

Setting Captives

FREE!

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As always, if we can help you in any way, please contact the church
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What a life-changing discovery it was when I discovered that I have a Father whom I had never known. I had even, unbelievably, stubbornly turned away from my Father and my God—the One who loves me as much as His only begotten Son, Jesus.

I was, unknowingly, missing so much! The potential is boundless when, by His power, He can whisper a galaxy into existence, and yet He *loves* me! Only a fool would reject an offer of love from the Creator-God of the Universe. When, by God's grace, I finally saw myself, and God, more accurately, I accepted His extended hand. He "translated" me "from the kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of the Beloved Son." That was the beginning of my whole new life. My gratitude for that day is enormous.

By His unmerited favor towards me, that light in my eye and confidence in His unwavering Faithfulness (in spite of my foolishness at times) has even grown greater as the years have gone by. I now understand, from the Living Word of God, even more of what really happened on the day that I gave my life away—and it's *good!* I'll continue that thought a little later, but first let me share a little about some of the personal struggles that I encountered early on. Maybe you, too, can relate to these frustrations.

Before I had been a disciple very long, I began to feel an enormous dissatisfaction with my ability to adhere to what God was seemingly requiring of me. I really wanted to serve God, but I had to be honest with the Scriptures. The Word of God demands that every thought, every penny of my money, every instant of my time be subject to God. It really does! And as Paul said in Romans 7, there is nothing at fault in God's expecting that from us. It is not the fault of God's Word. In addition, I

must have perfect understanding of every doctrine, or surely I'll be "lost." If I didn't believe all of the right things (generally as someone else has determined "right" for me), my soul or growth was in great jeopardy. On top of all this, it was required of me to maintain complete obedience to ten thousand other commands in the New Testament (regarding widows, the poor, my family, attitudes at work, evangelism, and prayer). What if I overlooked, in my ignorance or my lack of diligence in Bible study, one or two of these commands?

If I was truly honest with all of the commands in Scripture—and not simply comparing my life to the prevailing religious environment and my peers, I was in BIG trouble! If guilty on the smallest point, you and I are legally guilty of murder, adultery, and every other supposedly "bigger" crime (James 2:10; Gal.3:10; Mat.5:21-22, 28)—and must be judged accordingly. I couldn't do all of the good things that Jesus commanded or the multitudinous directives of the "Christian life" about which Paul and the other apostles wrote. Nor could I cease from all of the bad things that the Word of God forbids, though it was clearly my Father's Will that I be like His Son Jesus in every area of my life. I had no excuses for my inadequacies and outright disobedience and insensitivity, and I desired no excuses. I knew for a fact that the clichés "I'm only human" and "we all have different personalities" and "he comes by that temper naturally—his great uncle was that way—I guess it's in his blood" do not cut it scripturally (1John 3:3-10; Heb.10:26-31; 2Peter 1:3-4; 1Cor.3:3; 2Cor.5:17). Personally, I choose to believe the Word of God! (Maybe you too, should read these verses right now and see if you can say "Amen" to what God has said). There's no excuse or acceptable explanation for continued rebellion against God's Word and His Authority, or any need of living as "mere men," as Paul (by the Spirit of God) had said.

A wonderful breakthrough occurred in my life when I came to grips with, and planted my feet solidly on (Eph.3:17; 1John 5:4) the Truth of the Good News of Jesus Christ. It was probably my fault, but I simply had never really heard before what I am about to share with you. What really did happen in God's creation when His Son, Immanuel, was murdered by the sins of mankind?

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (Colossians 2:13-15).

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:1-7).

But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (Galatians 6:14).

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:1-11).

By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy {useful, fruitful} (Hebrews 10:14).

Do I really believe that? Was it God who said that?! Dare I argue with that?

Finally I recognized, acknowledged, and began to “walk by trust” that His Word about who I am because of Jesus is *true*. And it doesn’t even matter what kind of day I’ve had and what mood I happen to be in! I am who I am by the undeserved kindness and favor of God through Jesus Christ. This absolutely revolutionized my life. Romans, Chapter Seven (marriage to the law) ceased to enslave me while Romans, Chapter Eight (marriage to Jesus) became as natural as breathing air! The sins that I had whitewashed as “socially acceptable,” and those that had crushed me because I was certain of how lethal they were (and yet was powerless to overcome)—those sins were now being gloriously “put to death by the Spirit of Christ.” Though I still have “giants” to battle daily, even in the “land flowing with milk and honey,” it certainly is an encouragement to know that God has given me that land of total victory already (Josh.1:3-9). The command to “go possess the land” speaks of a Land, a Kingdom (Eph.1:3; Lk.12:32-33), that He has already conferred upon us! Our calling is to be “strong and courageous,” to go forward obediently, and “the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” and “will give you every place where you set your feet!” (Joshua 1:3-9; Rom.16:20; 1Jn.5:4,18).

