



LESSONS 2019

RECONCILLATION WITH GOD

Colossians 1:15-23

INTRODUCTION

After creation, man lived in an atmosphere of peace, harmony and security. Communication with God was unparalleled. God crowned mankind with glory and honor, allowing him to hold all creation under his feet and to rule over and take care of creation (Psalms 8:5). This speaks of his greatness and responsibility as a co - creator with God. The process of disobedience started in the thoughts, then the desire and finally the action; the consequence was what we know as sin (Genesis 3:1-24 and James 1:13-15).

Adam and Eve's eyes were opened, and they hid because they were afraid and ashamed. The result was disastrous (Romans 3:23): separation and enmity with God, with themselves, with others and with creation.

In this first lesson, we will briefly cover the redemptive plan of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, reconciling man with God and all his relationships, as well as the urgency of being entirely sanctified to inherit eternal life.

1. GOD TOOK THE INITIATIVE IN RECONCILIATION.

...through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you ... (Col. 1:20-21).

I will start with the narration of a family event of a family living close to a city. In a pastoral visit, I observed the conditions in which they lived : extreme poverty, mistreatment of children, specifically two girls, one of them an adolescent in a Rehabilitation Center for juvenile offenders, A sick old woman without attention from her only son, an alcoholic father of the girls. The absent mother had mental problems. She left her seven-year-old daughter in the care of a neighbor to work in domestic roles in Mexico City. She only had one day a month off from work, and she spent it with another man and sporadically visited her daughters. The grandmother sent a pumpkin to the neighbor with whom the youngest child has taken refuge. A pumpkin that matured prematurely and was dried out. She sent it to them to prepare food for the little girl. The neighbor exclaimed, "Pumpkins no longer grow as before because it doesn't rain as it should. We depend on the rainy season for a good harvest. Things are getting worse with the changes in the weather." I diagnosed sick people, sick relationships, and land that produced sick pumpkins.

This experience allowed me to relate it to the consequences of man's sin. I observe a disturbance and disorder that each person living in sin has, and it is reflected in the family relationships between spouses, parents, children and siblings. It affects society and creation (animals and the environment). The cause ... man has lost the true image and likeness of the Creator.

That was not God's purpose in the creation of human beings. In Genesis chapter 1, God declared that what he had created was good. Because of disobedience, mankind experiences pain, separation and death (Romans 3:23 and 6:23). It became a relationship of enmity. God was offended, but He is the one who takes the initiative of friendship, of reconciliation. In love, he sent his Son Jesus to regain that

image that was lost in mankind. The great work was the restoration, the reconciliation that made it possible for mankind to once more reflect the image of God.

- a) Man lost his identity, his right to be called son, beloved of God, and ended up as foreigners and strangers (Ephesians 2:19).

In Colossians 1:15-19, the Apostle Paul writes about the identity of Jesus Christ with its attributes to fulfill the purpose of the Father. Man easily loses his identity and sometimes lives only by instinct. But Jesus Christ never lost his identity, but fulfilled the task of reconciliation.

- b) God makes it possible to restore his identity in mankind through Jesus Christ. His precious blood shed on the Cross was the price.

Jesus Christ came to seek and save what was lost (Luke 19:10). He justifies, regenerates and adopts us as his children. Let's see the following paragraphs of the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene.

9. We believe that justification is the gracious and judicial act of God by which He grants full pardon of all guilt and complete release from the penalty of sins committed, and acceptance as righteous, to all who believe on Jesus Christ and receive Him as Lord and Savior.

9.1. We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that gracious work of God whereby the moral nature of the repentant believer is spiritually quickened and given a distinctively spiritual life, capable of faith, love, and obedience.

9.2. We believe that adoption is that gracious act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer is constituted a [son] *child* of God.

9.3. We believe that justification, regeneration, and adoption are simultaneous in the experience of seekers after God and are [obtained upon the condition of] *received by* faith, preceded by repentance; and that to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.

(Romans 5: 3: 21-26, 28, 5:10 , 2 Corinthians 5: 17-21, 1 John 1: 9; 3: 1-2 and ss) (Manual 2017, p. 30-31)

The redeeming work of God reconciles us with the Father, making it possible to fulfill the first part of the great commandment: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength* (Mark 12:30).

- c) God reconciles us with ourselves.

When we are reconciled with God, we become his children; we are members of a large family (John 1:12, Ephesians 2:19). In this way, we belong to the people of God (1 Peter 2:9), and we are not slaves, or upstarts or foreigners, but we are reconciled with ourselves. We are stewards of our life and of creation, and this makes us responsible to society.

- d) God reconciles us with our neighbors.

By being reconciled with God and with ourselves, we can also be reconciled with others, with our neighbors. Let's look at the second part of the Great Commandment. *The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these* (Mark 12:31).

Our responsibility to our neighbor is first the fulfillment of the Great Commission passion ignited by the crucial evangelization of the lost, sincere and unconditional interest in bringing men and women to the feet of Christ to be part of the kingdom of God and have the promise of eternal life.

God reconciles us with creation, namely the animals, plants, i.e. all living beings and the environment, to restore harmony with the environment. John Wesley emphasized in his writings about the ecological balance, a situation that he anticipated in his time. Now in the XXI century we must attend to it urgently. Our responsibility is also to take care of the earth, the environment, and consequently, take care of God's greatest creation ... mankind.

In the Bible we find passages like Genesis 2:15, Psalm 8:3-9, Psalm 19:1-4, 148; Biblical passages that are also mentioned in the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene in paragraphs on contemporary moral and social problems (Paragraph 924).

II. GOD SANCTIFIES US TO THE NEW CREATION WITH HIS HOLY SPIRIT

In Colossians 1:22-23, the Apostle Paul writes that the purpose of reconciliation with God is to present us holy and blameless and irreproachable before him.

10. We believe that sanctification is the work of God which transforms believers into the likeness of Christ. It is wrought by God's grace through the Holy Spirit in initial sanctification, or regeneration (simultaneous with justification), entire sanctification, and the continued perfecting work of the Holy Spirit culminating in glorification. In glorification we are fully conformed to the image of the Son. (p. 31).

The second work of grace or baptism with the Holy Spirit, presents us separated from sin, keeps us irreproachable for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION:

Justifying grace consists in the intervention of Jesus Christ in forgiving our sins and reconciling us with the Father. Justification is part of the process of restoring the image of God in us. It precedes the new birth or regeneration to bring us to sanctification.

In the story above, everything would change if the family would accept Jesus Christ as their savior. Their lives would be transformed, their land and their family relationships healed, and the society would be different. And most importantly, they would be prepared for the kingdom of heaven.

The seven-year-old girl did accept Christ as her Savior.

- As a senior adult, how is your relationship with God?
- How do you feel about yourself?
- How do you relate to your neighbor, family, neighbors, etc.?
- What are you doing for the animals and environment?

Think about these things and ask Jesus Christ to forgive you of your sins, and the Holy Spirit to purify your heart.

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THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Isaiah 46:1-4

INTRODUCTION

In this session, from the prophet Isaiah we will review the sovereignty of God. Unlike gods made or created by man, which need to be made, cleaned and restored, Our God, Jehovah of the armies, whom we worship, is the one who supports us and who carries us throughout our lives. Let's see the implications of the Great I Am.

I. THE GODS THAT ARE A BURDEN

Polytheism is found in many societies around the world. In many places, idolatry prevails in a high percentage. In the festivities of the cities or towns, before celebrating, the stewards or caretakers of their deities wash them, and if necessary restore them. They take time to put new clothes on them. There are exclusive tailors for this type of attire. Those who profess the Roman Catholic faith make processions through the surrounding streets.

I witnessed two processions: one was the patron saint of a town that was being carried, accompanied by dancers and native music bands and firecrackers, to visit the one who was celebrating. The second procession was similar, with the idol being carried on the shoulders of four men the entrance of the town. Such is the idolatry and spiritual blindness in which people invest all their savings to make the best celebration of the year.

