



Bird of fire

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Thanks to Jesus who gave us a new life, breaking the separation between us and the Father and leaving within our being His Holy Spirit to teach us, comfort and rule and intercede for us.

This book is dedicated to all those who do not know the true image of Jesus yet, the One who can take them out of the darkness of sin into the light of eternal life.

"Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.'" (John 3: 1-8)

Index

1. Introduction	6
2. Before	10
• To be born again	11
• Truths about God and His purposes for men	13
• The sinful nature of man; the works of the flesh	16
• Sins, commitments and spiritual lies	22
3. After	32
4. Epilogue	38
5. Biblical References	39

Introduction

What do you understand by salvation?

What do you think about the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross?

What does it mean 'to be born again'?

Why does God get so angry with sin and why does He worry so much about the sinner?

Why being a conscious Christian is so important to the Lord?

If we read God's word carefully, we realize that nothing is by chance. *First*, we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God in a human incarnation that led Him to death on the cross to redeem us from our sins. He was the only one able to do this. He was not just a prophet but the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit; *1 Jn. 5: 7; Matt. 3: 16-17; Mk. 1: 9-11; Lk. 3: 21-22*). *Second*, He gave us eternal life, dying *only once* for our sins (*Heb. 9: 27-28*) and this faith comes to our hearts when we hear the word of God. Through this faith, when we do what is written in *Rom. 10: 9-10*, declaring Him aloud as our only Lord and Savior, excluding all other gods, we receive His Holy Spirit into our spirit and we are born again, as Jesus said to the Pharisee Nicodemus, "no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit... What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit" (*Jn. 3: 1-15*). Our verbalization is necessary, for it is through the word that the spiritual world records what we want and manifest it in our lives. That's why God in creating the world spoke His word. He said, "Let there be light" and there was light. *Third*, we must believe that God raised Him from the dead, for the resurrection was the landmark of the work accomplished on the cross, that is, through it Jesus defeated the law and the death, the sin, the devil, the flesh and the world. *Forth*, be willing to abandon all other doctrines, religious concepts and objects of veneration, as well as all habits that you have had until today and that have been learned from the world. Whoever is born again in Christ becomes a new creature, by the power of the Holy Spirit; changes its attitudes, therefore, leaves the things of sin and the way it behaved before and begins to be more interested in the things of God, seeking, now, the sanctity of life. *Fifth*, please, understand what is written in *Heb. 9: 27-28*, "Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." There is no reincarnation, only this life ("Just as people are destined to die once"). Therefore, don't neglect the chance the Lord gives you today to be saved.

Many speak of Jesus, but not with this vision in mind, so they are deceived, thinking they will gain eternal life by other means. After we believe and accept Him as the only Lord of our lives, abandoning any doctrine and delivering ourselves totally into His hands, then, yes, we are ready to be considered true *children* of God (*Jn. 1: 12-13*). Before this, we are only His *creatures* (*Rom. 8: 18-25*). The Lord is holy and His Word can not be mingled with any other that comes from the man or the devil, even with appearance of truth. In *2 Cor. 11: 14*, the bible says: "And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light [*here symbolizing the truth; however, what he brings is a false light of understanding, a false truth*]". Jesus also said in *Jn. 8: 44-45*, "You are from your father the devil [*He was referring to those who opposed Him*], and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning [*that is, he generated the spiritual death in Adam and Eve, and the physical death, when Cain*

killed Abel because his sinful nature was already within man], and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.”

Being a Christian is not to have a religion, it's just follow the word of God (the gospel, which means 'good news'), for the word '*religion*' comes from the Latin '*religare*', which means '*to remake a connection*', a connection that was lost between God and human being because of the sin of Adam and Eve. Therefore, the religion was something created by man himself to meet his inexplicable need of Him, but by his pride, he didn't allow himself to understand that only the Creator could do this by sending His only begotten Son (*Jn. 3: 16*: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life”).

This book aims to clarify questions about some religious practices that have been assumed by human beings as something pleasing to God; however, are abominations before Him for not having any agreement with His word. More than that, this book seeks to bring a discernment between the true God and everything else that is in the *spiritual world*, but it is not God (for example, angels and demons). Hence, read it with an open mind to the truth and a contrite and reverent heart before the Lord, and thus you will discover what it means to *be born again*.

As we saw in the previous page of the introduction, Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a teacher of the law, but something inside him had already moved him to learn more about the doctrine preached by Jesus, so he searched Him at the night, probably, on the sly because of his colleagues. He was amazed with the miracles that the Lord was doing and knew that only a man of God could make them. But his mind was not yet fully opened to understand some spiritual things. Then, Jesus said, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above”. What He was saying is that if he wanted to understand more about the mysteries of the kingdom of God, he would have to be born again, that is, to start spiritually all over again and be willing to learn a new way of thinking. The power of the Holy Spirit needed to operate fully and freely in his soul. Nicodemus did not understand and insisted asking if a man could return to the womb. Then the Lord explained to him again, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit”. What the Lord wanted to tell him with it is that there was a very big difference between being born as a human being of flesh and to be born of the Spirit by divine action. What Nicodemus needed to do was to believe that Jesus was the Son of God who had come into the world to save him from his sins and that he, Nicodemus, was a sinner in need of forgiveness from God to receive salvation. Nicodemus already knew the baptism of repentance preached by John the Baptist; however, as a Pharisee, it was very difficult to accept that he was a sinner like all men. Jesus continued talking a little about the characteristics of those who were born again ('to be born of water') and received the Holy Spirit. He used the Greek word '*pneuma*' (Hebrew, *Ruach*), which means, among other things, *wind, spirit*; and said that no one knows where the wind comes from or where it goes and that blows where it wills. This symbolizes the freedom that the children of God have to move on earth, for they are driven by the Holy Spirit to be where He wants and do what He wishes. “*Being born of the Spirit*” is to let himself be taken by the strength of the Spirit of God

(*baptism of Holy Spirit*) causing a true inner transformation, as happened with the disciples after Pentecost. In other words, it is to change radically the way of being, receiving all the power He has to shed, and to be an instrument in His hands to do the same thing that Jesus came to do among us: to teach, to heal, to deliver, to bring understanding of the word etc.; in short, to destroy the works of the devil. However, to accomplish this it is necessary to leave *EVERYTHING* that one has ever known and lived, opening his own heart for the new of God.

Another thing that should be clarified before we begin our story is about the meaning of *sin*. One of the meanings of the word *sin* in Greek is *HAMARTIA* = *to err the target*. But there are others like: *ADIKIA* = *iniquity, injustice*; *PONERIA* = *evil, of a vicious or degenerate kind*; *PARABASIS* = *transgression, to go beyond a known limit*; *ANOMIA* = *lack of law, disrespect or violation of law*. In short, sin is to err the target traced by God for our lives, it is the failure to love Him with our whole being; it's the active refusal to recognize Him and obey Him as our Creator and Lord; independence, to claim the position that only God can occupy; hostility toward God (*Rom. 8: 7*: "For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law – indeed it cannot"), manifested in active rebellion against Him; to take from God what is His. And the bible says that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins:

- *Lev. 17: 11*: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement."

- *Heb. 9: 22*: "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." Therefore, only the blood shed on the cross might redeem us from our sins.

Thinking of all those explanations of what sin is we can be sure that all of us err the target and practice all other distortions, so the bible says that we are sinners and if we say we have no sin, we are lying (*1 Jn. 1: 8-10*). Thus, *sin* goes much further than to kill, steal and commit adultery.

