

## Words of Encouragement, Sept 13<sup>th</sup> 2015

**Faith [in Jesus Christ] builds a bridge across the gulf of death. Death's terror is the mountain faith removes.** John Bunyan

---

**FREE TO FLY!** Author Francois Fenelon describes two sorts of people - one happy and free, the other like a tethered bird. We find ourselves like that bird, he tells us, easily captured if we allow the world we live in to keep us from doing (living in the freedom of) God's will. A bird tethered to the ground may look free. The string may not be visible if it's thin enough. If the tether is long enough, the bird may be able to do a little flying. Yet it's a prisoner - as we will be if we're snared by the world's powerful influences which includes many and varied 'things' including 'religious things'. If you are a church goer you owe it to God, to fellow humans, and to yourself, to ensure that you, your church, your denomination does not tether you in ways that hinder **your growth in 'Christlikeness'**. Historically many aspects of church culture and even church teaching have proved to be a hindrance to enabling people to experience the work of the Holy Spirit in being set free 'in Christ'!

How can the string be cut? Fenelon says, 'Only the Son of God can make us really free. He breaks every fetter (chain fastened around the ankle). When we call on Jesus to take charge of our lives, we experience a freedom that protects us from the world's enticements. It's a constant battle, yet to be living 'in Christ' is to be living in the only real freedom. At the same time, writes Fenelon, 'There is not a person in the world who can be allowed to hinder us from doing the will of God.' No one has any right to hinder us! They can only do so when we permit them to do so, it's our individual responsibility to be living as a person 'set free in Christ'! When the Son of God breaks the fetters, we are free! Free to continually choose what pleases God.

Fenelon strongly warns against placing too much trust in our intellect. Those who do, he says, 'quench the promptings of their conscience by reasoning away what they know to be right. I'm convinced that everything we do should be under the guidance of God.'

He points us to Matthew 11:25-26, in which Jesus prayed, 'O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleases you to do it this way!' (NLT) Jesus then says, 'My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' How we respond to this is our personal choice and responsibility. What are you doing or not doing?

*Dear Lord Jesus, please set me free in You. Enable me to continually respond to your Spirit and to walk every day in step with your will.*

*Please cut the fetters that are keeping me back, and guide all my thoughts as I diligently apply myself to living as you want me to.*

**Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'** Matthew 11:28, NLT

---

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the cloud of witnesses who remind us that loving you is a perpetual call to active duty. Grant us both passion and courage to answer Your call to peace and justice, no matter where it might lead us. Amen

---

Stanislavsky, the Russian dramatist and thinker, wrote: *'The longest and most exciting journey is the journey inwards.'*

---

*"I, the Lord, have called you to demonstrate my righteousness, I will take you by the hand and guard you, and I will give you to my people, Israel, as a symbol of my covenant with them. And you will be a light to guide the nations. You will open the eyes of the blind. You will free the captives from prison, releasing those who sit in dark dungeons".* Isaiah 42:6-7

---

The Western person has been inculcated (instilled by forceful or insistent repetition) by the false idea that we can know everything and can do anything. This means we can also control God or dismiss him. Or, as so often is the case, we can use God for our own ends. Therefore we live with little respect for God, our worship is self-interested, and our service is self-seeking. And the issue for us is more what *we* can do with God, as problem or possibility, rather than what God may do with us. We need to recover humility before God and rediscover our creatureliness before the Almighty. In other words, we need to gain a truer picture of what we actually are.

Meister Eckhart, in one of his sermons, emphasised that we can't just discover God, nor control him. All of our dealings with God call us to receive from him and to live in ongoing surrender and openness. He wrote, 'When God divinely enlightens you, no natural light is required. He brings that about.'

In a tired Western Christian church lacking depth and discouraged by the meagerness of its activism, a whole new sense of God's transcendence needs to fall like summer rains on parched earth. Our challenge, therefore, is not so much to find God, but to be found by God.

How are you praying in this regard? [Reading for May 20 from 'Hear the Ancient Wisdom' by Charles R. Ringma, Cascade

Books, 2013, ISBN 978-1-62032-772-2]

---

**No Task Is Too Big If God Is in It:** *'Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.'* Matthew 19:26. Some folk get all argumentative about whether we have the infallible Word of God. Thankfully, most of the sad arguments about different translations of the Bible have subsided as I well remember the tragic 'unChristlikeness' such arguments often

displayed among those claiming to be mature Christians.

A. W. Tozer wrote: 'As far as I am concerned, grant me God himself, and I am not worried about His writing a book. Grant me the being and presence of God, and that settles it! Whenever I find people running to science to find support for the Bible, I know they are rationalists and not true believers! If God said that Jonah was swallowed by a whale (or giant fish), than that is what happened to Jonah, and we do not need a scientist to measure the size of the gullet. Why do we fuss around finding out the collar size of whatever it was? Grant me God and miracles take care of themselves!

'Is healing for us today?' someone asks. My reply is that: 'Is God still alive?' And the answer is, 'Yes, God is still alive!' All right, then, healing is for us today. Whatever God did and was able to do and willing to do at any time, God is able and willing to do again, within the framework of His will. It is not whether we can understand it or not, it is whether God said it or not. If God said 'I AM' I respectfully bow and say, 'O God, thou art!' Letting God prove himself through the channels of our lives is the answer. Grant me God, and the task will not be too big!

What God is looking for today are women and men, boys and girls who 'know' Him and are prepared to live for Him and get their ego and sense of self importance out of the way to let Him reveal Himself in and through them. Only then will we be less inclined to substitute programmes, organisation, systems and human notions of 'success' for the unpredictable, exciting work of God Himself! And how good that is and will be!

Adapted from 'Renewed Day By Day' using excerpts from 'The Divine Conquest' by A. W. Tozer. Reading for 21st May. Christian Publications, ISBN 87509-252-7

Bill

---

---

Our lives become the shape of the days we inhabit!

---

---

Ambrose, bishop of Milan and a doctor of the church, said this in the fourth century: 'Death comes to every person. You must keep facing it with perseverance. Death is a passover from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality, from rough seas to a calm harbour. The word 'death' must not trouble us. The blessing that comes from a safe journey should bring us joy. What is death, but the burial of sin and the resurrection of goodness? Scripture says: '*Let my soul die among the souls of the just*'; that is, let me be buried with the just, so that I may cast off my sins and put on the grace of the just, of those who bear the death of Christ with them, in their bodies and in their souls.'

*Lord Jesus, you have conquered death and triumphed over evil. There is nothing left for us to fear. Put us to work on this earth, striving for the growth of your kingdom in everything we think, say and do. Let us die to ourselves each day that we might find ourselves made new in you. Thank you. Amen.*

---

---

---

**Christians ought to be radical, revolutionary and counter cultural just as Jesus was!**

Please grasp the initiative to forward the above on to others as an encouragement. Don't worry about whether or not they might disagree with something. All of us as Christians are in a learning situation and you might be the source of something that unlocks a life! If for any reason you would prefer NOT to receive this weekly email, simply let me know. If you know anyone else you think may appreciate receiving it, simply forward it on from you with a few encouraging words. If you prefer they not know who sent it to them, simply let me have their email address and I will contact them without mentioning your name. Bill