Giving up the old things

In the world, “someone” arranged things in such a way that in order to cope in this life, we are tempted to use inappropriate means. Satan comes to us just as he came to Lord Jesus and tempts us with various “advantages” which only aim at wrapping us in his web. *(All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me. Matthew 4:9)*

He does it in such a way that when we hear the Word of the Kingdom and we want to change the old things for the new ones from above, we end up being entangled so hard in the old ones that we are unable to make the change. *(…sin which so easily entangles us. Hebrews 12:1)*

To make it through this life and to have an acceptable standard of living, many of us have given into Satan’s offer. He is going to give us the things we desire, which we wouldn’t otherwise be able to access; but Satan gives us these things only if we accept to not tell the truth, to use bribery or gifts, appeal to cunningness, theft. We will take a couple of examples that will show us the way in which Satan catches us in his net. He catches us through the advantages that come as a result of sinning. These advantages can range from small ones, to insignificant, and up to very large.

- An example is undeclared work, which involves working without an employment contract registered at the ministry/state; or having a lower salary on paper and benefiting from the tax-free difference in hand. The advantage obtained by accessing this “black offer” is the gain of a significant amount of extra income. For many who find themselves in this situation, giving up this “old” way of living will be extremely difficult, as their income would be nearly halved and life would have to become much more difficult.

- To ensure ourselves a better living standard, most of us attend a school that ends with a diploma/qualification that will then be used throughout our lives. We can easily see that during the exams before graduation, Satan will come up with a tempting offer, which many of us might end up accepting. He will help us get the diploma by copying/stealing, thus giving up on the truth. Later on, he helps us find a good job provided we present, prior to employment, the diploma which we have obtained through theft. However, by presenting this diploma or certificate, which certifies that we have the necessary knowledge to fill the position, we will be living a constant lie.

By using that diploma to enjoy the benefits of what we have in fact stolen and lied about, we will ourselves in a chain of injustice and sin, out of which many might never be able to break free. *(Every thief, and anyone that swears falsely, shall be utterly destroyed. Zechariah 5:3)*

- Another trap in which many of us are caught in is the offer of earlier retirement (eg. “due to an illness”), through the use of lies. However, the lie is then accompanied by theft/receiving unjust incomes, which also brings with itself permanent spiritual consequences.

- Another significant financial benefit that Satan offers us is a lower cost for many of the services that we purchase. The condition set by Satan is to agree to work with those who steal taxes/who do not issue receipts for the service they provide. If these services were to be legally taxed, the household expenses of many would increase by 20-30%. To most, such a measure would be very difficult to bear. To better understand what these services may be, we will be mentioning a few examples: house constructions, house paintings, gardening, repair of the washing machine, repairs for thermal/electrical/sanitary installations, apartment rents, car repairs, activities related to agriculture: plowing, sowing, harvesting… buying and cutting wood, drilling a well… Let us however pay attention to what the Lord says:

"He who partners with a thief hates his own life." (Proverbs 29:24)

Not paying taxes results in a material advantage for the seller and the buyer. If you buy firewood worth 500 euro, but without an invoice, then the 20% VAT tax, which is 100 euro, will remain in your pocket; a significant amount for the lower-income class. Many do not view it as a sin, but imagine if the government went by the same rule; this month they send us 100 euro less from our retirement pension, the next month 105 euro less… We must sadly note that many of those who declare themselves "born again" are caught in this chain of injustice.

Failure to pay taxes shows us that we are not following the things from above/ the righteousness of the Kingdom of God. *(Pay your taxes, for the authorities and **the rulers are God's servants. Romans 13:6)* If we say we are in the light, but not pay taxes/follow this commandment, we lie and do not live the truth…** *(**If the light in you** is darkness, how great must that darkness be! Matthew 6:23)*

- Gifting/bribery is another thing that is practiced in many places today, even with garbage collectors. If we give up gifts, it will bring us difficulties of all kinds, the most difficult being in the hospital where neglect and suffering will come. However, if we accept suffering on the hospital bed because we do not give gifts, we will be crowned with the fruit that it produces, respectively abounding patience, or long-suffering. *(Know that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lackin* g *in nothing… James 1:3)*

To live in the Kingdom of righteousness, God asks us to give up the old things that are specific to the course of the world, even if we must suffer the losses. After that, He asks us to replace them with the new things of His Kingdom. *(He who steals must steal no longer. Ephesians 4:28; and pay taxes. Give to all what is due to them. Romans 13:6)*

To be motivated in giving up the old things, we have the promise of eternal life and the values of the Kingdom of righteousness, values that will bring rest and peace to our souls. *(The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Romans 14:17)*

If we want to be in the Kingdom of God, we will have to give up tax theft, replace the old things with the new ones from the Kingdom, and stop craving what is not ours. *(Give therefore Caesar

the things that are Caesar's. Matthew 22:21; Do not crave the things of your neighbor. Deuteronomy 5:21)*

When we are determined to stop using or crucifying the old things, we will lose the material advantages that these things offered. Difficulties will arise in our lives, there will be tough situations, but it is worth trying. *(In the world you have troubles, but take courage; I have overcome the world. John 16:33)* Together with these troubles, Lord Jesus tells us that He will give us His peace. *(The work of righteousness shall be peace, the fruit of righteousness: rest and eternal peace. Isaiah 32:17)*

For those that understand the values of the upper Kingdom and are determined to give up the old things, they must have faith that God will not leave them alone and that He will fulfill their daily needs. (*Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33; Be content with what you have, for He Himself said: "I will never leave you". Hebrews 13:5)*

Many of those that are called to benefit from the things of the Kingdom of God are not willing to pay the price, which often seems too high. But we must add that such an attitude shall only keep them away from the Kingdom. God warns us that the one that sins does not know God!