When we read the Old Testament, we can see that for some transgressions of the Law the punishment was physical death, usually by stoning, by the sword or depending on God's will. After the coming of Jesus, who died in our place, the punishment for those who insist on staying in sin is still death, here symbolizing the separation from God and the prison in chains of the devil; therefore, the loss of freedom and eternal life. In other words: to live eternally in hell. So, what we call *death*, that is, to be buried, God calls *to sleep*. For Him, *death is eternal separation of man from Him*.

Some animals in the Old Testament, described in the first seven chapters of Leviticus, were separated for the atonement of sins, for example: *young bull*, in the case of the high priest and the congregation; *goat (male animal)*, in case the prince; *female goat* or *lamb* for ordinary people, and *turtledove* or *pigeon* in the case of the poor. A tenth of an Ephah (1 ephah = 17.62 liters, so the tenth part corresponds to 1.76 liters) of fine flour ('choice flour' – the finest and purest wheat flour) was used in the case of someone very poor. For example, in *Lev. 5: 7* is written: "But if you cannot afford a sheep, you shall bring to the Lord, as your penalty for the sin that you have committed, two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering." I am writing this reference because the hero of our allegory is a male turtledove called *Nicholas* who discovered the reason for living as a 'dead' on earth and then begins to know what it means '*to be born again*'; he understands what eternal life is and decides to follow word of the Creator. Because the turtledove was an animal offered in sacrifice to God, *Nicholas* begins to be a living sacrifice, for he becomes a

witness to the truth. He is moved by a little pigeon called '*Bird of Fire*' (*The Holy Spirit*), which leads him to the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Nicolaus, Nicolas or Nicholas is a Greek name that can be translated as, 'victorious over the people'; victory of the people' or 'the winner of the people.'

May God bless you and clarify your mind, freeing you from every lie that can lead you to sin. On the contrary, may the light of the divine understanding touch your being, making you able to exercise the free will that He gave you, declaring Him as the only Lord and Savior of your life. Then, you'll know what *Eternal Life* is. May the peace of the Lord be with you!

Notes:

- Words or phrases enclosed in brackets [] or parenthesis (), in *italics*, were placed by me, in most cases, to explain the biblical text, although some verses already contain them [not in italics].
- The version used here is the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV-1989 (1995)
- NIV = New International Version (it will be used in brackets in some verses to facilitate the readers' understanding).
- At the end of the book are the biblical references of the quotations that were made.

Before



1
To be born again

There he was, Nicholas, wandering around the square where he used to meet with his friends every Saturday afternoons to ‘update the chat.’ But it was not Saturday, it was Monday and he did not feel well that morning. He had no desire to go to work or to talk to anyone. The other turtledoves were busy in the street, trying to get a supply to take home. He needed to think correctly about what was happening to his mind at that moment. If he stayed in the street, he could even get hit by a car, such was the state of alienation in which he found himself. His mind wandered for several passages of his life and his feelings seemed confused, following his disordered thoughts. Nothing was funny anymore, nothing called his attention. The sky was clear and blue, the sun shone, warming the hearts of many beings on earth; however, to Nicholas, everything looked gray and sad.

He thought, *“What a young turtledove like me should be doing right now? I should be behaving like everyone else who I know, instead of being here wandering like an idle old man, thinking of what passed away and will not turn back. Good heavens! Nicholas! Wake up, guy! You drank your last beer on Saturday. There is no reason to be with this appearance of hangover. Gosh! I’m so muddled that I want to throw everything into the air and fly to another place, but where? Nicholas, my boy, what happened to you? Do not go into depression, otherwise things will go down the drain. You are without money, you have already spent your money with nonsense, your girlfriend said goodbye to you, you have no more interest in work, no more goals in life, last week you ended up in the emergency room because of gastritis by stress ... You are going bad, guy!”*

Nicholas thought only what was not good; until he came across a black book written in large golden letters, *“Holy Bible.”* Ah! There was still one thing he could boast about: he was the only bird that had learned the language of humans. The Creator had been so good to him giving him this gift and he almost threw it away. The book had fallen, probably, from the hands of any regular of the square. That’s when the wind blew and the leaves began to open before him. It seems that someone wanted him to read them. He thought, *“After all, it costs nothing! I have nothing to do now.”*

He began to read, *“The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, ‘Mortal, can these bones live?’ I answered, ‘O Lord God, you know’. Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.’”*

“Umm... It seems that he’s talking to me. I resemble a bag of dry bones like these. Ouch! What is this shiver I feel now? Gosh! What spirit he is talking about? And will the bones live, be covered by sinews, flesh and skin? Let’s continue reading.”

“So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live’. I prophesied as he commanded

me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, ‘Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’”

He said to himself, *“Let’s stop here in order to reason, Nicholas. They look like you, a ‘cut off.’ The spirit that is in them comes from the Creator and must have life so that their flesh can live too. And the flesh is useless; it is the spirit that gives life. It means that my body is like a shell that serves to no purpose, but if my spirit has life, then yes, I’ll be helpful for many things. Ah! My spirit must also be alive, then; if it is dead, I won’t have projects, neither dreams nor reason to do anything. It takes a ‘breath’ in it, ah! Read more, Nicholas!”*

“Therefore prophesy, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.’”

“Ah! It is clear now. There is a note here, “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead” (Jam. 2: 26). I have a spirit within me, my own spirit that was given by the Creator, so I have some kind of life; I move, I know who I am, I know who’s around me, but there’s nothing else... Hmm! Only the Spirit who comes from Him gives me true life because then I begin to see what I can not with my natural eyes; I begin to understand more things, learn secrets that ordinary people can not. Wow!”

Nicholas did not notice, but this reasoning was not coming from him. A pigeon flew over his head swiftly and poured a tiny flame of fire, invisible to the natural eyes. He flew away from him without Nicholas being aware of it. By flying, the leaves of the book moved again.



2

Truths about God and His purpose for men

The leaves of the book stopped moving and Nicholas concentrated on reading. Fortunately, the book had some notes made by its owner, so that he could understand what he was reading:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being... He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

“Gosh! I’ve never thought about it. The Word is the Son of God, Jesus, who existed before the foundation of the world, for God is spirit and He is eternal. There is a note here, ‘Jesus is the word.’ Ah! Jesus is the living word of God, so it is written that the world was created through the Word, and it is God Himself in the person of the Son. Hence, we can say that He made all things. The Word also says that He came to His own, but His own didn’t receive Him. Hmm! He came to save the people who had been chosen in the Old Testament, of whom Abraham is called the patriarch. What a pity! They did not accept Him, but to all who accepted Him, He gave them the power to become children of God. ‘Power’, what a strong word! Hey! He is saying that gives all of His children (The people of the Old Testament and to us today) the same authority that He has to reign. I’m not still very capable of using the authority; my life is completely destroyed.”

He wanted to read more. Now he was interested in learning more about the Creator. What was His character? He went on reading,

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God”... “This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day”... “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day”... “The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge.”

Our little friend began to discover something important: God is love and His desire is that everyone has eternal life in Jesus, His only Son, that is, that they not come to know the death that sin brings, because it separates us from Him. And it’s the very word, the Son, which will bring the trial on the *Last Day*. How could he have eternal life?

