

Under The Spirit's Lordship



Foundations (Day 220)
by Derek Prince

We may sum up the first main distinguishing feature of a Spirit- baptised congregation, as we've seen it yesterday, by putting two words side by side. These two words are liberty and government.

At first sight it might appear inconsistent to put these two words together. Someone might feel inclined to object, "But if we have liberty, then we are not under government. And if we are under government, then we do not have liberty." People do, in fact, often feel that liberty and government are opposite to each other. This applies not only to spiritual things but also in the political realm.

I am reminded of the political situation in Kenya, in East Africa, while I was serving there as a college principal from 1957 to 1961. During that period the African people of Kenya were looking forward with great eagerness to the time when their country would attain to complete independence or self-government. The Swahili word used for independence was uhuru – which means literally "liberty" or "freedom" – and this word was upon everybody's lips. Many of the less-educated Africans formed wonderful pictures of what this uhuru or liberty would bring to them.

"When uhuru comes," they would say, "we shall be able to ride our bicycles on whichever side of the road we please. We shall be able to travel as far as we like in the buses without paying. We shall never have to pay any more taxes to the government."

To more sophisticated people in other lands, statements such as these might appear childish or ridiculous. Such people would argue that conditions such as these would not constitute true liberty but rather anarchy and disorder in their worst degree. Nevertheless, these simple African people were perfectly sincere in the picture of liberty which they had formed for themselves. Their own African political leaders often had difficulty in getting them to understand what liberty or independence would really entail.

The strange thing is that people who are perfectly sophisticated in their understanding of what political liberty means are sometimes quite childish in the picture they form

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of spiritual liberty.

Such people would smile at Africans who imagine that political liberty means they can ride their bicycles on either side of the road or travel in the buses without paying their fares. Yet the same people would behave in ways no less foolish or disorderly in the house of God, and then they justify their behaviour by the title of “spiritual liberty.”

For example, in some congregations, when one member is asked to lead in prayer and to present certain prayer requests to God, there are others who speak so loud in other tongues that it becomes impossible for the rest of the congregation to hear what the appointed prayer leader is saying. This means it is impossible for the congregation to say “Amen.” with understanding or faith to a prayer which they could not even hear. In this way, through this foolish misuse of tongues, the whole congregation loses the blessing and the effectiveness of united, wholehearted petition and intercession. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:7: But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. We may render this more freely: “The manifestation of the Spirit is always given for a useful, practical, sensible purpose.”

Thus, if the manifestation is directed to fulfilling the purpose for which it is given, it will always be in harmony with the plan and purpose of the service as a whole and will make a positive contribution to accomplishing that purpose. It will never be meaningless or distracting or out of place.

Devotional

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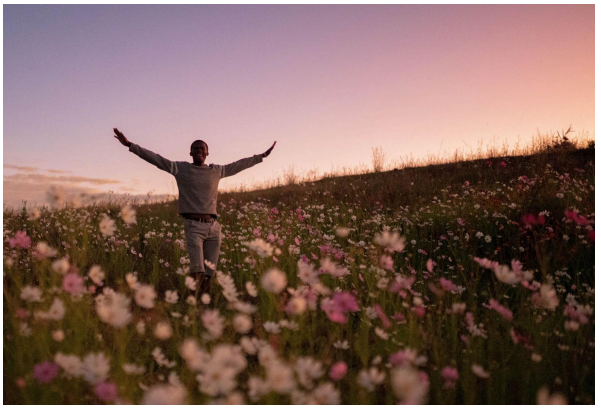

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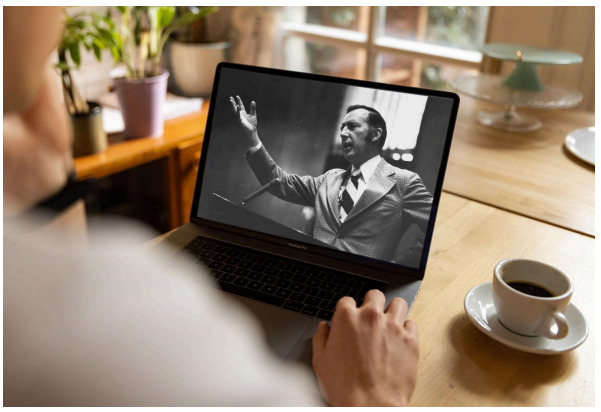

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