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## FREE INDEED ??

Maybe you saw a recent news report about a man in a Colorado national park. He was explaining to authorities that his wife had plunged to her death off a cliff. However, he had no explanation for the "X" that he had marked on his map of the trail where she fell. Maybe he was "finally free" -- but not for long!

In John 8:30-38, an inability to understand afflicted some of the people who gladly heard Jesus teach. Many "believed" in Him. But Jesus knew some were merely in agreement with what He said, but had not actually committed themselves to following Him. This is true of many who sit in church pews across our land, who merely "profess" to believe in Christ but do not actually "possess" Him by faith.

Verse 31, "**so Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples.**" He's making a distinction between those who were actually His disciples and those who were not. How can you tell the difference? Well, "disciple" means learner and follower.

Verse 32, "**and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.**" First, those who have been re-born by the Holy Spirit have had their hearts, minds, and wills changed by God's truth. Second, their changed beliefs irrevocably leads to changed behavior. They have come to the Light of the world, and left the darkness of sin behind. They receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, and live a new life in Christ.

But the earth-bound Israelites protested, "*we are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved by anyone. How is it that You say, you will become free?*" They were trusting in genealogy instead of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. That's like people today who think their family heritage or history in a church will somehow save them, or some ritual they experienced as a child, or some response they made in an evangelistic meeting. How can earthly experiences save you? The Bible says only Jesus saves! Only trusting in what Jesus has done for you will save you -- not trusting in what you have done!

And if you're truly trusting Jesus, you'll obey His Word. You'll be set free from sin and self. Supernaturally changed. And God's word will be your guide -- as you live out His truth by the power of the Holy Spirit. John Bunyan, author of Pilgrim's Progress, wrote inside the cover of his Bible: "Either this Book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Book." But how does God's truth set you free? Knowing the truth of God's Word helps you understand the three "tenses" of salvation in Christ Jesus.

**-1- You have been saved.** That's called "justification." When you trust Christ as Savior and Lord, God declares you legally justified before God. Until then, you have been lost in the darkness of sin. But in Christ, you are **FREE from the penalty of sin**, paid by Jesus' sacrifice of His life on the cross.

**-2- You are being saved.** That's called "sanctification" or the process of being made holy like Christ. This means you are **FREE from the power of sin**, because of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This means you no longer "have" to sin, because you've been released from your natural bondage to sin. Because you have new spiritual life in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, you have the power to say NO to sin.

**-3- You will be saved.** That's called "glorification" and refers to the new heavenly bodies believers will receive at the final resurrection when Jesus returns. This means you will be finally **FREE from the presence of sin**, because you will dwell with Jesus forever in the new heavens and earth.

Knowing the truth about salvation, you can live in the freedom of knowing Christ. The truth sets you free! As you have been justified in Christ, there is no longer any condemnation for your sins. Its paid for. As you are being sanctified in Christ, you have the power of the Holy Spirit to become more like Him, as you read God's word, understand it, and live it out in your daily life. All by His power. Though you live in a sinful world and are tempted daily by sin, you don't have to give in. You're free from sin's power. And you have the hope and promise of finally being fully saved from sin when Jesus comes again.

Meantime, how can you "live free" in Jesus? He said, *abide in My word and you will truly be My disciples.* First, be a learner. KNOW the truth. Put God's Word in your mind. And BELIEVE what God says, not the lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Then, be a follower. LIVE it out. Trust and obey, all by the power of the Holy Spirit. If you truly have faith in Jesus, you will follow Him, living for Him, by His power!