“... If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free... So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed”... “Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love... There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, ‘I love God’, and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also”... “You shall rise before the aged, and defer to the old; and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord. When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

“Umm! This thing now struck me. I’m afraid to know the truth about me because it can be ugly, but if I want to get rid of these problems, I need to know the truth thoroughly. Do you know, Nicholas, my dear?! You don’t know how to love, that’s it! So you are always afraid and you feel torments. You have called love many things that are not love. I’m sure that His love does not kill, but gives courage to overcome challenges. Furthermore, you must respect the elderly and love your fellow men in all nations on earth. If only I knew how to pray or had someone who introduced me to Him!” Then he read,

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God”... “Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us”... “This [prayers, supplications, intercessions and thanksgiving on behalf of all men] is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human.”

“Ah! What an interesting thing! There is no intermediary between me and Him except His Spirit, and even if I suffer and I do not know how to pray as I ought, when I am truly His son, I’ll have a mediator, not only His Spirit, but the very Son of God interceding for my sake. There is no other mediator or intercessor. Nicholas! What are you waiting for making the right decision?”

The book also said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

“This is awesome! These people out there say that all roads lead to God, but it’s a lie. The book says that the Son is the way, the truth and the life. If there is only one Son of God, therefore, there is only one way. If He is the truth, the rest is a lie. And if He is the life, which does not agree with Him is death, eh! What is written next?”

“I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me... Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

“Wait a minute! Here is a note beside, ‘The ruler of this world is the devil’. Ouch, what a fear! There’s more, ‘He was driven out when Jesus died on the cross for men.’ It means that even if he is prowling around, the victory has already been won when the

Son was crucified. And this victory is available to all who accept Him... Phew! Good news! Nicholas, it seems that things are starting to clear up for you, isn't it?"

Little Nicholas began to know many important things about God: He Himself gave His Son out of love, taught us to love, left His Spirit as our intercessor and showed us the way to heaven, besides to reveal the truth about ourselves. This was quite profound for him; he needed to absorb this learning and change his way of thinking.

He did not notice, but the same pigeon passed again over his head, poured another tiny flame of fire and flew away. By flying, the leaves of the book moved again.



3

The sinful nature of man; the works of the flesh

The Maker started again His treatment with the little turtledove. The pages opened and the bird could read,

“What are mortals, that they can be clean? Or those born of woman, that they can be righteous?”... “Surely there is no one on earth so righteous as to do good without ever sinning”... “As it is written: ‘There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one. Their throats are opened graves; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of vipers is under their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes’”... “The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse – who can understand it? I the Lord test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.”

This shocked him, *“I always thought I was a good guy. I have my faults, but I do not think I’m evil... But thinking better... Nicholas, my boy! Sometimes you say what you don’t want and if someone ‘steps on your big toe’ you become a dangerous critter, don’t you? Then, ‘God help!’ Your little mouth, so ‘holy’, becomes a weapon, don’t you remember? How much trouble you have already created because of it?”* He plucked up courage and went on, *“Hmm! There is one more note here, ‘One of the meanings of the word ‘sin’ is ‘hamartia’ (Greek) = to err the ‘target.’ There’s something else written, ‘If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.’ Umm! Nicholas! You’d better do a deeper inspection inside here.”* The book went on.

“Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. No one, when tempted, should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. But one is tempted by one’s own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death”... “For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin”... “Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested”... “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread’. Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone’.’ Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, ‘To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please [Adam, by sinning, gave what he had received from God to the devil, so Jesus said that Satan is the prince of this world – Jn. 12: 31; Jn. 14: 30; Jn. 8: 44]. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours’. Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it

is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you', and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone'. Jesus answered him, 'It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him, and angels came and attended him."

"That's it! You found the treasure, Nicky! Have you noticed that the old story comes always repeating in your life? You 'fall like a duck in the same lake'; it's the same temptation that takes away your peace, did you see? Gosh! Even the Son of God as a man was tempted by the devil, but he resisted and won. But! ... He had great faith in the Father, so He did not sin. It is no use asking for anything to Him and not to believe that He will give me. That's why we are in this torment: lack of faith, we don't know to resist temptation... Where is your strength, Nicholas? Moreover, the book says, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' Who is His child is protected; if the evil comes to tempt him, he will be tempting God Himself. Nicholas, you're bigger than this 'bastard cigarette', this can of beer that seems to come rolling up to you and those little things that seem to call you with invisible and irresistible fingers, don't you think? Stop being 'shameless' and resist. But how? I am so weak and so fickle. If I start a diet, the next day it ends... Today, for example, I had no desire to work. I do not know how I yet have a job. If I don't put an end in this depression, job will be by a whisker. Take care of yourself, buddy!"

Our little friend had just discovered something very important: no one was perfect or 'holier than Him.' On the contrary, had a tendency to do everything wrong without God's approval. Then, the fault was His. Nah! He needed to find a way to uproot this evil thing from inside him, which made him constantly stumble in life. Nothing worked. It was time to change that situation. He needed to have faith and know how to resist the temptation. He still lacked knowledge to put this force into practice. Where was it? The pages of the book began to move with the wind and he saw a note next to a text, 'what the Lord says about the sins of the human flesh.' *"Flesh, what is this?"* Another note sprang up, 'Flesh not only refers to the physical and material nature of man, but the part of his soul that tends to sin.' *"Oh, good! Now I'm understanding. Let's move on."*

"So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell"... "but no one can tame the tongue [as one tames the animals] – a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so"... "From the fruit of the mouth one's stomach is satisfied; the yield of the lips brings satisfaction. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits"... "Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; your own lips testify against you."

"Umm! There comes again this thing about tongue. This word is annoying me, but I find it hard to be quiet in given hours; after all, we have to speak what we have in mind, right? Hmm!... Stop justifying yourself, Nicholas! It is easier to recognize that you need to improve the 'speech', 'to sharpen the tongue' for more important things. How do I tame it? Oops! There is more reprimand,"

"And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. They know God's

decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die – yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them”... *“Do not say anything, Nicholas, just go on.”*

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord’. No, ‘if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads’. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”... “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”

“Vengeance is a sin; I can not keep it inside me anymore. I am now remembering certain relationships that were not very nice. I think that the desire to take revenge on each of those who hurt me keeps me stuck. That’s why I am not happy in love. I guess I’ll have to learn to release forgiveness henceforth. Nicholas, my beloved, one more thing needs to be changed in you! I just know that it’s hard to walk on the right track.”

“You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the Lord.”

“Look at this! Our appearance should be quite clean for God. And so many people doing stupid things out there, changing the color of their feathers or drawing on them! ... Furthermore, it is useless to do anything else because of who is dead... Gosh!”

“For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants [he refers to the higher authorities instituted by God, whether in church or in the world], busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them – taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due. Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; ‘You shall not murder’; ‘You shall not steal’; ‘You shall not covet’; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’. Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law”... “Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God’. So then, each of us will be accountable to God.”

“I’d better stop this bad habit of criticizing everyone. This is not very good. I think that is why many turn away; they do not stand my criticisms anymore. Alas! Now I remembered that I owe till the last feather of my body; indeed, I have the bad habit of buying on credit. I have to pay my debts, so no one will charge me anymore and I won’t have to go through so much shame, after all.”

“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that hurry to run to evil, a lying witness who testifies falsely, and one who sows discord in a family [NIV, ‘dissension among brothers’].”

“Nicholas! How many times have you lied this week? One more thing to learn: lie is a sin. Moreover, the Lord abhors the tendency of the flesh to create enmity and trouble. He hates arrogance, pride, falsehood, injustice and murder, people who plot evil things against others, especially against the innocent, and people who like evil. Protect me, Lord!”

“Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the

greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers – none of these will inherit the kingdom of God”... “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything”... “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death [*the ‘first death’ was the sin of Adam, which led to spiritual death*]”...

“Nicky, what a horrible thing! Coward does not go to heaven, besides those who practice the other things described above. Decide for yourself!”

“It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles... But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile”... “Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication [PT – prostitution], impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing [PT, gluttony], and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

“Look, guy, how many notes here!”

1) Prostitution here includes not only sexual promiscuity itself, but the ‘spiritual prostitution’, that is, not to have only one God in whom we rely; it means to ask for help to other gods, other aids to our lives, being unfaithful to Jesus. It is look for the solution of our problems elsewhere and wait on other help than His. Saints and guides are one thing; God is another quite different.

2) The impurity is more than obvious: to think of the opposite way to the innocence that God put in us through His Spirit; to think of filthy and worldly things instead of heavenly ones.

3) Licentiousness is sensuality, lust, debauchery, sexual satisfaction without shame.

4) Idolatry is to put things and entities on the altar other than Jesus, the Son of God. Greed is considered by God as idolatry (*Eph. 5: 5; Col. 3: 5*), as well as the stubbornness (*1 Sam. 15: 23*).

5) Sorcery includes all acts of rebellion to the will of God as all acts of occultism, superstitions, occult arts of divination and prediction of the future, familiar spirits, necromancy etc., that lead us not to believe only in the power of the Word to get something. Rebellion is considered by God as witchcraft (*1 Sam. 15: 23; Lev. 20: 27*).

6) Enmity is all that is contrary to love and true unity between the children of God, including antipathy, hostility and prejudice etc.

7) Strife means: discussion or strife of words, controversy, rivalry, competition, discord. All of these things prevent God’s truth.

8) As for jealousy, doesn’t even need comment; being jealous and possessive is to want to possess what is not one’s own asset, it is to want to take possession of something that belongs only to God, as another human being, for example.

9) Anger is a feeling that even God Himself feels against all sin and unrighteousness (His wrath). He does not forbid us to feel anger (*Ps. 4: 4a* – ARA: “Be angry and do not sin”; NRSV – “When you are disturbed, do not sin”; NIV – “In your anger do not sin”), because He knows that this kind of feeling is necessary to man so that he is not conniving with the sin and error, losing his salvation. What He does not want is that we give room to anger to affect our neighbor in a damaging manner or that we feel anger for what does not concern to the holy things. Fighting for the worldly and sinful things is not the will of God for us, because it ‘infects’ who are around us and

multiplies violence in the hearts, creating hard barriers of hatred and separation and often insurmountable. The wrath of God is His firm, constant, continuous and uncommitted antagonism with sin in all its forms and manifestations (*Rom. 1: 18*: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth”... “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord” – *Lev. 19: 18*).

10) Quarrels only create confusion and doubt in the minds of people and come from the evil one to divide and undermine forces.

11) Dissension means difference of opinion or interests, disagreement, opposition. It is normal that each of us has the right to think whatever we want about something; otherwise we would live in a dictatorship, which would bring oppression. But what Paul talks here is about a given standpoint, which can be distorted to the interest of some, creating doubt in the heart of the weakest and stealing their faith, bringing disunity and separation of purposes. Couples with completely opposite goals endanger the stability of the whole family, starting with the children, who lose the parameter of the truth of life. Societies where members do not have a single goal to the company will create sooner or later, the bankruptcy of the business. And so on in all branches of society; when there is dissension, there is no prosperity.

12) Faction is a divergent or dissident part of one group or a party, revolt, mutiny. Paul says that this kind of thing is an act of assumed rebellion, denying God’s choice for the leader and relegating his authority to the background. This decreases the strength of all and opens gaps for the destruction of the enemy. So, if you do not agree with the position of leadership in your workplace, do not lift up fans there to break down the company. This will bring harmful consequences for you and for those who follow you in this riot. If you do not agree, be brave, resign from employment and lift your own business, doing it your way and, if possible, better. This is maturity.

13) Envy, lie and slander are the works that have the highest quotation in the ‘ranking’ of devastation of the soul. The competition for survival generates this kind of attitude in order to succeed. However, they have to be uprooted from the flesh urgently, in order to stop the advance of the devil. Envy not only summarizes in wanting what belongs to the other; worse than that, is *to want to be that person*. “You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord.” *“Again the slander and gossip! Pay attention, Nicholas.”*

14) As for drunkenness and gluttony, don’t even need comment. Who can not replace a plate of any kind of food, a bottle of beer or a cigarette for Jesus, actually denies His importance over anything else.

“I am appalled. I have never paid attention to these things! Now I know they are sin and move us away from the Creator. There is more.”

“Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another”... “Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which are idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient”... “You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come. For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid them!”... “And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

“Yeah! I think I have to leave many things! God is not pleased with those who live provoking the others, making them angry. God is also not pleased with irreverence, pride and arrogance, for they are an abomination to Him. And yet there are people who think they know more than God!”

“None of you shall approach anyone near of kin to uncover nakedness: I am the Lord. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s wife [*stepmother*]... You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister... You shall not uncover the nakedness of your son’s daughter or of your daughter’s daughter, for their nakedness is your own nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s wife’s daughter, begotten by your father, since she is your sister. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s sister; she is your father’s flesh. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother’s sister, for she is your mother’s flesh. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s brother, that is, you shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law: she is your son’s wife... You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother’s wife... You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, and you shall not take her son’s daughter or her daughter’s daughter to uncover her nakedness; they are your flesh; it is depravity... And you shall not take a woman as a rival to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is still alive [*Monogamy has always been God’s plan for man, though He allowed polygamy to some extent for the multiplication of the human species shortly after the flood or in the case of ‘Levirate law’, marrying the sister-in-law not to destroy the offspring of the deceased brother*]. You shall not have sexual relations with your kinsman’s wife, and defile yourself with her... You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. You shall not have sexual relations with any animal and defile yourself with it, nor shall any woman give herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it: it is perversion.... For whoever commits any of these abominations shall be cut off from their people... I am the Lord your God.”

“He’s talking about unlawful marriages and abominable unions: sex with father and mother, stepmother, sister or half-sister, granddaughter, uncle, aunt, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, niece, as well as homosexuality and bestiality. I’d better keep quiet, because the subject is serious!”

He did not realize, but the little pigeon passed again over his head and poured another tiny flame of fire. As at the other times, he flew away. By flying, the leaves of the book moved once again.



4

Sins, commitments (pacts) and spiritual lies

“And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

Nicholas saw the note written below, ‘it means that he can bring knowledge that are darkness, but disguised as light, that is, of truth, but they are traps to catch the unsuspecting.’

“I’m feeling that it’s going to get hot; I’ve done so much nonsense in this area. Now I’m ready to know the truth.”

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth [NIV: The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness]. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles [*human idolatry or making God in the image of animals*]. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error [*sexual aberrations; God only planned intercourses between man and woman*]”... “Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me [*God curses to the third and fourth generation of those who commit sins and abominations against Him*], but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments [*God blesses up to a thousand generations of those who please Him*]”... “For I the Lord your God am holy. You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God. Do not turn to idols or make cast images for yourselves: I am the Lord your God”.

“He wants to be worshiped exclusively, without anyone or anything to occupy His throne, for it would be idolatry; He also doesn’t approve the distortions of the human mind that reach the body.”

