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Broken Hearts



*Ministério Seara Ágape
Estudo Bíblico Evangélico*

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I thank Him who is the head of the Church, Christ, and planned His Body on earth in a perfect way, distributing His gifts among each child with the purpose to cooperate for the good and the growth of all. Wisdom and power belong to Him.

I dedicate this book to all God's children who have been disappointed and hurt, and need strength to return to the path of peace, love and deep communion with Jesus, in order to be completely healed of their pain.

“You are a rare jewel, a lush and fragrant flower in the midst of your brothers. The gifts I gave you are precious and useful where I put you. Why, then, do you fear exercising them? Do not fear the rejection of men; they are lies used by the enemy to make you give up. I’ll strengthen you so that you move forward and no longer be afraid to show your light. Through you I will bring revival to my people and everything that seemed dead will gain new life. Many around you remain silent and suffering when they go through trials, sometimes even hopeless, because they cannot see or hear the incentive or the fire of boldness in their brothers. Rise up like Deborah and prophesy the victory. At the sound of your order, many warriors will rise again.”



Introduction

Which of us has never suffered emotional and spiritual wounds for wanting to fully fulfill the mission God gave us?

When we assume the commitment to follow the ways of the Lord, we begin to suffer persecution, struggles, opposition, and many other unpleasant experiences that lead some Christians to discouragement, exhaustion, and even the loss of faith, abandoning their blessings for not having any incentive to proceed. Unfortunately, it is within the House of God where we find many words and doctrines that confuse us and not allow us to have the true understanding of the gospel. Hence, sheep stray from the flock, for they no longer can feel supplied, besides having their gifts blocked in certain places because of the ego of some people.

Why so many fights, disputes, contention, prejudice and so many different doctrines within a single Body? So little is seen of the gospel, and much is seen of doctrine. Men create doctrines; the Spirit of God frees them from all of them so they may live the fullness of the true doctrine of Christ.

This book is an exhortation of God to His Church as for the spiritual gifts that should be flowing freely; however, are prevented by the flesh of some who feels entitled to direct a work that actually has a SINGLE leader, Jesus. It also speaks how carnal individuals and without spiritual empowerment can be used by their own egos and by demons to disturb the most sensitive and sincere and even hurt them, moving them away from the relationship with the Lord. These people who affront are generally authoritarian and controlling, provoking the other person to use his (her) authority too so as not to be hurt so much.

One of the greatest wounds is the one made against our ministerial calling.

This allegory helps us to understand the divine qualities placed in each of His children and how they can be corrupted or distorted by the enemy, if that person listens to any instruction and any order, without checking them with the Word.

I will use some flowers as a symbol of God's children, and some birds, in our case, parakeets, to symbolize everything that comes to hurt the hearts of those who believe in the Lord's promise to them. Malicious words come out from both the soul of the brothers and the mouth of demons, which use these people to undermine the divine plan for His Church; hence the need for vigilance and the real knowledge of the Word. The Lord Himself said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4: 6a). When we speak of knowledge, we are talking not only about the revealed word that proceeds from Him, but also the knowledge of the spiritual world itself, the strategies commonly used by the adversary to distort what has been created and to generate confusion and make wounds. The flowers were randomly chosen by me when I thought of the illustrations, but not by the Holy Spirit, for some how they have a symbolism known to many of us, serving to His purpose for this book. They contain the characteristics given by God to be used properly, the same way they can show the distortions of this features, if they are manipulated by the enemy.

The *daffodil*, for example, is a fragrant and lonely flower, although it grows next to one another, but not in the same trunk. The meaning of its name in Greek is '*which falls asleep*', '*to numb*.' At the same time that it can remind the believer the individuality that should be respected in relation to the spiritual gifts and the way of being of each one, even living in a community, this individuality can be distorted to the well-known 'narcissism', that is, to egocentrism, to vanity and the aggrandizement of one's own

self, diminishing the others. This is what happens to the believer who ‘falls asleep’ to the spiritual things and begins to give value the external things and the pleasures of the flesh, glorifying men. When I asked a revelation to the Lord about it, the word that came to me was in Jer. 6: 9-21 (‘Jerusalem under siege’ – NIV; or in Brazilian Portuguese ARA: ‘the iniquities of Jerusalem are the cause of its fall’): “This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Let them glean the remnant of Israel as thoroughly as a vine; pass your hand over the branches again, like one gathering grapes.” To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it. But I am full of the wrath of the LORD, and I cannot hold it in. “Pour it out on the children in the street and on the young men gathered together; both husband and wife will be caught in it, and the old, those weighed down with years. Their houses will be turned over to others, together with their fields and their wives, when I stretch out my hand against those who live in the land,” declares the LORD. “From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace [NRSV: They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.] Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them,” says the LORD. This is what the LORD says: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, ‘We will not walk in it.’ I appointed watchmen over you and said, ‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’ But you said, ‘We will not listen.’ Therefore hear, you nations; you who are witnesses, observe what will happen to them. Hear, you earth: I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because they have not listened to my words and have rejected my law. What do I care about incense from Sheba or sweet calamus from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable; your sacrifices do not please me.” Therefore this is what the LORD says: “I will put obstacles before this people. Parents and children alike will stumble over them; neighbors and friends will perish.”

Camellia is another flower that I will use as a character. It can have the same etymological origin of the proper name *Camilo*, in Latin, whose meaning is ‘*server of priests in the sacrifices*’, ‘*helper to the priest*’, ‘*which is before God*.’ When I asked its spiritual meaning for our story, the Lord spoke to me in Am. 7: 8-9, when He mentions the ‘plumb line’ (“And the Lord said to me, ‘Amos, what do you see?’ And I said, ‘A plumb line.’ Then the Lord said, ‘See, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass them by; the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword’”). Therefore, the choice seems to be significant, since Camilo talks about priesthood, and the plumb line is a symbol of ‘rightness’, ‘to test the truth’, ‘separation’ (as Amos says, the separation between the sacred things and idolatry). The plumb line is used by bricklayers or builders in the constructions so that the building is leveled; therefore, it can also mean the building of our lives through the correct word. The negative part is to abandon the rightness and the presence of God, turning to idolatry, whatever it may be, failing to build lives through the true teaching; in other words, to cause destruction instead of restoration.

The third flower, *sunflower*, is a flower of woody stalk that can reach a great height, depending on soil fertility and the luminosity that is available to it. It has an interesting feature that is to turn always to the sunlight. We could say that the meaning of its name is ‘*that follows the sun, that accompanies the sun, that turns to the sun*.’ For us, the sun

of righteousness is Jesus (Mt 4: 2), and when He rises upon a given situation He brings justice, peace, stillness, protection and salvation; we feel happy and free like a pet that came out of a place of imprisonment or captivity. His name – Yeshua – comes from the same Hebrew root of Yeoshuah (Joshua, YHWH saved), meaning Salvation, which translated is: forgiveness, protection, security, prosperity, peace and health. The interesting in this verse is that the Lord put a condition: to revere or fear His name. His deliverance is a privilege for those who revere or fear His name. And ‘revere’ or ‘fear’, here, is not just the fear of His wrath, but respect, reverence, recognition for who He is, to give priority. When He is the center, everything else is subordinate to Him. The text that the Lord told me to our story is in Jer. 33: 16: “In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’” Returning to our reasoning about the sunflower and the meaning of its name, ‘that follows the sun, that accompanies the sun, that turns to the sun’, we will expand it to: ‘he who follows Jesus, he who accompanies His righteousness; he who turns to it.’ Thus, the positive feature poured on the character (the sunflower) would be the exercise of divine justice by His Church, namely, to preserve its Salvation and generate Salvation in others. The negative side of this characteristic and that can be distorted by the enemy is the lack of understanding of its biblical significance, mixing it with the false human justice for own benefit, or thinking that God does not care about the injustices we experience. However, it is written: “For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them” (Isa. 61: 8) and “And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Lk. 18: 7-8).

