

- Systemic Teaching about Christian Life -

Evangeliu

The Gospel of the Righteousness of God

Das Evangelium

Von Christi Person und Namen; und von dem Anfang, wie er
und Nathanael, seinen Jüngern.

Im * Anfang war das † Wort, und
war bei Gott, und ** Gott war das

3. Alle
und ohne dasselbe ist nichts gene
macht ist.

4. In ihm * war das Leben, und
war das † Licht der Menschen

5. Und das * Licht scheinete in der Fin
und die Finsterniß haben es nicht begriffen

6. * Es ward ein Mensch von Gott gesa
der hieß Johannes.

7. Derselbe kam zum Zeugniß, daß er von
dem Licht zeugete, auf daß sie Alle durch ihn
glaubten

8. Er war nicht das Licht, sondern daß er ein

Series:

THE GOSPEL

The Good News of God

4th Edition – Sep/2019 – English Translation – Sep/2019

Copyright of the Author - Terms of use described in the published material.

General Considerations about Using This Material:

The subject presented in this material aims to provide support to knowledge and an in-depth study of the Bible and the Christian life.

Based on the understanding that in the Christian Bible is contained the consolidation of fundamental and formal records of the writings inspired by God for humanity and each person of it, the contents exposed in this material are not intended to add, ever, anything to the Bible, nor ever remove anything from it. The aim through this subject is to contribute to the exploration of what already was registered and passed on to us over thousands of years of history by the One Creator and Lord of Heaven and Earth.

The contents presented on the next pages, of course, intend to address just a portion of the essential themes of life displayed with such great amplitude in the Bible. On the other hand, however, this subject is presented in a grouped, colligated, organized and systematized manner with the objective to serve as an aid to knowledge and understanding of the Christian life without losing sight of the main aspects of it.

Ecclesiastes 12: 11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.

Related words put together, as told in the biblical text above, serve as goads and nails for fixing supports and help for the life of people that hear and receive them. Therefore, one objective of this material is to study and seek a broader understanding of the truths handed down to us by the Unique Pastor and God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

We would still like to suggest that the reading and studying of this material also should always be accompanied by prudence and proper investigation, believing that this is a very healthy habit to be practiced toward any material presented to a person.

The act of acceptance, rejection, or “retaining what is good,” is a personal and individual attribute given to those who receive the wisdom from God and which should be exercised or used by them toward all that comes into their hands.

Proverbs 8: 12 "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And find out knowledge and discretion.

Acts 17: 11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Proverbs 16: 1 The preparations of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits.

3 Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established.

More details about these initial considerations are posted at www.zoominchristianlife.org.

Ronald Gortz and Irmelin Gortz, servants of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Considerations about Copies and Distribution of this Material:

This particular material, whether printed or in digital media, is allowed to be freely copied for personal use. It is made available to be shared with those who hunger and thirst to know more about the Heavenly Father, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Christian Bible, and the Christian life, or even to be shared with those who just want to be more informed about these aspects.

*Revelation 21: 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."
6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.*

The free availability of this material has been just the adoption of a similar practical example of how the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, distributes life of the source of living water to those who thirst for it.

If a person, to whom such materials were beneficial, wants to share them with other people, one can do so, preferably indicating the “website” of this Systemic Teaching about Christian Life, where this subject, and others, can be obtained freely. (www.zoominchristianlife.org).

Nevertheless, if a person wants to share this material with anyone who has restrictions or difficulties with direct access to the “website” in reference, one may share a copy directly to him or to her, printed or digitally, just respecting the complete reproduction of the material, including the quotes about the criteria of use and copies.

We emphasize, however, that **this material is not allowed** to be copied and distributed, under any circumstances, when any commercial activity is involved. This subject is not authorized to be sold, exchanged for offers of money, goods or services, included in “sites” to attract the public to the “clicks” on “links” with the purpose of advertisements and trade, and similar situations. **This material is also not allowed** to be included in events, courses or retreats with paid subscriptions or for any personal promotion of “speakers,” instructors, institutions, or similar.

The permission for free use aims to make the materials widely available to people in general and for everyone who wants to access them for reading, learning, and growing in what is beneficial or who also wants to share them freely to those that have restrictions or difficulties with direct access to them.

*1Timothy 2: 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,
4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

More details about these initial considerations are posted at www.zoominchristianlife.org.

Contents

Contents	4
C1. The Relevance of God's Righteousness in the Gospel	7
C2. The Special Provision for Understanding the Singular Righteousness of God....	9
C3. Seek First the Righteousness of God.....	12
C4. The Eternal and Sovereign Righteousness of God	15
C5. The Importance of Understanding that Righteousness and Judgment are Distinct Aspects.....	27
C6. Highlighting God's Sovereignty and Righteousness also in His Position of Righteous Judge	34
C7. Vengeful, Condemning, Justifying, or Restoring Righteousness?.....	44
C8. The Crucial Need of Being Convinced about Sin, Righteousness, and Judgment Simultaneously and by the Holy Spirit	54
C9. A Brief Historical Analysis of Sin and the Terms Used for Sin throughout this History	61
C10. The Relevance of the Understanding of the Amplitude of Aspects Behind Sin for an Adequate Positioning Regarding Sin	66
C11. The Subtle and Ambitious Purpose of Sin Through Sin	76
C12. The Central Sin Present in Other Sins	82
C13. The Limits, the Means, the Temptation, and the Participation of People in the Actions of Sin	88
C14. The Body of Sin.....	104
C15. Sin Seen from the Perspective of Offense	119
C16. Additional Considerations on the Variety of Characteristics or Stages of the Working of an Offense	126
C17. The Ineffective or False Means that Try to Deal with Sin and the Set of Aspects Derived from Sin	143

C18. The Revelation of Sin and Righteousness “Before Christ” and “After Christ”	155
C19. The Righteousness of God Revealed as a Heavenly Gift.....	162
C20. The Sublimity of the Gift of Righteousness Manifested in the Justification of Sinners	166
C21. The Reconciling Purpose of the Justification of Sinners	176
C22. The Availability and the Acceptance of the Gift of Righteousness	182
C23. Facts or Changes Concerning an Individual's Conditions that Follow the Receiving of the Gift of Righteousness	198
C24. Life After Receiving the Gift of Righteousness and the Justification of Sins Committed After Receiving this Gift	204
C25. Perseverance in Rejecting the Subjection to Sin, and the Desire for a Life According to the Heavenly Righteousness After Receiving the Gift of Righteousness	214
C26. The Receiving of the Gift of Righteousness and the Abstention of the Association with Unrighteousness or Unequal Yoke	225
C27. The Heavenly Light and the Virtue of Discernment of Good and Evil Associated with the Word of Righteousness.....	245
C28. The High-Risk Position a Christian May Undergo by Neglecting Growth in the Word of Righteousness or the Christian Life	250
A. The Necessary Personal Participation of the Christian Concerning the Permanence and Growth in God's Righteousness.....	250
B. The Need for Each Christian to Receive the Gifts of the Righteousness of God with Due Attention	261
C. The Need for Every Christian to Feed Personally on the Word of Righteousness or Solid Food.....	265
D. The Need of Each Christian to Be Willing to Be Guided by the Holy Spirit	275
C29. The Fruit of Righteousness	289
C30. Christ: The Branch of Righteousness, The Sun of Righteousness, The Root of the Righteous, and the King of Righteousness according to the Order of Melchizedek	296

C31. Summary View on the Righteousness of God.....	301
Bibliography.....	304

C1. The Relevance of God's Righteousness in the Gospel

The subject covered in this new material refers to one of the themes that make up the series [The Gospel, The Good News of God](#), which already has the following previous subjects:

- ⇒ 1) Much More Than a Message: An Offer of Life!
- ⇒ 2) The Limit of the Unlimited Gospel;
- ⇒ 3) The Gospel of the Creator;
- ⇒ 4) The Gospel of Christ;
- ⇒ 5) The Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

In the subjects mentioned above, it has been highlighted that the Gospel of God refers to an offer of newness of life presented directly by God to humankind and also that the breadth of the Gospel is so extensive and comprehensive that it is necessary to use various compound names to expose its greatness and the diversity of its characteristics.

We understand that it is important still to remember here that the different compound names do not constitute distinct gospels. There is only one Gospel of God. The various compound names of the Gospel, therefore, announce some of the most prominent facets of this one Gospel.

The Gospel of God presents a wide variety of characteristics, for it is through the Gospel that God offers all the necessary provision so that human beings can be fully supported to live according to the Lord's will. Each of the major facets of the Gospel of God is vital or essential, for they complement each other so that God's purpose may be fulfilled in the lives of those to whom the Gospel is addressed.

And although many people do not realize this, the righteousness of God, in turn, is also one of those indispensable aspects that have a fundamental role for the life of all human beings and in the whole range of life that God offers through His Gospel.

If God's righteousness had not been foreseen and incorporated in the Gospel of God, the Gospel could never have been presented with a minimum of coherence or consistency, for the righteousness of God is one of the parts of the Gospel of the Lord which most confers validity and credibility to the Gospel and all that is offered through it to the recipients of this offer, as can be seen in the following text:

*Romans 1: 16 **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.***

*17 **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."***

Reviewing the text quoted above, it can be observed that the Gospel of God is only the power of God for the salvation of all who believe in it because in this same Gospel is contained the revelation of God's righteousness that enables an individual to reach the condition of justified before the Lord or of a righteous living by faith.

The understanding of God's righteousness, even if gradual or from faith to faith, is one of the most necessary and favorable aspects for a person to believe in the Gospel of God as the means to achieve eternal salvation and the newness of life that the Lord offers from His heavenly kingdom.

The Gospel of God, the working of God's righteousness, faith in God, eternal salvation, and the newness of life offered by the Eternal Creator are inseparable aspects of the Lord's purpose to offer all human beings the path to reach and live the eternal life which is provided for them from heaven, as Paul, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, describes in the last text mentioned above and in all his letters.

Therefore, given that the Gospel of God contains both the revelation and the offer of God's righteousness to human beings, we consider that it would be very appropriate to make the choice to use the expression "righteousness of God" as one of the compound names of the Gospel of the Lord and as one of the compound names to house a more detailed material of this attribute so essential to life and all other items of the Gospel.

The Gospel of God is the means by which God offers the restoration of the fellowship of human beings with Him and His word, but it is only through the righteousness of God that this restoration can be established justly or on a righteous foundation, which makes righteousness such a particular, essential, or crucial aspect of the whole Gospel.

The righteousness of God depends on the Gospel to be revealed, but the Gospel also depends on the righteousness of God so that it can be appropriately offered, that it may be believed, and that it may be experienced more and more in the life of the one who passes to believe in the Lord because of the Gospel and the righteousness of God revealed through this same Gospel.

The righteousness of God grounds the Gospel as an offer that is righteous, just, and which shows no partiality, but, at the same time, God chose that His righteousness itself should also be revealed in the Gospel which it grounds, what shows that righteousness and the Gospel are aspects that can never be dissociated.

A proposition of a Gospel dissociated from the full righteousness of God will never indeed be a Gospel; it will never really be an eternal "good news." And a proposition of fellowship with God apart from the righteousness of God will never be a valid or an acceptable proposal before the Lord.

The righteousness of God is worthy of honor, worthy of outstanding attention, and worthy of special dedication, for it is an integral and essential part of the foundation of all the newness of life offered and granted by the Lord, as well as of the life that there is in God Himself.

Since the basis of a person's relationship with the Lord is established in the righteousness of God, and not in the justice of men, it is also so crucial and indispensable that the Lord's righteousness becomes widely known, believed, and received as it is presented in the Gospel of the Lord.

C2. The Special Provision for Understanding the Singular Righteousness of God

The theme of “*righteousness*” or “*justice*” is part of any human society and permeates the life of all families, peoples, and nations.

What people understand for righteousness or justice, however, may vary significantly from nation to nation, from peoples to peoples within the same nation, from families to families within the same peoples, and from person to person within the same families.

For some people, the word justice or righteousness may sound like the accomplishment of works and tasks that are done in accordance with the standards considered fair and correct in a given society, for others it may look like a set of actions necessary for an injustice to be avenged, and yet for others, the term justice or righteousness may have the connotation of establishing laws and systems of judgments of the practices of the established rules, and so on.

In the present material, however, we do not want to stay focused on the diversity of human justice systems, for this is not the righteousness that the Lord has instructed us to seek first. The Lord Jesus Christ did not instruct His disciples simply to seek justice or what people understand by righteousness, but He instructed them to seek specifically the righteousness of God.

God's righteousness is highly differentiated from any righteousness or justice on Earth, and its origin and definition are not subject to what nations, peoples, and individuals speak about it.

Just as the kingdom of God is different from all other kingdoms, so also the righteousness of God is singular, unique, and incomparable. And just as the kingdom of God is revealed and enlightened only by God to human beings, so also the righteousness of the Lord can only be known by what God allows us to know about it.

Just as the definition of the kingdom of heaven and what is contained in it belongs to God, so the definition of the righteousness of God and of what is contained therein also belongs to the Eternal Lord.

The instruction about the righteousness of God has its origin in heaven and is passed on to human beings by the way that the Lord established and establishes it, as already seen in the introductory chapter of the present subject and as it can be observed once again in the following texts:

Psalms 97: 6 **The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples see His glory.**

Romans 1: 16 **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.**

17 **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."**

John 16: 7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

Knowledge and relationship with God's righteousness can be increasing and can reach deeper levels, just as a person can relate in a non-superficial and more intense way with God and His kingdom.

The Bible Scriptures present us with a great deal of information given by the kingdom of heaven so that people can begin to know about the righteousness of God, but a more precise and more in-depth understanding of heavenly righteousness also needs to be watered by fellowship with the kingdom of heaven through the Holy Spirit, the One appointed by God to make the righteousness of the Lord known to the people who dwell on the Earth.

In the present material we intend to address various considerations about what the Scriptures present to us about the righteousness of God, but we would also strongly suggest that the reader of this subject may keep in mind that the appropriate or more precise understanding of this subject can only be given to him or her by the Holy Spirit of God, Who has already been designated by the Lord to instruct us in this theme.

The Gospel of God is the means by which God offers us fellowship with Him and with His word, and it is also by fellowship with the Lord and with His word, through the Holy Spirit, that the heavenly righteousness is revealed to the one who walks from faith to faith in what is offered to him or her by the Gospel in reference.

“*The righteousness of God,*” like all other aspects of the Gospel of God, is also immeasurable, but this does not imply that the points that are necessary for the present time cannot already be known and experienced.

Thus, the Holy Spirit of God is given to us so that we may know what is freely granted to us through the Gospel of God, and this also includes the great gift of the heavenly righteousness.

The Holy Spirit was given the designation of God to convince the whole world of the righteousness of God, but He also received the designation of God to show this righteousness more deeply to those who receive the Spirit of the Lord and His righteousness in their hearts.

1 Corinthians 2: 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

The capacity for understanding the righteousness of God is not in the spirit of the world and is not in the intellectual ability of human beings. The capacity to understand the righteousness of God, as it is regarding other heavenly gifts, is also in the instruction of the Spirit of the Lord to those who allow themselves to be instructed by Him.

1 Corinthians 2: 13 **These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.**

14 **But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

Knowing that the righteousness of God is not understandable in the light of mere human knowledge, God has sent us a “Helper” so that this task can be accomplished. Although the subject of God's righteousness may be challenging, it is possible to be understood broadly when a person lets oneself be assisted and guided by the Spirit of the Lord.

Romans 8: 26 **Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.**

John 16: 7 **Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.**

8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me;

10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;

11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

12 I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

To understand the principles of God's righteousness, people need to go beyond human intellectual understanding and need to open themselves to the voice and the teaching of the Holy Spirit. A person may even have information about God's righteousness, dialogue and make speeches about it, but if the Spirit of the Lord does not teach and convince him or her of what the righteousness of God is, one will not understand it and will not have a firm and appropriate inner conviction about it.

The instruction of the Holy Spirit does not only allow people to know the truth more profoundly, but it also enables people to reach the position and condition in which the revealed truth of the Lord comes to be part of their life and illuminates their hearts and their walking in the most diverse circumstances.

When people seek the righteousness of God where it should be sought and through the means that the Lord instructs them to seek it, they will find it.

Proverbs 29:26 **Many seek the ruler's favor, But justice for man comes from the LORD.**

C3. Seek First the Righteousness of God

Before we go on about some specific characteristics of God's righteousness and how a person can experience or live with it, we would like to speak in this new chapter about the importance of seeking this righteousness in the “*first place*.”

In His preaching and teaching, the Lord Jesus Christ has often referred to the righteousness of God and, specifically in one of these mentions, He equated the importance of the search for God's righteousness with the search for the kingdom of God in the first place, as can be observed in the following text:

Matthew 6: 33 ***But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.***

Just as the Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples the relevance of the kingdom of God and what is the place of importance that the search for the kingdom of God should have, so He also taught about the prominent condition of God's righteousness and what is the place of importance that seeking the heavenly righteousness should have in the lives of those who want to follow Him.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not only teach that the righteousness of God should be sought diligently, but He also taught that God's righteousness should be sought before anything else, even before those things that may seem highly essential to life and for survival, such as food, drink, and clothing.

The same degree of importance that the Lord attributes to the search for the kingdom of God was also associated with the search for the righteousness of God, for the search for righteousness does not appear as an item secondary to the search for the kingdom of God.

Seeking the kingdom of God and the search for God's righteousness mentioned in the text above are presented at the same level of importance. None of the two aspects is superior or inferior to the other. The fact that the mention of the search for the kingdom of God appears before is a matter of an order or a sequence of search and not of importance, for the expression to seek first encompasses the two items without favoring one or the other.

The call for seeking the righteousness of God, however, needs a particular emphasis, for many people who say that they are dedicated to seeking the kingdom of God or that they are committed to knowing the kingdom of God rarely make quotations on the subject of God's righteousness or about seeking the righteousness of God.

The matter of the order of the subject of the search for the kingdom of God and the search for the righteousness of God is relative to the sequence necessary for the search. The righteousness of God is defined and found in the kingdom of God, and that is why it is necessary to seek the kingdom of God to find in it the righteousness of God.

On the other hand, the definitions of the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God are so close that they merge one with another, as announced in the following text:

Romans 14: 17 ***For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.***

The kingdom of God is righteousness of God; therefore, to seek the kingdom of God is to seek the righteousness of God and seeking the righteousness of God is also seeking the kingdom of God.

In other words, perhaps, it could be said that to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness is to seek first the characteristic of the kingdom which should be sought first to be adequately supported to seek the other facets of the Kingdom of heaven.

The call to seek the kingdom of God associated with the instruction to seek God's righteousness exposes an even more precise focus on what should be sought first or foremost in the kingdom of God.

The search for the kingdom of God associated with the search for God's righteousness is not a call for two distinct actions, but it is a call to one same action, it is a call to seek simultaneously two complementary aspects.

The righteousness of God plays such a fundamental role that the other items quoted about the kingdom of God in the text of Romans 14, verse 17, can only be achieved if, first, a person has reached the righteousness of God.

Without the righteousness of God, a person is not able to receive the peace of God and is also not able to receive the joy of the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit of the Lord does not rejoice in unrighteousness and does not concede peace where the righteousness of God is not present.

Highlighting still the aspect of seeking the righteousness of God first, we also recall that the expression "*to seek*," used to describe the position that the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ should have regarding the righteousness of God, and also described in the subject about The Gospel of the Kingdom, is correlated with the firm purpose of "*seeking to find*," "*seeking in order to find out*," or with "*the effort to investigate something in order to actually achieve what is being investigated*" (according to the Online Bible commentary associated with Strong's Greek lexicon).

To seek for something first, in turn, is then to seek for something **first in time, position, and place** (according to Online Bible comments associated with Strong's Greek lexicon).

Seeking for something in the first place is to seek something before anything else or is to put the search for something specific before other things.

Seeking the righteousness of God first, therefore, encompasses even postponing seeking some other things for after the search for the righteousness of God is already underway.

In the text of Matthew 6, verse 33, it is evident that the call for seeking God's righteousness is not something to be postponed to the near future or a distant future, nor it is an attitude to be delayed for the time after life on Earth, because the search for the righteousness of God is contrasted, by the Lord Jesus Christ, with the search for the most elementary material things for physical or earthly survival.

When the Lord calls us to seek the righteousness of God first, He does so because the righteousness of God can indeed be found by those who seek it first and by those who seek it according to the Gospel of the kingdom.

It is important to know that what the Lord has instructed to be sought in the first place is also possible to be found first, for before the Lord calls us to do something, He has already made provision so that what He asks us to do may also be accomplished through Him.

The righteousness of God is not an attribute of the kingdom of God that needs to be created or needs to be developed. The righteousness of God already exists, is already defined, and is already established, and, therefore, it is already available to be found.

The knowledge of God's righteousness is given from heaven to humans and reveals a characteristic of God Himself. The proclamation of the righteousness of God is a manifestation of the very glory of the Eternal God.

*Psalms 97: 6 **The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples see His glory.***

In the previous chapter, in the text of Romans chapter 1, it was seen that the Gospel reveals the righteousness of God. And once it has been fully offered to us, it also implies that the righteousness of God contained in this Gospel already has everything that needs to be sought, found, and enjoyed for a new condition of life.

*Romans 5: 17 **For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.***

The fact that the Lord instructs that seeking His righteousness should be done first has the central goal of benefiting us, for His righteousness is necessary for all circumstances of anyone who aims to live according to the will of God.

C4. The Eternal and Sovereign Righteousness of God

When the subject of righteousness is put on agenda, discussion or reflection, many people may come to think or consider that justice or a system of justice deals primarily with the resolution of situations caused by the practices of acts or actions of injustice or unrighteousness. This view, however, does not prove correct or complete when we observe justice or righteousness from its fundamental aspects.

Although the set of aspects to be considered as part of the concept of righteousness also needs to foresee the provision to deal appropriately with the judgment and consequences of errors, transgressions, sins, or iniquities, every concept of righteousness should, first of all, also contemplate a wide range of aspects that cooperate for the practice of what is good, appropriate, or for the prevention against the practice of what is inappropriate.

Thus, before or beyond the fact that righteousness is an aspect that deals with the consequences of the practices of injustice or unrighteousness, the righteousness of God, in its basis or foundation, is an eternal attribute of the Lord and is a virtue that underlies all the judgments and acts that God performs.

*Psalms 116: 5 **Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful.***

The Lord God is righteous in all that He does, for everything He judges and does has His righteousness as virtue or foundation, just as truth and grace precede Him.

Without the righteousness of God, the very position of the Lord's dominion over the universe would not exist. The throne of God itself could not stand without heavenly justice, for only what is established in God's eternal righteousness is what also subsists in righteousness for eternity.

*Psalms 97: 1 **The LORD reigns; Let the earth rejoice; Let the multitude of isles be glad!***
*2 **Clouds and darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.***

*Psalms 89: 11 **The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; The world and all its fullness, You have founded them.***
*12 **The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Your name.***
*13 **You have a mighty arm; Strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand.***
*14 **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face.***

And why is it so significant or vital to know that the righteousness of God is first and foremost a virtue or an eternal attribute of the Lord and which never can be separated from Him?

To know that the righteousness of God is an attribute of the Lord Himself is an aspect of such high prominence or relevance because the knowledge of this righteousness is one of the most crucial points in the constitution of faith or a person's trust in God, according to the text that we repeat once again below:

*Romans 1: 16 **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.***

*17 **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."***

Considering the fact that what a person believes about God may have a crucial role in his or her trust or faith in the Lord, and through which one is called by God to live the condition of newness of life in Christ, the understanding and the person believes about who God is and how God acts may also play a determining role regarding the faith of this person in the Lord.

If an individual does not have the conviction of understanding that God is righteous or that He acts in everything according to a righteous and eternal justice, this individual will also tend not to believe in God in the appropriate measure or will tend not to deposit the confidence of the aspects of his or her life in the hands of the Lord.

And, in turn, when a person does not trust the Lord, one also becomes weak regarding "overcoming the world," for faith or firm trust in the Lord is also one of the central aspects that gives victory to an individual on the most diverse aspects of the present world.

*1 John 5: 4 **For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.***

*5 **Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?***

In their afflictions of natural order or in the fragility, the torpor, and the inconstancy of their religions, people become distressed in their souls for ignoring or not believing that despite the injustices they see around them, there is a sovereign God who has righteousness as one of the inseparable virtues of His being and by which He always acts in righteousness aiming the good of human beings.

Therefore, when the Lord Jesus Christ calls people to seek the righteousness of God in the first place, He does it so that they do not have to be subject merely to the human attempts of conceptualizing righteousness or how to act by it. The Lord calls people to come to know righteousness first according to the heavenly kingdom and the source from which it proceeds so that they do not become restricted just to natural knowledge.

When the Lord Jesus Christ emphasizes the need for His disciples to seek first the righteousness of God, He is highlighting the need that each

human being presents regarding knowing God, in His virtue of righteousness, before or above everything else so that also the trust of each one of them may be established and strengthened according to the truth and goodness that is in the Lord.

Having in mind that the essential aspect of eternal life to which God calls us is to know the Lord, and considering that the righteousness of God is an attribute of the Lord, the call to seek first the righteousness of God is a call for us first coming to know God who offers us eternal life and so that among His many attributes we may first know His virtue of everlasting righteousness.

*John 17: 3 **And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.***

*1 Corinthians 1: 30 **But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,**
31 **that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."***

Through the call to know His kingdom first, God calls us to know Him first as the Lord and Sovereign above all and everything to understand that the provision of salvation and support of the newness of eternal life is only in Him.

Nevertheless, through the call to also first know His righteousness, the Lord calls us to know that His position of God is not just sovereign above everything and everyone, but that it is also a sovereign and eternal condition because in all the Lord acts according to righteousness and righteous judgment.

When we come to know that righteousness is part of the Lord's virtues, it is possible to observe that it is not restricted to dealing with aspects caused by injustice, but that it is also markedly active in the Lord so that none of God's actions are practiced in association with unrighteousness. Therefore, or because righteousness is one of His virtues, there is no act of unrighteousness in the Lord.

*2 Chronicles 19: 7 **Now therefore, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity (or unrighteousness) with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes.***

Repeating once more, the Eternal Lord is a righteous God because this is a characteristic of His being and which causes all His works to be done from His eternal righteousness.

The righteousness of God did not arise because of a need of proposing a solution to the errors and sins of humankind, and it did not begin because of Satan's opposition to God. The righteousness of God, like the kingdom of God, is eternal and unshakable, which, therefore, has always existed and has always been in God.

The righteousness of the Lord is a righteousness that has never suffered or will suffer changes. And what God has set as parameters of what is righteous in His eyes has not changed and will never change, not even with the circumstances that occur in the lives of human beings and not even through the years and centuries.

*Psalms 119: 142 **Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.***

...
*144 **The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting; Give me understanding, and I shall live.***

When God calls us to know His righteousness first, He calls us to reveal to us, through His Gospel, that one of the vital aspects of our faith or trust in Him is to know that righteousness is perfect in Him and that all His works are just, because God does not execute judgments and does not establish paths that are not permeated by righteousness, integrity, and truth.

*Psalms 19: 9 **The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.***

*Psalms 111: 2 **The works of the LORD are great, Studied by all who have pleasure in them.***
*3 **His work is honorable and glorious, And His righteousness endures forever.***

*Psalms 145: 17 **The LORD is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works.***

The works of God have the splendor that surpasses everything only because all His deeds are permeated by the truth and His righteousness.

*Revelation 15: 3 **They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!"***

No matter how many people, the world, and the powers of darkness seek to discredit the righteousness of God, God never departs from His righteousness, He never committed or commits unrighteous acts, and the Lord never performed or performs even one single action apart from the characteristics of His unshakable and eternal righteousness. For this reason, the Lord calls people to seek the knowledge of His righteousness

first in Him or His kingdom, and not in the concepts that people dissociated from the Lord and His kingdom seek to disseminate even in a very striking way.

As we have previously mentioned, the mistrust of whether God is righteous or whether He acts in righteousness is one of the most dangerous factors in the world to shake one's faith in the Lord, and it is one of the items that the devil most seeks to explore for people to turn away from God in their hearts.

Since the devil is not God, and cannot rise to the position of God, he, from the beginning of the creation of the human being, tries to propose the thought that some unrighteousness or a supposed injustice can be found in God in order to try to reduce or equate God's image to a creature's position, or in order to try to get people to think that God is unjust so that they do not seek Him as the eternally righteous and holy God.

Also on the days when the Lord Jesus Christ was in the flesh on the Earth, the devil and the people who were willing to intensely serve the darkness sought to find, in various ways, a fault in the Lord Jesus Christ so that they could ascribe to Him a degree of injustice, thus aiming to demean the work of the Lord and His credibility so that other people would not come to believe in Christ as the Son of the Most High God and that they would not obtain eternal salvation in the Lord and His righteousness.

The Lord, however, even when He was in the condition of the Son of Man in the world, and was tempted in all things that human beings are tempted, demonstrated the greatness of His heavenly righteousness so that people could and can place their trust in a holy God Who is just or righteous in all His acts.

*Hebrews 4: 15 **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.***

*16 **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

On the one hand, the Lord Jesus Christ was tempted by the exaltation that people inappropriately wanted to attribute to Him, to which He did not yield in arrogance or pride. On the other hand, the Lord was also tempted by the persecutions and afflictions which human beings impiously and violently imputed to Him, and regarding which, likewise, He did not succumb, demonstrating the righteousness of God also under the most extreme situations of afflictions of human life.

In Christ Jesus, God proved to be righteous and incorruptible also living among the creature and under conditions similar to the living conditions of the creature.

If the Lord Jesus Christ, in His condition as the Son of Man, had announced a lie or practiced just one action of unrighteousness, He could never be *THE RIGHTEOUS* who gave His life for the unjust, the innocent or the sinless who gave His life for the salvation of sinners.

Only a single act of infidelity that Christ would have done toward the Heavenly Father and the guidance of life that He received from the Father, through the Holy Spirit, would be enough to nullify the whole purpose of His coming in the flesh into the world. If the Lord Jesus performed one injustice, His righteousness, even as the Son of

God, would no longer be valid before the God of true righteousness. A single act of unrighteousness from the Lord Jesus would already have been enough cause for the promises of God through Christ be unable to be fulfilled, making even God Himself into a God of lies.

The righteous and holy life that Christ lived among human beings is yet another demonstration of God's holiness and righteousness so that people can place their trust in the Lord and Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Even when God presented Himself in the flesh to the world through His Only Begotten Son, and even when God was outraged, mistreated, despised, and rejected by His own creation to the point of crucifying Christ on the cross of Calvary, God did not act, at any time, dissociated or outside the boundaries of His righteousness.

The prophetic testimony that preceded Christ, the very testimony of Christ, the face-to-face testimony of the rulers before the Son of God, the statements of a Roman centurion and a thief before Christ on the cross of Calvary, as well as the written testimonies after the coming of the Lord in the flesh into the world, are unanimous in declaring continuous righteousness in Christ Jesus or that in Him was never found any unrighteousness.

The Lord Jesus Christ, as the Heavenly Father's envoy, even though surrounded by sins, offenses, abuses, lies, and injustices of every order against Him, never forsook heavenly righteousness and never behaved according to some precept of unrighteousness, as stated, for example, in the list of texts that follow:

Isaiah 53: 1 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

9 And they made His grave with the wicked, But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.

John 7: 18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.

Luke 23: 4 So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man."

...
14 (he) said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him;"

...
22 Then he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go."

23 But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed.

24 So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested.

Matthew 27:17 Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

18 For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.

19 While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."

Luke 23: 47 So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!"

1 Peter 3: 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.

1 John 2: 1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Above in heaven, as well as living in the flesh among humans, God has never abandoned His righteousness to do any act of unrighteousness. Whether in heaven or on Earth, the righteousness of God has always been present with the Lord and has always grounded all His thoughts and actions.

Just as in many situations it may seem to human beings that the kingdom of God is absent from the life of the kingdoms of the Earth, that what occurs in the kingdoms of the world appears not to be under the sight of the Lord, and that the kingdom of God is not always sovereign, so can it be regarding the righteousness of God. However, without the sovereign position of the Lord and His righteousness, the kingdoms of the world and human beings could not even have subsisted for so many centuries.

Even when the Lord did not find a single person who sought His righteousness, He did not allow unrighteousness to prevail or to establish a victory over His righteousness, showing us that not even the sum of all the injustices practiced in the world can suffocate, extinguish, or shake the sovereign and heavenly righteousness of God.

The Lord can manifest His righteousness to whom and where He wants it to be manifested, even if His righteousness is widely rejected by many on Earth.

The righteousness of God is not subject to human beings to be manifested. The righteousness of God is sovereign as God is sovereign. And God is always able to manifest His righteousness in a renewed way, even as a branch that springs from an ancient trunk, as the following texts show us:

*Isaiah 59: 14 **Justice is turned back, And righteousness stands afar off; For truth is fallen in the street, And equity cannot enter.***

*15 **So truth fails, And he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him That there was no justice.***

*16 **He saw that there was no man, And wondered that there was no intercessor; Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; And His own righteousness, it sustained Him.***

*17 **For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, And was clad with zeal as a cloak.***

*Jeremiah 33: 15 **In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David A Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.***

Those who submit to unrighteousness they see around them, and who also surrender themselves to be practitioners or accomplices of it, are also those who seek to introduce the thought that the righteousness of the Lord can come to the point of prostrating itself before injustice or that unrighteousness, ultimately, can reach the point of annihilating righteousness.

And to declare that unrighteousness can be sovereign over righteousness is as wicked and corrupt as trying to propagate the idea that God does not exist. It is as perverse and evil as trying to pass on the concept that lies can overcome the truth.

Nevertheless, neither ungodliness nor falsehood acting in conjunction with unrighteousness can overcome the truth and righteousness of God and His kingdom, for the Lord is truth and righteousness forever.

To say that righteousness can come to the point of being defeated by unrighteousness is such a foolish proposition as to say that God is equivalent to the creature or that the creature is equal to God, as already mentioned above and discussed more fully on the subject on The Gospel of the Creator, and of which we recall the following two texts:

Psalms 14: 1 ***The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good.***

Romans 1: 16 ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.***

17 ***For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."***

18 ***For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,***

19 ***because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.***

20 ***For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,***

21 ***because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.***

22 ***Professing to be wise, they became fools,***

23 ***and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.***

A sovereign and perfect righteousness is only fully righteous if it stands upright also in the face of full rejection and contempt of it or in the face of a vast injustice contrary to this righteousness.

Therefore, God's righteousness is so sovereign that even when entirely rejected by human beings, it has remained righteous or just. The righteousness of God was sovereign even when it was rejected in its entirety by all the people of the world.

The righteousness of God is so sovereign that the universal sum of injustices and actions contrary to the Lord's righteousness could never diminish it.

And returning to that which has already been mentioned above, the most expressive proof before which the righteousness of God was exposed was manifested in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it was also in the face of this so enormous opposition that occurred the most remarkable demonstration of the perfection and sovereignty of the heavenly and eternal righteousness of God.

Romans 3: 23 ***For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,***

24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,
26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Through the positioning or the attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the process of His crucifixion on the cross of Calvary, God has shown that His righteousness is infinitely superior to the set of all the injustices that people have done in opposition to the will of the Lord. Although exposed or placed under such strong objections, oppressions, anguishes, and weaknesses, the Lord continued to love people and to offer them the central aspects of His righteousness, which include His eternal love and forgiveness.

John 3: 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Even though it suffered injustice to the extreme by the creation, the righteousness of God prevailed and will prevail eternally.