This is much like what the Babylonians did in the time of the captivity. Governor Cyrus ordered the people of God to be freed and returned to Jerusalem, and some took the gods of the Babylonians with them. In v. 1, the god Bel is mentioned (abbreviation of Baal) and the god Nebo, speaker or prophet. They are carried as heavy loads by tired beasts. They were and still are made of stone, clay, wood, metals, clay, plaster, gold, silver, plastic or other heavy materials.

- a) gods that don't save (Isaiah 45:20)
- b) Made by man (Psalm 115:1-8, 135:15-18, Revelation 9:20)
- c) They are carved and have no movement (Psalm 115:4-8).

Nowadays they are put on charms, earrings, medals. They're put on altars, in businesses, markets, hanging on walls. And they stay there until their owner moves them.

There are also other gods that are heavy burdens for man: the love of money, unrestrained sexuality, empty philosophies, vices and addictions, among others. Some people want to leave them, but by their own strength, and they get up and fall again.

- d) God is to be worshiped in spirit and in truth, with faith and devotion. Many don't worship idols or saints, but they serve images that they have forged and have come to take the worship that belongs to God: sports, artists, preachers, Christian singers, etc.
 - 1. God is superior and is above all idols.
 - 2. God is not happy with the worship of idols and images (Exodus 20: 5).
 - 1. God asks: *Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit nothing?* (Isaiah 44:10)

II. THE ONLY TRUE GOD

God manifests his power, majesty and sovereignty from creation to eternity. Isaiah 46:3 refers to the people of Israel who God carried from their inception as a people. He had taken care of them and will continue to sustain them, fulfilling His purpose in them.

Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you (V. 4).

A. Man is the crown of creation, but has been warped because of his fallen nature. But when there is reconciliation with God, there is a transformation of all relationships. It is because of the infinite grace of God that as Christians we can experience the love of the great I AM who spoke with Moses (Exodus 3:14), and who is the same as who is written about in the Gospel according to Saint John. He is the I Am that reconciles us with the Father, with ourselves, with our neighbor and with the rest of creation. Let's see how he manifests his sovereignty and power to take us through the different stages of our lives.

1. I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE (John 6:35) - Bread represented the staple food of the Jews. In the biblical passage quoted, they had just experienced the great miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fishes. More than needing to satisfy their physical hunger, the multitude needed to satisfy their spiritual hunger. The physical bread would lose its effect and they would be hungry again. The Pharisees had material bread but needed spiritual bread, and only Jesus could eternally satisfy them. In addition, he said that whoever believed in Him would never thirst.

Let's meditate on this teaching while we walk awhile. He goes and returns with more than we asked. As a pastor, I experience it at every moment. I always wait for my Lord, but when I fall into worry, I cry and my Lord comes back with the basket full. Trust in the Lord. He is our Savior, provider, healer and comforter. God wants to satisfy our spiritual needs, to give us abundantly now and in eternity, eternal life (John 10: 28-30).

2. I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (John 8:12). Light that enlightens all men with the power to dispel all darkness from our minds, leads us on the right path. The sun of righteousness brings life and renews our soul and spirit (Malachi 4:2)
3. I AM THE SHEEP GATE (John 10:7). It means that He is the only true way, the only entrance, this is faith in Christ; those who enter through that door will be safe.
4. I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD (John 10:11). This type of shepherd knows his sheep and they know him; there is a relationship of submission and dependence. He calls his sheep by name and they obey; He takes his flock to eat, drink and rest; protects them from thieves; he grazes them, taking them to fresh pastures, and gives his life for his sheep.
5. I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE (John 11:25); Our physical death is a prelude to the resurrection. Our Lord Jesus Christ has the power to give life and restore it through his resurrection. He opens the door to life. When we understand who Jesus is, and we put our faith in him, a transformation takes place in our lives that allows us to understand pain, illness, accident or death. And if we don't understand it, at least we accept it humbly.
6. I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE ... (John 14:6), Understanding this, there is much to say and nothing to add.

7. I AM THE TRUE VINE (John 15), it speaks to us of a dependent relationship necessary to grow us.

B) Since birth He has supported us; at every moment He sustains us (Isaiah 41:13).

- "I made ..." Our God created. Each of the events of creation were affirming that the result was good. Man was created in God's image, according to His likeness (Genesis 1:26-27), and it was very good (1:31).
 - "I will lead" – He will lead us through paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:3b).
 - "I will support and keep." He watches over our security.
1. The eternal God is our refuge, his arms are our support (Deuteronomy 33:27). He is our good shepherd and the Bread of life.
 2. He saves us from danger (Psalm 121:7), because He is our good shepherd.
 3. He keeps us from filth and darkness (Ezekiel 36:29), because He is our Light.
 4. He will keep those who love him (Psalm 145:20), because He is the true vine and we are the branches.
 5. He keeps the souls of his saints (Psalm 97:10), because He is our Good shepherd.
 6. He guards our life (Matthew 28:20), because He is the way of truth and life.
 7. He keeps us from eternal death (John 11:25), because He is the resurrection.

CONCLUSION

If at this point there is no reconciliation with God and we still walk in idolatry, the burdening gods in our lives sadden the true God.

It is a good time to value the love of the Father, the redeeming grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray a prayer of confession and consecration to the one true God.

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INSTRUMENTS OF BLESSING

Genesis 11:31-32

INTRODUCTION

While it is true that our God takes us from the wombs of our mothers to the end of our days on earth, it is also true that as parents or spiritual leaders, we have the duty to model for our biological children or disciples our desire to seek the faith summit, not to lose sight or enthusiasm in life or ministry, until achieving the objectives in all areas of our lives.

In this session, we will reflect on a great character named Terah, a man of older age, who was an instrument of blessing but also an obstacle. The questions we must answer at the end of this study are: Who did I help on the path of life? How did I help my family? How did I disciple and lead others to eternal life? If we have not been a blessing, today is the day to start.

I. GOD USES US AS HIS INSTRUMENTS FOR CALLING OTHERS

- a) God called Abram (Joshua 24:2-3) from Mesopotamia (Acts 7:2). God took Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans and took him to Canaan, but Terah stalled him in Haran (Genesis 11:31-32).
- b) God called for repentance, salvation, entire sanctification and service. Yes we obey the call, we walk in the kingdom here and now until the consummation of it. There is always someone who disciples us, guides us. The church itself is the one that does the work. It is our responsibility to lead others. Let's review our life. We should continue to disciple, but also continue to learn from others. Although sometimes we see them as too young, but if they are in the Word, they are worth learning from or imitating.

II. GOD REMOVES US FROM SIN TO TAKE US TO ETERNAL LIFE

The instructions were precise ... march to Canaan. It didn't say that they should stop somewhere else, but we read, "... but when they came to Haran, they settled there" (Gen. 11:31). What happened? Did they feel sick? Were they tired because of their age? Possibly, or maybe there were other causes.

It was a big deal for Abram to stop. But he shouldn't forget that he had a mission and should move forward. Terah should have told Abram that he would stay, and Abram should move ahead. But the verse says, "They settled there."

- a. Maybe it was an amazing place of abundance and opportunities for success ... a place that was nice for the family to live. But that wasn't the initial plan.
- b. The old age of our parents or leaders require care as well.

It is painful for grown children to see their parents sick, and to be in the dilemma of staying or continuing. The normal thing is to stay to take care of them in their old age. But what happens when they say, "go ahead. Your siblings will take care of me." Or your parents say, "Leave your church, I need you to care for me. Take care of me now that I need you, and then later you can you move ahead."

Let's think about this type of situation. Ethical decisions and conscience. With them we honor or dishonor our parents and God. Discuss this topic with your group. (Ephesians 6:1-3, Luke 9:59)

Terah had taken Abram from Ur of the Chaldeans and now he was holding him up.

