

GETTING
BABYLON
OUT OF YOU

CHIP BROGDEN

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Cover art from the album *No Compromise* by Keith Green

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Babylon Discovered

*Chip, I heard the call of God to "come out of Babylon" (the religious system) many years ago. Since then I've grown spiritually and my walk with Him is deeper. I still miss the people but I don't miss the religious system. Once in a while I visit a home church group in my area. The people are sincere but something is missing. They're still religious! There isn't much difference between them and the church I left except for the fact that they meet in a living room instead of a church building. But more frightening is the fact that I get sucked into their religious mindset. I find myself falling back into legalism and debating the same old religious arguments instead of living and walking by the Spirit. **I got out of Babylon, but I can't get Babylon out of me!***

* * * *

It was a cool February night in 1999. My family and I walked next door from the parsonage to the church for what would turn out to be a very momentous occasion in our spiritual history.

We entered the sanctuary and took a seat in one of the pews. Although I was the associate pastor and the music minister, no one spoke to us or acknowledged us in any way. In fact, they went out of their way to avoid us.

The service was opened with prayer, and then with a chorus. With great enthusiasm the people sang:

*We're together again
Just praisin' the Lord;
We're together again
In one accord!*

*Something good is gonna happen
Something wonderful's in store;
We're together again
Just praisin' the Lord!*

At the conclusion of the chorus a business meeting was called to order.

The purpose of the meeting was to get rid of me.

I was not allowed to speak, but was allowed to listen as my character was assassinated. The conclusion was inevitable. I was fired. My family and I were ordered to vacate the parsonage immediately. Not only was this the end of my relationship with that particular church, but it was the end of my sixteen year association with that denomination, and the beginning of our journey out of Babylon.

The irony of the evening was underscored by the song selection that introduced it. In retrospect I realize the people honestly and truly thought that they were in one accord, doing the Lord's work, believing that something "good" was going to happen by removing an unwanted, unwholesome, and unwelcome element from their midst.

Upon further reflection I realized that the people who crucified Jesus were also in one mind, one spirit, and one accord - but the question is, what bound them together? What spirit motivated them, clouded their mind, darkened their

understanding, poisoned them with jealousy and filled them with rage against the only perfect Man Who ever lived? Was it the Holy Spirit, or some other spirit? How could they ignore all the evidence, fabricate lies, condemn the Innocent One, and scream for His murder - all the while believing that they, too, were "doing God's work" in defending the Jewish religion from Jesus of Nazareth?

Although my light affliction was by no means comparable to the suffering endured by the Lord Jesus at the hands of His prosecutors, the spirit working in the people at my "trial" was eerily familiar. They did the absolute worst they could do short of physical harm. They could not murder us physically, but they made every attempt to kill us socially, emotionally, and financially.

In the years that followed we encountered this same spirit over and over again.

This spirit was in the television ministry that we were briefly associated with, and it eventually drove us away in the same manner as before.

We have encountered this spirit in every church I have ever preached in and every group we have ever visited.

We have met this spirit in every meeting, conference, gathering, or workshop we have ever conducted.

We receive communication nearly every day from this spirit by way of emails and letters to The School of Christ.

Even more disturbing is the recognition that this spirit still tries to assert itself within us on occasion. God has given us a great victory in this area but if we aren't careful we sometimes find that very same spirit rising up from within,

seeking to influence our thoughts and our actions, even trying to manipulate our good intentions. We have learned to discern this spirit and cut it off very quickly, but it continues to rear its ugly head from time to time.

Unlike a demon that makes a person foam at the mouth and roll on the ground, this spirit *cannot* be cast out. If only it were that easy! But this spirit is very, very tenacious. It is very powerful because we like it, we want it, we defend it, we help it, we feed it, we encourage it, and (worse of all) we think God approves of it.

It quotes Scripture.

It prays and uses spiritual vocabulary.

It uses the name of Jesus.

It professes faith and love for God.

It does good deeds.

It defends what it believes is right.

It shares its beliefs with others and tries to convert them.

What is it?

It is a *religious* spirit!

Leaving Babylon Behind

According to an article in *USA Today*, 1 million people leave the traditional church each year, and most of them are young people.

Why do they leave? There are a number of reasons. I'm sure if you look hard enough you will find some who are just rebellious or don't want to submit to authority or are "just hurt." But not 1 million people per year. You can't explain these numbers by dismissing them as people who are "just hurt."