In short: in relation to the *sunflower* as a character in our story, we can say that Jesus expects of His Church to preserve its salvation and to generate salvation in others. He also wants that we exert human justice properly, according to the commandments of God, avoiding the distortion generated by the enemy on His justice and impartial judgment on our lives.

The fourth flower is the *water lily*. There is a genus of water-lilies, in the plant family Nymphaeaceae, called Victoria (botanical name, *Victoria Regia*) or giant water lily, with very large green leaves that lie flat on the water’s surface. The word ‘*Victoria*’ in Latin means *winner, victory over sin*; and ‘*Regia*’ (Latin) means *royal, of the king*. When I asked the Lord for understanding about this, He spoke to me in 1 Sam. 4: 22, where the wife of Phinehas, one of the sons of Eli the priest, said that the glory of God of Israel was gone because the Ark of the Covenant had been stolen (She said: “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured”). He also spoke in the following chapters, when the ark was in the temple of the enemy for seven months (1 Sam. 5: 1-12; 1 Sam. 6: 1). It made me think that the positive feature that was poured upon His Church was the Holy Spirit, His constant presence with the people, showing the power and the protection of the Lord. However, if there is no watchfulness or if the gift is despised, the presence of God goes away, and His children will get caught in the chains of the enemy.

The fifth flower is the *jasmine*. The word comes from the Arabic ‘*Yasmin*’, which means ‘*white flower*.’ It is a very fragrant flower, which reminds us of the fragrance of Christ over His Church and His presence with it. However, when the flesh begins to prevail, the Lord doesn’t go to war along with His children anymore, because He doesn’t approve their actions. The few who are faithful end up having to fight alone not to defile themselves with the sin of the group. That’s what happened to Amaziah king of

Judah, who had to go to war against the Edomites, but the prophet of God told him to go without the army of Israel (northern tribe) because He was not with them (2 Chr. 25: 7-8: “But a man of God came to him and said, ‘O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the Lord is not with Israel—all these Ephraimites. Rather, go by yourself and act; be strong in battle, or God will fling you down before the enemy; for God has power to help or to overthrow”).

The sixth flower is the *daisy*, with which we used to play ‘He loves me, he loves me not’ (in the original, *effeuiller la marguerite*, in French – defoliate the daisy), a game of French origin, in which a person aims to determine whether the object of their affection reciprocates that same affection or not. The daisy is a flower of the *Chrysanthemum* genus, but with many species and widespread throughout several nations around the world. And this happens because daisies are plants very resistant and easy to grow, and can be planted in different types of soil and climates. They also attract many pollinating insects, such as bees and butterflies. It not only grows in pots and gardens, but its natural species reproduces in fields. It has a very mild and pleasant aroma and has many colors, not just white.

When I asked revelation to the Lord about this flower, the word He gave me was in Jn. 8: 12-59 and the words that sprang to the eyes were “*I AM.*” Playing with the daisy: “*I am the Lord’s, I am not His.*” Jesus was saying that He was the light of the world and finishing with the lie and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who called themselves ‘children of Abraham.’ For several times, Jesus repeated “*I AM,*” the same phrase heard by Moses before the bush, when he had the revelation of God’s name: *YHWH, ‘the Lord’, ‘I Am who I Am’, the “I AM.”* Therefore, Jesus was openly admitting to be the Son of God before everybody, and was this truth that made Him strong to destroy the lies and hypocrisy of His opponents, in addition to giving Him authority to judge. The Father justified Him. Whoever did not believe in His words would die in their sins, because only in Him was the power of liberation. This biblical passage from Jn. 8: 12-59 was one of the longest discussions Jesus faced against the pride and hypocrisy of those who thought themselves wise in religion. When He repeated “*I AM,*” the Father clothed Him as happened in Gethsemane (Jn. 18: 4b-6); the soldiers who came to arrest Him fell to the ground before the anointing that was upon Him, especially when He said: “*I am he*” (*I AM*).

Daisy, in Greek, means ‘*pearl*’, the same word that Jesus used in one of His parables, describing the kingdom of God (Matt. 13: 45-46: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it”). Because it is a precious truth, it should not be given to any person (Matt. 7: 6: “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”). Dogs and swine are a symbol of are people who do not value God’s word and sacred things, especially if they respond to our words with abuse and violence, which makes us think that we should not give them the spiritual treasure given by God ‘on a silver platter.’ Thus, we cannot talk or discuss the word of God on equal terms with those who do not yet understand it, because they would mock it and would scorn it. Even the revelations about our ministerial calling are not understood by everyone (2 The. 3: 2: “And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith”). We must preach to sinners, but it is useless for us to go on preaching the truth to those who refuse it. Insisting on this only brings more problems, not only for us but also for them, that is, condemnation (Matt. 10: 40; Lk. 10: 16; Jn. 3: 18; Jn. 12: 48).

So, what He expects of His Church is that it is not ashamed of the gospel, neither of being God's child nor despising His promises and His truth, for it is the truth of the Word that gives strength against every lie and hypocrisy. More than that, let each one remains firm in his own calling, without interfering or trying to destroy the ministry of their brothers because of carnality or prejudice.

The seventh flower is *hydrangea*. The proper name '*Hortensius*', in Latin, means 'gardener.' The hydrangea is a flower that requires light soils (with no heavy minerals), but hard, siliceous (rich in silicon dioxide), devoid of lime (which contains calcium carbonate), which would leave them rocky. Therefore, it needs to be planted in light soil in order to expand its roots; however, in a firm land, so that it is not easily plucked. Depending on soil type (pH acid or basic) where hydrangea is planted it acquires a different hue of its petals: pink or blue. When I asked the keyword for the Holy Spirit, He spoke to me in Am. 7: 14-15 and Am. 8: 11: "Then Amos answered Amaziah [*priest of the king of Israel, Jeroboam*], 'I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son [*disciple, he meant*]; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees [*a peculiar tree that generates a fruit whose taste is like a mixture of fig with mulberry*], and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel... The time is surely coming, says the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.'" This made me think that God has planted His Church in the appropriate soil that is His word, not a heavy word, which prevents His Church from growing, but firm enough to keep it standing. Amos was a prophet commissioned by God, but was not a disciple of any other or was part of any prophetic school. On the contrary, he took care of the cattle and picked up figs. Therefore, what the Lord says to His people is that He wants to see true prophets, not raised by men or who talk anything only to be 'part of the team', but those who truly are His mouth on earth. Furthermore, He also speaks that the time is coming, when His own people will have hunger and thirst for the Word. That's what He wants: He wants the Church to hear the prophetic word and be hungry and thirsty for it.

The eighth flower is the *tulip*. They are odorless and solitary flowers like daffodils, that is, two buds are not born of a single trunk, only one bud. They are part of the bulbous species (in Hebrew, *H^abhaseleth*, *bulb*), much described in the bible and used as ornamental plants in Palestine, for example, the daffodil, the hyacinth, rose, lily, etc. I didn't find the exact meaning for the name '*tulip*' (only that is the Turkish word for gauze, with which turbans were wrapped – reflecting the turban-like appearance of a tulip in full bloom. A variant of the name is the contracted form '*Tuli*'), but it made me remember the name '*Tullio*,' which, in Latin (*Tullius*), means '*to raise*', '*to lead*', '*the one who leads*.' Some sources say that the name '*Tullius*', in Latin, means '*a jet of water*', '*a fountain*.' But I'll use the first symbolism. The Lord spoke to me in two words: 1 Cor. 12: 1-31 (different spiritual gifts, but generated by the same Spirit for the benefit of the Body, and therefore, the need for cooperation and mutual respect) and Zech. 8: 1-23 (promises of peace and restoration, directing people to speak the truth, every man with his neighbor. This happened after the return from captivity, when Israel was quite dismayed to rebuild the temple).

