



# Beauty for Ashes

A decorative flourish consisting of a central horizontal line with symmetrical, swirling, scroll-like patterns on both ends.



## ***Day One: This is Freedom***

***1 Corinthians 2:1 – 5 (NKJV)*** *And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

I once saw a woman riding a horse with just a thin rope around its neck. The woman was in full control, the horse stopping and turning and going as directed. I remember thinking, *'That's a beautiful picture of us yielding to God, just directed and guided by a slender cord, totally controlled by the Holy Spirit.'*

Yet I felt the Lord speak to my heart, *'Mandy that is a lie, that horse is still bound, not in true freedom.'*

This is the subtlety of the lie we can be caught in. The hold is slim, the cord very thin but nevertheless to the horses mind, that hold is so big that a 500kg horse will yield to it.

Yet, *Where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom (2 Cor 3:17). Know the truth and the truth will set you free (Jn 8:32). Whom the son sets free is free indeed (Jn 8:36). It was for freedom I set you free (Gal 5:1).* These are some of the things Jesus - the Word - says about true freedom.

Freedom is a big deal in heaven. God is the most free Person there is and we are created in His image. He made us free, and He redeemed us to freedom. He seriously means for us to be free.

***Galatians 5:1 (BSB)*** *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.*

Then I thought about riding horses at liberty, where there are no strings and no holds - not even the slightest sense of control. The mind of the horse and rider are as one, in complete harmony of thought and motion. There is no hesitation, only complete yielding on both parts. Everything the horse has is at the disposal of the rider and vice versa.



This is the video Holy Spirit brought to my heart: Stacy Westfall's Championship Run 2006. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEaMI5PkLIM>

What a beautiful picture of what true freedom and yieldedness looks like! I realised that there cannot be true freedom unless there is a choice... unless we choose to step into it and believe the truth of our rider. To believe in His goodness, His vision and His love and care for us.

Freedom is not a slender cord. It is boundless, unconditional love and enduring mercy. It is the gift of grace.



There is no cord around you... nothing to make you choose to be directed, guided or controlled by Holy Spirit. This is complete freedom. You can respond to His direction or roam where you please. YOU ARE FREE! What do you CHOOSE to do with that freedom?

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## ***Day Two: No Bondages***

Following the picture God had given me of real freedom, I had another picture of myself. This time it was like I was surrounded in cobwebs of fairy floss. I felt so frustrated and closed in and trapped. It didn't matter where I turned, there I was, surrounded.

It was sticky but yet it was ever so gossamer thin... what looked so big to my mind and felt so big to my body, the Lord showed me, was a wispy lie that was so very thin. I was in fact bound by wispy nothingness, which even a child could break.

I realised that just as there was no cord controlling me in the first picture... neither was there a cord binding me in this one. The Lord was showing me that I am completely free... and so are you! He is not controlling us... and neither is anything else. Even when we feel trapped and bound in the lies and circumstances surrounding us, the truth is that we are in indeed completely free.

It is the essence of humility and surrender to declare your active belief in the truth of God's Word when everything in your life looks the opposite. When you feel sticky and surrounded and trapped wherever you turn... to believe that actually you are free... to believe that actually you are who God says you are even when it all feels and looks completely the opposite... that is humility. That is surrender. That is faith.

And what does God say about you?

**He calls you the hope of glory.**

Did you get that? He says that you are His hope... the hope of His glory being seen in this world.

***Colossians 1:27 (NIV) ...the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.***

I stand in the glory and power of the cross - this is my hope and my future. Christ in me, the hope of Glory. Amen.



## Soak Time

Have you felt the sense of being surrounded by 'sticky' lies? What was 'binding' you?

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Can you lay aside the 'stickiness' you feel... the sense of being surrounded or being trapped, and make this declaration of humility, submission and faith:

*I stand in the glory and power of the cross - this is my hope and my future.  
Christ in me, the hope of Glory. Amen.*

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### ***Day Three: God of the Living***

This year has been a tough year - you might have guessed - and fail I have, look foolish I have, been embarrassed, judged and accused I have. It has challenged all I believe and know to be true. I confess, things have gotten mighty dirty, down in the pig sty, this year.

To share these beautiful truths from the Father's heart is both my humility and my freedom. It is the hardest thing I have done in a long while. But what I perceive as false... even what others might see as false... pales into insignificance compared to what God says is true about me.

Honouring the treasure is another message but suffice it to say that my sisters and husband and kids have been the only ones at times this year to call out the treasure in me, to see Christ in me when I just couldn't. The pit was too deep for me to see the sky.

I was going to share my testimony, but I realised that that's really the wrong word. I was actually thinking of my past. However, a testimony is living and active - our God journey through life, new and growing every morning. My testimony has little to do with my past and much to do with my future.

I tried to write it and just couldn't. It felt grubby and shameful and not honouring to the price Jesus paid for me. It felt like giving glory to the dead, and inviting death to again wash over me. Lord knows I don't need to do that again! It is enough to say that, I know shame and guilt and worthlessness, very intimately. Fear has been my companion in life, far too often. So I knew that my 'testimony' was not the story of my life lived in this shame, guilt, worthlessness and fear.

