

4- The Resurrection and Freedom

Freedom is a human cry and a widespread desire all over the world, especially in this day and age. This century is called the century of **'human rights and freedoms.'** History is nothing more than conflicts arising out of the search for freedom, whether political, economic, or social. Freedom is a **vital principle**, in fact, a **basic psychological need** without which man cannot develop or realize himself, implement his decisions, or preserve his privacy. These are all significant psychological needs that are necessary for man to experience inner peace, health, and stability.

There is no doubt **that God created us free**, and our freedom came at an exorbitant cost to Him. However, there is a **fake freedom** that is close to slavery, for ***"He who sins is of the devil."*** (1 Jn. 3: 8) There is a **genuine freedom** that our Lord speaks about, ***"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*** (Jn. 8:32)

There is no doubt that the death and resurrection of Christ grant us this genuine effective freedom, but how do we attain it?

1- God created us free :

God created us *in "His own image"* (Gen. 1:27) and because God is eternal, **He instilled in us an eternal rational spirit**. Because God is the "Logos", or infinite wisdom, **He bestowed on us a mind** and the power of speech. And just as God is free, **He granted us freedom**,

that is, He commanded us to pursue what was good and constructive and warned us against the destructiveness of sin. He then left us free to choose. Because God is also **holy**, He created us in His image with respect to righteousness and **holiness**. We went on in this way for a while in the Garden of Eden.

In order for us to have the opportunity of making choices and the freedom of taking decisions, God allowed Satan to fall and remain alive so that we could choose between walking with God or with Satan and be under his destructive authority. Man chose, in the Garden of Eden, to follow Satan and to yield to his temptation in order to have his eyes opened so he could become like God, and thus entered the darkness of ignorance and sin. His human nature became corrupt and he fell under the sentence of death.

However, God did not abandon us in this state, but made a plan for our salvation because He knew the weakness of our nature and the craftiness of the enemy. **This plan consisted of the following stages :**

- a- **The promise** : God promised that the woman's Seed should crush the head of the serpent when He told it, ***"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."*** (Gen. 3:15)
- b- **The preparation** : God prepared humanity through the patriarchs and prophets; He prepared a special people and purified it from idol worship until the coming of a pure virgin, **the Virgin Mary**. **The Old Testament was translated** into Greek in the third

century BC, in preparation for the spread of the gospel in a world that would use the dominant Greek language everywhere when the Greek empire would be in power. The **Roman Empire established a huge network of roads covering the continents** which they made secure with their powerful armies. This facilitated the travels of the apostles and the spread of the gospel of salvation to all the known areas of the world at that time. He even sent **philosophers and thinkers** to the pagans; these published their books that called for the practice of virtues and in which they voiced their expectation of the appearance of a Savior.

- c- **The birth** : The Lord was born of the Virgin Mary after the Holy Spirit had come upon her, purified her, and sanctified the matter taken from her to form the body of the Lord. The babe born of her was called 'holy', 'Jesus' (that is, the Savior), 'Emmanuel' (God with us), 'Christ' (the long expected anointed Messiah who would save man).
- d- **The ministry** : The Lord spread the message of salvation, the light of the Gospel, the teachings of the Kingdom, asking people to repent *"for the kingdom of God is at hand."* (Mk. 1:15) This is the same message carried by the apostles to the whole world (Lk. 10:11).
- e- **The redemption**: Christ's divinity, united with His humanity, was able to renew our corrupt nature, just as His humanity united with His divinity was able to die in our place. This solved the two problems that were the result of the old fall: **the sentence of death, and the corruption of human nature.** The Lord

gave us a new nature through the holy sacraments; He removed the sentence of death and forgave us, freeing us from bondage to Satan and from the yoke of the sin within and without us.

- f- **The resurrection** : In it, we arose with the Lord and sat with Him, in faith, in heaven; paradise was opened to be followed by the eternal kingdom. *"And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly man."* (1Cor. 15:49) We therefore cry out with the Lord at the resurrection, *"O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1Cor. 15:55-57) We were therefore set free from original and actual sin and have the divine promise: *"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."* (Rom. 6:14) We have freedom in the face of the dominion of sin, and the image of God has been restored in us.
- g- **The ascension** : Our thoughts and hearts ascended with Christ to heaven because *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."* (Col. 3:1-4) *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* (Lk. 12:34)
- h- **The coming of the Holy Spirit** : With Him, we can become servants with the disciples of the Lord as we

remember what He said, *“Tarry in the city of Jerusalem (prayer) until you are endued with power from on high.” (Lk. 24:49) “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” (Gal. 5:15) “Be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph. 5:18)*