So, the message here is that God wants to pour His manifold spiritual gifts, because they will 'raise' His people and will take them to the restoration of their inner temples. His children cannot let them die because of discouragement, self-indulgence, prejudice, or any other excuse. Only the Spirit of God shall bring a true revival. The gifts and the calling are irrevocable, as the word itself says ("for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" – Rom. 11: 29); therefore, even if they seem to have disappeared, is always time to revive them.

The ninth flower is the *lily*. The lily, in Palestine, is related to several varieties not specified in the translations. It is part of the bulbous species to which the bible refers (daffodil, lily, tulip, hyacinth, rose). Most of the references in the Book of Song of Songs, probably relates to the *hyacinth*, although the “*lips like lilies*” (Song 5: 13) may allude to the *red anemone* or the *Madonna lily* (Song 6: 2), which is native to Palestine. Lily is born in the valleys, which exhibit water only during the rainy season, and reminds us of purity, simplicity and holiness. So, when the beloved (Song 2: 1), compares herself to the lily, she exalts her simplicity, her purity and holiness. Thus, the Lord wants His Church wearing garments of holiness, simplicity and purity, even when the situations seem arid of the water of life, which is the word of God.

The tenth flower is the *rose*. It is also mentioned in Song 2: 1, when the beloved says she is the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys. Rose is a Greek word by which the flower is called. Sharon is a swamp on the Mediterranean coast, to the south of Mount Carmel. It is a place unfit for grazing (except in the southern part), for it is swampy ground; however, in a place like this, the rose blooms, whose word in Hebrew is here identified with many other bulbous plants (daffodil, lily, tulip and hyacinth) and that multiplies abundantly in the Plain of Sharon. The rose symbolizes love, compassion, romance, tenderness, the mild fragrance of the presence of the bride; and a common characteristic of flowers, like the rose, is their blossom. So, when the beloved says she is the rose of Sharon, she identifies herself with something delicate that awakens love and exudes its scent and is able to flourish in a land seemingly inappropriate, just because she is loved by her husband and feels safe with his presence. Thus, the Lord wants to see His Church blossoming for love, even though the circumstances around seem contrary, exuding His perfume to the needy of joy and beauty.

We'll end with the presence of the farmer (Jesus) coming to teach us to sow; and the word is found in Gal. 6: 6-10: “Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher. 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. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.”

May the Lord bless and instruct you in the reading, bringing important revelations for your edification.

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The sun had just risen when he appeared in that garden, ready to put his great dream into practice: to make flower-beds with the best seeds and bulbs of the most beautiful flowers he knew. The soil had already been prepared, so he just grabbed his instruments and got to work. The thought with himself,

“Ah! Let us first separate the species. Here will be the daffodil, here camellia, here sunflower, jasmine, daisy, hydrangea, tulip, lily, rose, and there in the pond, the water lily. My little plants, you’ll be quite comfortable this way, won’t you? I prepared everything especially for you. Oh, what a great family we’ll have when you begin to multiply! I’ll be very happy with this. The birds and insects seem to approve this work.”

He began planting seed by seed, bulb by bulb, and seedling by seedling until everything stayed as he had planned. It would be a very colorful and fragrant garden. The flowers were chosen in a quite special manner. The sun was almost setting when he finished. He looked pleased with his work and picked up the hoe, the shovel and the other tools. Now it was time to rest and wait for the result of his efforts. In the spring everything would be blooming. He was gone and the garden was silent.

Time passed, the rains began to water the earth, the seasons changed and the spring arrived with sprouts bursting forth in the garden. They did not realize where they were, until one day they looked at each other and were happy to have someone to talk to and exchange ideas with. Though they were of each species, they knew that, later, the family would grow and would give much pleasure to the farmer.

“Let me introduce myself; I am the daffodil. And you, who are you?”

“I am the camellia, nice to meet you all. When I grow up, I think I’ll give you a pleasant shade, folks.”

“And I’m the sunflower. I’m still small, but I can be very tall, and when my seeds fall on earth you will be amazed with my offspring. It’s good to see you here, so I have someone to talk to.”

“I also find it very good. I am the water lily, and even different from you, I feel much honored to have you around me. Good thing the farmer planned the lake in the middle of the garden; otherwise, I wouldn’t be able to see everyone, because, as you can see, I am the shortest. Yum! ... What a nice scent! Who is using it?”

“It’s me, the jasmine. The perfume I’m using is imported from the East, do you like it?”

“Of course, it is excellent. I, the daisy, have a very mild aroma, but not as much as jasmine. Even so, I feel happy with my petals. Children really like to play with me. My species is widespread throughout several nations around the world and many pollinating insects, such as bees and butterflies, are our greatest friends, helping us to spread our family. We like space and freedom to grow.”

“I am the hydrangea. Thank God the man planted me in a good soil and I feel very comfortable here. Although I also have no scent, my petals will add a special color to the garden. And you, who are so quiet, somewhat lonely, who are you?”

“I am the tulip. Fortunately, he chose the right color for me: red. Just as the hydrangea, I will give everything a different hue. I am just like that, quiet, most of the times. Don’t be surprised by my attitude, it’s just until I get used to the environment.”

“Never mind, dear; here we are planted as in a community well harmonized and happy, respecting the way of each one. I’m the lily; I also have a sweet and pleasant fragrance, don’t you think?”

“I think, but mine is also well known. I am the rose. Despite the thorns in my stalk, I’m not going to hurt you. It is my defense against predators. I’m a little sensitive, you know?”

The lily spoke, "I think we should not worry about anything; however, it would be a good idea to share our projects and potentials. I have the impression that the farmer has something bigger in mind by choosing our seedlings and seeds so carefully. Besides, there are so many species out there and he chose us. This is significant, isn't it?"

"Yes, brother lily. Why don't you start talking a little about you? So, we can better understand and cooperate with each other. Speak, we are listening!"

The lily said, "My ancestors are from Palestine and, over the generations, they gave rise to many varieties of lilies, so we're a big family. There, in the East, my relatives are born in the valleys, but only receive water in the rainy season. People say that our greatest qualities are purity, holiness and simplicity. I think we could develop these qualities in this garden. Don't you think the world a bit corrupted? The insects and birds that visit us could be transformed by our example; so, we would maintain this quality in some beings, at least. I always thought about having a ministry where I could talk about the Creator to the creatures, do you know? To teach them to approach Him with their clothes clean, innocent and simple. It is no use to want so much pomp, religiosity and magnificence. I'm sure that He even doesn't listen to us this way. Have you ever read the passage that says, 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these?'"

The hydrangea commented, "Yes, I've read it. It is very beautiful and I agree totally with this. It is through holiness and simplicity that we show the presence of the Maker in us. In fact, it should be somewhat difficult for your relatives to live in a land so adverse. Imagine, folks! Just drink water a few days a year! They should be a courageous people for having the ability to survive in a place that others never could."

The lily agreed, "They are, indeed. Sometimes they send messengers telling me about the struggles that they face to keep their clothes holy in the midst of such a corruption; however, with the help of the Maker they are winning. By the way, sister rose! You also have relatives in Sharon, don't you?"

The rose answered, "Yes. And they also go through some difficulties to keep love in the midst of so much strife. As you know, Sharon is a swamp in the border of the Mediterranean Sea, to the south of Mount Carmel in Israel. It is a place unsuitable for grazing (except in the southern part), for it is swampy ground; however, in a place like this my ancestors grounded their roots and stay until today, setting an example for all their descendants. So, one of my ministerial dreams is to teach other beings to keep love, compassion and not to be afraid to truly bloom, although it seems 'to bring some thorns.' I learned from my ancestors to flourish on land apparently inappropriate, just because I am loved by the Maker and I feel safe with His presence."