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God (Romans 8:3-4, 9-14).

For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).

For He made Him who knew no sin {Jesus} to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2Corinthians 5:21).

Will you choose to believe the Word of God about who you are in God’s sight because of His precious Son, Jesus (no matter how you feel about it, or how badly you’ve failed)? If you will, it will leave you eternally changed and continually advancing in the Faith. If it is your heart and practice to trust Jesus as the Father’s measurement of *you*, the Life in you will be observable to your wife, your children, your roommates, your boss, and all of your friends. Your pattern of life will be to celebrate what Jesus has done in you, rather than trying to add your work to His in order to justify yourself. God honors His Son, and will bless and affirm that heart *only*. Paul reasoned that if it were possible to justify ourselves in God’s sight by our merit, Christ must have died for nothing—

“...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”

*“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law {trying to be acceptable to the Father on the basis of anything other than the shed blood of His Son, Jesus}, then **Christ died in vain**” (Galatians 2:16, 21).*

What a ghastly idea for the Father to present us with on the Judgment Day. Would He say to us, as He did our brothers and sisters in Galatia, that as far as we viewed our “christianity,” Christ (His precious Son, the Lamb of God) might just as well not have been mocked, spit on and crucified? Would we continue, by our fear and attitudes, to act as if the gift of Jesus to a stubborn, empty people is just a poetic part of our theology? We are guaranteed to fail continuously if we ever try to approach the Father except through the blood of His Son. His sinless blood was spilled on the ground of planet earth to purchase us, free of charge (John 14:6; Heb.10:19; Rev.5:6,9; 22:17). Whatever we do, it is out of our love for Him, not our attempt to justify ourselves in His sight.

“Lest any man boast,” “to the praise of His Glory!” (1Cor.15:10; Eph.1:3-23; 2:1-10)

...even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the

justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law (Romans 3:22-28).

It must be built right into us. Even in the earliest days of the church, within a few short years after our Lord had returned to His Father's side, we had already begun to turn inward. Jesus was still bearing the scars of the cost He paid to "purchase men for God," and some were already attempting to find their security in a means other than trusting in, and resting in, the blood of Jesus to present them perfect (Heb.10:14-19; 4:1-10) to their Father.

On one occasion, when some of these men attempted to bind this heresy (Gal.1:8-9) on others as well, Peter spoke out boldly:

...and God made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they (Acts 15:9-11).

All of this discussion is so paramount to the quality of the rest of our lives. It certainly has been for me, and scores of others. It is simply the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ.

For the sake of the remainder of this correspondence with you, I'd like to call, if you'll permit me, the outworking (or ramifications) of this Gospel on our personal lives, attitudes towards temptation, and failures by a particular name. I'd like to refer to this Truth about "who we are in Christ" (about which the Scriptures have so much to say) "**positional Truth.**"

In short, the Life of a Christian is not "trying desperately to attain something to impress God," or to earn favor in His sight. Rather, it is functioning energetically from the confidence and "rest" of knowing who we are—because of our Faith in Him and being "clothed in Christ."

Notice the heart of Paul for the Christians in Galatia. They had been converted in a way that Paul described as "beginning in the Spirit," by His Promises, "by faith"—trusting implicitly in Jesus as their Hope. Now they were "trying to attain their goal by mere human effort."

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians

and stewards until the time appointed by the father. 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 as 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. But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those who by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years {thinking that by external things you might justify yourself in God's sight}. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain... (Galatians 3:26-4:11).

By way of parallel, consider a millionaire who is fearful and feeble and is exploited by unnecessary terror when the paperboy comes to collect. Consider another man with a Rolls Royce automobile who doesn't know what it is—so he walks on foot everywhere he needs to go. Would you say that he is in a pathetic and regrettable state of affairs? Would you agree that a woman and her family with a full refrigerator would not need to starve to death? All of those examples pale in comparison to living in mediocrity, spiritual poverty, fruitlessness, loneliness, and slavery to the appetites of the flesh—when the Truth is:

"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us (2Corinthians 4:6-7).

and,

The mystery which has been hidden for ages and generations, but has now been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of Glory! (Colossians 1:26-27)

For your own future here in this life, and for the sake of Jesus—that He might have a testimony in you (Gal.1:16) of His grace and power to change lives, please open your heart to the love of the Father, and the completed work of Calvary!

