

Freedom in Christ

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[0 : 01] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 4. And I want us to think about this section, really, from verse 14 on to verse 30.

If we could read maybe at verse 16, And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Now, from verse 14, we come to this new section in the Gospel of Luke, where Jesus begins his public ministry, and he begins dealing with people in their own particular situation.

[1 : 12] And we find him going around. We read about that in the first part, from verse 14, how he went about through all the surrounding country, and he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

As he was going from place to place, he taught in the synagogue. And, of course, the synagogues were, I suppose, very like our own church. It was a religious meeting place, and they weren't particularly ornate buildings.

They weren't buildings like the temple at all. They were very just ordinary, plain buildings. And one of the features of it, at the end of where there was actually a pulpit, that's where Jesus' place, where Jesus read and preached from.

But that end, there was an archetype chest where they kept the Word of God, in scrolls, not like we have in the Bible, but in that scroll.

And that's how it tells us. They unrolled the scroll, where Jesus unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written in the prophecy of Isaiah. And that end, the end where the, like the pulpit and where the chief seats were as well, you'll find that Jesus sometimes, he was rebuking the Pharisees for their struggle to get to the chief seats.

[2 : 33] They would be at that end. And that end of the synagogue was always built towards Jerusalem. It would be the, what would be termed the Jerusalem end of the synagogue. And there was a place where several people could stand, but in the center, this, like this pulpit.

And the difference, I suppose, between ourselves is that when the Word of God was read, the reader stood. But when it came to teaching from it, he then sat down.

And that's what we find it saying about Jesus. In verse 16, he stood to read. And then, verse 20, when he had rolled up the scroll and he gave it back to the attendant and he sat down and all the eyes of the congregation in the synagogue were fixed upon him.

This would have been a, quite a unique day for Jesus because this was his return home. This was the town that he had grown up in and he had spent the first 30 years of his life.

And here he was back in the synagogue that he went to as a boy growing up, as a teenager, and as an adult. But the day, this day was different because he wasn't in the pew, but he had come down to teach.

[3 : 51] And it would have been quite a remarkable experience for not just those who were listening, but for Jesus himself. And it's always a remarkable thing for any person who has maybe been brought up in a particular church to find themselves preaching there in the very, so familiar with pews and then find themselves in the pulpit preaching to people that they know so well, grown up with since he was a little boy.

And so it was quite a unique day for the Lord Jesus. Now, of course, when he opens and rolls the scroll, he comes to a particular portion deliberately from Isaiah chapter 61.

And of this particular part of the Bible in Isaiah is speaking very clearly of the Messiah. And Jesus is showing the people the type of person the Messiah is going to be.

Because as we've said before, the Jews were expecting when the Messiah would come that the Messiah would be somebody who would be a political ruler. He would be a person who would deliver them from the oppression of Rome, the Roman Empire.

And that once again, they would become a great nation, that they would become supreme rulers. They would be strong militarily and politically, economically, in every way. And the Messiah would lead them into this, like almost into again, into the promised land, into the time of great victory.

[5 : 26] But Jesus is showing them the Messiah. That's not the type of Messiah. The Messiah, and he reads from us here who the Messiah is to be, what his ministry will be, how he will live his life, the kind of person he is going to be.

And it's very obvious that Jesus reads this, that he is reading about himself. It's really quite a remarkable situation. And that we find that the Messiah is the one who is going to preach the gospel to the poor, he's going to heal the brokenhearted, and he's going to proclaim deliverance.

But before we go any further, let me ask you today, have you discovered this Jesus for yourself? We'll see this just in a little bit as we come to, when we come to conclude, that there were people, in fact, by and large, the congregation there, rejected the message of Jesus.

And still to this day, people are rejecting the message of Jesus. People who are sitting under the message of Jesus are still rejecting. You've got to ask yourself this question, and only you can answer it.

It's a personal one, that you have to answer in your own heart before God. Are you rejecting Jesus, or are you accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior?

