

Intro) We all want to get rid of our burdens and problems, don't we?
we **want to live in freedom**, yet too often we hang on to our guilt,
we are so used to our problems that we feel **comfortable** with them
like an old pair of **well-worn slippers**
Sometimes we willfully hang on to the things that lead us into **bondage**
Today we talk about living in freedom

- 1) The Peanuts cartoons feature Charlie Brown and Lucy – [Slide 2]
also **Linus** and his old blanket – his **security blanket** – [Slide 3]
On **washdays** Linus falls to pieces
His sister **Lucy**, who is a bit nasty, sometimes hides the blanket – [Slide 4]



This is a **modern parable** – just like Jesus used to tell
the blanket represents the things in which **we place our trust**
the things that make us feel **secure**
sometimes we feel secure in having our **familiar burdens**
Linus needs to let go of the blanket
he needs **to be free** of the blanket
he needs **to grow up** – but he can't
Linus is **intelligent**, but he still can't make the break

- 2) The Jews at the time of Jesus also had their **security blanket** – [Slide 5]
They emphasized that **Abraham** was their father – a good thing
and therefore they reasoned they were **secure** with God
– that was their **mistake**
They were God's **chosen people**
but they didn't **trust God** like Abraham did
as we see when he **obeyed God** and went to sacrifice Isaac
therefore "Abraham is our Father" was **false security**
they **hung on** to the old familiar Abraham thing
when they needed to be **set free by Jesus**

- 3) Many of us would have seen *Luther – The Movie* – [Slide 6]
which stars **Joseph Fiennes** as **Luther**
and the late **Sir Peter Ustinov** in his final role
as Luther's prince **Frederick the Wise**

It clearly portrays the story of how **Luther fought the false security** of the church in his day

the church was teaching that you could **pay money** to secure heaven for your loved ones

“when the **coin in the coffer clings**, the soul from purgatory springs”
the attempt to **buy what God gives freely** brings no security at all

4) What about us today

– do we hold on to things that lead us into bondage?

Things that **stop us growing up?**

Things that prevent us from **living in freedom?**

Consider the following **4 examples**: – **[Slide 7]**

a) **Sometimes** we hang on to **guilt**

We feel bad about what we have said or done
and we **never really feel forgiven**

We live with a general **vague sense** of guilt
and that **steals** our happiness and contentment



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b) **Sometimes** we hang on to a **bad self image** of ourselves

We may have been **raised in an environment**

where we were constantly put down and **told we were no good**

We may have been **intimidated by pastors** and others into believing
that if we open our mouths we will **say something wrong**

– so we **shut up**

We therefore feel that we are **useless** and can't do much

this becomes a **bondage** that holds us back from contributing

and **doing all the things** God has gifted us to do in his kingdom

c) **Sometimes** we hold on to **anger** and **bitterness**

Most of **us get angry** and twisted every now and again

but some people **nurture and feed** their anger

until it becomes a deep-seated **bitterness**

Sometimes we turn that against our **congregation**

or a pastor or someone else

we feel totally justified – yet we are **not free when we blame others**

d) **Sometimes** we hold on to an **unwillingness to forgive**

Someone has **genuinely** hurt us

– or it might just be an **imagined slight**

and we are going to **make them pay** – we will **never forget** it

Feuds and divisions in congregations can go on for generations

and once again it is **we ourselves who pay** the price

– we keep ourselves in **bondage and slavery to sin**

5) Are you living in freedom? – [Slide 8]

Or are you in some way or other **still living in bondage?**

Do you **want to be free?** That can be a bit scary!

