

Called into Freedom

I. Intro →

A. My story...

1. Curious in Middle School
2. Heard gospel clearly a few times
3. Freshman year w/ math teacher
4. Prayed with my sister
5. Truly believe that I trusted in Jesus to save me
6. But in some ways it seemed to get worse instead of better
 - a) Depression
 - b) Self Mutilation / Loathing
 - c) Suicidal thoughts
7. If I was a Christian now, where was the freedom? The change?
8. Do you have a similar story? About you? A loved one?

B. Everyone needs to be rescued...

1. Every person is born with a fallen nature predisposed toward wrongdoing (Gen. 6:5; Romans 3:23). We call this sinful nature.
2. Sin isn't just breaking moral codes like stealing or lying
3. We often don't view pride, stubbornness, lack of love, self-centeredness, and distrust of God as sin
4. Sin is anything less than God's perfect design
5. Perfect design = is to love him with all of our heart, mind, and soul.
 - a) All the time...
6. Obviously, we cannot do this. I don't even know what it means, really.
 - a) The reason we cannot do this is b/c we "died" in Adam
 - b) We are born in this world spiritually dead (not sick)
 - c) Another metaphor: enslaved to sin, desperate for rescue

C. We need FREEDOM. We need salvation

1. That's what this sermon series is all about
2. Our first sermon was about how God rescues us from the PENALTY of sin (death)
 - a) "Redemption" = the price paid to bring us back to God (Eph. 1:7).
 - b) "Propitiation" = turning away God's wrath (1 John 2:2).
3. Our second sermon dealt with how God brings us into new life as seen in the resurrection, which rescues us from the stain of the old life and the dread of hopelessness and shame
 - a) The greatest wonder of Scripture is not a physical miracle but the spiritual miracle of conversion (regeneration)
 - b) "New creation" = being remade in Christ's image (2 Cor. 5:17).
 - c) "New birth" = made alive in Christ (John 3:3).
 - d) "Expiation" = removal of sin and its impact on us
4. I began with those two sermons primarily b/c of the season of Palm Sunday and Resurrection Sunday.

5. Today, I want to give some foundational information answering the follow question: *Jesus said that if the Son sets you free (from sin and death), then you are free indeed. But why, then, don't I feel free? How do I effectively apply the FREEDOM of Christ to my life? Why can't I change?*

D. This is a question that is near to my heart, b/c it's a question I've had...

1. I want to tell you today what I wish someone explained to me 30 years ago. Namely, that salvation happens in three tenses of past, present, and future.
 - a) Justification (Past): Freedom from the penalty of sin
 - b) Sanctification (Present): Freedom from sin's power
 - c) Glorification (Future): Freedom from sin's presence

II. *John 12:24–25, [24] Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. [25] Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*

A. After Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, before his crucifixion, he had this encounter with his disciples

1. Jesus was looking to his death as a kernel of wheat
2. Then he explains what he expects of those who desire to follow him:
 - a) Don't love your life in this world so much that you are willing to lose eternity
 - b) If you want to follow Jesus, then you need to lay aside your desires and embrace his desires instead (his will, not yours)

B. In this passage, we see a big picture of what freedom is all about → surrender

1. Surrender to God's eternity vs. the world's temporal state
2. Surrender to God's leading vs. your desires
3. Surrender to dying to yourself instead of living for yourself

C. Paul summarized it this way: *Galatians 2:20, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

1. To surrender to Jesus is to yoke yourself to him in his death, burial, and resurrection
2. To surrender to him by faith is to trust in his work on the cross
3. It is to acknowledge that you want to be dead to your own desires, and you now live by faith, desiring to do what God wants for you
4. It is to daily remember God's love for you and surrender to that love when your flesh doesn't want to
5. As a young person, I was eager to yoke myself to Jesus to not go to hell, but I didn't want to yoke myself to him for the daily decisions of life
 - a) Who to date, what to do or not to do, how to act, what to pursue

III. Let's push into these three tenses of salvation and freedom to help explain

- A. When you read the NT, you see that salvation is used in three ways: "We have been saved... are being saved... shall be saved."
- B. Justification (Past). The moment you surrender to Jesus you are saved. You are justified

1. *Romans 5:1 - Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
2. Justification = being completely right before God b/c he has given me Jesus' righteousness and given Jesus my sin (swaps our bank accounts)
 - a) *"Just as if I'd"* never sinned & done everything perfectly like Jesus
 - b) The moment you surrender to Jesus and follow him by faith, some dramatic changes take place within you. There's no probationary period
 - (1) Forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:38-39).
 - (2) New creation (2 Cor 5:17)
 - (3) Imputation of Christ's righteousness (Rom. 4:5-6).
 - c) This is received...
 - (1) As God's free grace (Rom. 3:24).
 - (2) Accomplished by Christ's blood (Rom. 5:9).
 - (3) Received by faith, not works (Gal. 2:16).
3. I stand at the door and knock. Salvation is like letting Jesus into the house, which is your heart and soul & giving him ownership
4. You might not feel the changes, but they are true in the heavenlies
 - a) When you get pregnant, you might not "feel" like a parent right away, but you are a parent, and you will understand that new identity more and more
5. That's the past tense part of salvation and freedom.
- C. There's also a future tense → Glorification (Future)
 1. Glorification: Final freedom from the presence of sin.
 2. The final and ultimate state of believers, where we are perfected and transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, free from sin and suffering, and fully participating in God's glory.
 - a) You've been justified... you will be glorified
 - b) *Rom 8:30, those whom he CALLED he also JUSTIFIED, and those whom he JUSTIFIED he also GLORIFIED.*
 3. The war is on, but there are still skirmishes going on while the enemy gets cleaned up.
 4. Jesus is coming back to bring us to himself → our future hope!
 5. In our glorification we will at last be granted freedom from the very presence of sin in our flesh, against us, and around us
 6. Your glorification is coming – either upon your death or his return
 7. You will be saved from sin's presence → no more tears, no pain
- D. But what about TODAY? I want freedom, real freedom... today.
 1. Sanctification: Progressive freedom from the power of sin today
 2. Three Aspects:
 - a) Upon salvation we are instantaneously justified
 - b) Upon our death or his return we will experience glorification
 - c) Today we must grow in grace and knowledge, killing sin in our daily lives (2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 3:13-14).