“The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the *queen of heaven*; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger”... “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘You and your wives have accomplished in deeds what you declared in words, saying, ‘We are determined to perform the vows that we have made, to make offerings to the *queen of*

heaven and to pour out libations to her'. By all means, keep your vows and make your libations!' Therefore hear the word of the Lord:... 'I am going to watch over them for harm and not for good; all the people of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall perish by the sword and by famine, until not one is left. And those who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah, few in number; and all the remnant of Judah, who have come to the land of Egypt to settle, shall know whose words will stand, mine or theirs!'"

"That's it! He feels angry with idolatry, whatever it is, and this brings His punishment. Oh, mercy! Why, then, this people out there say, 'Hail, Holy Queen!'"

"When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints"... "Another angel with a golden censer came and stood at the altar; he was given a great quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar that is before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints [*those who are forgiven and sanctified by the blood of Jesus for having accepted the sacrifice of the cross and separated themselves for Him, whether married or single*], rose before God from the hand of the angel"... "Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice."

"Gosh! I had never imagined that incense to the Lord is the sincere prayers of His children. This is true incense that He wants to smell. And 'saint' is anyone who behaves in accordance with His will and separates himself for Him."

"If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not postpone fulfilling it; for the Lord your God will surely require it of you, and you would incur guilt. But if you refrain from vowing, you will not incur guilt. Whatever your lips utter you must diligently perform, just as you have freely vowed to the Lord your God with your own mouth"... "When you make a vow to God, do not delay fulfilling it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Fulfill what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not fulfill it"... "It is a snare for one to say rashly, 'It is holy', and begin to reflect only after making a vow."

"I'd better not make vows to Him anymore and that I end up not fulfilling. If He wants to bless me, amen! If not, amen too! His will be done. He knows all things. I don't need to buy my blessings. Now I found out that He is merciful and that in all His promises He is faithful. Nicky! You need to have more faith and understand that it is better not to bargain with Him. Furthermore, you can not consecrate what by itself is impure and abominable to Him, such as addictions, objects or wrong attitudes in the financial area or any other. 'To consecrate' means 'to separate' or 'to separate something truly to Him according to His holiness'; it means to leave aside what is impure or a lie."

"For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!... Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. Thus it was necessary for the sketches [*NVI = copies*] of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites [*he was referring to the vessels present in the temple, which had to be sprinkled with blood to be purified and had a symbolism, that is, they represented spiritual things*], but the heavenly things themselves [*spiritual ones*] need better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands [*he referred to the temple in Jerusalem*], a mere copy of the true one [*which is our spirit*], but he entered into heaven itself [*before the throne*]

of God], now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own [*the high priest came into God's presence once a year to make atonement for people's sins through the sacrifice of animals*]; for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as ***it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment***, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him"... "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins"... "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since then has been waiting until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet"... "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days', says the Lord: 'I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds', he also adds, 'I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more'. Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin."

"How nice! The animals no longer need to die because of men. The Son of God has already died for us once to finish with all the rituals of the past. That's it! We only have one life (not others) and we need to take care of it; we must make our right choice today, because we have only one chance to go to heaven."

"Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist!"... "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world"... "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also."

"Hmm! Now it's clear to me. The Son came to save the world, He incarnated as a human being like any other, and His name is Jesus, the Christ, God's Anointed, the Messiah. Whoever accepts this is from God; otherwise, cannot be His."

"But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher [NIV, Master], and you are all students [NIV, brothers]. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father – the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors [NIV, teacher; in Portuguese, guides], for you have one instructor [NIV, teacher; ARA, Guide], the Messiah [NIV, ARA, Christ]. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted."

"Ah! Here, there is an important note," 'Jesus was not removing the word *father* of our vocabulary. He was just saying not to misuse the word *father* in order to inflate the ego of those who seek honor through certificates or special positions. Jesus Himself used the word *father* in the usual sense (for example, in the parable of the lost son). The ancient leaders have always given much value to religious leadership (like a godfather) and took the risk of leading this practice to the religious extremism, idolizing men and taking out the Lord of the true center of worship and respect.' *"Yes, Nicholas! He is our Guide and Master. There can be no other guides or teachers. Let's move on."*

"Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that 'no idol in the world really exists', and that 'there is no God but one'. Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth – as in fact there are many gods and many lords – yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. It

is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled"... "No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons"... "All things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful, but not all things build up."

"Hmm! I found out that to be happy and healthy, it's just to give thanks to the living God and His Son by the food He gives me, for He Himself created it and He Himself blesses it. There is more."

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron. They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by God's word and by prayer."

"Oh, good! I can eat everything. God does not forbid me to eat any food. It is not the lack of food that makes me holy. And I can also marry and have a large and blessed family... The Creator will be happy with that."

The book continued to instruct Nicholas.

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames'. But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us'. He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house – for I have five brothers – that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment'. Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them'. He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent'. He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

"I've read this before; the resurrection will be only on the last day, the day when Jesus returns to call those who belong to Him. Therefore, the choice we make today will determine our destiny tomorrow; that's why there is a chasm between heaven and hell, as well as those who are gone and us. It's not permitted that the dead return to tell us anything of what there is 'on the other world'; we'll know when our turn comes. But I am sure of one thing: it depends on our choice now. After someone dies, it is no use to intercede for his soul, for the person alone had the chance to make his spiritual choice during his lifetime. This choice is personal. It is the exercise of the free will given by God to each one. Gosh! Nicholas, you have learned so many wrong things and now you have to throw away. It is better to learn the truth."

"And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their

graves will hear his voice and will come out – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation [*He was referring to the future, His second coming, about the resurrection of the dead, when those who made the choice for Jesus will receive eternal life, and those who did not opt for it will be tried and convicted*]... “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt”... “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died [*NIV: ‘have fallen asleep’; we say ‘died’ because they were buried; God calls ‘death’ ‘to sleep’*]. For since death came through a human being [*Adam, the ‘first death’*], the resurrection of the dead [*the resurrection of Jesus is the mirror of our eternal resurrection*] has also come through a human being [*Jesus*]... Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power [*hierarchy of demons*]. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death ... But someone will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?’ Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies [*a twig of wheat is not born if a seed does not die on earth; that’s what it means*]. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain [*we must first sow the grain or seed to have the foot or the entire tree*]. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed, its own body. Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are both heavenly bodies [*angels, stars and planets*] and earthly bodies [*we and the animals*], but the glory of the heavenly is one thing, and that of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable [*we sow here in life, living in an unclean and imperfect body*], what is raised is imperishable [*we sow in the spiritual things in order to have a spiritual body of glory and splendor and it differs from person to person, depending on their sowing on earth*]. It is sown in dishonor [*human imperfection*], it is raised in glory [*spiritual perfection*]. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living being’; the last Adam [*Jesus*], became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual [*We need to sow here while we are alive what we want to be in the future. If we sow only in the material and the worldly things, we can not be saved in the soul, nor have a spiritual body, because we did not think of it on earth, when we had a chance*]. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust [*our material body that was generated in the womb*]; the second man is from heaven [*our spirit generated from God’s Spirit in the new birth*]. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven. What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed [*cf. Phil. 3: 21 – he means that when Jesus returns a second time, many who are alive will be caught up in a spiritual body, glorified, as happened with Jesus when Mary Magdalene saw Him and therefore did not recognize Him immediately, for His appearance was different*], in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet [*an angel will sound a trumpet, summoning those who belong to Christ, for having His seal on their forehead – Rev. 7: 3; 9: 4; 14: 1; 22: 4*]. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised

imperishable [*with a body clean of impurities and different from that they had in life on earth*], and we will be changed [*we'll be caught up to heaven in our new body*]. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality [*we need to take care of our salvation and our holiness here on earth so that we can arrive purified in heaven*]. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory'. 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' [*Incitement, stimulus*] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law [*Law is government and authority over sin and that brings punishment*]. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain"... "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit."

