

CHAPTER 4

What Can I Do About My Problems?

(Part 1)

What can I do about those problems that *come my way* (problems which I meet as I travel down life's road)?

What can I do about those problems that are *in my way* (problems which are unavoidable and which I bump into as I go down the road)?

What can I do about those problems that are *for my way* (problems which God has sent for my good and His glory)?

1) I Need To Correctly Label My Problems.

Are They Real or Imaginary?

As I meet a problem or face a problem or try to solve a problem, the first thing I need to do is decide whether this problem is real or unreal. Some problems are just imagined, and they are not real at all! The problem does not even exist, except in the mind of the person who thinks it is a problem. [Note: Problems in our minds are problems to us; they are REAL to us, very real; the problem is one of **wrong thinking!**]

There are other problems that are very real. Did Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah have a real problem (2 Chronicles 20:1)? _____ Did Elijah have a real problem (1 Kings 19:1-3)? _____ Did the people in charge of the wedding feast have a real problem (John 2:3)? _____ Did Peter have a real problem (Matthew 14:30)? Did the man described in 2 Kings 6:5 have a real problem? _____ Did the man described in Luke 10:30 have a real problem? Did the unbelieving people in the days of Noah have a real problem (Genesis 7:11-23)? _____

These are all very real problems that very real people had to face. Sometimes the Lord Himself sends problems man's way. What are some of the problems God promised to send in the direction of the children of Israel if they should disobey Him (Deuteronomy 28:58, 63-67)?

Can you think of some very real problems that very real people had to face? Can you think of some very real problems that our country is presently facing? Can you think of some very real problems that your teachers at school face? Can you think of some very real problems which you have had in the past? Can you think of some very real problems which you are facing right now?

There are other problems which are not real, but only imaginary. These are things that we think are problems, but they are really not problems at all. A young child might think that there is a wild animal in the bedroom hiding somewhere in the dark. If there really were a lion or tiger hiding there, then the child would have a real problem, but the child has just created an imaginary problem. [The child's real problem is that his imagination is very vivid; he is not understanding that he is safe; he has wrong thinking that animals could be present in his room. This is not true at all, but it is very real in the mind of the child.]

Here's another example: A teenage girl might have a pimple on her right cheek, and because of this flaw she may feel self-conscious and think that everyone is looking at her. In reality everyone is *not* looking at her and most likely no one notices the pimple. The pimple is not really a big problem at all. She just thinks it is a problem. [This teenager's problem is real. She is thinking wrong because she thinks that she is acceptable if she has a flawless face. With the flaw she is vulnerable to lack of acceptance, and that is a problem for a teen. To her it is a major problem and very real, but she needs to needs to understand the problem of pimples in a balanced and healthy way.]

One day when Pastor Zeller was going to school in Indiana, he suddenly noticed a strange lump on the middle of his chest. He had never noticed this lump before, and he began to be somewhat concerned as he wondered what it might be. Sometimes people find lumps on their body that turn out to be cancer. One of Pastor Zeller's roommates worked in a hospital, and so Pastor Zeller told him about this "problem." His roommate examined him and said, "That is quite a lump! I work for a very good doctor, and he had better take a look at it!" The next day they all met at the medical building. Pastor Zeller was sure that he had some kind of problem, although he did not know how serious it really was. When the doctor came into the examination room, he said, "All right, where is this lump?" Pastor Zeller showed him. The doctor laughed and said, "That lump is supposed to be there! That's just a bone!" This physical problem was really no problem at all! [But it was a problem to Pastor Zeller before he received medical information.]

Can you think of something in your life that you thought was a problem, but it was not really a problem at all? Do you know of other people who have had problems which have turned out to be only imaginary problems? The first thing we need to do is to decide whether the problem is real or imaginary. We need to compare what we are thinking with what Scripture says. Is it true or false, according to God's Word?

Look at the first part of Proverbs 28:1. What is the wicked man doing? Does he think that there is a real problem? _____ Is the problem real or imaginary? _____

Read Proverbs 22:13. Is this a real problem, or is this lazy man just imagining a lion as an excuse for not going out and doing his work?

Many times we create imaginary problems because of our own fears. A person may dread report card time for weeks because he is afraid he will get a poor grade. When he gets the report card, he is surprised that he got a passing mark. The report card was not the problem he thought it was going to be! Have you ever worried or feared about something that you thought would be a problem, and it turned out not to be a problem at all?

There are enough real problems in life that need to be faced and solved in God's way. We do not want to add any imaginary problems to the pile!

Further Thoughts to Ponder

It is often hard for children to open up and share their thoughts and *especially* their fears. From an adult point of view or from God's point of view, the child's problem may be imaginary, but we do not want the child to think that the problem, which is very real to him, is minimal or not important. Many problems arise because the child does not have understanding about something. He needs to have clear thinking and see the whole picture. It is not always easy for young people to do this and they often need help.

