they were offered for different reasons.
- D. All of this is spelled out in the book of Leviticus. Leviticus is the third book in the Bible.
 - 1. *"And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel..."* (Numbers 8:19)
- E. I want us to zero in on this word for atonement. I think that you have already heard the Hebrew word used here, but might not have really noticed.
- F. If you have heard of a Jewish holiday called Yom Kippur, that translates as the Day of Atonement, because *kippur* means atonement.
- G. That really doesn't say too much because most of us have a fuzzy idea of what the word atonement means.
- H. I want to brush away the cobwebs and clarify what that means today. This isn't just some theological brain game.
- I. Because when you understand what atonement means, it is going to flip some switches in your mind AND in your emotions that are going to surprise you.

IV. Atonement

- A. There are several words in the Bible that all go together. They are all basically the same word, but different parts of speech, like run, ran, running.
- B. I'm going to give you the normal English translation, and then the Hebrew word.

1. Atonement	kaphar	the act of procuring atonement
2. Atonement	kippur	the atonement that is procured
3. Atoning place	kapporet	the cover on the Ark of the Covenant
- C. So I'll just use *kaphar*, as the word for all of them.
- D. When I grew up in church, I was taught that atonement (*kaphar*) means to cover. So when we talked about atonement, or the atoning work of Christ, it meant that God would cover a person's sin and guilt. God would cover sin and guilt through a sacrifice.

1. Ultimately, our sins and guilt would be covered by the sacrifice of Christ. By his shed blood on the cross.
- E. I remember getting into an argument on this once with a Bible teacher. I was just beginning college. But I had always been interested in theology. And was studying it and really into it.
 1. And this leader in our church kept saying that God had covered our sins through Christ.
 2. That didn't sit right with me. In fact, it annoyed me.
 3. My sins were "covered?" That's it?
 - a) I read in the Bible that my sins were gone, not covered. Taken away as far as the east is from the west. Removed as far from me as the heavens are high above the earth. Cast into the depths of the sea.
 4. So I asked my Bible teacher, "Why do you say my sins are just covered when the Bible says my sins are actually gone?"
 - a) He didn't really know what to say.
- F. Now, to be fair to my Bible teacher, he said our sins were covered because of this word, atonement, *kaphar*.
- G. For years, Bible experts assumed that *kaphar* basically meant to cover. They got this by looking at similar terms in other ancient languages. If you read any popular books, you're going to hear this. To atone is to cover sins.
 1. However, that is not the main viewpoint any more.
 2. Let me read to you from one of the standard dictionaries of Old Testament words. It's called the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*.
 - a) **The root *kaphar* is used some 150 times. It has been much discussed. There is an equivalent Arabic root meaning "cover" or "conceal." On the strength of this connection it has been supposed that the Hebrew word means "to cover over sin" and thus to pacify the deity, making an atonement. It has been suggested that the Old Testament ritual symbolized a covering over of sin until it was dealt with in fact by the atonement of Christ. There is, however, very little evidence for this view. The connection of the Arabic word is weak and the Hebrew root is not used to mean cover. (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 1, p 452)**
- H. In other words, the most recent scholarship now understands that *kaphar* doesn't mean to cover.
- I. And, back in the day, when my Bible teacher was saying that God covered my sins, he wasn't relying on the latest scholarship — which was already available. He wasn't communicating linguistic research had shown.
- J. So, when Moses said that the Levites would serve the people of God in the tabernacle. And that their specific ministry would be "to make an atonement" for them... what did that mean? What was God saying?
- K. Here is a picture from that theological dictionary of the one English word that best conveys what atonement means.
- V. Atonement
 - A. Today Bible experts know that atonement or *kaphar* mainly means *ransom*.
 1. It means to pay a ransom, or... It means the ransom that is paid.
 - B. When the OT uses this word for atonement, the idea of ransom is never far away.
 - C. If one of the core functions of the tabernacle is to bind our hearts to *truth*—to give us the reality check we need—and if another of the core functions of the tabernacle is *atonement*, which means ransom, then what is all that saying?
 - D. Let's go back to the beginning, back to the original creation.
 - E. This is how God made the human race.
 1. *Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."* (Genesis 1:28)
 - F. You were created with dominion. This means the right to rule. Authority. Power. Position. Status.
 1. **2 - God created you to be sovereign and free and to exercise your free-will dominion.**
 - a) This is all about your decisions. All about your choices. God made you mind, will, and emotions.
 - G. You are the sovereign ruler of your life. You are the captain of your ship. Your free-will (volition) is to be strong, under the mighty lordship of Jesus Christ.
 - H. There is an old stream of so-called Christian teaching that says God has to "break a person's will" before he can use them. I was taught this growing up.
 - I. Picture me, an adorable Italian kid in junior high and high school at my little Chicago church.
 1. They said, before God can use you, he has to break your will - I thought, what am I, a horse?
 2. They said, your will doesn't matter at all, Bill. What you want is evil. You have set aside your will, your violation, your dominion, so that God can be Lord and Master of everything - I thought, that sounds really hard.
 3. They said, Bill, you are a worm - I said, I'm never going fishing again.
 4. As I was preparing this talk for today, I wanted to check my memory and make sure I got the story right. So I hunted online till found one of the key books the had me read as a kid... and this is what it says:
 - a) **If, however, we are to come into this right relationship with Him, the first thing we must learn is that our wills must be broken to His will... In other words it is dying to self and self-attitudes. [Calvary Road, Roy Hession, 1950]**
 5. There's enough truth in there to make it sound spiritual and good, and enough error in there to make it dangerous. I know this teaching messed with my life.
 - a) Die to yourself. Your will must be broken. That teaching messed with me for 20 years.
 6. I radically disagree with all of this today.
 - J. I discover in my Bible that God gave us free will, so why would he break it? God gave us dominion. He told us to "reign in life" (Romans 5:17). He sliced off slivers of his own sovereignty and implanted them in our hearts. Why would he cancel that?
 - K. What I know today is that God doesn't want weak-willed followers.
 - L. God wants mature, stubbornly strong-willed men and women to take their stand in truth and holiness with him.