Luke 23: 34(a) Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

1 Corinthians 1: 18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."
20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?
21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.
22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;
23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,
24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.
25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

After unrighteousness had a specific time to reveal itself prominently among human beings, God made known the sovereignty of His righteousness before the most aggressive actions of injustice. And since God's righteousness has already been

demonstrated in the face of a vast opposition to it, the Lord will never allow unrighteousness to occupy a space of manifestation as broad as it previously has held, for from the moment that God introduced and revealed righteousness where it has been abandoned or utterly rejected, righteousness will also manifest itself increasingly through Him Who has been entrusted to establish heavenly righteousness in the hearts of those who want to receive it, namely: The Lord Jesus Christ!

*Isaiah 9: 6 **For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.***

*7 **Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.***

Just as God could never be corrupted, so heavenly righteousness could never be corrupted, even when the Lord lived for a certain period in the flesh in the world.

By the fact that many people put their eyes first and foremost on the unrighteousness they find around them, and not on the righteousness of God and His kingdom, many also seek to impute the injustice they see to the Lord rather than to acknowledge that it is by their estrangement from the Lord that unrighteousness becomes so widely propagated, which is why they also do not find the peace they aim so much.

When, however, a person looks first at the Lord and His righteousness, one also stands in line with the fruit, the harvest, or the result of the action of righteousness on his or her behalf. This aspect is to be approached more broadly later, but regarding it, we consider it to be appropriate to mention here the following texts:

*Hebrews 12: 1 **Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,***

*2 **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.***

*3 **For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.***

*Isaiah 32: 17 **The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.***

*John 16: 33 **These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.***

Concluding, then, this chapter, we would like to emphasize once again that it is also because of the spotless and unshakable condition of His righteousness that the Lord calls us to believe in Him and to live from faith to faith in Him. And this, so that we no longer need to be under the afflictions of those who do not trust in the righteousness of the Lord either because they think that life in its end has no purpose or because they think that through their religious conduct they can establish their own righteousness.

The Lord is eternally righteous, and His righteousness forever unshakable like all that is part of the kingdom of God. There is no corruption, there is no deception, there is no bribery, there is no unrighteousness that can move the Lord of His righteousness, and for this, as well, He is a God eternally worthy of trust, honor, respect, and reverence.

*2 Chronicles 19: 7 **Now therefore, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes.***

*Romans 14: 17 **For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.***

*Hebrews 12: 28 **Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.***

*29 **For our God is a consuming fire.***

*Psalms 33: 2 **Praise the LORD with the harp; Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.***

Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy.

*4 **For the word of the LORD is right, And all His work is done in truth.***

*5 **He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.***

C5. The Importance of Understanding that Righteousness and Judgment are Distinct Aspects

Although some kingdoms in the world and many people often confuse the terms “*righteousness*” or “*justice*” with “*judgment*,” one of the first points to be highlighted when the subject of heavenly righteousness is addressed, is that “*righteousness*” and “*judgment*” are very different aspects in the Scriptures.

Though every judgment of God is done in righteousness, or that the righteousness of the Lord also encompasses His deeds of judgment, righteousness and judgment continue to be differentiated aspects.

The judgment of God is associated with the decisions and judgments that God makes. The judgment of God is also associated with the sentences that God designates from the judgments He performs.

The righteousness of God, in turn, permeates and grounds all judgments of God so that every judgment of God may be done in full righteousness. The righteousness of God is already eternally established, as we have seen in the previous chapter, and it is the same regardless of how many judgments God has already performed or will yet perform.

When, for example, one looks at the natural world, perhaps it may initially be easier to perceive that there is, in fact, a distinction between the terms “*righteousness*” and “*judgment*,” for in the natural world a person can make a judgment based on parameters of righteousness or can make a judgment based on parameters of unrighteousness. So, also by this, showing that righteousness and judgment are distinct items even though they may be very close and may be found in the same scenarios or the same situations.

The act of making a judgment and the basis of parameters used for this judgment are different aspects. Therefore, in the world, a person can make a just judgment or grounded in righteousness, or one can make an unjust judgment or based on aspects of unrighteousness.

Evaluations of situations, decisions, judgments, and sentences arising from these analyses are the part related to the judgment, but that which these acts will express is the result of the parameters of righteousness or unrighteousness that were used to make the judgments.

Therefore, in a sense, judgment is an action to be carried out while righteousness can be what underlies, supports, or helps the action to be performed.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself in His preaching, while in the flesh in the world, expressed the possible cooperative, but distinct, work of righteousness and judgment.

John 7: 24 **Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.**

Judgment based on perfect righteousness is the reason why God never makes a decision in favor of evil or why God never practices an act of evil.

Judgment based on righteousness, for example, is also the basis for a person not to make a choice in favor of the practice of a sin or a lie, thus evidencing the preventive

and protective aspect that heavenly righteousness grants to those who need to perform a judgment or make a decision.

If, however, a person does not know the righteousness of God, how can he or she perform judgments or judge according to the just righteousness?

If a person does not seek the righteousness of God or the right righteousness before he or she assesses the options that are before him or her, and to know what attitude one will take regarding these options, how can one be sure to decide for something according to the just righteousness of God?

The righteousness of God is very different from the righteousness of men, and, as already mentioned in the present material, it proceeds from heaven, from the kingdom of God, and it is revealed from faith to faith to those who receive the Gospel that contains the righteousness of the Lord.

The revelation of the righteousness from faith to faith can be applied both to a growing knowledge of God's righteousness and to the diversity of situations in which judgment is required. The revelation of the righteousness from faith to faith is increasing, but it may also be manifested to each new occasion where judgment is necessary.

At this point, perhaps, some people might be asking themselves some questions about their role in exercising judgment, for the Scriptures also record that a person is not called to judge one's fellow man or should not stand as judge over one's fellow man, as mentioned, for instance, in chapter 2 of the book of Romans.

Nevertheless, when the subject of judgment or performing judgment is more widely observed in the Scriptures, the need for a broader approach or perspective may also be noted, for the act of judging according to the just righteousness encompasses a diversity of factors and is not limited to the circumstance described in chapter 2 of Romans.

To exercise judgment, to carry out judgment, to make a judgment, or to exercise the act of judging involves several distinct actions and stages, as well as it applies to many different situations in life. Therefore, the specific situation of not judging one's neighbor mentioned in the Scriptures in the book of Romans, chapter 2, should not be confused with the general practice of judging or exercising judgment regarding the most diverse situations in life.

If the specific exhortation of Romans 2 not to judge the fellow man had the objective to establish a general restriction on the practice of judgment, a broad set of other texts of the Bible would lose its reason for existing.

There are many texts in the Scriptures that point to the constant need for the practice of judgment, the act of judging, or the vital practice of discernment, as can be seen in the two texts below:

*1 Corinthians 14: 20 Brethren, **do not be children in understanding (the faculty of perceiving and judging); however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.***

*1 Corinthians 2:15(a) **But he who is spiritual judges all things.***

And how could or would an individual turn away from unrighteousness, iniquity, evil, or even various persons who choose to serve evil if one did not have at his or her disposal the possibility of practicing judgment or discernment between good and evil?

Also the expressions exemplified below, such as **take heed, beware, note those, avoid them, keep yourselves from, turn away from evil, depart from iniquity**, and several others, would make no sense if they were dissociated from the exercise of judgment or the practice of discernment.

Luke 12: 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

Mark 8: 15 Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

Philippians 3: 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

*Romans 16: 17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.
18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.*

1 John 5: 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

*1 Peter 3: 10 For He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit.
11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.*

*2 Timothy 2: 19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal:
"The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."*

When in some particular points the Scriptures admonish us not to judge our neighbor, they do not instruct us to cease to discern our fellow men and their attitudes, for this would be highly incoherent with many other Scriptures and would go against all instruction to continually use the discernment.

Thus, we understand that it is worth noting that the use of judgment or the practice of judging encompasses several stages, which may involve (1) information gathering, (2) the discernment of what is right and what is not correct, and (3) the determination of a sentence about some specific subject or person.

To judge, in the sense of discerning evil and departing from those who indulge in darkness, is a good, preventive, and necessary practice that the Lord Himself instructs to human beings in many places of His Scriptures.

Being called to depart from evil and even some people, under the guidance of God, means, for example, that a Christian is called to judge, in the sense of discerning, the most diverse circumstances and people around him or her. This call to judge or to discern, however, does not mean that he or she should also exercise the part of the practice of judging what refers to declare some sentence of damage upon his or her fellows.

Still in addition to what has already been said above, the specific instruction for a person not to judge one's fellow men does not mean that the functions of many magistrates or rulers who exist in civil life must be extinguished, for their existence is also recognized by the Lord to cooperate for a more appropriate functioning of the various human societies, as follows:

*Romans 13: 3 **For rulers (or magistrates) are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.***
*4 **For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.***

Therefore, on the one hand, and **respecting the due limit, the part that is up to each person to perform concerning the actions of discerning, the practice of judgment, or the acts of judging in accordance with God's righteousness should be widely practiced by all people and should never be abandoned.**

On the other hand, **the judgment that aims to deliberate on human beings in eternal matters is an exclusive attribute of the Lord, and if one wants to take this position for oneself, he or she wants to take on a condition that no human being should undertake.**

Although the human being is called to exercise judgment or discernment continually according to the righteousness of God for the most diverse circumstances of one's life, this does not give a person the right to pronounce sentence of condemnation on the eternal life of his or her fellow men, for this, emphasizing once again, belongs exclusively to the Lord.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, one of the criminals who was crucified beside the Lord said of himself that he was being condemned justly by men, but even though he appealed to the Lord's mercy concerning his salvation and eternal life. And though the Lord did not deliver this malefactor from the cross, He absolved him from everlasting condemnation.

Despite condemned by men, the criminal found salvation in the Lord, for eternal condemnation or absolution belongs exclusively to God, Who has full power to operate the salvation and spiritual newness of life of an individual even when the sentence or conviction of humans toward him or her has been severe to the extreme.

*Luke 23: 39 Then **one of the criminals** who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."
 40 **But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?"
 41 "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong."
 42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."
 43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."
 44 Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.***

1 Peter 4: 5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

6 For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

The scenario of the events that occurred at the final moments of the crucifixion of Christ is very remarkable or worthy of special attention, for even when darkness covered the whole Earth, God's power of salvation was present among human beings, saving eternally a criminal person and judged by the most severe human judgment.

Even when humans, in their earthly courts, condemn people to a complete end as to an individual's existence in the natural world, God can redeem this person forever before the eternal tribunal.

A human condemnation or acquittal is never the final stage of the judgment of the person before the Father of Lights and Who judges all in a court entirely grounded in the heavenly righteousness.

A person may admonish or warn others about the main parameters governing the heavenly and everlasting tribunal, but the position to designate a final sentence of condemnation or acquittal on a human being belongs exclusively to the Lord, and no person in the world is given this attribute. Like the criminal on the cross, all people, in one way or another, have been subject to sin, and no human being on Earth is just enough to be the judge according to the righteous justice of the eternal matters of one's fellows.

Thus, to judge according to the just righteousness also involves knowing to discern what fits or does not fit for a person to judge. It also encompasses a person knowing to what extent it is fair for him or her to judge the circumstances and attitudes of other people and at what point one needs to stop judging and letting it to whom the judgment is due.

*1 Peter 2: 21 For to this you were called, because **Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:**
 22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";
 23 **who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;**
 24 **who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed.***

*1 Peter 4: 5 **They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.***

*1 Corinthians 4: 3 **But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.**
 4 **For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.**
 5 **Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.***

Only He who has always acted and always acts in full righteousness or only He who has given His life in complete righteousness for others is authorized by God to be eternally the righteous judge over everything, all nations, and every individual.

*Acts 10: 39 **And we are witnesses of all things which He (Christ) did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.**
 40 **Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,**
 41 **not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.**
 42 **And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.**
 43 **To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.***

We still recall here that the subject about the practice of judging or discerning assigned to Christians is also described in the material of the Systemic Teaching about Christian Life entitled as The Law of Understanding, which is also why we will not go further on it at this point.

Finally, in this chapter, we reiterate once again that a minimum or sober understanding of the distinction between righteousness and judgment is an aspect that should be known by all people, for without it a person may find it difficult to

understand that one of the roles of righteousness is even to spare people who receive it from being exposed to an unfavorable judgment regarding their eternal life, as follows:

John 3: 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

C6. Highlighting God's Sovereignty and Righteousness also in His Position of Righteous Judge

Keeping still in mind the aspects considered in the last two chapters, that is, the fact that what a person thinks or understands about God's righteousness may also affect one's trust or faith in the Lord, and that the terms "*righteousness*" and "*judgment*" may present distinct aspects, we would like to approach a little more the specific subject of the Lord's condition as the Righteous Judge because this aspect may also be very relevant to a person's faith in God.

Although many people even consider or accept the idea that God, in His righteousness, also practices acts of righteousness, many of them do not have the same conviction when the subject refers to the judgments or the conditions of judgments that the Lord adopts or announces that He will adopt regarding each of the human beings.

Although some people even agree with the teaching of the Scriptures that God does all His works in righteousness, many of them do not have the same conviction that God knows or will know how to judge all righteously, or even that the Lord does know all the circumstances and injustices that are practiced in the world.

Therefore, just as the doubt regarding if the Lord indeed acts in full righteousness in the actions that He practices can aggressively oppose the faith in God of an individual, so also the doubt about the condition of the Lord as the Righteous Judge may oppose the confidence that a person is called to place in God.

God's position as the judge of the whole universe is one of the matters that most intrigues and challenges the human mind, because perhaps concerning it, the human being comes across one of the circumstances where there is one of the most significant evidence of the limitation of the creature, how much it has no control over the eternal circumstances, how much the creation depends on the Creator, and how much every individual is and will be exposed to the light of the Lord.

Questions about the exact beginning of life, about the various circumstances and purposes for which an individual was born and where he or she was born, what awaits each person after one's life on Earth, what is the basis of judgment after natural death, and several others, are issues that expose the enormous fragility of the human being in its mere temporal or natural condition.

Although the quantity and grandeur of deeds that God has allowed human beings to accomplish in their several centuries, the fact that the present world and the natural life are temporal or transient shows us how small and how limited the human being is in the face of the most crucial points of life, such as righteousness and judgment for eternal life.

Thus, it is also regarding the righteousness of the Lord in His position as the Righteous Judge that the difference between humans and God is widely evidenced. And when people seek to know these vital and precious matters primarily or just by their own points of view, they end up expressing the profound ignorance that may exist in them about what matters most to their lives, as it is exposed, for example, in the text below:

- Job 35: 1 Moreover Elihu answered and said:*
- 2 Do you think this is right? Do you say, 'My righteousness is more than God's'?*
- 3 For you say, 'What advantage will it be to You? What profit shall I have, more than if I had sinned?'*
- 4 I will answer you, And your companions with you.*
- 5 Look to the heavens and see; And behold the clouds, They are higher than you.*
- 6 If you sin, what do you accomplish against Him? Or, if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him?*
- 7 If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?*
- 8 Your wickedness affects a man such as you, And your righteousness a son of man.*
- 9 Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; They cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty.*
- 10 But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, Who gives songs in the night,*
- 11 Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, And makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?'*
- 12 There they cry out, but He does not answer, Because of the pride of evil men.*
- 13 Surely God will not listen to empty talk, Nor will the Almighty regard it.*
- 14 Although you say you do not see Him, Yet justice is before Him, and you must wait for Him.*
- 15 And now, because He has not punished in His anger, Nor taken much notice of folly,*
- 16 therefore Job opens his mouth in vain; He multiplies words without knowledge.*
-

In the face of the evil they see in the world, many people become displeased or even indignant with the Lord's attitudes and cry out to God with empty voices or devoid of proper purposes. However, God's position as the Righteous Judge can never be shaken or altered by human actions, whether good or bad, just as these kinds of cries never can really benefit those who want God to look at their situation at any cost or regardless of His righteousness.

The life of human beings in the world is permeated with injustice, but the present world is not the final stage of the whole process. And this is one of the factors that bothers people so much, for it underscores the position that they cannot have control over God, over the creation, and especially over many crucial aspects of their own lives.

As the Righteous Judge, the Lord does indeed need to assign a designation to every act of unrighteousness so that, as the ruler of the universe, He does not become a conniving judge or complacent with any injustice. However, the time that the Lord sets for judgment so that He stays in His position of righteousness toward all and just at the end of every individual's life on Earth is often so frustrating in the eyes of people.

Even though many think that God does not see all or all things, nothing is left out of the Lord's observation, Who, in due time, will also know how to deal with or judge righteously all that will be put before His judgment.

Nothing that has happened and happens in the entire universe can be withheld from being seen and judged by God, for this is the role of God as the judge of every creature and which He certainly will not fail to exercise in due time.

*Psalms 7: 11 **God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day.***

*Psalms 9: 7 **But the LORD shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment.***

*8 **He shall judge the world in righteousness, And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.***

*Hebrews 4: 13 **And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.***

A judgment with full righteousness can only be established from a global view of all the acts practiced in the universe and at all times of the world. And it is only the Lord God, the Creator, who holds this position of Omniscience, for He alone is God over everything and across all times.

Although in many human courts it is possible that many facts are distorted or obscured by partial visions of truth, by limited accounts of the events, and even by lies or false claims of justice, resulting inclusive in many unjust human trials because of their limited conditions, this does not occur before the righteousness and the eternal throne of God. Nothing before God can be concealed or hidden, even if the Lord waits for the proper time to manifest His judgment.

In the presence of God, the facts are uncovered or patent. And the deepest roots that led to the acts to be practiced cannot be hidden, which is also why no person has achieved by oneself a satisfactory condition of righteousness before God. There is no way for a person to commit an act of unrighteousness without this act being exposed before the righteousness and the judgment of God. Every act of injustice is evident before God even though the one who practiced the action is not aware of his or her unrighteousness or also if the one who practiced it tries to deny it by simulations or dissimulations.

Although many injustices and many sins go unnoticed before human beings and even before those who are elected to judge their fellows in the human courts, no sin goes unnoticed by God and, as has been mentioned before, no act of unrighteousness can be erased before God by human beings themselves.

Also in His position as judge over everything and all people, God never pleases with unrighteousness or sin, and is never complicit in the iniquity

of any human being, regardless of who committed it. In His position of judge, God does not use partiality in the face of committed injustices.

Acts 10: 34 **Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.**

35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him."

Romans 2: 11 **For there is no partiality with God.**

1 Peter 1: 17 **And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear.**

The knowledge of God's position as the Righteous Judge, who judges everything according to the just righteousness, is one of the most central knowledge on the whole subject of righteousness, judgment, and life itself, for it is from the faith or the trust in God, also as the Righteous Judge, that so many other areas of the heavenly righteousness are conferred upon human beings.

Seeking to understand God's righteousness to know how it works in all that the Lord does, including in all His judgments, instead of wanting to find out whether God is or is not righteous, may change much the perspective on learning righteousness itself.

When a person comes to believe that God is always righteous in everything He does, as well as in what He judges, one also advances toward a position where the knowledge of the righteousness that grounds God in everything He does becomes more understandable and accessible for him or her.

God does not heed to the cry of those who cast empty talks in the air about the righteousness and the judgments of the Lord, but He attends those who seek the righteousness of God because they hunger and thirst for the true righteousness that proceeds from the eternally righteous Lord.

To receive the righteousness of God widely, it is necessary first to receive the kingdom of God, for the kingdom of God is righteousness. But the heavenly kingdom is given to the humble in spirit, to those who are humble to recognize their limitations and who, at the same time, also recognize the right position of the judgments that God performs regarding them and the other human beings.

Matthew 5: 3 **Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ...**

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith to those who live by faith in God and to those who do not get tired of trusting in the Lord's instructions, guidance, or judgments.

Romans 1: 17 **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."**

Hebrews 11: 6 **But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**

In the psalms presented in the Scriptures, it can be noted, on several occasions, that the psalmists experienced great afflictions in the face of the injustices and evils that became manifested in the context of their lives. However, these afflictions could not overthrow their faith in God by the fact that they remained firm in acknowledging the Lord as the Righteous, Just, and Eternal King who judges or performs all judgment in full righteousness. Even though in the face of the injustice in the world, the psalmists, in maintaining their trust in the Lord, went from faith to faith to see more and more the sublimity and greatness of the heavenly righteousness.

Thus, recognizing the righteousness of God in all His judgments can also be vital or crucial for an individual to remain in connection and fellowship with the unique source of perfect righteousness and eternal life. For this reason, a person should never accept in his or her heart the temptation to doubt God's righteous position as the Eternal Judge, as shown by the very important Psalm presented below:

Psalms 73: 1 **A Psalm of Asaph.**

Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart.

- 2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped.**
- 3 For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.**
- 4 For there are no pangs in their death, But their strength is firm.**
- 5 They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men.**
- 6 Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment.**
- 7 Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish.**
- 8 They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; They speak loftily.**
- 9 They set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue walks through the earth.**
- 10 Therefore his people return here, And waters of a full cup are drained by them.**
- 11 And they say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?"**
- 12 Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches.**

- 13 *Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence.*
- 14 *For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning.*
- 15 *If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.*
- 16 *When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me,*
- 17 *until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.*
- 18 *Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.*
- 19 *Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.*
- 20 *As a dream when one awakes, So, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.*
- 21 *Thus my heart was grieved, And I was vexed in my mind.*
- 22 *I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.*
- 23 *Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand.*
- 24 *You will guide me with Your counsel, And afterward receive me to glory.*
- 25 *Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.*
- 26 *My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*
- 27 *For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry.*
- 28 *But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works.*
-

The human being is not allowed to die several times to know more closely the details of one's future situation and then to return to the natural condition on Earth again, so that one may know what awaits him or her after the time in the present world nor to teach others about what is to come in eternity. After due time in the current world, the human being inevitably has an encounter with a judgment for eternity, and nothing can change it or cause one to return to life in the present world several times, as the following text teaches us:

Hebrews 9: 27 ... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, ...

According to the account of the Lord Jesus Christ in chapter 16 of the book of Luke, after their death and after knowing the judgment about their lives, neither Lazarus nor the rich were able to return to warn the rich man's brothers about the critical position he attained after death and for having despised God and His righteousness, an aspect that remains unchanged even to the present day. However influential an individual may have been in the current world, no matter how intrepid or brave a person may have been in prayers or words, or by more natural resources one has attained, no one can return to the present world after having received the ultimate judgment upon his or her soul.

Nevertheless, the encounter of a person with the eternal judgment does not necessarily have to be an encounter of fear or dread, for if, on the one hand, eternal judgment occurs under conditions in which no human being has the criteria to be approved, on the other hand, God offers to help all to be supported by the Lord Himself in order to be exposed to a judgment according to the redemptive gift of the heavenly righteousness.

John 3: 18 **He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

19 **And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.**

20 **For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.**

21 **But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.**

1 John 2: 1 **My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**

2 **And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**

Romans 8: 15 **For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."**

Psalms 98: 5 **Sing to the LORD with the harp, With the harp and the sound of a psalm,**

6 **With trumpets and the sound of a horn; Shout joyfully before the LORD, the King.**

7 **Let the sea roar, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell in it;**

8 **Let the rivers clap their hands; Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord,**

9 **For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, And the peoples with equity.**

2 Timothy 4: 8 **Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.**

If a person deprives oneself of knowing the righteousness of God, one can also put oneself in a position of lack of proper knowledge of God as to the mercy and grace that the Lord offers to all. One can put oneself in subjection to the fear of eternal condemnation due to the fact of depriving oneself of knowing the path of justification that the Lord offers in Christ, as presented in the following text:

Romans 8: 32 **He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?**

33 **Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.**

34 **Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.**

On the other hand, if a person deprives oneself of knowing some central aspects of God's judgment and the firm position of the Lord as the Just Judge, one may incur the misleading and inappropriate thinking that God will not judge indeed those who have not received justification before the Lord by faith in the righteousness that is in Christ, disregarding so the following words:

Galatians 6: 7 **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**

8 **For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.**

Romans 8: 13 **For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**

James 5: 1 **Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!**

2 **Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.**

3 **Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.**

4 **Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.**

5 **You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.**

6 **You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.**

7 **Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.**

8 **You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**

9 **Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!**

- 10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.**
- 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.**

Hebrews 10: 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people."

- Romans 6: 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**
- 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.**
- 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**
- 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.**
- 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!**
- 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?**

Therefore, **believing in God's sovereignty over the whole universe and believing that this sovereignty is exercised in full righteousness by the Lord also in His position as Eternal Judge** are aspects that should always be seen together by those who want to enjoy the righteousness of God and walk according to the will of the Eternal Lord.

Psalms 48: 10 According to Your name, O God, So is Your praise to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is full of righteousness.

Isaiah 33: 22 For the LORD is our Judge, The LORD is our Lawgiver, The LORD is our King; He will save us.

Deuteronomy 32: 4 He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.

Psalms 99: 1 The LORD reigns; Let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; Let the earth be moved!

2 The LORD is great in Zion, And He is high above all the peoples.

- 3 Let them praise Your great and awesome name, He is holy.*
- 4 The King's strength also loves justice; You have established equity;
You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.*

C7. Vengeful, Condemning, Justifying, or Restoring Righteousness?

Another very significant aspect to be observed more closely when the theme of God's righteousness is addressed, as already mentioned previously, is that the heavenly righteousness is what it is or what the Lord establishes about it, not what the people think it is or what they would like it to be.

We understand that the aspect mentioned in the previous paragraph should be emphasized continuously, for also because many “*judicial systems*” of the world are denominated “*systems of justice*,” one may easily think that “*righteousness*” is a system of judgment to punish those who practice injustice in the sense of trying to contain the growth of unrighteousness.

Many people even think that righteousness should be a set of revenge actions of the wronged to those who have done injustice, whose thinking is admired and even widely disseminated in works of literature and films that consider as heroes those who supposedly avenge the so-called “innocent” and punish severely those who have practiced “injustice.”

Nevertheless, a relevant aspect to be observed in the human propositions of condemnation of those who practice injustice is that these condemnations, in many cases, can never provide reparation for all the damages that the injustice practiced has generated for those who have been wronged or even to those who have been deceived by evil to practice injustice by thinking that through it they could achieve some supposed benefits.

Even if a murderer, for example, is sentenced to the maximum penalty for the death he or she caused, the conviction of the murderer can never restore the life of the one from whom life was taken and can never restore this life to those to whom the murdered person was also precious.

On the other hand, we would like to mention here as a reminder, that the fact that many condemnatory laws cannot provide for restorations of various types of damages does not necessarily imply that this reality should be confused with the idea that the laws that regulate the civil life of a nation or a people are not necessary or useful in the cooperation of righteousness and the containment of practices of injustice. There are several laws for the context of human societies that are necessary so that injustices do not spread further or in a largely unbridled way. Civil laws in the world may, in many cases, be necessary and may be cooperative to resist the proliferation of bad or harmful behavior, as set out in the following texts:

*1 Timothy 1: 8 But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully,
9 knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but
for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners,
for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers
of mothers, for manslayers,
10 for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for
perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound
doctrine,
11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was
committed to my trust.*

Ecclesiastes 8: 11 **Because the 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.**

Proverbs 19: 19 **A man of great wrath will suffer punishment; For if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.**

If all people surrendered their lives to God's direction, the laws of human societies would not be necessary, for all individuals would be instructed in righteousness and walk by it through the righteousness of God, just as God is righteous in all that He does. This condition, however, is not a reality in the current world in which we live, for in this world people can choose, and indeed choose, not to follow the instructions that God offers them.

In their contempt for God and their fellows, many individuals even go so far as to decree specific laws to support their injustices as if the creation of laws could diminish the perversity of their practices. Before God, however, the creation of laws to mask the practice of unrighteousness is one of the most pronounced marks of one's surrender to ungodliness or iniquity.

Psalms 94: 20 **Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, Have fellowship with You?**

21 They gather together against the life of the righteous, And condemn innocent blood.

Isaiah 10: 1 **Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees, Who write misfortune, Which they have prescribed**
2 to rob the needy of justice, And to take what is right from the poor of My people, That widows may be their prey, And that they may rob the fatherless.

3 What will you do in the day of punishment, And in the desolation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your glory?

Psalms 50: 16 **But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to declare My statutes, Or take My covenant in your mouth,**

17 Seeing you hate instruction And cast My words behind you?

18 When you saw a thief, you consented with him, And have been a partaker with adulterers.

19 You give your mouth to evil, And your tongue frames deceit.

20 You sit and speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son.

21 These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; But I will rebuke you, And set them in order before your eyes.

***22 Now consider this, you who forget God, Lest I tear you in pieces,
And there be none to deliver.***

If all the acts of human beings were performed from the righteousness of God, there would be no need for the subject of condemnation to be put on the agenda, for if people followed God's instructions for their lives, they would not submit to the practice of sins and nor would they practice injustice. As stated in the last text of 1Timothy mentioned above and in the following verses, the law does not need to be promulgated for one who is a doer of good and for one who walks according to the direction of the Spirit of the Lord.

***Galatians 5: 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.***

As we have already discussed above, some restrictive laws are necessary for human societies and which may cooperate for their good. On the other hand, however, the cooperation of the restrictive laws is very limited in order to prevent that no unrighteousness comes to be practiced and is very limited also in the reparation of various damages caused by certain types of injustices.

As much as an adequate system of justice needs to predict convictions or condemnations, it will never be full enough and perfect if it is not in a position to restore the most significant losses to those who have been wronged.

Although life in the world needs "systems of justice" that predict convictions or condemnations of those who infringe on what is considered to be right or those who practice unrighteousness, no justice system in the world will be able to restore the most significant damages that injustices cause to people.

Therefore, just as the kingdoms of the Earth cannot provide that which the kingdom of God alone can provide, including those who are benevolent and cooperative with their citizens in many areas, so the justice of the kingdoms of the world will never be able to provide what alone the righteousness of the kingdom of God can provide.

Although God allows the kingdoms of the Earth and their judicial systems or magistrates to be a means for people to also receive benefits through them, both the kingdoms of the Earth and their structures of justice have never been and never will be able to supply to human beings the higher and most necessary aspects of righteousness.

If a person approaches the subject of God's righteousness only at the level of the so-called systems of justice or magistrates of the societies or kingdoms of the Earth, this person places oneself in a position where he or she is also deprived of seeing the higher glory that is in the righteousness of God in relation to the limited glory that exists in the human systems and which cannot achieve a true and full reparation of the damages caused by the injustices.

Some systems with conviction criteria may even have benefits in pointing to the consequences of the practice of unrighteousness and by containing a part of the unbridled advancement of injustices, but they do not have and will never have the

provision to restore or repair fully, and justly, the most harmful aspects that the practice of injustice produces.

Some laws that propose condemnation have cooperative aspects for the purpose they objectify and when legitimately used to inhibit those who insist on transgression, as we have already seen in one of the texts above, but they are thoroughly incapable of providing solutions for several higher purposes that people who have faced injustice need to achieve.

So, **the righteousness of God is superior to the systems of laws of the earthly kingdoms because it also uses criteria or characteristics superior to those that humans use in their laws.**

- 2 Corinthians 3: 4* ***And we have such trust through Christ toward God.***
5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,
6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
7 But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away,
8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?
9 For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.
-

If people were never exposed to the laws of condemnation, many of them would also have no knowledge of their acts of unrighteousness. However, if a person only becomes aware of the practice of injustice and the possible condemnation that may come from it, and never takes notice of the higher righteousness that can even restore what is due regarding the most damaging aspects caused by the injustice practiced, what good would the mere condemnation add?

Romans 3: 20 ***Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.***

+

Galatians 3: 10 ***For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."***

And yet another aspect that is very relevant to be observed when addressing the theme of righteousness in relation to condemnation and restitution is the matter of the time in which righteousness or justice manifests itself or may come to operate.

In this way, with the latter in mind, if the theme of justice in the face of injustice is seen only from the human perspective and the temporal perspective of life, no person can come to a minimally reasonable conclusion about true and lasting righteousness.

If God's righteousness were limited only to the aspects of temporal life, it would be incomplete or very flawed, for if God's righteousness could not offer a due provision for eternal restitution of the most significant damages caused by temporal injustice to a person, such righteousness could never be regarded as perfect.

The righteousness of God is perfect righteousness also because it is able to provide, even if in the future, righteous eternal restitution of the most significant damages caused by the most various injustices practiced. But without understanding the matter of the time in which this righteousness acts in this reparation, it is very complicated to understand the heavenly righteousness as being indeed righteous or just.

In the world, and even in the judicial systems of its kingdoms or nations, there are many cases of unrighteousness caused by the fact that they are subject to very limited or temporal deadlines to establish their judgments.

In the world, there are many cases of judgment already carried out that prove to be profoundly mistaken after they are exposed to new facts that are known over time. And here again, it is also impossible for all damages caused by these errors to be repaired or entirely restored by the justice systems of the world.

The time of life which a person wronged by the so-called justice of men has lost, for instance, can never be repaired in the sense of what might have happened in one's life if he or she had not suffered this kind of injustice.

Therefore, believing in God as a just or righteous God in all His creative and sustaining acts of the world is one level of faith in the Lord. But to believe that the Lord is also a just or righteous God who does and will make a righteous restitution of the most significant damages caused by the injustices committed, although not all aspects of this reparation will be reached at the time of life on Earth, is another degree of trust in God, which is why ***the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel from faith to faith.***

To believe in the Lord as the God who judges all things righteously, and to believe in God as the just and mighty one to duly repair the damages of all the injustice practiced, though not necessarily at the time in which a person would like that this restitution becomes manifested, may come to cause an enormous beneficial implication of change in the expectations of a person's life and deeds.

To believe that the righteousness of God will not fail, even though it sometimes seems to be delayed, is not always easy to be assimilated by the soul and in view that the righteousness of God is achieved by faith in faith, not by sight. Moreover, to wait for the righteousness of God or to trust in it does not mean that a person will not be afflicted while waiting for a more specific intervention from the Lord, just as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself went through afflictions.

Luke 18: 7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?

8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?

John 16: 33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

The Scriptures teach us that when the Lord Jesus Christ was as Son of Man in the world, He continually or in all things trusted in the Heavenly Father as a righteous God and who was just in all that He instructed Him to do. And even though most of the heavenly righteousness would be revealed through or after His death on the cross of Calvary, Christ also continually believed that the Heavenly Father would deal justly and righteously with all the injustice that was so sharply directed at Him while in the flesh on Earth, as can be seen once more in the text that we repeat below:

***1 Peter 2: 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:
22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";
23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;
24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness, by whose stripes you were healed.***

If the righteousness of God would be limited to be obtained just for the lifetime of a person on Earth, or if God's righteousness would not be powerful to also provide for the resurrection from the dead and the due eternal restitution of the most significant damages that those who believe in the Lord suffered, the most wronged or most unhappy people in all human existence would be precisely those who sought and seek exactly this righteousness of the Lord.

***1 Corinthians 15: 12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?
13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.
14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.
15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up, if in fact the dead do not rise.
16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.
17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!
18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.
19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.
20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.
21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.
22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.***

We emphasize, then, once again, that not all who intensely practice injustice and that not all who intensely practice righteousness see the fruit or the complete result of their works in their natural lifetime.

*Ecclesiastes 8: 12 **Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him.***

*1 Timothy 5: 24 **Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later.***

*2 Corinthians 4: 17 **For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,**
18 **while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.***

The righteousness of God has a striking and a constant presence in life on Earth at all times of its existence, but it is not limited to act only on the temporary things of natural life, nor is it limited to material, earthly, and transitory reparations.

As much as earthly and temporal injustice is difficult to be assimilated by human beings, a person should never cease to look at the eternal character of the Lord's righteousness so that one does not need to reap the eternal fruit of unrighteousness.

