

RESOURCES FOR BIBLICAL LIVING

PROBLEMS

SOLVING THEM GOD'S WAY



JAY E. ADAMS

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Temptation: Applying Radical Amputation to Life's Sinful Patterns

Lou Priolo, series editor

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P U B L I S H I N G

P.O. BOX 817 • PHILLIPSBURG • NEW JERSEY 08865-0817

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-59638-184-1

“I’VE GOT A PROBLEM.” How often have you heard those words on the lips of your friends? Or, for that matter, on your own? Problems usually mean trouble. And there’s no doubt about it, trouble abounds. Indeed, a man who was quite familiar with problems once exclaimed, “Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). Life is short, Job observed, and what there is of it is full of difficulty! Yes, that’s the way it is and has been, ever since Adam and Eve wrongly handled the problem of an intruder in the garden. There were no problems until the serpent raised a question—the first question in history—about God’s Word and his intentions. Then our first parents were faced with the world’s first problem: “What should we believe about and how should we act on this new thought that has been introduced into our minds? Should we obey our Creator, who forbade us to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Or should we . . . ?” You know the rest. As the result of their foolish solution, we now have problems with ourselves, with other people, with God, with ideas, with things—you name it. Life was not intended to be so full of problems, but ever since Eden, it has become virtually problem-oriented. Problems! Problems! Problems! Always problems!

Problem-Solving as Part of Life

Since the fall of Adam, life has been truly described as a succession of problems. A central problem of living that one must solve is how to turn problem-oriented living into solution-oriented living—how to experience a life of successive solutions. Is such a thing possible? In particular, Christian, because you

live in a world that is filled with problems, many of which are arrayed against your faith, do you sometimes wonder whether it is possible for you to find solutions that will enable you successfully to experience a victorious life? The world keeps churning up one problem after another, so that after a while you may be tempted to throw in the towel and give up. Well, surprising as it may seem to you, Christian, of all people, *you are the one who can become a superb problem-solver.*

Problem-Solving as a Christian

How is that? Why is it possible for the Christian to be the world's problem-solver, *par excellence*? That's what I will explain in this booklet: how you, as a believer, have an advantage over everyone else when it comes to solving problems.

To begin with, it's important for you to recognize that you cannot avoid problem-solving. Nor should you. For instance, when unavoidable problems arise because of your faith, you must accept the challenge of solving them. Suffering, perhaps, is the greatest of these problems. Peter writes, "If when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God" (1 Peter 2:20). The Roman government offered believers a solution to the problem of persecution: to call Caesar "Lord," and sacrifice to the emperor as God. It was quick, easy, and possible for every believer to accept this solution. But if one loved Jesus, such a solution was totally unacceptable. It meant denying his lordship. And it meant worshiping a false god. Christians, who would do neither, went by the thousands to their deaths because they refused the solution offered to them. Instead, their solution—God's solution—was to face willingly lions and gladiators in the Colosseum. The solution was hard, but uncomplicated. And like the solution in the garden, this solution involved making a choice—a choice for or against God. Indeed, one of the facts to learn is that *all* choices are in essence

the same—all solutions are either for or against God. Yet not all solutions are as straightforward as this.

There are many other problems that you must solve: how to make a living, what kind of car to buy, what to eat tonight, what clothes to wear today, whether to see the doctor or tough it out, and so forth. Usually, these are not pressing problems that entail such significant consequences as “Will you or will you not sacrifice to Caesar?” In other words, these decisions, while constituting a major portion of those problems that we must solve every day, ordinarily do not have life-changing outcomes. Yet they must be made. In fact, unless a person learns to make the myriad of small decisions cheerfully that he must address every day of his life, he may become annoyed by them, thus adding to the misery of existence that such easily irritated persons already experience.

Christians, however, have every reason to be happy people who are well adjusted to ordinary life problems, which they do not find to be irksome, but rather a joy to be able to face in a world that God has made and enables them to enjoy. They are thankful for food, automobiles, and the clothing that they have to wear. Thus, solving life’s ordinary problems, as a whole, is not a chore but a pleasure. I mention this because there are people who become exhausted over making the many choices that such problem-solving entails. They are usually the ones who lament, “Life is nothing more than problems, problems, problems!” No Christian ought to be found among that crowd. Instead, Christians ought to be known for their happy acceptance of God’s providential work in their lives. They recognize that day by day God sends them good and perfect gifts from above, which work together for their good (Rom. 8:28–29).

Do you live a life of gratitude for every problem you’re privileged to solve? If not, think of them this way: “Every time I’m called on to solve a problem, making the decisions involved in doing so provides me with one more opportunity to please