- i- **Membership in the Church** : Those who have been baptized and anointed with the Holy Chrism, who are rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ through Holy Communion, who renew their promises through repentance, have become living members of the Body of Christ, the Church. They are united with the Lord of glory, the head of the Body, with His saints in heaven, the invisible members, just as they are united with the rest of the believers who strive with us on the path of salvation and in the service of the kingdom.
- j- **Fruits and gifts** : The Lord gives the fruits of His Holy Spirit to those who have been filled with the Spirit of God. *“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Gal. 5:22)* He also grants them gifts for the ministry, *“the word of wisdom... the word of knowledge... faith... gifts of healings... the working of miracles... prophecy... discerning the spirits... different kinds of tongues;” (1Cor. 12:8-10) “but one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” (1Cor. 12:11)*

Through this perfect divine providence, man is saved and becomes a living member of the Body, serving with the

gifts the Lord gives him until he accomplishes his mission on earth and goes to paradise. On the last day at the Second Coming, the spirit is united with the body and man is raised with a spiritual luminous heavenly glorified body to soar and join the hosts of saints coming with the Lord on the clouds. He ascends to the heaven of heavens to spend a blissful eternity with the Lord in the heavenly Jerusalem after having been freed from the body of dust, from ingrained sin, from hostile Satan, and from the temptations of the world.

2- Absolute Freedom... a Delusion :

Young people imagine that there is such a thing as “**absolute freedom**”, but this is a great delusion for there are naturally limits to our freedom. Although you are free to own a car and drive it anywhere you wish, you are still subject to traffic laws, licensing, traffic lights, and safety measures. And although you are free to eat the kind of food you want in the quantities you desire, you are restricted by the kinds of useful foods and the appropriate quantities; otherwise, you will suffer many diseases.

That is why the notion of absolute freedom is a great delusion under which young people abroad labor, leading an immoral and sensual life. This is not freedom but a dangerous bondage that has removed them from the purity of holy matrimony and has led them into adultery and perversion. When they became addicted to sex, they fell prey to drug addiction and were led into crime. Some died because of AIDS or from a drug overdose; some went to prison because of crimes they committed; some were sentenced to death because they traded in drugs or committed murder.

Thus, we must not aspire to absolute freedom, for in reality it is a fake freedom, more closely akin to slavery. We need to search for true freedom, *“the glorious liberty of the children of God.” (Rom. 8:21)*

3- Genuine Freedom :

Genuine freedom means I can say ‘**No**’ to sin. But first, it means **the ability to discern and discriminate** between the lean and the fat, the constructive and the destructive. Therefore, genuine freedom needs the following:

- 1- **Enlightenment** : with the light of Christ and the gospel and through the work of the Holy Spirit so that I can tell wrong from right.
- 2- **Filling** : When I am filled with the grace of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit of God, I am able to despise the poisonous honey of sin. Therefore, the following are **the keys** to the life of young people :
 - a- **“Test all things; hold fast what is good.” (1Thess. 5:21)**
This means being enlightened, possessing discrimination and discernment, and a sound assessment of consequences.
 - b- **“A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb.” (Pr. 27:7)**
This means that spiritual filling and the indwelling of Christ imparts satisfaction and uplift so that a person loathes the noxious honey of sin.

And thus man can enjoy **genuine freedom**, a constructive disciplined freedom that builds him up in many ways:

- 1 **Spiritually** : through being filled with Christ, the church, and the Bible.
- 1 **Intellectually** : through reading, studying, contemplation, and sound thinking.

- 1 **Psychologically** : through the wise control of instincts, emotions, and habits.
- 1 **Physically** : through avoidance of cigarettes, drink, drugs, and an impure lifestyle.
- 1 **Socially** : through good relationships with all those around him.

4- Restrictions on Genuine Freedom :

There are important restrictions on genuine freedom, such as:

- 1- **The Holy Spirit** : who lives within us guiding and admonishing us, sanctifying and comforting us, leading us and granting us fruits and gifts.
- 2- **The conscience** : which is God’s voice within man, which reproves us for sin and alerts us so that we go back to doing what is right.
- 3- **The Bible** : whose light searches the heart and lightens the path of life; **“Your word have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” (Ps. 119: 11)** **“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Ps. 119: 105)**
- 4- **The teachings of the church** : providing general light on the path of the kingdom and constant warnings against sin and transgressions.
- 5- **Spiritual father** : who provides personal and direct guidance on the path of life and along its bends through the granting of absolution for sins and providing solutions for problems.
- 6- **The law of the land** : for the Christian subjects himself to the law of the land in accordance with the commandment **“Let every soul be subject to the**

*governing authorities. For there is no authority
except from God.” (Rom. 13:1)*

*We thus experience real freedom through the power of
the living Christ of the Resurrection Who dwells within us,
guiding our daily walk on the path of eternity and immortality.*