No matter how much a person has been wronged or even when a person has been a practitioner of injustice, God does not want anyone to reap the fruit of unrighteousness forever, and therefore, the Lord often retains condemnation or reparation during a determined time, as can also be seen in the following text:

*2 Peter 3: 1 **Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),**
2 **that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,**
3 **knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,**
4 **and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."**
5 **For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,**
6 **by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.***

- 7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.**
- 8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.**
- 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**
- 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.**
- 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,**
- 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?**
- 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.**
-

In the world, there are many people who make a point of announcing their claims for justice and even seek to attribute the guilt of the injustice of the world to God, to a supposed absence of the intervention of the Lord in the world, or even to the alleged non-existence of God. However, those who do so, and often do it even in a very striking way, ignore that it is for their own repentance and because of their salvation that God does not yet eliminate the injustice thoroughly from the world. For if the Lord would do so promptly, He would also have to separate and condemn all those who have done some unrighteousness in their lives and who have not yet accepted the provision of the heavenly righteousness that allows them to receive the forgiveness of their own transgressions.

While many people in the world think they have the right to cry out to God for the condemnation of their neighbor or fellow human beings, even regarding their eternal condition, the Lord first offers repentance and salvation to all, including the accusers of their peers so that they do not fall victim to the same condemnation they claim for others.

Thus, before people shout for the righteousness of God, they should learn to disassociate the righteousness of the Lord from condemnatory judgment because God is no respecter of any person either in His righteousness or in His judgment, and all those who do not receive the righteousness of the Lord are equally subject to condemnation before the Lord.

- Romans 2: 1 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.**
- 2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.**
- 3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?**

- 4 ***Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?***
- 5 ***But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,***
- 6 ***who "will render to each one according to his deeds":***
- 7 ***eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;***
- 8 ***but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,***
- 9 ***tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;***
- 10 ***but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.***
- 11 ***For there is no partiality with God.***

Romans 5: 12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

Romans 3: 9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

- 10 ***As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;***
- 11 ***There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.***
- 12 ***They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.***

23 ***for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.***

While the world cries out for the condemnatory judgment of God or cries out to God for the condemnation of all who commit or have committed injustices, doing so under the pretext of calling this judgment as the righteousness of God, the Lord first offers a justifying and saving judgment clothed with a true righteousness, mercy, and salvation since all human beings equally need this redemptive judgment and by the fact that the Lord does not want anyone to be lost eternally.

Psalms 94: 15 But judgment will return to righteousness, And all the upright in heart will follow it.

Isaiah 30: 18 Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him.

God is Just Judge, and therefore He does not fail to judge and punish all the injustice practiced, but together with the announcement of His position as Judge, the Lord also reveals an attribute of His righteousness that can restore people to an eternal position of righteousness even after they became subject to unrighteousness or sin.

*Romans 6: 23 **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Every work of injustice practiced on Earth passes through the judgment of the Lord, but not without God first offering to the people the characteristic of the heavenly righteousness that precedes the judgment of the Lord in order to offer to all individuals a provision not to suffer the condemnation or the eternal verdict of revenge for the injustice that has been practiced.

The Lord, therefore, is worthy of exaltation for His condition of Righteous Judge who will not allow sin and unrighteousness to prevail on the day of judgment, but the Lord is also worthy of all exaltation by offering beforehand His perfect righteousness so that His judgment may not be of condemnation to death, but for granting of newness of life to everyone who accepts the offer of justification, salvation, and novelty of life which is in His everlasting Gospel.

*Isaiah 5: 16 **But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, And God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness.***

The righteousness of God is the righteousness that deals righteously with the one who has been wronged, but it also deals justly with unrighteousness, with the harm it produces, and with those who have done injustice, but, primarily, looking for the possibility of eternal redemption and salvation both of the wronged and of the one who has done injustice, showing so that this level of righteousness is thoroughly unique and can only be performed by the Eternal Lord.

Therefore, to conclude this chapter, we repeat once again a striking example of how we are called to behave in the face of unrighteousness when the restorative righteousness of the Lord seems to be waiting longer than expected to manifest itself. This example was given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself so that in the Lord we would have another parameter or firm reference of an appropriate posture or attitude while we still await some conclusive aspects of the manifestation of the eternal righteousness and the heavenly judgment.

*1 Peter 2: 23 **Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.***

C8. The Crucial Need of Being Convinced about Sin, Righteousness, and Judgment Simultaneously and by the Holy Spirit

In life in general, there are various subjects, concepts, or words whose meanings may point in one direction when analyzed separately, but which may not prove to be accurate or broad enough if they are not observed together with other aspects that somehow are related with them or even contrast them.

As seen in the preceding chapters, the righteousness of God and the judgment of the Lord are examples of subjects that fall into the consideration of the previous paragraph, that is, they are subjects whose meanings or definitions can be observed more precisely or more broadly if they are also viewed together.

In previous chapters, it has been seen, for instance, that despite righteousness and judgment are distinct aspects, they are continually acting together since one grounds the action of the other and one also more fully clarifies the goal of the other.

Therefore, continuing to explore the theme of the Gospel of Righteousness or of the Gospel through which a person can know the righteousness of God from faith to faith, we would like to highlight, from this new chapter, that beyond the fact that the comprehension of God's righteousness is associated with the joint understanding of various aspects of the Lord's judgment, it is also very much associated with a broader understanding of sin, the practice of sin, and the consequences that may come to a person because one's subjection to sin.

Since the understanding of the opposite of one aspect may also cooperate in understanding the aspect one is seeking to know, and since unrighteousness is the opposite of righteousness, the theme of understanding various aspects of sin is crucial, for, in the Scriptures, the latter is in a sense also a synonym of unrighteousness, as presented in the text below:

*1 John 5: 17(a) **All unrighteousness is sin.***

Due to the frequent performance in the present world of one in opposition to the other or of one in complement to the other respectively, the themes of sin, God's righteousness, and the Lord's judgment are matters that are inevitably often mentioned jointly in the Scriptures, of which we highlight in this chapter initially the following text:

*John 16: 7 **Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.***

*8 **And when He (the Holy Spirit) has come, He will convict (rebuke or convince) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:***

*9 **of sin, because they do not believe in Me;***

*10 **of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;***

*11 **of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.***

The fact that an adequate perception of sin, righteousness, and judgment also depends on a joint perception of these three items, and how each acts regarding the other, makes the task of understanding each of these aspects even more extensive and challenging, but on the other hand, it also clarifies essential points that could never be understood if they were viewed just individually.

On the one hand, a part of the understanding of evil or unrighteousness depends on a person coming to know what goodness or righteousness is, and, on the other side, a part of the comprehension of righteousness or what is good only becomes more evident when a person is confronted with an exposition of what is evil or unrighteous.

Perhaps because they fear a broader understanding of what sin is, or because they are not willing to know this subject more profoundly, some people also end up depriving themselves of knowing more about the righteousness of God and the righteous judgment of the Lord, or vice-versa.

And yet another crucial aspect to be taken into account regarding the understanding or discernment of both good and evil or righteousness and unrighteousness is also related to the way or the means through which a person intends to acquire this understanding or discernment.

When God, for instance, calls people to a broader understanding of unrighteousness and what sin can do to those who surrender to it, the Lord is not calling people to indulge in all sorts of sin so that then they can discern it. This option is just not the most appropriate way to know unrighteousness or wickedness.

Considering that one of the integral aspects of the propositions of sin is that those who practice it also become increasingly deceived, entangled, and enslaved to it or the condition of unrighteousness, the way of surrender to sin is never the way for a person to understand appropriately what sin indeed is.

In the previous chapters, it was exposed that the righteousness of God and the judgment of the Lord cannot be known only by the information that human beings propose in their merely natural condition. Because righteousness and the judgment of God are heavenly aspects or attributes pertaining to the kingdom of the Lord, the knowledge about them can only be satisfactorily attained if the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, grants that an individual understands them. In the time that a person dwells on Earth, there is only one way in which a person can appropriately or truly know what is necessary for him or her to understand about the righteousness and judgment of God.

And if we return to the point mentioned above that unrighteousness or sin is presented as the opposite of the Lord's righteousness that can only be known adequately through the Spirit of the Lord, it is evident that also the understanding of what is unrighteousness or sin depends on what the Lord reveals us through His Spirit on this subject.

The fact that God's righteousness can only be truly understood from what the kingdom of God reveals or exposes about it, added to the fact that unrighteousness is the opposite of righteousness, also implies that sin can only be known truly from what the kingdom of God exposes about righteousness and unrighteousness.

It is only from the knowledge of what is true righteousness that the definition of what is unrighteousness can be adequately understood, or

only by knowing what indeed is eternal righteousness that the understanding of what is unrighteousness can be more accurately attained.

There are several matters in human life that can only be known if a higher aspect presents a more precise exposition about them. What is done in darkness, for example, is only fully revealed by light. Diseases become more evident because people know the higher concept of what it is to be healthy. Physical death becomes highlighted because it contrasts natural life. And any limitation becomes more evident when people also come to have a notion of something that goes beyond that limitation. And so on.

Thus, the fact that sin, righteousness, and judgment appear together in different parts of the Scriptures is not a mere coincidence. For without the light of the Lord, manifested by the Holy Spirit simultaneously over sin, righteousness, and judgment, the understanding of sin can become hugely misleading and may end up in a sea of confusion about what sin really is, which are the most necessary aspects to be understood about it, and what are the consequences that may derive from its practice.

When the Lord Jesus Christ said in the same sentence that the Holy Spirit would convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, the Lord has also done so that we know that there is a high relevance in knowing these aspects together and in understanding them through the disclosure or instruction that the Holy Spirit confers about each of these points.

The assignment that the Lord has bestowed upon the Holy Spirit to accomplish the task of convincing the world simultaneously of sin, righteousness and the judgment of God is not intended to make the subject harder to understand or to make it more difficult to access. On the contrary, the role that the Lord gave to the Holy Spirit objectifies above all the eternal good of the people and aims to show them that in the Lord, there is an alternative of forgiveness, remission, and salvation of sinners that is entirely grounded in the heavenly righteousness.

The Lord's designation of the Holy Spirit to convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment was so established, in one of its principal purposes, to point out that God's righteousness, above all, offers the path of forgiveness, redemption, and salvation to people despite the wickedness of sin with which they have been involved and the severity of the Lord's judgment upon sin and upon those who insist on remaining under the bondage of unrighteousness.

Without the understanding of God's righteousness, people can easily faint in their hope of being forgiven and delivered from the consequences of their sins or may surrender themselves even more intensively to bondage to sin by thinking that in one way or another they are already designated to eternal condemnation.

The fact that sin, righteousness, and judgment appear together in the Lord's words about one of the attributions of the Holy Spirit regarding the world is of vital importance, for a person's understanding of each of these three aspects may have very significant implications in what one will experience in relation to each one of them.

When the Holy Spirit convinces a person of sin, the vile and perverse condition of sin is far more evident than any other exposition that may exist about sin. On the other hand, however, the understanding that the Holy Spirit gives to an individual over sin is marvelous, for He also

presents it with the provision that God grants to people to be forgiven and freed from the yoke of sin, as well as to know that the righteousness of God is the perfect provision for them to be redeemed from the eternal condemnation of their souls.

Even in human courts, some concept of sin, righteousness, and judgment is always part of any trial, whether of condemnation or of reparation or restitution, whether formal or informal, for a judgment can only be reasonably developed if there is a prior qualification of what is considered or agreed to be correct, what is regarded as an offense or a crime, and what are the conditions to treat the reparation of what is right or the conviction of what was counted as an offense.

Although some people try to propose that ignorance about the acting characteristics of sin may even be beneficial to them, lack of proper discernment of sin is an extremely dangerous path, for if a person does not understand the basic characteristics that the Lord teaches about sin, one can be exposed to the practice of sin and the consequences that come from sin without even being aware of the evil to which he or she is subject.

Too much limited or misleading knowledge about sin, righteousness, and judgment, or the act of merely closing the heart in a dome of ignorance about good and evil, do not represent any guarantee of excuse or protection for a person to be preserved from becoming involved by sin, for a significant part of the practice of sin occurs precisely through ignorance, lack of a broader discernment of sin, righteousness, and judgment, or the resistance that people have towards learning about these three themes of such great importance.

When a person despises the action of the Holy Spirit, in the sense of being adequately instructed by Him on sin, righteousness, and judgment, the knowledge to which one tends to incline will always fall short of what is necessary for him or her, for devoid of the light of the Lord offered by God through the Holy Spirit, an individual ends up choosing paths of error, deception, or darkness.

In their resistance to God, many people, the world, and the powers of darkness also end up presenting their own concepts of sin, righteousness, and judgment in order to prolong their corrupted teachings. In its propositions, sin not only presents itself as an instrument to try to lead people to acts of injustice, but also to try to corrupt people's understanding of sin itself and, consequently, of righteousness and judgment. The human being under the condition of pride and subjection to sin, the world, and the powers of darkness also try to define sin, righteousness, and judgment according to their own criteria, which, however, aim to immerse people in circumstances ever deeper of surrender to unrighteousness or a life of opposition to the Eternal Lord, as exemplified in the two texts below:

2 Thessalonians 2: 9 ***The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.***

John 3: 20 ***For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.***

21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.

Since darkness cannot enlighten people's eyes not even for them to soberly see what they are subject to, and nor is it the intent of the darkness to do this, the Lord Himself, in His mercy and goodness, offers to give light through His Spirit to all those who by themselves can never see with the necessary clarity that which has enslaved them, the condemnation to which they have become subject, and the righteousness that can redeem them from a path of such dense darkness.

The attribution that the Lord gave to the Holy Spirit to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment has, above all, the purpose of being a manifestation of mercy from the light for those who cannot discern these aspects by themselves due to the fact of their condition of subjection to darkness.

Matthew 4: 16 **The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.**

1 Corinthians 2: 12 **Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.**

Repeating, then, once again, the simultaneous presentation of what is sin, what is the righteousness of God, and what is the judgment of the Lord was entrusted by the Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus to the Holy Spirit so that the joint convincing of these three themes results in a clear statement of the salvation that exists in God despite the great injustices already practiced by the people of the world.

Although the themes of sin, righteousness, and judgment may seem uncomfortable or even frightening to some people, the Lord does not call people to be instructed by the Holy Spirit about these things so that they become even more frightened or terrified, for the same Holy Spirit who was appointed by the Lord for this task was also appointed to highlight the glory of Christ Jesus as the Deliverer and Savior of all who believe in the righteousness of the Lord.

John 15: 26 **But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.**

Although the teaching of the Holy Spirit about sin, righteousness, and judgment also seeks to expose the terrible consequences to which a person becomes subject if one remains in subjection to sin, the Scriptures and the Spirit of the Lord also always point to the way of salvation and newness of

life that there is for all who receive the redemptive and saving righteousness of the Lord.

Just as light acts so that a person sees the way in which darkness cannot prevail over his life, so also, when the Holy Spirit instructs a person about sin, righteousness, and judgment, one is taught to see that the righteousness of the Lord prevails over unrighteousness and that the heavenly righteousness offers a way for the judgment of God proclaimed upon an individual to be of peace and eternal life in the Lord.

*Romans 4: 6 **Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:***

*7 **"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered;***

*8 **Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."***

The Holy Spirit's work to convince people of the central aspects of sin, righteousness, and judgment is, above all, to extol the fact that God has already made a provision of redemption widely available to all sinners, which is offered indistinctly to every human being and can be received by everyone who believes in the salvation that the Lord grants in Christ Jesus or the Son of His Love.

*Matthew 1: 21 **And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.***

*John 1: 4 **In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.***

*9 **That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.***

*John 1: 29 **The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"***

*1 John 3: 5 **And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.***

*John 3: 16 **For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.***

*17 **For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.***

*18 **He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.***

*Psalms 79: 9 **Help us, O God of our salvation, For the glory of Your name; And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, For Your name's sake!***

C9. A Brief Historical Analysis of Sin and the Terms Used for Sin throughout this History

Since it is known that in God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a perfect provision for the forgiveness of sinners and so that sin does not prevail in the life of a person, there is no longer any reason to avoid a more profound knowledge that the Holy Spirit grants about sin.

Thus, and in view of the significant relevance of a deeper and more structured understanding of the broad range of aspects associated with sin, it seems to us helpful to make an introduction about sin and some of its most striking effects also in the historical view presented about it in the Scriptures, as well as in the general view of the terms used in them to refer to sin.

To cooperate, then, with the purpose that is proposed in the previous paragraph, we would like to expose in this chapter parts of the text of The New Bible Dictionary because these parts, in particular, present a considerable number of aspects about sin in a very concise or condensed way, but without missing being also very broad and rich in some details that seem to be able to cooperate in the understanding of several points that we aim to present in the next chapters.

In this way, below follows the mentioned text:

Sin - according to The New Dictionary of the Bible:

1) Sin and its Definition:

The biblical terms for sin are varied. ... There are distinctions expressed in these terms; they reflect the different aspects from which sin may be viewed. Sin is failure, error, iniquity, transgression, trespass, lawlessness, unrighteousness. It is an unmitigated evil. But the definition of sin is not to be derived simply from the terms used in Scripture to denote it.

The most characteristic feature of sin in all of its aspects is that it is directed against God. David expressed this in his confession, 'Against You, You only, have I sinned' (Psalms 51: 4), and Paul in his indictment, 'the carnal mind is enmity against God' (Romans 8: 7). This orientation must be kept in view when we consider the different terms.

Any conception of sin which does not have in the forefront the contradiction which it offers to God is a deviation from the biblical representation. The common notion that sin is selfishness betrays a false assessment of its nature and gravity. From the outset and throughout its development sin is directed against God, and this analysis alone accounts for the diversity of its forms and activities.

...

2) Sin and its Origin:

Sin was present in the universe before the fall of Adam and Eve. This is evident from the presence and allegations of the tempter in Eden. It was upon the occasion of temptation that our first parents fell. But it is the origin of sin in the human family which concerns us. The Bible provides information on this subject, but no data bearing upon the fall of the devil and his angels.

Genesis 3 describes for us the process, and 1Timothy 2: 14 is the inspired comment (cf. James 1: 13 and 14). When we read: 'And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise'

(Genesis 3: 6), we are not justified in inferring that sin began with sensuous lust or even with the lust of the eyes. This fails to appreciate the genius of the tempter's assault and of the deception by which Eve had been ensnared. Satan's attack was directed against the integrity and veracity of God (cf. Genesis 3: 4), and the allegation by which he seduced the woman was that she and her husband would be as God, knowing good and evil (cf. Genesis 3: 5). It is to this godless aspiration that the attention of the woman was drawn, and it is particularly in her reaction indicated by the word 'a tree to be desired to make one wise' that we find the movement of defection and apostasy in Eve's heart and mind. This reaction shows that the tempter had gained her confidence, that she had acceded to his assault upon God's veracity, and that she desired that which the tempter averred, to be as God knowing good and evil. It is, therefore, to this type of lust that the narrative traces the origin of sin. She gave to the tempter the place that belonged to God only; she accepted the most blasphemous assault upon the integrity of God; she coveted for herself divine prerogatives.

In her willingness to parley with the tempter, in her failure to react with horror against his suggestion, and in her acquiescence there is disclosed the process that preceded the act of eating the forbidden fruit. Here we have the origin of sin and we are pointed to its true character. Sin does not originate in overt action; it proceeds from the heart and mind. Depravity of heart registered itself in the transgression of the commandment; Adam and Eve became first estranged from God and then they committed an actual transgression. They were drawn away of their own lust and enticed. How this could happen in their case is the mystery of the origin of sin.

The gravity of the first sin appears in the fact that the command violated was the summary exhibition of the authority, goodness, wisdom, justice, faithfulness, and grace of God. Transgression meant the repudiation of His authority, doubt of His goodness, dispute with His wisdom, rejection of His justice, contradiction of His veracity, and the spurning of His grace. Along the whole line of God's perfections sin was the contradiction. And this ever continues to be the character of sin.

3) Sin and its Consequences:

The sin of Adam and Eve was not an isolated event. The consequences for them, for posterity, and for the world are immediately apparent, as follows:

a) Man's attitude to God:

The changed attitude to God on the part of Adam and Eve evinces the revolution that took place in their minds. They 'hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden' (Genesis 3: 8), and the covering of themselves with aprons (Genesis 3: 7) is no doubt to be associated with the same complex of emotion. Made for the presence and fellowship of God, they now dreaded encounter with Him (cf. John 3: 20). Shame and fear were now the dominant emotions (cf. Genesis 2: 25; Genesis 3: 7 and 10), indicating the disruption that had taken place.

b) God's attitude to man:

Not only was there a change in our first parents' attitude to God but also in God's attitude to them. Reproof, condemnation, curse, expulsion from the garden are all indicative of this revolution in God's relation to them. Sin is one-sided but its consequences are not. Aspects of the divine character are turned towards Adam and Eve of which there is no intimation prior to their disobedience. Sin elicits God's wrath and displeasure, and necessarily so, because it is the contradiction of what He is. For God to be complacent towards sin is an impossibility. He cannot deny Himself.

c) Consequences for the human race:

The unfolding history of man furnishes the catalogue of vices (Genesis 4: 8, 19, 23 and Genesis 6: 2, 3 and 5). The sequel of abounding iniquity finds its issue in the destruction of mankind with the exception of eight persons (Genesis 6: 7, 13 and Genesis 7: 21 till 24). The fall had abiding effect not only upon Adam and Eve but upon all who descended from them; there is racial solidarity in sin and evil.

d) Consequences for creation:

The effects of the fall extend to the physical cosmos. 'Cursed is the ground for your sake' (Genesis 3: 17; cf. Romans 8: 20). Man is the crown of creation, made in God's image and, therefore, God's vicegerent (Genesis 1: 26). The catastrophe of man's fall brought the catastrophe of curse upon that of which he was the crown and over which he was given dominion. Sin was an event in the realm of the human spirit, but it has its repercussions in the whole creation.

e) The appearance of death:

Death is the epitome of sin's penalty. This was the warning attached to the prohibition of Eden (Genesis 2: 17), and it is the infliction that emanates from the curse (Genesis 3: 19). Death in the phenomenal realm consists in the separation of the integral elements of man's being. This dissolution exemplifies the principle of death, namely, separation, and it comes to its most extreme expression in separation from God, illustrated at the beginning in expulsion from the garden (Genesis 3: 23 and 24), Eden being the symbol of God's presence and favor.

4) Sin and its Imputation:

The first sin of Adam had unique significance for the whole human race (Romans 5: 12, 14 till 19; 1Corinthians 15: 22). Here there is sustained emphasis upon the one trespass of the one man as that by which sin, condemnation, and death came to reign over the whole of mankind. The sin is identified as 'the transgression of Adam', 'the trespass of the one', 'one trespass', 'the disobedience of the one', and there can be no doubt but that the first trespass of Adam is intended. Hence the clause in Romans 5: 12, 'for that all have sinned', cannot refer to the actual sins of all men, far less to the hereditary depravity with which all are afflicted, but to the sin of all in the sin of Adam. For in the verse 12 the clause in question clearly states the reason why 'death passed upon all men', and in the succeeding verses 'the one trespass' is stated to be the reason for the universal reign of death. If the same sin were not intended, Paul would be affirming two different things with reference to the same subject in the same context. This we cannot suppose. The only explanation of the two forms of statement is that all sinned in the sin of Adam. The same inference is to be drawn from 1Corinthians 15: 22, 'in Adam all die'. Death is the wages of sin and only of sin (Romans 6: 23). If all die in Adam, it is because all sinned in Adam.

According to Scripture, the kind of solidarity with Adam which explains this participation of all in Adam's sin is the kind of solidarity which Christ sustains to those united to Him. The parallel in Romans 5: 12 till 19 and 1Corinthians 15: 22 and 45 till 49 between Adam and Christ indicates the same type of relationship in both cases, and we have no need or warrant to posit anything more ultimate in the case of Adam and the human race than we find in the case of Christ and His people. In the latter it is representative headship, and this is all that is necessary to ground the solidarity of all in the sin of Adam. Adam sinned, therefore all sinned. To say that the sin of Adam is imputed to all is but to say that all were involved in his sin by reason of his representative headship.

There are good reasons for insisting that this imputation of Adam's sin was immediate. When Paul reiterates that it was by the trespass and disobedience of the one that the many were made sinners, that the judgment of condemnation was pronounced upon all, and that the sentence of death passed upon all, there is immediate conjunction of the trespass of Adam, on the one hand, and the sin, condemnation, and death of all, on the other. We may not intrude any other sin between the sin of Adam and the sin of all as the reason for the involvement of all in Adam's sin and its consequences. The only ground is the union established between Adam and his posterity. The sin of Adam sustains as direct a relation to the condemnation and death of all as is sustained to Adam's own condemnation and death. This is the import of Romans 5: 12 and 15 till 19, and 1Corinthians 15: 22.

Rejection of this doctrine betrays not only failure to accept the witness of the relevant passages but also failure to appreciate the close relation which exists between the principle

which governs our relation to Adam and the governing principle of the economy of salvation. The parallel between Adam as the first man and Christ as the last Adam shows that the accomplishment of salvation in Christ is based on the same operating principle as that by which we have become sinners and the heirs of death. The history of mankind is subsumed under two complexes, sin-condemnation-death and righteousness-justification-life. The former arises from our union with Adam, the latter from union with Christ. These are the only two orbits within which we live and move. God's government of men is directed in terms of these relationships. If we do not reckon with Adam, we are thereby excluded from a proper understanding of Christ. All who die die in Adam; all who are made alive are made alive in Christ.

5) Sin and the Depravity:

Sin never consists merely in a voluntary act of transgression. Every volition proceeds from something that is more deep-seated than the volition itself, and so it is with sinful volition. A sinful act is the expression of a depraved heart (cf. Mark 7: 20 till 23 and Proverbs 4: 23 and 23: 7). Sin must always include, therefore, the perversity of heart, mind, disposition, and will. This was true, as we found, in the case of the first sin, and it applies to all sin. The imputation to posterity of the sin of Adam must, therefore, carry with it involvement in the perversity apart from which Adam's sin would be meaningless and its imputation an impossible abstraction. Paul says that 'by one man's disobedience many were made sinners' (Romans 5: 19). The depravity which sin entails and with which all men come into the world is for this reason a direct implicate of our solidarity with Adam in his sin. We come to be as individuals by natural generation, and as individuals we never exist apart from the sin of Adam reckoned as ours. Therefore David said, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me' (Psalms 51: 5), and our Lord, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh' (John 3: 6).

The witness of Scripture to the pervasiveness and totality of this depravity is explicit. Genesis 6: 5 and 8: 21 provide a closed case. There is the intensity, – 'the wickedness of man was great in the earth'; there is the inwardness, – the 'imagination of the thoughts of his heart', an expression unsurpassed in the usage of Scripture to indicate that the most rudimentary movement of thought was evil; there is the totality, – 'every imagination'; there is the constancy, – 'continually'; there is the exclusiveness, – 'only evil'; there is the early manifestation, – 'from his youth'. That the indictment of Genesis 6: 5 was not restricted to the period before the flood is shown by Genesis 8: 21. It is a permanent condition that no external catastrophe can remedy. There is no escape from the implications of this witness inscribed on the early pages of divine revelation. It leaves no loophole for any other verdict than that this depravity is total both intensively and extensively. It extends to the deepest movements of the human heart and characterizes all mankind.

Later assessments of our sinful condition are to the same effect. The Lord searches the heart and tries the reins (cf. Jeremiah 17: 10), and His judgment is, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?' (Jeremiah 17: 9). In Romans 3: 10 till 18 Paul reproduces various Old Testament passages drawn particularly from Psalms 14 and 53, in which the severest indictments are brought against men. That there is no exception appears both from the context and from the indictments themselves. In Romans 3: 9 it is clear that the verses which follow are adduced to support the proposition that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin and to demonstrate what this sin involves. In terms of negation the charges are that 'there is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God ... there is none that does good, no, not one ... there is no fear of God before their eyes'. From whatever angle man is viewed there is the total absence of that which is good and well-pleasing to God. Considered more positively, all have turned aside from God's way, they have all together become corrupted, and the bodily members are the instrument of iniquity. Thus, the wide range of human function and activity is covered and the most determinative exercises of the human personality instanced in order to show the complete absence of good and the total presence of evil. Nothing else than the judgment of total depravity is the sum of this passage. In Romans 8: 5 till 7 Paul

speaks of the mind of the flesh, and flesh, when used ethically as is obvious here, means human nature directed and governed by sin. That flesh thus characterized belongs to all who are naturally procreated is the pronouncement of our Lord: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh' (John 3: 6). Hence when Paul says that 'the carnal mind is enmity against God' (Romans 8: 7), he is characterizing 'the mind' that belongs to all men by nature: it is enmity against God. No stronger condemnatory judgment could be made, for it means that the thinking of the natural man is conditioned and governed by enmity directed against God; not only this, – it is identified with this enmity. This is its native and characteristic exercise. At the point where the demands of God's glory are most manifest, at that point its hostility is most violent.

There are no degrees of depravity. There are, however, degrees of cultivation and expression. Depravity is not registered in actual transgression to an equal extent in all. There are multiple restraining factors. God does not give over all men to uncleanness, to vile affections, and to a reprobate mind in the way of which Paul speaks in Romans 1: 24, 26 and 28. Total depravity is not incompatible with the exercise of the natural virtues and the promotion of civil righteousness. Unregenerate men are still endowed with conscience ... (Romans 2: 14 and 15). ... Although depraved men may do the things of the law, yet they are not subject to the law of God, and enmity against God rather than love governs their hearts (Romans 8: 7; 1Corinthians 2: 14; cf. Mathew 6: 5 and 16; Mark 7: 6 and 7; Romans 13: 4; 1Corinthians 10: 31, and 13: 3; Titus 1: 15, and 3: 5; and Hebrews 11: 4 and 6).

6) Sin and the Inability:

Inability is concerned with the incapacity arising from the nature of depravity. If depravity is total, then inability for what is good and well-pleasing to God is complete. We are not able to change our character or act differently from it. The witness of Scripture is clear to this effect. In the matter of understanding the natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God because they are spiritually discerned (1Corinthians 2: 14). In respect of obedience to the law of God he is not only not subject to the law of God but he cannot be (Romans 8: 7). They who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8: 8) A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit (Mathew 7: 18). The impossibility in each case is undeniable. It is the Lord who affirms that even faith in Him is an impossibility apart from the gift and efficacious drawing of the Father (John 6: 44, 45 and 65). This witness on His part is to the same effect as His insistence that apart from the supernatural birth of water and of the Spirit no one can have intelligent appreciation of or entrance into the kingdom of God (John 3: 3, 5, 6 and 8; cf. John 1: 13; 1John 2: 29; 1John 3: 9; 1John 4: 7; 1John 5: 1, 4 and 18).

The necessity of so radical and momentous a transformation and re-creation as regeneration is proof of the hopelessness of our sinful condition. The upshot of the whole witness of Scripture to the bondage of sin is that it is a psychological, moral, and spiritual impossibility for the natural man to receive the things of the Spirit of God, to love God and do what is well-pleasing to Him, or to believe in Christ to the salvation of his soul. It is this enslavement that is the premise of the gospel, and the glory of the gospel is that it provides for release from the bonds of our servitude. It is the gospel of grace and power for the helpless.

C10. The Relevance of the Understanding of the Amplitude of Aspects Behind Sin for an Adequate Positioning Regarding Sin

Bearing in mind the considerations of the previous chapter, it can be seen how meaningful it is that being convinced about sin does not become restrained only to the definition of the act of sinning in itself and also does not stay dissociated from a clear understanding about the provision that is in the righteousness of God to deal with sin in each of its various characteristics or areas of action.

A broader and more beneficial understanding about sin, therefore, should also include the comprehension of the various aspects that are associated with the process of the working of sin, since sin aims at:

- ⇒ 1) Subjecting people to sin in its global or broader sense;
- ⇒ 2) Leading people to the practice of sins;
- ⇒ 3) Getting people to reap those aspects that result or derive from their association with sin or the practice of sin.

In the subject on the concept of Colligated or Associated Words that is used in the Scriptures, as well as in the introductory theme of the series of subjects on the Gospel, it was approached the aspect that in the life in general and also in the Scriptures often occurs the particular use of some words to associate with them more items than the mere linguistic meaning that is usually exposed regarding these words in the dictionaries.

If, for instance, we look at the word *wisdom* in the linguistic dictionary, we may find a few definitions about it, but if we look at what the Scriptures associate with the word *wisdom*, it can be seen that there is a multitude of verses that seek to show many details and the greatness which are in the wisdom of the Lord, culminating even in the definition that the Lord Himself is our wisdom and that in the Lord Jesus Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And similarly to the term *wisdom*, the Scriptures also refer to sin in a much broader way than just that which is generally associated directly with the term *sin*. The Greek word for *sin* in the New Testament, in the narrower sense of its linguistic meaning, represents the act of erring an objected target or is associated with the act of illegally transgressing something that should not be transgressed. The references in the Scriptures, however, do not merely say that sin is simply the act of committing an error or a transgression, showing us that behind the term *sin*, there is a much larger amount of factors than people in general know or consider about it.

Under a broader concept, sin is not merely an isolated act occurring in the universe when a person commits a transgression and which most superficial effects briefly become dissipated. In addition to the actions of the practice of sins, the Scriptures encompass under the term *sin* also all the evil potential that exists in sin before it is even practiced, as well as includes all the following aspects that derive from its practice or subjection to it.

If the concept of sin were only restricted to “*the act of transgression*” or “*the act or the practice of sin*,” sin could not be resisted or it could not be fought as the Scriptures suggest.

If the concept of sin would be limited only to an action that misses the target, sin could not be “taken away” from a person's life after it had already been consummated, for if it were only the act of sinning, it would start with the action of the practice of sin and its end would coincide with the end of the referred action.

The term *sin* in the Scriptures, therefore, encompasses:

- ⇒ 1) The practice of a specific sin;
- ⇒ 2) The items that act so that sin comes to be committed, that is, the aspects that precede the practice of sin and that act for it to be practiced;
- ⇒ 3) The items derived or resulting from the practice of sin and which act in association with sin after it has been practiced.

The fact that the term *sin* in the Scriptures covers acts that precede the practice of sin, acts of the actual practice of sin, and aspects that work after the practice of sin, in turn, also means that the time of sin is not restricted only to the moment that the practice of a particular sin is performed.

As already mentioned above, if the concept of sin contemplated only the execution of an act of unrighteousness or transgression, the time of sin would be limited to the beginning of its practice until the last moment in which it was being performed, ending definitively after the brief moment of its practice.

Therefore, the beginning of the time of what the Scriptures call sin is not at the beginning of the practice of a particular sin, and the end of the time of the process of what the Scriptures call sin is also not in the act of consummation of the practice of one specific sin.

According to the Scriptures, sin is already active even before it is practiced and may continue to be active for a very long time after the act of consummation of some particular injustice or transgression. In order for sin to be practiced, it must already exist as a possibility before it can even be practiced. And since sin produces real effects that extend beyond the time of its consummation, it shows itself present, or should have its actions taken into account, even after being practiced.

In a summarized way, the times of sin in the world may be divided, then, basically in:

- ⇒ 1) The time before the first sin was practiced by a human being;
- ⇒ 2) The time before the practice of some specific sin;
- ⇒ 3) The time from the beginning to the end of the consummation of some specific sin;
- ⇒ 4) The time when the effects derived from the consummated of sin have some space granted to act;
- ⇒ 5) The time when there is already a provision available to solve the effects arising from the practice of a sin;

- ⇒ 6) The time in which the provision to solve the effects derived from the association to sin or the practice of sin has already been used.

The understanding of each of the moments and times related to the performance of sin exposed above is very relevant or even crucial, for in each of them sin acts under different prerogatives and characteristics.

At this point, we understand that a very relevant topic to be highlighted about the various aspects of the concept of sin or the moments of its action is the fact that the Scriptures refer to sin both in the plural sense of the term and in its singular sense.

And in turn, the Scriptures references to sin in the plural form are more generally associated with the practices and maintenance of the practice of some particular sin or a series of sins, while the references to sin in a singular manner show the diversity and the breadth of the concepts and actions of sin in the global sense of the term.

