

## For Freedom Christ Frees You

Paul goes out of his way in **Galatians 5:1** to tell us why Christ freed us:

**“For freedom Christ frees us.”**

We humans are so unused to freedom that God has to make seemingly redundant statements. God knows that we would love to become free so that we can get ourselves into new forms of religious bondage “for the name and for the sake of our beloved Jesus.” But our beloved Jesus is rolling His eyes. Jesus Christ says: “I have freed you!” And we say:



“Great! Now we’ll stop eating chocolate for you, Jesus.” Or, “Thanks, Jesus! No more ogling bikinis an the beach—ever!” Or, “Thanks for freeing us, Lord! I promise we will go to church for you every Sunday for the rest of our lives!”

We’re not getting it. For **FREE-DOM** Christ frees us. This is not a theoretical freedom, it’s something Christ wants us to walk in. He wants us to *do* it. He wants us to exercise our freedom in concrete ways so that we can enjoy the simple yet profound pleasures life offers, guilt-free.

In other words, Jesus wants us to quit living as if Mother Theresa was looking over our shoulder. ■

# Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

*“If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love, I am a clanging gong” --1 Cor. 13:1-2*



Two out of three isn't bad.

## Scale down before you kill yourself



cious rolls, and roll more.

What happened next was something to see. Carleton began going the other way. Instead of being hell bent on amassing stuff, he went the e-bay route. He’d call me on the phone as excited as a kid and say, “Martin! I just sold all my power tools!” Now he has a classic car he’s trying to unload. “I don’t need this stuff,” he

### “PRACTICE THE LIGHTNESS”

A smart businessman friend of mine in Texas just couldn’t catch a break. I will call him Carleton. The most significant thing that worked “against” Carleton in the wealth-building department was that he was a believer in Jesus Christ.

I put “against” in quotation marks because Carleton now grasps the concept that God knows better than him what is best for him, and was all the time protecting him from his own ambition. He didn’t always know that. As his money dwindled, Carleton discovered new and creative ways of cursing his circumstances. Carleton strung together four-letter words in ways you never thought possible. After he’d exhausted himself, however, Carleton came to realize that it was God Himself keeping him from amassing the wealth he was certainly talented and smart enough to amass. Why would God do that? Well, damn it, that’s precisely what Carleton wanted to know.

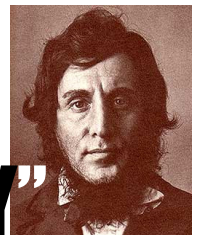
God did it to keep Carleton humble. He did it to keep him relying on Him rather than on the dubiousness of riches. He did it to make him look forward each day to the return of Christ. Because when things are going swell for us on old planet Earth, we start to not mind at all if old Jesus would put His return on hold for a few more years just so that we can stay on our pre-

told me recently. “It has been controlling my life. I’m sick of it. I can’t tell you how much more relaxing it is getting rid of stuff than trying to collect it. The meaning of life is coming into clearer focus for me—and it’s much simpler than the old way.”

Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:7—

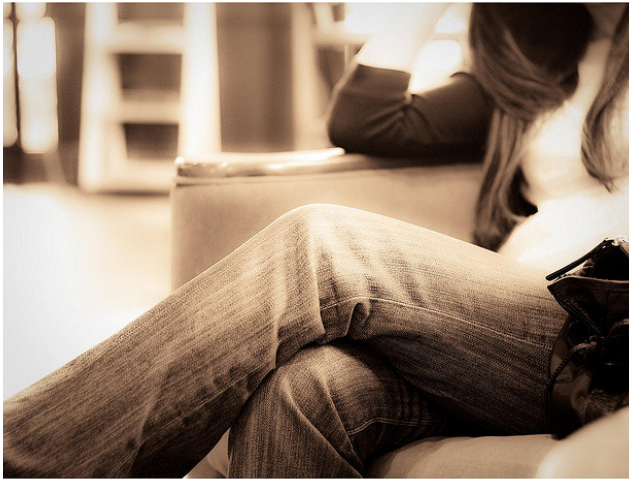
**“For nothing do we carry into the world, and it is evident that neither can we carry anything out.”**

