

Dropping the Negative Strongholds: The Bananas In Our Lives

(Go To Meeting)

Norbert Bohnert—April 21, 2023

You may be wondering how bazaar a title and hopefully Norbert hasn't gone off the deep end! Well, I don't think I have, but I'm using this 'bananas' scenario is an analogy of what I'm trying to get across in the message today.

I was reading sometime ago about a unique way that monkeys are captured for a zoo. I read in the article that it is something that I want to portray to you as brethren on what we can also get trapped into. So, I'll give you the analogy to start off. This is apparently a true way of how they capture monkeys for a zoo.

What they do is to take the small cage into the jungle and inside that cage they place a bunch of bananas. It would have to be a bunch, they close the cage and lock it, locking the bunch of bananas inside that cage.

As the monkey comes along and spots the bananas in the cage, he will reach into the cage—because he craves bananas—through the narrow rungs. However, in doing so the monkey is unable to pull the bunch of bananas through the rungs of the cage, because the spacing of the rungs are too narrow.

The monkey tries and tries with no success, not letting go of the bunch of bananas. Even while this is occurring and trappers come upon him, the monkey will not let go of the bunch of bananas. The monkey is entrapped and he allows the trappers to grab the monkey very easily.

You may wonder what relevance does this have in our spiritual lives, in our journey and walk with God. Brethren, this is the point of my message today. The point is driven home that if we saw this happening before us, and wanted to save that monkey from being entrapped, wouldn't we just yell out and in exasperation and say 'Drop the bananas!' it would be frustrating for us to watch this, because it is so difficult to imagine why the monkey would not drop the bananas and simply run away and avoid being caught!

The solution is so simple, so clear that the monkey could easily forego the bananas and take off and not be trapped.

This is the lead up to my message to all of us. I include myself, as well. Do we, in our lives, hang onto:

- our problems
- our past experiences
- our feelings
- our attitudes
- attitudes that cloud our perspective
- attitudes that alter our actions
- attitudes that sidetrack our best intentions

We simple won't let them go, even when it definitely in our best interest to do so! We, too, entrap ourselves by hanging on! So, the question I ask each one of us:

- What are you and I hanging onto that is holding us back and preventing us from moving forward in our walk with God?
- What is it that those around us would wish we would just let go of?
- What is weighing you down because you simply refuse to let it go?

I think I speak for a good majority of all of us, and admit that there are things, whether they are still there, or where we continue to think that some of the things we hang onto, or sometimes don't even identify, or we recognize and think it will make things better are actually things that make our lives much more complicated. Just like the monkey not letting go and giving the opportunity for others trying to entrap him.

What is slowing us down, because just won't put us down. We must ask that question of ourselves. Things that have occurred from our past, that we find more comfortable to hang onto, but are slowing us down and affecting us in extremely negative ways; sometimes physically, and more often spiritually

We hold onto things that we use to explain our behavior, why we do things the way that we do. Why behave in circumstances the way we do. We hold onto past experiences to excuse our lack of growth in life, whether it be mentally, socially or more importantly *spiritually!*

Those excuses trap us in life that we do not really seek or want, but are not willing to do anything about it. Can you personally relate to this? *I unfortunately, can't!* Sometimes we hang on so

tight that we are completely trapped and do not even see that we are in that state.

What are we hiding that we do not want anyone to find out about. This thing that you and I are dragging around, hoping that no one will ever find out. But in many cases they do know that something is up. They can see your character, your behavior, and your responses and/or actions.

Sometimes we tend to play games with ourselves and carry around something that really we do not need to be carrying around any longer. Each one of us should be asking of ourselves:

What are we holding onto that is making a monkey of ourselves?

We must determine in our mind and heart that *if we want a better life, including our spiritual lives*, we generally want to overcome and grow, *we must drop those bananas!*

We must drop that stronghold onto which we are holding! It is that simple. In our own lives, that banana—the stronghold—can be anything that keeps us from seeing things as they are doing what we should be doing. It can be something in our behavior that we know we need to drop, but we will just not let it go.

Sometimes we don't even recognize it as being a negative stronghold that is holding us back from advancing in our conversion process.

These bananas that we hang onto and become strongholds in our lives are described by Paul in:

2 Corinthians 10:4: "For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, **but mighty through God to the overthrowing of strongholds.**"

Strongholds are those things that become a constant pull in the wrong direction for us. It is a heavily fortified position in our life that we need to get rid of, to let go of.

