

WHO IS THE OWNER?

Fr. George Panackal

“But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw God’s glory, and Jesus standing at the right-hand side of God. “Look!” he said. “I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right-hand side of God!” Then they all rushed at him at once, threw him out of the city and stoned him. ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’ He knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lord! Do not remember this sin against them!’ He said this and died” (Acts 7:54-60).

Stephen did not think the stones coming against him will be changed into flowers, or that those who threw the stones would be dashed to the ground. Since he was with God he did not have any such imaginations. Instead of praying for a miracle by God, he prayed, “Lord! Do not lay this sin against them!” When any word or deed is said or done against a person who is full of the Spirit, what rises from the heart of that person is, “Father! Do not hold this against them!” Stephen prayed thus for his persecutors. The Holy Spirit will teach us how to act in such circumstances. As mentioned above, if we wish the stones should be turned into flowers, we shall be greatly disappointed when it does not happen so.

Nowhere else in history do we find mention of any person praying for those who were stoning him to death? In the midst of those who stoned Stephen, there was also a man named Saul. That Saul later became Paul. Stephen’s prayer must have been the cause of his conversion. Through that prayer, Saul, from being an enemy, was converted and became a great witness of Christ Jesus, ready to die for Him. He became the greatest missionary the world has ever seen. May Stephen’s prayer do the same wonder today in the lives of those who are anxiously worrying about those who harm them, whether at home or at place of work.

Paul and Silas were arrested and their hands and feet were bound with chains. The guards stood outside. But unmindful of the jail and chains they only saw Jesus who could, if He wanted, shatter the chains and break the jail. They were convinced that He was with them even in the middle of the night. With that conviction they continued to sing and praise their Lord and Master. They surrendered all their adversities into His hands. In the end, their chains were loosened and doors of the jail were thrown open.

Had we been in the place of Paul and Silas we would have questioned God, why He is not intervening in our predicament, why He is not minding us; is there no God? The person who tries to look at situations using his own intelligence and reasoning will only burden his own head with his adversities. On the other hand, one who adores and praises God in adversity will see God in it.

God sends His Spirit whenever we are in trouble. Why? So that we may understand the truth and know God’s will. Consider the disciples of Jesus in the Upper Room. They were praying so that they might receive the Holy Spirit; they were praying only to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Not because they did not have other things in mind. Like us they too had several pressing problems in their lives. They had left their boats and nets and followed Jesus. But with His death everything seemed to be lost. They were back to their poverty-stricken life. They began going back to the sea. In spite of all this they gathered in the Upper Room and prayed not for prosperity and wealth. Even though they shut themselves in the room for fear of the Jews, they did not think of their tormentors once they were together there. They prayed only to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The

Spirit of God came down upon them in their moments of adversity.

When we are in adverse circumstances are we able to pray for the Holy Spirit like the disciples? If we are able to do so, the Spirit will surely come to us. The Spirit will give us the freedom to understand the truth and to adore and praise God and call Him Abba, Father. "See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children – and so, in fact, we are. This is why the world does not know us: it has not known God." (1Jn3:1)

Many people think that God makes us suffer and cry. In that case, He must be very small and feeble. On the contrary, in every opposing circumstance, God makes us grow in the knowledge of truth. To grow in knowledge means to grow in truth.

What is our outlook on wealth? We think that with our own effort we made all that wealth; we are its owner, its master. But is that true? The Bible tells us that the owner of wealth is God; man is only its keeper and its user. Do we realize it? If we do, we will not spend a paisa without consulting its owner. Take such a decision and our life style will completely change. Will God give us money to waste on alcohol or to spend lavishly on unnecessary things? Only those who consider themselves as owner will feel the loss of wealth. Those who place it in God's hands will not have such regrets. We must seek God, the owner of wealth; our aim and objective should not be the wealth alone. Ask ourselves whether we are running after riches which cannot save us, or after Jesus who alone can save us. God is the one who protects us. His promise is before us: "Look at the birds of the air! They neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns. Yet God feeds them" (Lk.12:24). Let this conviction fill every part of our being.

Why Are You Afraid?

