

"For freedom Christ frees us!"

(Galatians 5:1- CLNT)

By George Davis

It seems that every American has become a junior shrink, speaking psychobabble fluently and scrutinizing those around him or her as authoritatively as any psychiatrist. We are quick to recognize and criticize controlling-obsessive behavior. We hasten to point out the trespasses of husbands, wives and parents that, in our expert opinion, compulsively manipulate those in their care for their own advantage.

Amazingly, many of those things that we most despise in the world around us are accepted as normal in the American Church. In fact, there is arguably less freedom in some of today's churches than there is in many third-world countries. Why this inconsistency? Why is obsessive, controlling-behavior judged as tyranny in our society and praised as "strong leadership" in the Church? Ignorance of the essentiality of freedom in all aspects of the Christian life is the root cause of this double standard. The abuses wax or wane accordingly.

Freedom is intrinsic to God's nature and to the nature of mankind, whom He created in His likeness and image. For this reason He has set relational boundaries that protect the autonomy of every human being and that govern all relationships with both Him and others. God Himself will not transgress the relational boundaries He has set. The unwitting or purposeful violation of these boundaries is an assault on the essential nature of both God and man and will always result in perversion and abuse. The watchman of these God-given boundaries is the much-debated human will. When the willful force themselves on the unwilling this usually constitutes a crime. Even our laws recognize some of the boundaries that God set, through not to the extent that He does. If our laws were as stringent as God is in this matter, any attempt to cajole and pressure another would be unlawful and even the vacuum cleaner salesman would be thrown into jail. He will not force Himself on anyone. I wish this were true of all His children. The sad truth is that many do not recognize these boundaries and therefore do not know that they are violating them.

Freedom is the climate that man was originally created to function in. Any redemption that fails to restore the dangerous and yet glorious power of unencumbered free choice to man is not redemption at all. Has anything really been restored if man is not brought

back to his original condition of freedom? I think not. Paul defines Christ's redemptive work in the following terms, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1, RSV) The underlying purpose behind Christ's redemptive work is FREEDOM! "For freedom Christ has set us free." Nothing less will do.

Paul went on to explain the reason why we were called, "For you, brothers, were called for freedom. Only don't use your freedom for gain to the flesh, but through love be servants to one another" (Galatians 5:13 WEB). We were called "for freedom." God's initial goal for every believer is freedom in all its scope and meaning. "All things are lawful for me," wrote Paul, "but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1 Corinthians 6:12 ASV)

Vincent suggests a more accurate translation of this passage, "all things are in my power, but I shall not be brought under the power of any" (*Vincent's Word Studies*). Here we see the twofold purpose of God. One: That all His children should be set free, having all things within their power, and secondly, that they would "stand fast" and not be "entangled again in a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1 ASV). First we are called for freedom, and once having entered that freedom, we are exhorted to maintain it. The Phillips translation reads, "Plant your feet firmly therefore within the freedom that Christ has won for us!"

For freedom Christ freed us! We have been called for freedom!" Not until this election and calling are realized can we choose to serve one another in love.

In the following pages we will consider the freedom that Christ died to purchase for us and how we might cooperate with Him in the maintenance and advancement of it, by honoring the relational boundaries He has set.

Man -- Created For Freedom

Freedom is the perfect climate in which the things of God's kingdom are birthed, nurtured and brought to fruition. We see this clearly born out in the creation story.

Out of all God's creation "man" was uniquely fashioned for freedom. For he alone was created in the image and likeness of God. Man occupies an amazing place in creation's scheme and is central to God's purposes in that he shows forth the

workmanship of his Creator, not only in outward form but also in his unique abilities and inherent needs. Unlike any other creature man possesses an amazing power of volition and is able to reason on a plain, towering above the purely instinctive, reactive and appetite-driven carvings of the beasts, birds and fishes. The need for freedom is built into his very makeup. It is his soul's air and breath. Men need freedom like fishes need water. A fish out of the water may live for a while, but what is the quality of that life? An animal separated from its natural habitat will experience deferred aspirations, changed behavior, perversion, retardation and even death. Likewise, all kinds of perversion result when man is denied the freedom that God created him to function in.

What IS freedom? The dictionary defines freedom as: "The condition of being free; the power to act or speak or think without externally imposed restraints." The antonym for freedom is bondage, the state of being under the control of another person or thing.

In His dealings with Adam and Eve in the garden, God valued freedom so much that he would not force them to eat of the Tree of Life but rather stood by while Eve and Adam ate of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God could have interfered but He would have had to undermine his purposes to do so. He created man with a capacity to choose and now man would choose. Unlike the deceiver who pressured Eve, like a used car salesman, into buying the lie; God didn't nag, remind, badger or hinder in any way. He allowed her the luxury of unencumbered choice. God was so serious about freedom that he ran the risk of man making the wrong choice and subjecting all of His creation to vanity and the bondage of corruption for six thousand years. That's pretty serious!

The redemptive work of Christ frees us from the vanity and corruption of the fall, restoring to us the freedom of choice. Through Adam's disobedience, freedom was forfeited. IN ADAM all of mankind was brought into bondage to sin. Through the disobedience of this one man all were made sinners. But through the obedience of one man (Jesus Christ, the last Adam) many are made righteous. (See Romans 5: 19). It remains for all of God's creation to be fully restored to the liberty it once knew, but those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus are once again free to choose life.

All of creation groans, desiring to enter into the *liberty of the children of God*. And we who have received the first fruits or earnest of the spirit also groan for our full

adoption, in which our corruptible bodies will put on immortality and we shall be freed from the last vestiges of corruption in our mortal bodies. (See Romans 8:20-22).

