

Prayer for Freedom from Habitual Sins

(from *The Utter Relief of Holiness*)

Renouncing the Sin

Freedom comes only as we bring these unsanctified and unholy places under the rule of Jesus Christ, so that he can possess these very places deeply and truly. Therefore, part of this first step involves sanctifying to Christ the place of bondage. If it's sexual, you sanctify your sexuality to Christ; if it's emotional (as with rage, or fear, or even grief), you sanctify your emotions; if it involves addiction, you sanctify your appetite, your obsession, and your body. At the retreats we do, we walk through this process in prayer, and many people are shocked to realize that they have never taken the first, simple step of sanctifying their sexuality (or emotions, or appetites) to Jesus Christ. But if you want to be free in this place, it must come under the total, intimate, ongoing rule of God.

Lord Jesus, forgive me. I confess I have been offering myself over to sin, and now I am its slave. I renounce it; I renounce my sins. [Be very specific here. For example, "I renounce the ways I have presented my sexuality to sin; I renounce my sexual sins. I present my sexuality to Jesus Christ. I sanctify my sexuality to Jesus Christ. I present the members of my body and my sexuality as instruments of righteousness. I renounce the ways I have presented my appetite and my drinking to sin; I renounce my sins with alcohol. I present my appetite and my drinking to Jesus Christ. I sanctify my body to Jesus Christ."] I renounce every way I have given myself over to sin. I dedicate and I consecrate my life [and this specific area] once more to the rule of Jesus Christ, to be his and his alone. May your atoning blood cover my sins and cleanse me. May your holiness possess me totally and completely.

You will also find it helpful to renounce the "sins of your fathers." Often in these places of lasting bondage you will find that a father (or mother, or brother, or grandparent) struggled with the same issue. The scriptures present to us the reality that sin is often passed down within a family line, and the effects of those sins are also passed down generation to generation (see Exodus 20:5, 34:7, Leviticus 26:39-42, Nehemiah 9:2).

Lord Jesus, I also renounce the sins of my fathers here [or my mother, my grandmother, what have you]. I renounce their sins of [be specific, as in, "their rage, their sexual sins, their alcoholism."] I utterly renounce and break with the sins of my family line. I plead the blood of Christ over those sins, so that they may not have a hold on me. I renounce them and break with them utterly.

Breaking the Stronghold

We begin to break the enemy's hold on us through the presence of "agreements." By this I mean places in our own hearts that have made a deep agreement with a feeling, a thought, a sentence. If you have struggled with something for years now, there are probably agreements along the

lines of: "I'll never get free of this," "I am such an \$%#@," "Who cares anyway?" "It's too late," and a host of others. Those are agreements, and they serve as a kind of permission for the enemy to keep you in bondage. So you must break them. In addition to these, there are the agreements with the sin itself: "I am filled with rage," "I am a drunk," "I am gay." They can even "feel" biblical but, friends, you do not want to be making agreements with your sin. You are dead to sin and alive to God. You are the dwelling place of Jesus Christ. You are forgiven and dearly loved. So you must break the agreements you've been making here, in this area. Some will be obvious to you; others require the presence of the Holy Spirit to reveal them.

Spirit of God, search me, know me, reveal to me the agreements I have been making in this area. I renounce those agreements now. [Be very specific.] I renounce the agreement that [What is it? "I'll never get free?" "Rage is just a part of me?" "It's too late?"] I break these agreements in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ. I renounce them. I renounce every claim they have given the enemy in my life. Jesus, my Deliverer, come and break these strongholds. Set me free in this very place.

Lord Jesus, show me every companion agreement operating here. I renounce the agreement that I'm alone, that no one will protect me. I renounce the agreement that I am dirty and disgusting. I renounce every agreement with shame. I renounce the agreement that I can never be forgiven. Spirit, show me what to pray, reveal these agreements.

This is how we undo that dynamic about letting the sun go down on these things and the enemy getting a foothold (Ephesians 4:26-27). Bit by bit you are recovering parts of your heart. You are taking them back from when you gave them away. This erodes the claim that you gave the enemy in your heart. Yes, terrible things may have happened to us, but we are the ones who made these agreements, these resolutions, these vows, and we're not going to see victory in that area until we renounce them.

I will be honest—if you've given your heart over to something many times over, you've given it a good stronghold, and if it is also tangled up in issues of wounds and sin, it's going to take some time to untangle and heal this, but it is worth the work. Don't just bury it. It's worth going into those dark places and those murky waters and working through it. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us of everything. Everything.

Having broken the agreements and renounced the sin, we often find that we have to be quite intentional in commanding the enemy to leave. "Submit therefore to God," wrote James the brother of Jesus, "resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Much of what we have been doing up to this point is submitting to God, bringing these specific issues under the rule of Jesus by renouncing the sins, breaking the agreements, sanctifying these places back to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Now comes part two of this verse: resist.

