

Freedom in Christ

WALKING IN FREEDOM EVERYDAY

Praise God that we have been on a journey of discovery of who we really are in Christ, week by week we have learnt truths about how God sees us and what He believes about us. We have had the opportunity of looking at where our unbiblical thinking comes from, the hold it can have upon each one of us, the pain and anguish that we go through day by day just because we have allowed wrong thinking to take a hold in our minds (remember the aeroplane!).

We have looked at our emotions and realized that there is nothing wrong with expressing our emotions, they are God given and are not just for our emotional well-being but also for our physical well-being too. In Psalm 139 it says “We are fearfully and wonderfully made.”

As we have unpacked and reflected on where our emotions come from, we realize that many of our negative emotions come from fear about who we think we should or shouldn't be, and the fact that we've allowed our wrong beliefs to become 'truth' in our thinking. Let us continue to choose to believe the truth about what we read in scripture and live in the freedom that it can bring.

Let us remember that we are on a journey of maturity, a journey where we need each other to be growing, in honesty, integrity and truth as well. Let us continue to develop and grow in our relationships within our small groups so that we can grow in maturity.

Hebrews 5 v14. “But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”

Today we are thinking about walking in freedom every day, not just a one off thing that happened sometime in the past, but a day to day realization of the truth we must choose. As we become more mature, we can train ourselves to

think, believe and live out the truth day by day. We need to remember dear friends, that this is not just asking God to 'Zap' us, it is however, a daily hour by hour minute by minute desire to ask God, by the power of the Spirit to help us to recognise the lies, choose to believe the truth, and therefore live in the freedom that it brings us.

For most of us we have had a lifetime of believing and thinking the wrong things about ourselves, our situations, and God, and it will take the rest of our lifetime to choose to depend on God and believe the truth. No matter how many obstacles there are in our past, our relationships, or our present situations, we cannot blame these difficulties for our lack of growth and freedom. Nothing and no-one can prevent you and I from becoming the person God wants you and I to be, except ourselves.

How many times have I heard and indeed thought for myself "if only that hadn't happened I could be", I urge us all to take hold of – 2 Peter 1 : 3 - "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness."

- God has given us all we need to grow in him.

It is however impossible for us to mature if we have not first taken hold of our freedom in Christ. Maturity is a process of growth that continues as we apply ourselves to knowing God and His word. A person may have been a Christian for 4 days or 40 years but they are still maturing. Freedom, however, is a position we take, in response to Christ's victory over sin and Satan, for example - the lies that we believe about ourselves are not true.

I'm rubbish

I'm dirty

I'm unlovable - to name a few.

We don't grow into freedom in these areas, we take possession of freedom by the authority we have in Christ. Whenever we realize that we have been deceived by believing the lie and therefore trapped in our wrong thinking and

behaviour. However, freedom and maturity are linked, if we do not first take hold of our freedom we cannot mature.

So how are we going to walk in this freedom day by day?

By taking personal responsibility

We need to confess, repent and submit to believing the truth, no one else can do this for us. We can pray for each other, and encourage each other but ultimately, we are each responsible for our relationship with God and therefore, claiming the freedom that He offers. Remember He delights in that fatherhood relationship - that's what he created us for.

Knowing the Basic Truths

That in Christ we are righteous. Do you and I know what truth is, or is it just 'head' knowledge? To put it another way, does it feel as if you need to do a good job for God to accept you? Are you still feeling dirty or useless? Do you believe the condemning thoughts you have? Even though you know the truth that God never ever condemns you.

Romans 8 v 1 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Faulty Thinking

Renew your mind with truth and truth will set us free. We need to continue to find strategies to help ourselves grow in what our mind believes. So every time you start to find your mind wandering or start to think the lie you've believed "I'm rubbish" - you need to make a conscious effort to stop. Actually, out loud say 'No' - break the sentence, even clap your hands to distract yourself. Or write on cards and place them around the home, on one side write the faulty thinking - 'the lie' - on the other - 'the truth' - about what God says, perhaps a scripture. Look at these when wrong thinking comes along, and read the scripture out loud. There is nothing magical about these, they are just helpful ways I can

suggest to renew our minds. Psychologists tell us that it takes around six weeks to form or break a habit. So let's continue to find ways of breaking the habit, it is really worth it. To enjoy the freedom that it gives us.

Training ourselves to distinguish between right and wrong thinking.

Hebrews 5 v 14 "But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." A significant part of training ourselves will involve spotting the lie we have been believing and putting in place the structure I've just talked about, constantly replacing the lie with the truth. Remember that it takes time to demolish a stronghold and get rid of negative thinking.

Let's look together at an example that might help us see how we take possession of our freedom and build strategies to maturity. The book calls it "A Stronghold Buster".

Thought:

Life will be awful after I have left school - I'm a failure, I don't know anything, can't do anything well - I just can't do it.

Lie: I believed that the best years of life were when you were at school. Why? Because I had heard time and time again people saying it. However, I had red hair and freckles and children delighted in calling me 'carrot top' and spotty. As a child I 'always' had stomach ache, a physical working out of an emotional pain to allow me to stay away from school. I never relaxed at school, never gained socially or academically what was on offer. Even ended up in Great Ormond Street hospital to have tests!

I dreaded leaving school because of the 'lie' that I believed about how useless I would be, beyond school. After all, if these were the best years, how would I deal with the worst years? I remember thinking life didn't seem worth living at one point. Needless to say, I did leave school and very

soon after had a near fatal car accident that really showed and taught me so much about God.

I can honestly say at the age of 17 my faith and relationship with God grew the most it ever had, and probably ever since, in a one given space of time. I also heard, 'saved for a purpose' - I felt like saying - aren't we all!

However, over the years, because of significant people God has placed in my path, especially my husband, I have chosen to listen to what God would say to me through him, and through believing and taking hold of scripture. I can honestly say that the best years of my life have been since I left school, and the most my life changed would have been when I was 17 and sustained the pain and ordeal of a broken neck – life changing for good - because I found God in a new and significant way.

I have chosen to listen to what God says to me through people, and through believing and taking hold of scripture, and I can continue to enjoy the journey God has placed me on, which is so exciting, rewarding and I, like you, can grow in possession of who God says I am. I am not a failure or useless because I did so badly at school, I am precious and special to God, and he delights over me with singing. Oh how easy I make it sound, but it isn't, like you with your lie, I do have to take possession of the truth and choose to believe it and enjoy the freedom of each day with Jesus and all you lovely people. Let us press on to reach the goal together.

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature would take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.” Philippians 3 v 13-15.

Taking one day at a time we can do it! I urge you in your small groups, in your relationships with each other to continue to help each other expose those lies, that faulty thinking. Find helpful scripture for each other, make yourself

accountable to each other, pray for each other. Speak words of truth into each others minds and situations. I urge us all to come before God and seek his forgiveness for the wrong things we have thought, and for the blame that we may have put on other people for our behaviour.

Let us enjoy the freedom of being like Christ wants us to be, he died for that, for you and me. Let us pray that Satan would have no hold over our minds, that we may grow in freedom and maturity.

Preached at Crawley Baptist Church by Sandra Warner on Sunday 25th January 2009