

"THE WORDS OF THE LORD ARE PURE WORDS, LIKE SILVER TRIED IN A FURNACE OF EARTH, PURIFIED SEVEN TIMES.

YOU SHALL KEEP THEM, O LORD, YOU SHALL PRESERVE THEM FROM THIS GENERATION FOREVER." (PSALM 12: 6 & 7)

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SPIRITUAL BOXES

**" But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built."
(Solomon's prayer as recorded in 1st Kings 8:27)**

**Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My Throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?"
(FATHER speaking through Isaiah 66:1)**

**"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."
(JESUS speaking in John 3:8)**

About two weeks ago my brother Les Berry of Lindale, Texas received a revelation relating to the subject of this message. He shared that revelation with me by phone, and we continued to discuss it off and on for several days. Since then, I have not been able to escape the subject, and I believe the Spirit of God has directed me to sit down and allow Him to speak. This I will now attempt to do. As always, I urge you to keep FATHER'S word close at hand. Be sure to test what you hear by His word and His Spirit. Finally, because I am just a man, your brother, who is far from perfect, eat the fruit that you find here and spit out the seeds.

My prayer is that our FATHER would set all of us free from our individual boxes and allow us to be caught up in the Person of the Holy Spirit, to be filled with Him, led by Him, and to complete our stay here by walking in Him.

One of the greatest hindrances to spiritual maturity and freedom in CHRIST is the religious box that many of us have allowed ourselves to be placed in. Webster defines a "box" as follows: "A rigid receptacle often with a cover designed to enclose or contain an object."

A box is used for only one purpose and that is to contain or control the location of whatever we put into the box. Once in the box, the contained object is limited in its

movement to the four walls of that box. Most Christians today have allowed themselves to be put into a religious box and they are just as confined spiritually as a man in a prison cell who is physically confined. Sadly, few realize that they are in a spiritual box and under the control of that box. These spiritual boxes that contain, confine, and control the sons and daughters of God were never approved of by God. JESUS CHRIST came to set the captives free, not put them in a religious box under the control of man's flesh.

**"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."
(John 8:33)**

Before our Lord left the earth, He promised to send His Spirit to abide in us. (see John 16:7) He also clearly stated that His Spirit would guide us into all truth. (see John 16:13) In 2nd Corinthians 3:17 Paul declares-

"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

The word *liberty*, when used from the Greek, meant to be free from slavery with no external restraint. It also meant that where the liberty of the Spirit was, there was freedom of access to God, and there was no control or domination by man. (see STRONG'S #1657) JESUS promised you and I and every born again believer freedom, not confinement in a religious box that was designed by man for the control of men.

Our FATHER is so jealous for each of us individually, that He even declared that one of His names is "JEALOUS".

"For you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is JEALOUS, is a jealous God," (Exodus 34:14)

In our FATHER'S jealousy, He hates all attempts that man makes to control, dominate, or manipulate His sons and daughters. It makes no difference that man tacks the name of JESUS on his ministry, his good works, or on his box. If the control, domination, and manipulation of men are the fruits of his efforts, then I must tell you that it is an abomination before a holy and jealous GOD! Our Lord did not go through the hellish horror of the cross and then send His own Spirit to live in us, just to have us bound up in a religious box where we would, at best, never get beyond a carnal state of Christianity, and at worst, where we would never experience His life, His very person living in and through us. My friends, you can die a slow spiritual death in a religious box.

For the sake of this message, I want to draw a parallel between two types of boxes. First, there is the physical box with rigid walls and top. This type of box is quite useful and good as it enables us to store or contain things that are important to us. Physical boxes enable us to bring order and neatness to our lives. Without boxes or containers, think what a mess we would have all around us, with piles of stuff here and there and everywhere. Before long, our stuff would become mixed up with our other stuff and what a mess we would have on our hands. Thank God for the benefit and the simplicity of our boxes and containers.

Spiritual boxes, on the other hand, are anything but good. Spiritual boxes rarely work in harmony with God. Instead, they tend to work in opposition to God. Spiritual boxes are designed to limit one's spiritual growth and to control or confine their spiritual movement. All thought and consideration of God is limited to the walls of the spiritual box. Left there long enough, the person will become part and parcel of the box that they are in. Most spiritual boxes contain just enough truth to seduce their occupants into believing that they are, in fact, feeding on the truth, JESUS CHRIST. In reality, they are taking on the form and likeness of their box – not JESUS CHRIST.

Apart from being led by the indwelling Spirit of God, man is by nature very easily manipulated. In short, we actually become whatever we submit ourselves to. All it takes is time. If a person sits in a Baptist Church long enough, he will become a Baptist. Likewise, if a person sits in a Methodist, Roman Catholic, Independent Christian, or Assembly of God Church long enough, they will become a Methodist, Roman Catholic, Independent Christian or Assembly of God person. Sit long enough in a non-denominational Full Gospel Church and that is what you will become. Sit long enough in a Buddhist Temple and you will become a Buddhist. It really is very simple. If you choose to get into a spiritual box and stay there long enough; you will live and die in your box. You will not reflect the likeness and image of God because God cannot be contained in your box, anymore than can the wind! You will also be limited in your knowledge of the truth, and in your limited knowledge, you will never experience the freedom of being led by the Holy Spirit as He lives in you. Simply put, you will never be able to consider God beyond the spiritual confines of the box that you have chosen for yourself. In this state, the soul is held prisoner and suffers much loss, never coming into full spiritual maturity. This is in direct opposition to the will of God for us.

FATHER desires that each of us enjoy the fullness of an intimate relationship with Him through JESUS CHRIST, One on one! Our FATHER desires that we feed on His word alone, that we know the truth, and that we experience the freedom of being one with CHRIST!