The “Tough Love” of the Gospel of Jesus

With all of this in mind, you should know the subtleties of how we can mess things (even good things!) up. I'd like to share with you a letter that I felt I should write to a brother who had taken all of this awesome Truth (referred to above as “positional Truth”) and called it “*the answer*” to all of our woes and trials. I think you'll find it helpful.

A letter to a new friend and brother

“This may be hard to believe, but there is a Truth yet higher than “positional Truth.” Oh yes! It is clear that many don't realize the unsearchable riches that are theirs *already*: “**every** spiritual blessing” which is in Christ Jesus!!! Many walk in fear and condemnation and poverty—“as slaves in the household”—when they are heirs of the entire inheritance. We should all be in “the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed” in all of our brothers and sisters—until they are no longer trying to attain maturity by “pleasing the Father” on some other basis (any other basis) than the hiding of their lives in the Beloved. Oh, how fundamental, yet so elusive is this Truth!

Paul spent over two years in Ephesus and still felt that they did not have an adequate understanding of who they were as they hid their lives in Christ (individually, and as a People), and therefore wrote them much about that Truth.

Paul had co-labored for years with many listed in Romans 16 as “giants of the Faith”—and yet spent much of his letter to them calling them to an understanding of “who they were” in the Second Adam. He called them to “put to death the misdeeds of the body by the Spirit,” not by the Law, and to “RECKON themselves dead to sin” but alive to Christ. Couldn't they remember that they had died to sin when they were buried into the death of the Christ, and now were new creations with no need to go on sinning that grace might abound? These were very fruitful, seasoned veterans in the Faith, having built with “gold, silver and precious stones” far beyond where you and I have been. And yet they still had more to learn about the “great and precious Promises” and being “participants in the Divine Nature.”

Even these veterans needed to be taught what Paul wrote to them regarding who they were “in Christ.” These are Truths that are precious and so valuable for even “fruitful, seasoned veterans” of Apostolic stature in God's sight (Rom.16:7, etc.) to embrace and enjoy and benefit from. May the Lord increase all of our hearts' understanding of this matter!

Most definitely we can never learn to appreciate enough the Grace of God and the magnitude of the free Gift He has given us. Yet, you and I need to be aware that the FRUIT of taking ANY, absolutely ANY Truth to automatically be “the answer” for someone is...broken Fellowship with Him, and “leaning on our own understanding” (Prov.2:1-10, 3:5-8; 1Cor.2:9-15; 2Cor.13:14; Phil.2:1; Heb. 6:4b-5; Gal.5:16-25; John 7:37-38).

POSITIONAL TRUTH IS NOT “THE ANSWER” THAT SETS MEN FREE.

JESUS CHRIST—THE PERSON—IS THE ONLY “THING” THAT SETS MEN FREE.

Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away (2Cor.3:16).

Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me {a person}!’ (John 14:6)

Jesus answered them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed’ (John 8:34-36).

Truth, be it “positional Truth” or any of the other Scriptures, is only of value to the extent that it draws us to fellowship—“having all things in common” with Jesus as a PERSON, a friend.

But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not trust. You search the Scriptures {and discover “positional Truths,” prayer, holiness, deliverance, praise and worship, the “armor of God,” Discipling, church government, eschatology}, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have Life (John 5:38-40).

And this is eternal life, that they may know {have intimacy with} You {Father}, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (John 17:3).

I'm in hopes that you already know this, but positional Truth is NOT what sets us free. Again, “***If the SON sets you free, you shall be free indeed!***”

The Truth that God may desire to say through your lips or mine at any given time may include the glorious Truth of who we are “in Christ.” It may not. It may be something entirely different, such as when Peter brought a Word to Simon the sorcerer, a baptized believer. He didn’t say: “Brother, don’t you know who you are? You don’t have to live that way anymore. Your Father loves you!” He might have said that, and that is a beautiful truth also. Who are we to decide what Ananias and Sapphira need before the moment comes to address it, as if there was some automatic secret counseling formula? Do they need a word of exhortation regarding “who they are in the Beloved”? Maybe. But it’s not for me to say in advance. I must be obedient to say a hard word if necessary (Heb.3:12-14).

