

# Chronicles of Diversity

*Your leadership weekly*



*St. Paul's Mission in NE Washington*

## Freedom's Price

**15 April 2003; Volume 5, Issues 15**

*"He who believes in Him (Jesus) is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (John 3:18-21)*

Except for the retired Roman Catholic Priest who served as chaplain to the Marines who are now at the forefront of the Iraq war, virtually all the people I know who favor the war are either evangelical Christians or political conservatives.

Since Seattle is such a liberal city I suppose that most of the 21% of the people who do not give President Bush a positive approval rating live in our environs. As I watched on television last Wednesday, as the statue of Saddam Hussein toppled in Baghdad and the people began to celebrate their new freedom, I was struck with the spiritual bondage of most of these antiwar folks.

Now most of these people profess a strong allegiance to personal freedom, but for some reason, they do not believe that a regime as evil as that which until recently ruled Iraq, should not continue to suppress the freedom of the Iraqi people. It was like their own bondage kept them from facing this evil itself.

As I investigated their thoughts further, I found that most of the opposition to the war was based on the fact that we could not predict the long term consequences before hand and also that all war was bad. Many so call Christians talked about the love of God for all people, without any mention of the many wars, brought about by God for transgressions in the Old Testament. You could potentially see this as a valid point, if your systematic theology truly believed that we are no longer under law but

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under grace. But these expert spokespersons however, have not such doctrinal underpinning, they only have their own opinion of a God they have created from their own delusions.

In this strange contradiction between freedom for Iraq, in contrast with the bondage of the antiwar component, the passage from John seemed to leap out from the Bible. To state the hidden meaning in the words of most of these people, "I don't want you to have freedom, because I do not have freedom. In fact, I really can't begin to understand how afraid I am of losing my own bondage, we need to stick together. In their bondage to Saddam and to Islam the Iraqis are my brothers and my sisters. If that cycle is broken, I don't know what could happen."

Now we hear similar rhetoric on why we need to stop the looting. To a certain extent they are saying, "Quick replace the Iraqi oppression with another type, just to keep some sense of order." Part of freedom, especially newly founded freedom, is the desire to do some things that may look in hindsight as really stupid, if not illegal. In that light the looting in Iraq will soon pass, as people become aware that freedom of any type, brings with it a responsibility to society, both secular and religious.

All freedom is much different than what the antiwar people say, it doesn't evolve out of the cosmos of nothing. It is achieved with a cost. That is true in the natural world because it is first true in the spiritual realm. If the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of mankind was no big deal, then political and economic freedom in this world would again be a given. This is also the error, or bad logic of the so called doves.

Men and women who only know darkness, have no concept of the light of Jesus Christ and the freedom that this light gives. This darkness is evil, and evil births evil, hence the harmony of darkness and evil in this world.

The leaders of France, Germany, and Russia were compared to the Three Stooges in a news commentary I heard. I also read a story of a GI in Baghdad who was handing out cookies he had received from home. He was approached and asked for a cookie by a man with a heavy French accent. The GI responded that he had no cookies for the French. To which the man reported that he was really half Italian. So the GI gave him half a cookie.

When you look at countries that are still in many ways politically hostile to evangelical Christianity, these countries are very afraid of the freedom and light of the gospel message. But in the case with the countries above, the bondage moves well beyond just the imposed spiritual atmosphere, but also is seen in all aspects of society, from the economic to family structure.

So sin and darkness leads to bondage, but this war has created a fantastic opportunity for Christians to be an effective witness to those worried about the war's necessity.

*"Finally, the Iraqi people have the opportunity to begin to truly experience freedom."*

"But look at all the looting and the innocent people who were hurt or killed."

*"Do you think that true freedom comes without a price?"*

"Well no, but the death of even one innocent person is too much to pay."

*"You may believe that is true in Iraq, but what would you think if that was your freedom?"*

"I suppose that would be OK with me in that limited case."

*"Do you believe that you now are truly free to be what you really think you should be?"*

"Well, no, my job is the pits, I have too many debts, I don't think I will ever get ahead, But that is just part of life in this world."

*"Sounds like you are experiencing a real dark time."*

"Well, sort of. I just think that my life really doesn't matter to anyone, even my family."

*"Do you know the Bible verse, John 3:16."*

"Who doesn't, 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.' People are always quoting it too me."

*"And John 3:17 says, 'For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.'"*

*"I'm a pretty good person, I try hard to help others. I think I will go to heaven when I die."*

*"Is that hope you have in heaven based on any criteria or does it really stem from the darkness that fills the rest of your life?"*

*"Well, maybe it is part of the darkness, I have no way of knowing."*

*"The Bible verses quoted above speak about that darkness and evil in the world and follow right after John 3:17. Why don't you read them again, out loud. Then I will explain to you the specifics of how that darkness can be shattered and you can experience a new freedom, even if your circumstances do not change, or may even get worse."*

Since this Sunday is Easter Sunday in the west, that full gospel message will be preached in countless churches around the world. You can take it from there.

## Seeds for Prayer

I met with my regular doctor for my surgical follow-up Tuesday afternoon. His recommendations were to continue to get back in shape. Begin to watch my diet more closely after my eighth week of recovery and begin to rehab my upper body, knowing that it will take time and that not only do those muscles need to be strengthened, but there will also be some scar tissue that may cause pain. Other than that he said he would see me again at my annual physical. He also thought it would be a good idea to get my little finger repaired at this time since it too could be added to the rehabilitation work outs.

I continue to try to understand the way that God would have me proceed from this state. That is true especially this summer. When I was in corporate life, I was always part of a larger team or was responsible for delegating work to other team members. Over many years now that team as essentially been me working alone. I think that focus of team building is something that will be important on the path forward. With that in mind the concept of "Beyond the Gold" seems to be the title on the path ahead. I meet with my old, as in time past, business lawyer this Thursday to determine how my ideas for a service based enterprise should best be formed and operated. Please intercede for this meeting and subsequent developments.