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When we get knowledge about Jesus, automatically transformation takes place in us. Our words and deeds change. The more you know Jesus the more you change.

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, and they are new every morning." (Lam. 3:22-23)

This love makes us a new creation, strengthens us to do deeds filled with love. For where two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, Jesus is there among them. Early believers felt the presence of God among themselves. A believer of Jesus is entirely different from others. All the religions talk about God like this: no one can see God if anyone sees God, he/she will die; this was the belief of the early Jews. People say God is this, God is that, etc. But no one ever taught about God like Jesus did. Jesus is the first person in history that called God, "Father." This is not merely a name but a relationship. When we look up to Jesus, we get all the answers we want about God. Jesus is the first born of all creation. To know Jesus means to know God. "The Father and I are one." (Jn. 10:30)

When we get knowledge about Jesus, automatically transformation takes place in us. Our words and deeds change. The more you know Jesus the more you change. The more you know Jesus the more you change. In history Jesus is the God who came down as a human being. There is no doubt about that, that Jesus was a human being. Some people believe that he was a prophet. A prophet is a person who talks for God. Jesus said it himself that the prophecy was about Him. All the prophecies were fulfilled in Him. This peculiarity we find only in Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the way and truth and the life" (Jn. 14:6). "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn.11:25). "The Son of man has authority on earth to

forgive sins” (Matt. 9:6). No one else said these things. Whatever Jesus said is the truth. Jesus said he would rise from the dead. He appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time. Whoever saw him believed in him and were witnesses for him. Isaiah spoke about why Jesus became a human being (Lk. 4:18). When Jesus went to the temple, He cast out demons, saved people from Satan and their bondages. He cured Peter’s mother in law; Peter was with Jesus so it follows that whoever is with Jesus, Jesus takes care of their family members. Jesus was available for even the leprosy patients. Jesus waited for the Samaritan woman near the well. Now Jesus is waiting for each and every person who comes to the Divine Retreat Centers.

Whoever is in Christ Jesus now, their problems are not so big. Jesus can solve each and every problem. For that you need faith. And that is the reason why the disciples prayed “increase our faith.” Isaiah 28:16 says, “One who trusts will not panic.” If we look through the intellectual level, we cannot see any miracles. Faith is much above the intellectual level. But it is not the opposite. We see our problems on our intellectual level. We are not looking for the One who can solve them. That is why people have fear, anxiety and worries. For a believer, rather than look at the problem, they must look to the One God who can solve them. When there was no more wine, Mother Mary went to Jesus.

One day Paul and Silas were going for prayer. But they landed in prison. They never took off their handcuffs or chains nor did the jailor. But Jesus took them off. The Jesus who said, “I am with you always to the end of the age.” The one who looks at Jesus should worship, praise and thank him, and then his problems are solved. Paul and Silas’ chains were unfastened. But they did not escape; they waited for God’s plans to be fulfilled through them. As a result the jailor and his family were saved. The believer always has his God inside his heart.

Jesus is the controller of our lives. Without Jesus our lives will not move in the right way, if Christ sets us free, then we are really free (Gal. 5:1). Jesus has the authority over Satan, disease, death and this world. If Jesus is with us then why should we fear? He will give us peace. When Jesus was resting in the boat a windstorm arose on the sea. The boat was in the middle of the sea and was being swamped by the waves. Jesus was with the disciples when asked to save them; Jesus stills the storm and rebuked the winds. Because he is the creator of all!

There are three areas in which Satan attacks us. That is: relationship, property and body. Job was attacked by Satan in all three areas. He lost his children, his property was destroyed and he got sick. God also has the authority over all these three areas. That is why Job said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:20). We should we give God the authority over us. When Gladys Stains came to know about her husband and son, that they had been burned alive, she gave thanks to God for keeping them alive until that time. Body, property and relationship: if you surrender them to God then that becomes a sacrifice, then God will protect them. If the Blood of the Lamb gave protection to the Israelites then God will protect us too. Jesus, the Lamb of God will give protection to our properties and we will be His. Then nobody can touch us. My life and all in my life will belong to God and this is the real spirituality. Whatever we may surrender will be sanctified by God.