When a person commits what is considered a specific sin, such as, for example, an action contrary to God's will, one is acting on the plural idea of sin. However, by committing a specific sin, a person may also be associating, or associating even more, with the sin in the broader concept defined from the standpoint of the references to sin in the singular form.

Although the action of sin, on the one hand, only manifests itself if a person practices some particular transgression, sin, on the other hand, is in constant activity in the world and represents a much broader or more global concept than the references in the Scriptures to sin in the plural sense of it.

In the global or the singular sense of the term, sin is, firstly, a potential evil that is present in the world even before a person practices evil, and even if it could be possible for no one to practice it, sin is available and present throughout the world that surrounds humans on Earth.

In this last sense, the time of the existence of sin precedes even the time of the creation of human beings.

On the other hand, we mention here by way of observation, that sin, obviously, has no independent action, it is not a subject that has autonomy in itself to perform some work, but as a potential to be practiced, it already exists before the first human being came to existence. As we know, for example, that strength precedes human beings, but that it does not have the capacity to act without agents to put it into operation, so sin also depends on someone putting it into operation. Just as it is said that strength accomplishes this or that, so it is also said that sin accomplishes this and that, but in both cases, we know that they are only operative if someone performs their action.

Thus, regarding the global meaning or the references to sin in the singular way, the concept of sin encompasses the real possibility that evil may come to be practiced, but not necessarily that it indeed has to be practiced, for the Scriptures teach us that sin can also be resisted or rejected.

It should be highlighted here also that evil and sin are not exactly the same thing, even though every sin is evil.

In its global sense, in its concept as a noun, in its initial concept, and even before it comes to be practiced by an individual, sin is:

- ⇒ 1) Partner of evil;

- ⇒ 2) The means by which evil seeks to transform its evil potential into concrete action in areas or scales that go beyond the space or scale that evil holds before the practice of sin;
- ⇒ 3) The objective tool by which evil seeks to multiply itself and seeks to expand its sphere of action.

Although sin, in the plural sense of the term or in its concept as a verb, manifests itself in very diversified forms or through various actions of people, every practical action of a particular sin has an association with sin in the global sense or is connected to the attempts of sin in its global aspects.

Behind a specific sin, in the plural sense or as the action of the practice of evil, there are a lot of details related to sin in its singular or global sense.

Only figuratively, sin, in the singular sense of the term or its concept of a noun, is like a dam that stores a multitude of evils that can be practiced by people if they also yield to sin in its concept of a verb or of the action of committing evil.

In other words, sin, in its concept of a verb or as the practice of a particular evil, is never totally disassociated from sin in its global concept and in which sin may come to the point of presenting a potential to trigger a flood of evils also associated with sin in its broader condition.

The fact that all sins, in the plural sense, are also connected to sin in the singular or global sense, causes that the surrendering to a specific sin also entails the risk of simultaneously triggering an incalculable set of damages associated with sin in its global concept. Although not always all the damages that can be caused by the practice of sin are seen and perceived immediately, the connection of the practice of specific sins with the global aspect of sin should never be despised or seen with levity.

*Romans 6: 15 **What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!***

*16 **Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?***

Sin as a potential for evil to be practiced is already a terrible enemy and needs to be dealt with carefully and with proper attention, but when a larger space of action is given to sin, a whole new scenario of situations to be taken into account may come to be manifested. When sin is not resisted appropriately or when space is given to it in some way, the effects of sin on human life may go far beyond what any person can think or imagine. And these effects can only be known if God, through the Holy Spirit, allows us to have a sober understanding of what we need to know about them.

The evil associated with the practice of sin may not be restricted to the specific evil of a particular act, for the practice of a specific sin is also a connection with the world of evil. And it is possible that the practice of one sin may impute a burden of slavery immensely heavier than the specific action that was committed and for a much longer time than the mere time of the execution of the most visible part of one particular sin.

Just as, for example, a single drop falling into a lake radiates the movement of water far beyond the place where it fell, so also the subjection to sin or the damage caused by the practice of specific sins may have the potential to radiate far beyond what it may seem initially.

*Ecclesiastes 9: 18 **Wisdom is better than weapons of war; But one sinner destroys much good.***

When Adam sinned, he did not only transgress an instruction from God not to take possession of something material that was undue to him. Adam not only consumed one of the fruits which he was not authorized to consume. He had not become indebted to God just for a mere fruit and did not become liable for the restitution of the fruit that he had eaten. If the damage done by the practice of one sin would be merely proportional to the specific external act of the violation performed, many harms caused by the practice of sin could be restored or repaired in a much simpler way.

The practice of specific sins, however, may have broad and profound effects that cannot be restored by an attitude precisely opposite to the sin that was performed, as has already been seen in the chapter on the righteousness of reparation or restitution.

By the practice of sin, Adam, for example, and among other things, also:

- ⇒ 1) Ceased to be a righteous man and became an unrighteous man;
- ⇒ 2) Passed on to the status and condition of a sinner or, in other words, ceased to be a man without sin and guilt;
- ⇒ 3) Came to be under the condition of condemnation;
- ⇒ 4) Came to be under new limitations, weaknesses, and many curses, being death the principal of them.

Among other things, the committing of a single sin:

- ⇒ 1) Generated unrighteousness that lasted for millennia;
- ⇒ 2) Changed the condition of being and the existence of the one who has sinned;
- ⇒ 3) Changed the condition of the relationship of the practitioner of sin with God;
- ⇒ 4) Generated slavery of the sinner to sin in the global sense and to its condemnations;
- ⇒ 5) Generated an environment of slavery for all those who descended from the one who committed the first human sin. Once the one who committed sin was enslaved, the seeds of this same individual also came to be born in an environment that was under the conditions of the bondage of the one who begot them. The sin of one made the seeds derived from a source enslaved to sin also be under some effects of the same bondage.

Resisting sin in its temptation aiming that evil does not come to be practiced is already a very challenging thing, but resisting evil after a person has yielded to the temptation of sin is even much more challenging.

When a sin passes from the level of temptation to the level of having been practiced, it may come to manifest a series of new and terrible characteristics. When a person confers the space for the practice of sin, one also puts oneself at risk of becoming subject to the consequences of one's practice and of a whole set of actions and power that could not operate in his or her life before the event of subjecting to sin.

A practiced sin places the one who committed it at the risk of having its relationship with sin itself changed significantly, for the practice of a particular sin can change one's position and condition regarding sin in the global sense of the term.

As long as a person does not submit to sin or resists its temptations, one is not an accomplice, partner, or agent of sin, but when one is subject to sin, a person's relationship with sin can also become significantly altered.

The practice of sin may establish an association of a person with evil on a level previously unknown. The subjection to sin can open a very different time in the relationship with sin and the position that a person occupies concerning it.

With the practice of sin, a person is at risk of moving from a condition of freedom and opposition to sin to the position of cooperator or servant of sin and a debtor to it. And if a drastic solution to the harms caused by the subjection to sin is not achieved and adopted, the practice of sin may inaugurate a time and an intense flow of highly severe consequences in the life of an individual and which can extend for a very long or even eternal period.

The position in which a person stands regarding sin can drastically change the conditions for him to deal with sin itself.

Positioning oneself in relation to sin in a preventive way, positioning oneself regarding sin in the face of the temptation to practice it, positioning oneself concerning sin to practice it, or positioning oneself in relation to sin after one has already committed it, are very distinct aspects and that expose very different facets of how to deal with sin.

Therefore, to know more broadly the various characteristics that the Scriptures expose about sin may come to cooperate significantly in the perception of the fact that each person is exposed to dealing with sin from the point where he or she is in relation to sin, and not from the point that an individual would like or think that he or she can deal with sin.

A person who is not subject to sin, for instance, can deal with the posture of not submitting to it, but the individual who is already subject to sin needs to deal with it in the perspective that can lead him or her to the condition of freedom regarding the slavery of sin. In the opposition or resistance to sin, it is crucial to understand, for example, that the condition of those who are free from the slavery of sin to overcome sin is very distinct from that individual who is still under the bondage of sin. For a person who is already enslaved to sin to be able to adopt a position of no longer serving sin, he or she must first be freed from the "set of consequences which is constituted from subjection to sin and to which one has been enslaved."

Becoming aware of the actual condition of a person concerning sin in its broader actuation may be vital so that a correct solution against sin, in every sense of which the term *sin* is used, can be sought, found, understood, and used.

On the other hand, not distinguishing what sin is in its various concepts, times and modes of action limits, and may even confuse, the understanding of a series of texts from the Biblical Scriptures that use the same term sin to expose the various aspects seen above about sin.

The lack of perception that sin presents distinct characteristics in its global position or as a means offered for evil to be practiced, in its position of the very action of the practice of evil, and in its state of working through the consequences of its practice, and yet, that there are specific ways to deal with sin in each of its positions, may keep an individual subject to sin not necessarily because one has the desire to serve it, but because one does not differentiate sin in each of its specific conditions of operation.

Recognizing the multiplicity of aspects of sin and how sin acts in each of them, or in the several times related to them, may elucidate many points that involve the attitude of a person concerning sin, for each distinct aspect of sin also needs to be seen and addressed in a specific way.

When a person does not perceive the various distinctions in the use of the term *sin*, one may try to positioning oneself regarding sin in a mistaken way, leading to frustrated attempts to resist or overcome sin caused by the mere fact of not addressing sin according to the angle that it should be approached in some specific situations or moments.

The approach of sin through perspectives that are incompatible with the various situations in which it is necessary to deal with sin is one of the main reasons why many people are defeated so often and so intensely by sin. Because they are unaware of some main characteristics of sin, many people end up experiencing a succession of weariness and profound frustration rather than the freedom they are seeking.

The discernment of one's position in relation to sin may appear to be very challenging and even embarrassing for some people, but, at the same time, a real awareness of one's position concerning sin is also one of the first steps so that one can become aware of how much he or she needs to become free and needs help to experience this freedom.

A sober discernment about the harm that can be caused by sin and the fragility that an individual presents in oneself to deal with sin, when one is already in the position of bondage to sin, can be one of the central and most crucial steps for a person come to recognize the need to be freed from this slavery.

An individual who is already under the yoke of slavery, and does not perceive or acknowledge one's condition, denies a real fact and puts before him or her one of the biggest impediments to being delivered from this yoke. However, the person who recognizes the unfavorable position in which one is already, that is, the one who accepts to see in a real way the facts before which he or she finds oneself, however sad or embarrassing this position is, has begun to open his or her heart to the heavenly light that enlightens even what is in the darkness. And if the light of God is mighty to show what is hidden in darkness, how much more will this light not also illuminate the right path of light so that a person may become free from subjection to darkness?

However sad and vile can be the fact of being subject to sin, this point was never an impediment for God to intervene in favor of someone who recognizes their precarious situation. And this intervention of God, so that

those who are under the most terrible bonds of sin can be delivered from sin, is also an integral part of the righteousness of God.

- Romans 5: 8* ***But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***
- 9* ***Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.***
- 10* ***For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.***
- 11* ***And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.***
-

The perception of the various ways and times of the operation of sin, or the duration of sin's action before and after the time of the practice of a specific sin, may, perhaps, initially make some people even more alarmed because it enlarges the perception of how sin acts in each situation. However, or at the same time, a broader understanding of sin can also be a crucial or indispensable point for the alternative of liberation, opposition, and practical resistance to the power of sin to become more evident.

Thus, as some more examples of what was mentioned in the above paragraphs, we have listed below some texts about God's intervention in favor of human beings precisely in scenarios of great darkness and affliction that surrounded people because of slavery to sin in its multiple facets. And this, so that these words of the Lord also cooperate in the exaltation of the righteousness of God and point to the fact that in God there is the possibility of a person's rescue from the slavery to the sin in its global concept, from the specific sins committed by him or her, and from the most severe set of consequences arising from the practice or subjection to sin.

Matthew 4: 16 ***The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.***

Luke 5: 32 ***I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.***

- Romans 7: 14(b)* ... ***I am carnal, sold under sin.***
- 15* ***For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.***
- 16* ***If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.***
- 17* ***But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.***
- 18* ***For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.***

- 19 *For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.*
- 20 *Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*
- 21 *I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.*
- 22 *For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.*
- 23 *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*
- 24 *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*
- 25 *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

- 1 Corinthians 15: 56 *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.*
- 57 *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Romans 6: 6 *Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*

Finally, in this chapter, we would like to highlight once again that the purpose of exposing a multiplicity of aspects of sin is not to exalt sin and to intensify a fear of sin and its acting strength, but it is intended to present various characteristics of sin so that God's provision to overcome sin and its derivative aspects becomes more widely exalted and known so that people may benefit from the righteousness of God that is already available to them in Christ Jesus.

The action of convincing about what sin is and how it acts is not a point to be feared when it is accomplished by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for when the Holy Spirit convinces people about sin, He does it primarily to offer the righteousness of God that has already defeated sin and by which a person may associate oneself with this victory so that sin may be taken from his or her life and that his or her life of faith in Christ Jesus may be eternally established.

The good news announced by the Lord Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit will do the work of convincing about sin is in the fact that the Spirit of the Lord does so by presenting sin simultaneously with the righteousness of God, in which, in turn, there is the perfect provision so that a person who receives it also sees the ceasing of the more profound harms that sin produces or tries to accomplish, and still, so that a person may be restored to a condition of being eternally blessed before God.

Romans 5: 20(b) ... *But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,*

21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, after exposing various aspects of sin and his position concerning sin, records in the Scriptures that a mere natural understanding or according to the flesh cannot guide a person to a victory over sin. Victory over sin, both in its singular sense and in its plural sense, can only be attained through the Lord Jesus Christ and through the understanding which the Lord bestows on the whole matter of sin and the righteousness that is in God.

Romans 7: 25 I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

In the following chapters, we will then seek to expose the topics mentioned in this chapter even in a broader way with the objective of cooperating so that the knowledge of sin and its ways of working may also be more exposed to those who no longer want to remain in the modes of action of sin and so that they also know more deeply the great grace and blessing of the Lord that is available to them in the provision of His unshakable and eternal righteousness.

C11. The Subtle and Ambitious Purpose of Sin Through Sin

In the previous chapters, it has been seen that the term *sin* is used in the Scriptures in multiple ways and, therefore, it can be used at least for the following aspects:

- ⇒ 1) Sin as a potential evil, even before it is practiced;
- ⇒ 2) Sin as a temptation for evil to be practiced;
- ⇒ 3) Sin as an injustice, since all unrighteousness is sin;
- ⇒ 4) Sin acting in the practice of sin itself;
- ⇒ 5) Sin working through the consequences derived or resulting from the practice of sin;
- ⇒ 6) Sin trying to act even after the consequences of sin have already been dealt with or solved.

The use of the term *sin* in the Scriptures for the multiple variations of its propositions and performances may represent a substantial advantage in approaching the themes related to it, for the grouping under one term of the vast breadth of what is associated with sin allows one to obtain a broader, more detailed, and more objective view of sin.

Nevertheless, only knowing what is understood under the multiple concepts of sin may still not contemplate the clear exposition of what sin seeks to attain. Being informed about the manifold facets of sin facilitates the perception of how it aims to work and how it tries to impute on human beings the association with it and to the set of consequences that derive from its action, but the main points to be unveiled still remain the purposes which are behind the working of sin.

And the Holy Spirit's action to convince the world about sin certainly also encompasses the exposition of the central or core characteristics of sin, for this action would not be deprived of unveiling the principal purposes that evil seeks to achieve through the working of sin.

When a person begins to look more deeply into the Scriptures for what sin is, one will realize that the more profound evil of sin is not just in what sin proposes to do, but it is in that which evil strives to achieve through sin.

What sin offers and proposes to people is very different from what it aims to achieve in relation to people. What sin offers and proposes is a subtle and vile tool or trickery to mask what evil really intends to achieve.

Sin is not a mere proposition to practice an isolated evil act, is not a practice of a mere transgression or an injustice, nor it is intended merely to bring few losses to people. **Sin is the means by which evil seeks to establish its deepest goals regarding the people it tries to entangle. Sin is a tool by which the powers of darkness seek to establish their dominion over people.**

One of the reasons why the powers of darkness are so eager to associate sin with as many people as possible is also because sin can be compared, in some respects, to a seed.

The seed is one of the most valuable aspects of the maintenance of many types of operations. By using the seeds, a sower can reap a multiplication of fruits and so,

through that which has been harvested, one may accomplish a diversity of other goals. On the other hand, if a seed cannot be sown, the sower also does not have the harvest to accomplish other purposes that one aims to achieve, leading him or her to an increasingly limited or restricted condition of action.

Thus, if all people always trusted in Christ, Christ's instructions would guide them to not give way to the sowing of evil in their lives, which would also cause evil to lose space of action among the human beings. Without the sowing of sin, evil also becomes deprived of the harvest that strengthens it to multiply its action among human beings.

Using yet another way to express the idea of sowing and harvesting related to sin, one can also observe in the Scriptures the principle of the salary that is required or due because of some act or work, as expressed below:

*Romans 6: 23(a) ... **For the wages of sin is death, ...***

Sin is also a means by which specific wages can be obtained, and the powers of darkness are eager to get the credit of this salary because through the debt of these wages they seek to establish their dominion over people.

Sin does not seek to lead an individual to merely stumble or to a mere practice of a transgression so that the person experiences only the consequences of the specific offense. Sin, when it presents itself, is accompanied by an intention that aims at imposing a heavy and of a long-term yoke on the person to whom it presents itself.

The term yoke, mentioned in the Scriptures, is related to a tool that unites cargo animals to carry out work under the direction of the one who puts the yoke on them, as, for example, a pair of oxen joined to draw a plow. And yet another feature related to some types of yokes is found in the fact that once they are put on something or someone, they can hardly be removed by that or those on which they were placed.

Therefore, when the Scriptures describe sin, they also present sin with the power to impose a yoke that may be placed on the lives of those who begin to align with or fit in the situations that grant the proper conditions for an improper yoke to be placed on them, and of which they become enslaved.

Sin, by itself, as a mere potential of evil, does not harm a person. However, once sin is given space to act, it longs for a high position in a person's life. Sin seeks to “reign” over all the acts of those who submit to its yoke, trying to impose to them an increasingly heavy burden and for a more extendable period, and, if possible, even for eternity.

What sin seeks behind or through any action it proposes is the subjection of those who practice it to the powers of evil, which, in turn, use sin as a means of reigning or dominating those who submit to sin.

What sin seeks is the subjugation of people to its dominion so that they become servants of it, but especially so that they become subject to the powers of evil or to the throne of the iniquity that make use of sin to extend their sphere of action.

Sin does not act alone and has close relations with the powers that oppose the true good for human beings, and also because of this, it must be avoided and appropriately resisted, as it is instructed in the following text:

Romans 6: 12 **Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.**

13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

The expression *to reign*, used as a reference to an operating capacity of sin, is yet another indication that sin, in the singular or global sense of the term, is not restricted just to the act of the practice of a transgression. The word *reign*, used above in conjunction with the operation ability of sin, is rooted in the same word *kingdom* used both for the earthly realms and for the kingdom of God, showing that there is also a set of evil powers and whose throne is based on iniquity, sin, and death that they seek to reproduce.

Psalms 94: 20 **Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, Have fellowship with You?**

The powers of darkness use sin to try to bring slavery to death and use the actions of death or fear of it to try to intensify the position of sin even further. Sin and death work on behalf of each other when someone gives space for them to act.

Sin is a means by which the vilest charges and the most considerable debts in the universe may come to be attributed to the lives of those who surrender to sin and remain under the yoke of sin.

Romans 5: 21(a) ... so that **as sin reigned in death ...**

James 1: 15 **Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.**

1 Corinthians 15: 56 **The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.**

Romans 5: 12 **Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.**

Still another aspect that is also interesting to note in the context of this chapter is that the death to which the Scriptures make references in association with sin is not, in the first instance, physical death, but the position in which a person stands regarding sin and regarding God.

Depending on a person's level of slavery concerning sin, one is already considered a person who is in a state of death, even though one has not yet experienced natural death.

The death that sin attempts to cause, in the first instance, is not always natural death, but it is the condition of a person being subject to an impediment that seeks to interpose in one's appropriate relationship with the only source of the novelty of eternal life.

A life that produces nothing useful for eternal times, because it does not receive newness of heavenly life from the true and eternal source, is considered in the Scriptures as an existence under a type of state of death. The Scriptures teach us that for God, the absence of the life that is according to the heavenly will is already a state of death. And this is what sin introduced into the natural condition of human beings when humans first practiced it and when all other people also became subject to this same manner of living.

The absence of fellowship with God and His instructions, and instead, the subjection to mere carnal directions or of the powers of darkness, express a lifeless life or a life under the reign of death. Although an individual may have intense or vigorous physical or natural life, one may be subject to a condition considered by the Lord as a state deprived of the most sublime life that the Lord offers to all through His Gospel, an aspect that is described very explicitly in the text below and which mentions the kind of unfruitful life from which the Lord frees everyone who receives the eternal salvation offered by Him from the heavenly kingdom:

*Ephesians 2: 1 **And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,**
2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,
3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.*

Trespasses and sins may become paths through which a person is very active or may become trajectories by which an individual comes to think that one is enjoying the life that is granted to him or her on Earth, but we emphasize again that before God, these actions are associated with the state or the way of death and not of true freedom and life.

Sin can try to show itself with pleasant appearances or attractive passions, but a proposition of sin is never separated from other intents, for sin always remains the sting of death that aims to wound, subjugate, and ultimately destroy the life of every person who gets subject to its domain.

The propositions or instructions for a person to yield to some specific sin, or some sin in the plural sense of the word, are vile councils and have embedded in them an objective of making a person come to enter deeper into sin in the singular sense of it. The propositions of sin, however glamorous they may appear, aim in the sequence to try to subject people to the hard, the oppressive, and the perverse dominion of the powers of darkness.

Although the understanding of sin is not necessarily pleasurable, differentiating the primary purposes of sin from the main ways of its operation can be very significant for an even firmer attitude to resist sin, for the mere contempt of the understanding of these distinctions will not help the people to avoid sin. As mentioned earlier, ignorance concerning sin is one of the major causes of the spread of sin.

The fact that a person commits a sin under ignorance does not exempt him or her from being victimized by the consequences that sin attempts to impute through a yoke of bondage. Just as ignorance about the law of gravity does not protect a child in the event of a fall or if he or she jumps from a high place, so willingly ignorance about sin, its purposes, and its effects do not represent a guarantee for people against the harsh consequences of sin.

Therefore, understanding the aspects of the different facets of sin, in conjunction with the principal purposes of sin, allows us to approach the theme of sin and how to deal with it in a broader and more objective way so that sin does not continue to reign over the life of people who no longer want to be subject to it.

*Romans 6: 6(b) ... **that we should no longer be slaves of sin.***

*Galatians 5: 1 **Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.***

The work of convincing people about sin and its purposes, when accomplished by the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures, aims to expose the subtlety of the malignity of sin throughout all of its parts so that the need for the provision of God's righteousness to deliver people from the highest cruelty of evil also becomes especially evidenced.

The heavy burden that people receive as a consequence of subjection to sin or because they have incurred in the practice of transgression does not need to be their destiny or their final stage. If they, through faith, only seek Him who through His righteousness has conquered sin and death, and is able to deliver all who are under heavy burdens, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, they can also experience the heavenly salvation and the newness of life that the Lord offers them.

To those who are in Christ Jesus and His righteousness, the subtle purpose of sin to subdue and keep the people under its dominion can no longer remain hidden and can no longer maintain its state of domination.

Matthew 11: 27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

Romans 8: 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

C12. The Central Sin Present in Other Sins

In the previous chapter, it was stated that the purpose of sin, behind or through sin, is to make it a tool or a means by which the powers of darkness seek to subdue people to serve them, for the existing evil gains more considerable power of expression and of manifestation when sin obtains a broader space of action and when it manages to raise more people subject to its control and domination.

To know that sin is an evil that can potentially be practiced, to know that sin is the act of doing evil, to comprehend that sin encompasses the set of consequences derived from the subjection to sin, and to know that sin is a tool of the powers of darkness to reign over people already broadens the understanding of the extent of the meaning of the word *sin* in the Scriptures significantly. However, the exhibitions of what is sin, seen to the present point, may still conceal some crucial aspects of the definition of what sin comes to be.

Although the above considerations about the term *sin* may already contribute significantly to understanding what sin represents and how opposed it is to the righteousness of the Lord and the good of each human being, we understand it to be crucial to point out here that one of the main characteristics associated with sin is that its propositions or attempts at acting are also intrinsically associated with the attempts at deception or concealment of much of its acting.

As may be seen in the text below, evil works are an integral part of darkness and, therefore, opposed to the light of the Lord or the bright and true exposition of their acts.

*John 3: 19 **And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.***

*20 **For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.***

As a tool in the hand of the powers of darkness and those who submit to them, sin seeks to hide or conceal its darkest parts in various ways, including through propositions of less profound or superficial definitions about what sin comes to be.

And among the chief ways in which sin seeks to conceal itself or tries to act deceptively is the attempt to hide the fact that it makes use of its actions which derives from other sins as one of its principal characteristics and strengths.

So, if a person does not understand the principle of sin acting from another sin, the possibility of understanding how one can resist sin and no longer submit to it will also be more difficult to be attained.

Therefore, among the aspects for a person to know more broadly the extent of the work of God's righteousness in one's favor, there is also the need for an individual to be instructed by the Lord about the sins that are facilitators of other sins or about the fact that sin often does not act through one sin but through a chain of various sins.

Before God, who is light, no proposition of sin can be hidden, and not even the sins that give rise to other sins can be concealed. And since the offer of God's righteousness to the world is presented so that people also may choose the provision of God that can indeed free them from the yoke of sin, this offer, obviously, also cannot abstain from revealing the deeper aspects of the attempts of the actions of sin.

God's offer for people to receive the heavenly light they need so much to know the way of the newness of life is also, at the same time, the provision of light so that they no longer need to be subject to the various hidden manners by which the darkness seeks to act, as may also be understood from the texts exemplified below:

John 8: 12 **Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."**

John 12: 46 **I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.**

John 3: 21 **But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.**

Psalms 18: 28 **For You will light my lamp; The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.**

No matter how much sin seeks to hide itself in darkness or tries to work through deception, but cannot do so before the eyes of God, so also its attempts to act from some propositions that seek to use other sins as their basis cannot be hidden from the convincing work that the light of the Lord brings about sin.

In this way, and to make even more evident that sin seeks to act from a more central point, we return once again to a part of the text already mentioned in the previous chapters, namely:

John 16: 8 **And when He (the Holy Spirit) has come, He will convict (rebuke or convince) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:**

9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me.

Looking at the text above, it may be observed in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ that in general, or in essence, the basic definition of sin is also associated with a very simple or direct aspect, since the basic concept of sin is in the expression: **because they do not believe in me.**

Through the exposition of the reason why the world needs to be convinced about sin, the Lord Jesus Christ shows that sin is basically expressed in the fact that people do not believe in Him, and, consequently, do not believe in God.

From the perspective of the words of the Lord Jesus, the lack of trust in God and His Only Begotten Son, is, on the one hand, the summary of what sin is or of what is a central starting point for people to associate with sin or become subject to it.

Not believing in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as God presents Him to the world and not trusting in His instructions is the basis of sin and is the position by which people become subject to the purpose that is in sin, while believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is the way to the liberation from sin, the yoke of sin, and the wages of sin, as the texts below similarly expose:

John 8: 24 **Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.**

John 3: 18 **He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

1 John 5: 10 **He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.**

Romans 14: 23(b) **...for whatever is not from faith is sin.**

Acts 10: 43 **To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.**

John 12: 44 **Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me."**

Sin is the opposite concept of the principal work that God expects every human being to practice continually. Sin is the position contrary to the primary work taught by the Lord Jesus Christ to be performed by all human beings, which, in turn, is exposed in the following text:

John 6: 28 **Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"**

29 **Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."**

From the beginning of humanity, not trusting in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ or the doubt concerning the Lord and the instruction that comes from Him permeated sin and continues to do so also in our day, for without trust in God it is impossible to please God since the direction for a life grounded in heavenly righteousness comes only from God and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 11: 6 ***But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.***

John 15: 5 ***I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.***

All instruction and strength to walk righteously or in righteousness proceed exclusively from God. And when people reject trust in God, fellowship with Him, and the guidance of the Lord, they are subject to do acts apart from God's will. In other words, they are subject to commit acts that are disassociated from the righteousness of God or are characterized as the actions of injustice, reminding here again that all unrighteousness is also sin.

If all the acts of human beings were performed through faith in the Lord and according to the confidence in the instruction that Christ has to give them, sin would lose the space of propagation of its unrighteousness, since Christ never gave, gives, or will give an orientation that is contrary to the eternal and heavenly righteousness of God.

Therefore, one of the most significant problems regarding sin is the non-belief of people in the Lord Jesus Christ, for whoever does not trust the Lord also is not willing to follow His instructions as He directs them to be followed.

If all the acts of human beings were performed under the trust of God and the direction of Christ, sin would continue to be a potential evil that could be practiced, but which would have its effect very restricted because no one else would choose to submit to it.

And yet another way of saying that not trusting in Christ and His righteousness is one of the chief expressions of sin and that works together with the other sins is also exemplified in the following texts:

Romans 3: 11 ***There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.***

Proverbs 21: 4 ***A haughty look, a proud heart, And the plowing of the wicked are sin.***

*Proverbs 24: 9 **The devising of foolishness is sin, And the scoffer is an abomination to men.***

*Zephaniah 3: 1 **Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, To the oppressing city!***

2 She has not obeyed His voice, She has not received correction; She has not trusted in the LORD, She has not drawn near to her God.

3 Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; Her judges are evening wolves that leave not a bone till morning.

When a human being begins to assume that one can lead his or her life or the lives of others through one's ability or the capacity one comes to believe that supposedly created aspects might have, he or she enters the path of a central point of sin which serves as the basis for other sins, and where the other sins may represent just the sequence of actions of a primary aspect of sin that a person accepted first.

The central sin that is present in other sins is a sin that seeks to establish the disruption of a person's connection with the heavenly light or of the trust in this light so that one may serve darkness precisely because of the absence of light or the lack of confidence in it.

In the global sense of the term, what sin seeks to accomplish to achieve its goal is to make people associate with the central sin in an even more continuous and intense way, since once people distance themselves from trusting in God, the fellowship with Him, and the Lord's instruction, they also become very vulnerable to a diversity of other sins.

*Isaiah 30: 1 **"Woe to the rebellious children," says the LORD, "Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add sin to sin."***

Thus, still considering the strategic position or strength that the central sin seeks to obtain regarding the other propositions of sin, it becomes evident that this is also one of the main characteristics of sin that should be resisted or overcome primarily or as a priority, as we are also taught in the following texts:

*Hebrews 3: 12 **Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;***

13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.

*Hebrews 2: 1 **Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.***

Unbelief toward God, which is also expressed by inappropriate trust in the wisdom of the creation, encompasses, at the same time, a departure from good and an association with evil. Faith or confidence in the Lord, however, becomes the expression, at the same time, of a position of association with good and a withdrawal from evil.

Jeremiah 17: 5 Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD."

7 *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD.*

8 *For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.*

9 *The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?*

10 *I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings."*

Psalms 40: 4 Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust, And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

Proverbs 3: 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;

6 *In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*

7 *Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil.*

In unbelief or distrust regarding God lies several central points of the association with a succession of other sins, which is why sin seeks to work so intensely against one's faith or trust in God. However, through trust in God and His righteousness, a person can find the central points that define the foundation to resist sin even in its most hidden and dangerous aspects.

Romans 5: 1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
2 *through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Hebrews 10: 35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

C13. The Limits, the Means, the Temptation, and the Participation of People in the Actions of Sin

After approaching several aspects mentioned in the Scriptures that are associated with the term *sin*, and what are some central purposes of the propositions of sin when it is offered to the people of the world, we also understand that it is beneficial to go a little further here on some considerations of some practical aspects related to the sphere of the actions of sin and the ways in which sin seeks to act in the lives of human beings.

In addition to exposing various aspects that show the breadth of the characteristics of sin so that people also understand the greatness or amplitude of God's righteousness that can perfectly help them to become free from bondage or the yoke of sin, the Scriptures also present a significant set of information about the conditions and means by which sin seeks to broaden its action so that also concerning these aspects people may be instructed in order that they no longer submit to sin.

The righteousness of God is the only means by which a person can resist or overcome sin and its set of propositions, as we will seek to expose more broadly in the chapters ahead, but this does not mean that a person should not be instructed about the conditions and means by which sin seeks to act regarding one's life.

If a person does not discern the conditions and ways in which sin seeks to work in his or her life, one may also have difficulty to discern the greatness of the provision of God's righteousness that is already available for him or her in the Lord to be freed from sin and to resist new attempts of sin against his or her life.

Through His Gospel, God offers the provision of His righteousness to all. However, if a person is unaware of the main aspects for which one needs the Lord's righteousness and is unaware of what seeks to oppose the establishment of the Lord's righteousness in his or her life, one may also be exposed to the risk of not discerning and recognizing the characteristics of the heavenly righteousness that the Lord specifically offers so that one can overcome the attempts of the actions of sin against him or her.

Therefore, being adequately instructed about the conditions and principal means by which sin seeks to act may be a subject as relevant as knowing the breadth of the characteristics of sin and the purposes it seeks to impose to each person, for, in some way, it is precisely in regard to the conditions and means of action of sin that a person can more objectively reject the attempts of sin.

Knowledge about the context, conditions, or ways in which sin seeks to act is especially relevant when it is observed in the Scriptures that it is also in relation to these aspects that sin, even though being vile and trying to work deceptively, is subject to specific criteria, is not allowed to act out of a range of limits that are set for it, and is not allowed to advance in a totally indiscriminate manner.

When the characteristics of sin are seen in conjunction with the conditions or means by which it seeks to act, it may also be observed that the fact that sin seeks to enslave everyone under its yoke does not mean that it has the ability and permission to do it whenever it tries to attain this goal.

The fact that there is an evil presence in the world does not mean that one automatically has to practice it and does not imply that one should stop opposing and

resisting sin. The fact that evil is available to be accessed in the world does not mean that it must also be used, that it must be practiced by all, or that it can establish the consequences that derive from it indiscriminately.

In the perversity of its higher purpose of subjugating people to itself, to the powers of darkness, and to the punishment of eternal death, sin seeks to make use of all the resources and means available to it. In its vile purpose, sin is cruel and entirely devoid of compassion and goodness, and, if allowed, it does not spare any kind of person, for as seen in the texts mentioned in previous chapters, sin is the partner of death and death of the sin. However, the fact that sin tries to act or reign indiscriminately over all people does not mean that sin can do so with total freedom of action or that sin has the power and the authority to work in all or over everyone according to its evil purposes.

Although sin seeks to work through all sorts of wicked expedients and seeks to disrespect all that is good, true, and righteous, this does not mean that sin can act in a totally indiscriminate manner in relation to the principles of the kingdom of God and nor does it mean that sin can prevail over the realm of light, remembering again that:

*John 1: 5 **And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.***

Although sin is disrespectful to one part of God's laws, it remains subject to another part of God's laws or to a set of limits or boundaries firmly established by the Lord.

Despite that sin seeks to act by way of transgression and deception concerning truth and what indeed is beneficial to people, sin itself is subject to higher rules which it cannot transgress and which God firmly establishes so that the work of sin cannot be expanded without any control over it.

As discussed in previous chapters, God is the Righteous Judge above all and above everything, and as the Judge who acts grounded on perfect and just righteousness concerning everything that happens in the universe, He certainly does not allow sin to move beyond which from heaven is permitted to it to act.

Although the Scriptures also present sin as an act of transgressing or trespassing, that is, the transgression of that which is just or seen as lawful before the eyes of God, as mentioned in the letter of 1John 3, verse 4, the very propositions of sin are also subject to acting through some ways subject to authorization in their attempts to expand their perverse intents.

