

Free Slavery

BY BOB HUTTO

"A christian man is a most free lord of all things and subject to no one; a Christian is a most dutiful servant of all things and subject to every one." This seemingly contradictory statement was made by Martin Luther in the 17th century, but is still just as applicable in the 20th as it was when first made. Likewise, it will be applicable in the 21st, 22nd, 23rd, and on into the ages of the ages. It is true that a Christian is free from the rule of all men, but on the other hand subject to all men. This is an important concept for all Christians to realize; not only to realize, but also to put into practice.

When Luther made this statement he was involved in the great reformation movement. His goal during this movement was to reform the Catholic church and rid it of the abuses put on the common man by those in high places. Luther's fight soon changed focus. It began as a fight against the sale of indulgences to further the position of ambitious men, but soon became a fight over authority. Luther maintained that no Christian was subject to anyone, save Jesus Christ. Christians were not subject to the pope or any other church official. Man, according to Luther, was directly responsible to Christ. Although Martin Luther was mistaken on many points he was right on this one.

Jesus himself teaches this principle. On one occasion he told his disciples, "Call no man your father on the earth; for one is your father even he who is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, even the Christ" (Matt. 23:9-10). We are not to call any man our "father" that is, we are not to recognize any man as having authority over us. No man has the authority to tell us what is right or wrong, only God has that right. Later Jesus said, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." We are subject to no man. Christ is our sole authority.

The Christian man is free from the rule of any man. He does not answer to the pope or any other church official or board member. He is subject only to Christ and should appeal to only Him and to His Word for authority in fulfilling his duty as a Christian. He is absolutely free from any commandment that originates with man. He is subject exclusively to the Word of Christ.

This probably is nothing new to most of us. We have all heard that Christians are subject only to Christ and to no man. It is with the second part of Luther's statement that we sometimes have problems. To enable us to live the Christian life properly we must realize that we are "most dutiful servants of all things and subject to everyone." A Christian is a servant not a master. He, like Christ, is not to be ministered to, but to minister (Matt. 20:28). In that same context Christ urged his disciples not to be like the Gentiles who lorded it over and exercised authority over them. It seems that there are some among us who would like to become leaders in the brotherhood. The Bible says that many who are first shall be last. We need to forget about being prominent in the brotherhood and set our minds to serve our God. Surely this is a true reflection of our times. We are constantly bombarded with self-improvement ideas. There is no doubt that more emphasis has been put on making ourselves

better than on making others better. How many times have we been heard saying, "What about me?" This kind of attitude is condemned by Christ. We should not seek to "find ourselves" but to lose ourselves in Christ (Matt. 20:28). We need to give up our rights to serve the needs and wants of others.

The New Testament is filled with phrases like, "the first shall be last and the last shall be first," "whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister," and "whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant." The sooner we learn and apply this fact the better off we will be. Are we not guilty sometimes of leaving the impression with some that they are basically good people and if they became a Christian they would not have to change too much? How wrong we are! When we become a Christian our whole attitude must change. Whereas we previously served no one, we now are slaves to God. Before we felt we were the kind of all, now we are slaves to do the will of God. Before we became Christians we reigned, now we serve. Even if we were pious it was because we chose to be. After we become Christians we live the way Christ would have us to live. We are not, however, held as slaves against our will, but are slaves willingly out of a love of Christ.

Not only are we servants of Christ we should also be servants to our other brethren. "Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you to the things of others. Have this mind in you which was also in Christ...." (Phil. 2:4-5). How tragic it would be for us if Christ had done what we do so many times, that is if he had looked to his own things. What would our situation be if Christ had said, "What's in it for me?" or "Man's a sinner? That's his problem." How grateful we should be that Christ willing to become a servant. Should we be responsible for anything less? We should all strive to be like Christ. He gave His life to serve man. We should do the same.

Surely Luther hit the nail on the head when he said "A Christian man is a most free lord of all things and subject to no one; a Christian is a most dutiful servant of all things and subject to everyone." The Christian is subject to no man, but subject to every man.

HUTTO HERE THIS SUMMER

We are happy to have brother Bob Hutto working with the church this summer as one of the preachers. He plans to be with us through August. He has already proven himself capable at preaching and has endeared himself to the brethren here.

Sowers Going Forth To Sow

BY EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.

Jesus spoke two great parables concerning sowing seed in Matthew 13. The first emphasizes the quality of the soil, the second the quality of the seed. Both parables are valuable lessons for one going forth to win souls to Christ, as well as for those who may judge the work of those who go forth to sow. Every preacher, every elder, every saint would profit from a careful reading and application of these two parables.

Good seed is needed. There were tares among the wheat because tares had been sown. Seed produces after its kind. When one preaches a sermon, teaches a class, or simply converses with another about spiritual matters -- he should be careful with his seed. Satan may have mixed some tares (false teaching) with his seed. We have seen a few times where the whole bag seemed to be tares.

