



Freedom's Gate

Publication of: A New & Living Way, Inc. PO Box 259, Ashley IN 46705 260-349-0928 or 886-963-1234 email: info@newandlivingway.org

HAVOC IN THE HENHOUSE Tossing on my chore clothes, I look out the window at the sky. Dusk again! How I dislike doing chores after dark. Since one chicken coop has no lights, I would need to hurry before the sun went down entirely. Rushing out to the barn, I quickly hook up the hose, turn on the water and head for the coop dragging the hose as I go.

The coop I'm working in is an old corn crib that sits in the middle of our farm. It has two cribs on either side that run the length of the barn. We keep chickens in both sides. As I open the door to one side the chickens begin their usual loud clamor for water and I am relieved there is still enough light filtering through the slats in the walls to see what I am doing.

There are three five-gallon tubs on the floor that I begin to fill, all are empty. The hens fight for a position, perching precariously on the edges for a drink. As is my habit, I purposely study the chickens looking for anything out of order, which is one of the reasons I don't like to do chores after dark. The light is fading and I still have to water the other side. Impatience begins to rise on the inside of me.

Suddenly, my eyes fall on a hen perched on the far tub, about three feet away from where I'm standing. She doesn't look right. I squint to get a better look in the fading light. I can't really see her so I move in closer to the tub and squat down in front of it. She looks so strange. Is she drowning? With my hand, I move some of the chickens off the tub and lean in. She lifts her head and I find myself staring into the beady eyes of a rat!

Gasping, I stumble backwards and stare at the furry little vermin. Unmoving, it stares back with those black, glittering eyes, alert and watchful. My heart is racing and I'm not sure who's more alarmed, the rat or me. A moment passes and slowly the critter goes back to drinking. Well! That answers that! Oh, what to do, what to do!!

As I watch the rat go back to drinking, I'm stunned that it isn't afraid of me and equally stunned that my chickens don't seem to notice its presence beside them. Anger quickly takes the place of fear. I whip the hose around and begin to spray the rat and horror of horrors there are not one but two rats! How on earth did I miss that?

My heart shifts into overdrive as I watch the now confused rats begin to run toward *me*. If I could breathe, I would scream. Now, due to the sudden lack of oxygen, the walls begin moving in on me. I don't recall this coop feeling this small! In a panic, I stomp my feet, still hosing down the rodents. The stupid creatures keep coming, then suddenly, as if on cue, they turn and run into a hole I had never seen before. I stare at the hole in disbelief...there are rats in *my* coop!

When my Mom asked me to write this article she mentioned

the above story. "Surely, there's a lesson in there somewhere," she said.

Yes there is. 1 Corinthians 10:23 says, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not."(KJV) So, what do the story and the verse have in common? One thing: freedom in Christ.

Paul understood his position in Christ and the freedom that comes with it. And yet he's the one who wrote the above scripture to the Corinthian church. Let's read it again in the Amplified: "All things are legitimate (permissible), {and we are free to do anything we please}, but not all things are helpful (expedient, profitable, and wholesome). All things are legitimate, but not all things are constructive {to character} and edifying to spiritual life."

According to this scripture, everything is permissible and we are free to do anything we please. Interesting. So is Paul saying that it's okay to drink? Yep. Smoke? Yep. Commit adultery? Yep. Cuss, bar hop, gossip? Yep. Jesus paid for all that on the cross, all that and much more. Everything between you and God the Father is good. You are considered righteous and holy.

Woohoo! You mean I can do whatever I want with no

repercussions? No, that's not what he said. He said, "We are free to do anything we please, *but* not all things are *helpful*, not all things are *determined by selfish interests only* or *expedient*, not all things are *profitable*, not all things are *wholesome*, not all things are *constructive to character* and not all things are *edifying to spiritual life*."

In a nut shell, (my paraphrase) you can do what you want without a breach in your relationship to the Father, but at the same time set yourself up for failure here on earth.

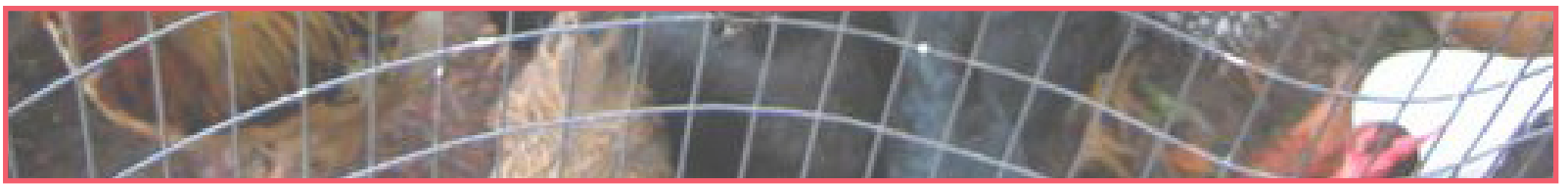
Galatians 6:7-9 (Amplified) says, "Do not be deceived and deluded and misled; God will not allow Himself to be sneered at (scorned, disdained, or mocked by mere pretensions or professions, or by His precepts being set aside), {He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God}. For whatever a man sows, that and that only is what he will reap. For he who sows to his own flesh (lower nature, sensuality) will from the flesh reap decay and ruin and destruction, but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint."