The limits that God has firmly established for sin are for the protection and benefit of people, but if people do not know the ways in which sin presents itself and what are the limits of it, sin may try to deceive them even in their ignorance of the way it works and its limits.

If, for instance, a person inappropriately thinks that sin has no limits in its working power, one is also more vulnerable to thinking that there is no appropriate and real way by which one can indeed resist the attacks of sin against his or her life.

On the other hand, if a person is instructed about the fact that before God's righteousness sin encounters a series of restrictions regarding the possibility of its actions, this person may also be able to understand that many aspects used by sin throughout history and many aspects of the attempts of sin against his or her personal life no longer need to be accepted.

In committing the first sin practiced by a human being, Adam, as a consequence, left to all his descendants a sinful nature and an environment terribly inclined and conducive to the further practice of sin. The sin of Adam had a massive effect on the whole human race and changed the state of humankind into a scenario hostile to God. However, in the face of God's righteousness and the path of the redemption that this righteousness has provided and offers to human beings, this sinful condition no longer needs to prevail in the life of an individual. In His mercy and righteousness, the Lord allows people who receive this redemption to become free from the domination of the yoke of the sinful nature and, thus, set limits on this historical actuation of sin and over their lives.

Romans 6: 6 Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

From the revelation of the way of the redemption of the human being, provided by the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, the possibility of people to rely on the Lord to set limits to the attempts of sin against their lives has taken on a whole new perspective. That is why it is also so important to know the boundaries for the action of sin from the standpoint of the righteousness offered by the Lord in Christ Jesus and what still are the ways in which sin seeks to work after the Lord's righteousness has been so widely revealed to the world.

And among the points that limit the actions of sin, God has also established that a part of the limits of the working of sin is directly related to the attitudes that humans adopt when the propositions of sin are presented to them.

Among the aspects that restrict sin's performance is also the position that each person takes regarding the propositions that sin makes to him or her or in relation to the means by which sin attempts to subject a person to its yoke.

As much as the actions of evil, through sin, may come to be very powerful, God offers His righteousness as a gift to human beings who live on Earth so that they may reject or resist the propositions that sin offers them, thus establishing that a part of the working of sin cannot thrive in its wicked intentions if people do not accept its propositions, as described in the texts below as well:

1 Corinthians 10: 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

***Ephesians 4: 17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,
18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;***

- 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness,
to work all uncleanness with greediness.**
- 20 But you have not so learned Christ,**
- 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the
truth is in Jesus:**
- 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man
which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,**
- 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,**
- 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to
God, in true righteousness and holiness.**
-

Because of God's provision of help that He offers them, people in the world are called by the Lord to abstain from evil, are called to trust in the Lord to be kept from evil, and they are called to understand the fact that a curse without cause is also deprived of coming to be fulfilled, as the Scriptures teach us in a few more texts below:

Psalms 34: 13 **Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking
deceit.**

14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.

Proverbs 4: 27 **Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot
from evil.**

Proverbs 26: 2 **Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, So a curse
without cause shall not alight.**

Psalms 97: 10 **You who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the souls
of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.**

Similar to the aspect that the Gospel of God presents full power or provision to save all people, but whose salvation becomes a personal experience only for those who receive the Gospel, so sin, in a sense, has immense power of destruction associated with it, but which can only act more broadly on its purpose if people opt for it, do not apart from it, or do not resist it appropriately.

If, on the one hand, sin and the immense power of destruction connected with it exist regardless of the choice of people concerning associating or not associating with them, on the other hand, this power may face significant limitations if people do not adhere to the propositions that are related to the practice of sin or the subjection to it.

Although the propositions of sin always involve the transgression of good and what is right in the eyes of God, the Lord, especially from the disclosure of the gift of the heavenly righteousness, has revealed that sin itself is only allowed to continue to advance or increase its sphere of action in the world if the people who inhabit the Earth grant it to do so.

After the revelation of the gift of righteousness that God offers to all human beings, sin must necessarily go through a process whereby it is granted a sort of authorization of action by people so that it can still obtain spaces to introduce its operations that enslave individuals to its domain.

In other words, following God's revelation to the world of the gift of righteousness to all human beings, a broader exposition about sin also includes making it known that the yoke of slavery to sin can no longer be imputed upon a person if one, through the righteousness of God, no longer allows it to be imputed to him or her.

After the revelation of the gift of righteousness that God offers to all people in the world, the Lord has also made it more evident that sin, in a way, needs to become “personal” in an individual's life in order to place its yoke of slavery on a person.

Here, however, we would yet like to highlight that there can be a significant distinction between being personally under the yoke of the bondage of sin or suffering the consequences of the sin of others or the world as a whole.

Several consequences that arise from the multitude of sins in the world reflect upon all those who are in it, but this is very different from a person being subject to sin because one personally rejects God's gift of righteousness or because one became associated with sin by his or her practice of specific sins.

Although all human beings are in some way exposed to a series of consequences of the sins of other people, including some damages caused by the sins of past generations and especially the sin of Adam, the sin, from the revelation of the gift of God's righteousness, can no longer reign over those who are aligned with the proper conditions provided by God so that sin does not reign over them.

*Romans 6: 14 **For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.***

After the revelation of the righteousness that God offers in Christ Jesus, sin, though powerful in many ways, can only widen the scope of its action if human beings accept it voluntarily, accept it out of ignorance, or if they choose not to resist it by the means that the Lord's righteousness offers them to do it.

All the natural descendants or of the blood of Adam inherited consequences of his sin and inherited a sin-inclined nature, but from the revelation of the gift of righteousness that God offers to all people, the ongoing imputation of the yoke of sin no longer needs to stay on an individual's life if one receives this heavenly gift in his or her life.

By one sin, sin, which existed before the creation of the human being, entered the world and received an ample space of action in its purpose to exercise its power so that all the descendants of Adam would also become associated with it, even if they did not practice the same or the first singular sin of Adam. However, this scenario received a remarkable change with the revelation of God's gift of righteousness, which, in turn, has also revealed more specifically or clearly that sin and its attempts at domination can be rejected or resisted by every person who receives in his or her life the gift of righteousness mentioned above.

As we have seen in previous chapters, one person's sin can result in several consequences that are detrimental to the lives of many others, but from the perspective of God's gift of righteousness, a person who suffers the consequences of others' sins does not need to remain under the yoke of slavery to which others submitted themselves. And this aspect, also foretold in the Scriptures by the ancient prophets, shows us the difference between the soul that remains subject to sin, and thus remains under the yoke of sin, and the soul that associates itself with the righteousness of God, as can be seen in the following text:

- Ezekiel 18: 1 The word of the LORD came to me again, saying,*
 2 ***"What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge?'"***
 3 ***"As I live," says the Lord GOD, "you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel.***
 4 ***Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.***
- ...
- 20 ***The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."***

Some consequences of a particular sin may extend to many, but this does not imply that those upon whom a part of the results is reflected must remain under the dominion of sin. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God declares that just as the father who has not sharp teeth from eating sour or not ripe grapes does not automatically transmit teeth that are set on edge to the child born of him, because the condition of the teeth the child receives comes from the genes of the parents (DNA), and not of the state of the teeth that the father acquired during his personal life, so too, in the light of the gift of righteousness, one person's sin or guilt does not need to continue in the lives of others.

From the revelation of God's gift of righteousness, the announcement that sin has very clearly established limits before the heavenly righteousness has become even more evident, just as the Scriptures have also made it more apparent that each person has a crucial role to play so that sin does not have dominion over him or her, as another text below exemplifies:

- Romans 6: 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.*
 13 ***And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.***
- ...
- 16 ***Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?***
-

And since from the revelation of God's gift of righteousness it is also more apparent that sin can have its power of action restricted when people choose not to remain under its dominion, when they reject it, or when they resist sin, it is also evident the need to know how sin seeks to act predominantly after the revelation of the gift of righteousness, as well as how a person can act to no longer become entangled or overcome by sin.

A broader and more adequate perception of the scenario in which sin's limits of action are more exposed also allows that a more adjusted and appropriate perspective on the propositions of sin comes to be more widely unraveled and used by people so that they do not become entangled by the subtle intents of sin or through what it proposes to each person.

Thus, emphasizing once again the point that sin has limits of action set by the Lord and the point that part of the operation of these limits also encompasses people's attitude towards God's righteousness and towards sin, we would like to point out here that this theme is so important or significant that the Scriptures even give a specific name to the set of the propositions of sin that can and should be rejected or resisted by people, calling it the "*temptation of sin*."

The subject of the "*temptation of sin*" is a very peculiar part of the whole theme of the action of sin. And as such, it also presents several specific characteristics that are particularly pertinent to it and whose discernment may be crucial for every person who yearns to be no longer subject to sin or entangled by it.

It has been commented previously that the existence of sin precedes the creation of the human being, and on this point, people have no control. However, when we look to the action of sin through temptation, the various times and stages of sin's operation can be seen under a much clearer or more objective condition, and regarding which, the perception of the participation of each person also becomes much closer or more tangible.

The subject of the temptation of sin may unveil a new range of aspects about how sin tries to operate and, so, it also challenges us to adopt new and practical attitudes to deal with sin. When the attempt of sin working through temptation is more widely understood, also a series of specific aspects about the possibility of rejecting sin and how it can be resisted may come to be known even more precisely.

The exposition of the fact that the temptation of sin is the way in which evil tries to get people to associate with sin perhaps may represent for some individuals a certain measure of fear concerning the evil power that there is in the temptations. However, this exposition can also bring abundant light and a significant encouragement to people because they may understand that it is in the aspect that sin is dependent on the acceptance of temptation that also the limits or restriction of its operating power are exposed, as it is presented in the text once again displayed below:

1 Corinthians 10: 12 **Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.**

13 **No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.**

Keeping in mind that the temptation of sin is in many respects the last frontier that separates a person from the association with sin, we may also consider that personal positioning or attitude in relation to the temptation of sin is, then, one of the most relevant aspects so that an individual does not incur the subjection to the evil that sin aims for him or her.

Therefore, having the goal of cooperating in order that the characteristics of the temptation become better known or become more evidenced so that people are better informed to reject or resist it, we will try to detail a few more specific points related to it.

Thus, as a first point, we would like to address the question about the temptation still not being equivalent to sin or if the temptation already characterizes a sin?

Although several people assert that temptation is not yet a sin per se, we should look at this point more widely from different angles.

Although the temptation is not always an expression of a sin of the one who becomes exposed to it, for a person can be tempted and not yield to sin, the temptation of sin is always a variation or a form of evil presenting itself to people, as the text below teaches us:

*James 1: 13 **Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.***

To claim that temptation is not yet a sin only contemplates a part of the process of temptation, because for a temptation to come to be constructed and offered to an individual, it is needed an act of evil or sin, at least by the one who is the agent who is trying to present the temptation.

The temptation of sin may not yet be the specific sin consummated by the one being tempted, but it is already an act of sin in the individual who renders oneself to be the tempting agent. That is, the action of temptation must be observed from at least two angles, the agent who proposes the temptation and the individual to whom the temptation is directed.

When, for example, the devil sought Christ to tempt Him, the devil was already operating in evil, he was already acting in sin as he had been from the beginning. Thus, on the one hand, the temptation was an explicit action of sin, but on the other hand, or in what regards the position of Christ concerning sin, temptation never came to be materialized into sin. The Lord promptly refuted the temptation and did not allow it to find ample space in His life, and neither that sin would find any opportunity to multiply itself through His life.

*1 John 3: 8 **He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.***

*Hebrews 4: 14 **Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.***

*15 **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.***

The subject of the temptation of sin is something that needs to be seen with particular attention, for if, on the one hand, the temptation may not yet be the practice of sin for the one being tempted, on the other hand, the temptation is a vile proposition for direct contact with the practice of evil. The temptation of sin is already a moving sin of at least one agent of sin to try to involve others in sin or to try to lead a sinner to be even more intense in one's practices of sin.

In other words, although a particular temptation in many situations is still not a practice of the sin on the part of the one who is exposed to temptation, the temptation is preceded by the working of sin that may have been already acting actively long before the attraction to sinning is proposed through a temptation.

And since a temptation in its propositions is already an expression or an active form of sin acting to try to increase its range of action, we would like to emphasize, as a second point, that the evil potential that is already in the temptation should never be overlooked or underestimated.

As with sin itself, the temptation of sin should also never be viewed carelessly, for considering that the temptation has behind it a corrupting agent or is associated with it, to give more space to the temptation than it should have also represents giving more space and proximity to the corrupting agent or the sin that is acting behind the temptation.

Since the temptation is associated with evil in its propositions, and therefore it is also a form of evil presenting itself, people, in addition to being called by the Lord not to yield to the temptation, are also called by God to be active in distancing themselves, every time when it is possible, already of the very sphere of acting of the temptation.

The Scriptures instruct people to keep an appropriate distance from every form of evil, as follows:

*1 Thessalonians 5: 22 **Abstain from every form of evil.***

*Ephesians 4: 27 **nor give place to the devil.***

Although not all temptations can be avoided by those who live in the present world, to give more space or opportunities to the temptations than they should have is also evil or may also represent a “wrong attitude.”

Even though the temptation is not yet, on the part of the one who is being tempted, the practice of a particular proposed sin, allowing the temptation to have a more extensive space than it should have is also an attitude of granting a more intense and dangerous approach of sin, as God instructed Cain about his position towards what is well to do and as well as towards sin.

*Genesis 4: 6 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?
 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."*

Through the words of God to Cain, the Lord teaches us that a person's attitude towards the good may also have a reflection in the proximity of the temptation of sin towards this individual. According to the words spoken to Cain, we understand that it is reasonable to conclude that if a person acts according to what is appropriate, one also finds a favorable condition before the Lord that provides a broader guard against the action of sin, but if a person renders oneself to bad attitudes, the temptation of sin becomes much closer to him or her. Although the specific sin that "*lies at the door*" may still not having been practiced, it is a sin proposition very close to becoming accomplished and which seeks to break into this door with much more determination than a more distant temptation.

Therefore, **spending excessive time with the temptation of sin or not acting in advance to prevent the temptation of sin from becoming too close can also make the possibility of committing sin or subjecting to it to become more real or imminent than it should be.**

Although the temptation of sin, in general, proposes the practice of a specific sin, an inadequate way of dealing with the temptation itself and the time of the temptation may also, by itself, already come to characterize the working of sin in an individual's life.

Spending excessive time with the temptation of sin, either by giving it undue space or by not having acted previously to prevent it, may consume many hours of an individual's life and may lead a person to submit to the operation of sin precisely for the loss of time spent with the temptation even if one does not come to commit the specific sin that the temptation is proposing.

Although the temptation of sin is often directed toward the attempts of leading a person to a more specific sin, it is important not to forget that sin, in its propositions, acts subtly and that its purpose is to engage the person in any form of evil, and not only in the particular sin for which it is tempting a person. The collateral sins that the temptation of a specific sin may cause, if a person becomes involved by the temptation beyond what one should, often need to be observed even more closely than the temptation of the particular sin that is proposed.

Yet in other words, whether by ignorance or by not acting with prevention to be surrounded by good and to abstain from the forms of evil, many people are exposed to temptations at a much higher intensity than would be necessary, and also for this, they often find themselves in such fragile conditions before the propositions of evil.

When sin is in operation through temptation, it does not limit itself to seeking a single way to try to involve those to whom its propositions are presented. Sin is ambitious in its attempts and seeks to use the most diverse kinds of space to try to entangle people and to try to impose on them the yoke or the heavy burden of bondage that accompanies subjection to sin.

If a person is not aware of the malignity of sin already in the temptation, if one is unwilling to perceive it, or if one does not resist this previous act of sin, one may be placing oneself in subjection to the time of the operation of sin or the yoke of sin even before one has practiced a specific sin that the temptation proposes to be practiced.

Through temptation, sin does not present itself as it really is, just as it seeks not to show what it primarily tries to achieve in the life of the individual exposed to temptation. As a temptation, sin does not reveal its purpose of imposing a yoke of bondage on those who give in to temptation or even on those who allow themselves to be entangled by the temptation in a closer way or for a period beyond what would be due.

Considering that one of the main definitions attributed to the term *sin* is expressed by the concept of an individual erring the intended target or missing the goal that would be appropriate for his or her life, if, by engaging an individual with temptation, sin may already prevent this person from advancing in the career that God has for him or her, sin has already managed to get this individual to miss the target even though one has not practiced the most explicit act proposed through a specific temptation.

When the Scriptures teach us not to become ensnared with any form of sin that so closely surrounds us, this also includes not letting temptation become excessively close, a reason why the Lord Jesus Christ instructs us to pray to the Heavenly Father so that He keeps us from being lead, enter, or falling into the “sphere of temptation.”

The Lord's guidance for resistance to sin does not encompass only the passive acts of those to whom temptation presents itself, but it includes instructions for active actions directed explicitly to dealing with temptation even before it presents itself or so that it does not come to present itself so intensely or directly to a person.

There are several examples in the Scriptures dealing with active and preventive actions so that a person does not become so intensely or deeply involved not even with the temptation of sin, of which we quote some more texts below:

Hebrews 12: 1 **Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,**

2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Matthew 6: 13 **And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

Matthew 26: 41 **Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.**

1 Corinthians 10: 11 **Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.**

12 **Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.**

13 **No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.**

14 **Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.**

In various parts of the Scriptures, **the Lord calls people to realize that opposition to sin or rejection of evil encompasses an active practice of good and that, in no way, is this practice devoid of preventive action.**

Romans 12: 21 **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

Psalms 139: 23 **Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;**

24 **And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.**

Psalms 91: 9 **Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place,**

10 **No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;**

11 **For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.**

12 **In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.**

13 **You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.**

14 **"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.**

15 **He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.**

16 **With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation."**

Psalms 119: 9 **How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.**

Psalms 1: 1 **Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;**

2 **But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.**

The vigilance and the fight against sin already in the preventive actions against the temptation of sin can be used as active and increasing actions in favor of the good so that the sphere of evil's performance may be kept more distant even in the propositions of the temptations.

We only remind here that the law of the Lord and keeping the word of God, quoted in some of the last texts above, are very different aspects than wanting to keep the so-called law of Moses or the words of the law of Moses, as it is exposed in the subject on Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth and in some details that will be seen later in some chapters of this present material.

And continuing to follow up some characteristics related to temptation, we would like to emphasize also, as a third point, that not all temptations are caused by agents external to the individual being tempted.

Regarding the subject about the characteristics of temptations, we also understand that it is crucial to point out that various temptations that present themselves to a person are, in reality, a sequence of other sins that the person has already harbored and maintains in his or her heart, as the following text warns us:

James 1: 13 **Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.**

14 **But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.**

15 **Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.**

16 **Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.**

Recalling some aspects mentioned in the previous point, we can see that if a person does not watch or act with prevention so that greed or one's desire does not attract and seduce him or her, one also puts oneself in a condition to be more exposed to other temptations or forms of temptations in his or her life.

A person who, for instance, gives way to envy also places oneself in subjection to a set of other several temptations or enters the sphere of other several inadequate attractions that seek to act from an envious heart.

James 3: 16 **For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.**

Just as in the majority of situations in which a person is attracted to practicing a robbery because one first established the platform of this temptation by coveting what pertains to others, something that is improper, or something before the right time, so greed also serves as a launching platform for countless or the most diverse temptations against the life of the one who allows covetousness to act as a primary sin in his or her heart.

Moreover, if an individual does not observe the fact that one oneself can be the source of new attempts of temptations in his or her life by giving a prior shelter to some

sins, one places oneself under an attitude that even goes so far as to be likened, by the Scriptures, to self-deception or to a position where one acts to deceive oneself.

This last aspect may happen, for instance, also when a person is never grateful or content with what the Lord confers at the most diverse moments and stages of his or her life, therefore:

*Proverbs 1: 7 **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.***

*Psalms 119: 36 **Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness.***

Covetousness, envy, the love of money, and other similar aspects, when given space for action, are things that can lead people to very foolish or improper temptations and attitudes.

Thus, we point out again that although a particular temptation does not yet necessarily represent the practice of a specific sin on the part of the one being tempted, every temptation, by itself, is mainly derived from some action of evil or sin, and in this way it should also be seen by people and avoided even at the root of the actions that allow it to be strengthened and multiplied against their lives.

*Proverbs 23: 17 **Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day;**
18 **For surely there is a hereafter, And your hope will not be cut off.***

*Hebrews 13: 5 **Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."***

*1 Timothy 6: 9 **But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.***

*10 **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.***

*11 **But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.***

Finally, in this chapter, we would like, then, as the fourth point, to address some considerations about the aspect that when God calls people to not give way to temptation and sin, He does not call them to try to overcome the offensives of evil through their very strength or by their own conceptions of how they should deal with sin in its many facets.

The Lord has chosen to convince the world about the various characteristics of sin chiefly by the Holy Spirit also because of the cunning and vile potential that is in sin even in the temptation, for through His Spirit, the Lord also exposes the fact that an individual can only overcome temptation by the protection and instruction granted to him or her by the heavenly kingdom.

To resist sin, even in its temptations, it takes much more than an individual's intention or attitude to no longer want to commit sins and offenses, for however determined or disciplined this purpose might be, it will not be sufficient to resist or overcome the opposing actions of sin and its temptations.

In their natural or carnal capacities, human beings have several limitations to resist or overcome evil. And it is only through the Lord's help to them that people can do good and, by it, win evil, as also exemplified respectively below:

Romans 7: 18 **For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.**

19 **For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.**

Galatians 5: 16 **I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**

Romans 8: 11 **But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**

...
13 **For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**

To know and believe that the temptation of sin can only be appropriately dealt with the ability and instruction that God grants may be very significant to understand that sin makes use of the most varied tools of darkness. Sin, already in the operation of the temptations, is a partner of lies, deceit, and the attempts to inflict fear, and it does not deprive itself of using these expedients simultaneously. Sin is tricky, cheating, and dirty when it tries to present itself to people, for it seeks to take on a pleasant appearance, astute propositions, and artful ways whose discernment go beyond the simple rational or intuitive capacity of the human being.

Without the cooperation of the Holy Spirit's work to make a temptation of sin evident, a person may become subject to a situation where one does not even realize how much one is being exposed to the temptations of sin and how often one is giving in to many temptations presented to him or her. And as much as a person does not perceive or recognize it, if there is still a reasonable degree of discernment of some temptations of sin, this discernment is only present in one's life because of the goodness and mercy of God towards him or her.

Dealing with the temptation of sin surely is not something easy, simple, and possible to accomplish only under natural wisdom, for the set of aspects that can be involved in a single temptation is far broader than a person can naturally understand.

Recalling, then, that the central point of sin's action aims at making people stand apart or disconnected from the fellowship with the Lord and God's instructions, this too will be the focus associated with every process of temptation, for once as a person turns away from the light that is in the Lord and His instruction, one puts oneself in a very fragile position before other temptations.

When a person adequately watches and resists the temptations of sin by being in fellowship with the Lord, by advancing in the career or path the Lord proposes, or by looking firmly unto Christ, sin does not reach a more significant space or strength to subject that person again to its domain. However, when sin can lead a person to be obedient to the proposals that turn him or her away from God and from looking firmly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, sin can gain more space to introduce an ever-increasing number of temptations.

Therefore, as we shall see several times in the present material, **the only place for an individual to be secure indeed against sin and the temptation of sin is for him or her to be and abide in God.**

In the text of Hebrews 12, verse 1 and 2, seen recently above, we can observe that **the opposite of remaining ensnared by sin, including the temptations it presents, is to run with endurance the race that is set before us by God and with our eyes looking continually unto the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Thus, knowing that sin must pass through temptation before it can act in one's life is an understanding that may be crucial for a person not to surrender to the intentions of sin, for despite a broader knowledge of sin and temptation also highlights more the vile condition that already exists even in temptation, this knowledge also exposes the weakness and limitation that is in sin precisely because it has to act primarily by temptation and so it can be resisted through the provision that God offers to people through His eternal righteousness.

*Hebrews 5: 13 **For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.***

*14 **But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.***

For those who live and walk in Christ indeed, the characteristics of sin, the temptation of sin, and the fallacy that a person cannot be freed from the slavery of sin are aspects that no longer need to be obscured and which become unraveled or exposed by the heavenly light. In Christ, operates a law that is superior to the law of sin and death, which is the law of life by the Spirit of God and which never can be overcome by any form of sin.

*Romans 8: 2 **For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.***

C14. The Body of Sin

Sin is an objective expression of evil, that is, sin is the means by which existing evil seeks to gain expression in the world and by which a person who practices it or submits to it also connects or associates with evil.

Sin is evil as potential wickedness, it is evil in the temptation, and it is the expression of evil during any practice of sin, but we would like to emphasize once again that the vile condition of sin is also highly accentuated by the evil and terrible consequences that the subjection to sin may cause.

The wickedness of sin, if not adequately interrupted, can still extend to a person throughout the time that the various consequences of the practice of sin or subjecting to it are still ongoing.

And, in turn, the sober knowledge that the duration of sin's action and its effects may go far beyond the time of its practice can be very helpful to anyone who does not want to surrender to what sin aims to achieve and keep. Knowing when the end of the working of a practiced sin occurs indeed may be crucial for many aspects of a person's life, for the end of the actions caused by a specific sin does not always happen according to an apparent end and nor do its consequences end when it seems that the practice of a particular trespass has ended.

A thief, for instance, may be involved in the consequences of a robbery for much longer than he thinks, for a thief, even if he returns the stolen goods, may become a convicted defendant because of his association with the act of stealing and not just for what he stole. Concerning civil society, a judicial proceeding triggered by theft, for example, is only closed when all condemnatory sentences have been served. And besides, the thief can still suffer rejections in society even after fulfilling the penalties attributed to him.

Therefore, the practice of sin or subjection to it may open a whole new and extensive chapter on the performance of sin after a person becomes associated with it. And understanding the principles of sin's working after it has been practiced, or after a person becomes subject to it, allows the perception of sin's action to become even broader or more enlightening.

Sin is vile from the conception of its proposition, it is evil already at the moment it presents itself to be practiced, but the continuity of the working of sin, even after it has been practiced, denounces even more how vast is the perversity that sin aims to inflict on people.

Thus, to cooperate with a broader and more objective perception or understanding of the fact that the action of sin may extend long after an individual has practiced it, the Scriptures show us a very enlightening and useful expression that condenses the whole set of the various consequences that may derive from the practice of sin or subjection to it, as can be seen in the following two texts:

*Romans 6: 6 **Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him (with Christ), that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.***

Romans 7: 24 ***O wretched man that I am!
Who will deliver me from this body of death?***

The set of facts that may come to be manifested from the practice of sin or the subjection of a person to it is considered in the Scriptures so close to sin that it often also comes to be called just as sin or as another of the characteristics of sin. However, in order for this set of aspects that derive from the practice of sin or the association with it to be perceived in a more prominent way, the Scriptures still attribute to it the expression “*the body of sin*” or “*the body of death*” that arises from the subjection of an individual to sin.

In other words, the practice of sin aims to generate a broad set of consequences for the one who is subject to sin, that is, the practice of sin aims to produce a “*body of sin*” over the individual who committed a sin so that one remains associated with sin even after the practice of a specific sin has been completed.

If the working of sin at most could reach the level of the disturbance caused by the temptation or even some discomfort in people while they were committing a sin, the extent of the action of sin would soon expire or fade away. However, sin is so dangerous also because of the package of consequences that comes from its practice and to which it seeks so insistently to link people, for it is through the “*body of sin*” placed upon people that sin reaches even more intensely the longed space to enslave them under its purposes.

It is from the imputed “*body of sin*” upon people that sin seeks to exert even more intensely the position by which it seeks to reign over their lives, thereby trying to place upon them also the results of adhering to the deceptive proposals which sin presented during the time of temptation.

Therefore, in describing what could become a source of immense distress to his life if he had to overcome sin only in its natural conditions, Paul does not neglect to mention the “*body of sin*” directly, as exposed once again below:

Romans 7: 24 ***O wretched man that I am!
Who will deliver me from this body of death?***

The difference between a person's position in the temptation of sin and after sin has been practiced is really huge. The temptation of sin, for example, is like a trap that is ready to imprison a person. The “*body of sin*,” however, goes further and encompasses the whole time and all the aspects that only make themselves known after a person has already become imprisoned by the trap. The proposition of people committing sin is accompanied by the aim of placing the full weight of the trap and imprisonment on the person who practiced it. And depending on the trap that has been set, it is very unfortunate to see how a misstep may change so significantly the life scenario of the person who gets caught by it.

Understanding, then, clearly, that through association with it, sin also seeks to generate, produce, or leave a body after its practice, or yet, that it aims to place a set of consequences for the individual who submits to it, may sound strange or even seem frightening to some. But this, in reality,

can be very enlightening and for prevention both so that an individual does not give in to subjection to sin and so that a person may find the understanding of how it is possible to act to not remaining under the slavery of the “*body of sin*” if one has already incurred in subjection to sin.

Thus, with the goal of expanding the considerations of the subject exposed in the above paragraphs in a more practical way or not to be too subjective, we understand that it is necessary to go a little further on this topic to know what are some main aspects that may be encompassed in the so-called “*body of sin*” or “*body of this death*.”

If we look first at the sphere of natural life, we can see that the items that compose what the Scriptures call as the “*body of sin*” can vary greatly depending on the type of sin one has committed and the harm it has done to others or oneself.

Nevertheless, in the spiritual realm, the aspects that make up the so-called “*body of sin*” have, in general, similar characteristics even though they come from different types of sins, presenting among their main items the following points:

- ⇒ 1) The deceit of sin;
- ⇒ 2) The punishment of sin;
- ⇒ 3) The debt writing or record that arises from association with sin.

Beginning with the deceit of sin, the first point mentioned in the previous paragraph, we would like to emphasize that the Scriptures intensely warn human beings that no one should be careless regarding any part related to sin and its practice, for the consequences of the practice of sin or the subjection to it may affect people's senses about the most essential aspects of life.

One of the effects of sin, as one of the characteristics of the “*body of sin*,” is that it acts similarly to leprosy, but in the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual realm, and may cause a gradual or even sudden decrease in the sobriety or the discernment of an individual regarding what happens around him or her and inclusive in one's life.

Sin tries to deceive people already in the temptations it presents, but its deceitful action can be accentuated even more profoundly and vilely after the practice of sin or the subjection of a person to it.

The temptation accepted, the sin committed, or the subjection to sin may profoundly affect the heart and understanding of the one who subjected to sin, for the hardening of the heart caused by the deceit of sin is one of the most terrible consequences of sin or the “*body of sin*” that may come to be established in the life of the one who becomes subject to sin, as shown in some texts below:

Hebrews 3: 12 **Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;**
13 **but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.**

2 Corinthians 11: 3 **But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.**

Hosea 4: 11 Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.

Ecclesiastes 7: 7 Surely oppression destroys a wise man's reason, And a bribe debases the heart.

The worst consequences of sin are not only related to the external or natural harm that its practice may produce, but also what they may cause to the heart or the mind of the person who becomes subject to sin.

When we look at the example of Adam's sin, we can see that the consequences for his soul or mind were immediate, causing him to be subjected to fear, shame, and a self-protective stance through which he blamed others for the mistake he had deliberately made himself.

During the temptation, sin seeks to separate a person from trust in God and from the Lord's instructions even if possible just for a brief moment, because an individual's lack of confidence in the Lord is one of the central elements that weakens a person before other propositions of sins. However, in the stage in which a person is already enslaved to the "*body of sin*," the possibility of sin acting through deception is even much stronger.

The "*body of sin*," when associated with a person, may become extremely harmful to one's life, for it will seek to act in that person's mind by suggesting the multiplication of new sinful acts, by the attempts of contamination or distortion of the knowledge about all that which proceeds from God to this person, just as it may go so far as to propose that the one subject to it even consider trying to assume the position concerning one's life that should exclusively be of God.

2 Thessalonians 2: 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Bearing in mind that the heart of a person who believes in the Lord is also regarded as a place or a temple of God's dwelling, and that it is through the presence of God in the heart that an individual has at his or her disposal the fountain of life or the living water, it is no wonder that this place is also the place that sin seeks most to reach to establish the "*body of sin*" in order to weaken and defile people's faith in their Creator.

In working in the attempts to associate people with sin, the powers of darkness aim to put upon people a "*body of sin*" that draws them even more into lies, to the attempts to distort or discredit the truth and, yet, to turn people more and more away from the love of truth and the love that is in the Unique and Everlasting God who created them, thus weakening them even more before or towards new temptations and deceits.

- Proverbs 4: 14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil.*
- 15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on.*
- 16 For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall.*
- 17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence.*
- 18 But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.*
- 19 The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble.*
- 20 My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.*
- 21 Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart;*
- 22 For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh.*
- 23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.*
- 24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you.*
- 25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you.*
- 26 Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established.*
- 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.*
-

Continuing, now, the second point mentioned above about the characteristics of the “*body of sin*”, that is, the punishment of sin, we understand that it would be interesting to observe it initially from the perspective of the concept of reaping from sowing considering that the “*body of sin*” results from the practice of sin or the subjection of a person to sin.

In addressing the subject of sowing and reaping concerning the attitudes of human beings, the Scriptures warn all people to be continually aware of the principles of this theme, for before God, as described in the text below, every individual also has his or her share of responsibility for what one sows during the course of life, which certainly also applies to sin and the harvest that comes from it expressed as the “*body of sin*.”

- Galatians 6: 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*
- 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*

An individual who gives oneself to the practice of sin or becomes subject to it stands in line to reap the “*body of sin*” over his or her life, which also encompasses the punishment associated with the practice of sin. If subjection to sin or the action of sowing it would not be related to the possibility of the harvesting of punishment, evil could be practiced freely without causing any consequence for those who practice it, and thus, to these, evil would not be evil indeed.

If there were no punishment for sin, God, as the Righteous Judge over the whole universe, would not be taking sin into account, and the Scriptures would not be expressing the truth about the consequences of the practice of sin. However, as mentioned in previous chapters and a few more texts below, God is not an accomplice to the practice of evil.

Proverbs 11: 19 **As righteousness leads to life, So he who pursues evil pursues it to his own death.**

20 **Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the LORD, But the blameless in their ways are His delight.**

21 **Though they join forces, the wicked will not go unpunished; But the posterity of the righteous will be delivered.**

Isaiah 10: 3 **What will you do in the day of punishment, And in the desolation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your glory?**

Isaiah 29: 6 **You will be punished by the LORD of hosts With thunder and earthquake and great noise, With storm and tempest And the flame of devouring fire.**

The Bible Scriptures describe that there are in the world people who believe and advocate that their association with evil will not really harm them or that the God who punishes evil is not indeed seeing the wickedness in the world, and thus, they are mocking of the implications of the “*body of sin*,” of God Himself, and of all His righteousness and judgment, as follows:

Psalms 10: 3 **For the wicked boasts of his heart’s desire; He blesses the greedy and renounces the LORD.**

4 **The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.**

5 **His ways are always prospering; Your judgments are far above, out of his sight; As for all his enemies, he sneers at them.**

6 **He has said in his heart, "I shall not be moved; I shall never be in adversity."**

7 **His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression; Under his tongue is trouble and iniquity.**

8 **He sits in the lurking places of the villages; In the secret places he murders the innocent; His eyes are secretly fixed on the helpless.**

9 **He lies in wait secretly, as a lion in his den; He lies in wait to catch the poor; He catches the poor when he draws him into his net.**

10 **So he crouches, he lies low, That the helpless may fall by his strength.**

11 **He has said in his heart, "God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see."**

Moreover, it can also be seen in contemporary times that many of those who speak words similar to those mentioned in the above Psalm express the same ideas even in a more wicked or evil-enhanced way. Based on an allegation of the existence of a supposed “time or dispensation of grace,” in which God supposedly would no longer take sin into account or under which God would forgive everyone and everything regardless of how each person behaved in his or her life, several individuals do not only resemble the characteristics of the wicked described in Psalm 10, but they also show themselves in a very similar position of those mentioned in the following text of the letter of Jude:

*Jude 1: 3 **Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.***

*4 **For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.***

To belittle sin and the punishment that may come from it, however, is foolishness, for the body that is generated by association with sin cannot just be despised if it is not disposed of adequately and dealt with in due time.