Only the pure gospel will save souls and keep them saved (cf. Gal. 1:8-10). The spiritual sower must constantly compare his thoughts, his words, his message with the word of God to see if they are indeed the truth or something he has imagined or carelessly borrowed from someone. Let God be true and every man a liar.

Tares of the Devil sown by the agency of the most sincere of men are still tares of the devil. Likewise, the pure seed sown by the hands of unscrupulous men will still save (cf. Phil. 1:15-18). The power is the word of God and not in the men who preach it.

The word of God will produce the kingdom of God. It will produce only Christians like you read about in the New Testament. It will produce only churches (congregations) like you read about in the New Testament. If any other kind is produced, something else has been sown. The New Testament knows nothing of the modern denominations that people join. Something else has been sown to produce them.

Liberal sowing is needed. Seed kept in the bag will not produce wheat in the field. The word must be liberally (in a good sense!) sown if souls are going to be saved in abundance (cf. 2 Cor. 9:6). While one should be careful with his sowing. He would not go out and purposefully waste precious sowing time throwing seed upon wayside soil (casting pearls before swine). But the fact that some will, in spite of everything, fall there during the normal course of sowing must not keep one from scattering the precious seed. In another figure Paul warns that one must take heed how he builds and that all material would not be good material -- but still building must be done. (1 Cor. 3). One cannot always tell the nature of the soil (heart of the individuals taught), so he must go ahead and sow the seed in abundance leaving the increase to God.

We must be realistic about our sowing. Not all the seed is going to produce good and lasting results. The fault does not rest with either the seed nor the sower -- it rests with the soil. We must face this fact.

When this is accepted there will be less who cease to sow out of disappointment. There will be fewer to criticize preachers, teachers, elders and the church in general for allowing (?) someone to be lost. There were four kinds of soil in the parable of the sower, only one kind produced fruit and that in different proportions! The best seed in the world sown by the greatest sower in the world cannot produce wheat on **wayside** (hardened) soil. It cannot produce lasting results in **stoney** places (hearts that will not allow the word to sink in and gain depth). That person will seem to be faithful (may indeed be) for a little while but trouble comes (real or imagined) and they wither or quit. They received the word "with joy" and "**immediately**" -- they also just as quickly or "immediately" fall away when trouble

comes to them. It cannot produce lasting results in **thorny** soil. Cares, riches, and the pleasures of this world finally get the upper hand and choke the word and their faithfulness to it out of their lives.

Sometimes it is hard for us to face the fact, especially with those whom we love dearly, that their unfaithfulness or disobedience is their fault. It is hard for us to see that they are just hard-hearted, worldly-minded, or very shallow in their convictions.

Sometimes it is hard for us to accept the fact that we have failed with someone. We blame ourselves too harshly. Maybe we will just quit because someone that we had high hopes for, someone that we had taken a lot of interest in, someone we had spent a lot of time trying to teach and encourage has disappointed us. We cannot let that happen. Not even Jesus saved all that he taught! Many of his disciples even turned back and walked with him no more!

Of course, examine yourself to see if you are indeed sowing the proper seed and that you are indeed sowing bountifully. If not, then make correction. If you are bountifully sowing seed to the extent of your ability and opportunities, don't despair when all are not saved -- some will be. Don't let some critic stop you by suggesting that you are to be blamed for the loss of someone that the critic was particularly interested in. If you gave it your best -- it is, likely the fault of the soil you had to work with.

I believe that it is a mistake for brethren to automatically think (as they do sometimes) that if we are not getting results in a particular area that it necessarily calls for a different approach. It may, yet it may not. It may be the soil (attitudes of the people) in that area that is the cause. Of course, the brethren should examine their approach. If it is either unwise or unscriptural -- change it. But don't rush to change it or to adopt any entirely new one simply because we are not seeing the results that we think we should. While taking a look at things, look at the soil. Remember, the Biblical approach to soul-saving is the only approach that will produce the results that God wants.

Now, sower go forth to sow.

"The Peanut Butter Eaters Church"

To my knowledge there is not a "Church of the Peanut Butter Eaters", but let's suppose that I START this church (after all, I do eat a lot of peanut butter). I realize the name is not a Bible name, but when you think of it, neither is the Catholic Church, Lutheran Church, Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Christian Church, or a host of other names that religious groups use.

