

## Water for the Dry Heart

The other day a member of the congregation confided in me that he had a **dry heart**. To tell the truth his confession did not surprise me as I had already realized that. With the years and the discernment the Lord gives us we can distinguish when there are plagues, when the land is hard or infertile. At least this man recognized his problem. The next step is to investigate the causes of the drought and find a way out of the situation.

When the heart begins to dry up, perhaps you manage to go to church, to attend the services, to sing in the choir, to serve in some ministry, but you know that inside your heart has been distancing itself from the fire, extinguishing the fervor, diminishing the desire for communion with the Lord. So pay attention, the Father through His Holy Spirit may in this hour want to speak to you through the Word, to touch you intimately in order for you to examine your walk.

In Jeremiah thirty one God explains the covenant that he established:

*<sup>33</sup>"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."*

God's covenant is that His Word, His principles, His values, will be put **in the mind of mankind**. Man is what he thinks. He is and acts according to what he thinks. So it is indispensable that he store in his mind higher, transcendent thoughts.

*"As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:9)*

So God's covenant involves and implies that we must hide in our minds, in our hearts, this Word that is alive, that is effective, that corrects, that cleanses the soul, as we are doing now by reading, praying and commenting on the Bible, listening to it with ready hearts. For some, perhaps you have read the same passage many times, the concept is the same, but it always yields us something new, something applicable to the reality we are now experiencing or facing. Hence the value of storing in our minds what God wants for each of us, his creatures. In Romans twelve it says:

*<sup>2</sup>Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,  
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

Spiritual development comes through this renovation of the knowledge of God, by constantly studying His Word which is a light to our path and a lamp to our feet, which guides our steps.

In spite of reading and studying the Bible for so many years, suddenly one finds a text that is so precious among those we had not considered before. Recently reading the book of Job in chapter 37:19, I found a very profound concept that relates to what we are considering.

*<sup>19</sup>"Tell us what we should say to him;  
we cannot draw up our case because of our darkness.*

Mental confusion and disorder generate darkness and, if we understand that man is what he thinks, we see that it is transcendental to reason, to think correctly. When there is disorientation, people say 'I am confused.' Their ideas have no order, their thoughts are not clear, they do not know how to act, there is chaos inside. It is precisely this darkness that generates anarchy. The light of Christ and His Word bring order to their thoughts which are sometimes darkened by adversities, crises, unexpected problems and situations.

So I insist, dear Christian, if you think you are firm, look where you are, see to it that you don't fall, analyze if you are being attracted by some of the transgressions in which the people of Israel in their flight from Egypt repeatedly fell, and understand that spiritual vigor, the renovation of your strength, come and go according to two essential exercises: first, the hunger for the Word of God; second, the work of the Holy Spirit.

Do we feel drawn to the Word of the Lord? Are we permanently captivated by it? We must study it personally, and if that does not happen, beware! It is a point that merits your attention. The Word is meant to daily and permanently feed you.

The second point is the motor that drives you forward in the way: the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Let's see some principles in what Doctor Luke wrote in chapter 3 where we find the story of Jesus' baptism.

How can a person be faithful to God throughout his entire life? Is it sufficient to take that transcendent step of public commitment to the Lord in baptism?

*<sup>3</sup>He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*

John the Baptist's preaching was: repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand, as is written in Isaiah chapter 40:

*<sup>3</sup>A voice of one calling in the desert: Prepare the way for the LORD;  
make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.  
<sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.  
<sup>5</sup>...and all mankind together will see it.*

Why does the doctrine of Christ sometimes generate such apathy, rejection and antibodies? The essence of Christianity rests in straightening out the paths of human life. Nobody likes to be told to rectify their steps, their way of thinking, especially when they are of mature age, 30, 40, 50 years old. It is curious, symptomatic, that the older a person gets, the more difficult it is for him to accept the Lord. So it is by grace that older

people take steps to rectify their conduct, to accept their errors, but the essence of Christianity is demonstrated there.

A voice of one calling in the desert, straighten out his ways. Crooked roads will be leveled. Besides it is necessary to show fruits worthy of repentance. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low. The rough roads will be leveled out. The mountains, the valleys, the hills, here symbolize arrogance, pride, self sufficiency, haughtiness, lack of submission and humility in the presence of the Lord, of not accepting the divine requirements for walking on this earth.

Let's take into account that this message is primitive. It was proclaimed in the beginning. It was preached emphatically by John the Baptist, and also by Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry.