"Look at this! God's children who are separated from worldly affairs to Him and for His sake will have a brighter and more beautiful body when Jesus comes back, as if they were angels, without the marks and the stains of sin. You better take care of yourself, Nicholas, and start worrying about where you go when you 'fall asleep'. Moreover, have you ever thought about it? The dead don't come back to talk to us; there is no such thing."

"Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient"... "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

"Ouch! One more thing that strikes me! Nicky, money can be a god! Look at the next note, 'the word Mammon, in Greek, which we see in other texts, can be translated as money or wealth.' 'Gosh! Money even has a proper name, like that of a god. I better give my money in the hands of the true God so that I can be really prosperous.'"

"Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to the voice of the Lord? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is no less a sin than divination, and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry."

"This is all I needed now! How is it? Greed and stubbornness are idolatry for God, and disobedience to His word (rebellion), as an act of witchcraft. That's why many people I know are not blessed. Besides, what are you doing, boy? You're stubborn like a mule! ... This is your mistake; so, you're saying that He is angry with you. You're stubborn, you're insisting with Him."

"Do not turn to mediums [*the divination by invocation of spirits*] or wizards [*NIV, 'who seek out spiritists'; this means: fortune tellers or soothsayers; they are false prophets, guessing the future. Guessing is to know or discover, by supernatural means or trickery or skillful devices, which is hidden in the past, the present or the future*]; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God"... "If any turn to mediums and wizards, prostituting themselves to them, I will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am the Lord your God"... "A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned to death, their blood is upon them"... "Now if people say to you, 'Consult the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and mutter; should not

a people consult their gods, the dead on behalf of the living”... “Then Saul said to his servants, ‘Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go to her and inquire of her.’ His servants said to him, ‘There is a medium at Endor’ [*North of Israel*]. So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes and went there, he and two men with him. They came to the woman by night. And he said, ‘Consult a spirit for me, and bring up for me the one whom I name to you’ [*God allowed this unique experience to His chosen with the purpose of giving him a lesson of life*]... ‘Bring up Samuel for me’... Then Samuel [*he was the prophet who anointed Saul king of Israel*] said to Saul, ‘Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?’ Saul answered, ‘I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more’... Samuel said... ‘Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord, and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the Lord has done this thing to you today [*the Philistines, enemies of Israel, were about to attack and king Saul was afraid*]. Moreover the Lord will give Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me; the Lord will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines’ [*Saul and all his sons, except one, were all killed in the battle of Mount Gilboa, as prophesied by Samuel*].”

“Do you see what happens to those who do what they should not? Look at the king! He died afterwards in the battle. I wonder, what happened to the woman he was looking for and did what was forbidden by God?”

“Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who by myself spread out the earth; who frustrates the omens of liars, and makes fools of diviners; who turns back the wise, and makes their knowledge foolish”... “Therefore thus says the Lord God: I am against your bands with which you hunt lives; I will tear them from your arms, and let the lives go free, the lives that you hunt down like birds. I will tear off your veils, and save my people from your hands; they shall no longer be prey in your hands; and you shall know that I am the Lord. Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not disheartened them, and you have encouraged the wicked not to turn from their wicked way and save their lives; therefore you shall no longer see false visions or practice divination; I will save my people from your hand. Then you will know that I am the Lord.”

“Nicholas! Look at what He does with those who provoke His wrath. It is better not to do nonsense.”

“But you who forsake the Lord, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune [*NIV: luck*] and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny; I will destine you to the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer, when I spoke, you did not listen, but you did what was evil in my sight, and chose what I did not delight in.”

“Good heavens! I had never thought of it, but God is not pleased with any kind of divination or superstitions. In fact, there is neither destiny nor luck. All this is sin to Him. It’s good to be aware of that! Look, there’s more!”

“While I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen before in a vision, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He came and said to me, ‘Daniel, I have now come out to give you wisdom and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications a word went out, and I have come to declare it, for you are greatly beloved. So consider the word and understand the vision’”... “But I am to tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth. There is no one with me who contends against these princes [*he referred to the princes of Greece and Persia*], except Michael, your prince”... “On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the

bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris), I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen, with a belt of gold from Uphaz [*or Ophir was an unidentified location from where fine gold came*] around his waist. His body was like beryl, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the roar of a multitude. I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; the people who were with me did not see the vision, though a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone to see this great vision. My strength left me, and my complexion grew deathly pale, and I retained no strength. Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a trance, face to the ground. But then a hand touched me and roused me to my hands and knees. He said to me, 'Daniel, greatly beloved, pay attention to the words that I am going to speak to you. Stand on your feet, for I have now been sent to you'. So while he was speaking this word to me, I stood up trembling. He said to me, 'Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words'... "and have come to help you understand what is to happen to your people at the end of days. For there is a further vision for those days'. While he was speaking these words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and was speechless. Then one in human form touched my lips, and I opened my mouth to speak, and said to the one who stood before me, 'My lord, because of the vision such pains have come upon me that I retain no strength. How can my lord's servant talk with my lord? For I am shaking, no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me'. Again one in human form touched me and strengthened me. He said, 'Do not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be strong and courageous!' When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, 'Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me'...

"*Hmm! What does this all mean? Who is Daniel and who is Gabriel? And Michael? Oops! There is a note beside,*" 'Daniel was a prophet; he fasted for many days waiting for a revelation from God. Then, after twenty-one days, the angel Gabriel came to explain to him what he needed to know. Gabriel is also known as the 'messenger of the good news' because he was the bearer of God's promises to Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, and Mary the mother of Jesus. Michael is an angel of war, a prince of them, the well-known 'Archangel Michael.' Gabriel told the prophet that the revelation he sought was being hampered by Rulers [*strong demons*] of darkness; they took twenty-one days to fall, the time of Daniel's fasting, but Michael was at his side to give him victory and allow that the servant of God received the revelation.'

"*Hmm! I had not yet thought about it: angels! Let's move on, Nicholas.*"

"Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word. Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will"... "But to which of the angels has he ever said, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?' Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?"... "Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'"... "I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; but he said to me, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!'"... "They [*the locusts, personification of demons*] have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek

he is called Apollyon”... “He said, ‘If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you.’”

“Oh! Good! One more note to explain it all, ‘Angels are powerful beings and filled with the divine radiance; however, they should not be worshiped or revered like God. There is only one God to be worshiped, Jesus. Although many theories out there try to say that there are several names of angels, in the bible only three have their names revealed: Michael, Gabriel and Apollyon (Abaddon), the angel described in Revelation. Abaddon is the satanic angel of the Abyss, whose name in Greek means ‘Destroyer’; in Hebrew, Abaddon means ‘place of destruction’ and is regularly translated as such in certain versions of the Old Testament, to denote the grave, the region of the dead. The well-known ‘Angel Raphael’ is not actually an angel created by God, but the very Spirit of God in action of healing. His name derives from El = God; rapha = healing: The Lord is who heals (Ex.15: 26).’”