The water lily said, "Yes, your scent is soft and gentle and attracts many people. It would be interesting to learn how to develop this gift with the rose. Love heals the wounds. We could build a work of inner healing and even open up space for outsiders. Bees, for example, would be very interested, I'm sure. What do you think, tulip?"

The tulip commented, "I'm related with the rose family, for being a bulbous plant as well, and I understand how her species feel regarding to keep the spiritual gifts. I was thinking that I could use the gift I received in order to revive those ones who seem to have been extinguished in the lives of other creatures. Do you know? I found out that when the gifts are free to flow, the people of the Lord stand up, and thus are restored. If you see convenient, I could also plan a weekly church service aiming the teaching and revival. Just imagine! Everyone here glowing with the fire of the Spirit! I know that in many places out there some tulips let the gifts fade because of discouragement, of self-

indulgence, prejudice, criticism, finally, for many other excuses. However, the brothers remember what is written, “The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable”; therefore, even if they seem to have disappeared, is always time to revive them.”

“Oh! What a wonderful thing, tulip! Thus, I the hydrangea and all my descendants, we shall always keep alive our prophetic gift. It is very important. The brothers know very well that it is written, “Where there is no prophecy, the people cast off restraint, but happy are those who keep the law.””

The water lily said, “What I know is that your ancestors suffered greatly because of this gift. It’s hard to be true prophet and say what the Maker commands. Therefore, most out there just ends up talking about anything, just to please everybody and not to suffer from insults.”

“As a prophet I tell you, my sister water lily, the time will come when people will have hunger and thirst for the Word. That is what the Creator desires, that the Church listen to the prophetic word and is hungry and thirsty for it.”

“May your words be fulfilled, hydrangea. Indeed, we might also perform a prophetic service, because thus we would be aligned with the Lord’s will for us.”

“I agree! Many people need to know prophetic exhortation and be sure that justice still exists.”

The sunflower asked permission to speak, “If I may talk a bit about it, I have sought with all my soul to keep me under the righteousness of God. My desire is to follow Him always. I learned from my ancestors that the Lord is our righteousness. In the Old Testament, the word justice was commonly used to refer to rectitude, the rectitude that God required of His people in following His law. After His Son came and died for our sins, the enmity between us and Him ended up and this is the true righteousness of God (to justify the sinner and resume his relationship with God). It is obvious that He is with us when we need to do the earthly justice, because the authorities that He put here have this purpose. Too bad that the creatures make such a wrong idea of justice, turning to selfishness and to the own right!”

“I think I understood it. The Maker expects of the Church, to preserve its Salvation and generate Salvation in men. He also wants us to exert justice on earth properly, according to His commandments, and to avoid misinterpretation of His justice and fair trial on our lives, for this would lead us to consider Him our enemy.”

“Yes, exactly, so I, the sunflower, am here to remind the group that we should keep His commandments and His true teaching. False teachings would corrupt the truth of His word.”

“And you, camellia? As I recall correctly, your ancestors served as priests, didn’t they? You also have a gift somewhat similar, with regard to justice and trial of God, don’t you?”

“Yes, my ancestors knew truly what it is to go through the plumb line of God because the Lord fulfilled His word and destroyed idolatry from among the people. From there, my family understood what righteousness is, they understood how to test the truth, and the separation between the sacred and the worldly things. Furthermore, they understood the significance of edification, for our lives can only be built through the correct word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

The daisy gave her opinion, “I understand much about *truth*. When children pick up my petals to play ‘*he loves me, he loves me not*,’ I remember the Master, preaching to His countrymen. Some wanted His truth, others despised it. He repeated several times ‘*I AM*’ (that is, He whom the Father sent to bear witness to the truth). Knowing the truth is to be like a rare and precious pearl, as were my ancestors; they left everything for the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, brethren, I say that we need to watch to keep things as

they really are, rather than letting the lie and hypocrisy prevail. What we have of precious is not to everybody and cannot be despised. We should not be ashamed of the gospel, neither of being God's children nor should we despise His promises to us."

"May I give my opinion too?"

"Sure, daffodil!"

"I've been thinking, while our sister tulip was exposing her project on revival of the gifts ... It is important to keep in mind that the respect for the individuality of the spiritual gifts of each one is what keeps the community united because unity is derived from the love that the rose told us about. Do you see how everything complements itself? However, if we fall asleep to this truth, our mistake could be fatal."

"He's right. I, the jasmine, I was instructed about it. When the flesh starts to prevail, the Lord does not go to war along with His children anymore, because He doesn't approve their actions; only the few who are faithful, end up having to fight alone not to be defiled with the sin of the group."

"That's why my name is water lily (botanical name, *Victoria Regia*). The word *Victoria* in Latin means *winner, victory over sin*; and *Regia* means *royal, of the king*. My ancestors taught me that when we have the Spirit of the Lord in our midst we are protected and we are victorious, for His glory is present. When sin lets it go, then yes, everything becomes meaningless and we stay trapped in the chains of the enemy."

The flowers talked for a long time, and when night came, they fell asleep. However, they had been heard by the usual visitors to the garden and by those who were already planted there previously and, therefore, considered that piece of land as their right. They didn't have the good intentions which the flowers longed too much to keep. Liking it or not, the community was not confined to them, but covered all creatures of the place. In fact, they were the newcomers, but they didn't realize it.

2



The small daffodil woke up along with the sun and was the first to notice the arrival of birds, the insects and the small worms that inhabited there. Some were very friendly and wanted to exchange ideas with him, after all, he had a different gift and they knew that he liked to teach all the creatures about the importance of maintaining this mutual respect, for the harmony of the community was based on it. The daffodil listened to everyone, respected the way of thinking of everyone who sought him and when he could he gave guidance to those who lived some problems within their own family. He was loved by everyone and knew how to deal with their neighbors and friends, for the Spirit was upon him.



Suddenly, he started hearing other twitters, different from the customary, so friendly. There they came, a flock of parakeets that flew every morning over the garden. Sometimes the small daffodil thought that they had some intention of disturbing the peace of that place. Why did they sing so loud? In fact, the sound they emitted didn't look like a hymn of praise to the Creator, but contentious and gossipy voices that came to confuse and distort the truth. They came near him and began to chatter,

“What's up, little daffodil? Have you already taught your disciples today?”

“Oh! Don't bother me. Leave me alone.”

“Do you know what we think about all you have taught? It is not quite right; after all, it's complicated to deal with each one the way he is, do you understand? If all were equal, it would be easier. We were thinking that if everyone followed the same orders, wore the same clothes and spoke the same way, your work would be less painful. They would have only to obey the rules! After all, aren't you the leader? The leader must be obeyed, not to serve his followers as you usually do. Have you thought about it? You open your mouth, and everybody bow before what you speak! Make some pamphlets and distribute; so, you will not have to keep repeating the same thing, do you know?”

“Yeah! ... Thinking better, you are right. After all, rules are rules. My teaching has good foundation and it's no use to mix it with anything else. I'll think about it.”

The parakeets went on chattering, while the small daffodil began to forget the words of truth, which one day he heard and were part of his being. Without realizing it, he began to follow a doctrine of his own, somewhat distorted, which began to fill him with some pride for being the ‘initiator’ of a new trend. He thought of making rules for everyone to follow; so, he thought, it would be easier to deal with problems. He would not have to go deep in each case, he would teach an easier and quick way to heal their

pains, he would enforce 'order' when they made a group meeting not to give so much chance for the opinions of others, and might even carry out a mandatory financial collection to keep the project running. If they opposed, they would be forced to leave the congregation. His life changed from there and some of his former followers didn't hear him anymore, although most of them had been at his side. After all, they didn't seem to have much reasoning, and nothing like a primer to be followed! Thus, no one would be led astray, and when necessary, it was enough to read it without protest. This was a true leader! ... Poor daffodil!