There are places and situations that we must go through: crises, illnesses or successes, but we should not stay there. The danger is that the passion for vision and mission is lost. We lose sight of the goal and our lives become inactive and sterile, and if we were guiding others, we also limit their lives.

Somewhere I read, "The enemy cools you, separates you and kills you." Let's seek the warmth of God and his church, we are generators of a warm atmosphere in our congregation.

Terah only accompanied Abram halfway. The delay only half-way, and loss of meaning in our lives, leads to death.

Why did he stop halfway? Maybe there was weariness, exhaustion or comfort, effects of the natural man (1 Corinthians 2:14). Terah had to die for Abram to continue.

Let's review in our lives to see if we are obstacles for others, if our exhaustion is harming the vision of the younger ones, or other adults like us.

Sometimes our stagnation is manifested through bitterness. Fear leads us to be jealous and controlling. We take childish attitudes like frustrations, and without thinking, we blackmail others to feel safe. The apostle Paul says that those are carnal attitudes; we are saved but still the old man emerges (1 Corinthians 3:1-4).

Let's reflect if there is still a Terah inside us? If so, that Terah must die so that our whole sanctified life may be resurrected. We don't do it alone; the Holy Spirit does it perfectly. We should only be willing to move forward. Let us have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:15-16).

CONCLUSION

God calls us in a personal way, and he entrusts us to guide others through discipleship. We are instruments of blessing, we encourage young people, new generations, in the faith. Let's make synergy, connections, with the young ones in family life and in ministry. We can listen to all the new and constructive things. With the wisdom of God, and experience in life, we will be able to be a bridge so that they can reach even higher levels of Christian life .

Let's take the second opportunity that God gives us to be mentors of the new generation. Let's go back to our first love, passionate about Jesus and his work. Let the Terah die in us. Let's not stay in Haran. Let's go after him who "... called us out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9).

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THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISOBEDIENCE

1 Kings 13:1-34

INTRODUCTION

In certain cultural contexts, older people are called aunts or uncles. This means that we deserve respect, a special consideration because we are symbols of authority and moral and / or spiritual experience.

The problem is when we lose our identity, we forget who we are and where we are going. We find ourselves without definite direction and our values, vision and calling are fractured, and that level of respect is lost.

Let's look at a biblical example of a privileged person named Jeroboam. In the period in which he was king, there was a servant of God described as an old prophet who had conformed to society and its vices. He did nothing to prevent idolatry. He didn't recognize the true worship of the true God; he had lost communion with God. He became accustomed to living like others. And his condition was a stumbling block for a man of God, whom he caused to sin by his lies.

Through this Biblical story, we think about our identity and obedience to God in all its precepts, and we must correct our paths, lest we lose such a great salvation and be worthy of eternal death.

I. OBEDIENCE OF THE MAN OF GOD (1 Kings 13:1)

The man of God or prophet of Judah brought a prophecy to Jeroboam, who pronounced judgment on the messenger, and in return received a great lesson. Through the prophet's intercession, healing was returned to the King. In gratitude, the King invited the man of God to eat at his home, promising him a present. (1 Kings 13:7-10)

The man of God could not eat, drink, or return the same way. He did not forget who he was and what his mission had been.

Our identity defines who we are. The definition of identity - "Set of features of an individual or a community that characterizes them compared to others." (Dictionary Real Spanish Academy)

We are children redeemed by the blood of Christ. We are in the world but we are not of the world. We have access to heaven through Jesus Christ, and we are led and perfected by the Holy Spirit. We have the spirit of adoption (Galatians 4: 6-7), and the Holy Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16). We are in the kingdom but waiting for its consummation. In the meantime we must live in obedience by fulfilling the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30) and the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-16).

The enemy will always be watching our frailties to make us fall and lose our crown (1 Peter 5:8). In the bible story, the enemy couldn't get the man of God to fail. But he didn't give up ... he used an old prophet to try again.

II. THE FALSEHOOD OF THE OLD PROPHET (1 Kings 13:15-17)

The old prophet tried once and failed; he tried a second time with deceit, with a false message (John 8:44, Revelation 12:9, Proverbs 14:25). The enemy is the father of lies and never tires of attacking the children of God.

- a. As Christians we should not tell other people what God has not said. Because of selfishness or jealousy, many believers boast that God spoke to them without being true, and they misdirect their disciples. When we lose our identity, that gives rise to complex, low passions of carnal men or women, and we are tempted to invent ... to make things up. God forbids us to lead others astray.
- b. On the other hand, if some old prophet, people who have been ministers in the past, gives us instructions, let us reflect before acting. The example in Acts 17:10-11 urges us to examine the scriptures and what people tell us. Many people can give us advice; let's see if they are of spiritual authority, and let's analyze what God tells us.

God speaks to us through the Word, through preaching, and through his Spirit. He confirms to us through his church and sometimes through circumstances.

Let's take time to meditate deeply on what we read. Let's be men and women of prayer and reading of His Word.

- c. We must treasure the scriptures and not be moved by someone who calls himself a minister and his conduct is doubtful. Example Galatians 1:8.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISOBEDIENCE

As citizens, we have an ID card, but this must be updated to continue exercising our rights as citizens. In the same way, as Christians we must keep up to date in our faith and testimony. We cannot live thinking about the past without being faithful in the present.

The old prophet had not updated his card and it was no longer valid. At some point, he lost his compass. He contributed to the defeat and death of the man of God.

- a. For the man of God, his failure led him to death. The mercy of God was present with him because he was not devoured by the lion, but he was not allowed to be buried with his ancestors. Although our lives have been right in the eyes of God, if we fail, we have to suffer the consequences. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The problem is that if we don't take time to repent, we will not enjoy the crown of life that God has prepared for us (Revelation 2:10, 3:11). Let us fight legitimately (2 Timothy 2:5).
- b. The old prophet was attacked by fear. He was afraid of the fulfillment of the prophecy, but also of the consequences of his evil. The only hope he had was to be buried in the same tomb as the man of God.

The Word of God says in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and in Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God in eternal life in Christ Jesus Our Lord." Let's take hold of that gift that is given to us by His great love. Let's reflect. Yes, like the old prophet, we have sinned against God. Let us return to Him through our Lord Jesus, our advocate.

CONCLUSION

Let's not forget that we were bought for a price. By the precious blood of Christ, we are children and heirs of the promise of God. We are constantly going to be tempted by the enemy. Don't give in to his tricks, forgetting God's precepts. Let's live in the Spirit so that we don't enter into temptation of disobedience, and are not stumbling blocks for others to whom we can advise badly.

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GOD IS WITH US IN THE CAVE

1 Kings 19:8-13

INTRODUCTION

At some point in our histories, we've each had internal struggles. Some of us are experiencing them now. They could have been due to sin or disobedience. It's possible that by being saved we have experienced conflicts like pressure, stress, anxiety, anguish, or anger. Maybe bitterness that resulted in spite and hatred. Perhaps we were tempted to jealousy and envy, sometimes by grief and sadness, illness or loss.

Do any of you remember if you went through depression and felt that it would never end, and you even wanted death? Are you in depression now?

In 1 Kings 19, we will reflect on a servant of God who experienced all this and much more. He wanted to die after a great victory. The physical exhaustion led him to experience depression.

I. GET UP BECAUSE A LONG ROAD REMAINS AHEAD OF YOU!

This story has great events as background. For now, we will look at the time when the prophet Elijah struggled with depression. The Angel of Jehovah ordered him to eat. The second time he warned him that it was not the end "... because he has a long way left to go" (1 Kings 19:1-7).

It's hard to know how long of a way it was from the start of his flight away from Jezebel. How far was it? What distance did he travel? How long ... months or years? The scripture doesn't specify. It just mentions the time between the broom bush and Mount Horeb. He was just supposed to keep walking in the same direction that God showed him.

From the time under the boom bush, he ate, drank, and walked 40 days and 40 nights until he reached the Mount of God, which guided him to the heights, and he sought the cave. Sometimes we want to be benevolent and defend Elias by excusing him. He was tired! He was sad, he was afraid! For sure but behind his fatigue, there was more.