[6 : 51] Have you discovered your need as Savior? Have you discovered that life is really too big for yourself? You see, as we go through life, sometimes we can feel so confident, maybe when we're younger, so persuaded that we are in control, so persuaded that we can, by our own whatever wisdom or strength, cope in life, and meet the challenges of life, and go through life, and feel that we are calling the shots.

But you know, it doesn't take much, and it happens in the experience of so many people that they're brought in a moment to see that actually they're not in control, that they're not as strong as they thought.

They are brought to discover that life is far more than they ever realized, that its challenges are far bigger than they realized, that its problems and its issues are such that they're brought to situations and places that are simply beyond them.

And life as they know it has been shaken. And many a person has come to that place and point and discovered that the Lord that they had really little time for is the Lord that they really need.

And that is what the Lord is saying to us all. Look, I'm here for you. I want to take you. I want to lead you in life. I want you to put your hand in my hand.

[8 : 20] I want you to give your heart to me. I want to be the Lord of your life because I want to enable you to live life to my glory and also to live it in a way where you will come to know more and more of what it is to enjoy me.

Because you see, there are many issues in life we can't deal with ourselves. Take, for instance, the issue of our sin. We can't deal with it. I think one of the things we often try and do with our sin is ignore it, forget it, bury it.

Push it away and say, well, that's in the past. There's no past with God. God hasn't forgotten about it. We may have forgotten about it, but God hasn't.

And the thing is, we are all answerable to God. We all have this responsibility. That's one of the reasons that Jesus, or it is the primary reason that Jesus came into the world and he says, look, I'll deal with it.

I'll deal with all these issues and all these things, all these wrongs, all these hurts, all these injustices, all these failings and failures in your life, and all packaged together in this sin.

[9 : 31] And that's what Jesus did on the cross. He took our sin upon himself in order that we may have freedom and have this deliverance. Jesus came into this world to be the friend of sinners.

Christ didn't come into this world 2,000 years ago to display God's wrath. God's wrath, in a way, Romans 1 tells us that, has already in a measure been revealed.

Jesus came to deal with God's wrath. He didn't come to display God's wrath. He came to display God's love and his mercy and his grace and his forgiveness.

Because God's wrath, in a measure, has already been revealed and will be revealed in a far greater way. But Jesus has come to be the Savior.

That is what he is today. One day he's going to come back as judge. But in the meantime, he is here as Savior. And today he is offering himself again to you as Savior.

[10 : 42] I am the great Savior of sinners, is what Jesus Christ says. Then he spells out for us here a wee bit about his role as the Messiah.

And he says here, because he has been anointed to proclaim good news to the poor. Now, any person who is living in poverty, that's one thing they want to hear, is good news.

Now, while I believe that it is actually speaking about those who are in poverty, their environment and their own personal circumstances are such that they are in poverty, it isn't confined to that.

I believe that it is also speaking, and maybe even more so, speaking about those who are poor in spirit. Those who feel their own poverty of passion in relation to God, who feel that they do not have within themselves that which can justify themselves before God.

The Pharisee in the temple, he tried to justify himself before God because he thought he was right. He thought he was good enough. The publican, on the other hand, he couldn't try and justify himself before God because he knew he had nothing.

[12 : 00] And that's why he cried out, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. So Jesus is saying, for those who are poor, those who feel that they don't have, those who feel that their own goodness isn't enough, he said, I've come with good news.

I have come to proclaim good news to the poor. That's what we were saying just a few moments ago. If you're here today, my dear friend, and you feel that you've got nothing, and you're there before God, and you're looking at your life, and you say, you know, I really, I really am aware of my own failings and failures.

The Lord is saying, well, I'm here. I've got good news for you. I can deal with these things. I can help you. I am the provision for life that you need.

I will deal with these things that you cannot deal with yourself. And so he's saying to you, look, you might be bankrupt today. You might feel empty spiritually, but I am here with riches, eternal riches, spiritual riches.

And then he goes on to say, he has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives. Those who have, now again, the history of Israel very often spoke about captivity.

[13 : 24] Those who were in exile. And it must be an awful thing to be taken captive to another place, to another country, amongst foreign people with a foreign language and foreign ways and a foreign culture.

