



No More Gatekeepers

In my daughter, Robin DeMurga's blog, *No More Gatekeepers*, she references the changes that have taken place in the church, and in Christian publishing/broadcasting. She wrote that years ago there were gatekeepers (self-appointed "mothers")—mean, angry and vigilant. Those theological, cultural and institutional gatekeepers were in control and determined who was "in" and who was "out," who had the power and how much, and who was "Christian" and who wasn't "Christian."

All of a sudden, the gatekeepers lost their power—or maybe more accurately, their power didn't matter. Nobody cared. I have hundreds of friends who have been criticized, marginalized and rejected by the gatekeepers, and who have suffered great damage to their ministries and reputations. It's a "gotcha" game and it isn't pretty.

I recently attended and spoke at a conference where the leaders and scholars who taught and preached were powerful, the worship was a bit of heaven, and the people there were unified in their belief that God wasn't angry with them and the finished work of Christ was really finished. The conference wasn't about what we could do for God, but what God had done for us. The conference was about radical grace, and I loved it.

Do you know what really touched me? I stood in the back of that auditorium with tears streaming down my face, thinking of the years I had walked a lonely road believing that I was the only one. (That thought, of course, was extremely narcissistic and insane; but nevertheless, there were times

when I wondered.) I wanted to be accepted and affirmed, and while there was some of that, there were the voices that warned, "You have to be careful about Steve and this teaching on grace. People will take advantage of it." Sometimes they said, "Steve is sincere but he never draws the line and we must, for God's sake, draw the line." I was (and still am) called antinomian and irrelevant and a preacher of a message of "easy believism" and "cheap grace."

As I stood there I realized that something had changed. In fact the

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whole landscape had changed. As I watched those people, young and old, tattooed and necktied, bald and pigtailed, wing-tipped and sandaled, high-heeled and booted, dreadlocked and barbered—I wept with joy at what God was doing. In fact, I believe that we are sitting on top of an awakening in America led by the kinds of people who cause the gatekeepers to wince...the people who refuse to build walls or to pretend that they are anybody's mother. These are the "terrible meek" who lift up Jesus and say to the world "Run to Jesus! He's not what they told you! He'll love you and forgive you no matter where you've been, what you've done or who you've hurt."

In an old play by John Masefield, *The Trial of Jesus*, Longinus the centurion who oversaw Jesus' crucifixion, reports to Pilate.

Pilate's wife, who had dreamed about Jesus the night before, asks Longinus to give her details of how Jesus died. After listening to Longinus, Pilate's wife asks, "Do you think he's dead?" "No, I don't," Longinus says, "He's been let loose in the world where neither Roman nor Jew can stop him."

I have a friend who says the message of Easter is "you can't keep a good man down." It's not just that a dead man got out of the grave and said we could too. It has to do with a living Messiah/King who has been let loose and is now moving among his people. He doesn't give a rip about gatekeepers.

He refuses to be told who he can love and can't love; he doesn't allow others to decide who he invites to the dance; he refuses to draw lines and throw rocks at sinners. His message (on a Northern Ireland billboard) is "I love you, is that okay?—Jesus."

That's how I feel about Jesus. The gates were lifted and the doors battered down, and the "King of glory, the Lord of hosts, mighty in battle, walked through."

Gatekeepers scare me to death. I like to be affirmed and loved. I don't like to stand outside the house where so many I admire and respect are patting one another on the back. I want to be part of the "in" group because I'm...well, that insecure.

But he's the man—the glorified risen Christ. I want to be with him and go where he goes, love the people he loves, weep where he weeps and dance to the music he provides. And when I don't, I'll rejoice that he still likes me.

He asked me to remind you. □

—Steve Brown