What did the cave mean to Elijah? It was a place where his dreams ended, where he found security; there he could continue digesting his melancholy.

Think about this point of your life. Have you ever taken refuge in a cave? In a place of desolation and sadness? Has illness isolated you from family or friends? Have you wanted to start a project or a job and realized that you no longer had the skills to do it? Do you see that the new generations or technology have overcome or passed you by? Have you gone through moments when you realized that your life plans did not come out as you had dreamed?

We may have made wrong decisions or lost control of the circumstances for a successful ending, but that doesn't mean we should stay in the cave. Remember the People of Israel; God did not take them out of Egypt to die in the desert or to stay in Horeb. God brought them out to take them to the Promised Land of Canaan. God did not take Elijah out of Tibet from Gilead to leave him under the broom tree or in the cave. No, he was supposed to train leaders to continue God's purpose, anoint his successor, and one day meet the King of Kings.

II. DON'T RUN AWAY FROM PROBLEMS

Elijah in his solitude was fleeing from his problems; he was also fleeing from his calling. He didn't want to share his problem; his life lost meaning. His actions revealed a feeling of guilt for imprisoned and accumulated anger.

But what God started with him would take him to the end, and Elijah would still exercise his leadership. He would anoint Jehu as king and Elisha as a prophet. He could not die until he had fulfilled God's purpose.

In the face of crises or illness, many believers think that God's plan for their lives has come to an end. If this is your case, dialogue with God and if He says that the long way remains, don't run away. Ask for guidance from the Holy Spirit; no doubt God will be there with you and for you as he was with Elijah.

III. GOD IS WITH YOU IN THE CAVE

"What are you doing here, Elijah?" (19:9-12)

After Elijah's dialogue with God in verse 11, the prophet receives instructions. "Go out" (verse 11). Not only your body should be outside, but also your internal disposition. Get out of that paralyzing fear, out of your pessimism.

Elijah expected God to emerge in the spectacular. He had already experienced it with the fire and sacrifice. But here, it happened with "... a gentle whisper" (v. 12). And when Elijah heard it, he went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

The presence of God was so powerful and sublime that Elijah had to cover his face with his cloak.

As Christians, we expect spectacular answers, and our prayers become noisy prayers that don't allow us to hear the soft voice of the sovereign God. We must learn to listen, to let God surprise us, and let the whisper of his voice heal our wounds and lift our stooped life.

Again there is the question "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (v. 9, 13)

He did not ask, "What are you doing here, son?" Or "What are you doing here, great prophet?" He calls Elijah by his name and everything that this represents. It is wonderful to see that in the middle of the cave, we are not alone, He is with us. He doesn't look at us from afar. He feels our pain.

The prophet Elijah had been fed by the crows. He had been the bearer of miracles: healings, food provisions, miracles in the drought and rain. He had seen God's glory when fire fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. God had honored him. Why now did he feel unsuccessful? The omnipresence of God was with Elijah and He did not leave him alone. He followed Elijah through the desert, to the mountain and even into the cave.

For a second time God asks, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

God doesn't tell him what he's doing there. This means that the majestic God is with him, there in the cave. In the struggle, in the affliction.

The great teaching we have is that God is not only with us in victories or when we're successful. He's also with us in our struggles, in the formation of our character as Christians.

Many times we feel that we're alone, but God is there with us to sustain us. In Him, we can be submerged in His presence. He heals our wounds, he consoles our sorrows; his infinite grace arouses momentous happenings.

CONCLUSION

The prophet Elijah was like us (James 5:17). He accepted God's help. He left the broom tree, got up, ate, drank, and got moving. He was obedient to the voice of God. He stopped isolating himself and running away, and fulfilled God's purpose for his life and for his people.

How long do you want to stay in the cold cave with a nauseating smell, in the middle of the darkness? A long road remains ahead of you ... get moving. Don't run away, face the problem. Jesus Christ promised to be with us until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20b). Let's accept the hand of mercy of our God (Psalm 145:14-21).

For you who are in the cave and have not reconciled with God - Isaiah 1:18-20.

If you lose control, don't be discouraged. Confess your sin to God and to the person who you've grieved, and make restitution. If you made bad decisions and are suffering consequences for your disobedience - 1 John 1:9.

Pray that you may have self-control

If you have been faithful, but feel that the circumstances, the abandonment of loved ones, the illness or the loss of meaning for your life has you in a cave - Isaiah 61:3.

Be grateful God is molding you to be fit for the kingdom. You are not alone. God is in control. He is developing the fruit of the Holy Spirit in you.

THE SERVANT THAT LOST THE VISION

1 Samuel 1:9; 4:13-15, 18

INTRODUCTION

Every company, institution or personal project needs to define the reasons or reasons for which it exists. Depending on the activities in which it specializes, the context in which it originated, and the people that it desires to serve, as well as the material resources and people with whom it wants to achieve the purpose, objectives are prepared to fulfill a mission. This means that you define how you expect to see future results. The same happens as human beings, specifically as Christians.

The mission allows us to locate ourselves in the present and the vision to project ourselves towards the future.

The person that occupies our reflection in this lesson is a servant of God, a priest whom we find in three different occasions. His main characteristic lies in his age and exhaustion; he was an older adult. He had a mission to fulfill, and no doubt goals to meet to reach the end successfully, but at some point along the way, he lost it. The vision vanished and the result was sad.

May this reflection be a warning for us that causes us to stop, think and make corrections. We will only achieve this with the help of God through redemption in Christ and the direction of His Holy Spirit.

I. A MAN SEATED (1 Samuel 1:9)

Sometimes because of age, illness, fatigue, or obesity comes the time when we spend most of our time sitting. This has nothing to do with older people who work in a job where they must necessarily be seated behind a machine or a desk. We're referring to the sedentary lifestyle that causes the loss of the vision.

In this first part about the Priest Eli's life, we find him sitting and watching how Hannah came to pray with a troubled heart.

- a. He had no discernment; he didn't understand the woman's pain, and he described her as "out of her mind."
- b. He didn't minister as a priest should or as Hannah expected.

There will be times that our family, friends or believers will come to seek our advice. If we have lost the memory of our identity and our relationship with God, we will draw conclusions that have nothing to do with the need of those who expect to receive support, and they will leave sadder than when they came.

- a. Hannah returned with the baby some time later (1 Samuel 1:26-28). She did have her identity and her relationship with God, she prayed with faith and God took pity on her.
- b. For the priest Eli, the results were not so important anymore.

As older adults, to avoid falling into obesity, physical or emotional illness, or quicker advancement of normal old age events, we must be proactive:

- a. Take care of your body, get rest, be good stewards of your body and mind; remember that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit.
- b. We must nourish our bodies, exercise, put our experience into practice and do things that encourage the exercise of our minds.
- c. Let's have different dynamics that renew our spirit: reading, singing, playing an instrument, listening to music. Associate with a group of people with our same interests.
- d. It's a good opportunity to share the Word, share your testimony and wise advice with others. With all this, there will be less chance of forgetting the mission that we have as human beings and as children of God until the last moment of our existence.

II. **A MAN FULL OF FEAR** (1 Samuel 4:13-15)

At the age of 98 years, Eli is again sitting. And any of us will say, "It's normal. If I at 60 get tired, more so for poor old Eli." But they lived longer then. The environment and food were different.

He still had his hearing, and he heard that the enemies of the people of God, called Philistines, had murdered his two sons and had taken the Ark of the Covenant. Why did he fear the Philistines? Because when the enemy had the Ark and fought against the people of God, they were defeated. Although for Israel, the ark represented the presence of God, the symbol of divine victory. Eli no longer had the strength to defend himself or minister to the people of God. He wanted to flee.

If we don't act and only look, God will stop dealing with us because of our lack of activity and paralyzed faith. Fear paralyzes; it prevents evangelism, curbs praise, distorts the Word in our minds, and exhausts prayer. This brings anguish and depression.

