

Who is in Control?

By Michael Clark

By his Holy Spirit, Jesus desires to lead us with cords of love. The more we have been abused by men, especially men who supposedly represent Him, the harder it is for us to trust His leading... We are being called to lay our self centered wills down and follow His loving voice and no other. We are being called into a marriage with a perfect mate, not slavery with one who abuses power.

When President Reagan was shot soon after he became President, General Alexander Haig announced at an impromptu news conference, "I am in control here!" Just what made him think so was never quite clear, but Vice President Bush was soon at the reins of the country, much to everyone's relief.

The issue of control is an important one to God as well. Jesus said in Luke 22:25, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that **exercise authority** upon them are called benefactors. **But ye shall not be so:** but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth **serve.**" The phrase "exercise authority" is from the Greek word *exousiazō*, which literally means *to control*. Jesus makes it very plain that godly leadership does not seek to control others' lives, but to be a humble servant to them.

Maybe some of the confusion in this area in the church today comes from the over use of the word "control" in some of the newer Bible translations. The terms "control" or "controlled" are used some thirty-two times in the New International Version, but not once in the King James Version.

The NIV states that we are to be "controlled by the Spirit" in Romans 8:6 and 8:9, but the KJV says that we are "to be Spiritually minded" or "in the Spirit." They both agree on the word "**led**" in Romans 8:14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." This word "**led**" was translated from the Greek word *ago* which could be translated "to lead, to bring, to drive, or induce." But before you say, "I told you so! Isn't to drive or to induce a form of control?" look at the next verse. "For ye have not received the spirit of **bondage** again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of **adoption**, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." We have been adopted by God into a loving family, not made into slaves in the chains of control.

Which sounds more like our Father? "[He leadeth me beside the still waters,](#)" or "He drives me to the watering hole and forces me to drink!"

By his Holy Spirit, Jesus desires to lead us with cords of love. The more we have been abused by men, especially men who supposedly represent Him, the harder it is for us to trust His leading. Demons and demonically influenced leaders desire to control you and shape you into their own image. They want to make you a puppet on a string, to be jerked around at their every selfish whim. Jesus, on the other hand, has entered into a love relationship with the church and calls us His bride. He never violates our wills. We are being called to lay our self centered wills down and follow His loving voice and no other. We are being called into a marriage with a perfect mate, not slavery with one who abuses power.

The only scriptural type of control that we are to be responsive to is self-control. Self-control or temperance is listed as a fruit of the Spirit in [Galatians 5:22-24](#) and again in [2 Peter 1: 5-8](#). And if this fruit of the Spirit abounds in us it "[will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.](#)"

My grandfather grew up in Texas. When he was only fifteen years old his step-father put him in charge of a couple of hired hands and six thousand head of sheep that they drove over six hundred miles across Texas to spring pasture. This form of sheep herding fits our culture's assembly line mentality of what a shepherd is. We use dogs, horses, jeeps, cattle prods, or what ever is necessary to get those critters to move where we want them to go so we can get that final product off to market and receive the gain we so dearly seek. How do you think God looks at this type of impersonal dealings with His sheep? Read [2 Peter 2:3](#).

When I told my grandfather's story to a lady who was familiar with shepherding practices in the middle east (not to be confused with our sheep herding), her first question was, "How could the sheep all hear his voice?" Obviously they could not. I asked her how big the flocks of the Bedouin shepherds were and she said the largest one she ever saw was about 150 sheep ([see Luke 15: 3-7](#)), so they could still hear their shepherds voice. In Madison Avenue driven America bigger might be better in the eyes of many and impersonal mega-churches might be desirable for

some, but this is not the case in the kingdom family that is lead by a loving Father and His Son.

