

October 4, 2014

I was recently praying and rehearsing the “Lord’s Prayer” and when I came to the phrase “Your Kingdom Come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” I was struck by the fact that a Sovereign God has asked us to pray and be part of bringing this to pass. This led me to observe that I could freely choose or reject to partner with God to achieve His plans.

As Christians, we understand that there are only two kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan [Jesus teaches this clearly in John’s gospel]. I was struck when I realised that one of the major differences between the two was freedom versus control. We can see this expressed through two world religions. Biblical Christianity invites, pleads, calls people to repent and accept Christ as Lord and Saviour. Islam’s Koran, on the other hand, states that you either convert or die – freedom versus control.

I recall the Discipleship Movement of the 80’s. Although it contained many good disciplines, it was rooted in control. Elders controlled the saints even to the simple decisions of allowing them to buy a fridge. Though not always successful, through the generations Christianity has fought control, even from its birth in the book of Acts. Being British, I recall the history of the Reformation and how the progression of control led to division within in the church at large. The controlling Church of Rome encouraged the Spanish Catholics to invade England, then one hundred years later these same Reformers imprisoned the Baptists forbidding them to meet for worship – control versus freedom. Though the divide and conquer strategy is highly effective, controllers will use any means to exterminate freedom.

Remember, there are only two kingdoms, and it’s been my observation that a pattern exists. When Christianity, regardless of denomination, turns to controlling the saints it becomes Satan’s kingdom, not God’s. Control is the vehicle Satan uses in order to provoke rebellion against God. In the wilderness, he even tried to control Jesus by offering Him “the kingdoms of this world” if He would only fall down and worship him. It’s this same principle at work when pastors control churches, boards control pastors, Christians control one another, a husband controls a wife, or the reverse. It applies to empires and dictatorial rulers controlling millions; it’s not just North Korea. The reason Muslim countries have such difficulty functioning as a democracy is because there is no freedom in Islam, only bondage. Slavery is rooted in Satan’s kingdom and manifests itself by one person exercising total control over another for life and death.

The Apostle Paul appeals to the church in Galatia “You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you... it is for freedom that Christ has set you free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened by a yoke of slavery.” Religion brings slavery through the law, Christ brings freedom through grace.

The picture now comes even closer to home when Paul tells the Christians in Rome that whatever controls us makes us its slave. Every habit, addiction, every sin that controls us makes us behave like those in the “other kingdom”, but the good news is that Jesus came to set us FREE from the law of sin and death.

But how are we to understand Paul’s letter to the church in Philippi; “Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord?” Isn’t that control? There is a story of a child who when standing in his high chair is told to sit down but then states, “I will sit down but I am still standing up in my heart”. All will bow the knee and confess that Jesus is Lord, but as to their hearts, only God knows.

When Jesus was challenged that he performed healing and miracles by the power of Satan, he replied that “a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand;” Satan’s kingdom is united in its plan to control mankind, God’s to

set us free. That's demonstrated in Luke's gospel records in the story of Jesus healing a crippled woman bent over for eighteen years "whom Satan has bound".

So now my prayer is Your kingdom come in me first, then this church, then this region, then this province then this nation, even unto the ends of the earth. Your will be done in me first, then this church, then this...just like it is in Heaven.

God has given us freedom to impact history for his Kingdom by prayer. In whatever colour it paints itself, let us not allow the "other kingdom", to control us.

Shalom

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