When we do not get rid of these strongholds then Satan is open to attack us on our own turf, behind our own defenses. It is not something that we see coming, because it is already there working against us from the inside. *The cornerstone of a stronghold is laid in this undisciplined mind!*

Proverbs 4:23: "**Above all guard the door of your mind with diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.**"

We need to protect our mind! We need to be diligent about it, because our thoughts determine the course of our life! Sometimes physically, but also

more often *spiritually!* ***We do need to protect our mind!***

By not actively attacking our negative strongholds, we are by default holding onto them! We are holding off opportunities, holding off a better more meaningful life. We are holding off the life that we are all wanting, ***the life that God wants for us!***

IF we do not take the strongholds down, they will take us down, it's that plain and simple! When Paul asks who is your master in:

Romans 6:16: "Don't you realize that to whom you yield yourselves *as* servants to obey, **you are servants of the one you obey**, whether *it is* of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

Don't you realize that when don't let go of the bunch of bananas, the stronghold in our life, ***we are actually obeying it! We are a slave to it!*** Unfortunately, that could lead us to death. Paul is telling us that that this is important, it's really a 'big deal'!

We are told that sin is a transgression of God's Law.

1-John 3:4: "Everyone who practices sin is also practicing lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness."

We all know that. If in the heat of the moment you don't think that you can remember God's Laws, ***sin is anything that you do that undermines your relationship with God, or undermines someone else's' relationship with God.*** If it is not building us up, it is sin! We know that sin leads to death, and we know that is not good!

Romans 6:17: "But thanks *be* to God, that you were *the* servants of sin, but you have obeyed from *the* heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you."

We all used to be slaves to sin, but we have been called to let go of that and run a new pattern of thought; ***a new way of seeing:***

- the world
- God
- our relationship
- our finances
- our past experiences
- our genetic inheritance
 - we are no longer our own
 - we are no longer slaves to 'that's just the way I am'
 - we are no longer slaves to 'that's just the way my family is'

That's should be all over in our lives! Those are just excuses!

Verse 19: "I speak from a human point of view because of the weakness of your flesh; for just as you *once* yielded your members in bondage to uncleanness, and to lawlessness unto lawlessness, so **now yield your members in bondage to righteousness unto sanctification.**"

We are not our own! We are God's! We belong to God! Does our behavior, thinking and our perspective on life glorify to Whom we belong? Questions that we must ask ourselves As Paul said, *we know all of this!*

- Do we not sometimes just drop the banana?
- Why don't we drop the bananas? *The stronghold that is persistently being hung onto!*
- Why do we not move forward?

The #1 reason is that many times we don't because we don't want to. We don't want to let go of those long-standing strongholds:

- those thoughts
- those habits
- those excuses
- the behaviors

We have been growing too comfortable with things the way they are! Not great, but not that bad either.

We may not like our situation, but it has become part of the story we tell ourselves, and we share with others. Unfortunately, many times it forms our identity as to who we are!

Jesus addressed this issue with a man on the Sabbath Day, which illustrates very well what I'm trying to get across.

John 5:1: "After these things *there* was a Feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And there is in Jerusalem at the sheep gate a pool, called Bethesda in Hebrew, which has five porches. And in these *porches* were lying a great multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame *and* withered. **They were waiting for the stirring of the water**" (vs 1-3).

These were people in dire need of healing! The reason is that they learned:

Verse 4: "For from time-to-time, an angel descended into the pool and agitated the water; and **the first one to enter after the agitation of the water was made well** from whatever disease he had."

Many people sat there waiting, and you can

imagine that scene.

Verse 5: "Now, a certain man was there who had been **suffering with an infirmity for thirty-eight years**... [that's a long time] ...Jesus saw him lying *there*, and, knowing that he had been there a long time... [noticing his condition and that he was sitting around the pool] said to him, '**Do you desire to be made whole?**'"

Remember, keeping in mind that this man had been sick for 38 years. The question seemed redundant! The answer a foregone conclusion!

If you personally were standing there and heard this asked of the man, you would want to interrupt and jump in and say,

Of course, he wants to be healed. He is sick, he has been this way for 38 years. What do You mean by that question? He was there at the pool, wasn't he?