How do you explain it?

I believe I can sum everything up for you in one word: *dissatisfied*. They are dissatisfied. Dissatisfied. And that's an interesting word, because it is the same word I use to describe how Jesus felt about most of those churches in the Book of Revelation - dissatisfied. Not content to just let things continue.

And you find that even with people who have left they do not *hate* everything about their former church. They still love the people, and are concerned for the people. They do miss something of the fellowship they once thought they had. And sometimes they miss it so much that they do go and visit other churches, trying to fit in, trying to find a place. But try as they might, something in them just cannot go along with it anymore.

People are tired of going to fig trees that hold out the promise of fruit but offer a hungry person nothing but leaves to eat. It's like one day they realize that there is no *Life* in the religious system. They've been eating leaves or chewing on bark, but there is no fruit, no sustenance, no nourishment.

Some people really struggle with the decision to leave. The more you identify yourself with the religious system the more difficult it is to let it go. It pulls you in. It want to keeps you there. It doesn't want to let you go. It will promise anything to get you to stay.

Once the decision is made, getting out of Babylon is relatively simple. You resign your position, cancel your membership, and stop supporting the church with your presence or with your finances. People from the church may come around and check on you, trying to persuade you to come back, but once they realize you aren't coming back they usually give up.

Free at last!

Perhaps...

But most people who leave the religious system eventually (hopefully) discover two supremely important truths:

- 1) The religious spirit is still alive and well in people long after they stop attending church, and
- 2) Getting Babylon *out of you* is a lot harder than getting *you* out of Babylon.

How can this be?

Simply put, you have been under the influence of a powerful religious spirit for years and possibly decades. You have internalized certain religious attitudes, opinions, prejudices, habits, and behaviors that are so much a part of your life now that you don't even think about them.

You have endured countless church services and sermons that reinforced those religious behaviors and attitudes.

You submitted to the ultimate form of peer pressure - the pressure to conform to the expectations of the religious leadership and your fellow believers, thinking that by doing so you were really submitting to God.

That is why leaving is so difficult.

Leaving is unthinkable, and now you've done it.

You've lost a part of yourself.

You defined yourself by your church, by your denomination, by your ministry.

You surrounded yourself with people who thought and behaved just like you, and that made you feel comfortable.

Now all that is gone, and you want to get that back again.

For many people, that means looking for a home church group, or a Bible study, or some kind of gathering so they can have "fellowship."

That's a good example of the religious spirit, operating so skillfully that you aren't even aware of it.

There's nothing wrong with "fellowship" in and of itself. But sometimes the very desire to seek out the affirmations of other Christians, to find another community, to find a new identity, to find a new "covering", is just part of the religious hangover you still haven't fully recovered from.

Are You (Still) Religious?

There are a hundred things you do, and thoughts you think, without even realizing that they part of the spiritual and emotional baggage you took with you when you left Babylon.

We have found the religious spirit takes on two particular identities, depending upon the personality of the person involved. There are certain characteristics that are easily discernable. Though not a complete list, it is a good starting point.

The Passively Religious

Primary Motivations: FEAR and GUILT

- Loves God, but is afraid of God at the same time. Terrified that if they slip up and make a mistake God will be terribly displeased with them and may even punish them.
- Reads the Bible, prays, witnesses to others, and attends church because they believe these things make God happy. Mortified at the thought of missing a church service; fearful for the souls of those who don't attend.
- Feels guilty for any failure in religious duties and for every sin, real or imagined.
- Is easily manipulated by fear and guilt to go to the extreme in helping others, serving the church, etc.
- Afraid to judge, speak out or exercise discernment when needed for fear of being wrong or for speaking against "God's anointed".
- Lives in a constant state of feeling unworthy, undeserving, and never good enough to merit God's favor.

