

You Can Have a New Life
Series: Lifted UP!
Romans 6:1-11; John 4:1-38
September 25, 2016

Welcome again to worship.

For the last few weeks, we have been going through a series called, "Lifted UP!" We are drawing from a passage from John 12:32, where Jesus says:

"And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself."¹

In the early 1970s, a social scientist named Philip Zimbardo led a team of scientists from Stanford University in an interesting experiment. The team built a mock prison in the basement of the University's psychology department. The scientists placed advertisements in the local papers looking for volunteers who would participate in the experiment. Zimbardo and his colleagues selected 24 people to participate, choosing the ones who appeared to be the most emotionally stable and healthy.

Half of the group was randomly selected to be prison guards. They were given military-style guard uniforms and dark glasses. They were told their responsibility was to keep order.

The other half of the group became the prisoners. They were arrested in their homes, cuffed, brought to a real police station, fingerprinted, and then blindfolded for the trip to the mock prison. They wore prison clothes with numbers on the front and back of the clothing. The number became their identity. They were only allowed to refer to themselves and others by their numbers.

In post interviews with the prisoners in the experiment, they confessed that when their identity became a number, they felt helpless and hopeless. Four of the prisoners were pulled from the experiment early because of emotional breakdowns including extreme depression, crying, rage, and anxiety. Other prisoners incited rebellions and riots against the guards. When the mock prisoners forgot who they really were, they became depressed. Their self-perception impacted their thinking, attitude, and ultimately their behavior. When they believed that they were criminals, they began to live like criminals.

The experiment was intended to last two weeks, but Zimbardo shut it down after 6 days because of the chaos that was ensuing. When he was dismissing some of the mock prisoners, he needed to remind them that they were not prisoners, that the scenario was not real.

Unfortunately many Christians live powerless Christian lives because they have forgotten their identity in Christ. We need to stop believing Satan's lies and realize who we are in Christ.

And it's no wonder. Satan is prince of this world and the father of lies² and there are some whoppers he tries to pass off on people, especially Christians.

First, you are a victim of your past.

We debunked that lie 2 weeks ago. When you lift Jesus up in your life, you are a Child of God. John 1:12 reads

¹ John 12:32 (NLT)

² See John 8:44

*But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.*³

I am not a victim of my environment or my heritage. I am no longer a slave to my past. Paul writes:

*We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.*⁴

Later he wrote,

*For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs.*⁵

In 1877, Harriet E. Buell wrote a hymn called "I am a Child of the King":

I am a child of the King!

My Father is rich in houses and lands,
He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands!

Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,
His coffers are full, He has riches untold.

I'm a child of the King,

A child of the King:

With Jesus my Savior,

I'm a child of the King.

My Father's own Son, the Savior of men,

Once wandered on earth as the poorest of them;

But now He is pleading our pardon on high,

That we may be His, when He comes by and by.

I once was an outcast stranger on earth,

A sinner by choice, an alien by birth,

But I've been adopted, my name's written down,

An heir to a mansion, a robe and a crown.

A tent or a cottage, why should I care?

They're building a palace for me over there;

Though exiled from home, yet still may I sing:

All glory to God, I'm a child of the King.⁶

A second lie Satan tells you is that you're of little worth.

We shot that one down last week. You matter. God cares so much about you that He's interested in everything about you, everything you do, and everything you say.

HUSBANDS LISTENING TO WIVES.

God cares about every detail of your life because you matter to Him. You are a redeemed individual. To redeem means to buy back from bondage, to buy back by paying a price. And sometimes the price is very high.

Have you ever heard of the phrase "a king's ransom"? You might say something is worth a king's ransom or someone is worth a king's ransom. The phrase goes back to the time of the Crusades when there was a king in England named Richard the Lionhearted. He was captured by his enemies during the Crusades, thrown into prison

³ John 1:12 (NLT)

⁴ Romans 6:6 (NLT)

⁵ Romans 8:16-17a (NLT)

⁶ Harriet E. Buell, "I Am a Child of the King" 1877

and a colossal ransom was basically asked of the people of England. They wanted him back so badly that they submitted to heavy taxation, over a process of time they amassed a fortune and filled up the coffers with large sums of money in order to free their king. And that's what gave birth to the phrase "a king's ransom." And it's used to connote a huge amount of money required to redeem someone back from bondage.

But Peter tells us of an even higher price, an infinitely higher price. He tells us that we were redeemed with precious blood, the blood of Christ.

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.⁷

If I offer a car for sale, which I think is worth \$7,000, and offers are made ranging from \$2,000 to \$9,000, how much is the car worth? The \$7,000 that I think it's worth? The "low-ball" offer of \$2,000? No. The car is worth what the highest bidder is willing to pay in the open market.

People are "traded" in a spiritual and eternal market. We are not worth what we happen to think, or any "low-ball" offer. We are worth what the highest bidder will pay. And the highest bidder is God, and the price-tag is the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. God looked out across the eternal ages and said, "I'll take that one, even though the price is steep!" Our worth is established once and for all, and can never change or diminish. God has made the ultimate offer and paid the highest price.

