

## “Free Bird” by Lynyrd Skynyrd

Today is Easter Sunday ... a day for celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The resurrection is THE pivotal event in human history. I want to take a few moments this morning to help you understand the meaning and power of the resurrection in the context of our popular culture. Most people you know would associate the Easter Bunny and chocolate eggs with Easter ... because that’s what you see when you walk into your local Wal\*Mart, that’s what popular culture thinks of Easter. But, Easter is far more than eggs and baskets and a long weekend. Easter changes lives. The power of Easter, the person of Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, changes people for the better.

To help you understand that I want to connect a popular song from culture to Easter. So today we’re going to look at Lynard Skynard’s iconic song, “Free Bird” in the context of the resurrection of Christ. Huh? Lynard Skynard and Jesus? Yes. Listen, this song is a “break up” song. Everybody in this room has experienced the pain and emotional rollercoaster of a break up. If Jesus can’t help us when we’re breaking up, then He can’t help us at all ... but the GOOD NEWS is that Jesus CAN help us during a break up, and at each and every other moment of crisis in our lives.

So, let’s listen to the first bit of the song and decided, “what would Jesus say about ‘Free Bird’”?

[Play snippet #1] That’s the first 1:08 off the song ... no lyrics yet! I think most people who like this song like it more for the music, which is great in my opinion, than for the lyrics. But, the lyrics are SUPER GREAT! So, here’s the first verse ...

[Play snippet #2]

If I leave here tomorrow  
Would you still remember me?  
For I must be traveling on, now,  
'Cause there's too many places I've got to see.

So, this guy is singing to his girl, and it’s a break-up song. He’s headed out the door, too many places for him to see and she’s kinda’ holding him back. He’s a free-spirited bird who feels caged, and he’s just got to break free ... and nothin’s gonna’ be able to change that. So, he loves her, but it’s over, and it’s his fault and he’s so sorry ... classic break-up song.

Let’s look at this first verse, because Jesus wants in on this classic southern-rock song! Two things to say about this verse ...

## 1. Jesus makes me memorable.

Luke 23:39-43 (NLT)

[39] One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, “So you’re the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you’re at it!”

[40] But the other criminal protested, “Don’t you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die?”

[41] We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn’t done anything wrong.”

[42] Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”

[43] And Jesus replied, “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

A part of us, deep within us, wants to be remembered after we’re gone. We want to live a life of significance, leaving a positive mark of people. This criminal had wasted his life away, and hanging there on the cross, using his last words, he just wants to be remembered.

Jesus makes that a reality by making us a memorable person. Here’s what a growing faith produces in us:

- Our character is strong.
- Our commitments are lasting. [the guy in the song isn’t into commitment too much]
- Our contribution is generous.

Don’t wait, though, to your closing gasp to call out to Christ! The words of this criminal show us it’s never too late to get right with God ... but it’s awesome also when we know Christ today and begin building those memories now.

## B. Jesus scratches my itch.

Here’s what the guy in the song gives as a reason for breaking up: “For I must be traveling on, now,  
'Cause there's too many places I've got to see.”

He has an itch that she’s not scratching. For travel. For excitement. For ... something. There’s a restlessness in the human soul ... a thirst for the deep things of life. Here’s what Jesus said about that kind of thirst: John 4:13-14, 13 Jesus replied, “Anyone who drinks this *ordinary* water will soon become thirsty again. [14] But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.”

I think this guy, when he gets to Paris, or Detroit, or South America ... wherever he goes, he’s still going to be itchy for more ... thirsty for more ... and he’s right, that a

girl isn't going to satisfy him. Each of us has a God-shaped vacuum within us that can only be filled with a personal relationship with Jesus.

You want a relationship that's going to "bubble up" within you. Keep you refreshed and satisfied forever. And Jesus told the lady and the well, and he'd tell those aching to fly away free ... Matthew 11:28, Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

Okay ... back to our song. Verse 2 ... really there's no verses ... the next part ... he's still breaking up with her ... [Play snippet #3]

But, if I stayed here with you, girl,  
Things just couldn't be the same.  
'Cause I'm as free as a bird now,  
And this bird you can not change.  
... Lord knows I can't change.

### **3. Jesus releases me from my cage.**

The main metaphor used in this song is that of a caged bird ... who just wants to be free. A similar metaphor is used in the Bible to describe the person who lives a life of faith in Christ:

Exodus 19:4-5, The Lord said, 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. [5] Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me.

Look, the purpose of flying free is to get to know God ... you fly to Him! God rescued His people from the cage of slavery in Egypt, they were free now to be God's own special treasure. The WHOLE EARTH was theirs, if they would seek to follow God's leadership.

And there's the rub. The truth is that genuine freedom is found connecting ourselves to God. Until we deal with our own stubborn desire to be in charge, we will never be free. It's the opposite of what the song says ... freedom doesn't come from running to the next adventure ... real freedom comes from submitting ourselves to God.

And I have the sense that Lynard Skynard knows that. Look at where the song is going: "Lord knows I can't change." The hilarious thing is that he's TRAPPED by his need to be free.

#### 4. Jesus changes what I can't.

Most of "Free Bird" is music ... there's a 4 minute guitar solo! But, most of the lyrics lament that he's not really free at all ... the one thing he can't change is himself. [Play snippet #4]

Cause I'm as free as a bird now,  
And this bird you can not change [x3].  
Lord knows, I can't change.  
Lord help me, I can't change.  
Lord I can't change,  
Won't you fly high free bird yea.

The one thing he's not free to do is change. He's stuck in his own search for freedom, walking out on someone he loves to chase something he can never have.

But there's good news for him, and for me, and for each of us: Jesus changes what I can't change.

Ephesians 1:19-20, I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead ...

God took something that was dead, the body of Christ, and raised it! God's power changes lives:

- God can take an empty heart, and fill it.
- God can take a dying marriage, and restore it.
- God can take a bitter regret, and replace it with hope eternal.
- God can take a wandering soul, crooked and broken, and straighten it out.
- God can take you, or me, and what's holding us back, and move us forward, changing us one day at a time.

WARNING: Don't fall into the trap of our guy in the song ... he's rehearsing a lie, "Lord knows I can't change" over and over. With God's help, and His leadership you CAN change. That's the whole point of the resurrection!

A closing prayer ... "Dear God, bring Your resurrection power to bear on each of our lives, and especially those sticky parts that are so resistant to change. Make Your Risen Son more real to us daily. Help us to live the faith-life in obedience to Your call upon our lives. In Jesus' name, amen."