Freedom and "The Adoption of Sons"

In the fullness of time Christ came to deliver those who were under the external restraints or bondage of the law into a new relationship with God. Paul used the analogy of child training to explain it. (See Galatians 4:1-) As long as an heir is under tutors and guardians he is no different than a slave, "though he is lord of all." I recognize that children are rightfully under some external restraints for their own protection and in that regard external restraints are legitimate, but we are not called to be children. We are called to be sons, led by the Spirit of God. Paul then went on to show that when Christ came, those who received Him entered a new relationship like that of a young strong man, no longer under the externally imposed restraints of the schoolmaster, namely the law. Now that Christ has come, we are redeemed into a new relationship with God, characterized by Paul as "the adoption of sons."

"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, To redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Galatians 4:3-7)

Those under the restraints of the "elements of the world" (external law) are like children that must be kept under guardians and stewards for their own safety. Children are a great source of pride and joy to their parents but if in due time they do not develop and grow into mature responsible adults, they become a reproach and shame. The ideal, then, is growth unto full stature. (See Ephesians 4)

What did Paul mean by "the elements of the world"? He is referring to the external constraints of law and religion, which he defines elsewhere as "Don't handle this! Don't taste or touch that!" (Col 2:21). Now this sounds a lot like something you would say to a little child, doesn't it? "Put that down! Get that out of your mouth! Don't touch that!" This negative approach is unprofitable in restraining the impulses of the flesh in that grace has not affected the heart and the desire for the forbidden thing remains and the moment you turn your back the child will continue to prowl. This is the weakness of the

old law covenant. It did not change the hearts desire. God wants to establish the heart in grace. He wants to give us a new heart with new desires, not impose external restraints upon uncircumcised hearts. He wants to transcribe His affections, passions, appetites and hopes upon our innermost beings--working IN us to will and to do of His good pleasure. This IS the New Covenant of which God spoke through Jeremiah.

"Behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. . . ." This New Covenant was "not according to the covenant. . . made with their fathers. . . ." No. This New Covenant would be different in that it would require a radical inner working of God's Spirit! "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says Yahweh: I WILL PUT my law in their inward parts, and in their heart WILL I WRITE IT; and I WILL BE their God, and they shall be my people: and THEY SHALL TEACH NO MORE every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Yahweh; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. . . ." (See Jeremiah 31:31-34 WEB).

In Hebrews 8:8-11, the author of Hebrews quoted this passage to show the failings of the Old Covenant and the superiority of the New. The chief difference being, "they (men) shall teach no more." Man is not the teacher in this new dispensation. God puts and writes His passion upon the hearts of yielded men. Isaiah prophesied of this, "All your children shall be taught of Yahweh; and great shall be the peace of your children" (Isaiah 54:13).

The Galatian believers were returning to those "weak and beggarly elements" of the Old Covenant. Paul made it very clear to them that to do so was to desire again to be in bondage, or led about like a child that cannot be trusted out of your sight (See Galatians 4:1, 9). In this figure, children are governed from outside by the child-harness of law and religion. (Galatians 4:1-). The indwelling Spirit of Christ leads mature sons from within (Romans 8:14).

The adoption of sons was a ceremony held when children came to adulthood. The Greek word for son here is *huios* (a mature son), and the adoption of sons spoken of here refers to the oriental ceremony called placing of sons in which a son, at maturity, was given charge over much of his fathers business. Every believer has already received the spirit of adoption. (Romans 8:15). It is this Spirit of adoption that proves that we are the sons of God. "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are

the children of God" (Romans 8:16). It is God that sends the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. The cry of the Spirit of the Son is "*Abba, Father.*"

Therefore we are no longer slaves but sons; and if sons, then heirs (destined for the full placing of sons) through Christ.

The difference between children and sons is that children require external restraints--looking to the law written on tablets of stone. Sons are imbued with the Spirit and heart of their Father. His passion and will is inscribed upon their hearts. Sons no longer serve out of duty, like slaves, but out of love for their Father. Slaves focus on the law. Sons focus on the Father. Men cannot teach us to relate to God as Father. The Spirit of the Son inspires sons to focus upon Abba not upon themselves, their "ministry," or their Interests.

In this figure of children and sons Paul is showing the difference between the life-principles of the old and new covenants. Those who have received the Spirit of adoption, the first fruits of the spirit are predestined as heirs with Christ to the full placing of sons. God sends the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying Abba Father. As Christ lives out His devotion to ABBA, in and through us (See also Romans 8:15), then we have entered an entirely different relationship with God through the Spirit. He is no longer the fearful being that descended upon Mount Sinai in fire, lightning and smoke. He is Daddy! He is ABBA! What manner of love has the Father bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God? (See 1 John 3:1).

The essential truth of the New Covenant as opposed to the old is that we who have received the Spirit of adoption are no longer bound and led by external devices of control. Those who are led of the Spirit are no longer under the law. (See Galatians 5:18). Conversely, those who endeavor to keep the law have fallen from grace (See Galatians 5:4). There is no balance to be arrived at here. The two are mutually exclusive. To choose one is to reject the other. You can not have just the right amount of law in your life for the one who endeavors to keep part of the law has come under the curse of the law in that they are obligated to keep all of it (See Galatians 3:10). This we know is an impossibility. (See Romans 3:20).

We are not bondservants, dutifully serving the letter of the law. We are sons, led from within by the Spirit of Christ, constrained by a Spirit-wrought love for the Father. If we are sons we are heirs (See Galatians 4:7) for only sons abide forever. Only he who is

no longer a bondservant of sin can abide in the house forever. Jesus said, "[A bondservant doesn't live in the house forever. A son remains forever. If therefore the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.](#)" (See John 8:34-36). Sonship and freedom are interconnected and inseparable. You can't have one without the other. Therefore, in scripture we always find the subject of sonship in tandem with freedom.