*Proverbs 14: 8 **The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, But the folly of fools is deceit.***

*9 **Fools mock at sin, But among the upright there is favor.***

...

*12 **There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.***

*Hebrews 10: 29 **Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?***

*30 **For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people."***

*31 **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.***

By pointing out that the punishment that comes from sin is a feature of the “*body of sin*” and that it may indeed become associated with a person who remains subject to sin, the Scriptures show the need for people to look at this subject more carefully, and yet, that the mere act of turning one's back on this characteristic of sin may not imply a solution against the punishment to which one who remains in bondage to sin becomes subordinated.

Once a person, for example, has already been held captive by a trap, attempting to deny that the trap exists or to deny that one is attached to the trap will not make the

trap disappear to the point that the person is free of it. Some action must take place so that also the liberation occurs.

Thus, the exposition of sin dissociated from the understanding that the association with sin is also subject to the harvesting of a “*body of sin*” does not represent a broad enough or satisfactory explanation, just as the “*body of sin*” is not truly exposed if the punishment that is part of this body is not adequately mentioned or explained either.

And, in turn, among the various aspects to be addressed about the punishment of sin, we understand that one of the main points that makes it such a necessary and differentiated theme is the fact that the kind of penalty that sin generates in the spiritual realm is singular and of a nature entirely distinct from any other punishment that may exist on Earth.

The punishment of sin, in the spiritual realm, for instance, cannot be paid off in the same way earthly debts may be paid off, because the penalty of sin cannot be settled with natural resources there are on Earth.

Psalms 49: 6, 7 and 9 **Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches, None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him That he should continue to live eternally, And not see the Pit.**

Although many human courts, formal or informal, impute some condemnations and penalties to persons that allow them to be redeemed through them before their societies, the debt of the punishment of sin, from a broader perspective, cannot be paid with earthly penalties or with human or natural resources, since the wages of sin or the harvest of sin, from a broader perspective, is also related to spiritual death and the possibility of implications for the time after an individual's natural life as well.

The Scriptures have never omitted to expose that the subjection of a person to sin is also associated with the possibility of the death penalty, as can be seen below:

Romans 5: 12 **Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.**

Romans 6: 23(a) **For the wages of sin is death ...**

Ephesians 2: 1(b) **... who were dead in trespasses and sins ...**

On the other hand, also in the matter of the punishment of sin, the Scriptures do not expose this characteristic of the “*body of sin*” so that people just come to know what awaits them in remaining under the bondage of sin.

Although knowledge about the main aspects of the “*body of sin*” and the punishment that is associated with it may initially appear to be terrifying, if the Scriptures did not directly or openly reveal that subjection to sin can also have a very severe punishment

as a harvest, people could also be deprived of knowing the fact that they need a release from this “*body of sin*” in order not to suffer the damage associated with it.

Knowing that sin seeks to enlarge its space through the “*body of sin*” in an attempt to keep people enslaved to it perennially may be a piece of not very comfortable information to know, but it is also through exposing what sin seeks to achieve through the “*body of sin*” that it is widely revealed as sin or as an evil work of darkness that aims at the destruction of those who become associated with it.

Romans 7: 11 ***For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.***

12 Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

13 Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

When a person begins to have a clearer perception of the body of consequences that sin intends to generate on the one who is subject to sin, he or she begins to go further than just the superficial understanding of sin and the deceptive appearances by which sin attempts to present itself when it proposes its temptations, for where the punishment associated with subjection to sin is not evidenced, people are prone to disregard sin. That is, they are inclined not to avoid sin, subjecting so themselves to it more and more.

Where the punishment of sin is not evidenced, the possibility of sin reigning is highly elevated. As mentioned earlier, the ignorance of people about the destructive way in which they find themselves does not serve them as security.

At first, it may seem very challenging for an individual's soul to absorb a sober understanding of the exceedingly evil condition that sin presents through the “*body of sin*” and the punishment associated with it, but it is also through becoming convinced about this so broad wickedness that a person can see how incapable one is of dealing with the evil of sin and how much one needs the help of the heavenly kingdom to avoid being under the yoke of such an accentuated evil.

Therefore, the Scriptures expose the aspect of punishment as a harvest that can come upon a person who is subject to sin so that people may have an understanding of how wicked sin is and not to be frivolous about it, but also to know how necessary it is for them to seek in God a deliverance from all the aspects that sin may already have imputed upon them or that it continues to try to put on their lives.

One of the striking benefits of attaining or receiving a proper understanding of the punishment of sin is being able to see how small a human being is in the face of sin and how helpless one is when he or she departs from the help that God offers to be freed from the burden of the “*body of sin*,” for the perception of the punishment that is linked to sin, still in time of salvation, can cooperate so that people wake up to incline the heart to the great help that God freely offers to all in Christ Jesus.

*Romans 5: 20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound.
 But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,
 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through
 righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*2 Corinthians 5: 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us,
 that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
 6:1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to
 receive the grace of God in vain.
 2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the
 day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted
 time; behold, now is the day of salvation."*

Finally, in this chapter, we would like to address some aspects of the third characteristic of the “*body of sin*” mentioned earlier, namely the debt writing or the record of debt generated by the practice of sin or the subjection to it.

A record of debt works very close to the aspect of the punishment of sin, but with the difference that it is an auxiliary instrument that can be used between the act in which a debt or punishment was contracted and the act of executing the debt or the application of the previously announced penalty.

A record of debt is a type of one more evidence that attests that a debt has been contracted or that a person is liable to receive the punishment recorded in a debt certificate.

And this matter of a debt record, or the recognition that there can exist a due and official punishment, is particularly challenging to address, for while the idea of the debt certificate may benefit the debtor in the sense that a time gap might be opened before the debt or the punishment is executed, a debt record also allows the debtor to be repeatedly or continuously reminded of his or her debts and frightened about the execution of the debt or the application of the punishment on his or her life.

Although, in one sense, a debt record may even mean a sort of relief to the debtor for some time, on the other hand, it can also be an instrument of continuous torment to the debtor by repeatedly highlighting the certainty of debt, punishment, or guilt.

The fear of the execution of the debt or the penalty of sin was already evident from the first sin committed by humankind, namely, the sin of Adam. And this fear is an oppressive instrument that may weaken the person subject to it to try to cause him or her to incur several other sins, as also was the case of Adam, who together with Eve, after sinning, began trying to hide from God's presence and use vain arguments to try to justify themselves.

Moreover, a debt record may also serve as an oppressive instrument by the fact that through it, the revelation of one's sin, one's guilt or shame may become exposed as well. In many situations where people end up in debt or punishment, they also become subject to a very active fear in their hearts because they worry that their failures or mistakes will be made known to others, remembering still that the attribute of “accuser” is also one of the characteristics described by the Scriptures about the devil.

Thus, while the debt record associated with sin signals that the debtor is still in the waiting line for the full execution of one's debt or punishment, it already has terrible characteristics related to it, for, as mentioned above, the debt certificate continually asserts or keeps alive the remembrance of the failure, the mistake committed, the shame, the guilt, and the punishment that has already been assigned to be applied.

And, in turn, the continual remembrance of a punishment that may be performed at any time, and without necessarily being preceded by a new warning, is already a terrible aspect of the "*body of sin*" at work, for under conditions of oppression, torment, or fear, people are even more vulnerable to subjecting themselves increasingly to a succession or sequence of many other transgressions or sins.

In its wickedness and craftiness in using the power associated with fear, sin does use the debt writing even to suggest that people seek relief in what will only lead them to an even broader commitment to sin itself. Although many individuals claim that they are seeking something pleasurable by following the varied paths of sin that numb their senses, the reality is that many do so to try to relieve the pressure that the fear of the debt record causes them, thereby incurring more and more in the false or misleading proposition of darkness that the intensification of surrender to a life of sin could somehow free them from the very sin that oppresses them.

Through every part that sin seeks to associate with the "*body of sin*," including the debt record, sin tries to suffocate people to the fullest level that is granted to it. Through the body of death arising from a person's withdrawal from free fellowship with God, sin aims to make that people no longer keep a hope of finding deliverance and that they come to think that they can never overcome sin because having already been bound by a sentence of condemnation, trying to lead people to the thought that they have nothing left but to surrender even more to the practice of a series of other sins or trespasses.

Whether by the deception that seeks to numb the mind or harden the heart, or by the punishment that already partially seeks to manifest itself over a person, or by the remembrance of the record of debt that terrifies and attempts to inflict fear in people, the prolonged subjection to the yoke of the "*body of sin*" can become an unbearable burden, leading the one who carries it to intense fatigue or to a terribly exhausting tiredness.

Knowledge of sin as to the hardening that its deception causes, as to its punishment, and concerning the debt writing that comes from it, but without the knowledge and use of the solution to oppose and overcome this "*body of sin*," can significantly unsettle a person or even destroy him or her entirely, manifesting that the evil acting through sin is evil until the end and remains evil in each of the items of the "*body of sin*."

If the "*body of sin*," with its characteristic of debt record, is not correctly identified and is not appropriately removed from the life of the one who carries it because of the association with sin, this body can lead a person to become increasingly ensnared in the slavery of sin which ultimately seeks to succumb an individual in perdition.

Although the concept of debt record contemplates the idea that an individual has a certain amount of time to come face to face with the execution of punishment, one should never consider the debt record as a definitive solution to the penalty of sin, for it is not a solution for those who already have a punishment sentence. It is only an extension with an unknown deadline or a debt collection date still to be required.

Thus, knowing about the debt record should never be seen as a possibility of a person still deliberately handing oneself over to subjection to sin, for one does not

know when judgment will come, just an individual does not know how to measure beforehand whether he or she will be able to deal with the pressures and threats of debt execution that the devil or sin will seek to throw upon him or her.

Both the punishment of sin and the debt record of sin need to be resolved adequately so that a person can be truly free. The postponement of the final application of punishment should not be taken as a definitive deliverance, but only as a period of mercy for the immediate search for the real solution, for the postponement of punishment is not an ultimate solution that can lead to true and everlasting peace.

*Romans 6: 1 **What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?**
2 **Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?***

The Scriptures teach us that the law of Moses was granted to make sin, the punishment that comes from it, and the debt record of sinners more evident also for people to know that there is no human solution against sin. However, from the revelation of God's righteousness in Christ Jesus, no person is called to remain under the law of Moses, for it, and its convictions or condemning aspects, can do nothing to save a person from the debt record and punishment.

And just as the law of condemnation does not prevent a person from sinning, for it only warns about the risk of sinning and asserts the consequent punishment of sin, so the debt record, by itself, cannot free a person from punishment and give new life to the one who has been sentenced to death.

Without an appropriate solution being found and used to remedy the debt record, the weight of this debt becomes an increasingly hard, heavy, and suffocating burden.

The “*body of sin*,” also in its threats and accusations associated with the debt record, is an exceedingly bad extension of the action of sin, which is why Paul's question recorded in the Scriptures is not surprising, namely, “***Who will deliver me from this body of death?***”

But thanks God that similarly to what has been described about the knowledge of the first two points of the “*body of sin*,” also a sober comprehension about the debt record that sin seeks to put on people can serve as cooperation for them becoming aware that they need to find the appropriate, lasting, or definitive solution so that they no longer stay subject to this debt.

Although this may seem strange, and even though in principle a debt record is contrary to the sinner, debtor, or accused, sober knowledge about this characteristic of the “*body of sin*,” before its full execution, can serve for a person to see how dire one's condition is and how much one needs an intervention powerful enough that can remove him or her from such a dramatic and damaging situation.

Although a debt record is an instrument of prosecution, the fact that there is a debt charge before the penalty is fully executed also provides a space or possibility for the enforcement not to take place if another way to remedy the debt is submitted in an appropriate or due time.

On the one hand, a debt record associated with sin is a terrible instrument, for it asserts the high level of evil of the “*body of sin*,” accentuating and keeping alive the

memory of the punishment that has been scheduled to be applied. On the other hand, however, knowledge of the debt record is also an aspect that allows the recipient of the penalty to become aware, still in time, of how much one needs an alternative that can pay off, as soon as possible, one's debt with sin or resulting from the subjection to sin.

Therefore, or in view of the points above about the debt record that is against every human being, we would like to emphasize here once again that the Holy Spirit, in His call to convince the world of sin, certainly does not omit to expose what people need to know about the main points that sin seeks to use against each of them. And once again, the Spirit of Lord does not perform His call aiming that people become more terrified of the power of sin, but that they may open their hearts to the Lord's provision that is fully sufficient to deliver them from slavery to sin in all aspects that they need to be freed.

When the Lord Jesus Christ invites people to come to Him to be delivered from their burdens, He does not call them to be freed only from temporary burdens, but above all from the very heavy loads placed upon them by their association with sin and which seek to establish themselves as an eternal body of death upon them. Therefore, becoming convinced about the terrible items of the “body of sin” needs no longer frighten anyone if they turn to the Lord Jesus to be delivered from them.

When the Lord Jesus Christ calls people to come to Him to be delivered from their burdens, He invites them to be also, or above all, delivered from the charges that most terrify and most frighten them. Among the many profoundly sublime aspects that Christ's work on the cross of Calvary has provided for the people of the world, there is undoubtedly also the provision of the heavenly righteousness to rid people of the fear that the debt record or the punishment of sin will be entirely executed, as mentioned in the following text:

*Hebrews 2: 14 **Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,***
*15 **and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.***

In His mercy and love for each person, the Lord Jesus can deliver all from the debt record and the fear that people have of its execution because the Lord has also provided a complete, definitive, and eternal provision to nullify any eternal validity of the referred debt on those who believe in Him, as the following texts explicitly announce to us:

*Colossians 2: 13 **And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,***
*14 **having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.***
*15 **Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.***

*Romans 6: 6 **Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.***

The deliverance that is in Christ is perfect and complete to release a person from slavery to the most terrible aspects of sin, for it is also fully sufficient for any spiritual claim of the punishment of sin and the debt record against the life of a person becoming eternally extinguished.

If, in one sense, people may find themselves in great distress or anguish in the face of the knowledge of the deceit, punishment, and oppression of the debt record that is associated with sin and asserted by the condemning law, and yet by the fact that they come to know that the interruption of each item of the “*body of sin*” ends only if all the points that bind a person to this body are resolved, on the other hand, they no longer have to submit to this kind of affliction or fear since the provision for their deliverance from the “*body of sin*” is already provided and available in Christ Jesus.

*Romans 7: 24 **O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?***

*25 **I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind (or understanding) I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.***

*8:1 **There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.***

*2 **For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.***

*Romans 10: 4 **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.***

If it were not for the provision of the heavenly righteousness and God's mercy in Christ Jesus, no person could be delivered from the deceit of sin and no person could be spared from experiencing the punishment of sin recorded in the debt assignment that every human being has against him or her. And this, not because God in His mercy does not see sin or fail to punish sin, but because in His love for each person, the Lord has assumed, in Christ Jesus, the payment or the discharge of the eternal debt of every human being.

*Lamentations 3: 22 **Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.***

Isaiah 53: 5 **But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.**

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Psalms 86: 13 **For great is Your mercy toward me, And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.**

2 Peter 2: 9 **Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.**

Concluding this point, we would like to emphasize that we understand that a more extended approach to sin, including the aspect of the “*body of sin*,” is really necessary and that ignorance about it does not help a person to be protected from it. However, we would also like to emphasize the importance that the approach to sin should not be dissociated from an intense approach to the gift of righteousness that the Lord offers to all people so that they no longer need to be subject to the slavery of sin and to the condemnations that already came from subjection to sin.

Thus, in addition to the final part of the previous paragraph, we inform here that after still considering some other aspects of sin, we will seek to expose further a more specific, broad, or direct emphasis on the gift of God's righteousness which is offered to us by the Lord or in the Lord.

Even the individual who has already received the gift of God's righteousness should not neglect a broader knowledge about sin and the provision of righteousness that is in the Lord, for by neglecting a matter of such high relevance, many Christians have returned so often to put themselves under a risky condition in which they are more vulnerable to not realizing the cunning attempts of sin against their lives.

Matthew 11: 28 **Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

C15. Sin Seen from the Perspective of Offense

People who observe life with a little more attention or curiosity know that many facts that manifest themselves visibly in the daily lives of human beings derive from a sum of other causes and occurrences that preceded them, and which, in turn, are not always so easily identified.

Nevertheless, aiming at providing help to the mentioned identification or to establish a more evident distinction between some types of causes that may act as precursors of a particular event, nomenclatures called “*root causes*,” “*primary causes*,” and “*secondary causes*” have been used in contemporary times.

In some segments of society, the primary causes are considered to be those that are closer and more evident concerning a particular event that is under analysis. Secondary causes, on the other hand, are those that seem to be more distant from the end of the event, but which have a very striking influence on the origin or the occurrence of the primary causes.

For example, in a car accident by which a person became seriously injured, we could say that the primary cause that led a person to be exposed to injury is the car accident itself. Secondary causes, however, would be those that were responsible for the car accident to occur. In this example of the car accident, the secondary causes may have been a defect in a car part, driver's inattention, speeding, and so on.

Also because the division of causes analysis into primary and secondary causes, and especially from a growing broader understanding of the secondary causes, many accidents, illnesses, tragedies, thefts, and various types of damage have been prevented daily in several parts of the world. When the secondary causes are identified more broadly and accurately, also several preventive actions frequently end up with very significant growth in terms of quality and effectiveness.

Similarly, regarding the theme of the last chapters of this material and although the Scriptures do not use the terms primary and secondary causes explicitly as they are used in contemporary days, we can observe that the writings of the Bible also make intensive use of the division of causes at various levels in their most varied subjects and even concerning the subject of sin.

Seeing the practice of sin from the perspective of an event occasioned by a succession or order of various causes can significantly contribute to elucidating the most hidden causes of sin's working or the causes that cannot be seen only through the primary and most evident actions. The limited or even exaggerated emphasis only on the outward act that is committed in the practice of a particular sin can easily lead to a very short-sighted perspective about sin, making that the initial actions of what caused a person to sin do not become evident, an aspect which, in turn, can also weaken preventive measures against sin.

To see the practice of sin from the perspective of a multi-step event, or going beyond the knowledge of the primary causes of sin's actions, may serve to track more broadly what causes a sin and may help to advance in identifying or knowing the deeper and more hidden items in which sin is grounded to initiate its propositions and actions.

And among the secondary, initial, or not so explicit aspects on which sin seeks to base itself to engage people, it can be found precisely those points seen in the previous chapters of this material, such as:

- ⇒ 1) The central sin that is present in other sins;
- ⇒ 2) The purpose of sin behind its propositions or the temptations;
- ⇒ 3) The body of sin by which sin attempts to impute permanent slavery to those who become subject to sin.

Among others, each of the aspects mentioned above shows that sin's action through secondary causes or various stages can even surpass much its working through primary causes.

In this new chapter, however, we would like to point out that in the Scriptures there is still the indication of another aspect correlated with the secondary or root causes by which sin seeks to work and which should by no means be seen just at a glance or without further deepening into it. This aspect, in turn, is related to the term “***offense***,” which, for instance, is mentioned several times in chapter 5 of the book of Romans, as follows:

*Romans 5: 15(b) ... **by the one man's offense many died ...***

*Romans 5: 17(b) ... **by the one man's offense death reigned through the one ...***

*Romans 5: 18(b) ... **through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation ...***

*Romans 5: 20 **Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ²¹ so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

Although we have so far dealt with several more profound or secondary aspects of the means and stages by which sin seeks to extend its work, and although under a first, brief, or succinct analysis one may even come to consider the term “*offense*” just as another synonym for sin or transgression, we understand that approaching sin also from the perspective of “*offense*” can represent a very significant contribution. It can serve both for a more accurate understanding of sin's attempts to act and for a broader or more precise comprehension of the working of the Lord's righteousness to offer people a condition in which they no longer need to be subject to sin.

Some people may consider the term “*offense*” only as a synonym for sin because it, in the original language of the book of Romans, expresses the idea of *a person's fall from or beside a right path or a lapse or deviation that causes a person to deviate*

from the course of truth and uprightness that one was following, considerations that in fact present various characteristics of sin or similar to what happens when a person runs into subjection to sin.

Moreover, the consideration mentioned in the previous paragraph may also be one of the main reasons why the approach to this point is so scarce or timid in the general literature or the teachings about the means and steps by which sin attempts to act among human beings.

Nevertheless, upon a closer look at the word “*offense*,” it can be observed that its use in the Scriptures:

- ⇒ 1) Is not limited to the condition of a mere synonym of sin;
- ⇒ 2) Represents a complement to the concept of sin;
- ⇒ 3) Reveals more precisely some stages or main secondary aspects of sin's attempts of actions.

In its broader use or in expressing some details about the initial actions through which sin seeks to manifest itself, the term “*offense*” may also be seen as a word through which the Scriptures aim to make known some peculiar or very specific characteristics concerning the manner of sin's working and which perhaps could become unnoticed if the association between sin and “*offense*” were not so directly mentioned in the writings of the Bible.

Understanding the link between sin and “*offense*” reveals some of the most intriguing, vile, or obscure aspects of sin's attempts to act, for it discloses some very subtle initial actions by which sin seeks to introduce itself into the life of an individual or through which sin tries to plant seeds so that a person becomes inclined to give more and more place to it.

In its broader use, it may be noted that the term “*offense*” unveils some secondary or root aspects of sin's attempts to act whose knowledge may be crucial and enable that an even more precise detailing about the working of sin comes to light, for since the word “*offense*” has as one of its main definitions “*the fall or deviation from truth or righteousness*,” also the words “*scandal*” and “*stumbling*” mentioned in the Scriptures have their condition especially highlighted.

Observing sin from the standpoint of “*offense*” may represent a very significant contribution to the understanding that the word “*offense*” emphasizes sin from the angle that one who associated with it may have stumbled upon a proposition or temptation that was before him or her, while the term “*transgression*” or the very word “*sin*,” in general, tend to be seen more under the connotation that the one who has sinned has taken some more direct action to do an undue or improper act regarding truth or righteousness.

Thus, in the first place, observing sin from the perspective of “*offense*” makes it possible to see more notoriously that sinning or subjection to sin may also occur because of a person's lack of attention to what is proposed to him or her or to what is put before him or her.

Although the Scriptures show us that the devil presented himself before the Lord Jesus Christ to tempt Him directly, we can also see from the Scriptures that those who opposed the Lord were continuously lurking in the expectation that they would see the

Lord stumble on something improper or into the traps they sought to set before the Lord.

In their characteristic of seeking to act obscurely, the powers of evil make use of attempts to lead inattentive people to stumble as one of their chief strategies. A reason why the Scriptures so often call people to remain sober and watchful, as exemplified briefly below since this aspect has also been mentioned in the chapters on the temptation of sin:

*Mark 14: 38 **Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.***

*1 Peter 5: 8 **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.***
*9 **Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.***

As a second point, something that also makes the subject of “*offense*” very challenging to understand is that the propositions for people to incur “*offense*,” fall, scandal, or stumbling not only seek to present an attraction to what is evil, but they also seek to act so that people come to discredit what is good or that they embrace positions of disagreement with what is true and righteous, as exemplified in the following texts:

*Romans 9: 33 **As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."***

*1 Peter 2: 8 And **"A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.***

*Matthew 11: 6 **And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.***

Observing sin from the standpoint of “*offense*” draws attention also to the fact that a person may have given in to the practice of the most external or elementary transgression not necessarily because of the direct attraction to wrongdoing or evil, but because one first has accepted or embraced concepts contrary to what is appropriate, true, or righteous before the Eternal Lord.

Knowing that sin also contemplates the characteristics of an “*offense*,” stumbling, or falling signals the need for an individual's attention not only to not become attracted to the temptation of an act contrary to God's will, but also to prevent the heart from

becoming corrupted by propositions that seek to distort the understanding of the most diverse aspects of what is indeed right, true, and righteous in the sight of the Lord.

In this way, when the Lord Jesus Christ announces that blessed is the one who finds no cause to stumble in Him or to be offended concerning Him, the Lord is certainly not saying that in Him there is any reason for people to be offended, but He is warning to the fact that people may be involved in unfounded “*offenses*” against the Lord if they do not keep vigilant regarding this possibility.

In highlighting the fact that a person may find cause for “*offense*,” stumbling, or scandal in Him, even though in Him there has never been, there is not, and never will be any sin or unrighteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ underscores how much the association of sin with deceit or deception is one of sin’s principal and inseparable characteristics.

In other words, just as there was no reason for Adam to accept an “*offense*” against his Creator, but he did so by heeding the seed of doubt about God's righteousness and His instructions, so the Lord Jesus Christ warns people to be careful not to accept any kind of propositions that seek to corrupt their confidence in God or what is appropriate to think about the Lord.

When the Lord Jesus Christ Himself warns people not to become scandalized in Him, He does so to warn people of the danger that comes with receiving “*offenses*” and for people to know that the “*offense*” against Him or God is very or extremely dangerous. And as such, “*offense*” may become the stumbling block with vast potential for harm to those who get offended with the Lord.

Luke 20: 17 **Then He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone'?**

18 *Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."*

Luke 17: 1 **Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses (or scandals) should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!"**

And considering yet what has been exposed above, the Lord Jesus Christ still teaches that the aspects related to “*offenses*” or scandals represent one of the most determining points for the production or the rising of so many sorrows and evils in the present world, as follows:

Matthew 18: 7 **Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!**

Also from the perspective of “*offense*,” sin is extremely vile from the beginning of its propositions, purposes, and the consequences it seeks to cause to those who submit to it.

Although the narrative in Genesis 3 also shows the various steps that led the human being to the practice of the first sin of humanity, the sin associated with the term “*offense*,” as, for instance, in the book of Romans, highlights even more objectively the subtle aspects that occurred in the human heart so that he would later come to practice the most outwardly visible acts of sin.

Sin exposed in a manner associated with the term “*offense*” allows us to observe even more explicitly how sin invariably tries to interfere with deceit in people's relationship with God, and by this, aiming at weakening their trust in the Lord or hardening their heart against the Creator of their lives.

Finally, as a third point, we would like to point out that in its attempts to act in stages or from secondary, initial, or preceding causes, sin seeks to create a succession of “*offenses*” where the first “*offenses*” cease to be just an “*offense*” and become propelling means or motives for new “*offenses*” or sins.

As mentioned in the chapter on the body of sin, sin does not only want to lead a person to commit a transgression, but it aims to enslave individuals through what may come over who became subject to sin so that the body of sin becomes a means of multiplication of other sins, what likewise applies also to “*offense*.”

And yet, **among the main aspects by which sin seeks to turn an “*offense*” into an instrument for the succession of other “*offenses*” is the fact that “*offense*” can also be correlated with the terms “*offending*,” “*contending*,” or similar.**

In other words, when, for instance, we come to see the “*offense*” also related to an action that may offend an individual or a proposition that someone welcomes in one's heart, it comes to denote the expressive danger that lies behind an individual becoming or feeling offended and, because of it, act on new “*offenses*” from other “*offenses*” previously received. A person who is offended or inclined to act out of “*offenses*” received, and not from the sober instruction the Lord gives him or her, puts oneself at high risk of seeing one's heart acting as a source of other “*offenses*.”

Considering still the correlation of “*offense*” with the position of being offended, we understand that this point also contributes significantly to the understanding of the exhortation that the Lord Jesus Christ makes for people not to be scandalized in Him, for one main reason why many people become offended with God occurs when they are offended by the way the Lord presents Himself to them, how He acts among them, or how the Lord determines the timing of His action among human beings.

In addition, the act of welcoming an “*offense*” with the above characteristics presents another extremely perilous aspect, for the “*offense*” received under the condition of becoming offended may still manifest a point by which a person places oneself in a fortified dome with high degree of resistance against any aid that may be offered to him or her, as exemplified below:

Proverbs 18: 19 ***A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle.***

Therefore, understanding the working of sin from the point of view of “*offense*” and, in turn, the “*offense*” correlated to the terms such as “*offending*,” “*contending*,” and others, makes us see or identify more transparently one of the main features of the deepest roots through which sin seeks to engage people in the next stages of its work.

When the process by which sin seeks to act is observed from the perspective of the multiple characteristics of “*offense*,” as the Scriptures instruct us to look at it, it can be noted even more broadly that the subtlety and the wickedness of the temptation of sin indeed go far beyond the mere proposition of committing just an outward transgression, a reason why this theme also needs to be investigated in more detail as part of the Holy Spirit's work of convincing the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Ephesians 4: 30 ***And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.***

31 ***Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.***

C16. Additional Considerations on the Variety of Characteristics or Stages of the Working of an Offense

Several aspects regarding the attempts of sin's actions from the perspective of offense were set out in the previous chapter, but because of the relevance of this theme and aiming to encompass an even more objective overview of these attempts, we would like to insist a little further on this subject.

And among the various aspects that may be addressed more specifically, we understand that one main point that makes understanding the offense particularly challenging is that it seeks to act in multiple stages and in a peculiar way in each of these steps.

In its various attempts or stages of action, the offense may encompass characteristics that are similar to the considerations made in previous chapters on the temptation of sin, but it may also include aspects that are similar to the body of sin that seeks to prolong the action of sin far beyond the practice of a specific sin.

Taking into account, then, first, the fact that offense may be equivalent to temptation, it can be seen in the Scriptures that the propositions of offenses may be presented to people before they accept, practice, or stumble upon them.

In its condition equivalent to a temptation, an offense may be exposed to an individual without this person necessarily incurring what the offense seeks to accomplish in or through his or her life, thereby showing that an offense towards a particular individual can already be active even if a person does not associate with it or before a person associate oneself with it.

Because a person has the option of rejecting a proposition of incurring an offense, it is notorious that the process of an offense may already have its beginning through other means even before it is proposed to an individual, for the proposition of an offense only occurs through agents who present it.

If we consider that one of the main characteristics of the offense is associated with the fall or stumbling of a person, we understand that part of its performance is also related to the activities of agents who beforehand seek to place propositions or obstacles for others to stumble on them.

Thus, in the first sense mentioned above, the offense is also characterized by a proposition that may involve the stage where an agent seeks to make use of an offense in order to continue this or other offenses by or in other individuals, trying to do so even without that the one who is targeted by the respective temptation has had in one's heart any previous participation in the offense of others or in the offense of the agent who is proposing the association of others with his or her offense.

And also based on the previous point on the characteristics of the attempts or stages of the working of an offense or sin, we would like to add, as a second point, the observation that an offense is also something that can be received in the heart from vile suggestions or questionings proposed by others even before the practice of a sin in its most external form is suggested directly.

Looking at sin's attempt to act under this second point, may also contribute to the understanding that the propositions of the acceptance of an offense do not necessarily seek to lead people directly to commit the external act of some temptation, but that

they often also seek to act by gradual stages of people's involvement until they perform the most outward actions.

In its early stages, the propositions of acceptance of an offense often seek to contaminate an inattentive or non-vigilant heart even through aspects that may initially appear to be unrelated to the proposition to commit a sin, but which a little later reveal themselves as previous actions that aim at making a person lower one's guard or be weakened in one's sobriety or understanding in order to not resist the proposition of the more external actions of the practice of sin.

In their first steps, many propositions of offense do not have as their primary objective the proposal of the practice of the part of sin that is more external, but to introduce corrupted questionings or concepts so that, from their acceptance or assimilation, an individual comes to practice the offense in its more exterior action, sometimes reaching even the point of not having to explicitly suggest the practice of the most external part of a specific sin.

If, for example, we compare the attempts of sin against a person with an army that intends to attack a fortified city, the offense, in one of its characteristics, would be like an agent of an army who would try to sneak into the city to open the doors of the fortification from the inside of it so that his army could more easily enter the protected city.

The preliminary proposition that seeks that an offense comes to be received in the heart is an attempt to lead an individual to associate with a more veiled sin so that one's perception of the need to resist the propositions of the most external sins becomes weakened or obscured. The proposition of an offense, in many situations, may have the character of an attempt to establish a secondary cause that is veiled or that seeks to remain hidden so that a person subsequently becomes more predisposed to other sins or to sins that are more notorious externally.

If Adam's sin, narrated in the early chapters of Genesis, is viewed as an event permeated by an offense working in several stages, it can be noted that the offense had been already in operation before the final practice of the first sin of humankind was outwardly manifested. Looking at Adam's sin only from the perspective of eating the fruit not authorized by the Lord reduces, significantly, the view of the whole scenario of the facts described in the very Scriptures about the occurrence of the first encounter of Adam and Eve with the proposition of sin.

Before the first sin of humankind came to be manifested externally, a lying conceptual proposition of an offense was presented with a hidden intention that it would become accepted by the hearts of those whom the temptation sought to involve. Before the action of the outward or the visible part of sin took place, one of the stages of that temptation worked for an offense against God to be absorbed by those who had no reason to become offended with God or to give continuity to the offense presented.

Instead of making a direct proposition of an alternative or opposite way to the path of life instructed by God to Adam and Eve, the serpent used the falsehood of words or the perversity of the lips to expose an offense against the Lord that had already been elaborated previously.

With the subtle objective of making Adam and Eve more likely to accept the proposal of an alternative path supposedly favorable to them, the devil first aimed at trying to produce their discontent with the way and condition of life in which they

found themselves. Instead of presenting a direct proposition for Adam and Eve to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and thus rebel directly against God, the devil sought to introduce a proposition to weaken their hearts regarding their trust in God so that the desire to keep or faithfully follow the Lord's instruction would also become weakened.

Instead of proposing a direct action of an outward transgression, the devil sought to use the subtlety of the proposition of a point of doubt about God, God's instruction, and God's intention in giving His guidance. That is, the serpent proposed something in which Adam and Eve would first become offended or scandalized towards the Lord so that they would subsequently disregard the instruction regarding whom they would come to have their minds defiled or corrupted.

The cycle of Adam and Eve's offense against God did not have its first stage in eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but in the devil's proposition to sow doubt in their hearts, which in turn, was also welcomed by Adam and Eve. Adam's sin, seen as an event with several stages, did not become manifested just because of a single action performed only in the final act he committed, but it also was in operation in what was assimilated at the beginning of the contact with evil and even before the outward practice of sin. Adam's sin, which caused immeasurable harm to him and his offspring, first began when the serpent's offense or lie against God and against the word that the Lord had spoken was accepted.

After Adam and Eve did not resist the deception proposed in the early stages of the proposition of the offense, the other steps of the offense also gained increasing strength to be manifested. Considering Adam's sin as a multi-step event, the outward act of sin was the manifestation or an example of the severe aspects that the previous stages of an offense received in the heart may cause in the life of the one who accepts or hosts it.

And if we continue to pay attention to the aspect of the early stages of the process of proposing offenses, we understand that we may see the present point still from another angle.

So, as the third point to be addressed in this chapter, we would like to highlight that the offense propositions, in their wickedness, often seek to establish first a primary or chief offense in the lives of people which for many people may not even appear to be an offense.

If on the one hand we can see from the Scriptures that Adam and Eve sinned because they gave too much or inappropriate space to the offense proposed by the devil or the serpent's mouth, on the other hand, we can see as well that the offense has advanced to new stages because by listening to the proposition of the offense, Adam and Eve, at the same time, also abandoned or ceased to consider God's instruction and their daily fellowship with the Lord.

From the perspective of this third point, it can be seen, therefore, that a central part of Adam and Eve's problem basically was that they did not seek the Lord or wait for the Lord so that He, through fellowship, would clarify the deceit there was in the early stages of the offense presented by the serpent.

As we have also seen in previous chapters, in proposing the sowing of an offense in a person's heart, the powers of darkness, above all, aim to produce a disruption of the trust of an individual in God, for a central part that permeates the practice of sins by humans is the attitude of an individual not to trust God, not to seek fellowship with the Lord, or not to trust in the Lord's continual and living instruction.

