

Pastor Dilson's Letter From Prison #2

Feb 25, 2013

Dear brothers and sisters:

God is great and merciful. He does not change or stop being what He is because of the problem or difficulties that I may be experiencing. The circumstances of life, no matter how difficult they may be, do not diminish God's glory or goodness. I cannot in any way keep from looking to my Lord and putting my confidence in Him; my eyes and hope are fixed on Him.

It's now two o'clock in the morning, and I cannot sleep. All the nights are hot, without space to turn over, extremely uncomfortable. In spite of all this, I know that Jesus is at my side, and this comforts me. I see my cellmates all asleep, and I keep imagining that Jesus wants to have some time with me for us to talk a little. These are the moments when I have freedom to express my frustrations, my feelings of anguish, my fears - what a dear friend, how I love Him!

During these nights I experience battles you can't imagine. I also feel the presence of the enemy close by, whispering in my ear, saying that God does not care about me. What a fight I wage against self-pity, against the feeling of despair, loneliness, injustice, anger, and so many other feelings that seek to dominate me. I rebuke those mental battles in the name of Jesus, the One who shed even His last drop of blood for me. He is infinitely good, and His mercy endures forever!

Those battles are fought not just at night, but also during the day. One needs to have a lot of courage, along with humility, and overall the Lord's grace to resist the insults, the acts meant to humiliate us, the arrogance and disrespect. A while back a Muslim man approached me and began to verbally attack me saying: "You are nothing. You know nothing. And nothing you teach is worth anything. You are less than the little toe of anyone here." And with many other words he tried to humiliate me more and more. The words he spoke were hard and terrible.

And all I said to him was: "Yes, you can continue. Yes, I am listening. Continue!" He became even more impassioned and poured out a flood of insults trying to drown me in his hellish words. After a brief silence, I asked him: "Have you finished? Have you said everything you want? If so, can I speak now?" With a stern voice he replied: "Speak!"—expecting I would reply in a tone of arrogance and anger.

So, I began by saying: "You're right. I really am nothing. I am less than a grain of dirty sand. I am dust. I am a worm. I am a filthy rag. I am a dead dog." And, almost crying, I added: "But I want you to meet someone who was everything, who was the Creator of the universe, full of glory, the Sovereign Lord, who in spite of all that, loved me so much that He gave up His life to be insulted, broken and shed His blood for me...."

And when this man heard me say that, it was as if he had been shocked with 50 thousand volts. He never expected that reaction. He expected I'd pay him back with equally harsh words. Then, with a soft voice he told me: "I have been trailing you and watching your movements over the past month. I was sent to test you, to see if you really are a man of God. And I can say that you are the man of God that everyone says you are. For a man of God, when humiliated, is exalted by God. Starting today, you have my respect!" I

was overwhelmed to hear this man recite the Word of God! Now he is one of my best friends. He has not come to Christ, but he has never again opposed my sharing Christ!

My dear brothers and sisters, I want to remind you that your life is hidden in Jesus, regardless of where you are or in what circumstance you find yourself. You might find yourself being humiliated, misunderstood, sad, anguished, sick, facing many needs. I want to encourage you today: "Cast your care upon Him, for He cares for you." Don't let the enemy receive any glory, for the Lord is present, even though He's not solving your problem in the way you had hoped. He will give you grace to endure and to be more than a conqueror.

Some days ago another man, to whom I've been ministering since I first arrived in prison, asked me: "How can I be a Protestant?" I answered: "I'm going to answer your question in a way that's different from what you're expecting. I'm going to imagine that you are asking me: 'How can I receive Jesus in my heart and become converted to Him?'" I then showed him some Bible verses, especially Rom. 3:23, Rom. 6:23, Rom. 10:9–10. I told him about the expulsion from paradise, the condemnation to eternal death, the plan of redemption through Jesus, and His death on the cross. I told him that it is necessary to believe in Jesus and obey Him, and after sharing a few other things I asked him: "Do you want to give your life to Jesus and become one of His disciples, believing and obeying Him?" He answered: "I do. I want to give Him my whole life. I want to live for Him." This man is a Frenchman, 55 years old. The Lord has given me the opportunity of sharing His love with such a diverse audience: Catholics, atheists, Muslims, Christians. Alleluia!

We need to remember that our life belongs to Christ, and since the one who owns us is the Lord, He has the right to use us however He desires, and wherever He desires, to fulfill His perfect will. He is God, the creator. In Him we live and move and have our being. What a privilege to be chosen by Him to be in this place at this moment, in order to be His arms, His feet, His mouth in order to embrace, help and show the way to so many here, who besides being prisoners, are so needy in every imaginable way.

I want to thank all of my brothers and sisters who have been with me in this prison. I can honestly say that my biggest desire used to be to leave here and rejoin those I love. However I have been praying the prayer of Mary: "May your will, Lord, be fulfilled in me." And if it be his will that I stay longer in prison, in order to bring freedom to those who really are captive (physically and spiritually), then may it be. He will give me grace to handle it, as He has so far. And He will give grace to the brothers and sisters who have been giving us the necessary support here.

I do cry and lament over being imprisoned, for I would rather be with my family, my wife, my children, whom I love deeply. Freedom is priceless. How it is precious! I had it for so many years of my life, and I didn't realize how important it was, how I should have taken better advantage of it to spend time with the people I love. But at the same time I rejoice in being a prisoner for the sake of the Gospel.

After the latest hearing (dealing with a man we had hired who claimed to be a lawyer, but really was not), the judge told me: "My work as judge has finished; the only issue that remains now is the fact that you converted children (minors)." He has seen that all of the other charges are false. The judge himself said that we are not "gang leaders," and he sees we are innocent of the enemy's accusations. The judge even told Zeneide that she was unjustly imprisoned.

All of this confirms what I've said from the beginning: I am a prisoner of Christ, and God is my judge. When the moment comes, He will release us from here, and I want to leave with the feeling that I was faithful to the Lord during my journey through this place.

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May the Lord continue to shower your lives with blessing.

*Christ's prisoner,
José Dílon*