A third lie of Satan is that your past sins are so awful, it's impossible for you to find forgiveness and acceptance.

You ever heard that one? Sure you have, especially when you have fallen for what seems to be the millionth time. Satan tells you that you are just too bad, too far gone. But it is a lie. The Bible says you are a forgiven person.

From the very cross that Jesus died, through the agony and pain, from not just an innocent man but the innocent and spotless Son of God, Jesus said:

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."⁸

Paul wrote,

So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.⁹

A psychology student said to his father, "One thing we learn in psychology is how to deal with people's guilt. We try to convince them they shouldn't feel guilty. But no matter how much we try it doesn't work." His father was a Christian and said, "Of course it doesn't work son. They are guilty."

We are guilty of our sins, but through the cross of Christ (God's act) and repentance (our act), God has removed our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west.¹⁰

19th Century Evangelist Charles Finney once preached on 1 John 1:7

But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.¹¹

⁷ 1 Peter 1:18-19 (NIV)

⁸ Luke 23:34 (NIV)

⁹ Ephesians 1:6-7 (NLT)

¹⁰ See Psalm 103:12

A stranger asked him to walk home with him; against all advice he did. Ushering Finney into the rear of a building, he locked the door and pocketed the key.

“Don’t be afraid,” the man said. “I just want to ask you some questions. Do you believe what you preached tonight?”

“I most certainly do,” replied Finney.

The man said, “We’re in the back of a saloon and I’m the owner. Mothers come in here lay, their babies on the counter and beg me not to sell liquor to their husbands. I turn a deaf ear to their cry. When a man leaves here we see to it that he’s well under the influence. More than one man has been killed on the railway tracks after leaving here. Can God forgive a man like me?”

Finney said, “I have only one authority: ‘The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.’”

The stranger wasn’t satisfied yet and asked, “If a man doesn’t spend all his money on liquor, we take him to our gambling hall and fleece him of his last dollar with marked cards. Can God forgive a man with a heart like that?”

Finney again replied, “I have only one authority: ‘The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.’”

The stranger still wasn’t finished. He said, “Across the street is my wife and daughter. Neither has heard a kind word from me in 5 years. Their bodies bear the marks of my brutal attacks. Can God forgive a man with a heart like that?”

Finney lowered his head and said, “You’ve painted one of the darkest pictures I’ve ever seen. But still I have only one authority: ‘The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.’” That night that man became a new creature in Christ.

A fourth lie of Satan is that you cannot be totally changed.

But when you lift Jesus up in your life, you are a new creation.

You should memorize 2 Corinthians 5:17:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*¹²

As Christians, we are new creations: The old life of sin has been defeated and destroyed by repentance, the old nature has been conquered by the crucifixion, and now we stand as new creations. We have new goals, values, desires, attitudes, thoughts, actions, new everything. As Christians we have not just been repaired but totally renewed!

The final lie of Satan I’m going to deal with this morning is that you’re incapable of having victory over your sins.

But that is a lie. If you lift Jesus up in your life, you are an overcomer.

God has never been totally defeated by the events of the past, nor will He be by the events of the future.

- Joseph was in the dungeon, but God released him and lifted him up.
- The Hebrews were in slavery, but God delivered them and lifted him up.
- David was overwhelmed by the guilt of his sin, but God forgave him and lifted him up.
- Daniel was in the lion’s den, but God preserved him and lifted him up.
- Jonah was in the belly of the fish, but God retrieved him and lifted him up.

¹¹ 1 John 1:7 (NLT)

¹² 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

- Jesus was in the tomb, but God raised Him and lifted him up.

No problem has been so great that God in His power has not overcome it. And that is the promise that comes to each of us this morning. What He has done in the past, He will do again today. Through God's power, we can overcome.

A young man in a wheelchair, crippled by an accident asked his friend, "Do I have a future?"

The friend responded, "As a pole-vaulter; no. As a man, yes!"

An overcomer accepts the promise of God's word that no matter how great the problem, he or she can overcome. You have a future.

Paul writes,

*Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.*¹³

Victorious living is a struggle between the old man and the new man. It's like habits. If you feed a good one, it becomes strong. Starve a bad one, it becomes weak. Victory is ours when we stop believing our lives are all about us and focus on Christ and His Word.

During our series, we have looked at people that Jesus met. He met a man who was born blind, and He healed him. He met a woman caught in the act of adultery, and He forgave her.

He also met a woman from Samaria who wouldn't fetch water with the rest of the women of the village because she was such a notorious woman. She had had 5 husbands and was living with a man she was not married to. But Jesus talked to her and turned her life around.

Think about these three people in relation to you:

- A man born blind. You have something you were born with that takes away life.
 - The woman caught in adultery. You have some mistake and it's a big one. It's so big that if people knew about it, you would feel completely naked, just as the woman was.
 - The Samaritan woman. There is a sinful choice you have lived with for a long time.
- Jesus gave each and every one of these people a new life. He can do it for you too... if you will lift Him up!

¹³ Romans 6:14 (NLT)