The parakeets did the same thing, coming and going every day, and one day the daffodil really looked inside him and was astonished. His leaves and petals had been completely torn and damaged by the peck of the birds. Every malicious word injured him and only now he realized the mistake into which he had fallen. He had fallen asleep for the true spiritual things and began to live religiosity without sense, which more resembled idolatry. Worst of all, he infected others with his distorted doctrine and he felt isolated from the true identity that the Maker had given him. He needed to return to his initial level; only then he could be cured. The price for neglecting the words of truth that he once heard was too high. He had fallen asleep to the things of God and became numb with the glory of the earth ... What now?

The other flowers called him, but he no longer heard them; he seemed oblivious to everything and everyone. His wounds were painful. Who would heal them? He was becoming more and more isolated and silent, waiting for the Lord's mercy on him. His appearance was pitiful.

3

The beautiful camellia also had just woken up and looked at the sky with pleasure, watching the flight of birds and insects that approached her. She also had her disciples, such as the daffodil, and taught them the rightness to walk according to the Word. She showed them that this rightness was no longer a religious ritual, but a communion of love and partnership with the Spirit of God, who directed them what to do at every moment and to avoid the paths of error. She also taught her disciples to discriminate between truth and lie, to separate the holy from the profane, to clean up their inner temple, getting rid of the old habits, especially of idolatrous practices that only brought them weight and burden. Her work was to build the spirit and soul of her friends, for she believed in the gift that had been placed inside her.

She also heard the parakeets that approached and began to pay attention to what they said.



“Camellia, my darling, look what we brought for you: some magazines with the latest trends and novelties in your ministerial area. I guess you could avail yourself of a lot of ideas, after all, you need to have an open mind; you cannot live your whole life under the same dispensation. Several discoveries have been made. Did you see the latest news? Not everything was what was thought; men discovered many truths through archeology and astronomy. Here, see, take it and read by yourself. It is revolutionary.”

They were gone and the camellia was delivered to reading. She began to perceive many things that were not in the old book she had read. How strange! They had an appearance of truth, although they were something innovative. She would like to do a test with her disciples. She would apply some of that knowledge in her ministrations and would see the result.

Time passed and her experiences went being developed in her disciples; many did not like the innovation and left her, because instead of feeling the freedom of before, they felt trapped in something that they did not know to describe for sure. They seemed to have ‘lost the plumb’, and all they had conquered seemed to have disappeared from their lives. The old practices were mixed with the new and confused them. Gradually, they went discouraging in their spiritual journey.

One day, the beautiful camellia noticed that everyone was like dead, without the joy of the past; she felt that they came to her meetings simply by a habit that had already been incorporated into their lives. Some did not behave with the reverence of before, they did not fear the Lord as in other times, and others showed signs that they were

being submitted to the wrath of the Creator. He was dealing with them. That's when she was faced with her own attitudes and looked inside herself. Her friends showed exactly what was going on inside her soul of leader. Something had been corrupted and she no longer knew how to fix. She asked them for forgiveness, but this was not enough. Her innovations have brought destruction instead of restoration, and this, yes, displeased the Lord. That's why she had that feeling of emptiness and loneliness. Although repentance had touched her being, she no longer felt the strength of the past or the so good fellowship that she once experienced. She had to find a way to go back, but how? She noticed that her petals and leaves had also been damaged by pecks of the parakeets. They were not exuberant and bright anymore; they were almost withered and lifeless. She looked at the sky to see if she felt some relief and if He heard her. She stayed this way for a long time.

4



The sunflower was happy that morning. The previous conversation with his garden fellows had been beneficial and he longed to pass to his disciples what he had planned for their growth. They liked to hear him because they started to discover the true face of the Creator through his teachings. They knew a good God who took care of His children and protected them, guarded them, taught them to share what they had with the less fortunate and do the best they could to lessen the injustices caused by the enemy in the creatures of the earth. Every day their lives were being built. They had ceased to hear some bad news so as not to afflict their souls and not to pollute their being with worldly things that served only to steal their strength. They got to know the profound revelation about what it meant to be saved and began to exert this justice among their acquaintances so the world where they lived could be a little better.



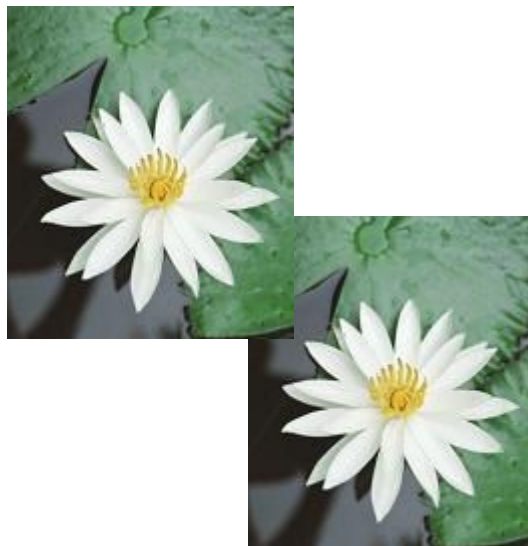
“Do you know who you look like, pretty sunflower?”

“I know who you are. Go away, you bunch of gossipers.”

“You look like a paladin of justice always fighting for the weak and oppressed. Let’s see if you can solve some dilemmas. Look what we brought for you: today’s newspaper. Take a look at the headline. What do you think? Is it fair? What would you do if you were a lawyer or a judge? What would you do if you were God? Would you admit such a thing? Indeed, where is your God who does not seem to hear what you say or need? Is it useful to talk so much, prophesy so much and work so much? Are miracles happening in your life? Look at the other news: what do you think? Have you ever seen something like this go unscathed, without punishment? This law will go into effect next week, and then? What will you do? Does this book you read have a solution for that?”

His head was spinning with so much confusion. What were they doing? What were they talking about? Could it be that what he preached so much was true? Did his God hear him indeed? Would He do justice in relation to his cause? What about those innocent people who perished at the hands of the wicked? Would they have to bear silent until they die? Suddenly, nothing seemed to have sense to him and the sense of abandonment invaded him. It was not only the abandonment of those who heard him daily. It was worse; it was the abandonment of the inner strength that kept him standing in face to so many struggles. Where were his faith and his hope? He began to cry. His interior rebelled and he wanted to blaspheme against Him who he trusted so much in the

past. What would he do now? Did He still love him? He felt sadness and anger at the same time; these feelings didn't let him look at the sun, much less follow it. He didn't exist anymore to the righteous sunflower. Some of his petals were cut, and his leaves, once lush and firm, now appeared wilted and, in some spots, they had rips apparently irreversible. It was time to stop and think. He bent over and almost gave up everything. He decided to be silent and wait.

5

The water lily woke up and looked at her appearance on the lake. Soon, many more would be born, because she could already see a few buds emerging. This is what is called a victory! Her disciples would arrive soon and she needed to be prepared to talk to them. At that time, they were developing the study on spiritual gifts. It was important to be in the presence of the Lord to be an example. They were coming, all of them, happy to hear the living word that gave their life a different direction. Some had already lived some interesting experiences with healing, which made them strong in the faith. Some had experienced miracles in other areas, others began to develop the gift of the word and this was gratifying. Many had already been baptized with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues, and some were instruments of liberation in the hands of the Maker. Everything seemed to be the result of the abundant grace of God poured upon His children.



“What annoying noise was this now? Oh! They were the famous parakeets, regulars of the garden. They came to visit her.”

“Hi, Vicky, do you feel victorious today? Did you know the latest news?”

“What are you talking about?”

