

Your Decision

John 8:31-32 : *"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed in Him, if you abide in My Word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free"*

- If some evenings, after a long day at work, you come home tired and looking forward to relaxing in front of the TV, but the tube is out, I believe you would do something to take care of the problem.

- If, when talking to your children, you realize they are not listening or they tell you that you are old fashioned and that you should be quiet because you don't understand them, I believe that sooner or later you would have to find a way to resolve the situation and establish a better relation with them.

- If your wife breaks one or two dishes every single day, you may eventually confront and resolve the situation.

- If your husband, when he comes home every night, flings his coat on the couch and leaves his shoes and socks on the kitchen's floor it would create a problem that the two of you may have to resolve.

These are factitious situations in which we could find ourselves, but if we wanted to live a more peaceful life we would need to find a solution for them.

While all of the above has to do only with our natural life, we must also consider that in our spiritual life there are things that sooner or later need to be resolved. As a matter of fact, there are many Christians, even sincere ones that live year after year with problems and situations that have a negative influence in their lives, without deciding to confront and get past them. This is exactly what I want to talk about, looking for counsel in the Word of God, in order to find the way and the truth that will set us free, like our Lord Jesus tells us.

We find the first advice in the epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians (3:12-14) *"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

The Scriptures tell us that the Apostle Paul was a Jew and a strict observant of the law. Before his conversion, he persecuted the Christians and caused many of them to be put in prison. He witnessed, culpably and consenting, the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Nevertheless, in spite of this once he received forgiveness from God he never looked back to his past.

Unfortunately today, many of us remain tied to our own painful past. We continue to walk with this suitcase full of wounds, negative experiences and many unresolved issues. But here is the good news, we do not need to bring the problems of the past into the present nor into the future, with God's help we can be healed and delivered from all of them and more. There are, in fact, many other issues that need to be resolved. Let's take a look at some:

1°) - **GUILT**

If in the past we have been involved in gross sin or in some form of occultist practice, like witchcraft, sorcery, astrology, idolatry and new age, and we still carry the guilt of these sins against the Lord, we need to go back to the Word of God.

The bible tells us that the Lord Jesus carried on Himself all of our sins and iniquities. He paid the prize for them on Calvary's cross. When Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice for us (you and I), He took upon Himself the punishment that was meant for us and - through the shedding of His precious blood He provided the pardon for our guilt.

So, the only thing that we must do is to confess our sins, repent in sincerity from the heart and then appropriate, by faith, the finished work of the cross.

Sin is a horrible thing that separates us from God. To receive His pardon we must repent. We must go to God with a broken and contrite heart, confessing our sins and rebellion to His commandments and ready to change direction and to follow His way.

Repentance includes the changing of some of our habits and models of life. We may have to give up some "friendships", avoid places of "danger" and so forth. In short, it means to turn around and to go in a different direction...the one that is pleasing to the Lord!

Therefore my dear friend, if you have repented of your sins, you have confessed them to God, and you have asked for His forgiveness but there remains guilt in your heart, know that the Word of God tells you that: *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us"*(Psalm 103:12). And if your heart still condemns you, then remember, *"God is greater than our heart"*.

Because the Lord had already provided for our pardon, we can go to Him and we can leave our guilt at His feet. In I John 1:9 it is written: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"*.

The blood of Jesus satisfies completely God's demands of justice and it purifies us from every sin, because with the shedding of that blood the wages of our transgressions has been paid. Therefore...resolve your guilt. Resolve it with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ...resolve it with the pardon that is given to you through His grace. He is the only One that can and wants to set you free!

2°) **RESENTMENT- GRUDGE - BITTERNESS OF HEART**

If in your heart there is resentment or rancor toward someone...if in your life there is bitterness or hatred toward someone, you cannot grow spiritually. Therefore you must resolve these issues. If someone offended you, hurt you or maligned you and you cannot find peace inside, then Jesus tells you "*Resolve it!*"

If in your family there is hostility and misunderstanding between you and your son, you and your wife, you and your father or mother, Jesus says: "*Resolve it!*"

If there is bitterness or resentment toward a brother or a sister in the Lord, toward the pastor or priest or whomever then know that there is only one way to be free from it all: the way of forgiveness. Forgive and forget. There is no need to continue to live a life conditioned by the bitterness that dominates your heart.

In Hebrews 12:14-15 we read: "*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.*"

Here the writer of this epistle refers to a root of bitterness and his advice for its eradication is to "*pursue peace with all people*".

If we don't live in peace we may be planting seeds of unforgiveness, anger, resentment, envy and bitterness. Yes, bitterness is a plant very "*hard*" to eradicate. God warns us not to plant its seed because the root will grow and in time of harvest it will corrupt many others. He tells us to pursue peace not bitterness. This is His will for all of us.

3°) **BAD HABITS AND VICES**

Many Christians cannot break free out of bad habits or vices. Cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, pornography and other similar practices are part of their lives. They know how much God hates these things and how devastating they are for them and for those around them, nevertheless they are unwilling to quit. Yes, they go to Church, they read the Bible, they pray and they have fellowship with other Christians, but when it comes to give up what we call bad habits, (but really they are bondages), their dependence on them makes them powerless.