The Good Shepherd

Now let us see how a Good Shepherd treats His sheep. John chapter ten reads as follows:

'Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.' Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

Then Jesus said to them again, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.' (John 10:1-18, NKJV)

But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (John 10:26-29, NKJV)

Notice in verses 3, 4 and 27 Jesus is the one leading the sheep. Hirelings don't lead His sheep! Ask yourself this, "How long would my pastor hang around as my shepherd if his pay check was stopped?" Paul went back to tentmaking numerous times when it became necessary to support himself and others who ministered with him, so that the work of their callings could continue. When a man is called to a ministry by God, he won't let a lack of funds deter him from obeying his Master's voice. Jesus has promised to be our "ever present help in time of need" (Psalm 46:1). If we are in the callings He has for us and are faithful to obey Him, He will be faithful to provide our needs.

In verse eight Jesus said, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them." The word "ever" is not in the original text and "came" should be translated "come." This verse should read, "All who come before ME are thieves and robbers, and my sheep do not hear them." This word "before" was translated from the Greek word *pro* which means fore, i.e. *in front of*, prior, or *superior to*. Do you suppose that Jesus was saying that Moses, David, Elijah, and all the prophets were thieves and robbers! I think not! Didn't Jesus say, "Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:58)." And John wrote, "All things were made by Him...(John 1:3)." This word is a positional word as well. If you and I were talking and another person got *in front of* me, between you and me or interrupted, he would be interfering with our communication and fellowship. This I believe is what Jesus was referring to. We see men do this in our church gatherings Sunday after Sunday.

Now do you understand what Jesus was talking about when He said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things... (John 14:26)." Or do you dare believe this: "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things (1 John 2:20, see also 1 John 2:27)." Do you understand that if you are one of God's kids, you have a divine anointing upon you to hear His voice and to "know all things"?

Jesus is the one you, His sheep, should be following and He is jealous for His sheep. Didn't we just read that, "[there shall be one fold, and one shepherd?](#)" Yes, it does says in [Ephesians 4:11](#) that Jesus has provided for the ministry gifts of pastors and teachers, and he also has provided apostles, prophets, and evangelists, and they had all better be providing a transparent view of the living Jesus or they will also be thieves and robbers drawing our attention towards themselves and away from Him.

Do you believe you can hear Jesus' voice? Have you tried? I think that we here in the American church with its abundance of professional teachers and preachers have had our hearing of His voice dulled by all the clamber of other voices. Have you ever sat down with your Bible and asked the Holy Spirit to be your teacher?

I was recently talking to an older sister that had been a Catholic most of her life. We had been talking about hearing God's voice speak to us. She admitted that she never had heard Him. I asked her what she listened to all day. She said, Oh, I have my TV onto TBN and listen to Christian albums. I said, "That explains it. God can't get a word in edgewise. Turn off all that stuff and just listen for His 'still small voice.'" She must have taken my advice. A couple of weeks later she said that God drew her attention to a sign she had driven by a hundred times that read, "Slow, Moose Area." She said that she was driving at night and she slowed down. About a mile further, a cow and calf moose were in the road. If she had not slowed down, she would have plowed right into them in the dark.

Ask Jesus to erase any doctrines of men ([see Mark 7:7,8](#)) that you have been taught, listen for His voice personally and ask Him to speak to you as you read the Bible. If you do, you will find what a loving shepherd He is. Once you know His voice, these strangers' voices will become more and more evident and you will refuse to hear them, too.

I would like to bring out one more verse in [John 10:9](#), "[I am the door: By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.](#)" Jesus is the door to the sheepfold and through Him you enter in to salvation, but more. Did He say that *you shall go in and out* and find pasture? You see Jesus does not portray the controlling spirit that would shut you up in a smelly sheepfold for the rest of your life. A sheepfold was a small pen made-up of natural and man made

barriers to protect the sheep from predators at night. The shepherd would sleep in the door way and stand guard over them. But come morning he didn't demand that they stay in that smelly place with little or nothing to eat. He let them go out to find pasture. Pasture is where you find it, sheep! It isn't in that manure covered sheepfold. Is Jesus big enough to keep you? Didn't He promise to leave the other ninety-nine and go out and find you if you got lost?

We serve a big God and I think He is much bigger than the church of today has the faith to believe. "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my Father's hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Do we dare believe it!

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