I woke up one morning earlier in the year with this phrase in my spirit. *"Don't live like a dead woman - you are alive!"* So I went on a journey with Mary Magdelene to the tomb of Jesus. Mary and I have a bit in common, a hidden ugly past and the liberty of a beautiful saviour.

I was struck by the phrase the angel spoke to Mary as she cried at the tomb of her saviour, ready to anoint his body with herbs to embalm him in death forever. Aren't our customs backwards and often so contrary to God - we keep people dead, Jesus brings them alive. We anoint or embalm the dead, almost



bringing glory to death. Yet Jesus calls dead things to life. Our perspective is often all that needs to change.

So she is peering in there looking desperately for Her saviour, when the angel says to her, *“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen”* (Luke 24 5-6).

It was like I was suddenly captured by the truth:

**We will never find signs of life in the dead stuff of our past.**

The living is simply not found amongst the dead. God is the God of the living not the dead (Luke 20:38). It’s the whole reason Jesus came - to set us free from sin and shame, death and every work of the enemy in our life.



What have you considered to be your ‘testimony’? The ugliness of your past, or the life of your unfolding journey with Christ?

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## ***Day Four: You Being Dead***

I was tormented many times this year, thinking, *"I just have to die. These things of my past simply aren't dead if they can come back and bite me. I need to crucify my flesh."* Man, I got in a flap! I spent the year chasing about in my past trying to kill everything.

It was only yesterday that I came to a sudden realisation (some of us are slower than others). I was reading the Word and Colossians 2:13 pulled me up short where it says *"...and **you being dead** in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven all your trespasses."*

Oh wow - I was already dead!!! What a relief - you can't get any more dead than dead! I came from a place of death. My past before Jesus was already dead... I don't have to die again or try to kill it... I was born dead in sin. I couldn't resurrect it even if I wanted to! Not even Jesus tried that - He instead recreated me, made me new. He gave me a new life and a new home.

Immediately I was set free from my own foolish efforts and dismal failures to crucify my own flesh. I literally felt freedom, rest and peace wash over me.

The reason it was so painful and I felt like my past was alive and killing me is because it was. I was literally living death warmed over - it was bad the first time, and it got even worse after multiple visits.

### **Trying to live alive in death causes great pain to us.**

It's like trying to breath under water...which is how I often felt - like I was drowning. I felt like my flesh and emotions were pitching a fit and they were, because I was trying to live out of a place where there is simply no life.

The ultimate form of pride is not believing what Jesus says to be true, just because you can't see it. The ultimate humility is declaring your agreement with it when it doesn't look true.

*"It's not how you look that matters, it's what you see." Lisa Bevere*





Jesus never returned to the grave. *"He is not here He is risen."* The death He died, He died once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God, never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.

We are so busy, thinking we still have a part to play in this. Yet this was God's idea, His plan and we have nothing to do with it except to believe it, to become fully convinced of His faithfulness.

Jesus didn't even put Himself to death! He presented Himself as a living sacrifice, and sin killed Him - the weight of the entire sin of the world.

Every area that mankind will ever fall short, is met in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. *'It is finished'*, means sin is finished, it's hold on us is finished, and righteousness is granted to all who will believe that it is true.

## Soak Time

Have you ever believed the lie that you have to crucify your own flesh? How did you attempt to accomplish this and how did it make you feel?

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What has Holy Spirit shown you about the truth of your crucifixion?

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## ***Day Five: Eyes of the Flesh... Eyes of the Spirit***

**Hebrews 11:11** *"By Faith, Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised."*

Do we really believe that it is finished? Will we judge God faithful to complete what He began in us? To keep His promise? Do we really believe Him when He says, *"Their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more"* (Heb 10:17)? Do we really believe in the power of the cross?

God will never bring up your sins to you - He remembers them no more! If God doesn't remember, then the Holy spirit - the very Spirit of God - certainly won't bring them up to you, and Jesus never says anything that the Father didn't say, so you are never going to hear about your sin, your past, yesterday or last week, or the last minute where you failed (no matter how ugly) from God. When we feel condemned, it is not the work of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:1 says *"There is now therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."*

If we feel condemned, guilty and ashamed, it simply is an indicator to us that we are walking according to the flesh. That's because the flesh is dead and there is no life in it. *"For to be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and peace"* (Romans 8:6). Being carnally minded is seeing with natural eyes, through our natural senses and not with the eyes of our spirit - which is according to the Word of God - who God's Word declares us to be. His Word is the mirror of our Spirit man.

If you look carnally, you will see flesh every time. It will remind you of death and have a terrible smell. God only sees us after the spirit. Where will you set your agreement with?

You see it's a lie, a very gossamer, thin cord. We are not riding at liberty but held by a thin cord of control. That control would be coming from our dead past, not our live future. Satan can even trick us into thinking God is doing it! I am telling you God will not control you in any way. If He would, Eve would



never have had a chance to eat the fruit and every man would be going to heaven, for that is the ultimate will of God.

I am preaching to myself here - there could be no one else that needs this message more than me! Declaring belief in the truth is my only path to freedom. I believe You, Jesus, and align with your truth even if I feel the opposite and others 'see' the opposite. My only hope is to believe you.



If you look at yourself through the eyes of the flesh, who do you see?

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If you look at yourself through the eyes of the spirit, who do you see?

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Which is the truth? Which one does God see?

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