Everything is so foreign to what you are. And spiritually, that's how we are by nature. We are in, we have been captured by sin and by Satan.

And the thing is, we are shackled by powers that we don't understand. You see, in the next verse, Jesus goes on and he talks about to set at liberty, that's after, he has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and then a little further down, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

It has much the same meaning. To be captured, to be captive, to be living under oppression. It's an awful thing. But you know, if you or I, supposing this had been our lot in life, that we had been imprisoned, or that our, say for instance, our parents had been imprisoned, or our parents had been taken into captivity somewhere, as happens in many places, and you were actually born there and you lived the first few years of your life in a captivity or in a prison with no freedoms, you wouldn't understand what real freedom and liberty was.

Because all you would know is what you have experienced in life. You wouldn't know another way of life. And you know, that's how it is for people as we are born into this world by nature.

[15 : 16] We are born in captivity. We are born in sin. We are shackled in this way. And we don't realize it. And it's not until the freedom of the gospel is brought before us when the prison bars are opened and the chains that hold us down are released that we begin to discover the freedom that is in Jesus.

And it's then that we see how shackling sin is. sin, which remains part and partial of our life, is forever dragging us back down, forever bringing us again so that we experience in a measure, although we have the freedom and deliverance of Jesus, we know that sin brings so much bondage into our lives.

And so this is what Jesus has done to set us free. And he's also, we're told, to the recovering of sight to the blind.

And that's what Jesus did. He did it physically over and over again, but he's also doing it spiritually. I once was lost, but now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see.

And that's what Jesus is able to do, is bring a spiritual vision to our eyes, to give us the focus that we've never had before.

[16 : 44] And you might be here today and you might know this Bible inside out. You might know the verses of Scripture, all the key verses. And if somebody said to you, how do I become a Christian in the same way as the man said to the jailer, the jailer said, I should say to Paul, what must I do to be saved?

You can say to them, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. You know that verse. And you can tell somebody who might ask.

But the problem is that right up to now, you yourself have never really believed. You believe it at one level and you believe that Jesus is Savior. You don't have a problem believing that.

But the problem is actually believing it savingly. Coming into a personal union and relationship with Jesus. And you know the thing is there's only one person who can take you that step that you can't take yourself.

You must come to him and say, Lord, open my eyes. Open my eyes. And remember with the man, the blind man, Bartimaeus, when Jesus dealt with Bartimaeus, Jesus said to Bartimaeus, what is it that you want?

[18 : 06] And Bartimaeus said, Lord, that I might see, that my eyes might be opened. And Jesus opened his eyes. And the very first thing that Bartimaeus would have seen in this world was Jesus standing there.

And that's what happens when a person comes to faith. They see all of a sudden sufficient of the way of salvation. They might not understand everything, but they see enough to know that this is my Lord.

This is the one for me. And they're given this faith to cast themselves upon Jesus. And that's the Messiah that he is. That's what he's offering and that's what he's proclaiming.

And then he says to, finally there, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. And this, of course, this imagery here that we have here is speaking about the year of Jubilee, which we read about in Leviticus.

That was a momentous year, bringing in the 50th year, the end of the 49 years. And it began with the blowing of the trumpet. It was the year of the new start.

[19 : 12] It was the year when the debts were cancelled out, null and void. It was the year when people were set free, captives were set free, it was the year of the new beginning.

It was a great time. And it was a wonderful system that the Lord had for his people. And Jesus is applying this spiritually. And he says, look, I'm the one who's ushering in this new beginning, this new start.

And that's what salvation is. It's a process of life. You're carrying on in life. And then all of a sudden, here is this place and point where Jesus becomes your Lord and your Saviour.

And while you're carrying on in life, it is a new beginning. Although it's still the same life, things have changed. When I say a place and a point where the Lord becomes your Saviour, I don't want to bring people into bondage thinking, oh, well, I can't give a place and a point.

I can't tell. Somebody says, what was the place, what was the point when you became a Christian? And you can't say. Don't get into any bondage over that because lots of people, I would imagine that many people in here today cannot give a day or an hour when the Lord worked in their heart.