The Aggressively Religious

Primary Motivations: PRIDE and ANGER

- Absolutely certain they are on the correct side of every religious argument.
- Claims to be saved by grace, but deep down still believes God saved them because they did something to deserve it (made a decision for Christ, walked the aisle, joined the Church, etc.)
- Reads the Bible, prays, witnesses to others, and attends church to be seen and praised by others.
- Intensely concerned about "doctrine" in general and believe it is their Christian duty to attack those with the "wrong" doctrine. Has never met a religious issue it didn't have an opinion worth fighting over.
- Quick to point out the perceived wrongs or shortcomings of others but typically downplays their own faults, which are for the most part invisible to them.
- Loves labels for groups and for teachings (Baptist, Charismatic, King James Only, Pre-, Mid-, Post Trib, etc.) and uses those labels to filter out and marginalize people they disagree with.
- Obsessed with God's wrath, judgment, and punishment on all unbelievers and heretics (defined as anyone who disagrees with them).

The interesting thing about the people in these two categories is the Passively Religious are usually found sitting in the pews, serving, giving, attending, supporting, and following; while the Aggressively Religious are usually found pastoring, teaching, governing and leading. This comes as no surprise when you consider the attitudes and belief systems represented by both types of religious spirit.

Getting Rid of the Religious Spirit

Please note: you cannot get the religious spirit out of *other people*. Jesus said to leave the Pharisees alone - the blind leaders of the blind will eventually fall into a ditch. Your concern is to recognize and deal with the tendency *within your own heart and mind* that is influenced by the religious spirit you were exposed to within the harlot church system.

If you're looking for instant deliverance or a prayer to pray that will break the spell and set you free instantaneously then you'll be disappointed. We're talking about overturning heart attitudes and thought processes that in many cases took years, even decades, to develop. *You cannot pray your way out of something you behaved yourself into*. You will have to *grow* your way out instead. There is no quick fix but you can expect to see gradual, continuous improvement over a period of time as you follow a path towards spiritual maturity.

Here are some helpful tips for getting started.

1. **You must be born again.** It may sound elementary, but are you an actual born-again disciple of Jesus Christ? It's amazing the number of people who attend church all their lives but have never actually given their life to Christ. Even if you have, it wouldn't hurt to re-affirm that commitment to Him right now!
2. **You must be filled with the Spirit.** Spiritual things cannot be discerned with the mind. This problem cannot be attacked with a lot of mental analysis. You need a power outside of yourself. Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit? If not then ask God to fill you right now and believe that He. Do not rely upon "signs" or feelings to tell you. Just accept it in faith once you have asked.

3. **Decide right now to take responsibility for your own spiritual growth.** For years you relied upon the church and the preacher to tell you what to do, what to think, what to believe. Now you will be taught by God Himself. You will be a disciple of Jesus, learning from Him. He will use others to help you but it will be a totally different way of learning that what you may be used to.
4. **Cut-off relationships with religious people.** If you're a recovering alcoholic you can't keep spending time with your old drinking buddies. Religious people will drain you, question your every move, and fight everything you say. Don't give them the opportunity.
5. **Start a new friendship with God.** Talk to Him and read a bit from the Bible every day. Be sure to use a version you can understand. Mornings are best, but this should *not* be thought of as a legalistic daily devotion or the fulfillment of your religious duty. This should be considered your "relationship building time" with the Lord. Let it be as free and easygoing as getting a cup of coffee with a friend so you can get to know them better. Resist the temptation to turn "relationship building time" into a religious function. Don't beat yourself up if you oversleep or skip a day. Friendship with God isn't measured by how many hours you pray or how many chapters you read. Also bear in mind that you aren't on a schedule for talking to your friends, so don't try to put God in a box for a few minutes in the morning and think that's the only time the two of you can speak to each other. ☺
6. **Look over your spiritual history together with God.** Begin to keep a journal of things God shows you. Don't just analyze your past, but ask God to walk through it with you and show you where you missed it and where you got it right. Which description of the religious spirit describes you better: Passive or Aggressive? Ask Him to help you identify your particular type of religiosity. When you discover something important about yourself or about the Lord *write it down in your journal*. This journal will become invaluable to you in the months and years to come.

7. **Dig deeper.** Make a "Major Belief List" of every important thing you believe, know, or think you know about God, Jesus, the Bible, etc. Next to each belief write down the *source* of that knowledge. Who taught you this belief? Why do you believe it? For example:

I believe the Bible is the Word of God.

Source: My pastor always said it was.

Be honest and take as long as you need to with this Major Belief List. It took years to formulate these beliefs, so don't be afraid to spend days or weeks working on your list. You'll continue to discover new items to add to the list in the months and years to come, so keep this somewhere safe so you can always refer to it (like inside your Bible).

