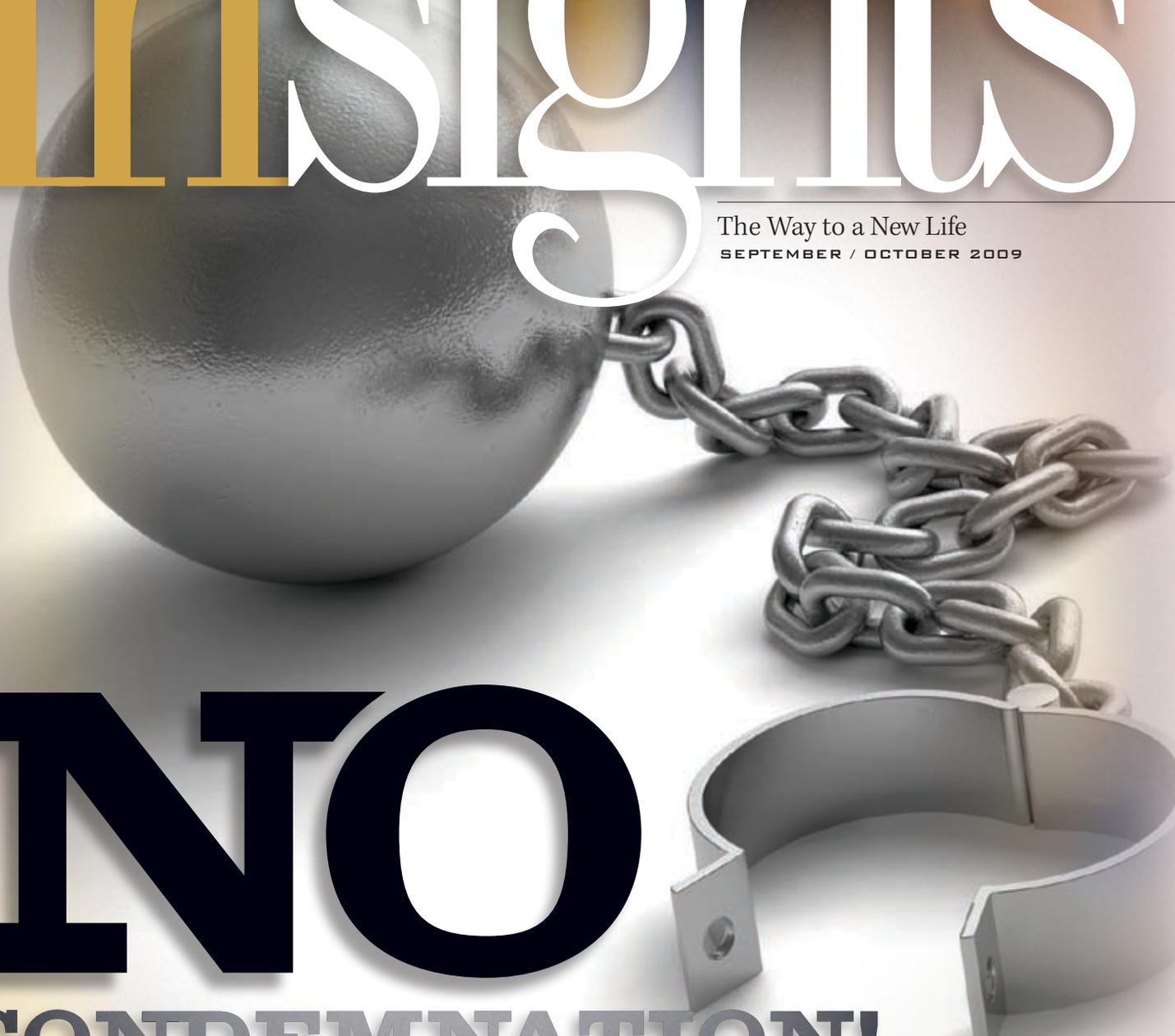


DENNIS BURKE MINISTRIES

Insights

The Way to a New Life

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2009



NO
CONDEMNATION!