“Nicholas! It is you who commands the angels to do good and to destroy evil... These ‘big boys’ are commanded by God Himself when there is something important to be done. Hmm! They are not to be worshiped, nor to receive our requests to them. Our requests are to God Himself; then, we command the angels to do what His word tells us. Oh! Now everything is clear. Why so much complication? Everything is so simple. If people knew all this they would not suffer so much.”

Our little friend began to realize why, very often, God allows the suffering of people: so that they are aware of how much sin brings suffering and other serious consequences for the present moment, for the future of the very person and for his future generations. He was perplexed, pondering how much his life had been spoiled by so many misconceptions and so many wrong decisions that he had made. He had a lot to correct within himself. There was still some hope for him? Soon, the next page was opened,

“Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that they should turn from their ways and live? ... For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.”

Nicholas looked up to the sky. What was that? It looked like a pigeon; but with a flame of fire on the head? What a crazy thing! Was it a mirage?



“Hey, you up there! If you are real, come down to talk to me.”

“Why don’t you go up? After all, you have wings!”

“What is your name? Are you challenging me?”

“My name is *Bird of fire*. Yes, I am challenging you. You’ve read enough and I know that you understood everything; you’re ready to make your decision.”

“What decision?”

“Don’t play the part of fool! Do you want to be saved or not? Or do you prefer to continue this ‘petty life’ of suffering, sin and defeat?”

“I think that’s enough. But how do I climb up there? You fly too high.”

“Read the next page and open your mouth. When you say the right words, you will be able to go up. Freedom will reach your being.”

Nicholas bent over and read:

“If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, ‘No one who believes in him will be put to shame... Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’”

“Yes, I believe and I surrender myself to Him with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my understanding and with all my strength. I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead to show me that there is eternal life. I ask His forgiveness for my transgressions.”

What was that? It seemed that the fire that was on the bird had fallen on him and melted all the invisible shackles that bound his life. He, Nicholas, now knew what it was *to be born again*. He felt as light as only one feather of his body. He spread his wings and went up to meet his friend.

“Welcome to the team. From now on, you’re the newest member of the great family of God and His ambassador on earth.”

“Where are we going?”

“Always up.”

After



Our little friend felt different. He had understood that he was a sinner, surrendered his life in the hands of Jesus as his only Lord and Savior and was spiritually free; his spirit had been created again. From this moment, he was a new creature, but his flesh was not yet healed. Now, indeed, it would begin to be treated, for his spirit re-born and directed by the Holy Spirit, the *Bird of fire* that was by his side, would change his way of thinking, feeling and acting to achieve the point of holiness and maturity determined by the Creator.

“What’s the first lesson, *Bird of Fire*?”

“The first is the freedom in Christ. I’ll show you a passage,

“For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’. If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

“Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law”.

“What does it mean?”

“This means that now you were freed, you will have a time of training to be perfected and the part of your soul that tended to bad things will want to prevail; then you must be strong and determined, walk under the God’s love to no longer compete with Him, neither to destroy again your own life and that of your friends. What is destructive is not from God and must be thrown away. It’s easy, trust me and let me direct your life every moment. Thus, besides the work is lighter, you will not have to supervise yourself so much, wanting to be perfect. It is your interaction with me that makes you perfect.”

“Do you mean that my old nature is dead? Do I have to behave like a new being from today?”

“Yes, it’s written, ‘So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!’... ‘For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died’... ‘But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God’... ‘For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God’... ‘But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him’... ‘There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.’ In fact, nothing separates us from each other anymore, and the flame that burns in me will burn in you, unless you deliberately decide to leave my company and return to the vices of the past. Then it will be quenched and your state will be worse than the first, did you understand?”

“Now I got worried. I look inside myself and I still see the wrong things. How will they go out?”

““And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything.’ This means that you have to act by faith, knowing that when you surrendered yourself to the Creator and repented of your sins, His blood cleansed you from them, that is, you were forgiven. From now,

what you have to do is change your way of living so that this deliverance comes to your flesh as well. You have to change, starting with your relationships; some of them are no longer helpful to you. God's word says, 'Do not be mismatched [*NIV: yoked together*] with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Belial [*A demon (an angel of hostility), or symbolize wicked or worthless people*]? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters', says the Lord Almighty. Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God.'"

"Do you help me? I need to think of a new way of relating to people."

"Listen: 'But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. Lord'... 'For I am the Lord your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy'... 'You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine.'"

"I still didn't understand very well what is to be holy."

"When He tells us, 'Be holy, for I am holy', He refers to behave as He behaves, that is, complete transparency and sincerity between what one preaches [*His word*] and what one lives. The word 'holy' (*hagios, in Greek*) also means 'sacred, pure, blameless, consecrated, set apart, worthy of being honored, to be like God, to have the inmost nature of God, be separated and reserved to God and for His service'. As you saw, this can only be achieved after confessing your sins and receiving by faith, the covering of the blood of Jesus over your life, besides walking with me everyday, to be my friend. It's I who makes the important changes in your soul, did you understand?"

"*Bird of fire!* Now I'm sure that I'll need your help."

"Do not worry, son, 'for all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' [*'Father', in Aramaic*] it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.'"

"And what do I do, then, to please Him?"

"Walk with me and I will start to pour more gifts upon you. I'll tell you a secret: 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness [*ARA, meekness*], and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.'"

"Cool! Can you explain me the meaning of each one of them?"

"Pay attention: *love* is more than clear, is it not? It's to treat your neighbor as Jesus treated, and give yourself to God as He gave Himself; obey Him as He obeyed the Father. The *joy* that I generate in your heart is due to the consciousness of my lordship over you, making you overcome all the trials and difficulties in the certainty of my deliverance and my victory, simply because you are a child, no longer a slave. It is a well-being resulting of the freedom of being a child of God, freed from all yoke of sin."

"Tell me more."

“*Peace* is the result of a surrender that leads you to the harmony of purpose with the Creator and makes you want what He wants; the certainty that everything will solve because He is God. Peace makes you to be like Jesus, because you’ll begin to see that nothing threatens you anymore. Being at peace is to know that everything goes well between you and Him. *Patience* means firmness of spirit, generosity, magnanimity, courage and fearlessness. *Kindness* means benevolence, indulgence, mercy, gentleness, to know how to make others happy, sweetness. Kindness symbolizes the nature of having the good established within oneself as a brand. It is to have a nature aimed always to what is good and thinking about the welfare of the neighbor as God thinks of His children. It is to hate all that is evil or may cause harm to others. It means to reject and oppose to the nature of the devil and the world; it means to be good.”

“Is it not like *generosity*?”

“*Generosity*, though it looks like *kindness* in its practical significance, symbolizes the nature of God (He is a giver of blessings), always aiming to meet His children in their needs. It is to be prosperous in mind and spirit, not measuring the amount of benefit that is made to the other; in other words, to give what is within your grasp without avarice so that there is no shortage or unnecessary suffering. It also means to be willing to help anyone in anything he needs.”

“I see.”

“*Faithfulness* is to be faithful to a commitment and a word that was given even if it has a price. The bible says that God is faithful. If you deny Him, He will deny you; if you are unfaithful, He remains faithful, for He can not deny Himself. This means that if you are unfaithful to a commitment as a believer, He will remain faithful to His own Word, for He is the Word and He can not change it. Elsewhere it is written: ‘For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished.’”

“I must learn to be faithful not only to God, but to what I propose to do. Infidelity has already hampered my life very much. And then? What’s next?”

