

## The utilitarian God is like a pagan idol

The "utilitarian" God who favors with privileges and blessings his "preferred ones" is not the same God that Jesus revealed to us.

This false "god" is like the one the devil presented to Jesus, telling him that he would supernaturally protect him, as we read in Luke 4: 9-12 ... *The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God", he said, "throw yourself down from here, for it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone".*

Many Christians desire the "utilitarian" God, who solves all their problems and fulfills all their desires, like the genius of Aladdin's wonderful lamp. However, this God who is "switched on" only for convenience is not the true God, but an idol, like the gods of pagan polytheists.

Instead of serving God, Christians today want to use God as a servant, which is available at 24 hours a day.

The "utilitarian" God accepts offerings in exchange for blessings. He is like the "god" which accepted the bargaining agreement proposed by Jacob, who said in Genesis 28: 20-22 ... *If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth ...*

Because of this evil logic, the reason for prayer of prosperity had not been answered is because he did not pray sufficiently, or because it lacked fervor in his prayer. Also because of this evil logic, the reason for the believer who suffered an accident or was assaulted is because he "let down his guard", or he had a "hidden sin."

I think the reason for many atheists question that God is the false image that he seems many times to be indifferent to the tragedies that afflict humanity and does not respond to the requests, even from their own children.

That is why I do not totally blame unbelievers for questioning the behavior of the God that many Christians present to them, because this "utilitarian" God is discriminatory and incoherent.

The reason for so many questioners of God's faithfulness is that there are many Christians who nurture the idea of an infallible God who heeds all the prayers of the believers who have "great faith".

For these presumptuous Christians, God should always be on hand to attend to the prayers of their spoiled children, like the genius of Aladdin's wonderful lamp.

These "super-faith fullers" claim to be able to "move the arm of God" with their powerful prayers, which provides ample ammunition for God's questioners, who mock when they note that God sometimes does not answer the believers' prayers, thus concluding that God does not have all the power that is attributed to him.

No wonder many atheists, agnostics, as well as believers of other non-Christian religions, imagine a "God" like that, who should always remove them from the dangers and vicissitudes of life, because the wrong believers gave them reason to think so.

Those smug and selfish believers boast a "God" who is always at their disposal, giving them perfect health, the best job and the avoidance of accidents at all times. They dare to oppress God in a corner of the wall, demanding the miraculous and immediate response of their "fervent prayers".

However, the true God that Jesus presented to us in his Gospels chose in his sovereignty for not interfering directly in people's lives, letting their lives succeed without supernatural interventions, so that no one can say that God favors some to the detriment of others.

I believe that God can do "miracles" at any moment, but not to favor only his "favorites," or to rid them of problems all the time, but to a greater purpose, which we may not understand yet, as it was the resurrection of Lazarus, narrated in John 11: 1-45, as well as other miracles.

The present Christian is demanding and wants immediate results at any time, and because of this he wants a utilitarian God, who solves his immediate problems, and if He does not, he is relegated to the discredit.

And then we hear the questioners' questions: *What does God do in the face of such misery? What does God do while thousands of children starve to death? What does God do in the face of oppression and violence? Why does God not act in the face of injustice?* Behind all these questions, what they are saying is: *God is indifferent.*

The faith of these Christians is conditioned to the immediate response of God, like the disciple Thomas who said: *Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe,* from where comes the famous principle: *seeing and believing.* However, Jesus said to Thomas: *Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed* (John 20:29).

These believers propagate that false image of the God which is manageable by their deterministic prayers, that is, a "utilitarian" God, who always acts favorably to his favorites.

The essence of the message of Jesus Gospel has nothing to do with the pyrotechnical paraphernalia, of which many religious people boast, which are absurd, inadequate and contradictory.

Jesus' disciples were filled with this spirit of arrogance and presumption that was abundant in the Old Testament when they asked Jesus to authorize them to send fire from heaven against the Samaritans, just as the prophet Elijah did. But Jesus rebuked them, saying: *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of* (Luke 9: 51-62).

During the three years of learning, Jesus' disciples had to be "detoxified" from every spirit of pride and violence they acquired through the Old Testament's law to which all Jews were subject.

Likewise, Christians who wish to get rid of the bad examples that exist in the Old Testament must increasingly adopt the teachings of Jesus, which He received from the true God the Father.

Those presumptuous and arrogant believers are often Christians of Pentecostal churches, who do not know how to deal with the spiritual gifts and who presume to be more "spiritual" than other Christians, harshly criticizing believers from other religious segments for not being so "bold".

This kind of believer does not accept the Christ who humbled himself by washing the feet of his disciples, who also suffered without any "help" in Gethsemane, and then on Calvary. They also do not accept the narrow path and strait door that Jesus proposed in Matthew 7:14, for they want just the victories and blessings that Jehovah promised at a very optimistic and inconsequent way to the Jews in the Old Testament.

We should rather pray to God the Father, but not with the pretense of demanding something, as if God were our servant. After all, prayer also led us to gratitude and recognition of what God does for us every day.

Even Paul had some of his prayers not answered, as he reported in 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10 ... *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me: My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

If even the great apostle Paul had some of his prayers not attended, it is really a lot of pretense that Christians want all their prayers answered in any time and circumstance.

*Oswaldo Carvalho*