God desires a family of many sons that are constrained by the Spirit of Him, who laid down His life willingly, who bore our sins and sorrows upon the tree. God desires sons who have a perfect love toward Him, who serve Him freely, without fear, placation, coercion or pressure of any kind. Perfect love casts out fear and with fear goes self-saving manipulation.

The Galatian Church did not have a perfect love toward God but neither did they error through committing gross acts of sin as the Corinthian Church had done. They were not libertines, casting off all restraint, but legalists, strenuously fighting to hold back the sinful nature through the rudimentary principles of law. Unlike some that sinned that grace might abound, these exerted much effort and energy to overcome sin. Having begun in the Spirit they now sought to be made perfect by the flesh. Like the Colossian believers, they were trading the grace of God that once worked in them to will and to do of God's good pleasure for the meager power of their collective wills, "will worship." (See Colossians 2:23). They were trading their freedom for the yoke of the law.

In Galatians 4: 22-31 Paul further explains the freedom of our New Covenant relationship with God by using an example from the life of Abraham.

[". . . Abraham had two sons, one by the handmaid, and one by the free woman. However, the son by the handmaid was born according to the flesh, but the son by the free woman was born through promise. These things contain an allegory, for these are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to the Jerusalem that exists now, for she is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, "Rejoice, you barren who don't bear. Break forth and shout, you that don't travail. For more are the children of the desolate than of her who has a husband." Now we, brothers, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But as then, he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. However what does the Scripture say?](#)

"THROW OUT THE HANDMAID AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE HANDMAID WILL NOT INHERIT WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN." So then, brothers, WE ARE NOT CHILDREN OF THE HANDMAID, BUT OF THE FREE WOMAN." (Galatians 4:21-31 WEB)

God would not accept the child of the bondwoman because it is in freedom that His purposes are birthed. He would only accept the miracle-child born of the free woman. The two have been separated by God himself, from of old, on that very day when he issued the command to Abraham, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son. . . ." (4:30).

Throughout the book of Galatians we see this common thread of freedom. Sarah is a type of that Jerusalem that is above, that is free and is the mother of us all. There will be enmity among God's people until the woman of bondage and the fruit of her womb are put from us. Brethren, "we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." (4:31). The family of God will never fully know this freedom until the bondwoman and her son are cast out. For "he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, SO IT IS NOW." We must learn what it means to be "as Isaac was. . . children of promise." Until we are living in the good of that Jerusalem that is above, that corresponds to the free woman, we will continue "bearing children to bondage" that can never live in harmony together. "FOR THE SON OF THE HANDMAID WILL NOT INHERIT WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN."

"Come now let us reason together"

God doesn't want to lead His people about like dumb mules and horses, with bits and bridles but to bring us into an understanding of His ways so we can be guided with His eye. (See Psalms 32:8-9) He desires to lead us like a Father who makes His family know His mind by a subtle wink of His eye.

Although He holds the stars in place, controls the course of nature and the winds and waves submit to His every command, God refuses to arbitrarily control this creature called, man. He searches for free and willing vessels. He will do nothing in a man or woman without first getting their consent.

Take Mary for instance. When God chose a woman to be the mother of His Son, He submitted his plan to the will of a lowly handmaiden named Mary. After hearing God's message she freely yielded, saying, "Be it unto me according to your word." God would

have never used Mary if she had not been a free and willing vessel. He would not force his will upon her but reasoned with her and she consented to His will. In like manner, God's reasons with His people to acquire their consent before He births anything in and through them.

Only those who are free can make Love's free choice to lay down their lives in service to God. Such as the love slaves in Exodus 21:5, who, after being set free, willingly set their ear to the door-post to be pierced through with an awl, as a sign of their willing and loving servitude to their Master. Why would they do this? "I love my master. . . I will not go out free." This is the only service acceptable to God. He refuses to use pressure upon that faculty that gives man his unique capacity for love. Love necessarily involves choice. The word choice implies an unhindered selective process. Where there is no freedom there can be no choice, and where there is no choice you can bet there is no love. For love to be genuine it must be freely given--not forced or yielded under duress.

Under the old covenant, a man and woman caught in an adulterous relationship were to be put to death. However, if the woman was a concubine "betrothed to an husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her," she was not to be put to death but scourged. Why? ". . . **Because she was not free**" (Leviticus 19:20). She may have been forced. She did not have the freedom to choose. She was a slave and God took that into account.

Though a man might force himself upon a woman and by virtue of his superior strength, go through the motions of love with her, he may never possess the true treasures that are locked away in her heart. For such treasures must be freely given and tenderly received. Without freedom love cannot exist. This is its fragile nature.

As Paul so often did, let's use the example of the husband and wife to further explain this relationship of freedom between Christ and His Church.

The love of a husband and wife is never more pure and wonderful than when they give themselves freely and joyfully to one another. This giving is beyond anything sexual and also consists of more than giving flowers and gifts. It is a mutual sharing in all of life's joys and sorrows. The moment Love is grasped or demanded it becomes one sided and is no longer love but obsession and lust. There can be no love where liberty

is molested. God IS Love and where the Spirit of Love abides there is liberty, there is freedom.

If one subjugates another that is proof enough that divine love is not present in their relationship. Love begets love. Contrary to the opinion of many today, we do not love God because we fear Him or because He demands it. We love Him because He first loved us! When we are free and no longer yield the fawning service of bound-servants then we can offer to God the love-constrained service of sons.