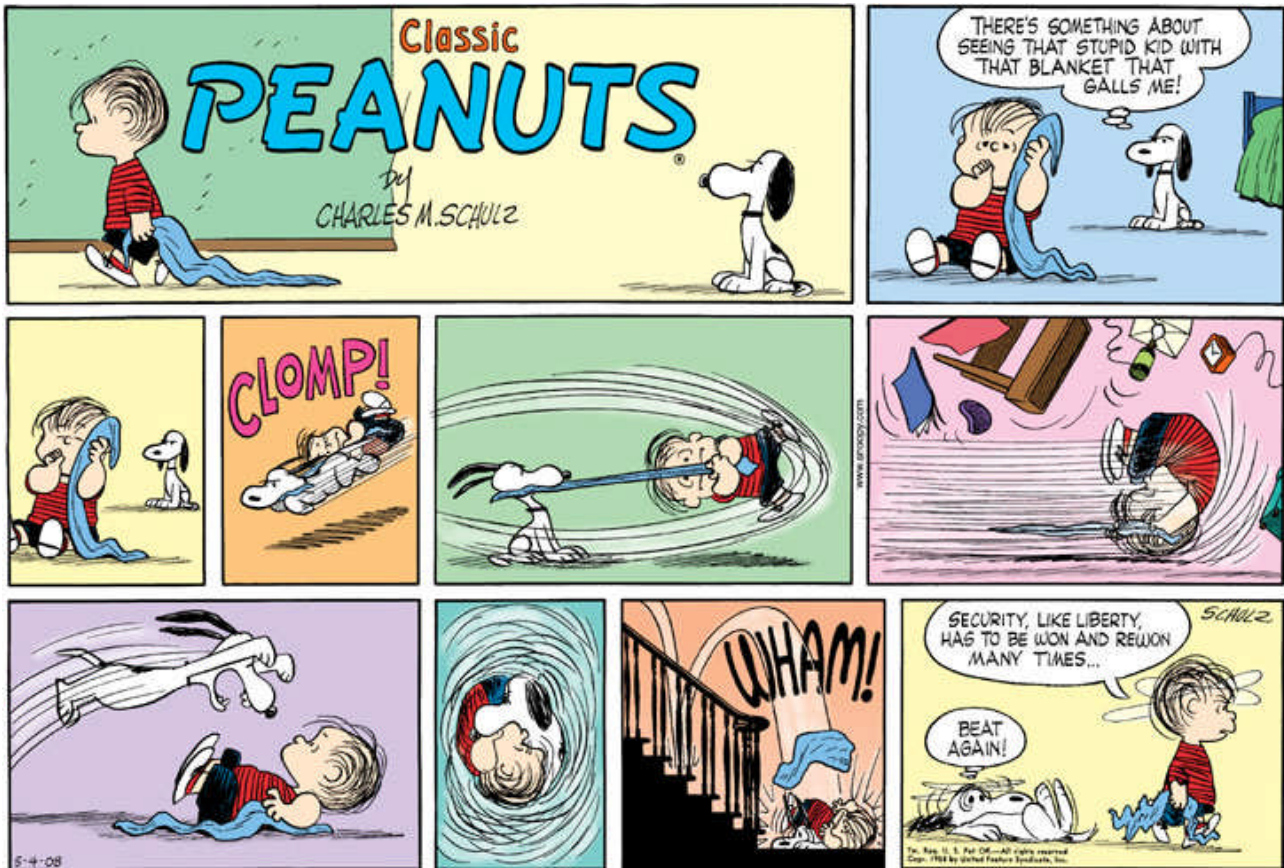
Or would you rather **keep things the way they are?**

Sometimes we go to **extraordinary lengths** to hang onto our blankets
we become **anxious** and even attack those who dare to suggest change
dysfunctional families and congregations insist they are ok

Those who care for them become **co-dependent** ...

All the while **proclaiming their freedom**, saying

“We have never been slaves of anyone!” – [Slide 9]



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You **don't need to be honest with me** if you don't want to

Play games with others if you must

But I encourage you to at least **be honest with yourself**

– don't kid yourself – [Slide 10]

6) Jesus makes you a promise in our text today

He says, “Linus, Jill, Bob, Lucy .. if the Son makes you free,
you will be free indeed!”

Yes, sin enslaves us

some sin like nurturing bitterness **we do to ourselves**

old habits die hard and

ways of doing things can be **deeply ingrained**

and contain **psychological dimensions** as well as spiritual ones

Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin
but **the Son sets us free**

The point is we are **powerless to stop ourselves sinning**
– let alone to deal with **past sin**

Sometimes the most **ugly** human beings are those who think
they are most **perfect**

We cannot free ourselves from sin

7) Jesus says, “If the Son makes you free, then you will be free indeed”

That is **where our freedom lies**

In **what Jesus has done for us** – his **death and resurrection**

And it is all **grace**

– grace alone, by **faith** alone, **not by works** lest anyone should boast

God has set us free by what he has done for us in Jesus Christ

We are **forgiven and free** from the consequences of sin
and **secure** in our relationship with God

That is the **good news that the whole world needs to hear**

Conc) A long time ago I sat watching a dog on rope – [Slide 11]

that restricted its movement to a circle a **couple on metres**
around its kennel

I imagined that the dog was **old** and that it had been chained all its life
what if someone came and **cut the rope?**

the dog was then **free to roam**

but maybe, out of **habit**, it just stayed within that old circle

it was really free, but it **chose to remain bound** – [Slide 12]

Don't be the old dog

– **don't hang on to your guilt, your bitterness, your anger**

Let Jesus set you free as he promised

Ask someone to **counsel you and pray for you**

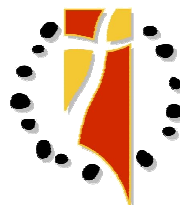
When you **fall back** into old bad habits **repent** and **move on** again

The good news is that it does not depend on us
because Jesus Christ has set us free
and therefore we are really free!

Amen.



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