“Another result of your relationship with me is *meekness*. *Meekness* means: serenity, tranquility, calm, to let be shaped by God, calm in the certainty of victory, be sure that everything has a solution. Being meek is to be submissive to the will of God, to His laws and the divine plan. Submitting to His will brings you power and dominion over Creation. It should not be confused with self-indulgence, laziness or passivity that gives up the authority that God has already delegated to you. Moses was a warrior, however, the bible says he was the meekest man on earth, because he let himself be led by God, despite being a leader and never relinquished the authority He gave him to lead His people. He often took drastic, strong and aggressive steps to keep order among the Israelites and fulfill his mission to the end. He was not powerless or passive in the face of rebellion of the people, but he let himself to be shaped by God in all these situations, exercising his leadership with wisdom and patience.”

“How did he manage to do that? He should have too much self-control!”

“Yes, so the ninth fruit that I generate in the children of God is *self-control*. Self-control prevents you from doing what your flesh wants, putting it under ‘my wings’. Nicholas, one who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and one whose temper is controlled than one who captures a city.”

“This makes me think that the hardest fight is not against the world or against the devil, but against our flesh, because when it is submissive to the will of God and my gaps are closed, it becomes easier to combat what is outside, isn’t it true?”

“This work of emotional release is long, it depends on your willingness and readiness to be worked and to know yourself; it depends on the will and the choice of God and a lot of patience, however, this leads us to a deep and true healing. It makes

you really a new creature. This will make you to live the bible verse that says, ‘and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.’”

“Indeed, I read in the book, ‘As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

“Did you understand now why you have to be faithful to Him? When you worship Him with the consciousness of His power and His lordship and strives to work the sanctity within your being, you will understand what is written, ‘I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect’... ‘Above all [*to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience*], clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony [NIV, and over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity; ARA, ‘Above all, be love, which is the bond of perfection’]. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

“Right! Gratitude must also be part of my life, because He has blessed me. He took me from the bondage of sin and death and gave me eternal life. Furthermore, I need to reformulate my way to work, with joy and love.”

“So he says, ‘Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality.’”

“What about the curses I ever heard in my life, the words, I mean?”

“He tells, Nicholas, ‘Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them [*the false prophets*]; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.’”

“For this I’ll have to turn prayer to Him into a healthy habit every day, right?”

“Do you remember what you read in the book? ‘Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God’... ‘I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.’”

“Yes, you will teach me how to pray the right way.”

“Do not worry; let me guide you in everything and thus the journey will be lighter. It is written, ‘We know that those who are born of God do not sin, but the one who was born of God protects them, and the evil one does not touch them. We know that we are God’s children, and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one.’”

“Do you mean that, in fact, for me things started now?”

“Of course! Repeat after me, ‘I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in me will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.’”

Bird of fire and *Nicholas* flew, going up higher and higher, because the goal was to reach the heights determined by the Creator for His new sonny. He had big plans for

Nicholas. There was no accusation, neither fear nor death, nor sin, theft, violence, destruction or hatred; only the love and the protection of the Eternal Father. They sang,

Great is the mystery of Salvation
So I come to you in prayer
To praise your holy name,
Oh, my Lord,
And fill your throne
With my gratitude

I left behind the old life
My way is now of peace
You shed your life,
Loving Father,
So I wish to give you glory

Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Great is the Lord's victory
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
I can live under His love
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Great is the Lord's victory
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
I can live under the love
Of Jesus
Of Jesus
Of Jesus
My light

Only the Lord is God

Epilogue



If you understood the message of God and truly want to become His child, not just live as a creature of Him, repeat this prayer out loud and put in the place in brackets [...] all the sins that the Holy Spirit revealed to you and that you have committed in ignorance, for you did not truly know Jesus. Remember Nicodemus, whom the Lord explained that it was necessary to be baptized in water to seal the salvation, that is, the new birth; it was *the baptism of repentance* of sins preached by John the Baptist, necessary for all believers. Now say,

“Father, in the name of Jesus I acknowledge that I have lived in sin. I know I have committed [...] and need your forgiveness. I need you more than anything else in the world, so today I declare that I deliver my life to Jesus Christ so that He may be my only Lord and Savior and I break all ties I have with the world, the flesh and the darkness. Jesus, pour your blood over my life and cleanse me from all sin; fill me with your Spirit of love and restore my communion with you. Turn me into the person you want me to be and straighten my paths. I want to be baptized in water as a sign of my repentance, burying my old life, and also receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit that will enable me to continue in my Christian journey. From this day on, I make a covenant with you, to belong to you till the end of my life. Amen.”

Biblical references:

Ex. 15: 26	Jer. 44: 17-30	Rom. 5: 8-9	1 Tim. 2: 3-5
Ex. 20: 1-17	Ezek. 13: 17-23	Rom. 6: 22-23	1 Tim. 4: 1-5
Lev. 5: 7	Ezek. 18: 23; 32	Rom. 8: 1-2	2 Tim. 2: 12-13
Lev. 11: 44a	Ezek. 37: 1-14	Rom. 8: 7	2 Tim. 3: 1-5
Lev. 17: 11	Dan. 9: 21-23	Rom. 8: 14-17	Heb. 1: 13-14
Lev. 18: 1-30	Dan. 10: 2-3	Rom. 8: 26-27	Heb. 2: 18
Lev. 19: 1-4; 16; 18	Dan. 10: 4-12	Rom. 8: 33-34; 36-37	Heb. 9: 13-14
Lev. 19: 28	Dan. 10: 14-19; 21	Rom. 10: 9-13	Heb. 9: 22-28
Lev. 19: 31-34	Dan. 12: 2	Rom. 12: 1-2	Heb. 10: 4
Lev. 20: 6-7	Mal. 3: 6	Rom. 12: 17-21	Heb. 10: 12-13
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Prov. 6: 16-19	Jn. 3: 16-21	2 Cor. 11: 14	1 Jn. 5: 18-19
Prov. 16: 32	Jn. 5: 27-29	Gal. 2: 20	2 Jn. 7
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Isa. 44: 24-25	Jn. 14: 6; 13	Col. 3: 5-6	Rev. 21: 8
Isa. 65: 11-16	Jn. 14: 30	Col. 3: 14-17	Rev. 22: 8-9
Jer. 7: 16-20	Rom. 1: 18-32	Col. 3: 23-25	
Jer. 17: 9-10	Rom. 3: 10-18		

Ex. = Exodus

Lev. = Leviticus

Deut. = Deuteronomy

1 Sam. = 1st book of Samuel

Job = Job

Ps. = Psalms

Prov. = Proverbs

Ecc. = Ecclesiastes

Isa. = Isaiah

Jer. = Jeremiah

Ezek. = Ezekiel

Dan. = Daniel

Mal. = Malachi

Matt. = Gospel of Matthew

Mk. = Gospel of Mark

Lk. = Gospel of Luke

Jn. = Gospel of John

Rom. = 1st Epistle of Paul to the Romans

1 Cor. = 1st Epistle of Paul to Corinthians

2 Cor. = 2nd Epistle of Paul to Corinthians

Gal. = Epistle of Paul to Galatians

Eph. = Epistle of Paul to Ephesians

Phil. = Epistle of Paul to Philippians

Col. = Epistle of Paul to Colossians

1 Tim. = 1st Epistle of Paul to Timothy

2 Tim. = 2nd Epistle of Paul to Timothy

Heb. = Epistle to the Hebrews

Jam. = Epistle of James

1 Jn. = 1st Epistle of John

2 Jn. = 2nd Epistle of John

Rev. = Revelation of John