God’s opinion, through Peter, was that, in this case, Ananias and Sapphira didn’t need a word of encouragement as much as they needed to be struck dead (Acts 5:1-11). The words of “Spirit and Life” (John 6:63,68; 1Cor.2:13-14; 1Pet.4:11) that will change a life or save a marriage might be an encouraging word about the Love of our Father and the Grace of His Son Jesus. Or maybe, just maybe, He’ll call me to say (as He did one of Apostolic Stature in the following passage):

Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’ But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.’ Then Simon answered and said, ‘Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me’ (Acts 8:18-24).

If I’m not capable of being wet clay to the extent that God could use me as He did Peter, I will be building with “wood, hay and stubble.” If I’m in Fellowship with and useful to the “Christ in me”—like Jesus, I too, will always be capable of making a whip and turning over pews. (It might just as likely be carnal arrogance, impatience, ungodly zeal and disrespect to turn over those pews. You’ll only know out of Fellowship with Him!) Work done, or even “biblical” lofty Truth spoken, “apart from HIM” is “nothing,” even “dung” (John 15:4-5; Phil.3:2-9; Mal.1:10-2:3).

Can I say?

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the

Lord. ‘And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not obey that Prophet (Jesus) shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”

Or just as readily say, “Your Father loves you and is running towards you with a ring for your finger and a celebration in His Heart—I don’t care where you’ve been sleeping, I don’t care who’s made your bed... He already gave His life to set you free!”

(In truth, it’s really the same message! “Repentance” is “TURNING AWAY FROM, AND TURNING TOWARDS OUR FATHER,” NOT ONE OR THE OTHER. The first (simply turning “away from”) is legalism without true Life in Him. The second (simply “turning to Him,” without turning away from every known sin) is a delusion.

And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother (1John 3:3-10).

Brother, I don’t believe the Apostle John was a legalist. Yet when he needed to say something like that, he said it.

It has transformed my life to know that when we have men and women so filled with the Love of our God and one another that they see the foolishness of trying to fill the appetites of the flesh with animal food, rather than spirit food, they’ll put all of that aside. They’ll grow out of the old clothes because they don’t fit anymore. It won’t be necessary for religionists to “curse the old clothes” of sin, and shame men to take them off. Truly all sin is only the desire to fulfill an inward need that was meant to be filled by the Father’s Love, the Family’s Love, and a Revelation of Jesus Christ in the inner man.

All of this does not, however, strip God of the right to use us “to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, in order to build and to plant” (Jer.1:10). Every man of God in the Bible, and our Lord Jesus Christ, did both.

Can I walk in and declare any one of the following:

I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.

Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance (Acts 26:17-20, Paul, in audience with a king).

Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.’ And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand (Acts 13:9-11).

Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and, ‘Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness’ (2Tim.2:19).

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’? But He gives more grace [provision].

Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up (James 4:4-10).

Not what one would call an encouraging word—unless you really love the Word of God (2Thes.2:9-12), and the God of the Word. The Bible tells us of the present-day Jesus in Words from Heaven:

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades!’ (Revelation 1:14-18)

If truly converted to this Jesus, the Jesus of the Word (rather than the one in our own image and likeness), no one could ever say anything so “hard” that it would cause us to be defensive or would crush us in a condemned way. Our total being is sold out to Jesus Christ already, our confidence is in Him, and everything is “entrusted to Him against that Day.” He is discipling me through these circumstances and this “difficult” confrontation (Heb.12:5-13; 2Tim.3:16-17). And I rejoice in it!

“The washing of the water of the Word.”

“Times of refreshing come from repentance.”

“He’s come to bless me by turning me from my wickedness!”

What an awesome God we serve!

Are you willing to say “difficult” things (rather than positional Truth) to anyone, anywhere, on a case-by-case basis? Are you willing to never say “positional Truth is the answer,” if that is not the current Word most necessary? Instead, would you be willing to say to someone: “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell?” If not, your usefulness to God will be severely limited.

“Lean NOT on your own understanding”... of positional Truth or anything else, but in ALL your ways turn to HIM. Anything else is to make yourself a god, knowing good and evil.

Some might say that positional Truth and God’s Father-heart are “good,” while “repentance from acts that lead to death,” “unless you repent you shall all likewise perish,” “unless you forsake all, you cannot be a christian,” “Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door,

and they will carry you out” are “evil” verses, legalistic, and “too negative to do any good.”

Not so. It is all Truth: He is “the SAME yesterday, today and forever!”