1. The will must be free. The will must be strong.
- M. But there is a problem with that...
- VI. The Bondage of the Will
 - A. God gave Adam and Eve the power of free-will choice, called dominion, and immediately the Satan went on the attack.
 - B. He attacked God's Word (Gen 3:1) and he attached God's Character (3:4,5). Satan tempted Eve. Eve tempted Adam. And they sinned.
 1. **3 - The sin in the Garden of Eden is the single most catastrophic moment in the history of the world.**
 - C. All bondage dates to this moment.
 1. All addiction, all dysfunction, all wounding, all guilt, all shame, all dishonesty, all hypocrisy, all brokenness, all despair, depression, discouragement, all clowning, sublimation, self-protective techniques, all trauma, all evil, all cursing, all the voices in your head, all sorrow and pain.
 - D. The sin in the Garden was humankind's terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.
 - E. When Adam sinned, human nature was changed.
 - F. Instead of the will being free, the will is not free. Instead of being at the top, the will is at the bottom. Damaged emotions are at the top... AND... something else is in charge of the whole soul.
 1. **When the human race surrendered dominion, human nature was taken hostage by dark and damaged alien powers.**
 - G. In theology, this is called the **Bondage of the Will**.
 1. In real life this is called constantly making choices you regret and not knowing why, and feeling unable to change it.
 - H. This is the bondage in your life. This is the captivity. These are shackles and chains you can't seem to break free of. Knee jerk reactions. Patterns. Instincts. Sick habits. Triggers.
 1. What triggers you to reach for a smoke, a toke, or a drink? What triggers you to say yes when you mean to say no? What triggers you to away from love and to accept porn? What triggers you to work yourself to death to the neglect of the people you love?
 - I. God made your will to be free, but it isn't free. It's swamped.
 1. Addiction, dysfunction, hopelessness, anger, temper, shutting down, running away, hiding, isolation, promiscuity... on and on.
 - J. The fallen human will has five dysfunctional masters:
 1. **Sin.**
 - a) *Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. (John 8:34)*
 2. **The Flesh (Your Dark Side, corruption)**
 - a) *While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. (2 Peter 2:19)*
 3. **Satan**
 - a) *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. (1 John 5:19)*
 4. **The World (Demon-inspired Philosophies)**
 - a) *Beware lest anyone [take you hostage] through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8)*
 5. **Fear of Death**
 - a) *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. (Hebrews 2:14, 15)*
 - K. These are the prison bars.
 - L. Picture it as you driving a car.
 - M. God put you in the driver's seat. That's your dominion. Where do you want to go today?
 1. God put himself in the passenger's seat, as your navigator and companion. He's going with you, and he wants you to consult with him on where you drive the car, every single day.
 2. That's the plan.
 - N. But the whole plan got turned upside down by sin.
 1. The fact of sin means you've been put in the back seat, with handcuffs. Plus you're gagged.
 2. God has gone there with you... we'll come back to him.
 3. But someone else is in the drivers seat... pick your addiction of choice, your dysfunction of choice.
 - a) Apathy. Procrastination. Whining. Victimhood. Anger. Temper. Hatred. Racism. Sexism. Shame. Self-loathing. Self-harm. Disappointment. Grandiosity. Superiority. Religious spirit. Self-righteousness. Murder. Gossip. Slander... the list is endless... but they always go back to the Big Five.
 - O. That's who's really running your life. That's who's in control.
 1. This is why you can't overcome sin. This is why that one temptation or those ten temptations continue to dominate you. You give in. You give up. You try to be free and fail.
 - a) You're not your own person. You're not really running your life. You're not who you want to be doing what you want to be. You're not free.
 - P. You've been taken hostage. The whole human race is bound and gagged and incapable of exercising their God-given dominion.
 1. Sin. The Flesh. Satan. The World. Fear of Death.
 - a) I've been taken hostage. You've been taken hostage.
 2. You are not free. You are not who you're meant to be, designed to be, called to be.
 - a) You will isn't free. Your will is in bondage. You can't rule. You can't reign. You can't exercise dominion. It's impossible.

