

# Are You a Captive?

We tend to think of captivity as being in a jail or prison, behind bars and a high retaining wall with barbed wire and razor wire. Yet, there is a captivity that is much more insidious, and which involves your *mind*. Captivity is when *something* or *someone else* has control over you ... like today's church organizations try to capture "members" to their corporation.

Psalm 137:1-9. *"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst of it. For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, and those who plundered us requested mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!' How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth — if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem, who said, 'Raze it, raze it, to its very foundation!' O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed, happy the one who repays you as you have served us! Happy the one who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock!"*

Exodus 1:8-14. *"Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, 'Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it*

*happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.' Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor, and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage*



*— in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor."*

## Forms of Captivity

We hear of “captive nations like China, Cuba, North Korea, the former U.S.S.R., and more and more so the U.S. — kings and bureaucrats exercise rigor and authority over citizens.

We can be captive to something else, such as to *demonic spirits*: they can rule over you and control your life; see Mark 16:9, where Mary Magdalene had seven spirits that were cast out. We can be captive to something physical, such as an idol which is why God said “You shall not make unto yourself a graven image” (Exodus 20:4-5). Actually, breaking *any* of the 10 commandments makes you a captive to sin, since if you break one commandment you break them all (James 2:10).

Our nation’s founders understood captivity very well, and had experienced the tyranny of kings in Europe. They did not want a repeat of that tyranny in the new nation. They understood that people were given certain rights by the very fact of their creation and birth. In fact, the purpose of the Bill of Rights was to set limits of government actions as they affect personal liberties. Note what the founders of our nation wrote in the Declaration of Independence.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive

of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

### **Liberty—That Priceless Quality**

Did God give us certain rights and privileges as human beings, born in His image, to be free and set apart from captivity and bondage? **TO BE SURE, GOD WANTS US TO BE FREE AND AT LIBERTY, NOT IN BONDAGE!** Let’s take a look now at the opposite of captivity: **Liberty**. Strong defines

liberty (1651, **eleutheria**) as liberty, or not being under bondage. See this same word used in all of the following scriptures.

James 1:25. “*But he who looks into the perfect law of **liberty** and con-*

*tinues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*”

James 2:12. “*So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of **liberty**.*”

Luke 4:16-19. “*So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: The Spirit of*





*the Lord is upon Me, because He has appointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at **liberty** those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”*

Romans 8:18-21. *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious **liberty** of the children of God.”*

II Corinthians 3:17. *“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is **liberty**.”*



Galatians 5:1-26. *“Stand fast therefore in the **liberty** by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I*

*testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the stake has ceased. I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off! For you, brethren, have been called to **liberty**; only do not use **liberty** as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, mur-*

*ders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."*

### **The Life of Mark Whitacre**

So ... a person within thick prison walls can be truly free of captivity if he has God's spirit! Take the situation of Mark Whitacre, whose life as a principle of Archer Daniels Midland was utterly changed when he was thrown into prison, and then met Jesus Christ for the first time.

"Mark Whitacre, at 32, was president of a division of Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), a Fortune 500 company. He had a beautiful wife, three children, and was promoted in only three years to corporate vice president and corporate officer. He and his family lived in a mansion, and his compensation package hit seven figures.

"Only a few years later, Whitacre was confronted by that same wife, who sensed big changes in her high-school-sweetheart husband. He was consumed with work and seemed unhappy. Eventually, he told her about his involvement in the long-term price-fixing scheme at ADM, in which the company essentially was stealing money from its customers and passing on

higher prices to consumers.

"Persuaded by his wife to turn himself in, Whitacre did so, knowing it might cost him his career and his high-flying life. Once he confessed, the FBI asked him to wear a wire and work undercover for the agency in an effort to bring down the other executives involved. He did that for three years, becoming the highest-level Fortune 500 executive ever to be a whistleblower for what turned out to be the largest price-fixing scheme in U.S. history.

"He later spent nine years in jail for stealing \$9.5 million from the company on which he had just blown the whistle. But even after



doing the right thing by turning in the company and being given immunity for his FBI work, he says he was still addicted to the position and income he had. 'I got obsessed (with the desire for money) after growing up in a middle-class family,' he says. With assets such as a corporate jet at his disposal, he had the life of athletes and rock stars.

