

These Unbiblical 'Freedom Theologies' Are Sabotaging the Church

Arguments against the invitation to go deep in God are increasing ... and it's Christians who are leading the resistance.

"re·li·gion /rə'lijən/ Man's attempt to use God to get what he wants."

Slap the label "religious" on anything that threatens your theology or impacts your definition of freedom. It feels spiritual. It is spiritual. The demonic spirit realm is filled with unholy wisdom, and very often this is the source of such a defense. Today's rallying cry seems to be fueled by the desire to be free from anything that places restraints, expectations or requirements upon someone. All of that, to them, is religious.

Many of the arguments are coming from those who have been duped into believing an unbiblical doctrine of grace. This false-grace ideology presumes that all has been completed by Jesus, and that nothing remains for us to do in order to be in relationship with him. Simply, his actions on the cross and at the tomb were sufficient. The result, if we only understood, they would argue, is that absolutely nothing can be done by us to increase our nearness to him, and, from the other direction, nothing can be done to decrease his nearness to us.

They argue that our sin is impotent. Our effort is both futile and unnecessary, and actually an offense to the finished work of Jesus. Their proposition is that we simply need a revelation of this supposed truth. When they discovered it themselves, burdens and weights were lifted and they began

enjoying God as a good, good Father. They would say they do nothing, except believe and receive and live in that revelation.

The truth is that eliminating every burden (God's burden is light, not non-existent) just may cost us our lives. If you are carrying a backpack on your three-day hike into the mountains, it's going to get heavy. If you decided to take it off and leave it behind, it will feel like freedom! You are suddenly relieved of that irritating, uncomfortable burden. However, you will also be without food, water, a sleeping bag and shelter. The elements of the world will overtake you, and you may very possibly succumb.

I celebrate with zeal every time someone I know encounters legitimate freedom and the immeasurable love of the Father. However, our experience in God cannot stop there. Those who do stop short need to be awakened to the deeper call of God on their lives.

You see, religion isn't that which produces a barrier to freedom; it's the attempt to use God in order to have the most pleasurable experience possible, no matter how selfish that pursuit may be.

Those who wanted Jesus to be their king one day turned on Him and demanded His death the next. Why? They were not set on worshiping Jesus but rather on using him. When he didn't deliver what they wanted, they decided to eliminate him for a better option. This is religion in action.

The crowds that went before Him and that followed Him cried out: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Matt. 21:9).

Pilate answered them again, "What then would you have me do to Him whom you call the King of the Jews?"

They again cried out, "Crucify Him!"

Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?"

But they cried out even more, "Crucify Him!"

So Pilate, resolving to satisfy the people, released Barabbas to them. And when he had scourged Jesus, he handed Him over to be crucified (Mark 15:12-15).

A Simple, Yet Profound Call

God is calling us into the deep.

The only way there is through radical surrender, fervent intercession, living in the Spirit and unapologetic holiness.

We must die daily. We must be living sacrifices.

I'm writing this from my hotel room during a ministry trip to Albany, New York, and I'm watching The International House of Prayer's prayer room live on YouTube. I was on staff at IHOPKC for a couple of years, and it was easy to see one specific reality: Most of these people were devoted to God at a level rarely seen in this nation. They weren't perfect people, but they were hungry people with a level of consecration rarely seen in the church. I've known many people who are offended at this. They actually despise IHOPKC and ministries like them. Why? Because their own level of passion for Jesus and depth in God are exposed as lacking. The thought that much is required of disciples of Jesus is contrary to their personal pursuits of undisciplined freedom.

Understand, I know these words I'm writing are provocative. I also believe they must be written so I can most effectively make my point. As obvious as it seems, a growing number of people in this generation don't get it: We can only experience the deep things of God if we are fervent, radical, surrendered and dying daily to the things of the flesh. There is no other way. There are no shortcuts.

At IHOPKC and other similar ministries all around the world, people are praying 2-4 hours a day or more. They are allowing the groans of the Spirit to erupt out of them. They are devouring the Word of God as they allow the presence of God to permeate them in the prayer room. The Holy Spirit is speaking to them with clarity. The prophetic atmosphere around them is electric. Dreams, visions and a powerful anointing become regular. The chambers of their heart are opened to the searching of the Spirit of God. These people are undone, hungry, desperate and relentless.