8. **Examine each belief and scrutinize the source.** The point of this exercise is to find out what God has revealed to you through your own personal experience as opposed to what you learned second-hand from other people. In the example above, the belief is correct but the source is wrong. This is important. You know a lot about God, the Bible, spiritual warfare, prayer, and so on. You have a certain perspective. Did this perspective come to you through your own relationship with the Lord, or was it handed to you from other people? That is what we're trying to get to the bottom of.
9. **Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the truth.** The only reliable truth is that which the Holy Spirit teaches. Rely upon the Spirit of Truth to teach you not only what is *correct*, and also what is *important*. A lot of religious beliefs are irrelevant to the Life of Christ Who indwells you. Don't agonize over things that are minor. Let go of some beliefs that are legalistic, or controversial, or just don't seem important in the grand scheme of things. Trust that if it is important then the Holy Spirit will show you. If He doesn't then you don't have to worry about it. It's O.K. to say, "I don't know the answer to that. I have no revelation into that right now." And let it go. You

don't have to have an answer for every question or have an opinion about every issue.

- 10. Live life, keeping growing, keep learning.** As your friendship with God develops you'll probably discover more things that need to be examined for religious influence. That's nothing to be discouraged about - it means you're making progress, and you're seeing things more clearly. Remember that the Holy Spirit is more powerful than any religious spirit. Continue in simplicity, building your relationship, and yield to the leadings of the Holy Spirit. You will find the old religious spirit is steadily losing its power.

Life After Babylon

Congratulations for having read this far. We hope you will put these things into practice and discover the joy and freedom that await you in your new relationship with God - a relationship that is free from the spirit of religion.

When God first called His people to come out of Babylon, He didn't leave them to wander around lost in the wilderness without a home. He had a specific place in mind for them: Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was a burned out shell of a city. The Temple was destroyed and the walls were broken down. But the people who came out of Babylon made the difficult journey back to their native land and began the hard work of restoration.

Spiritually speaking, the same thing is happening today. God is calling forth a remnant of overcomers to leave Babylon and be a "New Jerusalem" so the Testimony of Jesus can bring Life, Light, and Hope to the nations.

The School of Christ can assist you in your journey. We offer hundreds of free and "whatever-you-can-afford" resources to strengthen, encourage, and help you in your walk with God.

Transitioning out of one world and into another world is difficult, but not impossible.

We look forward to seeing you on the way to New Jerusalem!

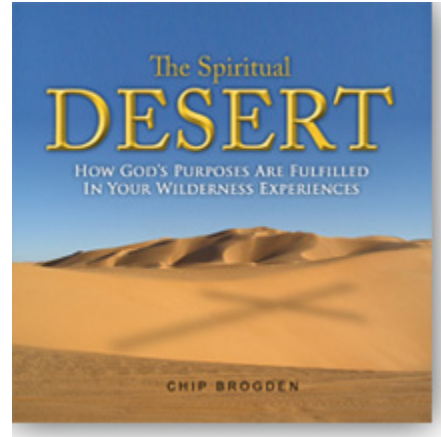
Recommended Audio Teaching

THE SPIRITUAL DESERT

How God's Purposes Are Fulfilled In Your Wilderness Experiences

by Chip Brogden

"Maybe you've come out of Organized Religion, and there's a great big void, a great big empty place in your life that used to be filled by "church", and so you're trying to find fellowship, but there seems to be no fellowship. Or you thought you found fellowship in a house church, but you were disappointed to discover that it was not what you thought it would be. For whatever reason it didn't meet your need. Maybe you don't even know why, but the point is you're still seeking something you haven't found yet.



"If you can understand God's Purpose for the desert, if you can understand how and why and that He wants to prepare a way for you in the wilderness, then I think it will encourage you. Whatever does not kill you makes you stronger. There is such a blessing in the desert. There are things you learn in the desert that you cannot and will not learn anywhere else. But what I see too many times is people seeking a quick deliverance! God calls them to the wilderness, He calls them to the desert, and they resist it, or they go and immediately look for a way out. They don't stay there long enough to derive any spiritual benefit.

"You're trying to avoid the desert, or get out of the desert, because the desert doesn't feel good. And I'm saying the desert you're trying to get out of is exactly the place where God intends to bless you and reveal more of Christ to you!"

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