When Christ lifts us off this earth and scoots us up past the clouds toward Neptune, we’re going to feel ridiculously light. Even though baggage flies free on God Airlines, we won’t have any. And neither will we say to the Lord, “Wait! I forgot the dining room set!” Carleton won’t be saying, “Hold up! I need my drill press!” As long as this will be our new truth, why not anticipate it? Further, why not start practicing it? Why not practice the lightness and untrammelled freedom that is our eternal destiny in Christ Jesus? Some day, all we are going to have (and need) are our celestial bodies and the spirit of Christ. I say, let’s get used to how that feels—to the best of our abilities. I finish by quoting Henry David Thoreau, who put it in a nutshell:



# “SIMPLIFY”

# Consider the lilies of the field



**“Do not worry about your soul.”**

—Matthew 6:25

Do you see circles under their eyes? Are they on their third pot of coffee? Are they fuming in traffic? Cussing their brains out? And yet see how beautiful they are. See how they sway in the breeze. It’s not that they don’t give a crap; it’s that they trust their Maker.”

**O**ur Lord pointed out lilies to some folks on a mountain one day and said, “Check those out, people. Do any of those flowers look stressed to you?”

Then the people said, “What about it, Jesus?” And Jesus said, “Be that way!”

This is my paraphrase of Matthew 6:28-30. The key verse of the surrounding contest is verse 25:

**“Therefore I am saying to you, Do not worry about your soul, what you may be eating, or what you may be drinking, nor yet about your body, what you should be putting on. Is not the soul more than nourishment, and the body than apparel?”**

Work. Buy jeans. Buy coffee and bread. Buy eggs and paper towels. Buy cheap shoes—or expensive ones. Buy a nice car; buy a clunker. Live within your means. Make more means, or make less—whatever you feel. Wear make-up; don’t. Eat in, or out. Make sure of one thing:

Hold it all loosely. Feel your hands go limp. There. Relax your knuckles. Feel that? Do it frequently; it is the opposite of grasping. Take a breath. Feel life? That’s God. It’s all you need, really. Now get dressed. Walk, don’t run. Let time dribble. You’re in a field. Consider the lilies. ■

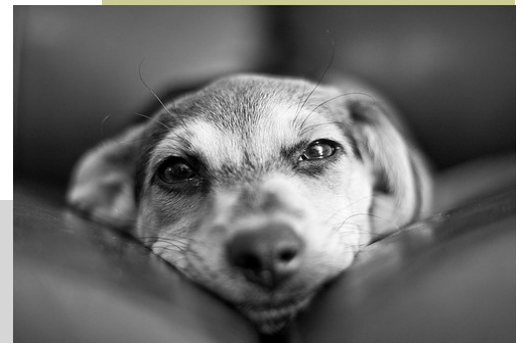
## What a revelation!

YOU LIVE IN A BUBBLE; REJOICE

**W**e are bubble people. I know you don’t feel very insulated, but you are. If you knew for a second how it would feel to be un-insulated, you’d appreciate what you have. Anyway, we live in a bubble, and the bubble is Christ. 1 John 4:4 says:

**“Greater is He Who is in you than he who is in the world.”**

That’s your bubble; it’s a bubble of protection against “he who is in the world,” which is Satan. The spirit of God makes its home in you (1 Cor. 3:16), and it’s permanent. The spirit has limitless power, but God chooses to limit it in us. Nevertheless, even that limited spiritual power is greater than the power of the lunatic spiritual being who is running the planet (relatively speaking),



namely, Satan. The spirit of God may radiate from you only an eighth of an inch (I believe this radiation to be literal), but that’s still a bubble, so thank God for it. It’s better than Satan radiating *inside* of you an eighth of an inch. It doesn’t matter how thin the wall of the bubble is, it’s the strongest bubble in the universe and it’s greater than Satan. Now all you need is to be aware of it. Believe God; trust that it’s there. It’s more real than your skin.