[20 : 31] But one thing they do know, like the other blind man who said, the one thing I know is that whereas I was blind, now I see. And for many people it is like a gradual process.

It is like how you would describe the dawn. You know how it is pitch dark. And gradually the night gives way to the day.

And you can't say at what particular point, oh, that is when the daylight came. It is so gradual. It is just this opening up as it were. And the dawn is coming in.

And the light is dispelling the darkness until eventually there is no darkness. And you are seeing clearly in the light. And for many people that is the way it has been.

Where there is this gradual awareness. Now of course from God's point of view there is a point. But from your point of view it can be gradual or it can be sudden.

[21 : 32] But what is important is that you see sufficient of the Savior to be able to say, he is my Lord and he is my God.

But finally the sad thing that we see here is we mentioned it earlier on. Despite the brilliance of Christ's preaching and teaching and despite the fact that the people were amazed at the learning of Jesus, they marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth, they wouldn't accept him or believe in him.

you know the old saying and you know it's a true one, familiarity breeds contempt and it certainly was true of Jesus because they there said, what on earth are you talking about?

We know who you are. We know. The thing is they did know but they also didn't know. they knew his history but they didn't know his birth.

They didn't know the full picture. They thought they did. And that's part of the problem in life. In digressing here, it's a problem we so often make in our judgments of situations and people.

[22 : 49] we think we know, we don't. We only know what we see but there's a whole lot that we don't see and so we form our judgments and we make our assessment of people and situations on false information.

That's why the Bible is always saying to us, do not judge one another because you don't really know. And that's what these people were doing. They were judging Jesus and they didn't know.

They thought they knew. but they only knew a bit of the story. But because they had grown up with Jesus, they were saying, we know who Joseph is.

You're the carpenter's son. We know your mother. We know your brothers and your sisters. We read about that in Mark's Gospel. We know your family. We know all about you. And they would not accept him.

And you know that whole area of familiarity, breeding, contempt, do you know it still rings through to this day? With the Gospel, with people's familiarity with the Gospel, maybe it's not contempt, but it's breeding rejection.

[23 : 57] Because they've heard it so often, so often, it's just like water of a duck's back. Oh, I've heard this over and over again. My friend, guard against that.

This is precious. Every time we come under it, it's new. It's the same word, but it can be made new. Because this is what God is able to do with it. Making old things new every single time we come under it.

These people, they wouldn't accept Jesus, so they were wanting him to perform a miracle. Right? They said, come on, you've been doing miracles all round. Do one for us. And Jesus wouldn't do one for them because he knew they were asking for the wrong reasons.

they were so filled with prejudice and unbelief that they wouldn't have believed supposing he had performed twenty miracles one after the other.

They wouldn't have believed and he knew that. But Jesus is saying to them, here I am. But then he gives them a warning and he says, you see the Old Testament is full of pictures of what the gospel is going to be about.

[25 : 08] And Jesus is warning them, look, the gospel is going to be taken from you and given to the Gentiles. And he highlights two incidents in the Old Testament, in the prophecy, in the reign or the prophetic time of Elijah and Elisha.

And Jesus is saying, you know, there were loads of widows in Israel. And God brought Elijah out of Israel, leaving all these widows behind and he went into Zarephath and he provided for this widow woman inside him.

In a neighboring place, but a place which was outside the favor and the privileges of the gospel. And it was the same with regard to Elisha.

There were many lepers in Israel, but the Lord bypassed all these lepers and he went into Syria, the enemy, and there healed through Elisha, Naaman, the Syrian.

And these were little pictures of what God was going to do through Israel's rejection of the Savior, where the gospel was going to go out to the Gentiles.

[26 : 22] Just as the healing went out to Zidon and the healing went to Syria. So, and the provision went to Zidon and the healing to Syria. So, Jesus is using these as an illustration of what can happen and what did happen.

He's saying to them, salvation is by grace, not by birth, or by genealogy. People were thinking, well, we're Jews, we're safe enough, and Jesus is saying, no, it's personal, it's individual, it's by grace.

