

The prodigal father



The biblical story of the prodigal son is well known. A man, the younger of two brothers, rebelled against the routine and responsibilities of his home. He asked his father for his share of the inheritance, and left to seek his fortune far from home.

Basically, he simply wanted to prove his independence as an adult. As long as he had money, he felt safe and happy, because he had many friends.

He soon learned the hard lesson of poverty and rejection. Abandoned in miserable conditions, he reflected on the family he had left and how well they lived. Acknowledging his wrongdoing, he returned home humbled and repentant and was received with forgiveness and joy by his father.

Many men could also be called "prodigal fathers". The typical prodigal father may be different in that he probably does not travel to a distant country; but otherwise he is much like the prodigal son. He eats

and sleeps at home, but spends very little time with his family. He leaves the raising of the children to his wife. After putting up with his work all day, he thinks he deserves to spend a few hours with his colleagues at the bar.

Sons learn to "be men" by observing their father, and copying what he does. Daughters may grow up fairly well guided by the mother, but often confused about how to relate to fathers, and later, men in general. The poor, distressed mother seeks comfort and advice, while her husband boasts that "everything is going fine in my household."

Of course, in time, this state of affairs brings consequences. Little by little, over the years, the children and the wife will lose respect for the man.

The best thing that can happen to any prodigal father is precisely what happened to the prodigal son. He must realize that he has failed. There is no money for his vices, and friends have long since ceased to be entertained by his jokes.

Although he fathered children, he is a stranger to them. He lacks his wife's affection, and marriage communication no longer exists. He would like to change and start over, recover what has been lost, but his pride keeps him from confessing that he is wrong. If he is responsive to the hand of God upon him, like the prodigal son in the Bible story, he can surrender and say, "I will rise and go to my family, and I will say to them:

"I have sinned against God and against you; I am not worthy to be called a father and husband. I have wasted time and money that belonged to my family; I deserve your condemnation and your contempt. But if God has mercy on me, and if you can find it in your heart to forgive me, I am ready to change and recover all that has been lost."

When we surrender to the Lord, no matter how many years we have wasted, He forgives us through the work of Christ. And generally, our family, with tears of joy, will say the same as the father of the biblical story: "Welcome home, prodigal father, all is forgiven." □



The street ... my old freedom

Testimony of a former prisoner

Some time ago I accompanied the prison directors to a soccer game being played in their penitentiary. One of the inmates, a young man whose face was deeply scarred, approached me and asked: "*How is the street?*"

He paused, looking for an answer that would give him the scent of his old freedom.

I pondered for a moment the hope of this inmate. The word *street, street, street* was spinning like a restless bee in my mind. I too, many times while I was in prison, thought the same thing as he did.

Almost stuttering, and trying not to disappoint him, I said: "Well ... same old, more cars ... many people ... also temptations ... and the danger of losing one's freedom."

He averted his gaze and walked away without a word, while the word "*street*" still hung in the air as a synonym for freedom.

Why did I want to be on *the street*? ... to do whatever I wanted? ... Did I want to be on *the street* to get drunk until I was senseless, to dream and to fantasize without hindrance, to have my wife, to see my children and give them warmth, protection, work? ... or steal to provide

them bread? To daydream of travel to the world on the wings of my imagination?

The hours passed and the penitentiary activity came to an end. The soccer field was empty, the gray sky of that day was silent, and the wind recited a poem of freedom, as we departed from that labyrinth of humans entangled among the bars who will not be able to see "the street" until the day of freedom dawned for them.

That incident still flutters in my head, and I am not convinced that the term "street" is synonymous with freedom. If I am a slave to lies, deceit, vice, and arrogance, then what? What can *the street* do to make me truly free?

I no longer miss *the street* as my old freedom. Not because I am now free, but because Jesus Christ, who has more drawing power than the street, gave me true freedom. However, I know that many who read this article will continue to wonder:

"How is the street?"

The answer is similar. The solution is the same: "*Know the Truth (Jesus Christ) and you will be truly free.*" □

Analysis: Perfect! Patient: Dead ...

"The laboratory results were perfect, but the patient died." This was the sad outcome in the life of a person who suffered all the initial symptoms of a heart attack. Several doctors saw him and a complete work-up was done, as is customary in such cases.

The primary doctor received the result from the lab technician: "Good news!" The patient does not have any of the diseases we were testing for.

However, the doctor said the patient had died one minute earlier. The official death certificate stated:

"He died of an unknown disease."

Who knows? Perhaps it was a new illness or an unknown combination of diseases. The doctors acted on the basis of their knowledge, but until knowledge is complete, from time to time, patients



may die before a correct diagnosis and treatment can be given.

Humanity, measured by its own standards, is sick. Of course, it admits to having minor problems that will soon find solution in science, education or in the fair distribution of wealth. But this is false, and the patient will die unless he heeds the divine laboratory results.

God says that humanity's sickness is basically spiritual, and that the only cure is in the salvation that Christ offers to the individual. *"There is no salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). □

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Worries...

Some people are worried because wars and crime are increasing daily in the world. They fear death and seem to have little confidence in practically anything. They feel inwardly disquieted.

All of life is an endless quest for peace that, in the end, they cannot find, leading from one frustration to another. Maybe you are in that situation or you know someone who is going through that experience.

The answer to this situation, first and foremost, is that the inner peace you are seeking is a peace that can only be found in the source of life. That source is God, our creator and sustainer.

On the other hand, the anxiety you have about war, crime, lack of love, and death is very natural. When any of us thinks about the world's economic, social, spiritual and moral problems, we can easily feel worried, frustrated and hopeless.

However, the problem is not only the concern for what goes on out there in the world, but for what happens inside us. The peace we desire is found only when we personally relate to God through Jesus Christ.

In Romans chapter 5, the Bible says, *"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The first step to peace is to realize that when we disobey God, we're actually fighting against God. But God is the very source of ultimate peace we need! By admitting our sin and believing Jesus' death ends that fight, we can finally have that ultimate peace with God. We can then have tremen-



dous peace in our hearts about any other problem in our life or in the world.

Jesus Christ said, *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you: let not your hearts be troubled, nor be afraid"* (John, chapter 14).

Peace brings hope and patience. And the hope that God gives us is a living hope, because when one receives Christ and has peace with God the Bible teaches that God Himself fills the soul of the human being.

Give your life to Christ, and you will experience what a hymn says:

"Peace with God - I earnestly sought it, but my good works did not bring me wholeness.

Oh! What peace Jesus gives me, peace that I knew not before, everything has become new since His peace I found!"