

It was back in 1988, but I remember as if it were yesterday. My family was standing on the front lawn of our rented house watching as I was backing out of the driveway. Tears were in their eyes as they waved goodbye and as they watched me go out of sight and I started the long drive toward Lubbock, Texas. What was in Lubbock that was so important? Texas Tech University.

Tears were also in my eyes, I almost had to pull over on several occasions, I couldn't see. Many times on that trip I wondered if I was doing the right thing. I was so tempted to turn around and say, "I'm just not doing this."

I was going to be away for about a year and a half, finishing my doctorate. It wasn't a goal to which most people attain or even need, but in the world of academia, it was a necessary move. It's a sad state of affairs when the letters after your name mean as much or more than what is behind your eyebrows. However, I didn't make the rules so I needed to play the game. If I was ever going to be "respected," if I was ever going to "publish," if I was ever going to produce media related materials that were accepted, I was told I needed to finish the degree. It wasn't exactly a prison sentence but it felt like it.

Sandy, my wife, and I agreed it just wasn't right to pull the kids out of school for just a year, taking them away from their friends, their roots and a superior school system, for a public school system in Lubbock which, at that time, was less than desirable. So off I drove, alone, to Lubbock.

The family came to visit when possible, I made the trip home on rare occasion and Sandy came down for a couple of months the second summer. All in all it was horrible, but we survived.

For the year and a half my sole purpose was to write my dissertation, which turned out to be a book of about 200 pages. It was a study of the methods and effectiveness of a TV program, "The Amazing Grace Bible Class," produced by the Madison church in Madison, Tennessee.

I went to class, worked at my assistantship, taught a Bible class at one of the local congregations, but mostly researched and wrote, and wrote, and wrote. When it was completed I had conducted a national survey of 100's of people who watched the program, the churches that sponsored it, and even the Madison church itself. It literally took thousands of hours.

I lived in a small apartment and had to put my desk in the bedroom. I would write until I could no longer stay awake, roll over on to the bed, sleep a few hours get up and continue. Overall it was a process that was both demanding and quite ridiculous. I had to stay on schedule to return home before the money ran out or my brain unraveled, which I was sure was going to happen any minute.

Near the end of the process I was required to present my research, in book form, to a committee of five faculty members any one of which could say NO and require me to begin

all over again.

I thought I was ready for the big day when I had to go before the committee and “defend” my work. I had talked with each committee member individually, each had had the opportunity to read the dissertation, each had made suggestions, I made the changes they suggested and it was time for the oral presentation.

Things were fine until a day or two before my presentation when the dean of the college resigned. One of the women on my committee thought she was in the running for the job. So after being one of my advocates for nearly a year and a half, she showed up at my presentation, and wanting to impress everyone, she decided to attack my work and me. So she said NO! It was a major betrayal. I had done everything she had asked in preparation of the dissertation, she said she was fine with it and the presentation would be like a rubber stamp. It was anything but a rubber stamp.

The head of my committee asked me to leave the room and I heard him yelling at the woman all the way down the hall. After about 45 minutes, I was called back into the room and all members of the committee had signed the acceptance form except for this woman. I was told to make the additional changes she wanted, present them to her, and she would sign off on the document. My fate was now totally in her hands.

The next day I went to see her and she gave me changes that would have taken another year to complete. But I only had two weeks before I had to head home. I was trapped! I was almost in despair! I was thousands of dollars in debt, had spent a horrendous year and half, and now it looked like it just wasn't going to happen. And, to make things worse, the changes she wanted were totally out of line. It was the most pressure I have ever felt in my life. I felt as though I was going to explode.

The only thing I knew to do, except for praying was to go to see my major professor for his suggestions. He said the changes asked of me were ridiculous and not to do any of them. He said they were so “out there” even this woman wouldn't remember what she had asked me to do. He told me to wait a week, turn in exactly the same work and she would never know.

I waited as he suggested, turned in exactly the same paper and two days later she called me and told me she “loved” the changes, they were exactly what she wanted and she was ready to sign off. It was 9:30 in the evening when she called, Sandy and I drove to her house, and she signed off.

I cannot begin to explain to you the elation, the jubilation, and the freedom I felt as I walked out of her house. The weight of a thousands mountains was off of my back! The nightmare was final over. I could breathe again.

Now, here is the point of this article. The freedom, the jubilation, the elation I felt is **NOTHING LIKE THE FREEDOM YOU FEEL WHEN YOU ARE WASHED IN THE BLOOD OF JESUS AND FREED FROM YOUR SINS.**

We have all been trapped in sin, hopelessly in despair. The Bible says, when in that state we are WITHOUT HOPE AND WITHOUT GOD! (Eph. 2) But in Christ we become alive again. God gives your life back to you, frees you from your sins, and lifts the weight of a thousands mountains off of your back!

There is no better thought than to KNOW when you approach the proverbial pearly gates, that when God sees the blood of Jesus on you (Rev. 1:5, Acts 22:16) He “signs off” on you for eternity. There is nothing better, in this world or the world to come!

It is my prayer that for those of you who may not have experienced this wonderful FREEDOM in Christ, that you check it out, because when the Son sets you FREE, you are FREE INDEED. (John 8:36)

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