(1) That is the situation of all the world.

3. You're a captive, a prisoner, and a hostage.

VII. Ransom

- A. Question: if a person is held hostage, what is the word for the money paid to set that person free?
 - 1. Answer: Ransom
- B. Question: what is the primary meaning of the word atonement?
 - 1. Answer: Ransom
- C. What God was doing when he told Moses to construct the tabernacle was the most relevant, liberating, life-giving message he could ever give to the world.
- D. The tabernacle was God's giant neon sign pointing to the ransom that sets you free once for all from every dark force that holds you back.

VIII. Silver

- A. There were three metals used in the tabernacle: gold, silver, and copper.
 - B. Throughout the Bible, silver is usually connected with... wait for it... ransom.
 - 1. The hooks that held up the curtain around courtyard were made of silver.
 - 2. The stands that held the boards that held up the bars that held up the curtains were made of silver.
 - 3. The sacrifice that each Israelite made as part of worship was a gift of silver.
 - a) And, this sacrifice was said to be a ransom (Ex 30:12,13).
 - C. In the construction of the tabernacle, you could say the foundation was silver...
 - 1. just as the foundation of our salvation is the ransom paid by Jesus Christ.
 - D. Because the tabernacle didn't just anchor your heart to truth, the tabernacle showed again and again the ransom that was paid to set you free.
 - E. This is atonement. This is the atoning work of God. This is redemption, and forgiveness, and cleaning, and liberation all wrapped into one.
 - 1. The offerings were to make atonement. The sacrifices were to accomplish atonement. The priests were to effect and explain atonement. The whole tabernacle existed to symbolize and instruct atonement.
 - a) Because atonement means to ransom from bondage, and God in Christ has set you free.
 - b) And until this ransom, this liberation, this freedom, and this redemption is really anchored in your heart, your will isn't actually free.
 - F. So we say...
 - 1. The first part of God's construction project is to anchor your life to truth.
 - 2. **The second part of God's construction project is to restore your dominion... by ransoming you from every force that holds you hostage.**
 - a) To break your shackles. To tear away your muzzle. To reactivate your free will. To return you to the driver's seat of your life, with God at your side... You're free to go. Drive!
 - G. And what was that ransom price?
 - 1. Thousand and thousands of sacrifices which all pointed to the One Great Sacrifice to take away your sin.
 - H. What was the ransom price?
 - 1. It was the death of your substitute. The shed blood of your sacrifice. The finished work of Christ on a bloody, horrible, old Rugged Cross.
 - I. That was the the ransom. That was the price that was paid.
 - 1. *"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."* (Matthew 20:28)
 - 2. He gave HIMSELF a ransom for all (1 Tim 2:5).
 - a) Jesus Christ ransomed you from sin. That's atonement. That's salvation.
 - b) You getting the power of that atonement hammered into your psyche, into your mind, will, and emotions... that's sanctification.
- (1) And that's what I'm preaching about. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

IX. Conclusion

- A. Freedom is biblical. Liberty is biblical. You being you, is biblical. You being ransomed from all tyranny is biblical.
- B. Where did the founders of our nation get their view of liberty? They got it from the Bible.
 - 1. Thomas Jefferson said, "The God who gave us life gave us liberty."
 - 2. Noah Webster said, "The Christian religion... is the source of all genuine freedom."
 - a) No other political theory has ever made individual freedom the cornerstone of its philosophy. Not ever before and not ever since.
- C. God is a gentleman. He will not force anybody to be saved. He will not force any saved person to live saved.
- D. The church is a gathering of sovereign free-will individuals... under the loving Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- E. Freedom is the trumpet blast of Scripture... because the shed blood of Christ restores what the devil snatched away in the Garden of Eden.
- F. Jesus Christ and him crucified has paid your ransom because he is your ransom. I pray that you would embrace, and walk, and stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has set you free.