You may think this question was strange on the surface, but was it really? Was that question strange? Could it be that this man had become so accustomed to his condition, after 38 years, that he liked it that way? Is it possible that he liked it that way so that Jesus had to ask him that question.

- Do you want to be healed?

or:

- Has your condition become your story?
- Is how you get attention?
- Is it how you explain your existence?
 - Do you get the drift from what I'm saying?
 - Is it possible that it is the way we sometimes deal with problems that we have become accustomed to the life we lead in the world that's around us?
 - Are we so accustomed to the problems we have?
 - Are we so comfortable with the excuses that we cling to?
 - Are we so accustomed to the feelings and insecurities that enslave us?

And Christ comes to us asking the same question:

- Do you really want My help?
- Do you want to experience the power of God in your life?
- Do you want to have your prayers answered?
- Do you really want to overcome, or at least bring under control the problems that have been plaguing you for so long?

Dropping the Negative Strongholds:
The Bananas In Our Lives
(Go To Meeting)

- Do you want to remove the spots and wrinkles?

So that you might inherit the Kingdom of God! So that God will be able to use you in His plans for all eternity!

The question is, **Do you really want God's help?**

When you really consider that we have all the power in the universe available to us, to get done in our lives what really needs to be done. **To overcome:**

- the insecurities
- the habits that we have
- the worries,
- the depression
- the sins
- the anger
- the family history that plagues us

When you really think about it, it's amazing that we have any problems at all. But the reality is: *we do! We really do!*

Throughout the Bible we find over and over again Scriptures that tell us about the power that is available to us.

Ephesians 3:20: "Now, to Him Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, **according to the power that is working in us.**" *We have that potential!*

Philippians 4:13: "**I can do all things through Christ, Who empowers me.**"

2-Corinthians 12:9: "But He [Christ] said to me [Paul], 'My grace is sufficient for you; **for My power is made perfect in weakness.**' Therefore, most gladly will I boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may dwell in me. For this reason, I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ; **for when I am weak, then I am strong**" (vs 9-10).

There are many more Scriptural references. All this points to the fact that we have special strength that is available to us that is a match to any problem that we face in our live. Yet, here we are today dealing with and excusing away the same problems, the same issues.

1-Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has come upon you except what is common to mankind. **For God, Who is faithful, will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear;** but with the temptation, **He will make a way of escape, so that you may be able to bear it.**"

We are promised that! That is a promise from God to each one of us. At this time of year as we have just come out of the spring Holy Days, the days of Unleavened Bread where we make a concerted effort to examine ourselves and leave our sin behind. To drop those bananas, those negative strongholds that leave us vulnerable to Satan and a slave to sin!

We should seriously think about these situations that we have or get ourselves into. Why are continually plagued by long outstanding problems just like the crippled man was.

- Why aren't they overcome, or at least brought under control?
- Could it be that it's maybe the way we want it? *Don't bug me; leave me alone!*
- Can't we get back to our mindsets?
- Is that possible?

Each of you can answer that! But I have personal thought that at times in the past. We are all vulnerable!

John 5:8: "Jesus said to him, 'Arise, take up your bedroll and walk.'"

Verse 14: "After these things, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, **'Behold, you have been made whole. Sin no more, so that something worse does not happen to you.'**"

We know that disease is not necessarily a consequence of sin. It can be, as in the case that was revealed to us by this verse we just read.

Wouldn't it be reasonable to conclude that this man we just read about committed sin because he wanted to? Because he was comfortable with it? So, Jesus asked him:

- Do you want to be healed?
- Do you want to stop sinning?
- Do you want to drop the bananas? *That stronghold in your life!*

All valid questions Jesus had for this man! We know that some sin can be pleasurable, at least for a short time. There is sometimes fun, and many times we do not think we are harming anyone, let alone ourselves! God does not knock us over every time we do something wrong.

Ecclesiastes 8:11: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

We find Solomon saying that no one is stopping us, because sentence against the sin is not

executed speedily. We can become very comfortable and think that it is okay. But is it, brethren? Is it?

Hebrews 11:24: “By faith Moses, after becoming a great *leader*, refused to be called *the son of Pharaoh’s daughter*, **choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the temporary pleasure of sin**” (vs 24-25).