Take breaks and continue your tasks. If we no longer have a good memory, let's use a diary and write down the pending, key issues. Let's ask for help from those who have more confidence to read to us if we no longer see well. Ask for help moving and changing position if we struggle to do those things.

III. **A MAN WHO BROKE HIS NECK** (1 Samuel 4:18)

Here we see a sedentary man, aged and obese. When he heard that the Ark was in the hands of the enemies and his sons had been killed, he fell over backwards and couldn't get up.

An inactive life will lead us to the past testimonies about God, but only about the old life. We get used to remembering our best moments of glory, and we forget the mission. We lose vision and therefore we lose mobility, and along come cardiovascular, cerebral, and mental diseases. Many fall and rise, but others fall and die like Eli.

CONCLUSION

Let's not lose sight by just sitting in our comfort, with a lack of strength and enthusiasm. Let's search every day to be surprised by our God. (Habakkuk 2:3)

Let's be alert to be a blessing to others, interceding for the weaker ones. (Josue 1:9)

Let's let go of what we no longer have to do. Let's place into God's hands that which takes away our peace. We are not baskets for garbage; don't hold on to it. Let everyone assume their responsibilities without being selfish. We only supervise what we now teach.

Let's exercise faith, hope and love.

Let us ask God for mercy every day. He has promised to give us his mercies every morning.
(Lamentations 3:23,40-41)

"He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak." (Isaiah 40:29)

THE RIGHTEOUS WILL FLOURISH LIKE THE PALM TREE

Psalm 92:12-15

INTRODUCTION

In the Bible we find different literary genres to interpret the author's intention. In Psalm 92:12, the psalmist refers to the flourishing of the righteous as compared to the palm tree and cedar in Lebanon. Both have characteristics that resemble the development and growth of man. The palm tree in the Bible is a symbol of triumph, of victory. Compared to the Christian, it is created to go from power to power, always to be in victory, triumphing over sin.

In this session we will focus more on the palm tree, specifically taking as an example the date palm that has many lessons to give us as Christians.

I. THE RIGHTEOUS ARE SIMILAR TO THE PALM TREE IN IT'S PHYSICAL MAKE-UP

Palm trees grow where many trees cannot. Their height reaches between 25 -30 m. Their roots find their way down, and when encountering rocks, they wrap themselves around them. Faced with the great storms of the desert, they hold up and don't fall easily. They resist frost of - 10 C ° and grow in climates with temperatures of up to 50 C °. Its heart is soft; when the storms whip it around, it doesn't break.

The application for our lives is that when we have a crisis due to family, work, financial problems, illnesses or situations related to age, we bend but don't break because our roots are woven around the Rock that is Christ (Psalm 28:1, 1 Corinthians 10:4) and our soft heart inhabited by the Holy Spirit allows us to stand strong when the storms come. The storms form our character; we recover and continue to worship and serve God.

This type of palm tree begins to bear fruit between 12 and 15 years of age, and does so abundantly until 60 - 80 years. It has an average life of 250 to 300 years. It can have a production of up to 100 kg per year. For the Egyptians it was considered a symbol of fertility.*

Its trunk grows straight. Interestingly, it doesn't allow grafts. It reproduces by suckers or seed. This is how our life as Christians should be: we must have an entirely sanctified heart, attitudes that glorify and exalt the blessed name of our God. We are in the world, but we are not of the world (John 17:15-19).

We must multiply, evangelize and disciple, fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). While we walk, work, or do any activity, we must announce the good news of salvation.

II. THE RIGHTEOUS ARE LIKE THE PALM TREE IN ITS USEFULNESS

Its roots, stems, bark, branches, and fruit are all used for various things.

- a. Furthermore, its roots are so deep that they bring to the surface water that announces life for the Bedouins who travel through desert places. When they see a palm tree, they associate it with an oasis, a place to rest, refresh themselves, and quench their physical thirst.

We need an oasis on the journey through this land, and we find it in Christ Jesus, that "whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst" (John 4:14, 7:38). We must be instruments of salvation for all the travelers who are drying up and can't find an answer for their lives. Let's see

around us how many men and women in the autumn and winter of life feel hopeless, without faith. Let's stop our journey and be channels of blessing. Sometimes young people come to us for advice; it is time to be instruments of life. Let's bring that fragrance of Christ, that smell of life. (2 Corinthians 2: 14-17)

- b. Its branches serve to provide shade, for roofs, but also for nests of the little birds. We must also be an instrument of protection and good hosts.
- c. The palm branches also serve as fuel to warm up the frosty mornings. Palm branches were used to celebrate the entrance of the Lord Jesus in to Jerusalem (John 12:13), and in John's vision in Revelation 7:9, they referred to the final victory.
- d. In addition to what has already been mentioned, they are used to prepare medicines; its branches cover roofs of houses.

It is applicable to every Christian to serve in multiple tasks.

III. OUR FUNCTIONS AS SERVANTS OF GOD

- a) We are planted in the house of Jehovah to blossom. The palm tree was planted in the courts of the house of Jehovah. God gave us a call and we should flourish in the development of the ministry to which we were called; it is not too late (Psalm 92:13).

Let's take advantage of free time to do manual work, grow vegetables or flowers, enjoy doing and teaching others. To the best of our ability, we must testify of the greatness of God in the years of youth or adulthood, inspiring the younger generation. And if we reach the feet of Christ already in the evening of our lives, let us continue to experience the goodness of God, listening to others, and together meditate on his Word and pray for one another. Let's see what the needs are and form groups of intercessors.

- b) We are planted in the house of Jehovah to bear fruit. If we are planted by the stream of water (Psalm 92:14; 1:3; Jeremiah 17:8), we will bear abundant fruit. Just like the date palm, its best fruit are after the 80's.
- c) We are planted in the house of Jehovah to announce the righteousness and justice of God. It means that we must recount "... to the generation to come, the praises of the Lord, and his power; and the wonders he did" (Psalm 92:15; 78:4).

CONCLUSION

Through the grace and mercy of God, we can be transformed and enjoy a victorious and productive life for his honor and glory. By ourselves, we will not be able to be righteous and of perfect heart, but only by the precious blood of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. God will do great thing in us and we will be instruments in his hands.

In the stage that we are living, there will be critical moments. Remember the palm tree that doubles over but doesn't break, and when it happens, we will be ready to go to our heavenly mansion. Let us age with grace. Let's enjoy ourselves at this stage, and in the midst of sorrow and sadness, let's say, like the apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

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*[www.info-jardin.com/palmera datilera fénix](http://www.info-jardin.com/palmera-datilera-fenix)

THE PROMISES OF GOD

2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 7:1

INTRODUCTION

This biblical passage arose in my heart after having prayed and sung a hymn with these words: "All the promises of the Lord Jesus, are powerful support of my faith. As long as I fight here, seeking its light, I will always trust in its promises. Great and faithful, the promises that the Lord Jesus has given, great and faithful, in them I will always trust." In these passages, the apostle Paul speaks about the promises of God and also about the conditions. The central message is that God, through His Holy Spirit, cleanses us from all filthiness so that we may be worthy of His promises.

I. THE PROMISES OF GOD

"We are the temple of the living God." "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people" (2 Cor. 6:16). Let us also review the following passages (Ezekiel 37:27, 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19).

We live with someone because we are a family or there are common interests. Many times we must be tolerant for peaceful coexistence in terms of family dynamics. God makes our hearts his room; what a great honor!

Walking with the people meant that he would be with them all the time: they walked, they worked, they ate together, etc. There was a close link.

The same thing happens for us now; God walks along with his children who delight in his presence.

Recognizing him as our Lord means that he has control of our lives in all senses. Not by imposition but by his grace and our disposition.

"‘Come out from them and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you’" (V.17).

Leaving those things implied leaving the customs and ways of doing things that belong to the old man ... the only way of life, and we can only achieve it when we have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior. He justifies us before the Father, regenerates us, and adopts us as children.