Let's stop here for a moment and go back to the rat in my coop. Did you know that a female rat can have up to six litters a year, with each litter consisting of six to seven babies each? Did you know that rats eat chickens and eggs? Do you suppose my hens know that? Obviously not, since the birds seemed okay with sharing their water with the disgusting creatures!

1 CORINTHIANS 10:23 (KJV)

"ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL FOR ME, BUT ALL THINGS ARE NOT EXPEDIENT: ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL FOR ME, BUT ALL THINGS EDIFY NOT."





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HAVOC IN THE HENHOUSE

As their owner, it is my job to protect those pea brains and provide for them the things that will cause them to prosper. Rats, if left untended will eventually wreak havoc on the whole coop.

In the same way, there are things in our lives that we do, like a rat, that are wreaking havoc in our lives. We use our “freedom in Christ” as an excuse to live selfishly and then blame God for the chaos in our lives.

In the verses above it says, “But he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” Eternal life starts here on earth, not when we get to heaven. Here are the directions on how to “sow to the Spirit”...

1. Get some scripture. A good one to start with is Romans 4:7, 8.
2. Meditate on it. Meditate means to mumble. Simply put, talk about the verse with your spouse, your kids, your friends, yourself, the Lord, your animals, anyone who will listen. (Pets make awesome audiences – they have no opinions).
3. Take communion as often as you need to remind yourself that

in Him you are righteous, holy, loved by the Father and free of the bondage of sin.

4. Watch as the “rats” in your life begin to disappear, only to be replaced by wisdom, prosperity, health and all the other blessings the Father has so freely been trying to get to you.

Now, what have I just done? I have taught you to divert your attention off yourself, off your hang ups, off your hold ups, off your sin and refocused your thoughts on the Father. He will and already **has rescued you from you.**

Take a lesson from me. When I left the coop that night I went directly to the one who could fix the rat problem – my husband. Now even though I know about the rats, my focus is not on them. Why? I know their days are numbered and they are no longer my concern. My husband told me he’d take care of them, and being a man of his word has lifted the care of the problem off my shoulders.

God your Father will do no less – you have His Word on that!

~ Robin Clifford

ON THE WINNING TEAM

Isn't it great to have things happen in your life that bring you that warm fuzzy feeling? You know that feeling you get when you get the big job awarded to you after working so hard and long to get. Or that feeling when your son shoots his first deer or your daughter cooks her first burnt free cake. Or maybe that time you spent all day cleaning the house and your husband notices when he gets home. You know that deep feeling of happiness that is called joy, that inward thing that puts one of those silly looking smiles on your face every time you think of that wonderful moment in your life. What a great feeling that is.

That feeling of being on the winning team is such an awesome feeling. Do you realize that being in the Family of God is like being on the winning team? Have you read the back of the Bible? We win! We are on the winning team no matter what the score is at halftime; in the end we win. Mike Huckabee told a story of how his local news station on TV would announce that the prerecorded Arkansas basketball game would be aired after the news program; if you didn't want to see the score of the game then close your eyes while they showed the score on the TV screen. Well, Mike would always want to see the score because if Arkansas won then he would go ahead and stay up to watch the game, but if they lost then he would just go to bed. Well let me say it again, we win! So no matter what course the game looks like it is taking, don't forget the end results. Don't let the circumstances dictate that warm fuzzy feeling inside you, but instead with thanksgiving and praise give the One Who is the reason for the victory, all the glory and honor that He so rightfully deserves.

As I write this article I can't help but think about a magazine that we get each month. The articles inside talk about the good things that are coming, how change is coming, or how the New Year will be better. Which is all great and encouraging and many people need or want to hear it, but when month after month is all about change, maybe we should starting looking at how blessed we really are today. And if you need some help finding blessings in your life then you need to do some research on how many people in the world own a car, eat three meals a day, worship God whenever and wherever they want and the list goes on and on. Don't get me wrong, I want to continue receiving blessings from God and believe He has bigger and better things for my life. But if the grass is always greener on the other side then we can't or won't appreciate the things we already have. As I was going through the holiday season this year, I

started thinking about the many blessings in my life. With no boasting intended, my wife and I find it hard to imagine that we can be blessed any more than we are, with all thanksgiving to God Almighty. Now anyone that has been to my house can see we don't have the picture perfect place and could find many areas in our lives that could use some improving, but compared to

PHILLIPIANS 4:11

**“NOT THAT I SPEAK IN RESPECT OF WANT;
FOR I HAVE LEARNED, IN WHATSOEVER
STATE I AM, TO BE CONTENT.”**

the blessings of our family and our future, those material things don't compare. We have learned to be content and rest in Him, knowing that He will meet all our needs through His riches in glory. (Philippians 4:19)

Philippians 4:11 sums it up: “Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content.”

~ Chad Days

We are making some changes in our monthly newsletter, Freedom's Gate, and we will not be sending them out for a couple months. We invite you to send us testimonies of how God is using your position in Christ to change your life and the lives around you. We would love to have you visit our website, newandlivingway.org, where you will find teachings, studies, articles, testimonies, and past newsletters.

REMINDER:

- Home Fellowship starting Tuesday, March 10 from 7-9pm at the home of Joe & Anne Pranger.
- Ladies Bible Class starting Wednesday, March 11 from 12-1:30pm at the home of Joe & Anne Pranger.
- New Creation Conference on March 20-21 at the Farmstead Inn, Shipshewana IN.

Please call or email us with any questions, info@newandlivingway.org or 260-349-0928 or 260-349-0798.