“There are many threats nowadays! Besides, many teachings that were valid no longer have credit, do you know? People are looking for something of greater value, things that stimulate their lives a little more; it is no use to waste time with religion. Modern life has so many needs and attractions that are a true priority. If you do not update or renew yourself, ‘adieu’, you become old-fashioned. Science has also new discoveries. Have you asked your doctor? Things to make you more beautiful, physically fitter in order to have a better job, to earn more, be more recognized... Does it not matter? Of course! Think, Vicky! You need to teach your boys and girls to be fashionable and look for the best way to live life. After they die, it no longer has interest. Everyone goes to the same place...”

They continued chattering. She withdrew and began to think about what she was living and doing. Could it be that what she did was important, really? She seemed without luster compared to certain things that appeared out there. So many people being seen and placed as headline of newspapers and magazines! And she, even if rejoiced in the invisible victories of her pupils, she did not seem to do a great thing. No one appreciated her work. Good heavens!... How many hours was the water lily in this ‘meditation?’ She could not answer, but when she realized, her image in the lake had

changed. Her countenance was not of a successful person, but of a defeated one. The brightness of her being was gone. She had given much value to things that had not, instead of valuing the gift she had received from the Creator. Her gift was gone; it had been stolen as the Ark of the Covenant was in the past.

Her tears fell into the lake, forming circles whose waves in centrifugal movement disappeared as smoothly as the precious things that she once knew. One after the other, the tears seemed to empty her of her inner beauty. She asked the Lord for forgiveness for having neglected the gift, but would it be enough to solve her problem? Who would fix the damage done by parakeets in her petals and leaves?

Time passed... she cried... and waited.

6



The small and delicate jasmine was waking up too. It seems that during the night his scent grew stronger; perhaps, by the freshness of the air. His perfume was a big attractant for other creatures, because they felt the sweet and gentle scent of the presence of the Lord with him. The jasmine was happy to live there in the garden with the other flowers. However, he had noticed some difference in many of them and that disappointed him. They seemed to have fallen in the faith. He did not want to judge anyone, but... there was something strange. Did it rain during night? Some of his companions seemed to have their petals more damaged and also their leaves, but he had no explanation for that. One thing he knew: he didn't want to mix himself with anything that could lead him to sin or to take him out of God's presence. Some disciples who used to hear him came and began to tell what had happened to the flowers of the garden. They also told him about the famous parakeets, which came to put an end in the pleasure and the joy of serving God. He decided that he needed to do something to stop this destruction, but how? Alone? While his friends went out to work, he stayed alone and looked at the sky. Would he have any answer? The birdsong and the hum of insects were the usual ones. Had the parakeets given up? Suddenly, he heard them.



Inside his heart a voice told him, 'Go alone.'

One parakeet provoked him, "Hey kid, is everything all right today?"

Another one asked, "Are you perfumed, pretty boy?"

He replied, "Shut up."

They insisted, "Huh! Did you decide to fight?"

But he asked, "Who wants to fight?"

The parakeet mocked him, "We, hah, hah, hah, as always. Do you think you are different from the others, huh?"

He answered, "No, but there is not a word that you can say to divert me from my project."

"Oh, yes? Do you think you can keep this perfume forever in a place as smelly as the world?"

"The righteous shall live by faith."

"Who will listen to what a scrawny and perfumed kid has to say?"

"I came to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

"Is it not true that the kid is good indeed with the sword?"

“If you’re so good with this, small jasmine, kill your partners at once since they are already defeated or kill us.”

“Vengeance belongs to the Lord. He will repay and will justify me.”

Another one asked him, “In the name of whom do you think you will do the work? Alone? ... With no name and no help from anyone?”

He quoted the Scriptures, “You come to me with sword and spear. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, my God, whom you have defied. This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hand I will give your flesh to the wild animals of the earth.”

“Come on, stop with this! Isn’t easier for you to change your mind and yield to our suggestions?”

He quoted the Scriptures again, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test. Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him”.

“Hey, folks! Let’s go because things here are difficult.”

They withdrew, but the small jasmine was very tired of fighting. His petals and leaves were somewhat damaged like those of his companions who had been injured. He felt insulted in his faith, in his loyalty, in his surrender, in his dedication to the holy things; this made him sad. There was only one difference: despite of all, the Creator was glad for his sake and had given him victory. He was exhausted. There was nothing else to do. What he could have done with his strength, he had done; now it was just wait.

7



The daisy woke up in a good mood; after all, she was protected in that garden and was loved by her companions. But she did not like some regulars who came to visit from time to time; however, without sincerely wanting to hear the truth. They were always coming and going, were always the same way and still took the opportunity to meddle in the lives of others. Her disciples were growing solidly, firmed in the Word, learning how to solve their problems by themselves, seeking the strength in God alone, not idolizing the flesh. This behavior made her happy. In that place, she taught every day the small insects that visited her. First, they had a nice chat, then they began to speak of many things of God and many were enlightened in their doubts. Thus, she also felt helpful to those who one day, surely, would take a stand on the way they should go. For now, she sowed and waited.



What was that noise coming in her direction? Oh! As usual, the parakeets, as idle people who have nothing to do, but who like to disguise themselves as religious and knowledgeable of the things of God! They came always together to strengthen themselves, for only one could not sustain a serious discussion about the truth.

“Hello, daisy, darling! How long we do not see you! We missed you, did we not, folks?”

“Of course! Daisy is our favorite. So dedicated to the Lord, aren’t you, my precious?”

“How is your ministry?”

“Very well, thank you.”

“Are you really the chosen one to teach the Word?”

“I am.”

“Are you sure that your ministry comes from God Himself? It’s so... how can I say?... Different, is it not?”

“Yes! All things came from Him.”

“Well! If it’s so, then, why there is no real help? Look! We are from the prayer group and we were thinking how we should pray, do you know? We can pray for you, but... for your ministry... well! Do you know, don’t you?”

“No, I don’t know!”

“It escapes the traditional a little, do you understand?”

“Yeah, darling! It has no special clothing or certain rules of preaching... there seems to be too much freedom... we are afraid of you lose control. Have you ever wondered if

an outsider comes in and sees all that... freedom? They will ask if you are entitled to be up there and then what will you reply?"

"That I am."

"Don't you think that the gifts are more or less equal among the brothers? How, now, God would do such a thing, thus... more like what's out there, do you understand? You know! ..."

"No, I don't know!"

"Do not be silly! You tell many 'secrets' that is difficult for us to listen within the community. It is easier to hear from the outsiders. Are you sure you have salvation? Are you sure that what you do is the true word? That you are really a child of God, sealed with His Spirit?"

"I am."

"You know what it is? We think you're a bit 'loose'. How do I explain?"—

"Free, you mean?"

"—Hmm! Perhaps! Kind of... too independent, if you want to use that word. We are afraid that something bad will happen to you. Let's be direct. You don't obey any leader; you are not tied to just one place; you go wherever you want. You are without spiritual protection. That's it! We are so used to the limitations of a place and a community that it is difficult to understand how the Creator would leave you 'loose' like that, without a leader to control you?

"He wrote in the Holy Book, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age... Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.' I'm obeying His orders. I'm not unprotected. He covers me Himself. I am free to go where He sends me and say what He wants. Everyone, anywhere, has the right to know His doctrine in this Universal Congregation that belongs to Him."

"So, are you qualified for this?"

"I am."

"Good! So, tell us some new things that we should know; after all, we need to pass them on to the others, don't we, folks?"

"Only to few are given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; to others, all are spoken to them in parables, in order to fulfill the word that says: You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn—and I would heal them... This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

"Gosh! Who do you think you are?"

"That I'm His daughter."

"Come on, brethren! It is no use to talk to her. We can only pray that the Lord takes these revolutionary ideas out of her head."

"Get out, you brood of vipers," she thought.

