

The Staff and The Sword Ministry

Relationship Reports

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RELATIONSHIP



PART 9 JESUS OUR FRIEND: BEING SAFE

LETTER OF THE LAW vs. SPIRIT OF THE LAW

“FOR THEY BIND HEAVY BURDENS AND GRIEVOUS TO BE BORNE, AND LAY THEM ON MEN’S SHOULDERS; BUT THEY THEMSELVES WILL NOT MOVE THEM WITH ONE OF THEIR FINGERS . . .” (Jesus in Matthew 23:4).

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Our relationship with Jesus is all important here: it is all the difference between the **LETTER OF THE LAW** and the **SPIRIT OF THE LAW**.

In the Scripture reference above (Matthew 23:4), Jesus is speaking of what we **DO** and what we **DO NOT DO**—speaking of legalism as less weighty (important) than the greater weight (more important) of “**JUDGMENT, MERCY AND FAITH**” (verse 23). What is important to note is that Jesus qualifies tithing (which I call legalism) and “**Judgment, Mercy and Faith**” all as “**THE LAW**.”

In the U.S. legal system the parallel is seen in two versions of the law, version #1 is **THE LETTER OF THE LAW** and version #2 is **THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW**.

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LETTER vs. SPIRIT: A SIMPLE VIEW

There is a simple view: if a four-year old child started a fire by playing with matches and a house burned down. By the letter of the law, the child should go to prison for arson, but by the SPIRIT OF THE LAW (Judgment in this case) no legal action would be taken. In present day Iran, under strict Moslem law children are being executed for breaking the law and here we see THE LETTER OF THE LAW and being weightier than THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW.

The present day church system too perfectly fits within the definition Jesus made in Matthew 23 and the effect it has had on each of us becomes a factor in our relationship with others, ourselves, and Jesus. What I speak of is HEAVY BURDENS: we are taught “heavy burdens” and we in turn do the same thing to ourselves and others. But more on HEAVY BURDENS later . . .

BEING FREED BY LOVE

We are too hard on ourselves and if we have had any kind of normal upbringing, we practice self abuse as if it were a virtue. We know we are not perfect, yet we are deeply disappointed when it is an evident fact by our mistakes and we tend without conscious awareness to “punish” ourselves for that lack of perfection—as if that action would make us more perfect. But it does not accomplish that, rather we assume greater burdens on ourselves.

Excessive fasting can be a self assumed burden, excessive prayer can be a burden, and all of it comes under the heading TRYING TOO HARD or STRIVING or GOING PAST OUR LIMITS.

What HEAVY BURDENS create in us is a personality out of balance, we lose sight of our true self. When we are not sacrificing (the burdens part) then we are self-seeking and both in excess. What do I mean?

It is not what we do that counts, though we need go our limit, we need also see we have a limit. It is truly who Jesus IS that counts and all the self-purging exercises we can dream up do not enhance or make better our relationship with Jesus. In fact, they become stumbling blocks.

HEAVY BURDENS

Here's a little more on HEAVY BURDENS . . .

Years back, I would purge myself at regular intervals with severe fastings, destroying everything that was a hindrance (in my eyes) to a walk with God, forcing myself to pray endless hours, and keeping my nose in the Bible hour after hour. And then, when I eased up, I was so self-seeking and driven by suppressed desires that what followed virtually undid any holiness I gained in the HEAVY

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BURDEN exercise.

I ended-up with an exaggerated view of myself, very holy (self righteous) at intervals followed by compulsions that left me with a reverse self image (very unholy).

But, it wasn't Jesus laying these heavy burdens on me, it was me laying heavy burdens on me.

THE EXPERIENCE LEVEL

When any of us hear about Jesus for the first time, when we read the Bible, listen to a sermon or whatever—what we do is that we understand what we hear and read out of our own personal experience frame of reference. We have no real way of grasping the essence of what JESUS' LOVE means because we are bound by our human love experience which as good as it gets is limited and too often CONDITIONAL. Jesus' love is unlimited and unconditional. Yet, locked as we are to within the confines of our own experience, we cannot really comprehend the true meaning of Jesus' unconditional love UNTIL we experience it.