Think of a father who must provide daily food for his children. He may even be unemployed. This is a real problem to him, but if he is thinking right and according to the Word of God, he knows that God is the Provider and God has promised that He will supply ALL the needs that his family has. Not having

food is a problem for him—not imaginary, but from God's perspective it is imaginary. It isn't real because God knows the provision is on the way.

Children need to have the assurance that their parents and those they look up to in the church really care about their needs (whether real or imaginary) and will be there to talk to them about what concerns them the most.

What Kind of Problem Is It?

We need to identify our problems and classify what kind of problems they are. A person may have physical problems, mental problems, spiritual problems, social problems, economic problems, etc. Let us consider these one by one.

1. Physical Problems

What kind of problem did Timothy have according to 1 Timothy 5:23?

_____ What kind of problem did the man in John 9:1 have?
 What kind of problem did King Saul have (1 Samuel 31:3)?

_____ Each of these verses describes a very real physical problem.

Can you think of a physical problem which you have had during the past year? What is the most serious physical problem you have ever had in your life? Are there people in your school who have obvious physical problems that perhaps make them different from others in certain ways? Do your parents have physical problems, whether major ones or minor ones? Your grandparents?

Consider 2 Corinthians 4:16. Which part of this verse is talking about physical problems?

As you grow older, do you expect to have more or less physical problems? _____ Do you expect to *always* have physical problems, or will there come a time when they shall be no more (Revelation 21:4)? _____

2. Mental Problems

Mental problems are those problems that come about because of the way a person thinks and reasons and uses his mind. Wicked Haman used his mind to reason and calculate, and he concluded that the king wanted to honor him (Esther 6:6-9). Was his calculation correct, or was he sadly mistaken (Esther 6:10)? _____

Jacob saw a bloody coat, and his mind led him to believe that his son Joseph had been torn to pieces by a wild animal (Genesis 37:32-33). Jacob was not aware that his sons had deceived him (Genesis 37:31-32). For years Jacob lived with the problem of grief and sorrow because he had been mentally tricked!

Have you ever had a homework assignment that was too difficult? Have you ever had a math problem which baffled your mind and left you feeling frustrated? Has your memory ever failed you, and when you needed to remember something important, your mind drew a big blank? While taking a test in school, has your mind ever gone blank, and even though you studied the materials, you somehow could not think of the answers? Have you ever been perplexed in trying to build something or put something together?

As we stumble and fumble and try to learn and use our minds, we need to remember that there is one Person who has a PERFECT MIND: "O the depth of the riches both of the _____ and _____ of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the _____ of the Lord?" (Romans 11:33-34). God never makes a mistake! God never makes a wrong calculation! There is never a problem that baffles the mind of God! God's mind never goes blank! God's memory has never failed Him! God knows the answer to every question!

When the children of Israel had no water (Exodus 17:1-4), do you think God was worried and perplexed and wondering how this great problem would ever be solved? When you face a difficult problem (something that you cannot solve), is there Someone who has the answer and knows how to solve it in the best possible way? _____

3. Spiritual Problems

Spiritual problems are problems a person has when he or she is not in a right relationship with the Lord. In John 5:40 the Lord Jesus Christ said, "And ye will not _____ to me, that ye might have _____." This verse can also be translated as follows: "And ye do not desire to come to Me, that ye might have life." According to this verse, what must a person do in order to have everlasting life? _____ These people did *not* come to Christ. Why did they not go to Christ? Was it because they had a physical problem? _____ Was it because they had a mental problem and could not understand what the Lord was saying? _____ No, their problem was a SPIRITUAL PROBLEM. They did not come to the Saviour because they did not want to come. They refused to come, and they chose to continue on in their sins!

Did the Corinthian believers have spiritual problems (1 Corinthians 3:3)? _____ Did the children of Israel have spiritual problems (1 Corinthians 10:5-10)? _____

The root cause of all spiritual problems is sin. Sin is the cause of most of our problems. Can you think of problems that have been caused by someone's anger (either your own anger or someone else's)? Can you think of problems that have been caused by someone's wrong use of the tongue? Can you think of problems that have been caused by someone's disobedience to a higher authority? Can you think of a problem caused by someone who desired to have something that did not belong to him? What sin caused the following problems?

1) Joseph being sold into Egypt (Genesis 37)

2) Joseph being put into prison (Genesis 39:17-20)

3) Adam and Eve being driven out of the garden (Genesis 3:24)

4. Social Problems

Social problems are those problems that relate to the society we live in. As people live and work with other people certain problems arise. If we could find some island where no people lived, then we could be sure that there would be no social problems there. But as soon as you put two people on the island, WATCH OUT FOR PROBLEMS!

Did the whole world face some very serious social problems in the days of Noah before the flood (Genesis 6:1-4, 11-13)? _____ Did Jesus predict that the world would have social problems in the future (Matthew 24:6-10)? _____

What social problem did Solomon need to solve in 1 Kings 3:16-28?