I bring the blood of my Lord Jesus Christ right here, in this very place. I renounce every claim I gave the evil one to my life right here, in this very place. And I bring the blood of Christ now

against the strongholds and against the spirits operating here. [Sometimes you will need to be firm and specific: I bring the blood of Jesus against all spirits of addiction, of alcoholism, all spirits of rage, of homosexuality, and so on]. I banish these enemies from my life now—from my body, my soul, and my spirit. “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). I resist the devil here and now and I command these spirits to flee in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord.

Ask the Spirit to guide you. If you will stick with this and let the Holy Spirit guide you, you can be free.

Lord, forgive me for giving place in my heart to resentment, to lust, to anger, to alcohol. Forgive me for giving place in my life to resignation and self-reproach and shame, to fear and doubt and control. I renounce it now. Come, Jesus Christ, and take your rightful place in my heart and in my life here. Come and set me free here, in these very places. I plead your blood over these sins, and I break every hold I gave my enemy here, in the name of Jesus Christ.

As you do this, you erode your enemy’s claims to keep you in bondage. By the way, your enemy is not going to like the fact that you are about to get free. He will try to discourage you from praying like this. He will try to distract you (the phone will ring, you’ll suddenly be hungry, you’ll feel like doing it tomorrow). He’ll try to make you feel like, *this is so stupid, I can’t believe I’m doing this out loud*. He’s going to make you feel like *this isn’t working* or *this isn’t going to work; now I’m becoming one of those nuts*. Just push through all of that.

I bring the work of Jesus Christ once more against you [shame, rage, fear, sexual sin, resignation, etc.] and I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to go to the throne of Jesus Christ in his mighty name. “It is for freedom that Christ has set you free” (Galatians 5:1). I claim my freedom now in the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus, I ask you to sanctify me through and through. May my whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). Sanctify me through and through, in this place, in this issue.

Healing the Brokenness

Now for the best part: the healing. God wants to make you whole and holy. He promises to heal the brokenhearted. So now you invite Jesus in to heal the wound, to love you in this place, to restore your soul, to heal this memory. You invite him into your past.

Lord Jesus, I invite you into my wounds and my brokenness. [Again, don’t be vague and general; be very specific.] Jesus, I invite you into the day I was abused. Come into my shattered heart, my shame, come into that moment in my life. I ask you to cleanse me here, to heal my broken heart and make me whole.

Linger in this place in prayer. Listen. Pay attention. Often Jesus will bring up something necessary to your healing. For example, suddenly you feel the anger toward your abuser—Jesus is showing you that you need to forgive.

Jesus, I forgive my brother for abusing me. I release him from my rage and I give him over to you.

Sometimes you'll feel the shame and self-rejection.

Lord Jesus, come into this shame. I renounce self-rejection. I renounce despising myself because of all that has happened. I forgive myself as well. Come and heal me.

Sometimes you will feel the young places in your heart crying out for love or for protection.

Lord Jesus, gather the young and frightened place in my heart into your loving arms. Come and find me here, in these very places. Gather my heart into your love and make me whole.

As you are inviting Jesus into your wounds, what is so very beautiful is the fact that quite often—not every time, but more than you'll expect—Jesus will show you what he is doing; you will see him come. Call it seeing with your mind's eye or Christ using your imagination or seeing with the eyes of your heart or your spirit—however you want to describe it. Often you will see Christ come back into your past. He may take you by the hand and lead you out of that room. You might see him step between you and the one who wounded you, or he might simply tell you, "You are forgiven, you are safe, I love you."

Healing doesn't necessarily have to be dramatic. Oftentimes it is very quiet. Jesus simply comes as we invite him to, and though we may not "see" him or "hear" him, he comes, and we sense a new peace or quietness in our soul. Our heart feels better somehow. The important thing is for us to give him permission to these wounded places, invite his healing love, and wait in prayer for him to come. Do this with each memory of wounding, with each event (ask the Holy Spirit to guide you). Often I will pray Isaiah 61 as I do this:

Lord Jesus, you have come to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God. Come and heal my brokenness right here, Lord; free me from this captivity, release me from all darkness, bring your favor here in my soul and bring your vengeance here against my enemies. Lord, you came to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. I ask you to do this in me—comfort me where I am hurting; bestow on me a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. Come in this memory, in this wound. I receive you here.

Many times Jesus simply says, "Let me love you." We need to open our hearts up to his love. As we do, it allows him to come to this very place. Linger there and listen; ask for the healing grace of Jesus Christ over and over again. He comes, dear friends, he comes.

