

Out of Control

We have heard a lot about items being out of control lately. Stories about Toyota products suddenly accelerating and carrying its terrified passengers with it have made lead stories on the nightly news. A much touted episode involving a Toyota Prius seems to be associated with Toyota's "drive by wire" system of automated control where the "key in the pocket" and the Constant Velocity automatic transmission conspired against the hapless driver. In this case, there was no direct physical override in place. No key in an ignition switch. No direct link to a "neutral position" in the transmission. Our experiences with personal computers, cell phones, and digital assistants have taught us that software will from time to time foul up.

Our government for the past two decades has been out of touch with the populace. Spending and government encroachment in the private affairs of the citizenry continues to rise. The national debt progressively achieves record levels in spite of increased taxation. The recent healthcare debacle is a prime example of how the promise of "representative democracy" has failed in practical application. The Obama administration continued to push socialized medicine and universal healthcare reform even though numerous polls indicated that a majority of the voting public was against an over aching government intrusion into the private sector and sizable increase in the federal budget. The Obama/Pelosi juggernaut continued to forge ahead with complete indifference to both the will of the American people and the almost universal record of historical failure of socialized healthcare in most other countries.

Most of us have acquired training and chosen a profession. We have invested time and money in our careers fully expecting a return on our investment. We have made sacrifices to provide a better life for our families and yet, with the downturned economy we are working longer and bringing home "less bacon". For the first time in American history it looks as though most of our children will achieve a lower standard of living than we have.

As we age our bodies betray us. As we interact with our loved ones, we lose our temper and lash out. We try to use self-control but can't muster it. We try to reach within and find the means to love others, to avoid sin, to honor God, yet, we fail miserably. Individually and corporately, we are quite simply out of control.

Paul highlights the classic human struggle in this manner: *"I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate"* (Romans 7:15, New Living Translation). Satan is constantly looking for ways to trick, trip, or fool us in to falling far short of our potential. The frustrating aspect of this is that our very nature tends to work against us. (*"Be clear-minded and alert. Your opponent, the devil, is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour."* 1 Peter 5:8, International Standard Version). We fight, we anguish, we fail. *"(There is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am!"* Romans 7:23-24a, New Living Translation).

We are and can never be in control according to Paul *“The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.”* (Romans 7:14b, 18-19, New Living Translation). It is God’s design that we be influenced. Those influences will be either evil or good, that we can choose. Paul writes *“I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God’s law with all my heart. Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Romans 7:21-22, 24b-25a, New Living Translation). Additionally, Paul advises *“So place yourselves under God’s authority. Resist the devil, and he will run away from you.”* (James 4:7, GOD’S WORD® Translation)

God’s desire is that we live righteously by loving him and others. However, He well knows we cannot do that alone. We must rely on Him. God gets no glory in our efforts to control ourselves and we should exercise control *“not be based on human wisdom but on God’s power.”* (1 Corinthians 2:5, International Standard Version). Christ is sufficient according to Paul, *“My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness. So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.”* (2 Corinthians 12:9, New Living Translation). We can only truly be in control of our lives by relinquishing our control.

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