"I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (v. 18). A relationship of Father and son and daughter, blessed be our God for being inclusive.

II. THE CONDITIONS

"Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

- a. "Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body": fornication, adultery, homosexuality, theft, avarice, drunkenness, swindling or conning, etc. (1 Corinthians 6:9-13) Gluttony, drunkenness or cares of this life (Luke 21: 34).

- b. “Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates ... spirit”: Pride, hatred, haughtiness of spirit, fights, jealousy, anger, strife, dissensions, heresies etc.
- c. “Perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.” God knows our hearts, where carnal desires are born. However, He purifies the heart, affections, emotions, thoughts and all his children's desires through the Holy Spirit. He is the one who puts the sanctifying power into action. Therefore, we must attend to what the Apostle Paul says in Galatians 2:20. The personal self is crucified with Christ, dead to ourselves and alive for Christ because He is the one who lives in us.
- d. Sanctified for service. Holiness is practical; it affects all areas of our lives, our physical, mental, spiritual and social relationships. We must have purity of intentions and ambitions. Only if we are clean can we be useful for his service. For this reason, we must be tools of gold or silver; otherwise we will be for use without value (2 Timothy 2:20). Let's take the opportunities that God gives us, and if it has not been possible to receive God's promises for your life, family or church, ask now for that inheritance from our God.

CONCLUSION

The holiness of the people of God is the only thing that will impact the world so that evil is overcome, and it will only be achieved when the message of salvation has been shared through entirely sanctified people, temples of the living God, clean of all filth, with a relationship of intimacy with Christ, who dwells and walks with us. Let's start in small groups. Meditate on all the promises we have in the Bible; share testimonies of the fulfillment of his promises in our lives, and sing hymns about the promises of God. All this in small groups in the church and in the communities where we live.

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

Luke 11:1-4

INTRODUCTION

Luke 11:1-4 gives us some steps for learning to pray. We will meditate on the first verse to learn about submission, a great desire for a relationship with the Father through prayer, and seeking blessing for the group of disciples.

Observe that the disciple knew how John the Baptist and his followers prayed, but after seeing Jesus pray, they longed to learn to pray like he prayed. In response, Jesus taught this model prayer.

We will look at some characteristics of Jesus' habit of prayer, and finally the responsibility that we have to pray not only for ourselves, but also for others.

I. A REQUEST

"Lord..." When Jesus finished praying, a disciple exclaimed "Lord" (kurios), a Greek term denoting authority, a relationship of property, submission and obedience.

"... Jesus the Christ can with all propriety, claim complete devotion, loyalty, reverence and adoration from the heart on the part of men. That's why 1 Peter 3:15 exhorts us saying, sanctify [hagiasate] God the Lord in your hearts "(Purkiser 1991,347).

"... Teach us ...", here we find three teachings: first, the disciple shows deep expectation about what he had seen in the Lord. What would he have seen on Jesus' face as he prayed? Why did he wait until he finished to ask him with humility and willingness to learn? He was delighted to see it, to hear it, but he also reflected on the origin of that security, of the dependence on the Father, and his passion in prayer. This made the disciple wait no longer and he immediately asked to be taught the great secret of prayer.

1. There must be answers even on our faces, giving evidence of trust and dependence, submission and obedience as we pray.
2. The disciple demonstrated that he was willing to undergo a process of teaching-learning. He didn't evaluate if he would have time, or if he would have to participate in a big long course, he just wanted to learn to pray ... no matter what. It's never too late to learn to love, to serve God and our neighbor, but above all we must ask God to teach us to pray.
3. He makes the request in the plural; he doesn't say "teach me," but "teach us." This shows that he's looking out for others; he's not selfish. In Jesus, we achieve unity. "Prayer generates proximity, and this proximity always translates into ethical responsibility towards one's neighbor (Cassese G. 1994, 160).

"... to pray ," "Praying is a communication of love made for the purpose of having an intimate conversation with God ... the words used when praying are not as important as the attitude of trust, honesty and absolute dependence on God's love "(Amparo R. 1976, 37-38).

The disciple didn't ask Jesus to teach them to preach, or heal the sick, or free the demoniacs, etc. His request was forceful.

We must stop thinking that prayer is just a list of requests for our comfort.

II. THE TEACHING OF THE MODEL PRAYER

In verses 2 through 4, the Lord teaches us the way to pray:

- It begins with the invocation, “*Our Father in heaven ...*” It recognizes the Father - child relationship
- Exalting his name, adoring him - “*Hallowed be your name.*”
- Bringing the kingdom to earth because of his sovereignty - “*Your kingdom come*”
- A relationship of recognition - “*May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*” - submission to his Lordship.
- Continues with intercession and petition for daily needs – “*Give us each day our daily bread*”
- For the forgiveness of sins – “*Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us*”
- Deliverance from evil – “*and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*”
- Matthew 6:13 ends with adoration and exaltation – “*... for yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen*” (Matthew 6:13b) Let's review these elements in our daily prayers.

III. PRAYER – A DISCIPLINE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

He prayed in different places

- a. In the temple (Luke 2:46),
- b. In the synagogues (Mark 1:21-22),
- c. On the mountain (Mark 6:46),
- d. In the desert (Luke 4:1-2).
- e. In the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32);
- f. On the cross (Mark 15:34)
- g. In quiet places (Mark 1:35)

He prayed at different times

- a. In the morning (Mark 1:35)
- b. At noon (Mark 6:41)
- c. Evening prayers (Mark 6:46-47)
- d. At night (Mark 14:22-24, Matthew 26:26-28)),
- e. All night (Luke 6:12)

He prayed in different ways:

- a. Individually in solitude (Luke 5:16; 22:41)
- b. Collectively with his disciples (small groups) Matthew 15:36, Luke 9:18

c. Collectively with the crowd in thanksgiving (John 6:11)

We need to have habits of dialogue with God for personal matters, but also as a ministry of intercession for others. Prayer involves meditation, and it forges our character. We also strengthen ourselves in faith for others.

We are invited by the Apostle Paul to pray always (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

We can start with the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, then the prayer of the elder (Psalm 71). When making prayer a habit, we will have much to pray for: for ourselves, our family, the church so that it is perfected for the coming of the kingdom, the city or community where we live, disoriented youth, etc. If we are going to be intercessors, let us take into account some essential elements: integrity as intercessors, create empathy with the people for whom we pray with.

Look for the perfect link between our spirit and the Spirit of God. All this is through faith. When we hug a baby and put it on our chest, we hear two beats, but if he is really attached to us, we only hear a single heartbeat. This is how our communion in prayer should be, to have the confidence that we are in dialogue with God in submission and obedience. In intercession, God puts answers in our minds. These can be: Trust, wait, it's done. God is in control. The answer may be a temporary silence or a resounding no. Amparo, in his book *Introduction to Spiritual Disciplines*, paraphrases Matthew 26:39b, 42,44:

In Gethsemane, Jesus Christ prayed, and there was not the response He desired, out of love. Yes for love for us.

"Father in this moment of anguish I have enough confidence in your love as to confess how I feel in the most intimate part of my being. If possible, I would prefer that we find another way to save humanity that did not include my suffering and death at Calvary. However, now I'm glad of not being in control, of not being ultimately responsible for making the decision to solve this matter. I'm not telling you to change anything, but because I need to express my feelings and I know that you understand me. What a relief it produces not being in control of the universe!" (Amparo 1976, 36)

CONCLUSION.

- Let's ask the Lord to teach us to pray with wisdom by making our hearts ready to obey his will.
- Let's get involved in prayer programs in the congregation we attend.
- Let's collaborate in intercession ministries and teach new generations to have prayer as a means of grace and as a spiritual discipline.

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THE PRAYER OF THE SENIOR ADULT

Psalm 71

INTRODUCTION

It says in Leviticus 19:32, "Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD." I try to do this every day with my mother, many times at a distance, and with the older adults I serve.

