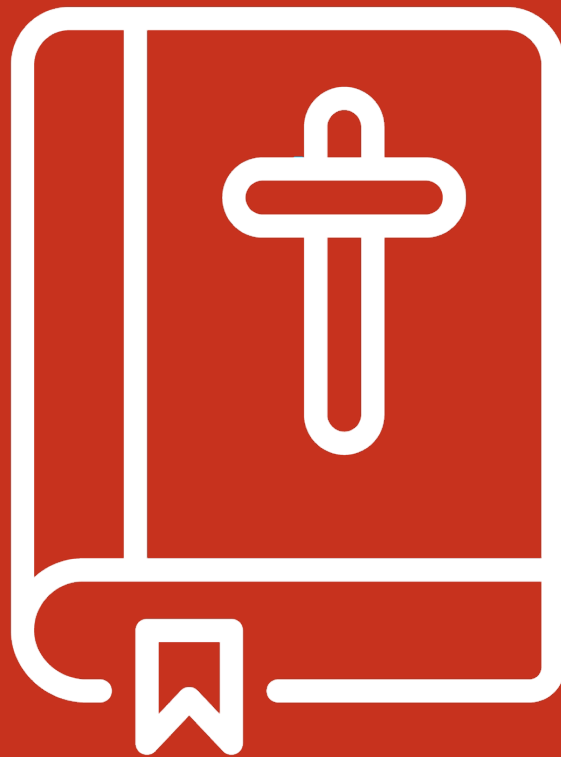


A Series of Short Messages with Big Truths

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES

Issue Six



FREE INDEED

Jimmy D. Brown

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Much of what I'm sharing in this message has been deeply shaped by the teaching of John Piper. While I use a different illustration and express these truths in my own words, the core ideas and insights are ones I first learned through his ministry. It is with deep appreciation that I acknowledge the theological framework in this message is drawn from his work.

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES #6: *Free Indeed*

*[The following transcript is from a ten-minute message
shared with an audience at a local gathering.]*

Shortly after we were married back in 1994, Paula and I made a decision that led to the most cringy, awkward moment of our entire marriage.

We agreed to sing a duet at church.

Now, let me be clear: Paula can sing. She was in choir and madrigals in high school – she’s a beautiful alto with perfect pitch. But I can’t sing. My vocal range is somewhere between “*injured goose*” and “*dying smoke alarm*.” But for some reason, we decided to go for it.

We picked one of our favorite Steven Curtis Chapman songs, “*Remember Your Chains*,” grabbed a karaoke-style accompaniment track, and practiced like we were about to go on tour.

What we didn’t realize was that we had signed up to sing on *Homecoming Sunday*. Which mean the place was packed – not just with the usual crowd, but with everyone who had ever attended the church and was still in the land of the living.

When we started singing, my voice cracked from nervousness. Paula heard it – and lost it. She started laughing. I started laughing. She started laughing harder. People in the congregation – God bless them – started laughing with us. Or probably at us.

We tried to recover. We really did. But it was a vicious loop of my cracking voice and a room full of laughter. And after what felt like the longest three minutes in human history, we slunk back to our seats and hid behind our Bibles. The pastor came up, paused, and all he could say was, “*Ah, those chains.*”

We did not stay for the potluck lunch after the service ended.

But the song itself is a beautiful reminder that Jesus has set us free. Listen to these words from the chorus – don’t worry, I won’t sing them...

*Remember your chains
Remember the prison that once held you
Before the love of God broke through
Remember the place you were without grace
When you see where you are now
Remember your chains
And remember your chains are gone*

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES #6: Free Indeed

Having recently celebrated Independence Day, I thought it would be fitting to talk about the freedom we have in Christ this morning. Let me read a few verses from John chapter 8. Listen to what the Bible says in verses 31-37...

[31] So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, [32] and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." [33] They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" [34] Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. [35] The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. [36] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (ESV)

Here's the main point I want to make today:

*Christian freedom is being released from sin to joyfully
follow Jesus in loving, satisfying obedience.*

We're going to get to that in just a moment, but first let me point out what freedom is not...

1. You're not free if you are forced to do something you don't want to do.
2. You're not free if you want to do something, but you don't have the opportunity to do it.
3. You're not free if you have the desire and chance to do something, but not the skill to do it.
4. You're not free if you have all of these, but after doing something, you regret it.

Let me give you a quick example...

Let's suppose you're a thrill-seeker, and you want to race your car to the top of 14,000 feet Pikes Peak in Colorado at up to 140 MPH with its more than 150 turns. This is a real annual race!

On your way there, your car breaks down. You're not free to race because you don't have the opportunity.

Or, you get there and realize you don't know the first thing about racing hairpin turns on a mountain. You're not free to race because you don't have the ability.

If you get there and have the skill to race, but as soon as you start up the road, you realize one tiny mistake and you're going over the edge ... so you chicken out. You're not free to race because you don't have the desire.

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES #6: Free Indeed

Now, let's suppose you get there, have the skills and find it absolutely thrilling to race those curves, so you put the pedal to the metal and off you go having the absolute best time of your life, enjoying every second.

But, unknown to you, the brakes of the car you are driving are broken, and you are soon going over the edge no matter what you do to try to stop it. Are you free? Are you free indeed? No way. It may feel like freedom while you're enjoying yourself, but you're not free at all. You're going to be dead in less than a minute.

Freedom isn't just wanting to do something, being in a position to do something, and having the ability to do something. Real freedom is all of those things plus no regrets over what you do. You're not really free if you have the desire, opportunity and ability to do something that you later wish you hadn't done.

What the Jews in the text we read earlier didn't understand and what people around the world today don't understand is this:

When you haven't been released from the penalty and power of sin through faith in Jesus, you're not free no matter how you think, feel or act – you're enslaved to a master that will destroy you.