- E. When I consider my testimony, I think that I was JUSTIFIED when I was in high school, but I wasn't embracing a life of sanctification
1. God was willing... calling... wanting more of me... it wasn't his fault...
 2. <Tell my story from freshman year of college → a song>
 3. I knew God could save me... but did he love me? Was he that kind of good? Did he want a relationship with me beyond salvation?
 4. If he truly loved me, then I could trust him... I finally gave up and told him that I would follow him for real...
 5. I started reading Matthew... I started praying... I started to change
 6. As I was reading, God would convict me of sin... I would have to choose how to respond: confession, repentance, & prayer <or> refusal
 7. And then something else happened... God started asking me to give up things that weren't necessarily sinful
 - a) This is far more difficult → the first thing was video games
- F. One day, about a year later, I heard a sermon on Hebrews 12:1–2
1. *[1] Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (ESV)*
 2. The metaphor here is running a race. Jesus is at the finish line. He's holding the crown of life. You're already IN the race (you're justified). You will finish the race upon your death (glorified).
 - a) But will your run be one of freedom?
 3. The speaker talked about eliminating sins.
 - a) In our race metaphor, sins would be blatant things you can't be doing if you are running the race around the track
 - (1) Me and the Sermon on the Mount
 - b) Before we knew Jesus, "We chose sin at every turn of the track" because our fallen desires were in control (Rom. 7:18–19).
 - c) Now, in Christ, the Holy Spirit, deposited at regeneration, empowers us to "put to death the deeds of the body" (Rom. 8:13).
 - (1) We have the power to say NO to sin for the first time!
 - (2) We have the ability to stand up under temptation
 - d) And when we fall, we can freely confess and repent, bringing hidden sins into the light (1 John 1:9) and being cleansed
 - e) The more we embrace the simple obedience of **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the weaker sin's grip becomes
 - (1) One day you wake up and realize you don't really struggle with that particular thing anymore
 - f) We surrender our sins when we say NO to their siren's call
 4. But the passage doesn't just talk about sins. It also talks about weights, entanglements that slow us down.

- a) These are like the vines wrapped around our feet, the backpack you are trying to carry: the things that distract you, pull your focus, numb your heart, that you don't want to give up
 - (1) They aren't necessarily sinful
 - b) Hebrews's call: "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles" (Heb. 12:1).
 - 5. As I listened to the speaker he simply questioned, "What is slowing you down? What habit, relationship, or mindset pulls away from you running the race hard for Jesus?"
 - a) I immediately knew what it was for me → video games
 - b) I realized in that moment that God was giving me an invitation:
 - (1) I could continue as is, still be used by him, experience his grace, and still go to heaven → he wouldn't force me
 - (2) Or I could surrender this thing that wasn't sin, but it was a distraction. It took my time, my thoughts, my affections
 - c) An athlete removes anything that drags him down (they used to compete naked!)
 - (1) Would I sever this habit? Would I run less encumbered?
 - 6. After church I went home, canceled my account, deleted the game from my computer, and experienced a blessing and freedom hard to explain
 - a) Yes, over the years there have been times I tried to play games again, but after a month here or a week there I simply realized that I still cannot handle it.
- IV. Freedom begins at surrender. Freedom continues with surrender. Until the precious surrender of death. If you want freedom today, it happens when you stop fighting God.
 - A. Coming to Christ is like letting Jesus into your house and signing over the deed
 - B. At first, you are okay with him just being in the living room
 - C. But then he starts to point out that he wants to throw out those dirty magazines over there in the box, or that you tend to gossip a lot
 - 1. Those things are hard... they require surrender (but lead to freedom)
 - D. Then he points out that you spend a lot of time on Netflix or playing games. You zone out on social media a ton. He suggests you should consider releasing those things too.
 - 1. Those things are hard too... they require surrender (but lead to freedom)
 - E. But then he asks what's in the closet... You swallow hard
 - 1. These are the hardest things to release. These are the encumbrances that burden us, enslave us even though we are free in Christ.
 - F. If the Son has set you free then you ARE free indeed (justified, glorified)
 - G. Jesus wants you to experience more freedom, But it costs your surrender
 - H. In the coming weeks, we are going to begin wrestling with difficult things
 - 1. You will face a crossroads that you might not want to embrace
 - 2. Jesus won't force you, but he is inviting you to deeper freedom
 - 3. Are you willing to embrace the spiral staircase of surrender?
 - 4. Are you willing to toss aside every sin, yes, but also every encumbrance?