As founder and "pastor" of this new church, I would be able to write its creed and approve new members. I could even charge them a quart of crunchy peanut butter before even allowing them to become a member. It would be such a short time before I'd have thousands of peanut butter eaters pounding on my door desiring entrance into this new church. I could really make it grow by promising tax exemptions for them. That would provide money for the church, too. All it would consist of would be a lot of

paper work. Here is the way it works: I go to a business man and show him the huge figure that he pays in tax dollars each year. The church "purchases" the business from him (without any money- just by signing papers) and that makes the business completely tax exempt from state and federal taxes. The business is then leased back to the original owner and the money that is used to be paid in taxes is now split 50-50. This will provide much income for the church and a few extra thousand dollars for the owner. Many business men would be willing to do this and it is completely legal according to our present laws.

Dear Readers, you may think this story has been completely ridiculous, but this very thing has been happening. Mrs. Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the atheist who pushed to get Bible reading and prayer out of public schools, has started "The Poor Richard's Universal Life Church" in Austin, Texas. Poor Richard just happens to be her husband. The church was founded to promote atheism and to provide tax exemptions in the exact way we have been mentioning.

Would you be interested in knowing how Mrs. O'Hair got a wild idea like this? She says, "The Baptist Church is the one that gave me the lessons about the lease-back gimmick." Mrs. O'Hair says she has documentation that the large Southern Baptist Convention has made this deal with industries including Borden Milk, Mack Trucks, Burlington Mills, and Rath Meat Packing. Mr. Fred Noe, senior associate secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention at the time that Mrs. O'Hair started this scatter-brain idea, stated that the Southern Baptist Annuity Board "not only has lease-back agreements with these major industries; but more than 100 other businesses throughout the United States. The S.B.A.B. pays no federal taxes on its \$40 million plus investments."

Baptist Friends, Catholic Friends, Methodist Friends, are you tired of high taxes? The very denominations to which you belong are part of what is causing it. For ages, preachers of the gospel of Christ have been pleading with members of denominations to leave their practices that are anti-scriptural. The church is a divine institution and has a divine mission, that of saving souls. The Bible speaks only of one church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23). Search the scriptures and see what the church believes, teaches, and practices. Search the church you are a member of and see if it is doing Bible things in Bible ways and giving them Bible names. Make your stand for truth!!!

-Bob Buchanan

Via "The Hessville Reminder"

Plain Talk On "WHY"

Why is it that some families, who live a good distance from the meeting house, who have their share of company, whose work schedule keeps them busy, and who experience bodily aches and pains like the rest of us, almost never miss a worship service? They love the Lord; and therefore they keep His commandments (Jn. 14:21; Heb. 10:25).

Why is it that some saints, who do not have much money in the bank, who do have pressing family obligations, and who have to manage wisely "to make ends meet" never fail to give at least ten per cent of their earnings to the Lord? They love the Lord; therefore they keep His commandments (Jn. 14:21; I Cor. 16:1-2).

Why do some Christians, who miss the local Lord's day assembly because of illness or being out of town, always lay their contribution by ahead of time or "make it up" later? They love the Lord and appreciate the fact that the work and ability of the local church is dependent upon the proper function of the "every joint" or member (Jn. 14:21; Eph. 4:16).

Why do some always miss the Sunday A.M. Bible classes and the evening services, and only attend the assembly when the Lord's Supper is served? They are too indifferent to study for the Bible classes and are embarrassed by their ignorance. Or they are infirm physically. Or they are infirm spiritually. Or they are ignorant of their responsibilities. Or they are more converted to the Lord's supper than they are to the Lord.

Why does a minor illness in one member of a family keep the whole family home on Sunday, but on Monday the entire family (and sometimes including the "sick" person) can be up and out and about? They didn't want to worship the Lord in the first place, so like the people of Luke 14:18 "they all with one consent began to make excuse."

Why can some "Christians" be "too sick" to attend worship for several months at a time; yet during that time go shopping, go for short trips, and attend family affairs? They haven't yet learned to seek "first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." (Mt. 6:33).

Why do some knowingly schedule any number of worldly activities that interfere with worship when such is not necessary to "make ends meet"? They get more enjoyment out of worldly things than worship, or they are more interested in laying up treasure on earth than in heaven.

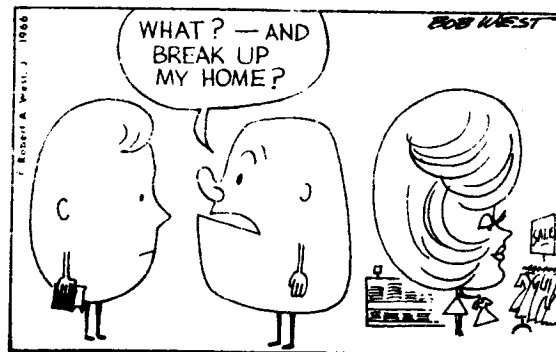
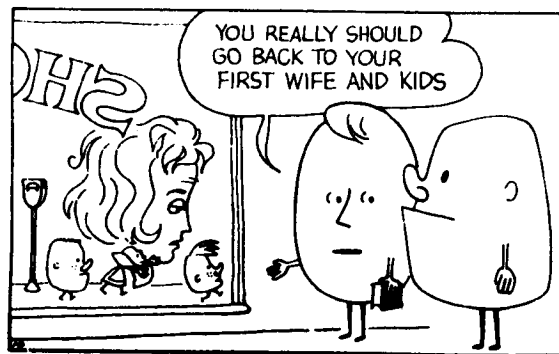
Why will some become offended at this article? Their conscience hurts them, and they lack the courage and conviction to do anything about it.