Lack of trust in God or lack of fellowship with the Lord repeatedly presents itself as one of the secondary, root, or main factors because of which many people end up making inappropriate concessions to the propositions of offenses which they end up facing in their lives.

While the temptation of sin sometimes tends to be viewed more predominantly from the perspective of trying to induce a person to move on to do something that should not be done, looking at temptation through the stages of offense propositions enhances the point that the wickedness of sin is not only in what it suggests for an individual to do but also in what it subtly longs for a person to abandon before the practice of the more outward act of sin.

Several dictionaries explain that the offense, or a cause for scandal, among other things, is also a disagreement, a separation, an affront, a transgression of an established agreement or even an act of infidelity of one side with the other part.

Thus, Adam's sin, before or beyond being an act of advancing to evil, was a sin of breaking a covenant of faithfulness to God.

Hosea 6: 7 **But like Adam (men) they transgressed the covenant; There they dealt treacherously with Me.**

In the Scriptures, there are several texts in which the emphasis of taking a position against sin is not only described as adopting the posture of resisting the practices suggested by the temptation of sin, but it is also firmly or mainly emphasized as related to the Lord's call for people to not turn away from the fellowship with Him and the instructions which the Lord offers by His grace to all.

The keeping of the living fellowship with the Lord and the instructions He grants to the heart is fundamental at all times in the life of those who long to walk on the path of eternal life and so that no space for a possible deviation from this path may arise, as briefly exemplified in the texts below:

1 Corinthians 1: 9 **God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Proverbs 4: 20 **My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.**

21 **Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart;**

22 **For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh.**

23 **Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.**

24 **Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you.**

25 **Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you.**

26 **Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established.**

Proverbs 1: 5 A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,
6 To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles.
7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

In addressing sin's attempts to act, some people might tend to make the emphasis of teaching fall more prominently or almost exclusively on the most evident and outward acts of the practice of sin, but this is not sufficient and productive to highlight what was indeed abandoned for a sin to become committed.

Therefore, **if the subtlety of the temptation of sin is already extremely perverse in attempting to conceal the body of sin that an individual may come to reap by associating with an offense, far more perverse is the subtlety of temptation to seek to hide what a person may lose by the subjection to sin or offense.**

In choosing to accept the offense proposed to them by the serpent, Adam and Eve not only decided to receive the proposition of the offense, but also chose to stop walking in the continual fellowship with the Lord, in the daily and living instruction of God, and in the confidence in the truth and the heavenly righteousness. By accepting or receiving the offense, Adam and Eve inclined themselves to the path of withdrawal from life and to the way of the harvest of death because of the wages of subjection to sin.

Even though the damage of sin may be terrible in terms of punishment and debt record, that is, in regard to the body of sin, the most considerable damage to which, for example, Adam became subjected after the practice of sin was not only what sin imputed upon him, but what Adam lost because of having received the imputation of being a sinner who committed a sin which was, at the same time, the expression of an offense.

By association with the offense or the practice of sin, Adam became subject to the penalty of his sin. However, worse than being under the sentence of punishment of a sinful act is to become dissociated, because of an offense, from the fellowship with the only source that can redeem a person from the chastisement of sin.

In its general concept, sin not only seeks to act to make people subject to a debt that is not payable by human beings, but it seeks to keep people associated with offenses so that primarily their fellowship with the One Who has the provision for the discharge of the debt of punishment and the power to forgive the sinner is weakened.

Still in other words, one central damage that the subjection of sin seeks to cause in the life of every human being is the separation or blindness that this subjection can cause concerning the knowledge of God's glory or the knowledge of who God is and what God provides both for life in the present time and for eternal life, as taught in the following text:

*Romans 3: 23 **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.***

As we have seen in previous chapters, and to put it briefly, the ultimate consequence associated with subjection to sin actually flows into death, for death is the harvest of the one who sows the practice of sin and does not reach a provision that can interrupt this harvest. However, the wages of sin is death not only because there is a sentence of a death penalty to the sinner, but because the choice to be subject to sin may also result in leaving the source of life and the instructions of the newness of life that there is in the Lord.

Death as the wages of sin is caused not just because of the subjection to evil itself, but because the choice of subjecting to darkness is also characterized as a choice of a way of turning away from the One Who can grant eternal forgiveness to the sinner, the novelty of eternal life, and the light for an individual to walk in the path of this newness of heavenly life.

*1 John 5: 10 **He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.***

*11 **And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.***

*12 **He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.***

*13 **These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.***

*John 8: 12 **Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."***

*John 3: 19 **And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.***

Of all the consequences that come from the associating with sin, the most serious has always been, and remains to be, the interference that sin, as an offense, seeks to cause in the relationship of an individual with God. Ultimately, it is always this central point that the propositions of practicing sin aim to achieve.

*Isaiah 59: 1 **Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear.***

*2 **But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.***

The lethal condition of sin initially tries to work in the interruption of the flow of the fellowship on an individual with the heavenly life to then manifesting itself in the matter of slavery and punishment that it attempts to put on people. The primary or

main harm that sin seeks to cause at the very beginning of its proposition is the withdrawal of people from an appropriate relationship with the Lord, for it is only in the Lord that an individual can find proper discernment inclusive to discern the misleading propositions of offenses.

Knowing the characteristics of the attempts of actions of sin from the perspective of offense is also one of the points that very explicitly makes evident the need for every human being to remain in the living, continuous, and close fellowship with his One True Creator.

*Hebrews 3: 7 **Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice,***

8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness."

*...
12 **Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;***

13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.

What is, then, and what has always been the central challenge of the human being?

The greatest challenge of human beings has always been and remains to be the fellowship with the Lord, the Unique True Creator. And therefore, corrupting this relationship is also the highest target of sin in its actions of proposing offenses.

A person's heart is the central battlefield on which sin seeks space to work. And, in turn, an offense is one of the favorite flags that sin tries to set on this battlefield, for if a person has his or her heart in God, one also has access to the source of eternal life, but if a person welcomes something undue in the heart that separates him or her from the source of this life, the result, if nothing contrary to it is done, is a successive harvest of new errors and devious paths.

And here again, we would like to make use of the aspects covered in the paragraphs above to highlight a fourth point or stage of the attempts of the actions of an offense, which shows us that after the step of trying to keep people from the fellowship with the Lord, the offense seeks to work so that those who have distanced themselves from the Lord also come to act from the opposing position they have taken in their hearts regarding the fellowship with God.

The subjection of an individual to an offense may also result in the subordination of the sinner to a position of enmity toward God or a condition where one behaves as an enemy of the Lord, for the choice of something that God does not do and will never be part of is also an option contrary to God and, therefore, characterized as an offense against God Himself and His kingdom, as exemplified below:

*James 4: 4 **Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.***

- 1 John 2: 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*
- 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.*

Since God is not an accomplice to sin, falsehood, or lie, regardless of who practices them, adopting the attitude of subjection to an offense may also imply that the one subjected to sin moves to a position of rebellion in relation to the will of the Lord, which, in turn, also expresses a work of sin as described below:

1 Samuel 15: 23(a) For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

In one of its aspects, the proposition of an offense is a proposition of the deposit of discontentment or contention in the heart that aims to change the inclination of the heart so that a person gives up being connected to one side to become attached to another part to opposing inclusive that first part from which one withdraw oneself.

Remaining in the fellowship with the Lord or changing sides in the position regarding this relationship is what respectively determines one's victory or defeat over sin, and this is why sin so much enjoys using the proposition of offenses and scandals, because by receiving them, people may be positioning themselves at the side of sin and at the same time in a position contrary to God.

The subtlety of the offense's working is surprising, for if allowed to do so, it may simultaneously withdraw a person from God's will and obscure one's heart to become an opponent of the Lord.

Therefore, Adam's sin imputed to him a punishment as a salary and affected the fellowship he had with his Creator, but in yielding to subjection to sin, Adam also subjected himself to a position of offense, disobedience, and resistance to the Lord and at His instruction.

Let us note well the characteristics associated with Adam's sin once again. Adam's sin was not motivated by a mere longing to eat an unauthorized fruit. Adam's sin was encouraged by the serpent through a lie directly offensive to God and by the devil's motivation in contradicting what was established by the Creator.

The sin to which the human being submitted for the first time was also a choice to submit to a proposal of trying to live a life where God's full and absolute sovereignty supposedly could cease to be a reality or at least cease to belong exclusively to God. The offense presented by the serpent included the proposition that by eating the fruit in reference there would no longer be only one sovereign God, suggesting that the very human being could become a god to himself and that he might equate himself with the One and Only Eternal God who knows everything and provides everything for life.

The matter behind the temptation, which was hidden in the subtle induction for the fruit of a particular tree to be eaten, was not just an option to eat or not to eat a specific

fruit, but it involved the context of an inner choice for another kind of government over life and, implicitly, for the rejection of the type of government so far established over it.

Moreover, when Adam chose to eat from the fruit of the tree that he was not authorized by God to eat, Adam chose to believe the serpent rather than the One who created him, accepting the assumption that God perhaps was lying about the consequences of sin. When Adam made the choice for the proposed offense, he also chose to be complicit in an offense against his very Creator and source of resources for life.

Considering that in the Scriptures that which is not done through faith in God or by trusting the Lord is also regarded as sin, or that without faith it is impossible to please God, to yield to subjection to an offense that seeks to shake one's trust in the Lord represents not only a way of departure from the confidence in the Lord, but it is also an attitude that acts in opposition to the Lord and what is pleasing in God's eyes. And in this respect, there is no neutral position to be chosen by an individual.

*Luke 11: 23 **He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.***

Accepting the way God establishes the functioning of all aspects of life is one of the biggest and most central challenges for all human beings, and this is also a crucial point in a person's positioning specifically concerning the offenses that are put before him or her.

Thus, under a summarized and objective analysis, sin, when viewed from the perspective of an offense accepted in the heart, is also characterized as an expression of discontent with God or dissatisfaction with the will of the Lord, and which, in turn, will seek to act also outwardly to try to change what God has established or longs for people to follow.

In other words, observing sin under the cycle of receiving an offense cooperates to show still in another way the opposite position toward God that there is in all sin, which is why the following texts also show that when a person submits to sin one also simultaneously placed oneself in a position of offense toward the eternal Creator, as follows:

*Psalms 51: 1 **Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.***

*2 **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.***

*3 **For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me.***

*4 **Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight: That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.***

*Psalms 41: 4 **I said, "LORD, be merciful to me; Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You."***

Luke 15: 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you."

We also recall here again, what was commented in the previous chapter, namely that the propositions of offenses are often not exposed by a direct attraction to evil, but by proposing questions or uncertainties contrary to righteousness and truth so that a person becomes weakened in one's conviction about these aspects and also starts to work in opposition to them.

Thus, concerning the present point, the proposition of accepting an offense may also have associated with it the objective of leading a person to take side with the offender, trying so to make that the one who receives it also becomes an offender against the one or that which is the target of the offense. The offense may come to be a proposition of taking a position against someone or something that one side proposes so that other parts also become partakers in the proposed offense.

Sin viewed from the perspective of an offense shows that the propositions of sin indeed seek to disrupt a person's proper relationship with God, for in doing so, it also opens the space for advancing to the point of enticing people to the side of opposition to God.

Regarding the case of Adam and Eve, while they still were in Eden, it can be observed, then, that the first offense with which humanity became involved was a sequence or a cycle of steps, showing that the offense proposed to them by the serpent involved at least three parts, namely:

- ⇒ a) The proponent of the first offense, namely the serpent or the devil;
- ⇒ b) The possible recipients of the first proposed offense, namely Adam and Eve;
- ⇒ c) The principal or the final target that the offense aimed to reach through new stages and through new offenders, that is, God.

And, in turn, as already mentioned similarly in the previous chapter, if it happens that an individual accepts a proposed offense, associates with it, or stumbles upon the proposition made, then also a fifth point of the offense's action may begin to become more notorious, which is the attempt to generate a cycle of new offenses and new offenders.

Expressing it in another way, one thing that can be observed from the case of Adam and Eve is that the attempt of sin acting through an offense does not seek to generate a one-occurrence event, but an event that causes a process with a succession of new occurrences, stages, offenders and broader targets.

Considering that the acceptance of an offense by an individual may change his or her position of friendship in enmity, of cooperation in a posture of resistance, and of integrity and righteousness in a conduct of corruption and unrighteousness, it is once again highlighted that sin, besides from the harm it seeks to inflict on who is subject to it, also aims to make those subjected to it multipliers of the actions of sin.

Accepting an offense, if no effective position against its action is taken, is a highly dangerous attitude. It may be the beginning of a successive chain of new sins on the part of the host of the offense, as well as it may become the beginning of a successive chain of new offenses, new offended people, and new offenders, since the offense received by an individual also can try to use this person as another carrier of offenses to other people.

In one sense, the offense may make it more evident that sin could be compared to a harmful virus or bacterium that primarily aims to contaminate an individual and cause severe harm to his or her life, but in another, this perspective makes it more evident that sin also has its focus on using the contaminated person as a means or a new agent to try to reach other individuals.

The intense and explicit interest of the powers of darkness in the offense is because the offense received has a potential that is not only active in leading a person to the practice of a particular sin, but also in the fact that it may be productive in generating a chain reaction of new sins in the life of the one who received the offense as well as against the lives of others who are somehow involved in the life of the one who is the target of the first proposition of the offense.

The powers of darkness are aware of the potential for contamination that may be associated with the acceptance and reproduction of offenses, and this is why the temptation of sin is so intense in the sense of trying to cause a person to stumble into an offense or to encounter a space to place an offense in the heart of those it seeks to entice as a performer of new sins.

The proposition of an offense, from its first attempt or stage of action, seeks to act as a precursor to a series of sins or offenses that evil aims to propose in the steps more ahead.

Therefore, one thing that should never be overlooked about the cycle of an offense or its attempt to work in multiple steps is that the acceptance of an offense may change not only a person's position in relation to God but also regarding other individuals.

Associating or adhering to an offense may cause people to change sides regarding the Eternal Creator and the proponent of the offense, but also in relation to other individuals.

The offense seen, for instance, from the point of view of being a motive that aims to make people come to the position of offended with God, with truth, and righteousness shows us that what offenses present in their contents are, in its later stages, also propositions of indignation of one side with possible reflections on several other parts.

In the case of the offense proposed to Adam and Eve in Eden, the first disgruntled with God was the devil, who, in his indignation, was not content with him already being an offender to God, thus seeking to involve other individuals in his own offense so that they too would become offenders to God.

Similarly, when the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world in the flesh, the outraged against Christ were primarily the Pharisees and not the people in general, but who, not being satisfied with the situation, also sought to incite the people to become scandalized with the Lord Jesus or to find causes for stumbling in Christ.

Moreover, in some of its attributes, an offense could perhaps also be compared to a long-lasting battery that has the possibility of receiving multiple charges to energize the maintenance and growth of sin in a person's life.

Since the acceptance of an offense may cause a person to shift his or her position toward God from one side to another, it may also lead to absurd and unfounded disturbances, stubbornness, and edification of resistances to peace, against truth, against justice and, at the same time, to cause an attraction to that which is contrary to the truth and true righteousness.

One of the powerful effects of the offense on the lives of the offended people is, then, that the absorbed offense seeks to make these individuals adopt very bizarre, evil, and harmful attitudes towards themselves and against others, attempting to use even the most varied hypocrisies or dissimulation.

From the standpoint of an offense, sin demonstrates that the devil's strategy through one of the attributes of the offense's actions is to try to introduce a mentality that seeks to reverse good into evil and evil into good. Through offenses, sin seeks to disorder people's thinking so that they may come to regard "the thief as the good character in the story" and the "truly good character as the thief in the facts." And all this, in order to grant broader freedom of action to the thief or to weaken people's resistance to him.

Isaiah 5: 20 **Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!**

The thief, referring here to the devil, never proposes anything good and none of his propositions of offenses have righteousness as their foundation.

John 10: 10(a) **The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.**

In his eagerness to perpetuate his wrongdoing, the thief seeks to turn everyone else into thieves as well, perhaps thinking that by doing so he will not be exposed to true righteousness and, consequently, will not be exposed to condemnation by not having anyone who could condemn him.

Sin viewed from the perspective of offense also expresses the attempt to propagate a lie under an appearance of truth to justify the continuity and the spread of evil.

The offense proposes to make the offending agent the victim of the offense and proposes to make all others equally offenders to try to place them in a condition similar to the first offender. The offense may manifest very perverse characteristics because it is a means by which the proponent of the offense seeks to raise or gather others to his or her corrupted side so that these also stand against those with whom the offender is offended and against the truth and righteousness that denounce his or her attitudes.

The offense seeks to generate a vicious cycle where the heart is filled with thoughts that aim at keeping the focus on the idea that people are the victim of evil and that the injustices that come to them are ultimately the result of the lack of a true care of God towards them and not the fruit of the enmity that the human beings received in their hearts against God. And it is also because of these kinds of characteristics inherent to the offenses that the Scriptures warn people not to associate themselves with bitterness and related aspects, as follows:

*Hebrews 12: 15 **Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.***

*Ephesians 4: 30 **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.***

*31 **Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.***

Soon after Adam surrendered himself to the offense against God, his heart began to give the continuity of the propagation of other contentions, claiming that God was guilty of his sin because of the woman God had given him. That is, after committing an offense against God, because he had accepted an offense against the Lord in his heart, Adam offends both God and his wife, trying to avoid offending himself for not recognizing that it was he himself who had sinned.

Therefore, or because of the profound wickedness of offense as a multiplier of sin, that also the sowing of contention and discord with the goal of passing on an offense is so abominable before God, as exemplified in the list of the following texts:

*Jeremiah 2: 29 **"Why will you plead with Me? You all have transgressed against Me," says the LORD.***

*Isaiah 45: 9 **Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'?***

*Isaiah 41: 11 **Behold, all those who were incensed against you Shall be ashamed and disgraced; They shall be as nothing, And those who strive with you shall perish.***

*Proverbs 6: 16 **These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:***

*17 **A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood,***
*18 **A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil,***

*19 **A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.***

*Romans 16: 17 **Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.***

18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Proverbs 6: 12 **A worthless person, a wicked man, Walks with a perverse mouth;**

13 He winks with his eyes, He shuffles his feet, He points with his fingers;

14 Perversity is in his heart, He devises evil continually, He sows discord.

Proverbs 17: 11 **An evil man seeks only rebellion; Therefore a cruel messenger will be sent against him.**

12 Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, Rather than a fool in his folly.

13 Whoever rewards evil for good, Evil will not depart from his house.

14 The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.

15 He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

Isaiah 30: 1 **"Woe to the rebellious children," says the LORD, "Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add sin to sin."**

The offense is one of the most important aspects to be understood about the working of sin, for it is one of the most relevant points to be dealt with very firmly and objectively in order to be eradicated from the heart so that enmity no longer extends from the one who is tempted to accept an offense in the heart or to keep holding on to an offense already received.

The offense is not something that can be dealt with lightly, for even if the external damage to a particular sin may be repaired or fully resolved in the civilly accepted sphere of a given society, the offense can still remain associated with the heart of the people, whether it is in the heart of the one who has sinned or in the heart of the person who has been the victim of someone else's sin. Thus, an offense may lead to a result where a specific sin may continue to have active space through an offense even after it has been outwardly resolved.

So, realizing that in the actions of sin, there is also a seed of offense wanting to extend to new sins, allows us to see more clearly the astuteness of sin and the longing that there is in the working of sin to try to continue to multiply itself further.

The propositions of offenses, scandals, or stumbling means, which perversely and deceitfully aim to turn people against God and other people, are so abhorrent to God because these things may advance beyond stumbling into a transgression and even come to a condition of appreciation for sin and the spread of sin.

*Proverbs 17: 19 **He who loves transgression loves strife, And he who exalts his gate seeks destruction.***

*Proverbs 29: 22 **An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression.***

*Proverbs 28: 25 **He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, ...***

On the other hand, we would like to point out that the non-acceptance, non-absorption, and non-support of offenses, scandals, or stumbling means change the scenario profoundly in the life of those who reject these aspects in the sense of not welcoming them in the heart, as well as in the sense of not reproducing them against others, as exemplified to us by the Lord Jesus Christ and as instructed in the following texts:

*1 Peter 2: 20 **For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.***

*21 **For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:***

*22 **"Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";***

*23 **who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;***

*24 **who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness, by whose stripes you were healed.***

*Proverbs 22: 10 **Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; Yes, strife and reproach will cease.***

*Proverbs 26: 20 **Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.***

*Mark 11: 25 **And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.***

*26 **But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.***

*Matthew 5: 9 **Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.***

Looking, then, to summarize the previous and the present chapter, we may see that sin from the perspective of an offense, among other things, aims to:

- ⇒ a) Present itself not only directly, but also through veiled means or propositions that seek to cause inattentive people to stumble into becoming associated with sin;
- ⇒ b) Attract people not only to appreciate evil, but also through the attempts of discrediting or belittle what is true, righteous, or good;
- ⇒ c) Work so that an offense does not become restricted to an isolated act only, but that it becomes a means of multiplication of other offenses by also associating it with aspects of terms such as offending, contending, and others;
- ⇒ d) Propose offenses as temptations subtly elaborated already before they are even accepted;
- ⇒ e) Suggest the acceptance of offenses in stages or gradually even by veiled propositions or that initially do not appear to be related to the most external propositions of sin;
- ⇒ f) Suggest the acceptance of some primary offenses that for many do not even seem to be an offense, such as the breaking of the fellowship of an individual with the Lord;
- ⇒ g) Lead a person who has departed from the fellowship with the Lord also to act in accordance with the position against the Lord that he or she has adopted;
- ⇒ h) Lead a person who accepted or received the offense initially proposed also to become an offender multiplier of offenses against God, oneself, and his or her fellow men.

And finally, in this chapter, as in the other parts about sin, we would like to reiterate once more that the convincing about the various attributes of sin, when done in the light of God's righteousness, is not primarily intended only to highlight the destruction that sin wants to cause. Addressing the aspects of sin more broadly, also when it presents itself in the form of offense, strife, scandal, or cause of stumbling, is intended to show the need for people to resist sin or not to associate with it in these specific characteristics as well.

And even more relevant than the aspect mentioned in the previous paragraph, addressing the characteristics of sin from the point of view of the offense is intended to show, also from this angle, that although sin seeks to make use of various ways or steps, the Scriptures show us that the Lord's provision for people not having to submit to sin is entirely sufficient.

*Romans 5: 17 **For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.***

...
*20 **Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,***

21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As much as a person has already offended God and his beloved Son, the path of forgiveness of these offenses and of the reconciliation with the Creator has been fully provided by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, and which, in turn, is available to all who do not accept to be offended or remain offended with the way God offers this reconciliation and to anyone who believes in the Lord for salvation also from the oppression caused by sin in its characteristics of offense.

Romans 6: 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

C17. The Ineffective or False Means that Try to Deal with Sin and the Set of Aspects Derived from Sin

After discussing in the previous chapters about so many aspects related to sin, we understand that a broader or more specific approach to the themes that teach us to avoid, resist, or reject the evil attempts at sin also becomes increasingly necessary or crucial.

The mere knowledge of sin and the consequences derived from sin would not be of much use if there were no alternative that would allow these consequences of being stopped or remedied. The knowledge of sin and the implications that sin tries to attribute to those who associate with its propositions is very useful so that sin may never be seen lightly, so that people may see and understand better their need to turn away from sin, but also to become aware of their necessity of finding an alternative that can truly set them free from sin and the most relevant effects of the subjection they have already done to sin.

Sin indeed has death as its salary, and this is a principle that human beings themselves cannot modify. However, this does not automatically imply that there is no proper way to deal with sin and the aspects that derive from it so that the sinner can be delivered from sin and the consequences that could come to the one who became subject to sin.

To explain that sin has death as its final harvest is a real part of the work of convincing about the aspects related to sin, but to say that there is nothing more to be done about the sinner to deliver him or her from this punishment is a very distinct and incomplete situation or statement. Explaining sin only in the light of the condemnation that death is the wages of sin, without showing the process of how this death is applied and how the eternal chastisement can be avoided, would only serve to destroy and condemn, but it would not serve for the redemption and salvation of the human beings from this terrible condemnation.

Proper information about the possible effects of sin on a sinner's life or the information that sin is a way of death for the one who remains subject to it receives significant emphasis in the Scriptures primarily for that a person, still in the time of salvation, may look for the appropriate alternative of help to stop the destructive process of sin. The wages of sin is the eternal separation from fellowship with the Lord if one remains in sin, but if the sinner reaches the path that breaks his or her association with sin, one can come to see the interruption of the process of the consequences of death assigned to him or her.

As has been commented earlier, when the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, exposes sin and its vile or terrible consequences, He does not do so to condemn people or to annihilate their hope of reaching their deliverance from sin. The Lord exposes sin so that people can know the reality about sin in order that they may also know the reality about the kind of salvation they need for the consequences of sin to be stopped to reign over their lives.

*Psalms 25: 8 **Good and upright is the LORD; Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.***

Luke 9: 56(a) "For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

*Luke 5: 31 Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.
32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

1 Timothy 1: 15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

Knowledge of the truth about evil cooperates to show the path of liberation when also or together is presented the true path by which a person may find freedom from subjection to evil and the consequences of the association with it.

A warning or exhortation that a person should not be associated with sin or remain subject to it becomes more meaningful if a possibility of him or her to interrupt the subjection to the yoke of sin is also presented.

On the other hand, to mention the existence of a provision that makes available the interruption of the subjection to sin and the body of sin, or that the repentant sinner may reach the forgiveness of his or her association with sin and the eternal consequences derived from it, does not imply to say that all sorts of solutions can indeed afford the release of an individual from subjection to sin.

To observe more closely the abundance of evil consequences that may come from the subjection to sin helps us to see that any alternative that intends to offer a solution to deliver an individual from these damages and evils must have an even broader abundance of provisions in order to annihilate all the eternal effects unleashed by subjection to sin. That is, the consequences triggered by the subjection of a person to sin can only be truly solved by an alternative that is powerful to free this individual also from the most critical aspects triggered by his or her association with sin.

The consequences and harm caused by sin are extremely terrible, of immense breadth, and, therefore, they can only be overcome by an alternative that is superior and more powerful than all the power of destruction and death that may manifest itself after the subjection of an individual to sin.

*Romans 5: 20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,
21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The association or subjection to sin is not a mere fall where the very person who became subject to sin can stand up on his or her own, can simply move on as if nothing had happened or as if only a slight stumbling had occurred.

Before being manifested in some visible action in the natural world, the subjection to sin is also a practice that comes from the heart and has far more severe repercussions in the spiritual world than in the material world.

The subjection to sin is a way in which weaknesses and incapacity are attributed to human beings and from which they cannot be freed through any effort of their own or any effort provided by their fellow men, for the association with sin may enslave the one who incurs in it to a bondage to sin itself and from which the enslaved can never reach freedom by oneself or through the help of others who are subject to a similar condition.

As we have seen before, the burden of sin is weighty because it may come to contemplate slavery to its deception, to the fear of the debt record and may shake a person's sobriety in order to attribute to him or her guilt or even a self-condemnation feeling. However, the most severe thing is that sin tries to raise a barrier of separation and enmity of the sinner toward God, to the Unique Source that could help him or her to be saved from the slavery to sin, the debt record, and the punishment of sin.

The subjection to sin makes the sinner a useless person in the sense of being able to provide for his or her own liberation from the yoke that comes from the association with sin and the body of sin. Subjection to sin is a way in which no action originating from the sinner can be done or offered in righteousness to solve his or her impasse with the most critical consequences of the association with sin.

The yoke of sin cannot be overcome from the one upon whom the yoke of sin is laid, for when a person incurs in the subjection to sin, one also becomes subject to a yoke from which one cannot be set free by his or her own efforts.

Falling by the association with sin is as if a person falls into a spiritual abyss from which one will not be able to leave without the outside help of someone fully capable of pulling him or her out also spiritually of this deep abyss.

When a person associates with a sin that has the characteristic of an offense toward God, one can only be absolved of the offense if God, to whom the offense was first addressed, so grants it.

Although civil societies need to have laws and courts, as we have already commented in other chapters, and even though many sins are also punished in civil societies, the spiritual discharge of debts from subjection to sin does not merely occur in the punishments of the human societies and nor does the spiritual absolution of sin occur in acquittals before these civil societies and the civil or religious institutions they create.

The debt of sin, in the spiritual realm:

- ⇒ 1) Cannot be paid by the ways in which financial debts are paid off, for it is not payable through human or natural resources;
- ⇒ 2) Cannot be repaid by human efforts, for these cannot repair the full extent of the spiritual damage that the association with sin may produce;
- ⇒ 3) Cannot be paid by the contempt for the debt of subjection to sin, for the simple attitude of ignoring the debt as if it did not exist does not nullify the fact that caused the reason for this debt to come into existence;
- ⇒ 4) Cannot be repaid with the attempts of compensating the charge through works and sacrifices, for a human work under the yoke of sin cannot undo the

separation that the subjection to sin has caused between the sinner and God, nor can it change the status of sinner ascribed to the one who became associated with sin;

- ⇒ 5) Cannot be paid off with impatience, anger, or rebellious reactions as if increasing the intensity of the practice of more sins or as if attempting an even bigger confrontation of God's righteousness would render God unjust and the sinner into a righteous person.

Subjection to sin alters a person's spiritual condition and position in relation to sin, and a solution against the harvest generated by the subjection to sin will only be valid if it also can restore the state and the position of the sinner to a spiritual condition in which the guilt or the body of sin can no longer be imputed to him or her.

Since association with sin is primarily spiritual, the gravest harvest is also spiritual. Considering that sin is firstly a spiritual transgression, there is no way for the debt that it causes to be paid with anything material such as money, a human work, offerings, sacrifices, or any human efforts. Since sin is also associated with the spiritual world, the solution concerning it must also include a solution that reaches the spiritual realm.

Therefore, no human being can solve the spiritual damage that the association with sin may cause. No human being has the appropriate or due resources to solve or repair what has been damaged by subjection to sin in the spiritual realm.

At this point, however, or still before addressing more broadly the provision that can truly free an individual from slavery to sin and the body of sin, we understand that it is crucial to make a preliminary point about the fact that in the world, there is also a wide variety of propositions of ineffective, improper, or false provisions against the dominion of sin and which continue to be insistently proposed to human beings in each of their generations.

It is very impressive to observe how so many people, either through ignorance or obstinacy, insist on seeking solutions that can never solve the problem of the association with sin and the set of consequences that it tries to impute on those who submit to it, which puts them in an even more pitiful situation than the very condition that they already find themselves under the slavery or the yoke of the body of sin.

Subjection to sin places a heavy burden on people's lives, but false propositions to find freedom from slavery to sin intend to bring people to a second level of cruel and hard yoke of slavery, as the Lord Jesus Christ also exemplifies by referring to the inappropriate propositions, conduct, or works that the scribes and Pharisees practiced in the days when He was in the flesh on Earth.

*Matthew 23: 15 **Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.***

...
4 For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

The means that falsely propose a deliverance from sin seek to attribute a new heavy yoke upon the already heavy yoke of sin, promising relief that can never be fulfilled. These false means are like propositions that want to imprison people in deeper prisons within the prisons they are already.

The insistence on seeking alternatives to overcome the yoke of sin in a way dissociated from the alternative that the Lord offers and to which the light of God points has always been present in humankind, but in the situations that human beings have chosen to seek their own alternatives to dealing with the oppressions that afflicted them, they have opted for the path of increasing the degree of their afflictions, aspect also announced by the prophets of antiquity, as exemplified below as well:

- Isaiah 30: 9* ***That this is a rebellious people, Lying children, Children who will not hear the law of the LORD;***
10 Who say to the seers, "Do not see," And to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.
11 Get out of the way, Turn aside from the path, Cause the Holy One of Israel To cease from before us."
12 Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: "Because you despise this word, And trust in oppression and perversity, And rely on them,
13 Therefore this iniquity shall be to you Like a breach ready to fall, A bulge in a high wall, Whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant.
14 And He shall break it like the breaking of the potter's vessel, Which is broken in pieces; He shall not spare. So there shall not be found among its fragments A shard to take fire from the hearth, Or to take water from the cistern."
15 For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not,
16 And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses", Therefore you shall flee! And, "We will ride on swift horses", Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift!
17 One thousand shall flee at the threat of one, At the threat of five you shall flee, Till you are left as a pole on top of a mountain And as a banner on a hill.
18 Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him.

Repeatedly over the centuries, human beings have thought that the pursuit of temporal relief offered by the world or that the carnal comfort associated with their own endeavors to find solutions could compensate for the oppression that subjection to sin causes, but life under some supposed freedom through some works of the flesh or without the instruction of the light of the Spirit of the Lord never set them free, it, instead, only enhanced their subjection to sin.

Isaiah 30: 1 "Woe to the rebellious children," says the LORD, "Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add sin to sin.

Incurring in bondage to sin is very damaging and may unleash terrible consequences even though they may not be apparent for a while. However, incurring false alternatives to deal with the results that come from sin may further aggravate a person's situation because it delays the interruption of the vile process of sin and it may blind people even more intensely concerning the appropriate provision of victory over the consequences of subjection to sin.

The false means propose that people seek liberation from sin in the opposite direction in which deliverance can be found indeed, and this, in order to keep them occupied so that they do not even become inclined to seek the true solution. False means are often propositions that even may be presented as pleasant for those who are enslaved to sin to keep them entertained or numb so that they may increasingly turn away from what can truly set them free.

The search for an alternative way to what is already proposed by the Lord for a person to become free from sin and its consequences may become an even more aggravated position in the subjugation of sin, since this search may eventually also become a position of obstinacy toward a path that is not truly beneficial and which may even express the intention of trying to nullify or weaken the Lord's exclusive proposition for the salvation of sinners.

The insistence on seeking an alternative path to the path proposed by the Lord for the sinner's justification and salvation also expresses a resistance to the work of the Holy Spirit, Who was appointed by the Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus to convince the world precisely that Christ alone is the fully satisfactory provision for the remission and salvation of sinners.

Acts 7: 48 However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says:

49 'Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, Or what is the place of My rest?

50 Has My hand not made all these things?'

51 You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.

Sin and false suggestions for dealing with it are not aspects that people should irresponsibly deal with, for accepting the multiplication of evil may affect people far beyond what they can imagine.

Matthew 24: 12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Isaiah 9: 18 For wickedness burns as the fire; It shall devour the briars and thorns, And kindle in the thickets of the forest; They shall mount up like rising smoke.

Clinging to an ineffective or false means of dealing with sin and the body of sin may further aggravate the situation of one who has been subjected to sin, for by clinging to a false means of escape, a person, in addition to remaining submitted to sin, is still subject to an illusory solution of deliverance, further deepening one's association with deceit and delaying, even more, the possibility of becoming free indeed from the yoke of evil.

Just as the building of temples or a high tower to reach heavens, such as that of Babel quoted in Genesis 11, does not bring people closer to God and only results in contrariness to God and confusion, so the false means also try to attribute a task without substantial purpose, as well as to introduce a confusion of ideas to the sinner so that “a cloud of false suggestions” may conceal the proposition that truly provides the sinner's absolution and the solution against the perverse effects of sin.

The proposition of the ineffective or false means of liberating the sinner reveals profoundly subtle and terrible aspects of evil, for, in addition to the aim of sin to make people unaware of the wickedness of the subjection to it, the false propositions still aim to entangle people so that they consume their time and resources in seeking liberation from sin by means that can never truly make them free.

False means of dealing with sin are agents associated with sin in trying to keep people subject to it for as long as possible, and, therefore, they should also be known so that they can be resisted and rejected more accurately by those who want true deliverance from the yoke of sin. False means are no less evil propositions than sin itself, for they work aiming that people do not become aware of their own inability to deal appropriately with the yoke of sin so that they also do not look for the solution where it really can be found.