Good example! The fleeting pleasures of sin are real. No question about it, they are real! It is not always a comfortable thing to live with sin in our lives; we all know that! In fact, at times it just the way we want it!

Is that not a terrible thing to say? But we as humans with a carnal nature and free moral agency just sometimes create such situations. We need to be observant and catch ourselves when we hear ourselves say, ‘I tried, but I just can’t do it.’ The bells and whistles should go off in our mind, in our head, and give us a red alert. It should be triggered, *because we have the power to deal with this!* It is available to us. We cannot, and should not, let us fool ourselves.

It’s very easy for us to get into a mode of thinking, and it’s not even that we cannot or we tried; it is really that we don’t want to. We don’t want to let the bananas go! ***The stronghold that is holding us in captivity!***

We are not disciplined at times and it is a weakness we all have. Sometimes we often give up or lose faith in God, because we confuse *source* with *process*. The Source of the power to overcome and is available to all of us. But that does not solve the problem by itself. The process of overcoming is hard, and we can all attest to that. It requires

- our participation
- our struggles
- our perseverance
- our will power

There is a cost that can be hard to pay!

It is the old adage that we as humans have a limited amount of will power. Will power will not be like a fire extinguisher, because once we use it the tank is empty! Will power is more like a muscle that weakens when you don’t use it, but strengthens when you do use it. It must be developed. The more we use it, the stronger it gets.

When it is weak, we need to slow down and take precautions. Will power, or self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. We are expected to grow and use it.

Why do we often hang onto things, because if we let them go, those things that we are familiar with makes us anxious. It takes us into the unknown and new path not previously seen. We ask: What will I do? I feel totally out of control!

Philippians 4:6: “Do not be anxious about anything; but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, **let your requests be made known to God in everything.**”

That is a formula for success, a way to drop the bunch of bananas! Prayer and supplication coupled with gratitude, and gratitude is huge part of life change.

Verse 7: “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.”

We become anxious when we try to control things that are out of our control. That peace Paul refers to only comes to us when we let go, when we surrender everything! We do not have, because we are finally in control of our life because we have eliminated the uncertainties of life. We have peace when we no longer need to control.

When we turn our life over to God, and trust Him with the uncertainties of our life, we bring that peace that passes all understanding not our lives. It passes all understanding because us it counter-intuitive. Letting go of control brings peace. ***Trusting in God brings peace!***

There are many things in life we cannot control! But there are important things that we can control, like our character, our choices, and the way that we approach life. We all need to work on those things. Depression should be our penance. Remembering in one thing, looking back is quite another! We need to see our past differently. Anxiety is about an imagined future with limited possibilities. Depression, worry and anxiety are diminished when we have clarity about what really is important.

We must let go at times to move into the future that God has set for us. Paul tells us that we are to drop the bananas.

Ephesians 4:31: “Let all bitterness, and indignation, and wrath, and clamor, and evil speaking be removed from you, together with all malice.”

Paul begins telling us to live a life worthy of our calling! Worthy of the understanding that we have been given.

Verse 17: “So then, I declare and testify this

in *the* Lord that you are no longer to walk even as the rest of *the* Gentiles are walking, in *the* vanity of their minds.”

Let us not live in the futility of thinking that live without the knowledge that God has personally given us. They are depressed, anxious, worried and getting their own way. They are seeing life from the wrong point of view. Let us work on not doing that! It’s a challenge for us all, each one of us. We have been given a distinct perspective on life. The perspective of those around us and much of the advice you will find comes from a heart that has hardened to the ways of God. Paul is telling us not to let this shape our thinking or our perspective on life.

Verse 31: “Let all bitterness, and indignation, and wrath, and clamor, and evil speaking be removed from you, together with all malice.”

We must get rid of all of that! Paul is basically saying, ‘Let’s clean the house!’ It doesn’t matter if your grandmother or grandfather was that way. Drop it! Drop it now! Everyone is tired of our sad stories! We all have them. If you personally do not get rid of it, it will ruin and rule your life!

Everything you think and do will be filtered through the lens of your said story. That is not what we have been invited into. Paul says that we have been taught the pattern of teaching we find in God’s Word. Paul says in v 23 that we are put the old thinking behind us and take hold of a novel approach.

