

## MORE WINE

I identify with this word.

Several years ago, when the Lord prompted my wife and I to move back to the mid-west from the Seattle area, the Lord gave me a dream, which I did not understand until after we had left the institutional church He sent us too.

In the dream, I was driving a white 1965 Mercury Monterey convertible with light blue interior. I turned the vehicle up to the gates of what looked like an old west log fort. The gates swung open, and I drove in. The church the Lord sent me to was near the back of the compound, and parked in front of it. I exited the car, and went around to the trunk to collect the gifts I'd brought for the church. From everywhere it seemed, child-like dwarfs emerged and surrounded me. As I began to show the gifts I'd brought, they began snatching the gifts from my hands, treated them disrespectfully, snatched gifts from the trunk and threw them back after handling them carelessly. Several were letting the air out of the tires on the car and kicking the side panels, and some were jumping up and down on the seats.

While I began taking the gifts back and tried to put them away and chase them out of the trunk and rest of the car, a slightly taller pimple-faced teenager was pressing into me waving a clenched fist in my face. Finally I spoke a few words in the Spirit directly into his face and he was 'blown' away. No sooner was he gone, than another appeared in his place, shaking a fist in my face and threatening to hit me. Finally my anger took over, and I seized him by the collar, and reared back my own fist to hit him. At that PRECISE moment, the pastor emerged from around the corner, and waving his finger at me he shook his head "NO". Then he called out "come on kids" and as fast as they had appeared, they disappeared after the pastor. I had collected all the gifts, closed the trunk, and I walked around the car and checked the tires – no harm was done. I then seemed to be faced with the decision to either join them in the building or drive off.

I decided not to join them and after pondering whether or not to do a 'donut' in their parking lot with my powerful car, I simply drove off, thru the gates and into the wilderness, which ended the dream.

At first I thought the Father sent me to that church FOR that church – to spark something, anything that resembled revival. However, they turned out to be resistant to all of it, preferring tradition to the Spirit. The dream it turns out was to show me how I would be received there, and my eventual decision to choose to follow Christ instead of man.

Three years after leaving that church, I understand that the Father sent me there to open my eyes, to break me of my addiction to religion and of my need for the approval of man. Honestly, I am still somewhat hurt by it, and at times I struggle to pray for them. Similarly, they seem to be hurt by our leaving. As often as we see someone from that church, they express their wish that we would come back. Yet not once has anyone ever

asked why we left. We discussed our reasons only with the pastor on the day we presented our letter of resignation. And the pastor chose to keep it confidential which has only fueled the rumor mill about us. Lest anyone wonder whether we left out of anger, we remained for many months and sought the Lord's direction, until finally He said to us: "get out of the way and let it fail".

I have NO doubt that IF we returned to that church, they would feel better – that somehow having us there would validate their decision to remain there. Our return would in fact "enable" them to remain in a place that intentionally stunts their spiritual growth, and shields them from a genuine relationship with the Father. Lately, when someone admonishes me to "go to church", I have taken to simply challenging them to show me where in any of the 4 gospel accounts Jesus ever told anyone to "go to church". And I have reminded them that their church creed claims the Bible is the "sole basis" for everything they do and believe. Most shake their heads as if I am woefully deceived, though I still hope someday one of them will actually take me up on the challenge, and see for themselves that Jesus instructed no one to "go to church". Rather, He said "follow Me".

Therein lies the basis for the word you received Clay – "follow Me". Christ is IN us, and lives THROUGH us. When Christ walked the earth, He walked OUT of the religious institution of His day and into the wilderness where He was free to teach and minister as the Spirit led Him. Christ IN us is STILL walking out of the institutions and into the wilderness where He commands our complete devotion. Though Jesus occasionally ventured into the temple and synagogues (which by the way He referred to as "your temple" and "your synagogues"), for the most part He remained in the wilderness, where He said "the Son of Man has no place to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20). No believer should "lay his head" at the feet of a false shepherd, which is precisely what they do whenever they subject themselves to the institution, and those who prosper from it.

I am reminded of an old Keith Green song, wherein he sings "I pledge my head to heaven for the Gospel". There is a similar scripture in one of Paul's letters I think, but I can't find it right now. Fundamentally, I think the difference between being IN or OUT of the institution is as simple as the difference between pledging our head to men, or to Christ. You can not pledge your head to men, and be effective for Christ.

Jack Helser