

I woke up with the joyful task in front of me to write this month's letter. The title of it you may see next month; it was not going to be "Release." This morning during my time with God, I was compelled to change the noun I had planned to write about to "release." I am really trying to get proficient at listening and hearing and obeying God's words to me. Some may think it odd, or even worthy of ridicule, to believe that God would speak words to me of an insignificant nature such as the topic of this letter. But, I tend to believe that He speaks to us constantly through His spirit. There was a man who was arguably **the most successful man ever to live**; I am convinced that He was so successful because He listened, heard, and obeyed continually. He listened and obeyed continually. He walked by the Spirit, and for Him, all things, all the time, worked out for the best. We would do ourselves well to use Him as an example in our walk.

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But **if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.***
(Galatians 5:16-18)

I think we are many times **trapped by our own thoughts**. These thoughts are understandably influenced by our experiences, insecurities, imaginations, and our physical surroundings. So, there should be no surprise that we are not accustomed to hearing a guiding voice from our Creator, Provider, Sustainer, Healer, Guide – whose realm is not in the physical. But He does guide us, and he does want us to seek His guidance. Our own guiding thoughts are limiting and oftentimes they mislead us to make poor decisions.

Our God is so big and amazingly powerful that He created billions of galaxies, each of which contain billions of stars with the distances between them taking light thousands of years to travel between them. Surely you have stopped to consider how awesome God is. A champion of God that I know and respect puts it this way: "My God is so awesome, **He puts hairs on the legs of ants.**" And, He can break rocks with the wind:

*So He said, "Go forth and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD was passing by! And a great and strong **wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks** before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:11-13)*

Elijah was no stranger to the important job he had to do for God. And he was no stranger to hearing God's voice, in whatever way it came to him. The prophetic writings are full of examples of God telling the prophet what to do. I think this passage was written for us as an example to remind us that **we need to be looking at and paying attention to everything around us**, big and small, loud and quiet, bright and dim, with question and discernment. The [more we do this](#), the better at it we get.

One definition of the noun "release" is "an abatement of distress; a means of deliverance." The word comes from Old French "*relaissier*" – to relinquish or quit. Older roots are from Latin, "*relaxare*" which gives us "relax." Aside from the verb, the noun "release" is used in many ways: the release mechanism of a catapult, a press release, a letter of release that legally transfers responsibility, or an activity that provides an escape from stress. But they all have the commonality of purpose that is to allow something to change from being captive to being set free.

If we are to “walk by the Spirit,” but we are trapped by our own thoughts, our ability to listen, hear, and obey will be severely compromised. We need to find a release from that trap. No surprise that we should look to God for such a release. He’s shown a few times throughout history that **He can and will provide a release from captivity**. He released the Israelites from Egypt, Daniel from the lion’s den, Israel from the Philistines, Noah from the flood, David from Saul, Isaac from sacrifice, Judah from Babylon, Israel from the Midianites, Lot from Sodom, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the furnace, and mankind from sin.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen. (Galatians 1:3-5)

The great news is that our Old Man, the likely source of the trap of our own thoughts, was buried in baptism, crucified on the cross. He’s dead and we are not subject to his influence any longer. Right. Right? My faith tells me that is true, but my flesh still hears him calling to me, shouting out orders like a ship’s captain whom the mutineers tied to the mast. **My old man should be dead, but he’s not**. My weak flesh has kept him alive and sometimes even obeys his “orders.” We are, in a sense, captive to the old man and we need a release mechanism from that captivity. Christ is that release.

*Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so **we too might walk in newness of life**. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. (Romans 6:4-7)*

At the end of 2Corinthians 6, Paul seems to give us a release from being among the unbelievers. He’s referring to Isaiah 52:10-12. But the original Greek also sounds like a release from our old man. The word for “their” (their midst) is “autos” which also means “self.” So, the scripture below could also be read as **“come out from the midst of yourself...”**

"Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)

We are the Ecclesia, according to Messiah in Matthew 16:18. This word, generally translated as “church,” literally means “called out ones.” Called out of what? Released from what? Released from darkness...

*But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may **proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1 Peter 2:9)***

God’s love for us is a release from death, the wage of sin. His plan for salvation is a true gift and a miracle that we are privileged to experience. Claim it for your own, follow Him, and rejoice in your release!

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)

Peace to you and glory to God!

-Nate

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