If by this point we are not subject to God's command, if we work illegally or drive our vehicles indifferently to traffic laws, if the world's television/internet is our food, if we use bad words… it means that we are still in the fallen state, in which sin is a way of life, we are not yet born of God. *(Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Romans 13:1; For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 1 John 2:16).*

We will have to understand that even if we perform multiple religious rituals: if we go to church, pray, speak in tongues, prophesize, but we do not walk after righteousness, God tells us that He does not know us! *(Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Matthew 7:21; Many will say to Me on that day:*

"Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?", and then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." Matthew 7:21-23)

If the Holy Spirit has not convinced us about the state of sin, it means that the new birth has not occurred. The first thing the Holy Spirit does to the one who receives the Word of God is to convince him about his state of sin. This is the beginning. The Spirit cannot dwell in man without having convinced him about this state. *(And when He (the Holy Spirit) comes, He will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness… John 16:8)*

The Scripture makes a clear distinction between darkness and light. For the one who walks in the light, sin is no longer a way of life. He is characterized by giving up on the old things and is

hungry/thirsty for righteousness and purity. *(Whosoever is born of God does not sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 1 John 3:8)*

Let us be very careful not to confuse the born from above person who has a fall, with the one who has not yet given up the things of the Kingdom of Darkness. We should not fool ourselves and state that there is no man without sin, and by doing so let ourselves indulge in the things of darkness. *(Whoever sins is of the devil. 1 John 3:8)*

There is an incomparable difference between someone living in darkness, not fully subject to God's commandments, and someone who is fully subject but falls into a mistake/sin.

In the first case, we can speak of a permanent sin and living in the darkness of the old things, without God, even if that person declares that he has returned to God. *(If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we are liars and do not have the truth; 1 John 1:6; Whoever sins is of the devil. 1 John 3:8)*

In the second case, we speak of unwanted accidental sin. In this case, by confessing the sin, there is the possibility of cleansing through the Lord's blood.*(But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7)*

The Scriptures tell us very clearly how we can verify ourselves. If we are a new creature: the old things are gone. *(Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away… 2 Corinthians 5:17)*

A resisting attitude

Another old thing that is hard for us to give up, which provides us with a way of life that lacks much trouble is the attitude of resistance towards those that wants to hurt us. When someone seeks to take our belongings, to humiliate us, the old "man" will look for various solutions to prevent it from happening. These vary from simple gestures of resistance, to harsher and even harsher attitudes; it could be an outburst of anger, or even calling the police…

Let's look at an example: If we come home from work during the evening and notice that someone has taken over our personal parking lot, we have at our disposal the option of lifting up his windshield wiper to manifest our dissatisfaction. Perhaps he won't care and we will have to lift it up once more, then if it persists we will have to leave him a threatening note… or call the… By appealing to worldly/ resisting methods for solving the problem, we will certainly find ourselves a solution, but if we are going to resort to the upper things/non-resistance, all that we will have left is to be humiliated.

We may perhaps agree on some minor aspects of non-resistance, such as *allowing someone to skip the line to get to the doctor.* However, when our financial stability or physical integrity comes at risk, our priorities suddenly change and we can no longer clearly see these values/things of the Heavenly Kingdom.

Nonetheless, if we want to be in God's presence and have His peace, we must accept the price of giving up this old thing which only brings trouble, and replace it with the Lord's teaching. (But I tell you: do not resist…)

If we won't understand that we are called to carry out our salvation unto the very end and that we must grow to be just like Lord Jesus, if we won't understand that the Kingdom of God requires us to live in righteousness, be men of peace, abounding in patience, love… then we will hold on to the old things in order keep ourselves out of trouble. We will end up keeping a little resistance, so that when we are surrounded from all sides, in order to make our lives easier, we will still maintain a few hidden intentions, a half-truth, some undeclared work, bribery…

However, in order to enter the Kingdom of God, we must sell / give up on all the old things so that we can buy that new treasure/ new things to replace the old ones. *(The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Matthew 13:45; But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness. Matthew 6:33)*

The one who makes the decision for the Kingdom will have to leave himself in the strong hand of God, and God Himself will start working. He will lead our path, which will lead us to peace, abounding patience, love… *(This is why He is also able to forever save those who draw near to God, through Him. Hebrews 7:25)*

Self-reflection

- Are the old things still a way of life for me?

- Do I love the values of the Kingdom of God, am I thirsty for its purity?

- Have I searched for the things from above as for a treasure?

Source: *Giving up the old things* — Unmodified Word
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