In His dealings with men God honors unencumbered choice above His will. He will never resort to trickery or extreme control tactics. Instead He chooses to reason with us--fully exposing His heart to us, while giving us the liberty to accept or reject His desires. As we freely yield to Him, He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure but our willingness is always the determining factor. He is not seeking the placation or appeasement of faint-hearted servants but is searching for sons that will gladly offer their bodies as living sacrifices unto Him. Jesus is the perfect example of this. The sacrifice of love is no sacrifice at all. In Gethsemane Jesus withdrew from the disciples and reasoned together with His Father in prayer. In His humanness He asked, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me" but, as a Son, He prayed, "yet, not as I will, but as you will." Then after returning to His disciples and finding them asleep He withdrew again and prayed a second time, "My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!" O what a beautiful example of sonship! Even as Jesus was praying these words, Judas was coming with a mob with swords and clubs from the chief priest and elders of the people.

Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. While the mob was arresting Jesus, Peter took a sword and struck off the ear of one of the servants of the high priest. It was then that Jesus revealed to Peter that this path of betrayal and death was the will of the Father. "Put your sword back into its place, for all those who take the sword will die by the sword. Or do you think that I couldn't ask my Father, and he would even now send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that it must be so?" (See Matthew 26:38-54). Jesus could have easily avoided the cup. He could have asked and the Father would have sent more than twelve legions of angels to His aid but His desire for the Father's will was stronger than His dread of the cup. The efficaciousness of Christ's redemptive work is forever bound to the fact that He laid His life down willingly. It was not taken from Him. Jesus said, "No one takes it from

me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again." (John 10:18) Had Jesus chosen, at any time, not to lay down his life the Father would have honored the will of His Son and sent the legions of heaven to rescue Him. It was imperative that Jesus went willingly to the cross and that is exactly what He did. It is equally imperative that he, who takes up his cross to follow Jesus, is free to lay down his life or take it up at will. God accepts only the living sacrifices of those who freely present themselves unto Him. The good, acceptable and perfect will of God is proven only in those who willingly drink the cup. (See also Romans 12:1-2). God doesn't force His will upon anyone nor is He pleased when well-meaning men attempt to arbitrarily do so. When the heart is won and the will is freely yielded then alone is the sacrifice good and acceptable to God.

Coming through the Door

Imagine you are driving through a residential section and see a man crawling into a house through a window. What do you think? Does that look a bit suspicious? You probably just witnessed a thief breaking into someone's home. The owner would enter through the front door. Jesus used a like figure to explain proper relationships in the kingdom of God. "[Most assuredly, I tell you, one who doesn't enter by the door into the sheep fold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But one who enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. Whenever he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.](#)" (See John 10:1-4).

Every Child of God is like a house whose doors open only from within. Anyone who doesn't enter by invitation, through an open door, but rather enters another way, is the same as a thief and robber. When uninvited men avoid the gatekeeper and sneak through the windows of intimidation and manipulation, there is always one objective in mind--to take what does not belong to them. No one will open to known robbers so these thieves must stealthily sneak in another way. All relationships must come through the DOOR of Jesus Christ. He is not only the Mediator between God and men but He is also the Mediator between men and men. He is the Door to the sheep. They are His alone. If I truly believe that Christ's lordship implies ownership and that all believers are His property, I must relate to them differently--I must approach them through Him. I must come through the Door with no hidden agenda.

In his book *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about the boundaries and limitations placed on relationships because of Christ's intermediation between men and men.

The other person needs to retain his independence of me; to be loved for what he is, as one for whom Christ became man, died, and rose again, for whom Christ bought forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Because Christ has long since acted decisively for my brother, before I could begin to act, I must leave him his freedom to be Christ's; I must meet him only as the person that he already is in Christ's eyes. This is the meaning of the proposition that we can meet others only through the mediation of Christ. Human love constructs its own image of the other person, of what he is and what he should become. It takes the life of the other person into its own hands. Spiritual love recognizes the true image of the other person which he has received from Jesus Christ; the image that Jesus Christ himself embodied and would stamp upon all men. Therefore, spiritual love proves itself in that everything it says and does commends Christ. It will not seek to move others by all too personal, direct influence, by impure interference in the life of another. It will not take pleasure in pious, human fervor and excitement. It will rather meet the other person with the clear Word of God and be ready to leave him alone with this word for a long time, willing to release him again in order that Christ may deal with him. It will respect the line that has been drawn between him and us by Christ, and it will find full fellowship with him in the Christ who alone binds us together.

Such insight is uncommon among Christians today. Few understand it. If Christ is not the mediator between believer and believer, husband and wife, friend and friend, parents and children, then all these relationships run a high risk of becoming obsessive and controlling.

In its rudimentary form witchcraft is simply trying to control others against their wills. This is something that we all are very capable of doing, considering that witchcraft is listed among the works of the flesh (see Galatians 5).

Charles Newbold Jr. explains the widespread effects of witchcraft.

The practice of witchcraft--trying to get others to do things against their wills--permeates every level of human experience, from politicians who deceive us to get our votes, to advertisers who send us subliminal messages, to merchants who try to hook

us on their products, to clergy persons who try to dictate our consciences, to entertainers who play on our emotions. . .

It is the principle cause of trouble in the home between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters who try to manipulate one another. It is the cause of strife between friends and nations. It is the major source of conflict in churches. . .

Guilt feelings, fear, depression, suspicion, mental ruminations and rehearsings, anger and bitterness, fantasies, confusion, jealousy, compulsions, and obsessions may be caused by the fleshly practice of witchcraft. Poverty, crime, sickness, disease, and conflicts in relationships are also among the effects of witchcraft. . .

Almost every one of us at some time or another will experience the frustration and anger that results from manipulation. The presence of witchcraft creates a negative atmosphere that drains life from everyone who is touched by it.