I can almost hear the Lord say: "It is tragic that you, a born again individual, a new creature in Christ Jesus of 5, 10 or 20 years are still practicing those bad habits and feeding those vices. Don't you know that *you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you...Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy ghost Who is in you whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.* (I Corinthians 6:19-20)

The Lord says: "Enough being slave of these things. It is time that you handle this situation and decide to resolve it! Yes, resolve it! If you want to grow and be mature in

your spirit, if you want to walk with me, you don't need to smoke anymore, you don't need to get drunk, to take drugs or to be involved with pornography. Now is the time to trust in Me and with My help you can resolve all of your problems.

Assuredly these are problems common to many people, Christian or otherwise and I don't presume to offer an exhaustive solution to them in such a short time. My goal is to underline the existence of many reasons why people continue to live with such bondages (or dependencies) in their lives. Let's take a look at some:

A - The first reason is **DECEIT** Many people think that NOT solving these problems is normal because they are so adjusted to living with them that to do anything about them would be unnatural. The following are some of their excuses: "That's the way I am" ... "What's so wrong about it?" ... "Everybody does it".

Therefore, years go by and the predicaments remain to accompany them all through life. They influence their marital interaction, the relationship with their children and with their parents, at work, in school, in church and so forth. This is deceit. There is no reason why life should go on with unresolved issues.

If you are thinking that is normal to go around carrying a suitcase full of unsolved problems, I tell you IT IS NOT. Jesus is telling you: "*Resolve them!* Yes, all your life you have thought that this is the way you are, that you cannot change, but the truth is that - with the help of God - anything can change and you can live the "abundant life" that He wants to give you.

B - The second reason is **FEAR** Why are there situations in our lives that we don't seem to be able to unscramble? Very often the main reason is FEAR. We are afraid to confront them. We don't have the courage to talk about them with our wife or with our husband. We are afraid to go to our mother or father and talk to them about issues that we have carried with us since our childhood and we are afraid to go to our boss to resolve that sad situation we are encountering at work. If we really think about it, many are the circumstances that disturb our well being and we do not confront them only because of fear.

Fear blocks us, so we continue to carry the burden on our shoulder year after year. In the end all of that becomes an obstacle in our spiritual experience as it robs us of the joy of completely living a true Christian life. The truth of God's Word, on the other end, declares: "*God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind*" (2 Timothy 1:7)

C - The third reason is **BEING FLIPPANT ABOUT GOD**

There is another category of people who do not resolve particular situations because they have no intention to resolve them. Their behavior is strange; they come asking for advice concerning the solution of their problems, we give them some answers, they listen but then they act totally opposite to what they have heard. Later they come back, they ask the

same questions, we give them the same answers and this little game repeats without stopping. The truth is: they do not want an answer.

In the Word of God there is a very clear example regarding this kind of performance. It's in Luke 9:57-58, where it says that while Jesus walked along the way, someone told Him: " Lord, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said to him, *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."*

What did this man want from Jesus? Actually he wanted nothing, only an answer. In reality he had no intention to follow the Lord. Continuing reading in the same passage, we encounter two other people that approached Jesus and when Jesus invited them to follow Him, they found excuses not to do it.

The first one said: " Let me first bury my father". But Jesus answered: *"Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."* (Luke 9:60). To the second who came to Him saying, "let me first say goodbye to my family" Jesus said: *"No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."* (Luke 9:62)

What does all of this teach us? Here we have three people that want to follow the Lord, one different than the other. Jesus challenges each one to make a serious decision, but none answered Him, not taking God seriously! Playing with God!

This is one of the reasons our problems don't get resolved. Do we really want to get out of problematic situations that block us from living the kind of life God has planned for us? If we do, there needs to be a change. A change not in the people around us, but in us! We are the ones that need to change; we are the ones who need to make the right decision in order to bring a solution to our present situation and to be serious with God. We cannot play games with Him.

The sacred Scripture presents us another very clear example of what we are talking about. A young man approached the Lord saying: "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him: *" You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'* And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth." Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, *"One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."*

This is the answer that Jesus gave the young man, but he didn't like it because it wasn't the one he wanted to hear. As a matter of fact, it is written: *"... But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."* Mark 10:18-22.

This young man was not looking for the Lord's answer! You may go for counsel to the priest, to the pastor, to Christian brothers or you may watch Christian television, listen to cassettes of anointed sermons, go to meetings or conferences etc. and it's all good, but

God will speak to you (and you will hear Him) only when you come to confrontation with the truth of His Word and when you start to implore, pray and seek HIM with all of your heart. You will look for Him with all the strength that is in you and you will find Him.

In the book of the prophet Jeremiah it is written: *"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD..."*
Jeremiah 29:13-14

To conclude in Hebrews 11:6 we read: *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."*

I believe this Word is for you, who are reading right now. I believe that the Lord is talking to you right at this instant: "You have lived a long time with that situation, with that problem that you never solved, but now it is time for you to be set free. Now is the time that you come to Me...that you seek Me with all of your heart and I will let you find Me and I will help you. There is no more reason for you to continue dragging this burden behind. Come to Me with the sincere intention to resolve it and I will help you.

Yes, Jesus tells you: "It is time to resolve it!"

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(translation from Italian by Laura Pedota)