There are few things more exhausting and debilitating than giving your life to the wrong things. How many are fighting battles we never meant to fight, because we simply haven’t dropped the bananas. ***That negative stronghold in our life in the first place.***

Instead of dealing with the issues that are before us, we live with them, and we make poor choices. We find ourselves in situations that were never meant to be that we can deal with.

When we deviate from where we should be, you make poor choices. It is time to face our issues head on and move back to the path that God meant for each one of us to be on. Paul mentions bitterness; bitterness is hard to let go of, especially when it’s the only thing standing between you and a breakdown.

As Paul tells us we must let it go! Anyone who is bitter does not want to hear the fact that ‘it’s not your fault, it’s your future; your future is your responsibility. The choices that you make from here on are yours and yours only no matter what

happened to you. God has given us choices, and that can be a tough thing to swallow at times in our lives.

This is when it helps to get yourself around people who are filled with optimism and hope. There is nothing worse than hanging out with a bunch of negative people. We find courage to drop those bananas and move foreword when we are in the presence of the courage of others. That is why we have each other, every one of us. That is why we have each other. We have all faced troubles and endured pain. There is no shame. There are areas where God is collaborating closely with us and we don’t even know sometimes.

Paul said that he was made strong in his weakness. Our scares do not display weakness, but the courage to learn and to grow. These obstacles, those things we sometimes hang onto, are ‘impostor shepherds.’ They lead us to destruction! They tend to being to rule our lives. They superimpose our thinking, an operating program that causes us to misinterpret everything, even the Word of God.

- we lose touch with reality
- we lose who we are
- we are led down the wrong path
- we are led to the wrong choices

Jesus talks about this in:

John 10:1: “Truly, truly I say to you, the one who does not enter the sheepfold through the door, but climbs up some other way, that one is a thief and a robber.”

It is not from the Word of God if it does not reflect the mind of God; it is coming to you through the wrong door; it is an impostor! It is not the real Shepherd!

Verse 2: “But the one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he brings the sheep out, he goes before them; and **the sheep follow him because they know his voice**” (vs 2-4).

- it is clear
- it is strong
- it is comforting
- it is safe

Verse 5: ““But they will never follow a stranger for they will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.’ Jesus spoke this parable to them, but they did not understand what He was saying to them” (vs 5-6). *We were called to know and to follow the shepherd’s voice!*

We can all listen to the voices in our head telling us to act on our insecurity, our sad stories or past, or what someone else is doing. The way we are wired to lead us in the wrong direction and we have to be very careful.

Verse 7: “Therefore, Jesus again said to them, **“Truly, truly I say to you, I am the Door of the sheep.”**”

What we hang onto will steal our hope, kill our connection to God and destroy our life. If we are His we will not listen to those voices.

To drop the negative stronghold’s in our lives, the bananas is to have life to the full as God intends.

The problem is within! It is not God, it is not other people, it is not our circumstances. ***It is us!*** Each one of us, ***it is us!*** It’s how we have chosen to respond to what life has thrown at us. It is a mismanagement of our mind. **What are we holding onto that is holding us back?**

We can be holding onto something that is not necessarily wrong, but we sometimes need to let go of it, even if it’s temporarily. It does not necessarily mean forever. Every season of life requires different things from us. For example, what we could rightfully hang onto as a single person different than what you should hang onto as a married person. What are we holding onto, that may be a good thing in a different season of life. But right now it is just a hindrance to where you are and where you need to focus!

Self-awareness comes into play. Examining our selves personally, which we were in the process of doing with the days that have just gone by, the days of Unleavened Bread. Asking the question continually:

- How is my behavior affecting those around me?
- How did I come to see the world this way?

There is something that we need to let go of. As God’s people we are to see the world from a new mindset, which is an attitude, a collection of thoughts that information and emotions attached that create a certain perspective on life. It is a filter everything that we experience in life. Remember, this is important, because our perspective determines our future. Our future is not linear, it is dynamic!

Romans 12:2: “Do not conform yourselves to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind in order that you may prove what *is* well-pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God.”

Paul connected the renewing of our mind to a new future. We must examine our thoughts and know where they come from. Then we are told in:

2-Corinthians 10:5 *we are to be:* “...bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ.”

An average individual has over 30,000 thoughts per day, and sometimes more. That is a lot of thoughts to sift through, and with every thought having the potential to change who we are; that is critical. If one thought, about every three seconds is brought into captivity is a monumental task.