The general condition of the modern-day church is like the fictitious story wherein a soldier, having taken a prisoner cried out to his commanding officer, "Sir I have taken a prisoner!" Upon hearing this the commanding officer answered, "Good work soldier, bring him to me!" But much to the officer's chagrin the soldier replied, "I can't." "Why not?" Exclaimed the officer! "He won't come," answered the soldier. Then, his patience worn thin, the commanding officer shouted, "Then come yourself!" To which the soldier somewhat timidly replied, "He won't let me." Are we like this soldier? What is the true fruit of our gatherings? Does the atmosphere of our gatherings promote life and freedom or does it drain life from everyone who is touched by it? Though we profess to stand in the liberty of Him that led captivity captive and boldly sing the songs of freedom can we honestly say that our ministry promotes freedom?

Though the fruit of the Spirit is self-control (See Galatians 5) you would not know it by looking at Christendom today. For what we see is a fear-based-environment in which the worst is anticipated and Christians are treated like ex-cons who lack self control and would certainly re-offend were it not for the rigid safeguards of the system-Church, keeping their fleshly tendencies in check. We have not been given this spirit. Paul wrote,

For you didn't receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15)

Among other things this means God will not use fear or other forms of manipulation to get us to yield to Him. If you look at the context of the above passage you will find that the law and fear are companions. Fear is an emotion experienced in anticipation of some specific pain or danger, usually accompanied by a desire to flee or protect. The unknown traumatizes religious man. A written and codified standard is a comfort to him. His fears and insecurities are allayed by the predictability of the letter. If you have a fear of spiders (arachnophobia) you will do all you can to stay away from spiders. You are tormented when they are near and you will do anything within your power to put distance between them and you. It is the same with an unhealthy fear (phobos) of God. For the one with a God-phobia will do all that is within his power to put distance between God and himself. He erects religious bulwarks and veils and prefers human mediators, as did the children of Israel who said to Moses, "[Speak with us yourself, and we will listen; but don't let God speak with us, lest we die](#)" (Exodus 20:19). Such a relationship to God is one of torment because love is not perfected. "[There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has punishment. He who fears is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because he first loved us.](#)" (1John 4:18-19).

We love God because He first loved us and we continue to yield to Him because of His steadfast love for us. The environment of love is the environment of freedom and must be kept untainted by fear, and the manipulation that fear brings. The boundaries that God has set between believer and believer must be honored for this glorious relationship of love to continue.

Boundaries

"My deep definition of sovereignty - He is God, and you are not!" (Rod Parsley)

An understanding of God's sovereignty is critical if we are going to cooperate with His guidance in our individual lives and avoid breaching divinely established boundaries in the lives of others. Paul asked those who were given to such inordinate activity, "[Who are you to pass judgment \(*Krino*\) on someone else's servant?](#)" When you think of it, this is an incredibly telling question. Paul is not so much addressing a particular judgement but is addressing the ambition in man to sit as a judge. In the first century, the Greek word *Krino* was used of judges and arbiters in matters of common life that passed judgment on the deeds and words of others. Paul reminded those would-be judges who sought "to rule, govern. . . to preside over with the power of giving judicial decisions. . . ." (*Strong's*), who sought to lord over another man's servant, "[Before his](#)

own master he stands or falls." Then Paul expressed his undying confidence in the sovereignty of God, "And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4 NAB). In effect Paul was saying, He is God and you are not!

God works continuously in our lives to make us understand His sovereignty so we will no longer trespass the boundaries of others as though we were their lord and master. This is most difficult between husbands and wives and parents and children for we are prone to say, "this is my wife/husband" or "these are my children," as though they actually belonged to us. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are not ours; they are Christ's and He has entrusted them into our care. They are the sheep of His pasture and He is the Door. Either we relate to them through Christ the Door or come as a thief and a robber, taking by stealth and force what rightly belongs to Him. Believe me! I am preaching to myself here. This is a lesson that is a long time coming in my life and I am not so sure I have fully learned it yet. Not that long ago Charlotte (my wife) said to me, "Honey, you are so careful about how you relate to other brothers and sisters in Christ. You would never knowingly force or manipulate any of them. I only wish that you would treat me and the children with the same respect." God is still working on me, renewing my mind to view Charlotte and the children as His beloved sheep and teaching me to approach them through the Door of His Son. The more I see that they are the sheep of His pasture, the less I take them for granted.

The question remains, who do we think we are? He is God; we are not! Who are we to judge (lord over) another man's servant? I am not saying that we should not discipline our children in love, but if we don't come through the Door, recognizing that they are His, we will certainly chasten them after our own pleasure *not* His (See Hebrews 12:10).

Even more so, we need to respect God's boundaries in relating to other people. He is their master, not us! Before Him they will stand or fall. For all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the Body, the church: Who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence (See Colossians 1: 16-18). Oh, that such faith in the sovereignty of God would fill the earth once again!

Today's Church leaders seem to know little of such faith and behave as though all things do not consist in Christ and He is not the Head of the body and that every child

of God would fall were it not for their much-needed intervention. Let us be completely honest with ourselves. If people "do the will of God" because men expect them to, they are not alive to God or His will; they are alive to men. They are man-pleasers doing service as unto men. (See Ephesians 6:6).

Authority in the Church is not a military authority, based upon rank, position or natural propensities but a patriarchal or family authority, based upon spiritual maturity and love. Dietrich Bonhoeffer explains.

Every cult of personality that emphasizes the distinguished qualities, virtues, and talents of another person, even though these be of an altogether spiritual nature, is worldly and has no place in the Christian community; indeed, it poisons the Christian community. The desire we so often hear expressed today for "episcopal figures," "priestly men," "authoritative personalities" springs frequently enough from a spiritually sick need for the admiration of men, for the establishment of visible human authority, because the genuine authority of service appears to be unimpressive. . .