IN THIS ISSUE

LIVE COMPLETELY FREE FROM GUILT
DISCOVER THE TRUE POWER OF YOUR VOICE



NO CONDEMNATION!

BY DR. DENNIS BURKE



CONFIDENCE IN ANY RELATIONSHIP GROWS WHEN PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO TRUST EACH OTHER AND REALIZE THAT EACH ONE HAS THE OTHER'S BEST

interests at heart. In the same way, confident Christians have learned to trust that God loves them. They also know that through faith in His Word, they qualify for His great abundance.

One of the most self-defeating beliefs many Christians maintain is that they are nothing more than forgiven sinners. But according to Scripture, that isn't even possible. A person is either one or the other — forgiven or a sinner.

Once you have received forgiveness, you are free from sin and born into Christ. In Christ, you are no longer a sinner; now you have been made a saint in Him. Being free from sin, you are also made free from the nagging voice of condemnation — or at least, it is now possible for you to be free.

Sadly, for too many, the Christian life is filled with feelings of condemnation and a nagging sense that

God is disappointed with them in some way. A condemned person has been found guilty and sentenced to punishment for a crime. Thus, to be condemned specifically means to pronounce the guilt of a person.

Because we know that Jesus took our punishment for sin, we also know that we are without guilt. Therefore, if we choose to live with condemnation, we are also choosing to ignore the depth of the work Jesus has done for us.

Although the New Covenant wasn't yet established during the ministry of Jesus, He lived as our Example. He demonstrated both the perfect love of God and the life that anyone would ultimately be empowered to live.

We see one example of how deep God's love runs in the account of the woman who was caught in the very act of adultery and then brought to Jesus (see John 8:3-12). We don't know why these accusers didn't also drag the guilty man to the feet of Jesus to be judged. However, we do know that Jesus refused to condemn this woman. In fact, He told the accusing, self-righteous scribes and Pharisees that they could condemn her only if they had no sin. Of course, not one of them would go so far as to claim his own sinlessness — so, as a result, the woman's accusers dispersed.

Then in verses 10 and 11, Jesus gives us a very powerful insight:

"When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.'"

Although the Law demanded that this woman be taken outside the city walls and stoned to death, Jesus didn't hold her to the Law. Instead, He revealed a higher law — the royal law

of God's perfect love.

Religion had made those accusers harsh and heartless, and it does the same thing today. When someone is caught in sin as this woman was, the religiously calloused will immediately write that person off. And if any trouble comes to that person, the religious just dismiss it as an example of someone getting what he or she deserved.

Jesus didn't condemn the woman caught in adultery, nor does He condemn any sinner or saint who is caught in sin.

Instead, Jesus forgives and empowers them to live above sin. He isn't soft on sin or its consequences. Jesus is, however, committed to unconditional love that will see anyone through tough times.

For our part, we must learn to live in the assignment of Jesus' love. In John 3:17, Jesus tells us His true assignment:

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

If God doesn't condemn us, we need not accept the condemnation of others or even of ourselves. Nor can we allow ourselves to condemn others who may be caught in a snare or trap of sin.

This same love is further seen in the love Jesus demonstrated toward Peter. After Peter had betrayed Jesus three times, the disciple's deep despair drove him away from all he had embraced following Jesus, and he went back to fishing. Then after Jesus had been raised from the dead, an angel spoke to the three women who were at His tomb:

"But go, tell His disciples — and Peter — that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you" (Mark 16:7).

Jesus singled out Peter because the disciple had fled in despair and condemnation after betraying his Master. Jesus specifically wanted Peter to be told to come find Him along with all the other disciples. Jesus' words reveal that He didn't

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hold Peter's betrayal against him.

Similarly, whenever we fail or stumble in our walk with God, He doesn't quit loving us or believing in us. He knows that His love has the power to overcome all we are struggling with.

