

Eric Butterworth Speaks

Essay #17
THE "HIGH WAY" TO FREEDOM

"Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." These are the opening words of Rousseau's Social Contract. And the Bible says, "God created man upright, but he has sought out many inventions." Every person hungers for freedom...but life is consciousness--and only in consciousness can one be in bondage. Thus, by only changing consciousness can one find freedom.

Have you ever said, or felt, "I'm sitting on top of the world!" You may reply, "Yes, but not very often." It would appear that such occasional experiences of all-rightness come by way of good luck. So, we think we must enjoy them while they last, for the good luck can as quickly change to bad luck. We have been conditioned to believe that health and peace and well-being are brief intervals in the "damned horrid grind" of life. Thus, we hope for the best but expect the worst. Startling, and freeing, is the new insight in Truth that declares that health and harmony and prosperity are the norm, the innate potential, the natural flow of the Infinite.

Thus, when we are "sitting on top of the world", it is not the world of people and conditions and things. It is the world of consciousness. We can enjoy this experience at any time, even while the people, conditions, and things of the world may be anything but good. When next you have the feeling of well-being about life, analyze your state of mind. You may make the great discovery...that joy and peace and enthusiasm are not just reactions to things... but the causes of them.

A child once defined gravity as "God at the center of the earth who keeps people right side up when the world is upside down." Make no mistake about it, the world is often upside down. The "Abundant Life" that Jesus heralds does not depend on some worldly Eden. If you expect the world to give you all-rightness, you will be disappointed. You might even give up on your Truth ideals in disappointment, saying, "Truth just doesn't work." It works all right, but it works in you.

The world you sit on top of is the world of your own thought and emotions. No one can intrude himself into this world, no one can upset it, disturb it, turn it upside down. There may be disturbing people "out there" in your world, and upsetting conditions, but there is no valid reason that you should be disturbed or upset by them. It really doesn't make good sense, ever to let things or people decide how you should act. Most of us simply react to things and persons. Thus, our lives are happy or miserable depending on outside stimuli. No one is unhappier than the perpetual reactor. His center of emotional gravity is not rooted within himself, where it belongs, but in the world outside him. His spiritual temperature is forever being raised or lowered by the climate around him, and he is at the mercy of the elements.

You are the master of your own mental household, or you should be. You must, of course, assert control and discipline your reactions. One man said, "Instead of simply reacting to things and persons, I am going to become an 'internal reactor'." He whimsically refers to himself as "I.R." He is relating to an atomic reactor in which there is a tremendous mobilizing of nuclear energy. He is committing himself to act as he wants to act--not just forever reacting to passing circumstances.

It is probably true that, while most of us get ourselves ready for the day by donning dress, make-up and accessories, few of us prepare ourselves mentally. We need to start the day with a quiet time of prayer, and a recommitment to positive and productive thinking. We need to resolve to look up instead of down--to get our faith lifted.

This is what faith is--a lifting of our mind to God-consciousness. Recall the time the disciples encountered Jesus walking on the water. Impetuous Peter climbed over the side of the boat and started out toward Him. Suddenly, he realized that he, too, was actually walking on water. It was too much for him to believe. His impulsive faith melted away like a snowball in an oven, and he began to sink. As long as Peter looked up, he was able to do the seeming impossible. When he looked down in

the subconscious memory of inadequacy, he sank into the morass of helplessness.

Consciousness calls for discipline and practice. In a moment of prayer-practice or the experience of a lecture or meditation service one may be "walking on water." We are "practicing the presence" with enthusiasm. However, when we get out into the mundane world, there is a strong tendency to quickly begin to look down. Perhaps, we meet a disturbing person or situation, and we react in disturbance. Thus, though we practiced the presence of God for minutes at a time, we may be practicing the absence of God for hours at a time. Then, we wonder why we don't keep on top of the water more than we do.

The chains that bind us in life are forged in our own thoughts of self-limitation. Freedom is our inheritance, but ours is the responsibility to "stir up the gift of God," to get our faith lifted, and to work up a spontaneous enthusiasm for life. Emerson says, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." Actually, we are born with enthusiasm. It is that "spark of celestial fire" at the core of our being. The apathetic life simply has the flame turned down--and it can be turned up whenever one cares to do so.

You may say, "Enthusiasm is fine, but with my problems what do I have to be enthusiastic about?" This is the great fallacy. Enthusiasm is not a response, but a cause. The enthusiastic person does not act in that way because things are going well. Things go well because he is enthusiastic. Get the fire turned on and your consciousness tuned in by working with a realization such as this one: "I am alive, awake, alert, joyous, and enthusiastic about life."

This is not to suggest that you can achieve a level of life where challenging things do not occur. As long as there are people, the stock market will go up and down, and there are differences between persons. But Jesus said, "In the world you have tribulation, but I have overcome the world." You can overcome the tendency to live as a reactor to worldly things and people. Why not march to the best of your own drummer? Why not become an I.R...internal reactor? "Do not let your life be shaped by the world about you, but let God remold your mind from within."

You can be free in a wonderful way through the disciplined preparation for every day of your life. Establish yourself in the consciousness where you do not let people or conditions determine how you act; get your faith lifted up; and get yourself turned on to the divine flow. This consciousness will, as the youngster says, "Keep you right side up when the world is upside down."