MY EXPERIENCE

Out of the rigors of my self imposed heavy burdens I did gain a side benefit, which was a discipline of daily prayer. The Lord led me to “ease up on myself” and as I did, prayer became more and more a conversation and less a toil and heavy burden—that's when I could be in prayer six hours and it felt like a few minutes, for it became a joy. That joy was a conversation with Jesus. An artist might depict a walk with Jesus—an excellent example in many ways.

Jesus' Love is unconditional to the extent all fear of anything and everything fades away instantly, and He can talk to us about our deepest darkest sins in such a way (lovingly) that one is not ashamed or convicted or condemned. And, it is that loving truth that does not offend in the slightest degree that actually sets us free of the very sin inclination in us.

There is nothing hidden from Jesus and when we are with Him in prayer-meditation we KNOW this, and there is NO FEAR. Because He does not judge us, I began to learn how NOT to judge others. Because He accepted and loved me the way I was, and loves me the way I am, I learned to accept myself and to accept others all at the same time. But none of this was forced on me, by me, Jesus or anyone else—in talking to and being with Jesus, the more I KNEW Him, the more I wanted to be like Him and He did all the rest and is doing more.

My experience was that as I eased up, became myself in balance and accepted myself as He did, and yielded to Him as the One who transforms (not myself or man's system) that then and only then,

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changes happened in me. Of course, He works slowly and transforms at a rate we consider too slow and often we can hardly perceive the change in us. I know today that sin-areas in me were so totally removed from me that today I can no longer remember what they were. And, this is an interesting experience: in the areas Jesus transformed me over the years, there is today absolutely no recall of what I was like in those areas when sin was prevailing. What this means is that as we change into His likeness by Him, coming into what we are in Him, what we were ceases to exist even in memory and it not longer can be feared.

If a man were a homosexual and was reformed out of that sin nature, the memory of the past would always present itself with the FEAR falling back into it. That FEAR alone would always present itself in such a person as a latent or hidden tendency. Yet, when Jesus transforms a person, His Love removes not only the fear but the memory with it. As a result, the person is restored to innocence.

Where we need remember one thing: ***ONLY JESUS CAN DO THIS!***

WE WALKED & TALKED

One time, I was taken into the heavens and Jesus and I WALKED hand-in-hand down a beautiful path in Heaven and TALKED. A Christian will never rightly understand the meaning of the concept “Trust in Jesus” until they have experienced His Love in this way. You feel His Love, you feel totally safe with Him, no subject is forbidden, no question is forbidden. There is no earthly experience to remotely parallel it.

So, it is repeatedly said that each of us need seek a personal relationship with Him but this is only the beginning. When we speak of Jesus’ Second Coming, we usually realize that a preparation for His Coming is called for yet how many know what it is?

Each of us are members of the Body of Christ and we should be with each other the way we are with Jesus, as He is with us. So long as we lay heavy burdens on ourselves, we will never be able to do anything less to others around us. It is as true for the Church system of man as it is for the individuals out of that system.

BUT HOW CAN I??

I can’t—you can’t—we can’t!

But, JESUS CAN!

So, how can you talk to Jesus as I do? It really is easy, so easy it will stun you!

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Here's how: you pray, you look to Jesus in your heart, you talk to Him, and IMAGINE a conversation.

GOD'S GIFT OF IMAGINATION

IMAGE is the key word in IMAGINE, meaning picture in your mind literally WALKING AND TALKING WITH JESUS.

We tend to forget that God speaks to us in pictures, in dreams and visions and words themselves are only symbols that depict images of things we know or have seen. We forget that we are made in God's LIKENESS AND IMAGE, thus we have on a small scale His make-up within each of us and talking to Him is so easy we get hung up on man's teachings that block what is in fact our second nature (first actually).