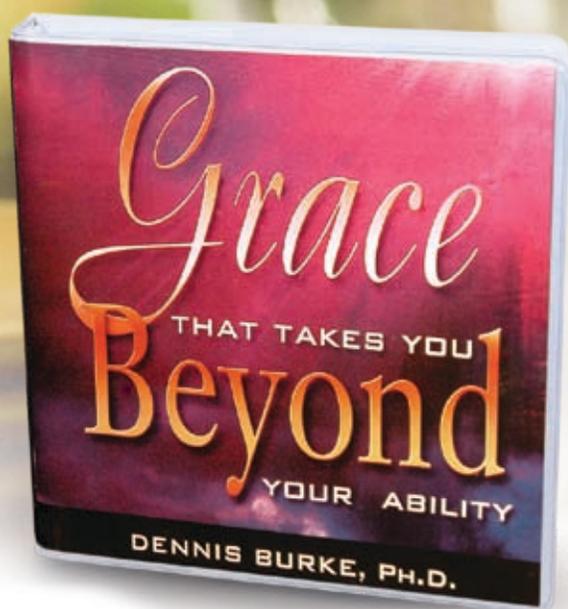
The Old Testament is filled with examples of God showing His love and continuing to believe in people even after they ran from Him and compromised. For instance, God told the prophet Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and declare His words of warning, but Jonah ran the other direction. He had no intention of doing what the Lord

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had told him to do. It was only after Jonah called out to God in repentance from the belly of that great fish that everything started to turn around.

Then in Jonah 3:1-3, we read one of the truly great statements about God:

"Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.' So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord" (Jonah 3:1-3).

Did you see it? God spoke to Jonah the second time. Just as God did with Jonah, He also continues to give us new opportunities to get it right.

God will always give you a second chance to obey Him and do it right. In fact, He will give you a third, a fourth, and a fifth chance — and He won't stop there because He will not give up on you.

Romans 8:1-4 (*Wuest*) makes a clear case for staying free from the nagging voice of the accuser:

"Therefore, now, there is not even one bit of condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit, that of the life in Christ Jesus, freed you once for all from the law of the sinful nature and of death. For that which is an impossibility for the law, because it was weak through the sinful nature, God having sent His Son in likeness of flesh of sin, and concerning sin, condemned sin in the sinful nature, in order that the righteous requirement of the law may be brought to completion in us who, not as dominated by the sinful nature are ordering our behavior but as dominated by the Spirit."

I like the way the *New Century Version* of verse 1 reads: "So now, those who are in Christ Jesus are not judged guilty." You have been judged — but not judged guilty! You are judged with Jesus' righteous judgment. You are now in Christ — free of guilt and every last trace of condemnation. You have been made the righteousness of God. Old things have passed away, and you are a new creation in Him. That Old Covenant Paul referred to as the ministry of death and condemnation has given way to life, love, forgiveness, and rightstanding with God.

There is now no more condemnation. Your sins are under the eternal and unchanging blood sacrifice of Jesus! So confess your sins to the Father, and be done with them. As you receive the freedom that is yours in Jesus, you will close the door on condemnation and allow the depth of His love to restore you and make you whole.

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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

“LISTEN! IT’S THE VOICE OF SOMEONE SHOUTING,
CLEAR THE WAY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS FOR THE LORD!”

THE POWER of YOUR VOICE



BY VIKKI BURKE

There was a great deal involved in order to get Jesus from Heaven to the manger, into His earthly ministry, and back to the Throne again. Even though this was all part of God’s plan, it didn’t automatically happen — nothing does. For

example, Matthew 18:14 says that it’s not the Father’s will that any should perish, but people die and go to hell every day.

God’s plans were established before the foundation of the world. But with the help of the serpent, Adam and Eve strayed from God’s plan, and the groundwork for bringing Jesus to earth to redeem mankind and restore God’s plan began.