Our job is simply to be vessels to do whatever HE says, any time, anywhere. We are to say “**NOTHING that we don’t hear Him saying**” (John 15:4-5; 5:19; 6:57; 8:28-29; 10:30; 12:49; 14:15-21; 14:7,10), to “lean NOT on our own understanding” of any “Truth,” but to Fellowship, abide in Him, let His Words ABIDE in us, and “eat the scrolls”—not evaluate them for “the answer.” **HE, ALONE, AS A PERSON, is the answer**, and only by fellowship in Him can we bring Life to one another (1Cor.2:9-16).

“If anyone turns to HIM, the veil falls away.”

If we turn to a Truth about Him, it will be a “decreasing,” “fading Glory”—rather than the “ever-increasing Glory” that is in HIM. **Jesus** is the TRUTH that sets men free. Even “positional Truth” apart from Him, as a living friend, is only another empty doctrine to argue about. We’ll put our misguided trust in the “concept” of His Grace towards us, rather than in Him. And then we’ll build a denomination (or a so-called “non-denomination”) or “ministry” around our great discovery.

As Jesus has said in many, many ways: “**Brother, if you got a thing out of it, YOU DIDN’T GET A THING OUT OF IT!!!**” He brings us through the exciting understanding in our hearts of certain Truths as an investment in our future. He doesn’t do it so that we can camp out on these nuggets of Truth by saying “At last! The long-awaited answer! Now I will be free!” He feeds us Bread from Heaven so that we can better fall in love with Him and glorify His Majesty.

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

I know that the issue on your heart, as well as mine, has to do with releasing ourselves and friends from a man-created religion—a rework of

the Jewish and Catholic systems that are based on behavior modification and/or “decent and in order” rituals to “appease” God. True Biblical Christianity is, instead, fellowship, friendship, and true Life on the streets with one another and Him, not “services” or “masses.” Our “gatherings” will then be the overflow of what is happening “daily in public and from house to house,” as it was in the church of the Bible. It’s not a pipe dream—it is literally happening every day. It really is still God’s heart to have a People, “joined and knit together,” a corporate “Christ-Life” that shows the world His Presence by their life together (John 13:34-35; Heb.3:12-14; 1Cor.12:12-26).

By way of warning, our Father will make certain that a “thing”-related ministry or “church” will not bear the fruit of “joined and knit together by every supporting ligament,” the corporate Man, “one heart, one mind, one accord,” bearing one another’s burdens, confessing sins one to another or “Holy-Spiriting one another DAILY so that none are hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” It will all remain theory, hype, clergy/laity, speechmaker/audience (which is an abomination and destruction of God’s inheritance in the Priesthood of Believers), individualistic and shallow in corporate life if we are built on any other Foundation than He Himself, the Living, current Head of His Body, which is the Church. Nevertheless, ministries, movements, and “thing-oriented” churches can certainly, for awhile, be sustained by hype, flattery, a good speaker, creative “ministries” that make people feel important, and a great vocabulary of doctrine and deep spiritual truth. So what?!

In such a case we’ll then be faced with the necessity of creating a theology to explain why the church isn’t anything like the church of the Word (Eph.3:10; Mat.16:18). We just “believe” basically the same things, if that. Men will be filled with vanity and a hard edge—very unlike the Holy Spirit of Jesus of Galatians 5. Many will remain rude, uncorrectable, individualistic, lazy, bitter, materialistic, engrossed in idols of career, hobbies, family, computers or a host of other things. Many, many have remained enslaved to wretchedness who could propound the Truth of “seated with Christ in Heavenly Realms” much better than you or I. You know, and the last 1800 years bear testimony, that all of the speeches in the universe on positional Truth or the “right doctrine” or anything else—WILL NOT CHANGE MUCH OF ANYTHING. Nobody preaches that well.

My brother, “the LIFE becomes the Light of Men,” both with Him and one another. “Who we are in Christ” is but one glorious facet of the diamond”

(End of letter)

I know, brothers and sisters, that it was difficult to take the time and discipline of heart and mind to read this as if Jesus had written it to you. But I want you to know that you are in my prayers, and I am earnestly filled with hope that our Father will use you as you present yourself to Him as one malleable and available to be washed and purified and equipped for His Purposes on this planet day by day. May God Himself Pioneer the Path and be your Rear Guard. I love you.

P.S. I hope that the “things” that you’ve just read will not become a “thing” to you, but that you will search out Jesus, a friend and the Teacher (Mat.23:10), to walk along the Way with you. May He help you and enrich and equip you in every way.

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen (Hebrews 13:20-22).