Ultimately, this hankering for false authority has at its root in a desire to re-establish some sort of immediacy, a dependence upon human beings in the Church. Genuine authority knows that all immediacy is especially baneful in matters of authority. Genuine authority realizes that it can exist only in the service of Him who alone has authority. Genuine authority knows that it is bound in the strictest sense by the saying of Jesus: "One is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren"(Matt. 23:8). The Church does not need brilliant personalities but faithful servants of Jesus and the brethren. Not in the former but in the latter is the lack. . . . (Dietrich Bonhoeffer - *Life Together*)

I am convinced that most of the problems in today's churches are due to the fact that they have become personality cults centered on episcopal figures instead of the body of Christ growing up into the Head. (See Ephesians 4:15-16). We must be delivered from this subtle idolatry before we can be true servants of Christ. We must be delivered from an undue reverence of men or we can never hold to the true Head. We must be free from all men before we can be servants to anyone, especially Christ.

"Free from All Men" 1Corinthians 9:19

Paul makes it very clear that if we seek to please people we cannot be the servants of Christ.

Am I now currying favor with human beings or God? Or am I seeking to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ. (Galatians 1:10 NAB)

We must be free from the expectations and demands of others before we can freely give ourselves in service to them. When we no longer need their praise and acceptance, then we can truly serve them. Until then all that we do is done to appease, impress and manipulate.

Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people. (1 Corinthians 9:19 MSG)

Undue reverence of men leads to bondage

"The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD is safe." (Proverbs 29:25 NAB)

Nothing could be more self-serving than trying to please men. We can only give pure unadulterated service when we are free from all men. Until then all our service is tainted by the ambition to preserve our lives. When we try to please men because we fear them or desire their praise and adulation, we are not serving them. We are serving ourselves. We want to make them think highly of us or make them happy with us so things will go well with us. We must be free from such egocentrism or we can never be servants of Christ and His sheep! We must be free from the fear of what men might think of us or do to us (Matthew 10:28) or our motives will never be pure. In Revelation 12:11 we see listed among the strengths of those who laid down their lives in service to the Lamb; "they loved not their lives unto the death." The followers of the Lamb are free from all men! They seek only the honor that comes from God. We must be delivered from the ambition to seek the favor of human beings. If we are not set free from this we are no better off than the Pharisees who could not believe in Jesus because they valued the honor of one another more than the honor that comes from God. Jesus said to them, "How can you believe, you who receive honor from one another and do not seek the honor that comes from God only?" (John 5:44 MKJV)

Adam Clarke commented, "They (the Scribes and Pharisees) lived on each other's praise. If they had acknowledged Christ as the only teacher, they must have given up

the good opinion of the multitude; and they chose rather to lose their souls than to forfeit their reputation among men! This is the ruin of millions."

Yes, we can never be the servant of Him who said, "I do not receive honor from men" (John 5:41), unless we are free from all men. Otherwise we will be too busy serving and saving ourselves to be anyone else's servant.

The Anointing Breaks the Yoke

A yoke is an external device of control, placed on dumb animals to get them to pull together and be productive. Throughout the scriptures God often used the yoke as a symbol of bondage and heavy-handed control.

Of Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, the LORD said, "I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright" (Leviticus 26:13). The yoke was also used to typify the burden of over taxation. Solomon has built a glorious kingdom on the backs of the people of Israel. The people had grown weary of the burden. After Rehoboam took the throne of his father Solomon, the people came to him and said, "Your father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make you the grievous service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, lighter, and we will serve you" (1 Kings 12:4). Rehoboam refused the counsel of the old men to lighten the tax-load upon the people but rather took the counsel of the young men who said, "Thus shall you speak to them, My little finger is thicker than my father's loins." The yoke was too great. The people rebelled and the kingdom was divided.

Later God spoke to Israel about three things that stood in the way of Him hearing their prayers. "Then shall you call, and Yahweh will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, Here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking wickedly; and if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall your light rise in darkness, and your obscurity be as the noonday" (Isaiah 58:9-10). Because of Israel's refusal to put away the yoke from the midst of them and declare freedom every man to his neighbor, God put their necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon (See Jeremiah 27:8). Don't be deceived. God is not mocked. We *will* reap what we sow! If we sow bondage we will reap bondage. If we sow freedom we will reap freedom.

The Antioch Church was undoubtedly the freest assembly in all of Asia Minor. Religion abhors freedom like nature abhors a vacuum. Therefore, the brethren at Jerusalem held a special meeting to decide what restraints, if any, should be placed upon them. The brethren at Antioch had no law to guide them, so the question before the council was, how shall they relate to the law? At first this so-called "Jerusalem council" seemed uncertain and was leaning toward putting the yoke of the law upon this gloriously free Church. Thankfully someone was listening to God! Peter spoke up, "[Now therefore why do you tempt God, that you should put a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?](#)" (Acts 15:10). The yoke that Peter is speaking of here is the law, "the yoke of bondage" (See also Galatians 5:1). The quickest way to tempt or test the patience of God is to put His people back under the law

There is only one yoke that is acceptable and that is the easy and light yoke of the meek and lowly Christ. (Matthew 11:29-30). The true anointing of God breaks every yoke of bondage. "[And it shall be in that day, his burden shall turn away from on your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck; and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing](#)" (Isaiah 10:27).

Jesus ministered in this anointing. He stood in the synagogue at Nazareth, took the scroll of Isaiah and announced, "[The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord](#)" (Luke 4:18 RSV).