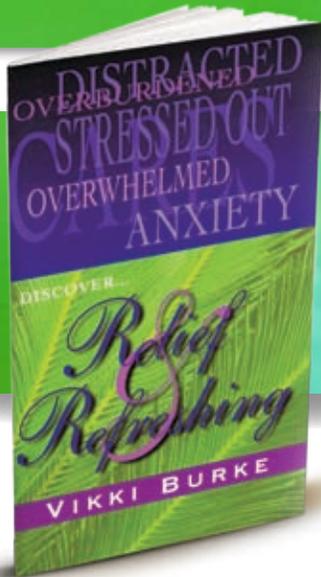
Notice what God said to the serpent as punishment for his part in hindering His plan: “And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.



He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15). This announcement was the first indication to the kingdom of darkness of the Messiah’s coming.

But God’s pronouncement in the Garden was not the only time He spoke about this future event. For hundreds of years, the Spirit of God moved upon men like David, Isaiah, Zachariah, and Daniel to speak about the Messiah yet to come.

The voice of God echoed through these prophets, defining the anointing that would rest upon the Messiah and what He would accomplish



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for all of humanity. It was the God-inspired voices of these prophets that would summon Jesus to the manger — and then into His ministry on this earth.

Notice the Holy Spirit's specific wording through the prophet Isaiah: "Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting, 'Clear the way through the wilderness for the Lord! Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God!'" (Isaiah 40:3). Many years later, the Holy Spirit used the voice of John the Baptist to clear the way for the Lord. John the Baptist's voice opened the pathway or the entrance for the Word to become flesh and dwell among men (see John 1:1,14).

Jesus said that of everyone born of a woman, none was greater than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11) — yet many great prophets lived before John. For example, consider the ministry of these prophets:

- **Elijah called down fire from Heaven and successfully challenged demon spirits.**

- **Elisha raised a boy from the dead and multiplied a widow woman's last meal, thereby preventing her and her son from starving.**
- **Moses pronounced plagues of blood, flies, boils, and finally death upon an entire nation of people who refused to obey God.**

How could John be greater than these when he didn't perform any miracles? What caused Jesus to rank John above these prophets?

It was John's voice. The words John spoke built the path from which Jesus launched a revolution of righteousness that would forever change the world. John's voice opened and cleared the way for God's plan to unfold.

John the Baptist demonstrated the power of the spoken word for anyone who will use it. The good news is that you and I also have voices that can open divine pathways and allow

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT YOU AND I ALSO HAVE VOICES THAT CAN OPEN DIVINE PATHWAYS AND ALLOW GOD'S PLAN TO UNFOLD IN OUR LIVES, OUR CHURCH, AND OUR NATION!



God's plan to unfold in our lives, our church, and our nation!

Zachariah, John the Baptist's father, teaches us another powerful lesson about our voice. Before John's birth, an angel appeared to Zachariah as he performed his priestly duties. The angel said to him, "...Don't be afraid, Zachariah! For God has heard your prayer, and your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son! And you are to name him John" (Luke 1:13). The angel continued to give Zachariah many details regarding John's life and ministry. But notice Zachariah's response to the angel's message: "...Do you expect me to believe this? I'm an old man and my wife is an old woman" (v. 18 *Message*).

This was definitely not the way Zachariah should have answered the angel! In fact, it is always a bad idea to question what God says.

Wouldn't you think that the appearance of an angel would have been enough to cause Zachariah to believe?

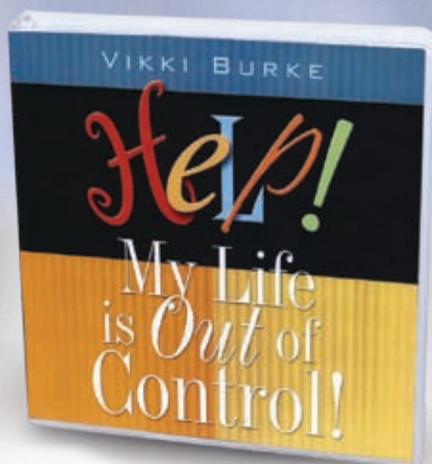
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Well, it wasn't. The angel answered Zachariah, "...I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! And now, since you didn't believe what I said, you won't be able to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly come true at the proper time" (vv. 19,20).