*<sup>8</sup>Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. <sup>9</sup>And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.*

The tree is known by its fruit.

*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven,*

Many in the western culture where we were born have learned of God from childhood. This text warns us that ritualistic religious life is not a guarantee that we qualify before God. It is the fruit, the works, the acts worthy of a straight way, of rectified steps, of a form of thinking that has been corrected by God.

*<sup>9</sup>The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."*

The axe is ready; every tree that does not give good fruit is cut down, dried up. It is good for nothing but to burn.

*<sup>12</sup>Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"*

The publicans, or tax collectors, represented the worst in the society of that time. They collected taxes and had to give a percentage, perhaps 5 or 10%, to the Roman Empire. The rest they kept for themselves, thus exploiting their fellow citizens, taking advantage of collecting the taxes and overcharging. Some of them, moved by the words of the carpenter, wanted to rectify their lives and asked him what they should do. Jesus told them:

*<sup>13</sup>"Don't collect any more than you are required to."*

They were not to abuse their power but to collect only what was necessary to pay the taxes and sufficient to live. They were to stop being greedy and oppressing the weak.

*<sup>14</sup>Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."*

Soldiers who represented the imperial force, the authorities, also wanted to be baptized. He did not tell them to resign from the army as he did not tell the publicans to stop collecting taxes, but to be just in what they did, unbiased in their labor. Thus he used as examples two social groups that are very critical for every society, the worst social segments of that world: soldiers and publicans. Some of these came to Christ to be baptized, hearts looking for a deeper life with God.

Likewise he ordered the soldiers not to extort anyone, not to abuse their authority, not to receive bribes, and not to take advantage of their position, but to be content with their salary.

It seems that throughout history soldiers have never earned too much and are exposed because of their job to be tempted by bribes. As ministers of faith, it was easy for them to obtain more resources through the exercise of their authority, and to receive favors. Publicans and soldiers always went together in carrying out the law, and were prone to fall into corruption.

Here we find ethical principles for labor that have tremendous application in the present.

*<sup>16</sup>John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire*

If you do not have this interior baptism, if you quench the Holy Spirit in your life, you are in a very complicated situation. You are in danger of falling, of clouding your future, and of losing fervor in your walk with the Lord.

It is necessary to have two fundamental things clear. They can guarantee that you arrive at your goal. The Word, by feeding ourselves and constantly studying the Scriptures, produces a constant renovation of our minds, of our inner being. On the other hand, we must depend on the patient and powerful work of the Holy Spirit in us. He is the inner fire that impels us. He is like coal in a locomotive that produces the energy that moves us toward holiness, to continue living, and carries us forward in this way. If you stop adding coal to the locomotive of your soul, if you disregard the presence, power, and fullness of the Holy Spirit in your inner life, then you will become critical and complaining, perhaps doing things just to be active but not from the heart. You will begin with coolness and stinging comments that will cause you to become ensnared in the crooked ways of this world.

I will finish with verses 21 and 22 of Luke chapter 3:

*<sup>21</sup>When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too*

What a great example. All the people were baptized with the baptism of John for the forgiveness of sins. All the people were baptized and then came Jesus, the son of God, who had no need whatsoever because he did not have to atone for any fault, he had no need for a new birth, he did not need to repent. Nevertheless he gives us a sign of humility, an example to follow. Therefore he comes to the Jordan to be baptized.

*And as he was praying, heaven was opened  
<sup>22</sup>and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.  
And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love  
with you I am well pleased."*

One of the others who heard adds, "Listen to him".

The heavens opened in this instant. Let's think what would happen if in the silence of this moment the heavens opened for us. Many times the heavens have opened in the sight of men. If we could see it in this moment, we would verify the festival, the joy, the happiness that there is in heaven over one sinner that repents. Here we are quiet, above they are playing trumpets of happiness for what is happening here on earth at this moment.

When people, having repented of their sins, of their faults, of their past life, recognize Christ, embrace the faith and publicly commit to follow this holy way, there is a celebration in the heavens.

How important is that commitment!

I hope, beloved believers in God, Christian reader, that these concepts underlined in your soul in this special day will help you to be one of those people who always walk with the Lord. He called you for all of your life. Discipline yourself; make adjustments in your habits. The most wonderful thing that can happen is to follow in the foot steps of the Master, arrive at the end, finish the course, and see Christ face to face.

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