Yet, those who subscribe to the unbiblical “freedom theologies” that I addressed above somehow believe that they are as close to God as those who are giving themselves in a more deliberate manner, even if they make no effort in drawing close to him.

Therefore submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to dejection. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up (James 4:7-10).

A Powerful Anointing

I’ll never forget the time I had a regional prayer meeting in my church. A well-known megachurch leader was in the prayer meeting along with several of his friends. I was praying with my eyes closed when I felt this intense wave of the glory of God wash over me. I opened my eyes, and this man of God had just walked by me. I waited for him to make another lap, and as he passed by again, the wave hit me a second time. This happened several times.

I knew this man knew God. There was a depth that was uncommon. He was living in such a way that resulted in a very powerful

anointing swirling around him. I yearned to do whatever it took to carry that type of glory on my own life.

I've experienced similar manifestations several times, and each time leaves me crying out for a deeper hunger and a more resolute life.

Pastor John Kilpatrick was preaching at a Bay of the Holy Spirit remote event in Detroit. I was on the front row during this morning session, enjoying the wisdom that John was releasing to us. Suddenly, in the middle of a point, he stopped. He simply said, "He's here."

As he gazed toward the rear of the auditorium, I turned my head and looked myself. You could see a wave of God's glory moving from the back to the front, row by row. Then it hit me. If I had an unlimited vocabulary at my disposal, I would still not be able to describe that experience. Simply, God arrived.

There is no way that manifests except via a radically devoted life, a life that John Kilpatrick exemplifies. There are precious few who live this way.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings. With two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. One cried to another and said:

*"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts;
the whole earth is full of His glory."*

*The posts of the door moved at the voice of him who cried,
and the house was filled with smoke.*

*And I said: "Woe is me! For I am undone because I am a man of
unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean
lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."*

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal which he

had taken with the tongs from off the altar in his hand. And he laid it on my mouth, and said, "This has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged" (Isa. 6:1-7).

As we live consecrated lives, encounters and revelations will increase. The truth found in Scripture will explode off the pages. We will be undone. As with Isaiah, the revelations will result in a declaration of God's holiness and our weakness and struggle. If there is sin in our lives, it will be instantly evident. Then, the fire will sear us and our redemption and deliverance will be made clear.

We will live with a never-ending burning in our spirits and a tremble that marks us forever.

If we want to experience the wonders of God, radical consecration is the only option.

Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will perform wondrous deeds among you" (Josh. 3:5).

The Terror of Hell

Not only will we live tepid, powerless lives that are focused mostly on our own personal experience instead of laying our lives down for Jesus, but those who refuse to consecrate and devote in the place of intense prayer and surrender are at risk of eternal separation from God. There is a terror of hell that the enemy is making ready for them to experience.

My book *The Terror of Hell* is a sobering message of how intimacy with Jesus and salvation in Jesus are related. In the encounter, I was dragged toward hell. The terror I experienced was horrifying and fully indescribable. God spoke to me after the encounter and said, "John, many Christians will be shocked to find themselves in hell one day."

It's possible that a Christian may be in a good place today, but in the future, they may grow apathetic or lose their first love. Here's a portion of an article based on my book:

A backslider is focused on his own condition, on his own comfort zone while a good man is in tune with the heart of God. His pleasure comes from intimacy with Father God. His pleasure comes from going where God is going, doing what he is doing and feeling what he is feeling. There is no sense of ease in the storm, but there is satisfaction and joy in the presence of God and by being in active agreement with him.

This message is a wake-up call for every one of us. Many wonderful people will be terribly shocked to find themselves separated from God forever.

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" But then I will declare to them, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice evil"(Matt. 7:21-23).

This Scripture is in reference to those who would call themselves born-again Christians. People who have understood and actually flowed in the power of the Holy Spirit. They understood their heavenly position and earthly authority as they overcame demons. These were your miracle workers.

We need a wake-up call, church. We can't presume to be in a place of safety simply because we said a prayer, go to church, give offerings and talk about Jesus. An intense pursuit of holiness and intimacy is required. This is a message that must be shouted from the rooftops. I can't imagine multiplied millions of people who are currently following Jesus in an unsaved condition crying out in terror one day, "I'm going to hell? That's impossible!"

To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars says these things: I know your works, that you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain but are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfected before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you (Rev. 3:1-3). {eo}

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