One day I was talking with my 89-year-old mother about this Psalm and about Proverbs 20:29b "... gray hair is the splendor of the old." She told me, "It is true, God has already helped me many years, but now I do not see, I do not hear well, I do not have teeth, nor strength in my legs." Then we looked at Ecclesiastes 12:2-8, 13: "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind."

The brightness of her face, her big smile praised our God. For this reason, the prayer of Psalm 71 makes sense for our lives. In the midst of the circumstances of old age we pray. While we pray we must also keep silence so that God speaks to our hearts. We meditate on sayings, on our condition and on His will.

I. PRAYER AND MEDITATION (Psalm 71:1-14)

"To meditate is to focus our attention on that which is the object of our adoration, of our love. Usually in silence and with enough time, we allow our thinking to realize what God means to us and the various ways in which he shows us his love." (Cassese 2004. Pp 161)

Meditation comes from the Latin "meditatio" and refers to the action and effect of focusing thoughtfully on the consideration of something. The concept is associated with concentration and deep reflection. (Wikipedia, dictionary)

- a. An intimate relationship of the psalmist with God makes him remember God's sovereignty. He is aware that God is his refuge, help, salvation, hope, his rock and strength; God is the one who gives him security.
- b. He remembers that he has enemies: on the one hand they were visible, those who envied him, the heathen peoples, external enemies; that is why he asks for protection from shame, from the hand of the wicked and violent (vv. 71:1b, 4, 7, 10-11).

This teaches us that we must have the character to take the hand of God and defend ourselves against injustice, firmly using constitutional rights as citizens. That is why we must know our laws well and / or ask for support from specialists when it is beyond our faculties.

With sadness we see that sometimes the caregivers, whether family or institutional, don't take the precautions that this age requires.

- c. There were also the internal enemies, the invisible, beyond satan. There were also the imaginary, those that were created only in his mind: shame, shyness, low esteem or feelings of inferiority that turn into pride and arrogance, feelings of guilt, ideas of death, anorexia, insomnia, delusions, unresolved arguments, etc., ... enemies that intimidate and paralyze. In the face of his fears, he declares that God is his refuge, his hope and his security. Let's check if we have passed

through the invisible enemies, if we remember that Christ is our immovable Rock, our refuge and strength.

Because of the fragility of age, emotions become vulnerable, and it is time to take hold of the Christian's armor, explained by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:11-18.

- d. A greater fear for which he prays is not to be left helpless in the time of old age: when the legs lose firmness and they wobble. Before that situation happens, we must be prepared. We need to have someone to help us with a cane, a treadmill, or maybe even a wheelchair. We need to make arrangements for help when our arms adopt awkward postures; our teeth flee from the oral cavity and our eyes darken; at the time of hearing loss, when the desire to sing leaves, when objects of normal weight are a heavy burden, concerns for the family increase, at the time of the loss of appetite or digestive problems, brain problems, lungs, heart, liver and / or kidneys.

By nature we are remedial, but we do not necessarily have to wait until we are in serious trouble to consult the doctor. First, let's review with the one who made us; he knows all our systems and body physiology. And he will put his healing hand or science for our healing. Let's be foresighted.

These are times where, through prayer and meditation, we rest in the Lord; He reminds us that He will be with us every day until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20).

The preacher Solomon wrote, "and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

The apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:8 wrote, "We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

The spirit returns to God; the body is simply a house in which we live. This is a topic that in most cases saddens us. Let's not see it like that; let's learn to put our trust in Him. "... Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.'" (Revelation 14:13) Yes amen.

Who is this for? For those who have washed their clothes with the blood of the lamb and have allowed the Holy Spirit to purify their hearts, those who have put their faith, trust, and hope that one day we will see him face to face. How precious it is to rest from fatigue, burdens, shame, and illness. Let's see death as a liberation and not as a tragedy. Let us become heirs of the promise (Hebrews 6:12).

II. WORSHIP AND MEDITATION (Psalm 71:14-24)

In response to his prayer, the psalmist meditates on all the attributes of God and His fidelity to him, from the womb of his mother, in his youth and through adulthood. He continues to remember the majesty of God and exclaims praise for the righteousness of God.

- a. He continues to praise God for who He is and for his innumerable acts (14-15). "We must adore at all times with grace in our hearts, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19).
- b. He praises with string music: the psaltery and the harp (v. 22). In our context, we are to praise God with everything that brings harmony and beautiful melodies to our God, sparing no cost or

effort. But the most important instrument is called the heart. It is the one that emits the best melody of obedience, perseverance, faith, love and joy.

- c. He worships God for His greatness, wonders and righteousness (19-21,24)
- d. His praises produce joy.

Somewhere I read the following statement from John Piper:

"The better worshiper I am, the closer I am to the image of the son, and the closer I come to that image, the better I reflect the purpose for which he created me, and the closer I get to my purpose, the fuller I find myself, the more I enjoy life, and the more fullness I have, the more joy I experience in God." Let's meditate on it.

III. HOPE AND MEDITATION (Psalm 71:15-19, 24)

Let us read the Psalm three times and we will find a mixture of the emotions and faith of the psalmist. If we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and are led by the power of his Spirit, we have a duty to show and tell of the wonders and righteousness and power of God to the new generations. Praise him through prayer and publicly bearing witness to his greatness.

CONCLUSION

The writer of Psalm 71 helps us recognize that our old age has its limitations, but also its advantages. We must worship God, giving him thanks for all his love and power to bring us from the womb to the gray hair, for being our refuge, help, savior, hope, rock and strength, the one in whom we find security. Also for all the years that God has allowed us to live, we glorify him, testifying to the younger generations. As we fulfill our responsibilities, there will be worshipers praising God for his wonders, power and righteousness (Psalm 78:1-8).

Our example of prayer will be the best inheritance we leave for posterity.

Let us age with grace, praying, worshiping, meditating with the hope of the consummation of the kingdom.

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GIVE ME THIS MOUNTAIN

Joshua 14:6-15

INTRODUCTION

Some human beings end their days in childhood or youth, others in the autumn or winter of their lives; sometimes physical, emotional, social, mental conditions are lethal.

The sad thing is when we forget the promises of God and we end hope and faith; we allow ourselves to be consumed. We abandon ourselves and forget that we can still continue to grow and learn.

It is true that we are decreasing, but as long as we have life, we have the possibility of being co-creators with God. This is the teaching we can learn from the life of Caleb, who at 85 years old remembered and claimed the promises that God had given him through Moses. Let's reflect and return to the promises of God for our lives, families, and ministries.

I. GOD DOESN'T FORGET HIS PROMISES (Numbers 14:24)

Caleb was one of the 12 spies who went to spy out the promised land. When they returned, ten of them brought pessimistic news. They recognized that it was a good land with an abundance of food, but they were also afraid because it was a land of giants, and in their opinion, they were like locusts. However, Joshua and Caleb brought encouraging news. "Let us go up and take possession" (Numbers 13:30). God recognized Caleb's spirit, his courage, faith and obedience, and introduced him to the promised land, and designated possessions for him and his offspring.

In Joshua 14:6, 15, we observe that 45 years have passed and Caleb reminds Joshua "You know what the LORD said to Moses, the man of God, at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. ... Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day." Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance." (V. 12,13). This was not just any hill country, any mountain. It was Mount Hebron, 2800m high; it was the highest. It was a territory inhabited by giants and large and fortified cities.

This speaks to us of an audacious, fearless and brave old man. He could not do it alone; he needed a team with confidence, physical strength, intelligence and wisdom in order to equip them with strategies.

Caleb said, "I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then." I can't help but wonder, how would you describe your body at 85? Caleb said that his strength was the same as when he was about 40. There is no doubt that enthusiasm arises from within with power and authority. That attitude is experienced when we have the Holy Spirit. Caleb was sure of victory, and of course, there is no victory without battle. He knew who he was and who supported him.