Why will this article cause some to try to do better? They are basically honest and, notwithstanding past weaknesses, they still want to go to heaven.

-Bobby Witherington

(Via, The Hessville Reminder)

THEOPHILUS



Modesty, Morals, And Mores

BY EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.

"In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety..." -- 1 Tim. 2:9.

Our sense of modesty is affected by our moral standards and cultural mores. No informed person could deny this. But, it is a mistake to overly link our sense of modesty to current morals or contemporary customs.

God connects modesty in dress with shamefacedness or shamefastness ("that modesty which is 'fast' or rooted in the character" - Vine) and sobriety ("soundness of mind" - Vine). Vine comments further on "sobriety": "Sound judgment 'practically expresses the meaning: 'it is that habitual inner self-government, with its constant rein on all passions and desires, which would hinder the temptation to these from arising in such strength as would overbear the checks and barriers which **aidos** (shamefastness) opposed to it.' (Trench....)".

I have been shocked more than once by statements of brethren "who seem to be somewhat" concerning modesty in dress. I have heard it suggested that whatever is accepted by the current culture is indeed modest. I have heard it suggested that God is more concerned with our attitude than how much skin is exposed or covered. (That is about like a Methodist's claim that God is more concerned with our motives than He is with how wet we get at baptism.) Such statements, at best, are half-truths. They discourage no one from following the world's standards in dress.

MODESTY & MORES

Cultural environment does affect one's sense of modesty, just as it affects one's general sense of right and wrong (conscience). It may cause one to be either over or under scrupulous. God warns against overriding one's conscience even when it is tied to unwarranted conclusions. It may be that his conscientious scruples reflect too greatly a faulty cultural and religious background. God knows, however, that one's sensitivity must be protected. It may be that he is overly sensitive in matters that, in the final analysis make little difference--but if he overrides it in such matters his conscience will be dulled in matters that will make an eternal difference.

Should we then teach folks that since scruples vary with people and places that one should simply do what is conscientiously acceptable to his peers? What about a brother in an area where "head-hunting" is socially acceptable? There are God-revealed principles that rise above cultural variations.

Dress is but the index to one's inward sense of modesty. But we must not forget that it is that much. Dress may indicate an unwholesome desire for attention (pride of life). It is in this area over-dress is immodest. It may indicate an unwholesome desire to be sexually attractive (lust of the flesh and eyes). It may just indicate an ignorance that God condemns a display of nakedness (cf. Rev. 3:18). One may indicate all of these things with or without intending to. It is interesting that Vine comments on *gumnos* (nakedness) as being "(a) unclothed...; (b) scantily or poorly clad...; (c) clad in undergarment only..." (emphasis mine -- E.O.B.). One may immodestly expose body outright or just in effect. Nakedness would hardly be covered by a coat of paint -- though maybe technically so. Neither is one's nakedness covered by form fitting clothing!

It may be true that some of the clothing considered modest today would have been though immodest in Grandma's day. But to say this does not dismiss the problem. It may be that Grandma was simply overly scrupulous. Yet Grandma should not have violated her sense of modesty even if it did have an overly scrupulous base. Grandma would have violated God's law if she had let her "nakedness appear" --so will Granddaughter and Great Granddaughter!

One's dress often reflects inward character. The Bible speaks

of the "attire of a harlot" (Prov. 7:10). One should be careful that his attire identify him with no ungodly element of society. Care should be taken that one's manner of dress does not encourage immoral thinking and behavior by the beholder. If it is a sin to "look to lust" and it is (Matt. 5:28)-- it is likewise sinful to furnish the match that lights the flame. Any doctor can tell you the natural effect that public exposure of private parts has on the opposite sex--unless one has extremely strong morals and character. Yes, God is concerned about how much skin is exposed (especially in certain areas) because it reflects on the inward attitude that should be fast or rooted in character. It also produces the rotten fruits of immoral thinking and actions. It is no accident that with the advent of the mini-skirt that sex crimes increased. This is a matter of record.

The whole story of modesty is not told by telling of dress habits. Modesty must govern speech, life and general conduct. Dress is but a part of the whole picture -- but a very important part when one seriously considers the effect it has had on our society-- to say nothing of the church.

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