They went away, but like the jasmine, the little daisy was tired and unfortunately wounded. The hardness of heart had hurt her, as well as lies and hypocrisy, jealousy, religiosity, rejection and resistance to the truth of the Lord through her mouth. Her petals seemed to have been plucked to play "He loves me, he loves me not", and her leaves seemed to have been shredded by the cutting words. However, she was firm in

what she had received and would not hesitate, even if no one understood her reasons. He would heal her. She would just wait.

8



The hydrangea was radiant that morning. It seemed that the bluish hue of her petals increased every day, giving a special color to the garden. She also rejoiced by the gift that God had given her, though often she had to use it more strongly to bring the rebels back to the ways of truth. She knew that when she prayed, the Maker listened to her and, somehow, the spiritual world was moving around her. Sometimes, she had hoped the readier manifestation of the prophetic word, but it seemed that they were delaying to manifest. She wondered if the problem was her faith that still needed to be strengthened or if the enemy himself stole the words that came out of her mouth or prevented them from acting in any way. One thing she knew: some of them manifested in a short period of time and were accurate sword against the enemy's ties. What saddened her a bit was the lack of explanation that she had for her dream in particular. Why did her dream seem to tarry so much? For years she had been prophesying about it, not what her sisters commonly called 'to prophesy', which was more a desire of the heart than something coming from the mouth of God. She actually received from Him a promise and a gift, and her dream would come true anyway, despite everything seem to say 'no.'



She looked at the tree in front of her and saw that they were coming down toward her. Nobody escaped them. All the flowers until now had been questioned.

"Good morning, hydrangea!"

"Good morning!"

"What do we have for today?"

"What do you mean?"

"We have seen your prophetic worship and we came to a conclusion."

"And what is it?"

"Are you really a prophetess?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Well! It's because certain things that you said weren't fulfilled yet, and then we would like to know if some leader has already approved your ministry."

"And does any creature need to approve what the Creator Himself gave?"

"Don't be boorish! We're only questioning the veracity of your words. Certainly, some of them were fulfilled in the very hour, but the rest ... how is it?"

"Have you never read the *Word of truth*?"

"Do you mean the *Scriptures*?"

"Yes."

“And what does this have to do with our question?”

“If you had read them, you would know that the Creator called whom He wanted in order to speak His words, and many of them came true from seven hundred to a thousand years after they were prophesied.”

“What makes us a bit confused is that all the other prophets tell us so good things, and you come up with a word that... ‘God have mercy’! It seems that we will all perish in sin.”

“Could it be that the creature has changed so much along the ages? But for you to know that these prophets were sent by God or not, He sends you a message, ‘For who has stood in the council of the Lord so as to see and to hear his word? Who has given heed to his word so as to proclaim it? I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. Am I a God near by, says the Lord, and not a God far off? Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them? Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? says the Lord. Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? See, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who use their own tongues and say, ‘Says the Lord’... for the burden is everyone’s own word, and so you pervert the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God.’”

“Well! Do you mean that we are behaving the wrong way?”

“I don’t know, I’m not God to judge, but He knows whom He has chosen. Let everyone search his own heart. By the fruit you’ll know the tree; that’s what the book says. What kind of fruit did you produce? Have they built someone’s life or have they destroyed dreams? Have they allowed the blossoming or caused hearts to wilt?”

“You know how it is; it’s not everything that we can say. You have to think about who will listen. That’s why you are being rejected—”

“For telling the truth.”

“—Honey! Tell people a little bit what they want to hear; it is good for their souls.”

She quoted the Scriptures, “Am I now seeking human approval, or God’s approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ. The gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

“I see that you know the book very well. These words are there, aren’t they?”

“Yes, and they are to everyone who assumes his identity as a prophet.”

“Do you have a word for me, then?”

“Yes. He says to you, ‘Daughter, do not be sitting and idle, thinking that things will change in your life automatically, without effort on your part. Remember that my Son died on the cross and paid a high price for your soul. All blessings have a price to be paid. Often, you search help in people who know nothing of the difficulties of your walk or the pains of your heart. Therefore, cry out to me with your faith, as the blind believed and cried for mercy. Cry out to me with all your heart and I will hear you. I’ll set you free and I will show you a new life, where the accusations will no longer come over you and where anything that you built with love will never be stolen or destroyed. Turn your eyes to heaven and seek my face; its light will illuminate and guide you. The light is my living word that is at your disposal. Don’t be looking at it as a book of stories or fairy tales. Leave aside the fantasies of children and pick up the plow. Don’t look back. Who picks up the plow and looks back cannot be my disciple. Make your

choice today, because I'm in front of you, waiting for your cry asking, 'Lord, I want to see.'”

“Let's go, brethren. Our hydrangea needs to rest. Goodbye, darling.”

Our hydrangea really needed to rest from so many affronts and accusations that she had received. Their leaves had the marks of the beaks, and her petals were cut a bit, but the day would come when all the promises would be fulfilled in her life and she would be recognized by what she was, not by what they would like her to be. She looked up, seeking His face and His light. He saw her and would answer. She would wait for Him.

9



The delicate tulip was awake too and felt the warm morning wind touching her leaves. She rejoiced, because the wind had always been her companion. It made her revive the gift. It was what she needed most, because she saw her companions a little frail and fallen. She was happy when she could give a word of encouragement to the bees, the butterflies and ladybugs that alighted on her. They went out different, with hope in their heart and this filled her with strength, but often the discouragement that she perceived in her own sisters left her shaken. Were they not willing to fight anymore, to trust, to believe, to love, to multiply their talents? Just because some lived in the idleness, would everyone have to stay this way too? She thought,

“Umm! Lord, be with me! There come the parakeets. Chatters!”



“What were you thinking about, *small flame of fire*?”

“Did I change my name now?”

“The thing is that whoever sees you from afar seems to be seeing a lit candle. Do you still insist on reviving these dead people?”

“Why do you reject the gifts of the Lord?”

“We know that many things are somewhat risky, you know? That thing of praying in tongues is not everyone who agrees. It sounds as ‘thing of crazy people.’ Imagine, if suddenly, the person goes insane!”

“Why don’t you stop saying nonsense, not knowing what you’re talking about?”

“Darling! This garden looks like I don’t even know what, after you were planted. Before, the natural inhabitants lived a normal life, only knowing that the Creator exists, but not bothering Him for trivial things. After you arrived, it seems that everything turned novelty, ‘upside down.’ We hear preaching and prophecy the whole day. It’s a lot of people to and fro, wanting to hear messages, and actually this kind of thing disrupts our usual chat, do you understand?”

“The usual gossip, you mean.”

“The case is that we are not accustomed to so much ... (I have no words)—”

“Anointing. In other words, you prefer to live this little carnal life, not caring too much about growing and renewing yourselves, don’t you?”

“—Well! This business is a hard work and I don’t know if it’s worth it.”

“Do you think the truth is not worth it?”

“What do you mean?”

“The Maker said, ‘If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’”

“Free from what, for example?”

“From you yourselves, from the smallness of mind and heart that prevents the Spirit from flowing and manifest Himself. You do not let Him speak freely. You raise the walls of religiosity, of morality, of the appearance of well-being, of prejudice, criticism toward the brothers, the hypocritical trial, the false knowledge of the Word, without delving into your inner selves because when you do this and find out that you are not perfect, that you are not healed and desperately need of God’s hand in there, maybe you give up blaming others and you start worrying about yourselves. You’re afraid to experience the spiritual gifts because it will lead you to experience, truly, the spiritual world and you don’t know to deal with it. Hence, it is easier to criticize those who have a sensitivity that you don’t have. He tells you, “These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace, do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath; for all these are things that I hate, says the Lord.””

“What else He has to say to us?”

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed... Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ... If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gift.”

They flew away quickly and left the tulip alone. She looked at her and still saw the wounds made by the criticism and by the traditionalism that left her petals and leaves somewhat damaged. But it didn’t matter! He would heal her when He showed everyone the project He had for her. She just had to wait.

