

### Boxed-In

In Holland, where I grew up, a child's playpen is called a *'boks'*. A square trellised timber structure, like a pool fence, with a slightly elevated wooden floor. It keeps a young child out of harm's way and allows the parents to attend to home duties. In a way it symbolises what the child's life will be like. Everyone feels boxed in at times. Perhaps even for long periods. It's a feeling that we like to shake off. That may be possible, but could involve being irresponsible towards others and self. Breaking out then is not a good idea. Those kind of boxes can be frustrating. The stress they bring, might begin to affect personal health. It can be that bad.

There is no magic wand to wave these situations away. A Christian understanding of life offers answers but none of those are easy. God uses the predicament I might be in towards building character. For me to become mature in Christ. Character has all kinds of benefits. But do I enjoy my situation? No, sir!

How about Jesus. As the Son of God he surely was the freest person ever. Not so: Jesus was much boxed in by his mission. More so than anyone else. It cost him everything including an excruciating death. And then he broke free from his box once and for ever.

One day, I will likewise break out. But not yet. The challenge is to experience a particular kind of freedom while still being boxed in. That is what Jesus meant when he said, 'If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed' (John 8:36). A box is a *spacious* item of not too large a size. While being boxed in happens in *time*. What Jesus offers right now is not a breaking out of a situation when it is not responsible for me to do so. Rather, he invites me to break out of the constraints of *space and time* within my box while the situation remains as is. It is a spiritual matter.

But I am facing a major difficulty. How to escape *space and time* and enter that realm beyond everyday reality? I am not a mystic nor desire to be. I have read about mystical experiences and learned much from it. I have come to understand that my 'mysticism' is one of ordinary faith that somehow translates into a liberation of my inner disposition. The shackles, or boxes, can become transcended spiritually. Let me explain.

When feeling particularly restricted in how I really would like things to be, I talk to Jesus – of course. That conversation has a grounding rule. If the situation is one in which I have a role to play that clearly corresponds with what may be charitably expected, one in which I have a responsibility, I will not rebel against it. I may kick against the pricks occasionally in my thinking just to let off steam. I am no saint. But I will seek to follow Jesus, who once asked for 'his cup' to pass him by, but it didn't happen. It is this acceptance in which I will find the beginning of my liberation.

On this basis my conversations with the Lord become both meaningful and beneficial. That spiritual engagement, whether verbally or reflective, changes things. Inexplicably, my spirit has begun to lighten up. It breaks free from its frustrations into a feeling of liberty. It may be subtle, but it's for real. As Jesus said, 'my burden is light.' But undoubtedly, one day soon, I need to have the conversation again. For as long as the box remains, that's a given. I must consistently deal with the irritation my boxes bring and not let it begin to dictate my mood. Life simply works that way. I must seek to put my box into the right perspective.

Unfortunately, some people may find themselves in situations that feel more like a vault than a box. My suggestion that they should accept their situation without complaint then seems overly glib. I'm amazed how people in such a situation are able to carry on. Surely our Lord will give them a special grace. I am not suggesting either, that if someone or situation pushes me back into my box unnecessarily, that I should invariably become meek and mild. There is no harm in standing up for myself when not being irresponsible in doing so.

Fortunately, my boxes are nothing dramatic. Yours may not be either. But they still can be a nuisance. The reality is that my spirit is able to roam free in spite of the boxes. In Jesus, it is not beholden to *space and time*.

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If you have found this interesting please consider my books in which much more is explained about God and the reality of an authentic Christian perspective on life – the benefits that offers.

Thank you,

Michael