Only Jesus offers full and forever freedom. He alone can break sin's controlling, enslaving influence in us so that we are empowered not to sin, and instead we can enjoy – without regret – all of the pleasures and privileges God has for us in knowing Him. We can say "yes" to blessing after blessing without ever wishing we hadn't.

Jesus gives us real freedom at all four levels...

1. Desire. He changes our hearts so that we *want* what is good, right and true – that which is pleasing to God and puts us under His blessings. He gives us new affections so we love God rather than sin.
2. Opportunity. He makes it possible for us to follow Him into new, real, abundant life by removing the barriers of guilt, condemnation and separation from God, as well as our bondage to sin itself.
3. Ability. Through the Holy Spirit, He empowers us to lovingly and joyfully live in obedience, providing us with the strength to do what we could never do on our own.
4. No Regrets. He fills our lives with peace and purpose, so that walking in God's will leaves no shame or sorrow—only the fullest and longest-lasting joy, even when life is hard.

That's what it means to be free indeed.

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES #6: *Free Indeed*

*Christian freedom is being released from sin to joyfully
follow Jesus in loving, satisfying obedience.*

Do you see? Freedom is always from something and to something else. When we trust in Jesus...

- He sets us free from a life of shame, regret, joylessness, emptiness, addictions, fear, pride, doubt, lusts, anger, jealousy, every kind of sin and eternal death at the end separated from God. And...
- He sets us free to a life of honor, purpose, strength, contentment, victory, humility, security, faith, peace, hope, love, joy, every kind of righteousness and eternal life at the end in the very presence of God.

That doesn't mean we won't struggle or suffer—but it won't last forever. Sin, Satan, and death no longer rule over us. No matter what comes, we belong to a new Master who leads us for our good.

Restraint free. Regret free. Really free.

Now, the people in today's passage said, *"We've never been enslaved—how can you say we'll be set free?"* But they were hurtling toward destruction without brakes. We all are, without Jesus. As He said, *"Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."*

If you've never put your faith in Jesus, let me speak to you for just a moment. You may feel free—doing what you want—but deep down, you know you're not. There's regret you carry with you. There are habits that rule over you. There's emptiness inside of you. You're not free—but you can be.

Jesus came to break your chains. He lived the perfect life you couldn't, died the death you deserved, and rose again in victory. He took your place so you can be forgiven and set free—from guilt, shame, sin, and death—to know, love, and enjoy God forever.

That's what Jesus meant when He said, *"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* He frees us from wrath and empowers us to live transformed lives here and now until we get to be with God forever.

If you want that freedom today, ask Him when we pray—He'll do it. Freedom comes through faith—receiving what Jesus graciously gives us to enjoy without guilt. And if you have questions, come talk with me after.

For those who already know Jesus, remember what He said:

"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (vv. 31–32)

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES #6: Free Indeed

How do we walk in this freedom? We live by what He tells us.

1. We obey His commands.
2. We embrace His truth.
3. We believe His promises.

We let His words find a place in us—guiding, shaping, freeing us to enjoy all that comes with knowing Him. That’s real freedom—doing what we were created to do so that God is honored in us and we are happy in Him.

Christian freedom is being released from sin to joyfully follow Jesus in loving, satisfying obedience.

Whatever sin you're struggling with—it's not your master. Turn to Jesus. He'll give you strength to overcome it. No more shackles. No more prisons. You are not a slave anymore.

Listen...

Jesus has set us free from all enemies. We were enslaved to sin. We were deceived by Satan. We were cursed by death. But we are no longer prisoners! Through Jesus, we can say “no” to sin, say “get behind me” to Satan and say “you have lost your sting” to death.

So, remember your chains—and remember: they’re gone.

Because if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.

Let’s pray...

Heavenly Father, we bow this morning and praise You for being our Liberator. You have delivered us from the domain of darkness into the marvelous light of Your grace. The Son has set us free from sin, Satan and death ... they have been stripped of their power over us. Help us to walk each day in this freedom that is ours. And for those who are still being ruled by sin, we ask You to work in their hearts today so they see the beauty of all that can be freely enjoyed in the gospel – and so they ask You for it this morning. To You be all the glory, for You alone are worthy of our affection and adoration. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

Reflection Questions

1. What stood out to you from this message as most meaningful? Why?
2. What was the central idea or theme from this message?
3. What Bible verses or passages were used, and how do they support the message?
4. How does this message relate to your life right now?
5. In what ways did this message convict, encourage or inspire you?
6. What good news did you receive in this message?
7. What did you learn about God that is praiseworthy in this message?
8. How was grace and the gospel presented in this message?
9. What do you think God wants you to do as a response to this message?
10. With whom do you need to share or discuss this message?

PRAY IT

- *God, I praise you because...*
- *I confess that I struggle with...*
- *I thank you for...*
- *Please help me...*

How has God spoken to you through this message?

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Connecting With Me

If you have questions about any of the enclosed material, or if you have any other questions about life with Jesus, please reach out to me by using the *Contact* form at the bottom of the page at *JimmyBrown.com* (making sure you enter your email address correctly). I will personally reply back to you, usually within 24 hours (excluding holidays or weekends).

NOTE: There are a number of free resources available at JimmyBrown.com, and I regularly add more to the site. Check back often for additional materials to access at no cost.

Other Connections

- Social media (personal page): www.Facebook.com/thejimmydbrown/
- Daily devotions: www.FinishLineFaith.com or www.Facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/
- Travel / mission vlog (with my wife, Paula): www.TheMissionAmerica.com

*If this resource has been helpful to you, please reach out and let me know.
And please pass this document on to other people who may, by the grace of God, be helped too.*