I would say it’s impossible, however the task before us is to ponder every thought that we have. What we need to do is examine the filter through which we allow our thoughts to enter our mind or be processed in the mind in the first place. We must identify the source of our thoughts and filters through and allow them to linger are spread to those around us.

We design a mindset by intentionally shaping our external inputs, such as what we read, our experiences, what we consume on the Internet, where we go and the people we surround ourselves with. If we do not, our environment will shape us and determine our mindset, ***and we are guaranteed to move away from God!*** It’s bound to happen!

It is each one of our responsibilities to chose the environment that will shape who we are. Of course, again, it is our choice: Godly or carnally!

We cannot move through life on autopilot. God asks us to be intentional and to see life from a new perspective. The point of renewing our mind and bringing every thought into captivity is so we are not limited by our own mind. What God is teaching us is beyond the ability to imagine for ourselves. It is why humility is so important!

As soon as we think we know, we stop learning! There is much to learn if we can lay down our pride! We are to let go of the past and grab hold of the future. A mind disconnected from God is a small mind trapped in a small world.

Have you ever notice that people who hate their life are the least likely to change it? Their mind is shut down to possibilities and it becomes a trap!

When we are told in Philippians to think on what is good it is because it is a way out of anything we have experienced. It provides a way to drop the memories that trap us. Those who love their life are more likely to grow and change because their mind is opened. Not to mention the fact that they are

bound to make fewer wrong decision when you mind is in the right place.

To look at life in a positive way is not a naïve view of life, but our proper response to God and what He has done for us. What is something that is one of the hardest things to let go of?

John 15:12: “This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you.”

God and His Son loved us so much that Jesus gave His life for us, even though we did not appreciate it. Understanding the depth of that sacrifice, which we were just reminded of with Passover, but not only at Passover but throughout the year should be a key part in a worthy manner: *esteem life as we should!* Being asked to lay down one’s life:

Verse 13: “**No one has greater love than this: that one lay down his life for his friends**”

Laying one’s life down for his friends seems like ‘a bridge too far.’ That would be a huge gift to say the least. People have done it for all kinds of reasons. I can picture scenarios where I might do it, but I think the implications of v 13 go deeper and harder than simply giving up my physical life for yours.

What if I gave my life for you and I had to live with my decision every day for the rest of my life. Christ and God the Father now live with Their decision to make possible the forgiveness of our sins and the possibility of eternal life daily, even though most people have no appreciation for it, and walk over everything He stands for. *Ask yourself:*

- Could I do that?
- Would I do that?

That is supernatural love! It does not come naturally to us.

A successful Christian will take ownership of their situation. In a non-successful Christian will blame others and spend their time on the issues that they really cannot do anything about. Then they stagnate!

People who take responsibility for their lives have the power to make changes. You must be accountable.

It was sometime back I read about an individual, and I’m not sure where I read it, but I will never forget it. I’d like to share that idea with you:

I was a revolutionary when I was young, and all my prayer to God was, ‘Lord, give me the

energy to change the world. As I got older and approached middle age and realized that my life was half gone without my changing a single soul, I changed my prayer: ‘Lord, give me the grace to change all those who encounter me. Bless my family and friends and I will be satisfied.’

Now that I’m and old man and my days are numbered, I have begun to see how foolish I have been. My one prayer now is, ‘Lord, give me the grace to change myself.’

If I had prayed this right from the start, I would not have wasted my life!

Brethren, I ask you, have we wasted our lives? A valid question that each one of us can ask. Do we want to be the one our front leading the charge with our pet ideas, or the one trying to control the situation of other people?

That is much easier than examining our own behavior and learning to control ourselves. That is not so much fun; there is no apparent glory in that. It’s a challenging work. There is a lot of inertia to overcome.

What happens? Our problems are now our habits. We have grown accustom to our problems, and over time we find them easier to justify and find excuses. Someone once said that adults are just children with better excuses.

Sure, we might acknowledge it as a problem, but is sometimes our favorite line, ‘but we can work around it.’ Or we look around and ‘it’s comparatively not so bad.’ Invoking the principles of relative sin. ‘I am not so bad, but they are much worse!’