The "Spirit of the Lord" is the agent of freedom. It is the anointing that breaks the yoke and sets the captives free. God sent His Son to declare a Jubilee that, from that time forward, would effected every area of life--spirit, soul and body. He was sent to heal, preach deliverance and set at liberty. God sent His Son as the fulfillment of the last and ultimate celebration of freedom (jubilee). This is why Jesus was anointed. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him for freedom's sake, to set at liberty those held captive by Satan, sin and the tyranny of religion. Why was the Spirit of the Lord upon Jesus? Answer: "for freedom." Is this the anointing of our ministries? Do we dare ask, "Is my ministry one of setting the captives free or binding people to myself, my vision, my perspectives? Do I put them in the yoke of my expectations or release them to stand or fall before their true Master, trusting God to keep them? Is my ministry one through

which the oppressed are set free or is it like that of the Pharisee (Matthew 23:4), who bound the free and shut up the kingdom of heaven against men? (Luke 4:19, Matthew 23:13). Do I gather people to myself and control them or free and release them? Do I allow them to be free from all men, including myself, that they could truly be the servants of Christ? Do I let the oppressed go free? This is the test of true ministry!

The acceptable year of the Lord was the fiftieth year, the year of Jubilee, in which liberty was proclaimed "every man to his neighbor" (see Jeremiah 34:15). All debts were forgiven. All lands were restored and everyone who had been sold into servitude through debt was released. All the bands that held men captive were loosed. This was the "fast" that Israel refused to keep.

Is this not the fast that I have chosen:

To loose the bonds of wickedness,

To undo the heavy burdens,

To let the oppressed go free,

And that you break every yoke? (Isaiah 58:6 NKJV)

The Lord's fast is a celebration of freedom in which bonds are loosed, heavy burdens undone and the oppressed go free. It is not enough to let the captives go free. More is required. Every yoke must be broken. Every device of external control must be put away from us if we are to celebrate the Lord's fast. If the Spirit leads us we are no longer bound and led by yokes or external devices of control. Instead we are taught and led by the anointing (See 1John 2:27) of which Jesus said, "when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth". If we are to walk in lockstep with this truth we must stop disrespecting our fellow believers by treating them "as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." The Lord desires to guide them with His "eye" (Psalms 32:8-9). He desires to lead them by His Spirit not harness and plow-rein with law. "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Freedom and Forgiveness, "Letting the oppressed go free"

We cannot discuss freedom without discussing forgiveness, because freedom begins or ends there. We traditionally tend to view forgiveness as pardon. It is that, but it is more than that. True forgiveness is letting the oppressed go free.

Jesus taught His disciples, "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive (*apoluō*) and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:37-38). Vincent explains, "Christ exhorts to the opposite of what He has just forbidden 'do not condemn, but release'". The opposite of release is judgement and condemnation. The axis of control is judgement and condemnation. The axis of freedom is forgiveness.

The Greek word (*apoluō*) rendered *forgive* in the passage above means, "1 to set free. . . to let go, dismiss, (to detain no longer). . . a petitioner to whom liberty to depart is given by a decisive answer. . . to bid depart, send away. . . to let go free, release. . . a captive i.e. to loose his bonds and bid him depart, to give him liberty to depart. . . to acquit one accused of a crime and set him at liberty. Indulgently to grant a prisoner leave to depart. . . to release a debtor, i.e. not to press one's claim against him, to remit his debt." (*Strong's Lexicon*)

As you can see, forgiveness and freedom are inseparably linked! One cannot be realized without the other. Jesus said to the paralyzed man, whose friends had lowered him down through the roof, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." The scribes and the Pharisees who were listening began to say among themselves, "Who is this that speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" Jesus answered their questions with another question, "Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you;' or to say, 'Arise and walk?'" (See Luke 5:20-23). Forgiveness and freedom are one and the same. True forgiveness breaks every yoke and aids the captives in their escape. Isn't this what Jesus did for us?

On another occasion, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath day. A woman was present who had been bent over by a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years. Jesus saw her and said to her, "'Woman, you are freed (*apoluō*) from your infirmity.' He laid his hands on her, and immediately she stood up straight, and glorified God" (Luke 13:10-13). This woman with the spirit of infirmity is a parable of freedom. Christ released her from the infirmity that had deformed, confined, controlled and oppressed her for many years and she could stand and walk upright before God, giving glory to Him. Isn't this what Jesus did for us? He forgave and freed us from our sins

and freed us from our infirmities. This is how Christ forgave and this is how we are to forgive each other, "[just as God also in Christ forgave you](#)" (Ephesians 4:32).

The words of an old hymn come to mind. "He paid a debt He did not owe. I owed a debt I could not pay. . . ." Thank God! The Son has paid the debt! He has set me free! He has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that were held against me, "taking them out of the way, nailing them to his cross!" (Colossians 2:14). He did not pay the debt and leave me crippled. Hidden within Christ's "Your sins are forgiven you" is His "Rise and walk. . . you are freed from your infirmity." Jesus came not only to forgive sins but to set at liberty them that are bruised.

Jesus taught His Disciples to pray, "[Forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. . .](#)" (Luke 11:4). Jesus' reason for teaching his disciples how to pray was largely to show them how heaven shuts itself up against those who refuses to set others free. In Matthew's account, immediately following this model-prayer are these words, "[For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you don't forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses](#)" (Matthew 6:14-15). Those who refuse to forgive cut themselves off from God's forgiveness.

This really bothered Peter, primarily because it seemed to be open ended. Surely this should not be taken to extremes, after all, the law demands retribution. So Peter came and said to Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" But before Jesus could reply Peter quickly interjected his own answer. "Until seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I don't tell you until seven times, but, until seventy times seven." Wow! I am sure that was not what Peter wanted to hear. Jesus went on to answer Peter's question with a parable.