"Since ADM was likely to fire him when it learned what he was doing, Whitacre decided to steal what would have been his \$9.5 mil-

lion severance pay. When he was exposed in 1995, and then turned in by ADM for the theft, he nearly wriggled free again. Facing a plea deal that likely would have given him six months in prison, he turned it down because he would have been marked as a felon for life. 'I couldn't wrap my hands around that,' Whitacre says, 'It was pride, narcissism. I was definitely still trying to control things.'

"Instead, he was given nine years in prison. In hindsight, though, 'It was a net gain by having a longer sentence,' he said.

"Prior to going to prison in 1998 and after two suicide attempts, he was introduced to a man from the Christian Business Men's Connection who reached out to him, read the Bible with him, and disciplined him using an investigative form of Bible study called Operation Timothy. 'I had lost all my friends,' Whitacre said, 'so it was wonderful to have a friend, a person who [wanted] to talk to me. There were a lot of other things he could've been doing.'

"While he was in prison, paroled Watergate felon Chuch Colson came to visit him and helped him understand that no sin he had committed was unforgivable. The stealing from the 'dirty management' of ADM was bad enough, Whitacre says, 'but I was not so sure what he put his family through was forgivable.'

"Finally surrendering to Christ three months after entering prison, he said the rest of his term gave him 'the peace and contentment I had never felt. For the first time in my life I felt like I could fill that void in my life. In 14 years in the Fortune 500 world, I never filled that void. They could have given me

\$100 million (in salary). I finally got it earning \$20 a month in prison.'"

### **Captivity—a State of Mind**

So we see that captivity really has to do with the God we obey, what we do, say, and think, whether of sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness.

Romans 6:16: "*Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?*"

Deuteronomy 30:19. "*I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;*"

With Christ's resurrection and giving of His spirit to us, He has "led captivity captive", because the spirit of God is pervasive in us.

Ephesians 4:7-8. "*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: when He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.*"

Yes, we are *all* captives, but we are not to suffer and be captive as a murderer or thief, and be put behind bars (I Peter 4:15). Being captive applies to *all of us*. You are either captive to sins and lusts of the flesh, or you are captive to God Almighty and His spirit working in you. **THE ISSUE IS IN YOUR MIND! CAPTIVITY IS REALLY A STATE OF MIND!**

Romans 7:18-22. "*For I know that in*

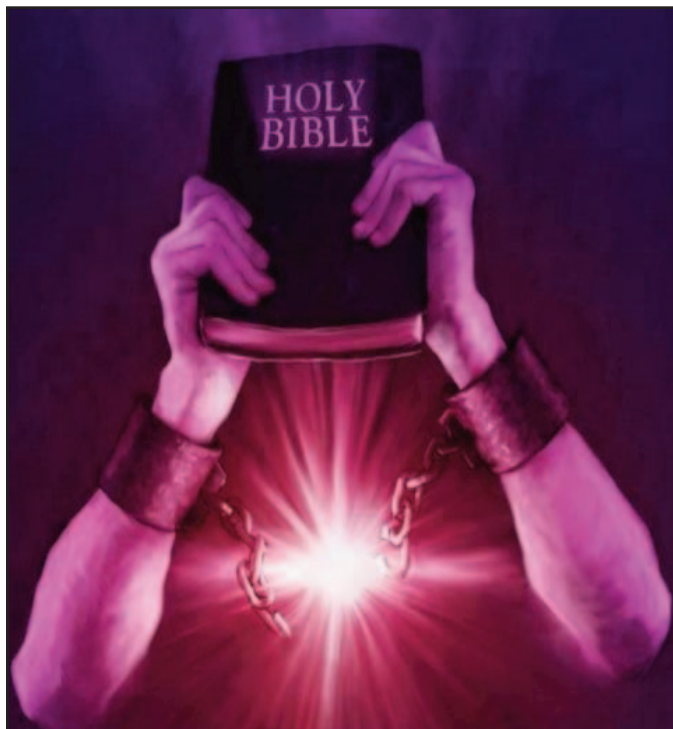


*me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.”*

II Corinthians 10:3-5.

*“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that*

*exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”*



The *captivity* is to bring every thought into obedience to God. We can do this through God's spirit, for through Him all things are possible (Mark 10:27), and Paul stated that through Christ they are.

Romans 7:24-25. *“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I*

*thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”*