10



The fragrant lily was watching the insects around him and the interest that they had in performing their work. It all seemed so simple and done with such purity and love. He sought to understand how other creatures were so contrary to that, always ready to complicate and put difficulty in everything, to see things with eyes so wicked and defiled by sin. He sought so much to be in tune with the Creator, but other beings did not seem to feel the same need. They thought about different things, always aiming self-interest or with malice in the heart. Why could they not feel happy just by seeing their fellow men accomplished in their projects? Then he remembered the Scriptures, where the stain of sin ended up for distorting the truth and preventing holiness. That's why, so far, no one had managed to regain it completely. Only One managed to keep it; hence, He died for all and His example remained, so that the 'way back' was open to His children.



“Why are you so thoughtful, lily?”

“He must be thinking of holiness and his ministry. Hah, hah, hah!”

“Have you not yet given up being holy? Have you not yet given up making everybody holy?”

“Why don't you go away?”

“Because we want to hear a little what you have spoken to your disciples.”

“May I ask you what for, since you will not put the words into practice?”

“Oh! Come on, not everyone here is malicious.”

“Do you know what all of you remind me now?”

“What?”

“Some people who came to the Master to question His authority and His teaching. He said, “And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent. You search the scriptures [or ‘search the scriptures’] because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept glory from human beings. But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God?””

“What does this have to do with us?”

“Without the true love within your hearts there is no way to come into His presence; so, very few can feel Him fully. You talk, but you do not act according to what you preach. You consider yourselves right and perfect; however, you don’t want to look to the flaws that exist within yourselves, so you do not let the word to penetrate where it has to reach. You pray with your mouth, but not with the heart, because you cannot even cry anymore. You like the outward appearances and the applause of men; however, do not like to humble yourselves before anything or anyone, let alone before the Lord. You talk about surrender, but you cannot strip yourselves of so many things. You talk about love, but you cannot demonstrate affection for someone whom you do not know. You do not even communicate with the brothers who you don’t see for a long time or who have another way of thinking. If you’re going to do something, you always have to go together to feel safe, because you cannot really feel safe only with His presence. You charge for what you should give freely and do not recognize the work of your brother, who is worthy of his salary. You think that it’s he who has to do everything for free. You transform the sanctuary into another thing, other than a place of worship and true healing. You don’t contribute to spread the ministry of others. On the contrary, you hinder it, rather than encourage who is beginning. You don’t believe in the experiences that you have never lived and say they do not exist. You don’t take seriously the complaints and pains of the more wounded and accuse them of having no faith, hence they are not achieving victory. You fight against each other, sit as far apart as possible and then raise your arms to praise. You conform yourselves with the strife and the lack of love within your own family, saying that this is impossible to be changed and that we must accept the human impossibilities, and then, you come preaching about love and faith. On Sunday, it is one thing; the other six days of the week are another thing. Is this holiness?”

“We need to be alone to think about it. Will you excuse us?”

“Of course!”

It was still difficult to transmit to any one the will of the Father. It was so simple, but impossible because of the imperfection of the flesh. He alone could do this; however, those who strove to come into His presence could understand what He meant. The lily had already been so hurt by saying these things! How many charges had already come to his life because of his personal search! Still so, he would continue, waiting on Him to judge his cause; even wounded, he would continue to believe.

11



The fragrant and delicate rose woke up that morning and blossomed. Her blossoming was pleasing to the Creator. How would she teach those beings to love too? It was her dream and she felt that He approved it. No wonder He gave her thorns to defend herself! Otherwise, she should have already been destroyed by such much indifference and hatred in the world. How cold it was! The only thing that made her happy were the small disciples whom she was able to do so far; little beings, but sincere and needy of the power of love and willing to multiply it despite all the difficulties. They visited her every day and cared about her. They were her ‘children’, while the other buds of the rosebush had not yet blossomed. Too bad not everyone thought like the little insects! Even the other flowers there had already been defeated by the contrary feelings, and some of them were quite injured. The rose, like the lily, knew how to feed on this love. The Creator was her source, so the small rose smiled to Him today. His approval was more important than anything for her. However, her happiness didn’t last long. There they were around her, the unpleasant and noisy parakeets. Would they never stop talking?



“How is our precious rose?”

“I’m fine, thanks.”

“Did you not give up loving after so many attacks against your life?”

“It’s my mission.”

“We were precisely talking about it. We had a meeting and we decided that we do not want this kind of work here. We had had some traumas because of other ‘loving people’ in the past and we do not want to take the risk anymore—”

“Of seeing your followers switching sides, right?”

“—Wow! What a punch in the stomach. Honey, why weren’t you more subtle?”

“As you were with me?”

“Umm! This one will take some work; didn’t I tell you?”

“Listen all of you. I’m not as those whom you spoke. In second place, do you know why love bothers you so much? Because you have to throw the ego away from the throne that you erected for it and have to learn more to serve, but what you want is to be served. Am I right?”

“Ahem! Well!”

“My work aggrandized many lives, I interceded for many needy and helped many to rise up, but I was only injured and ‘used.’ My small disciples are very happy with the

work and all in the garden seem at ease with the idea. The burden becomes much lighter, does it not?”

“And who is thinking of easiness here? Life is hard, baby! The path is narrow. We love the Creator in our own way and that’s it! Do you think that you will change our way of being?”

“What do you call love? This falsehood disguised as politeness? He left His word that says, ‘They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.’”

“Who said we do not keep His word?”

“To keep means ‘to obey the word, to surrender to it, to let it act as if it must’, but it is you who control it according to the convenience. Who has all the material facilities, but does nothing to supply those who are needy, is not obeying the Word. Who has the authority to open, but closes the door to those who need an opportunity, does not obey the Word. Who has many friends around him to help at all times, should also have a word and a gesture of comfort and affection to give to those in need; however, how many remain weeping at his side, suffering so much emptiness and loneliness for not feeling participants!”

“My dear! Don’t you think you’re being too incisive?”

“Let anyone with ears listen!”

“Didn’t I say that this girl would bring us trouble? My will is—”

“Shhh! This will not be pleasing to many people. We need to care for our reputation. Goodbye, Rosie. We’ll meet any other day.”

The delicate rose was exhausted and, like the jasmine, the duel of words had hurt her too, but now she was stronger to withstand the hypocrisy and falsehood. He who loved her had more value to her; He would always protect, rescue and heal her. She would wait on Him.

12



Night came and all went to bed. They were quiet and thoughtful because of the bruises suffered. But the farmer was aware. He knew all things. While His beloved ones slept He provided for. There would always be a remedy for everything. He came at night, while the flowers were resting, and spread over them a pure balm to heal their wounds. It also gave them dreams of peace and faith. They didn't realize His presence there. Then, with His work completed, He went away again.

The dawn came and the sun rose and the flowers woke up from their sleep. By looking to themselves, they didn't see the wounds anymore, and when they looked at each other, were glad to see that LIFE was in them. They were not only healed, but had blossomed and their descendants had been born. The garden was all flowery with many species and colors. The disciples of each one of them also didn't come alone. Each of them brought their offspring to honor those who had sown the good words in their lives. Now they were ready to fly away and beget other spiritual children. The time had come for the flowers to reap what had been planted with so much difficulty. They were a real community where the gifts flowed without barriers, generating growth and well-being.

The hydrangea then prophesied, "Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher. 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. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith."

As for the parakeets, what was left to them was to be ashamed and be silent, to never again bother the other beings because of what they did not know. The malicious words they said were silenced forever.

“But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen! Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you in the womb and will help you: Do not fear, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring. They shall spring up like a green tamarisk, like willows by flowing streams. This one will say, ‘I am the Lord’s’, another will be called by the name of Jacob, yet another will write on the hand, ‘The Lord’s’ and adopt the name of Israel. Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.” (Isa. 44: 1-6)