What social problem did the Pharisees ask Jesus about in Matthew 19:3 ("put away" = divorce)?

Do you see any social problems in the world today? As you read the newspapers or hear the news, what kinds of social problems are common in our world today? Are there any social problems in your school, or do the students always get along with each other and with the teachers in perfect harmony?

In Bible times, did the Jews and Samaritans get along together in peace and harmony and friendship (John 4:9 and Acts 10:28)? Can you think of social problems today that are the result of different nationalities, different skin colors, different languages, different religions, etc.?

5. Economic Problems

Economic problems are those problems which have something to do with money, wealth, or possessions and how these things are shared and distributed among men. If you only have a dollar in your pocket and you want to buy an ice cream sundae which costs \$4.00, then you have an economic problem! Unless you earn some more money or someone shares with you their wealth, you will be unable to purchase the ice cream. If you steal the money that you need, then you have a spiritual problem, and you have caused a social problem!

According to Acts 11:27-30, what kind of economic problem did the believers in Jerusalem have?

What kind of economic problem did Jacob and his family have (Genesis 41:54,56; 42:1-2)?

What kind of economic problem did Paul cause in the city of Ephesus (Acts 19:24-27)?

Do you see any economic problems in the world today? in our country? in your own family?

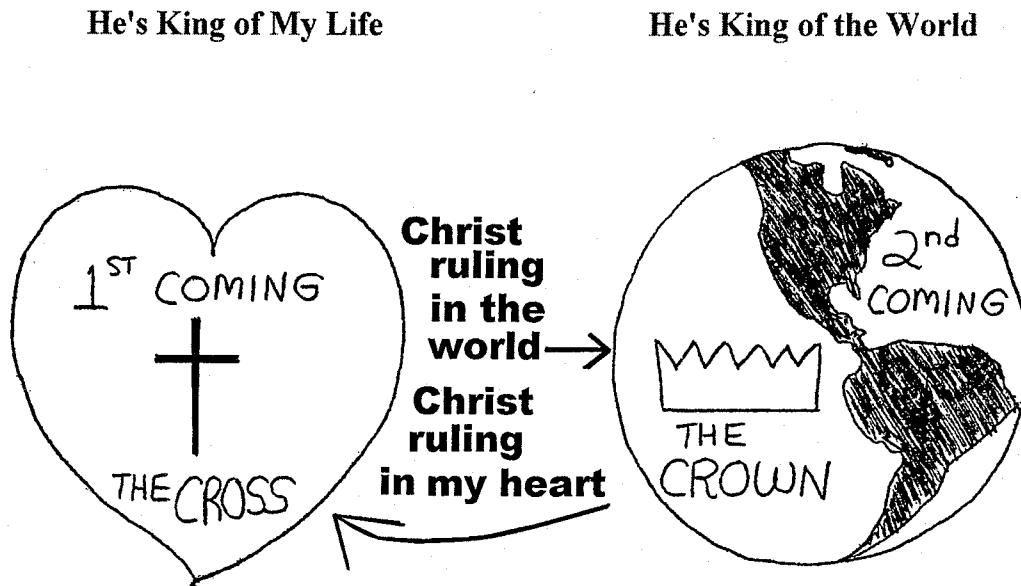
The living God has no problems. Those things which are very real problems to us are not problems to God.

The Lord Jesus Christ is able to give His peace to a heart that is troubled with many problems (see John 14:27). I can thank God that He can flood my heart with that peace NOW!

The world is filled with serious problems (war, poverty, crime, etc.), and it will continue to have all of these problems until the Prince of Peace comes to earth to set up His kingdom (Isaiah 9:6-7). He will then make it possible for the whole world to have peace.

I can thank God that there is coming a day when the Lord Jesus Christ will take care of the problems of this world. I can also thank God that He can reign and rule in my heart *right now* (see Luke 17:21 and Romans 14:17)!

When Jesus came the first time, He did not set up His kingdom; instead He went to the cross to die for sinful men. This means that Jesus must come to earth a second time so that He can reign and rule as King. Jesus came the first time so that He could make it possible for man's heart to be right. He will come the second time to make it possible for man's world to be right. He came the first time to be the **Saviour**; He'll come again to be earth's **King**. At His first coming He was given a **CROSS**; at His second coming He will be given a **CROWN**.



<p>THE RESULT OF CHRIST RULING IN MY HEART:</p> <p><i>Righteousness to the Believer</i> <i>Peace to the Believer</i> <i>Joy to the Believer</i></p> <p>See Romans 14:17</p>
<p>THE RESULT OF CHRIST RULING IN THE WORLD:</p> <p><i>Righteousness to the World (Jer. 33:15)</i> <i>Peace to the World (Isa.9:6-7)</i> <i>Joy to the World (Isa.65:18-19)</i></p>

In the next chapter we will continue to think about what we can do about our problems.