FREED FROM THE PAST

How to Relate with Your Past from the Truth

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INTRODUCTION

Still Standing in Yesterday

Some time ago I sat with one of my daughters in ministry. She loves God. She serves Him with a willing heart, and the call of God on her life is plain to see. Yet as we spoke, I saw that something in her was still standing in yesterday. The things of her past had not stayed in the past. They were in the room with us. They spoke in her answers, in her fears, and in what she expected of people and of life.

I did not tell her to forget. I did not tell her that it did not matter. It mattered. What I did was help her relate with those things rightly, to see them from the truth and not from the pain. And as the light of the Word came into that conversation, I watched yesterday lose its grip.

When she left, I could not stop thinking of the many. There are many like her. There are believers who are saved, filled with the Spirit and serving in the house of God, who are still answering to yesterday. There are those who were wounded at home. There are those who were betrayed by people they trusted. There are those who cannot forgive themselves for what they did. There are those who carry a name someone gave them as a child, and they have lived under it ever since. They sing of freedom on Sunday, and on Monday the past is waiting for them at the door.

This book is for them. It is for you.

Hear me. Most people believe that the answer to the past is time. Give it time, they say, and it will heal. But time does not heal. Time only buries. A wound that is buried is not a wound that is healed; it is a wound that is waiting. Others believe the answer is to forget, and they spend their strength trying not to remember. But a memory does not leave because you command it to leave. God's answer to your past is neither time nor forgetting. God's answer is truth.

Look at the first public words of the Lord Jesus in Nazareth. He stood up in the synagogue, opened the book of the prophet Isaiah, and read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to

preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18).

When He declared His ministry, He did not name the crowds. He did not name the powerful. He named the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives and the bruised.

Two words in that verse carry the whole message of this book. The first is "deliverance". The Greek word is *aphesis*. It means a release, a sending away, a letting go. It is the same word the New Testament uses for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28). And hear this: Luke uses it twice in the one verse. Deliverance to the captives is *aphesis*. To set at liberty them that are bruised is, word for word, to send them away in *aphesis*. The release that deals with sin is the same release that deals with what sin has done to you.

The second word is "bruised". The Greek is *tethrausmenous*. It does not describe a small mark on the skin. It describes something crushed, broken in pieces, shattered. Jesus knew exactly whom He had come for. He came for people whom life had broken.

Now go back to the place Jesus was reading. In Isaiah 61:1 the prophet says, "he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives." The Hebrew word for "liberty" there is *deror*. It is the word of the Jubilee. In Leviticus 25:10 God commanded Israel to "proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." In the fiftieth year the trumpet sounded. Land that had been sold returned to its families. The bondman went free and returned to his own family. And Jesus closed His reading with "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:19). He was announcing the Jubilee.

Here is the wonder of it. In the Jubilee, the bondman did not work his way out. He did not earn his release. He did not wait until he felt free. His freedom was proclaimed, and the proclamation made it so. The trumpet

did not ask how long he had served or what had been done to him. It simply announced: you are free; go home.

This is why the title of this book is *Freed from the Past* and not *Getting Free from the Past*. The proclamation has already been made. Jesus did not come to begin a long process by which you slowly escape yesterday. He came to proclaim a release, and then He went to the cross and paid for it. If you are in Christ, you are not trying to become free. You have been freed. What remains is for you to know it, to stand in it, and to walk in it.

So here is the governing truth of everything you will read in these pages: **You are not what happened to you. In Christ the past has lost its right to rule you; now learn to relate with it from the truth.**

Hear the words carefully. I do not say the past did not happen. It did. I do not say it did not hurt. It did. I say it has lost its right to rule you. And I say there is a right way to relate with it. That is what I helped my daughter in ministry see, and that is what I want to help you see.

In the chapters that follow, we will hear the voice of the past and learn why it keeps speaking. We will see what God did when He made you a new creation, and why what happened to the old man has no claim on the new. We will stand with Joseph as he names his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and learn from him how a man relates with his past without being ruled by it. We will face what others did to you, and see what forgiveness truly is. We will look at how you grew up, and meet the Father who has taken you up. We will deal with what you yourself did, and receive the mercy that made Paul and Peter what they became. We will learn how to stand when the memories rise. And we will walk out free, with our faces forward, carrying a testimony that will set others free.

I have not written this book to help you manage your past. I have written it to show you that in Christ your past has already been dealt with, and to teach you to live like it.

The trumpet has sounded. Come, let us go home.

CHAPTER

1

The Voice of the Past

Many believe the past is behind them. They say it with confidence: "That is behind me now." They moved house. They changed churches. They grew up, married, raised children, entered ministry. Years passed. And because the years passed, they believe the past is silent.

But the past is not silent. The past speaks.

It does not speak with a loud voice that you can point to. It speaks quietly, from inside. It speaks in the way you react before you have had time to think. It speaks in the fear that rises when someone raises their voice. It speaks in the suspicion you feel when someone is kind to you. It speaks in what you expect from people, in what you expect from life, and sometimes in what you expect from God. You did not give it permission. Yet it has been speaking for years, and you have been answering it.

This chapter is about that voice. We cannot walk free from what we have not recognised. Before we hear what God has done with your past, we must hear what your past has been saying.

Who Told Thee?

The first question God asked man after the fall was a question about where he stood: "Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9). The second was a question about a voice.

Adam answered, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." And God said, "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" (Genesis 3:10–11).

Hear the question carefully. God did not ask, "Are you naked?" He did not ask, "How do you feel?" He asked, "Who told thee?" God went straight to the source. Until that moment Adam's knowledge of himself had come from one voice, the voice of the One who made him. Now

another voice had spoken, Adam had believed it, and what he believed was driving him. He was afraid, and he hid.

That is still the order. A voice speaks. A man believes it. Then he acts on it. Fear and hiding are never the root. They are the fruit of a voice that was believed.

This is why I have so often said that people deal with the fruit instead of the root. A man says, "I have this anger. I have fasted over it. I have prayed over it. It keeps coming out." He is fighting the fruit. A woman says, "I cannot trust anyone. I want to, but I cannot." She is fighting the fruit. The question God asks is not about the anger or the mistrust. It is the question He asked Adam: Who told thee?

How the Past Speaks

Let us name the ways the past speaks.

It speaks through the home you grew up in. The house you left long ago is still speaking. If love in that house had to be earned, you are still trying to earn it. If voices in that house were raised in anger, a raised voice today can make a grown man a frightened child again. If you were never praised, you may still be waiting for someone to say "well done", and you may resent everyone who does not.

It speaks through the wound. Someone you trusted hurt you. It may have been many years ago, but the wound has a voice, and its message is always the same: do not trust, do not open, do not let anyone close. So you guard yourself, and you call it wisdom.

It speaks through the name you were called. Some were called stupid. Some were called a mistake. Some were told they would never amount to anything. A word spoken over a child goes deep, and it keeps speaking long after the person who said it has forgotten it.