A time back, I realized that Christians always see Jesus but do not have the sight in their conscious minds because they have been taught to believe it impossible, therefore block themselves off from seeing what they see. If they have their awareness raised to the point to where they KNOW its possible they usually feel themselves unworthy (blocking again) and go the wrong direction, trying to be worthy by the HEAVY BURDENS route. The greatest hindrance is actually FEAR—we fear to see Him fearing He will be angry with us over our wrong doings (He will not), fearing He will scold us over something, fearing He will tell us something we do not want to hear. It is all unreasonable FEAR and it is this that lastly blocks us from the closer relationship.

Using the God given gift of IMAGINATION, being child-like, and simply imagining in our mind out of prayer, out of a view of His Love as given here, both seeing and talking to Jesus we can cut through all the fear barriers at once.

At first we will think (automatically) that it is only our imagination (we are in control) and be comfortable with imagining Jesus with us. To do this requires a child-likeness and innocence which we can by our choice exercise in a free will choice. But, after a time of imagining we will begin to realize that it is not our imagination, we will begin to realize that in fact we ARE seeing and talking to Jesus Christ.

FEARING FEAR

FEAR is the major hold-back in all of us and it is an institution in the Church system of man; but IN CHRIST THERE IS NO FEAR.

A person might fear to imagine seeing and talking to Jesus for fear of deception. Yet most deception

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is in us: it is self-deception. It is possible that at first by imagining seeing and talking to Jesus that our own spirit-soul will speak to us, as well as Jesus. Thus, we may hear 50% from Jesus and 50% from ourselves. Consider it, before we began to hear 50% from Jesus we were likely hearing 100% from ourselves.

There is nothing in Scripture that tells me that growth in Christ is not a trialsome and painful process because it is, dying to self involves pain but also joy in great measure at the same time which more than compensates for the pain.

There are no fool proof systems in the Church today except an abiding ultimate and absolute Trust in Jesus Christ to keep us, one and all. Anything more or less than this is fail certain.

A secular writer (Sydney Harris) made an observation worth quoting here [I regret to note that I no longer have the publication reference for this quote, but the quote is especially important to this discussion]: *“Even religion has failed to liberate and unify man, because it’s adherents have never tried to do what it’s founders hoped for; from the bloodthirstiness of the Crusades down to the madness of the mullahs, the love of power has triumphed over the power of love. Chesterton said, ‘Christianity has not failed; it has never been tried.’”*

Not long ago, a young prophet traveled with me a period of weeks, but he FEARED the power of demons (obsession) and was very subject to deceptions and could not discern Jesus. In a matter of days, by leading him in prayer, by instructing him to know how to discern, he was hearing Jesus’ Word clearly and with ease and seeing Jesus as well.

How was this done? I loved him as a brother and there was no subject or view he could make that was not heard in Jesus’ Love. In an environment of unconditional love, with the modest prayer discipline, he was set free in a matter of hours and moved by the Spirit of God with ease.

Where Jesus is the focus, where Love of Him is primary, where there is no condemnations and an abundance of encouragement to simply move by the Spirit of God Christians readily blossom in Christ. The Love of Jesus removes fear, and when we begin to experience His Love personally from and in Jesus Himself, we are set free.

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

But, freedom in Christ is something so totally new to us that when we move from the narrow confines of ‘heavy burdens’, of the DOs and DON’Ts system to the broad open fields of Jesus’ Love and openness we feel uncomfortable and tend to run back to the confines to feel safe. But, we will never be safe in the confines only prevented from ever reaching the potential Christ Jesus has given us.

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The power of Jesus' Love is something we each need experience before we can ever truly preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because except with His Eyes of Love we can never begin to see the great and blessed depth of God's Love in the Scriptures and if we cannot see it, we cannot preach it.

IMAGINATION

IMAGINATION is like priming a water pump . The only danger in it is this: to imagine and then to NOT look to Jesus openly and wholly.

If you trust Jesus to keep you and to lead you in all things (as I have learned to do over the years—and, am still learning to do), then Jesus will surely DO JUST THAT!

Jesus really is OUR FRIEND. And, we really are SAFE IN HIM.

God Bless,

Chuck-JOHNEL