[Therefore the Kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king, who wanted to reconcile accounts with his servants. When he had begun to reconcile, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But because he couldn't pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, with his wife, his children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and kneeled before him, saying, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will repay you all!" The lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, who owed him one hundred denarii, and he grabbed](#)

him, and took him by the throat, saying, "Pay me what you owe!" So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will repay you!" He would not, but went and cast him into prison, until he should pay back that which was due. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were exceedingly sorry, and came and told to their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him in, and said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt, because you begged me. Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, even as I had mercy on you?" His lord was angry, and delivered him to the tormentors, until he should pay all that was due to him. So my heavenly Father will also do to you, if you don't each forgive your brother from your hearts for his misdeeds. (Matthew 18:21-35)

We see by the above passage that forgiveness is attached to the concept of just dues and retribution. Someone does not pay their debt to us (either imagined or real) so we take them by the throat and demand, "Pay me what you owe!" If they don't, we cast them into our debtor's prison where they are held in an oppressive sense of our disfavor until they have paid the last farthing. The last avenue of manipulation is unforgiveness. It is the last means of punishing those who refuse to submit to our expectations. The one who refuses to forgive often has an acute sense of Justice--constantly rehearsing the wrongs that are done to them and demanding their rights--constantly pleading their case before every open ear. They feel completely justified in condemning and judging the offender--banishing them from their presence and refusing to acknowledge or affirm them in any way.

To forgive as Jesus forgives is to let the guilty go free and seek to actively restore relationship with the wrongdoers. Jesus, the innocent, came to us, the guilty, and bore the consequences for our sins, that He might restore fellowship with us. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18, NKJV). Anyone who refuses to forgive in this way destroys the bridge over which he himself must pass. Forgiveness is not about justice at all. It is about mercy triumphing over judgment. It is about the innocent bearing the sin a penalty of the guilty. If we do not have mercy on our fellow servants, even as God had mercy on us, the lord will expect full payment of us and deliver us to the tormentors.

True forgiveness is a decision to bear the consequences of another's actions, and set them at liberty. Isn't this what Jesus did for us? To forgive as Jesus forgives goes beyond the silent suffering of injustice. Christ-like forgiveness is expressed in a passion to set the captives free and goes so far as to plead for them before God. Again, Jesus is our example. While He hung from the cross He prayed for those who crucified Him and cast lots for His clothing, saying, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Then there was Stephen who while he was being stoned to death, knelt down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60). What was Stephen doing? He was forgiving just as the Lord had forgiven him. How should this knowledge impact the way we relate to each other?

Paul explains:

[Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. \(Colossians 3:13 NRSV\)](#)

We have talked about the sin of controlling others in the name of leadership for selfish reasons. We have discussed the need for freedom in the relationships of husbands and wives, parents and mature children, believer and believer. There is one more issue of control that must be repented of before the church can know the freedom which God has intended and that is man's attempt to control and manipulate his Creator.

Man's Attempt to Control God

The ambition to control everything in his or her environment entered mankind in the garden when Eve and then Adam ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Since then mankind has been driven to "be like God." Religion grew out of this lie. Pagan or otherwise, religion is basically man's attempt to control his environment by soliciting the help of the gods, by placating and obligating them through mysterious rites and rituals. Even human sacrifice was once offered with a view toward such control. Likewise, as we look out across Christendom we see rituals and ceremonies, some very much resembling the ancient pagan ceremonies, being offered up to gain the good will of God. Man's deep-seated ambition to be like God is chiefly expressed in a desire to exercise dominion over God Himself. Religious dogma is one of the ways that men attempt to obligate God and make Him the servant of their desires. In the fall man lost his creature-to-Creator relationship. Christ came to redeem

men and restore them as "new creatures" before their Creator. In Christ (the last Adam) the ambition to control others, even God, is consigned a place along with the rest of man's fleshly drives, i.e., the cross. The ambition to be like God and micro-manage the affairs of our own lives and the lives of others is consigned to death.

Before we can be fully free we must first free God to once again to be the Father-Creator in our midst. Which means no more God-playing on our part. By that I mean; we must humble ourselves and assume our proper position as His children and new creatures. Except one comes as a little child he cannot enter the kingdom of God and as God clothes the lilies and provides for the birds of the air so He desires to provide for every nuance of our lives, individually and corporately. As one friend often tells me, "God has a real problem, He thinks He's God." This is only a problem if we are still listening to the tempter's voice; "you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5).

There is no rest, no peace or liberty where man is in competition with his Maker. Truly this is the root of all the abuses that men inflict upon each other. But more, it is the reason that God cannot move freely in the midst of His people. He will not compete with us. He thinks He is God and He is right! We must stop trying to control Him--to get Him to do our will and allow Him to break us and write His will upon our hearts. We were created for His pleasure NOT Him for ours. We cannot manipulate Him to our own ends. This is where freedom begins. We are not truly free until we are free from the delusion of Godhood--free from the ambition to control everything and everyone around us--free to be frail, humble creatures before a mighty Creator.

Perhaps the best definition of humility in all of the scriptures is found in Psalm 131.

GOD, I'm not trying to rule the roost, I don't want to be king of the mountain. I haven't meddled where I have no business or fantasized grandiose plans. (Psalms 131:1 MSG)

The New Revised Standard Version reads,

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time on and forevermore. (Psalm 131:1-3, NRSV)

The upheaval in the world and in the Church today is an indicator of the unrest in the hearts of men who are trying to rule the roost and be king of the mountain. The division and abuse in the Church today emanates from the hearts of those who are fantasizing grandiose plans and meddling where they have no business. O how we need the stillness, quietness and rest of soul known only to those who have ceased from their works and entered into His rest (Hebrews 4:10).

Jesus invited His followers to enter that rest.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29, RSV)

When we once again deliver the control of the universe back into the hands of its rightful owner and become like a weaned child on its mother's breast, we will witness the light and power of Him who spoke the universe into existence. When we undo the bands of iniquity, let the captives go free and break every yoke, then will our light break forth as the morning! When we forgive others as He has forgiven us, then we will know the release and freedom for which we have been set free!



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