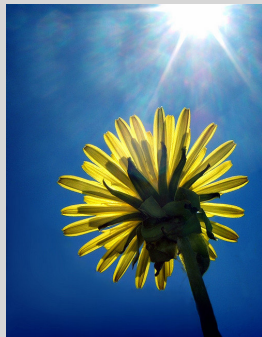
Even dogs have it, though less of it than you. See the dog in the photo? That’s the peace I’m talking about. 1/32 of an inch—*maybe*—and the crazy pooch isn’t even aware of it. ■

**Q&A** WHAT IS MEANT BY THE VERSE THAT GOD WILL NOT GIVE YOU MORE THAN YOU CAN BEAR, BUT WILL ALLOW YOU TO ESCAPE IT? HOW CAN YOU ESCAPE AND BEAR SOMETHING AT THE SAME TIME?

**Y**ou can’t. This is a mistranslation of 1 Corinthians 10:13 from the King James Version. Here’s how the Concordant Version Reads:

**No trial has taken you except what is human. Now, faithful is God, Who will not be leaving you to be tried above what you are able, but, together with the trial, will be making the sequel also, to enable you to undergo it.”**

The Greek word that the KJV mistranslates “escape” and the CV translates “sequel,” is *ekbasis*, whose elements are OUT-STEPPING. In other words, while you’re going through your trial, God will show you how the whole thing will work OUT. He will show you



the good thing you will STEP OUT into when the hard thing is over. In short, He will give you a vision of the future. Imagine God saying:

“I know this trial is hard, but see what I have made for you. Here is a short film clip I want you to watch during this hard time:

**“The Lord Himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command...and the dead in Christ shall be rising first. Thereupon we, the living shall be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.**

**And thus we will always be together with the Lord.” —1 Thess. 4:16-18**

Good enough? ■

# Rants & Stuff

The Apostle Paul says we should not murmur (Philippians 2:14). Therefore, I shall rant.

## Who cares if they think you're a nut job

I KNEW WHAT I WANTED TO DO FOR A LIVING—AND I DID IT



I love snappy sayings. Jesus said, “Become as a child.” I always liked that one. I became as a child that day in 1993 when I looked in the mirror and asked myself what I wanted to do with the rest of my life.

I was working for the U.S. Postal Service at the time, supporting a wife and three chil-

dren on a respectable wage. But it’s not what I wanted to do for a living. My passion was writing and studying about God. So I looked in the mirror with the heart and mind of a child and said, “I want to study and write about God for a living.” The ensuing months were a torture chamber of fear and of letting go, but I finally took childlike faith to its logical conclusion and jumped in, trusting God to meet my needs, which He has. This brings me to the next snappy saying:

“Build it, and they will come.”

This, of course, is from the film *Field of Dreams*, where Ray Kinsella hears a voice in his cornfield telling him to destroy a good portion of his cash crop and build a baseball diamond so that a dead baseball player can come back to life and play again. I remember visiting a financial counselor right after seeing this movie and telling him my plans.

“You’re going to do *what?*” said the counselor. He stood before a chalkboard, fondling his chalk.

“Write a newsletter, I said.

“How many subscribers do you have?” he



asked.

I said, “None.”

This appeared to puzzle the man. “How much will you be charging for your newsletter, once you *do* get subscribers?”

“Nothing.”

The counselor tossed his chalk, said he could do nothing for me, wished me a fine day, and locked the door behind me. I went home and told my wife, “Apparently, we are idiots.” But the spirit of God said, “Don’t mind that guy. Build it, and they will come.” So I started writing my newsletter, to nobody. They *did* come, and they haven’t stopped yet.

Another snappy saying comes from *Reader’s Digest*: “When you jump off a cliff, you *will* build wings on the way down.” This has a little bit to do with commitment.

It has a lot to do with faith. ■

## For the love of Jesus, go the hell to bed

One of the worst things ever to happen to mankind (besides McDonalds) was the invention of the light bulb. Thanks to Thomas Edison and his ridiculous little tungsten filament, we can now stay up past midnight, or even 1:00, and still get up at 6:30 and go to work. Who cares if we feel like wet wash-

rags by three in the afternoon, snap at the kids, or eat Snickers bars for lunch? At least we can say that we accomplish a great many things, make excellent use of our time, and experience at least one near-fatal car accident per month. Confronted with all our modern advantages for accomplishing so many more things than our predecessors, I wonder what would Jesus do? I already know.

He would go the hell to bed. ■