And Jesus is hitting them with the truth. I think it was Augustine or somebody that said that truth, people love the truth when it enlightens, but people hate the truth when it rebukes.

And that certainly was true for these Jews that day because the truth was rebuking. And so, they take Jesus out, they take him up to the top of the hill on which the city was built, and they're going to fling him off the cliff edge and kill him.

That was often used as a form of execution amongst other nations. It wasn't historically so in Israel, although we find in the time of Amaziah, remember how he ordered the killing of 10,000 Edomites by throwing them off a cliff.

[27 : 47] It was a terrible way for people to die, to be thrown off a cliff. 10,000 of them were thrown off. You can read about it in 2 Chronicles chapter 25. But that's what they were going to do.

And in a miraculous way Jesus just goes out from them. It doesn't explain how. But you know this, I love what it says, passing through their midst he went away.

I would love to have seen their faces when they reached the edge of the cliff. There they're marching and they've got him. And somehow there's this crowd and they're all going and they've got hold of him. And somehow in a miraculous way he goes out.

And they reach the cliff and everybody says, where is he? He's gone. Do you know what that is saying to us? If you go forward three years to the Garden of Gethsemane and you see the soldiers and Judas and all of them coming, the high chief priests and all these people coming to take Jesus.

And Jesus says to Peter, I could call right now on twelve legions of angels to be delivered, but I'm going to give myself up. There, it wasn't time to give himself up.

[29 : 02] They had hold of him, but they couldn't take him because he's the son of God. He was the son of man, the son of God. They couldn't take him because it wasn't his time.

And that shows us in the Garden of Gethsemane, he could have done the same then, but his time had come and he gave himself up. And then we read just in conclusion, verse 31, and he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and he was teaching them on the Sabbath, and they were astonished at his teaching for his word possessed authority.

And so on. See what he did? I love that. They took him to kill him in Nazareth because he was preaching and they didn't like what he was preaching. What did Jesus do? He went straight off to another synagogue and he went to preach.

And Jesus is showing us a kind of faithfulness that we are required to live out as well. Because you know it's so easy when we get knocked back to give up.

And we're going to say if we face these difficulties and we try to do something, oh well, that's it, I'm going to give up. Well it's one thing about the Christian faith, it's not for quitters.

[30 : 16] And it's not for quitters to be working in the gospel. And you know it's one of the things, I talked about how we mustn't be judging one another.

We ought not to be judging gospel workers either. Because when you look at things naturally, supposing you're looking at a field and you say to yourself, right I'm going to take that field and I'm going to deal with that field and I'm going to plant vegetables or whatever in that field.

Here's a rough field. it's full of stones. There's so much you've got to clear the stones and maybe you'll get two or three people along to help you.

And some are clearing the stones and then they're coming in and turning the ground even before you get anywhere near planting anything. And you know it's the same in the kingdom of God. It's the same in gospel work.

There are some people and they're going to be, the work that God is going to give them is going to be like those who are cleaning the stones. Shifting away the stones, preparing the ground for others.

[31 : 22] See the Lord has a big picture and he's using different people and sometimes we pass judgment upon those whose ministry is lifting stones and throwing them away. They don't get any of the glory in the reaping and in the harvesting that some others do.

But they've got the hard work and they're working away there and people are criticizing and say oh nothing's happening. Man isn't to judge. When God gives somebody a work to do you have to be faithful.

We all have to be faithful to that particular work. But it's all part of God's big picture and so we've always got to remember that. We are to be faithful to wherever we've been set and whatever we've been given to do.

Just as Jesus was faithful in all his ministry may we then seek this Lord and seek to follow this Lord every day of our life.

Let us pray. Oh Lord our God we give thanks today for the word of God and we pray that it may speak into our hearts in power.

[32 : 31] That it may impact us for good. Lord may we not go away from here and say well that's nothing. May we realize that God's word is something and that God is the great God of heaven and earth who in his love and his grace and mercy has sent his son to be the saviour of sinners.

Bless us we pray. Bless all our homes and our families. All our loved ones near and far we commit them to thy care. Take away your sin for Jesus sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.