"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8: 31 & 32)

"At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."

"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

(John 14: 20 & 23)

Oh, how God hates the spiritual boxes that have His sons and daughters bound up and separated from Him. Without realizing it our hearts are swayed away from our first love, GOD, and before you know it, our box takes His place and we form an idol in the heart. Always remember that anything that comes between you and FATHER is in the eyes of God, an idol. When we set up idols in our hearts, we will invariably center our affections on those idols. An idol can be a family member, a job, ministry, a doctrine, or

just simply a religious box. It does not take long for an idolatrous heart to reveal its first love. Sooner or later the mouth will speak of that for which the heart has the greatest affection.

Sadly, today I find that few, especially men, have mouths that are filled with words of love and affection for our Lord and King of all Kings. I hear a lot about sports, family, the pursuit of wealth and, of course, their Church – but – very, very little is said about JESUS CHRIST. Our hearts are cluttered with idols, and those idols are crowding out the only One who is, in the end, important.

"Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?" (Ezekiel 14:3)

And we wonder why our prayer life seems so ineffectual. God simply will not tolerate idols of the heart. He will not! If you believe that God will excuse an idolatrous heart that allows anything to come between your total love and devotion for Him, including your Church or ministry, then you do not know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In Ezekiel 14:4 our God warned us as follows:

"Therefore speak to them, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols,".

In other words, God warns us that He will answer us according to the idols of our heart. He will give us the answer that we have already decided we want. In short, He will leave us to our deception because we no longer have a love for the Truth! Paul warned us in 2nd Thessalonians, Chapter 2, that JESUS would not return unless a great falling away from the faith occurred first. (see verse three) Falling away from the faith simply means a falling away from the love of the Truth – JESUS CHRIST. If we do not love Him above all else, we are simply not worthy of Him. Don't take my word for it, listen to JESUS, Himself –

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." (Matthew 10:37)

He who loves (you fill in the blank) more than Me is not worthy of Me. We cannot fool God. He knows our heart, and if the love of the Truth – JESUS – is not there before all else, He warns us that He will even send us a strong delusion so that we would believe the lie. Go ahead and read the warning for yourself in 2nd Thessalonians 2:1-12.

Today, many, I believe the vast majority of those who call themselves born again Christians, have a greater love in their hearts for their religious idols than they do for

JESUS. For them, their box has become truth and they will rise up in a holy rage toward anyone who would question the measure of truth in their box. They have tacked the name of JESUS over their door, and so far as they are concerned, theirs is His very own special box. They are always quick to defend the idol of their heart – their box – but very slow to defend the God of Glory – JESUS CHRIST.

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.

For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the Lord will answer him by Myself. I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people. Then you shall know that I am the Lord."
(Ezekiel 14: 6-8)

As our God expresses Himself and warns us concerning the idols that we set up in our hearts, never forget that these warnings still apply to each of us today. Only a false angel of light or one of Lucifer's false ministers of righteousness would say otherwise. (see 2nd Corinthians 11: 14 & 15)

"For I am the Lord, I do not change;" (Malachi 3:6)

**"My covenant I will not break, Nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips."
(Psalm 89:34)**

"Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven." (Psalm 119:89)

Leonard Ravenhill was fond of making this statement: *The word of God is either absolute or obsolete.* We choose whom we will believe – God or man. FATHER has said all that He is going to say to man. He has given us His word along with His Spirit to interpret that word. Not only that, but He has promised us a One on one relationship with Him – FATHER and son – FATHER and daughter – together, one. How awesome is that promise and how deep the love our FATHER has for us. Now we have no excuse for allowing idols to form in our heart. Always remember that it is in the heart where the issues of life are settled. God looks at the heart and His response to us depends upon what He finds there.

"Do not look at his appearance or his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1st Samuel 16:7)

If there was ever a time to ask our FATHER to examine our hearts and show us our idols, it is now. May God forbid that you or I would draw our last breath and find that there was an idol between us and our God. May God forbid that we draw our last breath, never

having experienced the freedom of being released from our religious box that had our heart confined and separated from the liberty of the Spirit of the Lord.

Religious boxes manifest themselves in many ways. The most obvious is the institutional Church. While I believe that the vast majority of these institutions reproduce after their own likeness and image, rather than a likeness and image of God, I must admit that I also believe that there are fellowships who have leadership that desires that the saints be free to follow JESUS, alone, and to not be confined to their box. I believe this because I know of at least one such fellowship in Tennessee.

I conclude for now with this thought: Whether or not you are a member of a not-for-profit institutional Church is not the issue. The issue is simply one of where your hearts first love is. Wherever your first love is, there is where your first loyalty is. You could very well have fled the institutional box and retreated into another religious box, the walls of which you built with "I" (your beliefs) being the chief cornerstone. In such cases you are just as much a prisoner as you ever were.

There is only one safe place where we can be assured of our standing before a holy God.

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1)

The secret place is in the heart of man. Center your thoughts on JESUS CHRIST, alone, as your only Lord and your Master. Remember, you belong not to yourself, not to your family, not to your Church, not to a pastor, teacher, or prophet – No! If you are born again, you now belong to God, alone, and you are His temple. (see 1st Corinthians 6: 19 & 20) Feed on FATHER'S word as if your life depended on it – it does! (see Matthew 4:4) Then ask FATHER to lead and guide you into all truth as He promised to do by His Spirit.(see John 16:13) Never forget that He loves you more than you can possibly comprehend, and He asks only that you come to Him with a willing heart. Soak in His love for you and allow Him to remove the idols of your heart!

God Bless

Tom

"And we Know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son JESUS CHRIST. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, Keep yourselves from idols. Amen." (1st John 5: 20 & 21)