Gabriel was utterly aghast that a man would question God. Gabriel stood before Almighty God, who had sent Zachariah good news in answer to his prayer. How could this man question God? Clearly Zachariah could not be trusted with God's plan. So because of Zachariah's words of

unbelief, Gabriel had no alternative except to close his mouth until after God's plan was fulfilled. There was too much at risk to allow Zachariah to jeopardize God's master plan with the words of his mouth. With Zachariah's voice silenced, God's plan was executed, and Elizabeth conceived a child in her latter days.

continued on back



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Not long after Elizabeth conceived, Gabriel appeared to a young virgin named Mary with a similar message: “Don’t be afraid, Mary,’ the angel told her, ‘for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus” (vv. 30, 31). Although Mary was engaged, she had not yet been married. So upon hearing this news, she, too, asked Gabriel a question, saying, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin” (v. 34).

Mary asked a question, but it was very different in nature to Zachariah’s. Zachariah’s question doubted God’s ability to do such an impossible thing, but Mary simply asked how it would be accomplished since she was a virgin.

Obviously, it’s okay to ask God how He will accomplish what He has promised us — as long as we believe what He says, no matter how impossible it seems.

Gabriel didn’t silence Mary as he did Zachariah; instead, he answered her question: “...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you... For nothing is impossible with God” (v. 35, 37 *NIV*). Strong’s Concordance states that the Greek word “overshadow” means to envelope in a haze of brilliancy. As Mary voiced her agreement with Gabriel’s message, saying, “...May everything you have said come true...” (v. 38), the Holy Spirit enveloped her in the very glory of God, and she supernaturally conceived without a man.

So why did Zachariah and Mary experience completely different results based solely on their response to God’s promise? Because without a voice in agreement with God’s plan, nothing happens. This is a spiritual law that God established in Genesis 1:2: “The earth was empty, a formless mass cloaked in darkness. And the Spirit of God was hovering over its surface.” Although the Holy Spirit hovered over the darkness, nothing happened until God said, “...Let there be light...” (v. 3). At that moment, the Holy Spirit released creative power that would bring to pass what was spoken — light was released and darkness fled.

The supernatural power of God is voice-activated! Without our voices speaking in agreement with what God has already promised, there can be no lasting change in our lives. Our voices either “open the way” or “get in the way” of God’s plan — depending on how we use them. Our words either advance the plan of God in our lives or hinder it.

God needs our voices to clear the path for His plan from our house, to the church house, to the courthouse, to the White House. It’s our voices that will clear the way for God’s plan to unfold in our lives. It’s not our pastors’ responsibility or some prophet’s job — the responsibility rests upon us alone. The question is, are we hungry enough to do whatever it takes to walk fully in God’s plan?

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We can’t watch hours of bad news and expect to remain uncontaminated from man’s perspective. Spending 15 to 30 minutes with God cannot neutralize the effect of so much bad news. Consider Jesus’ rebuke of Peter, when He said, “...Get behind me Satan, you stand right in my way Peter when you look at things from man’s perspective...” (Matthew 16:23). If we hear enough bad news (and the media is sure to make it available 24/7!), we’ll soon begin to believe the negative reports we hear, for Romans 10:17 tells us that faith is built by what we hear. Then we’ll start talking about the bad news we’ve heard with friends, coworkers, or family members. As a result, we will activate the spiritual law and experience the negative harvest of what we’ve given voice to.

But there is good news! We can alter that outcome by using our voice to speak what God has promised instead of what the media predicts!

Our faith is fed and grows strong as we continually hear God’s Word, filling our minds and our mouths with His voice as it is spoken through His Word. We can announce loud and clear the truth that will move us in the direction of God’s promises.

Psalms 65:11 (*NKJV*) says, “You crown the year with Your goodness, And Your paths drip with abundance.” We can experience the best year of our lives as we begin activating our voices by faith. So let’s determine to use our voices each day to declare God’s words of life. As we do, we will set our feet squarely in the middle of His good plan for our lives!

Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptures come from the New Living Translation of the Bible.