Let us remember the moment when God gave us the promise; he gave us a plan for our life, family, profession or ministry. How beautiful it is to realize that God involves us in his purposes, and leads us to high mountains in faith.

II. GOD REMINDS US THAT IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO CONQUER (Joshua 14:10-11)

Caleb had a conquering spirit, balanced emotions, and well-trained strategies. Although others considered themselves locusts, he would fight against giants. He moved forward with the promise and vision, and enjoyed it together with his offspring.

In about 1928, my paternal grandmother, young herself with her young children, had in her hands some Castilla nuts. She and her family had suffered in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, and there was famine everywhere. Seeing those tiny seeds, she thought that her offspring would not go hungry if she planted those seeds. They would have some to eat and even some to sell. Now, at 91 years old, she can still pick up walnuts and sit down to taste them, and remember that many years ago she had sown those seeds. For five generations, we have enjoyed the shade of the tree, the branches for tying a swing, and especially the rich walnuts from Castilla. My grandmother had vision and her decision has blessed us. She gave the message of God's sovereignty to my father as a child. And by the grace of God, today I am the daughter of the great King, and I am redeemed by his precious blood.

Are you one of those who are constantly making excuses? Do you remember the promises that God told you he would give you? Today is the time to enjoy those promises, even if it means effort. It is worth having an optimistic and bold attitude. Don't invent limitations, defects or setbacks. Restart a project. It may be that our mountains are our character, pride or low self-esteem.

III. THERE IS A MOUNTAIN THAT WE MUST CLIMB!

Have you noticed that it says a hill or mountain and not a plain? Maybe because the latter does not represent too much difficulty. Most people go for the easy thing, something that doesn't represent sacrifice. That is why in congregations, many people only come to the party or come at the end of the Sunday preaching, but to the prayer service they shine by their absence.

We associate mountains with height. The Psalmist writes, "I will lift my eyes to the mountains; Where will my help come from? ... My help comes from the Lord" (Psalm 121:1-2).

From the heights, the horizon expands, the vision is greater, freshness is breathed. In the mountains, there is greater security, the beauty of the valleys and the plains are contemplated.

While the climbers climb, their respiratory system, their shoulders, and their legs are strengthened. In the spiritual field, our character is strengthened, we find new functions to develop, we equip ourselves and go down to the valley to tell our brothers that it is worthwhile to make an effort, because there are still many things to discover. Maybe new melodies to sing, new instruments to create, medicine to discover, new seeds to plant, new foods to invent. What is the mountain you need to conquer?

CONCLUSION

Let's bring here and now the promises of God; let us dialogue with Him.

What pending thing is there to achieve?

What happened to Caleb, without a doubt we will also achieve it. Take heart, as God was with Moses, Joshua, and Caleb, He will also be with us.

It may be that the mountain you need to conquer is your family, friends, an undeveloped ministry, gifts that have not been developed or used. Perhaps the mountain is called salvation or sanctification.

On each mountain that we are going to conquer, giants will appear. But if we go with the Spirit of God, we will be more than conquerors: “The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still” (Exodus 14:14). “‘Don’t be afraid,’ the prophet answered. ‘Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.’” (2 Kings 6:16)

Do not go alone, join someone who has the same promises, who accepts the same challenges.

Today is the time, tomorrow may be too late. Find a place to meditate, pray to our heavenly father.

SECURITY IN GOD

Psalm 121

INTRODUCTION

Since we were children, we've been aware of someone superior to us. And if our parents were Christians, they taught us that in Christ we are safe. One of the Psalms that we learn by heart is Psalm 121, "The Song of the Pilgrim." This psalm is considered a hymn or chant. It is divided into four paragraphs and shows God as protector.

The Hebrew people were pilgrims from the time they left Egypt until they reached Canaan. Through the desert, they experienced countless dangers. Nomadic people encounter dangers at every moment. The psalmist, on his way to Jerusalem, goes singing, but he also reflects on the danger of being ambushed. They made sure that the God they worship gave them the confidence to face all kinds of threats. From this Psalm we observe a pilgrim people who were reflective, joyful and confident.

Let's see the implications that each paragraph has for this stage of our life.

I. IN THE MIDST OF ANXIETY, IN GOD THERE IS SECURITY (Psalm 121:1-2)

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2)

People who did not recognize Jehovah as God used to place their deities in the mountains. The Hebrew people had important experiences in the mountains. So it was not strange for the psalmist to reflect on the place where they would find protection. Towards the valleys or towards the mountains? But he realized that it wasn't in the mountains. His help, his protection, his confidence was not in Jerusalem either, but in God himself with his unlimited and infinite power.

Where is our gaze set? On finances? On material things? On professional titles or on our family? On some idol? Or on prestigious positions?

Perhaps at this point, you are enjoying your investments, the best product of your work, of your children. At best, it is time to reap success, enjoy pensions. But if the material inheritances are already gone, don't be afraid, the one before you is your help.

As Christians, we don't make long walks in the desert, but we are pilgrims to the heavenly abode. Our path is full of thorns, dangers and temptations and, like the people of Israel, we don't need to reach Jerusalem to experience security. We experience the wonderful presence of God. But we must look up beyond the mountains (Isaiah 41:10 and Matthew 28:20).

II. IN THE MIDST OF DANGER, GOD PUTS US IN A SAFE PLACE (Psalm 121:3-4)

"He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." As long as we remain in his will, under his authority and protection, we shall be safe.

- a. We need to be on the Rock that is Christ (Psalm 40:2b, Matthew 16:18) (On this rock, not on the rock of Peter).
- b. We need to hear and obey his voice (John 10:4)

- c. We need to be in his will (Colossians 4:12)
- d. We need to live in holiness (Hebrews 12:13-14)

Our God does not sleep or fall asleep. He guards his people; this means that he watches over us and defends us (John 10:27-29).

The enemy is constantly watching to separate us from the protecting hand of our God. If we don't keep in communion with his spirit, we run the risk of being hurt or devoured by the cruel enemy. Sometimes we believe that our enemies are the ones we can see or touch, but there are some who attack us and are inside us: pride, anxiety, jealousy, pessimism, anger, bitterness, among others. The apostle Paul mentions to the Ephesians the need to put on the armor of the Christian to extinguish the darts of the enemy. (Ephesians 6:10-18)

III. IN THE MIDST OF ADVERSITY, GOD IS OUR SHADE (Psalm 121:5-6)

“The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.” (Psalm 121:5-6).

In this Psalm we continually find the action of keeping, guarding, watching, escorting. This should give us the assurance that our heavenly Father protects his children at all times.

The term “shade” does not refer to God as darkness or lack of light, but constant or persistent. How wonderful to have God's presence continually at our side!

The problems that come our way during the day will not tire us nor the anguish that comes up at night, because God will be there, every day ... every night ... until the end of the world. (Matthew 28:20).

IV. ON OUR PILGRIMAGE, GOD PROTECTS US (Psalm 121:7-8)

“The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.” (Psalm 121:7-8)

- On our pilgrimage (Philippians 3:20), He goes before us (Exodus 13:21).
- John 10, he is marking the path, we step on the footprints that he is leaving.
- He protects us from behind; it is like a person who opens the door and enters behind us so as not to let the enemy enter our room (Isaiah 30:21);
- He is around us (Psalm 125: 2), within us (1 Cor. 6:19) and above us. He covers us with his grace and sustains us in our battles. Let God awaken in our being security and continuous joy.

CONCLUSION

Brothers and sisters, let us not let our internal enemies, to mention a few: the fear of disease, of losing our job, pessimism, anxiety, complaints, resentments and lack of forgiveness, feelings of guilt or bitterness, intimidate and weaken us. God knows our afflictions; some of them are necessary to form our character. Jesus Christ says that "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Let us not fear death itself. God has everything under control. In the midst of anxiety, there is security, in the midst of danger, He will put us in a safe place, in the midst of adversity, he is our shade on our right hand, and on our pilgrimage to the heavenly dwelling, he protects us.