We should and we must know better! In this life what we are called to is not about getting better than the next guy. *It’s about continually improving ourselves!* We must raise the bar on ourselves, setting higher and higher standards of ourselves.

We do not have any business being mastered by anything or anyone because we have a new Master, God the Father and Jesus Christ! God has invited us into a way of life where we are to let go of every encumbrance, because we want to be fully His! Fully submitted to His way of life.

This may be hard to swallow, but let’s consider this: the long outstanding problems that we may have, and ask ourselves, the problem that we don’t really want to utilize the power of God. Use the Holy Spirit that we have in our lives to make the

necessary changes. Am I speaking out of turn! Hopefully, I'm not!

- What are we hanging onto that we would be desperate to get rid of?
- What private agendas are we hanging onto that do not allow us to get God's help?
- How can we get out of our own way so that we do not block the skilled voice of God?

We cannot answer these questions without humility. It takes a degree of humility to answer these questions if the answers are going to move us forward and closer to God. Otherwise, it's easy to look through the distortions that make us look and feel better in the torturous logic that betrays us so easily.

So, please do not take this as an extremely negative message, but rather answer the questions on a positive note, and know that we can make the changes necessary that we need to make with the help of God's Holy Spirit.

We have been granted that, let us use it! The Holy Spirit will give us that power or resolve that we need to get through the struggles and the tricky situations, or to overcome our own moral sluggishness. It may give us the power to see things more clearly, to separate the Godly solution from the moral or intuitive solutions that we gravitate to.

In any event, we need it and we need to ask God for it. Our physical existence limits us. Through the gift of faith, God shows us possibilities. Our faith shows us what God has in store for humankind. We wait now for reality to catch up with our faith.

God's Word shows us the many possibilities available to us, that are made visible only by our faith in it. If we can let go of our limited physical thinking, let go of the inconclusive solutions that are offered by the minds of men and renew our mind with a new perspective that God has given us, we can overcome and move beyond the past that limits us.

We need to take God's Word at face value and begin to ask ourselves the right questions and begin to align our thoughts with the mind of God. We will see the lasting solution to our personal issues and problems. We must take the first steps toward God! We begin by walking and then we will see.

In faith we live below God's intention for us, and is why without faith we cannot please God. We need faith; it moves us from what we are to what we can be. Of course, only with God's help! It is

what connects us to God. Most of us, and that includes me, live beneath God's intention for us.

We need to drop the bananas, those negative strongholds that are being hung onto and start moving. We can change ourselves, our attitudes and our effect on other people. We can change our opinions; we can change direction. Only the discipline and our decision to ask God for His help are missing.

We have the chance, the capacity, the answers and most of all we have the Divine help. All the elements are there right in front of us. I, you, all of us must make the decision to regularly review our life to identify those bananas, those strongholds in our lives that we need to let go of.

- What is not serving you well?
- What is the next step you need to take?

Let us ask ourselves those questions. This is a personal matter. Let us ask those questions!

Christ asked each one of us: **Do you really want My help?** That is a very valid question. **Do we want God's help?**

As I look at the problems that I've had in my life thus far, and the problems I still have in my life, I many times think about this analogy of the monkey in the jungle. I wonder if God was looking down from His Throne seeing me struggling and snared by my personal problems and shaking His head and saying: **Why don't you just drop the bananas!**

Scriptural References:

- 1) 2 Corinthians 10:4
- 2) Proverbs 4:23
- 3) Romans 6:16
- 4) 1 John 3:4
- 5) Romans 6:17, 19
- 6) John 5:1-6
- 7) Ephesians 3:20
- 8) Philippians 4:13
- 9) 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
- 10) 1 Corinthians 10:13
- 11) John 5:8, 14
- 12) Ecclesiastes 8:11
- 13) Hebrews 11:24-25
- 14) Philippians 4:6-7
- 15) Ephesians 4:31, 17, 31
- 16) John 10:1-7
- 17) Romans 12:2
- 18) 2 Corinthians 10:5
- 19) John 15:12-13

Dropping the Negative Strongholds:
The Bananas In Our Lives
(Go To Meeting)

NB:bo
Transcribed: 5/15/23

Copyright 2023—All rights reserved. Except for brief excerpts for review purposes, no part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means without the written permission of the copyright owner. This includes electronic and mechanical photocopying or recording, as well as the use of information storage and retrieval systems.