In the world, there are many suggestions of ways to deal with sin to try to soften the awareness of slavery to sin and to attempt to lessen the fear that punishment and the debt record try to put on a person. However, any suggestion of a means of dealing with sin that is not entirely sufficient to eliminate the punishment, the debt record, or the body of sin associated with a person is not only ineffective and false as to the deliverance it proposes, but it is also a means that seeks to add even more shackles or chains so that an individual does not come to find the true liberation or salvation.

In this way, when a person adopts an ineffective means to try to achieve deliverance from slavery to sin and the body of sin, one puts oneself under an even more critical level of deception by the fact that after placing oneself under false means, one also or first needs to be freed from the wrong means to deal with the yoke of slavery of sin in itself.

Ineffective or false means propose solutions that do not place a person in the condition one needs to be to overcome sin and the harvest that comes from subjection to it, trying to make people who already are subject to sin come to be subject yet to other wicked or vile aspects.

And, in turn, or because of the power of deception that evil seeks to achieve through propositions that falsely claim to solve the problem of slavery to sin and the body of sin, the number of these propositions in the world is also quite extensive, varying both in terms of names and in the most diverse ways of being presented.

The more people move away from the only provision of righteousness that can truly set them free from the chains of sin, the more they multiply the ways and teachings that can do nothing to benefit them indeed. And the more people want to widen the way for their salvation based on ineffective propositions that are proposed by the creature rather than the Creator, the more they demonstrate how broad the path leading to perdition or alienation of the eternal life presents itself.

Matthew 7: 13 Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

The propositions of ineffective means of opposing sin and the body of sin act in the line of generating false hopes or that are based on distorted and lying promises. And in their intent to deceive people, they go from the level of the propositions of people to ignore or despise what subjection to sin might produce and may go to the degree of the proposals that high sacrifices are necessary so that the desired deliverance supposedly might be achieved.

Nevertheless, from a broader perspective, practically all ineffective propositions against sin have in common the fact that they falsely suggest, and in the most varied ways, that the solution for deliverance from slavery to sin could supposedly come through some variation of human attitudes or works, or yet from some aspect found in the created world.

There are people, for instance, who try to belittle the power of the consequences of sin by saying that life is merely a temporary existence. There are those who despise it by teaching others to look with contempt to the day when God's wrath against sin will be manifested globally. And there are still others who despise sin by alleging that sin and its effects can be overcome by works and offerings made by the sinners themselves. However, all of these suggestions, including those that teach that the power of sin can be despised, are repeatedly based on the independent attitude of human beings toward their Creator, as if the victory over sin could be under their control or as if the words that they utter could be able to nullify the wages that come from the subjection of an individual to sin.

Turning a blind eye to the harm that sin may produce does not make it less sin, just as the works and the sacrifices that offer a human solution to the problem of sin do not make it less sin either. On the contrary, they often add sin to sin precisely by the proposition of unfruitful and deceit works.

The propositions clothed with the appearance of wisdom based on human knowledge about sin or even that seem to be godly, as if by natural intelligence or human work sin could be overcome, are often the works in which sin seeks the most to hide and act in a veiled way to keep people enslaved to its domain.

If merely despising sin or the accomplishment of works, offerings, and sacrifices to be delivered from the yoke of sin were satisfactory to overcome the slavery caused by sin, those people who surrender in these ways would be worthy of honor and to have their acts copied or reproduced by others. However, if none of these acts can deal with

the central point of the human problem, the attitudes that attempt to solve the slavery of sin through the most diverse human propositions, works, or sacrifices, but without any success at the end of their endeavors, are also attitudes that are among the highest actions of waste of time of life and among the most profound illusions that human beings may come across.

A sinner, for example, does not achieve real peace only because someone falsely utters peace over him or her and because someone has said that some particular human attitude will free him or her from the weight of sin, as the following text also exemplifies:

Jeremiah 8: 11 For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace.

Peace to the one who has been subjected to sin can only be reached if one comes to be released, in fact, from the yoke of sin, or, in other words, if one becomes justified from the guilt of his or her sin through something that has the power to justify him or her indeed.

God never intended people to make sacrifices and burnt offerings to Him because of the sins they committed, because sinners, from themselves or from the condition of slavery to sin, are not worthy to offer acceptable sacrifices for a fully satisfying provision for the redemption of their lives.

Jeremiah 7: 22 For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.

23 But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.'

24 Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward.

Hebrews 10: 8 ... "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), ...

Ultimately, therefore, the very mentality that people can come up with a solution to become free from the yoke of sin through contempt for sin or through the efforts, disciplines, and sacrifices that they themselves perform is also part of the yoke that sin seeks to place upon the people who submit to it.

To think and come to believe that the denial of the committed sin, that despising the debt of sin, that salvation can be hereditary from father to son, that works of obedience to the law, that works of human hands, that human justice, or that human knowledge can overcome the weight of the subjection to sin is a path of submission, in one or

another way, to a thought and belief that can never provide a real solution to the problem of an individual's association with sin.

A person's belief in something ineffective to save him or her, no matter how much one insists on it, does not make what one believes for his or her salvation become something capable of saving him or her.

The kind of propositions referenced in the paragraphs above are propositions that present themselves as a form of light, but which in fact do not illuminate the true path for an individual's absolution from the body of sin, since none of them contain the elements that satisfy the requirements for the redemption of a sinner and for him or her to be placed in an appropriate condition of righteousness.

Just as darkness does not produce light, so the propositions that come from those who are subject to sin do not have the proper light not even to correctly discern the proposals of sin, much less to resist the effects that are caused by subjection to sin.

Matthew 15: 14 **Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.**

As much as the world diversifies, multiplies, and teaches its own propositions to achieve deliverance from sin, they are still just ungodly and deceptive propositions without a real condition to deal with sin and the wages that sin claims to require of those who become associated with it.

As much as the world tries to strive against the oppression of sin and multiplies or teaches the most varied and creative propositions that seek to solve the problem that the yoke of sin wants to place on people, the world cannot liberate people from that which it finds itself imprisoned.

1 John 5: 19 **We know that ... the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.**

As much as the world tries to insist on ineffective propositions or as much as people in the world want to make a lie collective, the globalization of people's belief in a misleading proposition or a lie will never make it a way of true salvation.

Therefore, once again we would like to emphasize that the position of contempt for sin and its consequences as if they were not powerful or real, the attitude in relation to sin as if it could not be solved, or the position of seeking to solve the problem of sin through attempts that can never really solve it, can be, in many ways, even worse than slavery to sin itself.

1 Corinthians 15: 33 **Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."**

Only the light of the One who is not subject to sin can illuminate what is behind sin in its most varied aspects, just as only the One who is not subject to sin can show the true solution to the sinner's deliverance from the most diverse areas of the working of the yoke of sin.

*Psalms 146: 8 **The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; The LORD raises those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous.***

*John 8: 12 **Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."***

*John 1: 29 The next day **John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"***

*John 8: 31 **Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.***
*32 **And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."***
*33 **They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free'?"***
*34 **Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.***
*35 **And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.***
*36 **Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.***

Finally, in this chapter, as it was also mentioned in the previous chapters that addressed sin and its consequences, we emphasize once again that the convincing or elucidation about the means that falsely propose freedom from the slavery of sin does not objectify to frighten people, because even though sin is also vile in proposing false solutions, the heavenly righteousness, offered by the grace of God, also provides sufficient provision for the enlightenment of the heart of people about the falsity of every misleading proposal that sin attempts to put before them.

*2 Corinthians 4: 6 **For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***

*Psalms 18: 28 **For You will light my lamp; The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.***

*John 1: 5 **And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.***

*Psalms 79: 9 **Help us, O God of our salvation, For the glory of Your name; And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, For Your name's sake!***

The Holy Spirit has indeed been sent by the Lord to convince the world of sin in all its attempts so that people know how terrible and deceptive sin is.

Nevertheless, in conjunction with the work of convincing the world about sin, the Lord has also attributed to the Holy Spirit the work of convincing the world about the righteousness of God so that people may know how broad is the righteousness of the Lord, how capable it is to provide for the deliverance of sinners from the vast abundance of evils that sin seeks to place on them, and to let them know that the righteousness of the Lord is the only way in which they can be redeemed, forgiven, and saved in order to receive also eternal life in the Lord.

*Acts 13: 37 **But He whom God raised up saw no corruption.***
*38 **Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins;***
*39 **and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.***

*Acts 4: 11 **This (Jesus) is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'***
*12 **Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.***

*Romans 10: 13 **For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."***

C18. The Revelation of Sin and Righteousness “Before Christ” and “After Christ”

In order to show that the righteousness of God offered by the Lord through His Gospel is crucial to the salvation and eternal life of every human being, we have sought to make clear from the beginning of this material that both the word *righteousness* and the word *sin* have a much broader and ample use in the Bible Scriptures than the descriptions presented about these terms in the vast majority of the language dictionaries available in the world.

In the previous chapters, we have seen, for instance, that the term *sin* is used by the Scriptures to denote the very existence of the possibility that evil comes to be committed, including the work of sin in the temptation or proposition of offenses, just as it is used to denote all the period of consequences that may come from subjection to sin or subjection to the ineffective propositions that sin proposes for people supposedly become delivered from its yoke.

In the matter of *righteousness*, we have seen that this term in the Scriptures is by no means limited to the actions of condemning people for the practice of transgression, but it encompasses the whole basis of God's actions and conduct regarding the entire universe. God acts righteously in everything because the basis of all His decisions is firmly grounded in His righteousness. Because of God's perfect righteousness, no sin ever could, can, or will be found in God or any of His judgments, ways, and actions.

In the opening chapters of this material, we highlighted that the Lord, even in the face of a multitude of injustices committed against Him, did not respond with unrighteousness, demonstrating that His judgment, including when Christ was in agony on the cross of Calvary, has always been grounded in righteousness.

The coming of Christ in the flesh into the world, as well as the crucifixion of Christ, however, were not limited to a public demonstration of God's righteousness even in the face of terrible and cruel circumstances that the Lord experienced in the world or that were directed to Him through aggressive and direct oppositions.

As was also briefly commented earlier, through the crucifixion of Christ, both the broader revelation of sin and the more comprehensive revelation of God's righteousness reached a dimension so far unthinkable and incomprehensible to almost all the human beings.

Christ's coming into the world, and His crucifixion, did not only occur to divide the reference of chronological time into “before Christ” and “after Christ,” but they also or mainly served to introduce a new time for the understanding about the operation of sin and the working and purpose of God's righteousness in Christ Jesus for the remission and salvation of sinners.

From the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh into the world, God plainly manifested the fulfillment of the promise that in His righteousness there was not only a provision for the Lord not to be associated with unrighteousness, but also that He, in His righteousness, has made full provision for a righteous way of liberating human beings from the yoke of slavery to sin.

From the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh into the world, God has started to reveal much more explicitly the breadth of the deceit and the yoke that sin seeks to attribute to people, but also or together He began to disclose much more widely the righteousness provided by the Lord so that people no longer need to remain under the yoke of sin, the body of sin, and the false or misleading propositions of deliverance that try to keep people subject to the slavery to sin.

The work of convincing the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment together was delegated more explicitly by the Lord to the Holy Spirit only after Christ's death and resurrection because of what God manifested through the coming of His only-begotten Son into the world and because the fact that only after the manifestation of these specific events could the broader conviction on these subjects in reference also be more accurately assimilated by human beings.

Therefore, so that the theme of sin, righteousness, and judgment may be understood more adequately, we underline that it is also crucial that the perception of the period in which we are inserted in the history of humanity on Earth also needs to be appropriately adjusted.

In order to continue the objective mentioned at the beginning of the previous chapter, that is, to know more precisely the aspects that teach and enable us to avoid, resist, or reject the wicked attempts of the working of sin, it is also necessary to know what God has made available to humans throughout history and especially from the most explicit revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ to the world.

Remembering still the previous chapter, we would like to add here the consideration that a significant part of the ineffective propositions that the world follows in seeking liberation from slavery to the set of aspects related to sin simply derives from the lack of more precise observation of the points that the Lord manifested or revealed increasingly throughout history.

If a person, for example, adopts only the Old Testament Scriptures to try to understand how one can find deliverance from slavery or subjection to sin, and disregard the coming of Christ in the flesh into the world and the revelation that the Lord presents about His righteousness in the Scriptures of the so-called New Testament, this person's perspective on the subject in reference will also tend to be very limited and inadequate.

After Christ's coming in the flesh into the world, sin continues to crave the same wicked intentions that were associated with it before this coming of Christ, but the scenario for sin's actions changed radically. Although sin essentially remains evil regardless of the coming of Christ in the flesh into the world, several aspects of the context for sin's attempts to work came to be under characteristics substantially different.

The fact that people on Earth today live after the coming of Christ in the flesh into the world does not imply that sin no longer intends evil for them, for the coming of Christ in the flesh into the world has not caused that sin, in itself, came to be changed in its characteristic of being extremely evil or perverse and in what regards of the abundance of wicked consequences which it seeks to attribute to the lives of those who associate with it. However, through Christ's coming into the world and the new manifestations of some particular aspects of the Lord's righteousness, the position of sin for its actions and the condition of people being able to see and take a new position regarding sin have undergone extensive or very substantial changes.

After Christ's coming in the flesh into the world, sin continues to try to act in line with the wicked intentions it had used until then, but with the difference that, from the crucifixion of Christ, sin had its evil condition more widely unveiled and also that sin itself became subject to condemnation, undergoing a radical change in its power to claim dominion over people.

When God allowed sin to show all its wickedness against His Beloved Son, Who took upon Himself the debt or punishment of the sin of all human beings, sin entered the path of its own condemnation, for by receiving the payment of its wages through the crucifixion of Christ, also the right of sin to claim its salary was substantially changed.

*Romans 8: 3 **For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ...***

The Bible Scriptures contemplate the most varied angles of sin's working so that the wickedness of sin may be exposed, but also, and most importantly, that God's provision for people and against the dominion of sin may be manifested in its greatness and in its full capacity to supply absolution and victory over sin in its various aspects, as exemplified once again in the texts below:

*Romans 5: 20 **Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

*Galatians 3: 22 **But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.***

The way Christ manifested Himself to provide the true path of salvation was not done without the enemy "sin," the body of sin, and those who want to use sin to rule over people first became exposed to the shame that is pertinent to them.

The Scriptures tell us that Christ came into the world in a perfect manner and time. He came at a time when all the most diverse human attempts to live life dissociated from God's will had already been tried, and He came at a time when all human ways of dealing with sin had been tried without achieving any success.

*Hebrews 9: 26(b) ... **but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.***

Hebrews 2: 14(b) ... (Christ) Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,
 15 *and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

Galatians 4: 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.
 4 *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,*
 5 *to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

In the fullness of time, the righteousness of God descended from heaven in the person of Christ to allow the wrath of sin against the righteousness of the Lord to reveal itself with an unprecedented intensity or in a way never conceived by the human mind, the mind of the mighty of darkness, and neither by those who were serving them in the world. However, it was precisely in this extreme expression of the working of darkness against the Lord Jesus Christ that sin became manifested as defeated before the natural world and before the whole spiritual world.

Colossians 2: 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,
 14 *having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*
 15 *Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*

The Scriptures even teach us that if the powers of darkness and those through which sin operated most intensely knew that Christ's crucifixion would also imply the condemnation of the most relevant tool used by darkness to spread evil, which is sin, they would not have crucified Christ.

1 Corinthians 2: 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,
 8 *which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

When God allowed darkness to work so that the Lord Jesus Christ came to be crucified, what appeared to be a definitive and unprecedented victory of the powers of darkness against the righteousness of God proved to be the unparalleled manifestation of the triumph of God's righteousness over the powers of darkness and the dominion of the principal weapon of darkness.

In the process of Christ's crucifixion, a level of actions was allowed to darkness which had never been admitted before, and it was yielded that the powers of darkness opposed God beyond a limit that had never been permitted previously. However, or at the same time, the powers of darkness were also never exposed to failure in the degree that they were exposed by the cross of Calvary.

In the process of Christ's crucifixion, the extreme power of darkness and sin, which is death, was fully revealed as defeated through the manifestation of what the Scriptures call as "God's weakness."

All the strategy of sin and all the power that sin has obtained from human beings to work against the living expression of God's righteousness in Christ Jesus was not enough to overcome this righteousness in its greatest expression of weakness.

1 Corinthians 1: 22 ***For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;***
23 ***but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,***
24 ***but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.***
25 ***Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.***

When sin received Christ's sacrifice as the full payment of the wages of sin, it also incurred in the fact that all debt toward it became fully ended, thus losing all right to withhold under death those who believe, because of the death of Christ, in the provision that ends their debts to sin, beginning firstly with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who took upon Him the punishment of all human beings.

Acts 2: 22 ***Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know,***
23 ***Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;***
24 ***whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.***

Romans 8: 1 ***There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.***
2 ***For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.***

Once sin received its full payment through the sacrifice of the life of Christ on the cross of Calvary, it has been shown that the full and total sovereignty of God's righteousness reigned even over the most powerful and cruel expression resulting from sin, namely, the death.

1 Peter 4: 1 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ...

Revelation 1: 17(b) ... But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

1 Corinthians 15: 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

After the crucifixion of Christ and His resurrection, nothing else can withhold the act of withdrawing the sin's domain and the body of sin from the life of those who believe that their debt to sin in Christ has been ended forever.

Ephesians 4: 8 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."

1 John 3: 5 And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

And yet in other words, **when the powers of darkness that worked over the lives of human beings received Christ's sacrifice as the due payment of the wages of sin, they also allowed the way to the newness of life in the Lord to be offered freely and without any impediment to all human beings.**

1 Peter 3: 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.

Therefore, although the character of sin, death, and the devil remains equally evil at all times, from the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the idea of the legitimacy of sin's actions and unrestrained dominion over people was denounced or unmasked, opening up the way for the other aspects of the sinner's salvation to be broadly revealed to the world as well.

Repeating once again, although the evil intent of sin remains the same at all times, Christ's crucifixion and resurrection have vastly changed the possibility of how the attempts of sin actions can be seen, for from the righteousness of God manifested by the coming of Christ, also the conditions for a person no longer need to be subject to the dominion that sin attempts to put on people have been widely revealed.

Concluding, then, this chapter, we would like to emphasize again that taking into account the facts of the period of history that is called in the Scriptures as the “*fullness of time*” is also a crucial aspect in order that the real understanding of the contemporary position of sin does not become distorted or compromised, and especially so that the appropriate understanding of God's righteousness for the salvation of sinners does not become obscured either.

2 Timothy 1: 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,
9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,
10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

C19. The Righteousness of God Revealed as a Heavenly Gift

Taking into account the considerations of the previous chapter, it is possible to begin to realize clearly that God's righteousness is still far greater and goes far beyond presenting God as a Just or Righteous Judge in all His decisions and acts.

When we begin to see that God has given His beloved Son to manifest the provision to make people free from slavery to sin, the body of sin, and the ways that falsely propose this freedom, it can also be clearly seen that the Lord has done this in behalf of all human beings, thus demonstrating that the heavenly righteousness is another of the wonderful and essential attributes of God that the Lord offers to share with those who accept to receive the gifts that from heaven are offered to them.

Considering that the righteousness of God is an integral part of the Gospel of the Lord, and that the Gospel refers to an offer directed by God to all human beings, it can be seen through the Gospel that, in addition to presenting an attribute of the Lord, the righteousness of God is also a gift to be given to those to whom the gifts of the Gospel are directed.

*Romans 1: 16 **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.***

*17 **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."***

As was widely mentioned in the early subjects of this series, the Gospel of the Lord does not refer only to an informative message and a notification of knowledge, but the Gospel is the actual offer of the gifts of the heavenly kingdom to save human beings and to enable them to live a life according to the will of God and His kingdom.

Therefore, in addition to revealing to the world His condition to do everything in righteousness regardless of the circumstances that oppose His righteousness, the Lord, through His Gospel, also offers the righteousness of the heavenly kingdom as a gift to all human beings so that they may receive this righteousness in their lives to also reach and enjoy what can be obtained only through this heavenly provision.

By presenting His righteousness as a gift that can be offered and extended in favor of human beings so that they may find deliverance from the most diverse bondage to which they have become subjected, the Lord has manifested the greatness and sublimity of His righteousness even more unique and broadly, manifesting a whole special set of aspects of God's marvelous work in favor of His creation.

The righteousness of God, as a gift from the Lord, is the heavenly righteousness manifested among human beings, but also in favor of human beings. And, in turn, to understand righteousness as a gift from the heavenly kingdom, widely made available by the Lord to human beings, can cooperate significantly for an individual to see and experience this righteousness in a much more personal way than just having the general knowledge that God does not act dissociated from His righteousness, an aspect also announced since antiquity by the psalmists and as exemplified below:

*Psalms 31: 1 In You, O LORD, I put my trust; Let me never be ashamed;
Deliver me in Your righteousness.*

*Psalms 143: 1 Hear my prayer, O LORD, Give ear to my supplications!
In Your faithfulness answer me, And in Your righteousness.*

...
*11 Revive me, O LORD, for Your name's sake! For Your righteousness'
sake bring my soul out of trouble.*

*Psalms 65: 5 By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us, O
God of our salvation, You who are the confidence of all the ends of
the earth, And of the far-off seas.*

As a gift from the Lord, the heavenly righteousness is the sharing of God's righteousness in favor of His creation and with the creation itself, allowing this righteousness to act in behalf of the creation and to become an indescribable gift and blessing in the lives of those who receive it.

In addition to being an attribute of God's very essence, God's righteousness is an essential gift through which the Lord offers the path of justification to sinners so that the other aspects of the newness of life according to the heavenly kingdom may be shared with all those who receive the justification offered by the Lord.

*Romans 5: 1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace
with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which
we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Christ's triumph over sin, and over the body of sin that sin seeks to attribute to those who have associated themselves with it, is already fully accomplished, but it is by receiving the “gift of righteousness,” eternally established by God, that a person can come to realize this triumph and become fully part of this same victory.

*Romans 5: 17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the
one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift
of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

Because of its contribution to restoring people's fellowship with the Lord, the “gift of righteousness” is undoubtedly one of the gifts that God offers that should be known the most by all human beings.

When God offers to share a gift with humanity, He always does it to cooperate with people for them to obtain the purposes of blessings that the

Lord has in store for them, but this becomes even more special concerning the “*gift of righteousness*” given the key or vital position that this gift occupies for people's access to a series of other gifts the Lord offers them.

- Romans 5: 6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*
- 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.*
- 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*
- 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*
- 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

In this way, knowing the righteousness of God also in its characteristic of a gift that is offered to all people and granted to act in behalf of each human being can profoundly alter a person's perspective of life, even in the context of the world in which sin or injustice still works.

Through the “*gift of righteousness,*” things that seemed impossible to interrupt can be interrupted and things that seemed impossible to obtain become widely accessible.

When an individual comes to know and recognize what the “*gift of righteousness*” has already done and can do for him or her, also the context of how a person positions oneself regarding life can be substantially changed.

Romans 5: 15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.

...

20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,
21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6: 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 5: 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Galatians 2: 20 **I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.**

Considering that God's “*gift of righteousness*” to all human beings encompasses aspects so essential and crucial to the salvation and newness of life for each individual, it also becomes even more evident why the Lord calls everyone to seek His kingdom and His righteousness first.

In the breadth of the marvelous aspects that there are in the kingdom of God and His righteousness, the “*gift of righteousness*” is especially noteworthy since it is through it that the impediment for people to access the kingdom of God is removed as well as the reconciliation between an individual and the Lord is established, which is why we will also devote the following chapters to seeking a broader approach to this precious, vital, and glorious gift.

C20. The Sublimity of the Gift of Righteousness Manifested in the Justification of Sinners

When sin is exposed in the light of the heavenly righteousness, a deeper understanding of sin also highlights more broadly how damaging sin's working is when it is allowed space to act and how broad needs to be a righteousness that proposes to offer the deliverance of people from sin, from the body of sin, and from the subjection to propositions that falsely offer alternatives for people to become freed from slavery to the set of aspects associated with sin.

And although it has already been considered in the previous chapters that a conviction was imputed to sin through the crucifixion of Christ and that in Christ the heavenly righteousness is also offered as a gift of redemption, it seems to us that the matter concerning the condition of human beings regarding sin after the coming of Christ in the flesh into the world is a subject that still needs to be addressed more intensely.

If, on the one hand, we have the information that the crucifixion of Christ was necessary for sin to be exposed to the light of the heavenly righteousness and for it suffer condemnation, on the other hand, if only the condemnation of sin were the goal of the righteousness of God, human beings still would not have a provision that could restore them to eternal life in the Lord.

By associating themselves with sin, human beings have also become sinners, wicked, or unrighteous. Thus, if the work of Christ only caused sin to be condemned for having acted against the life of an entirely innocent person like the Lord Jesus Christ and for having already received the payment of its wages by Christ's death, the work of the Lord on the cross of Calvary would not necessarily imply that the condition of the sinners passed from an unrighteous to a righteous status.

*Romans 3: 10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;
11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.
12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."*

The act of Christ of giving Himself to be crucified on the cross of Calvary, therefore, was not a process that aimed only at some isolated aspects of the consequences of human subjection to sin or merely to demonstrate God's wrath against sin. The offer of Christ's life to be sacrificed on the cross of Calvary was a beforehand announced work and perfectly prepared primarily to enable the remission of sinners so that they can reach a position where they can return to the fellowship with the Lord and the status of heirs of eternal life.

Christ's sacrifice, in one of its most striking and extraordinary goals, was accomplished to establish what the Scriptures call the "justification of sinners" so that those who sinned could repent and present themselves before God under a condition of righteousness.

And, in turn, the "justification of sinners" is undoubtedly one of the most evident aspects of the greatness and uniqueness of God's righteousness as an offer and a heavenly gift that has worked and continues to work on behalf of every person who finds oneself in the present world, as exemplified once again in the following text:

*Romans 5: 16 **And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.***

*17 **For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.***

*18 **Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.***

The justification that occurred from Christ's act of surrender on the cross of Calvary, and which came to be offered to all through the gift of righteousness, is at the core of the demonstration and proof of God's love for every human being, as explicitly presented also in the text below:

*Romans 5: 8 **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

*9 **Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.***

Moreover, we understand that the insistence on the subject of the justification of sinners shows to be very necessary also due to the fact that a vast contingent of human beings sees this justification as one of the most intriguing aspects of God's righteousness.

Although justification is an integral part of the whole process of salvation that God offers to human beings in Christ Jesus or that without justification through the blood of Christ no person could ever come to obtain salvation, this point still causes strangeness or discomfort for many.

When the justification offered by God is placed for discussion, in several cases it can be observed that this very essential aspect of salvation is one of the points that generate the most diverse reactions to it, either by the lack of understanding and manifestation of disinterest to the deeper aspects of this matter or because the opposition to it precisely by what is offered by this justification.

At first, the principle God uses for the aspect of justification may sound strange because what it offers, through a gift of righteousness, contradicts the logic of most people's thinking or may not even be perceived at all in a minimally appropriate way just for presenting a fact that goes against a more predominant thought of the world.

The most common thought among many people in the world is that the individuals to whom a justification should be directed, or whom it should benefit, are those who perform works worthy of this justification, but in the case of the justification according to the gift of the heavenly righteousness, it precisely offers to justify those individuals who are not worthy of this justification.

Thus, because the gift of righteousness is not addressed to justifying individuals who supposedly would be worthy of justification, but it is presented to offer justification precisely to those who have no merit to be justified, also the understanding of the justification offered by God through the gift of righteousness shows itself especially challenging for the human mind.

Let us note once again a part of the text of Romans that has been seen above in this chapter, namely: ***But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

Christ did not die for human beings because they did some good or some kindness, but, on the contrary, He died for them when they were still highly associated with sin or subject to it.

In the following texts, one can observe, still by other examples, the proposition mentioned above about the justification of those who are not worthy of it:

Matthew 9: 12 ***When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.
13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."***

Romans 4: 4 ***Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.
5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,
6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works.***

In the text of Romans 4 just quoted, Paul tells us, in an extremely objective way, that the one who “***believes on Him who justifies the ungodly***” receives the imputation of the righteousness of God in one’s life, showing that the Lord Himself is the proponent of the justification of those who are far from deserving it.

The justification of sinners is one of the things that troubles people not only nowadays, but it has been questioned throughout history and repeatedly contested by those who do not understand or accept this way of God's working, as also mentioned by Paul in the following text:

1 Corinthians 1: 22 ***For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;
23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,
24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.***

Both the model so-called Jew, representing a typology of all people who think it is possible to achieve justification by acts of religious practices or human works, and the model so-called Greek, typifying people who extol the knowledge and the human reason to explain all things, fail to understand how an almighty and sovereign God could give Himself as a sacrifice for those who turned their back on Him to associate themselves with sin.

For the religious who yearn for a place of worthiness to be justified, God's justification is a scandal against their ways of thinking and acting. For the rational, who strive for a place of worthiness through knowledge and intelligence, or even through the proposition of thoughts that God does not even exist, the sacrifice of Christ is the expression of madness or a work devoid of logic and sense.

Nevertheless, or at the end, both the Jew and the Greek, the religious as well as the rational or liberal, use the same basis of reasoning, thinking that if the human being has entered the path of falling or subjection to sin, it should also be the human being responsibility to find a solution or a way of achieving a reward by his own to become free from slavery to sin and to present himself justified before God.

The propositions of both the figure of the Jew and the figure of the Greek, however, disregard the fact that sin has weakened the human beings and entirely dissociated them from the possibility of finding a way out by themselves that can justify them concerning the debt they have assumed by association with sin and before God against whom they have performed an offense that no human being can repair.

When we look at the proposals of both the so-called Jewish model and the so-called Greek model, approached more broadly in the materials under the title *The New Creature in Christ and The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ*, we can see that the lack of perception of the reality in which they find themselves because of sin is one of the saddest and most brutal consequences of sin. The subjection to sin has resulted in blindness to human beings to the point where they became deprived of minimally adequate perception of the spiritual world and the fact that they, in themselves, have no possibility of reversing the position they have put themselves through the association with sin.

Sin has hardened people's hearts and their natural minds to the point that they, naturally speaking, even oppose the unique true solution for the salvation of their lives.

Romans 3: 12 ***They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.***

1 Corinthians 2: 14 ***But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.***

Thus, if a person does not open one's heart to the Holy Spirit of God to be taught by Him about the righteousness of God, one will not understand the justification the Lord offers him or her and will remain subject to thinking that this justification is a foolishness or a reason for being scandalized in God, making room for a successive sequence of new offenses, as seen in previous chapters.

On the other hand, we understand that it should be emphasized here again that when the Scriptures state that God justifies sinners and that He sent His Beloved Son as a living sacrifice for the provision of their justification to be fully established, this does not mean that God is indifferent with the sin of each individual or that God became complicit in the transgressions of human beings.

The justification of sinners is part of God's immaculate righteousness, and as such, it was manifested to the world in a way in which God's own righteousness remained fully righteous or perfect.

God's justification for humankind was not introduced into the world suddenly, randomly, at any time, or in any way. God's justification was broadly prepared and pre-announced, so that the purpose and conditions of the working of the gift of righteousness, when it came down from heaven to be offered as a living sacrifice to justify sinners, had already been established beforehand in order that the righteousness of the provision which the Lord was bringing to Earth could also not be questioned after the sacrifice was made.

The prince and the powers of darkness, after Christ was crucified, could not demand anything contrary to God's justification for people because they had previously been able to gain access to the information that Christ's sacrifice was also as a sacrifice of a perfect lamb who would let Himself be sacrificed to redeem human beings from slavery to sin, the body of sin, and the ineffective means that in vain try to redeem people.

When the powers of darkness acted for Christ's crucifixion to occur as predicted, they had already been warned verbally and through the Scriptures that Christ's sacrifice was a sacrifice for the remission and redemption of people from their debts to sin. When the powers of darkness cooperated for the crucifixion of Christ to occur, they had already been warned that the crucifixion of Christ would also represent the full payment of people's debt to sin, as well as it would be the provision of their forgiveness before the Lord. When the prince and the powers of darkness exerted influence upon people to be inclined to perform Christ's crucifixion, they also consented to the legal verdict that through the death of Christ human beings would be justified of the debts of their sins, as well as before the Lord.

The condemnation of death that was addressed to be applied to all human beings fell upon Christ so that no person would be condemned eternally to death without first receiving broadly the revelation and the offer of the gift of righteousness that can save them eternally.

*Isaiah 53: 5 **But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.***

*6 **All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.***

*7 **He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.***

*8 **He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.***

9 And they made His grave with the wicked, But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

11 He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

In His death, Christ took over Him our chastisement so that through His resurrection, we could find justification and newness of life in the Lord.

Romans 4: 25 ... (Jesus, our Lord), who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

John 3: 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Here, then, it becomes evident again that what the Scriptures call as the fullness of time should be taken highly into account.

God, in His perfect and full wisdom, established a specific time when all central matters of sin and righteousness would be brought face to face and would be condensed and revealed in such an impactful way that the reference to the ages in the world would become divided into before the manifestation of the gift of righteousness and after the revelation of the gift of righteousness.

Because the working of sin was fully exposed only in the face of the crucified Christ, the living gift of God's righteousness, and because the righteousness of God was only so widely manifested to all men from the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, it pleased God to regard the sins of humankind performed up to the time of these revelations as sins which were done under ignorance and the tolerance of God, being also these, therefore, justifiable by the sacrifice which was previously broadly announced for this purpose.

In the face of the crucified Christ Jesus, the Lord manifested sin widely in its very way of being and working, as well as in the real purpose that sin has toward the people

who associate with it. However, also through the crucified Christ Jesus, the Lord manifested His incorruptible righteousness in an overflowing or most tangible and close way as possible that it could be exposed before human beings. And all this, so that people, with a broad understanding about sin and the righteousness from heaven, could come to realize that only from God comes true righteousness and that they could come to choose for the life that is in God and not for the path of death that is associated with sin.

Romans 3: 19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Acts 17: 30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.

If sin entered the world through an offense when humanity did not yet know the full extent of the wickedness of sin, it pleased God, through Christ, the gift of the heavenly righteousness, to reveal to the world that in Christ people can also be justified from the sins that were made at the time when the knowledge of sin and the righteousness of God were not yet so widely available. And this, so that the Lord may be known as the righteous God in all things and the justifier of those who believe in the righteousness of God by faith, and yet, that by believing, they may also receive the newness of life that is granted after the justification.

Therefore, from the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ, it became abundantly clear that the way for an individual to find justification for eternal life or newness of life in the Lord is exclusively in the position of him or her to believe in Christ Jesus as the unique provision worthy for the justification of sinners and which God provided through the surrendering work of His only-begotten and eternal Son to be crucified on the cross of Calvary.

Romans 5: 18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

John 14: 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

And finally, in this chapter, considering once again the vital condition that the justification provided by God represents for each person's life, we would like to present below also some notes extracted from The New Bible Dictionary so that, yet in other words, this subject may become even more enlightened and consistent for those who seek to know the essential aspects of what the Lord has made available to us in Christ or in His gift of righteousness so that we may live an abundant life according to the Heavenly Father's will, namely:

1) *The Meaning of the Word Justification:*

'Justify', in Hebrew or Greek, is a forensic term meaning 'acquit', 'declare righteous', the opposite of 'condemn' (cf. Deuteronomy 25: 1; Proverbs 17: 5; Romans 8: 33).

...

2) *Justification in Paul's Writings:*

Justification means to Paul God's act of remitting the sins of guilty men, and accounting them righteous, freely, by His grace, through faith in Christ, on the ground, not of their own works, but of the representative law-keeping and redemptive blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf. (For the parts of this definition, see Romans 3: 23 till 26; Romans 4: 5 till 8; Romans 5: 8 and forward).

Paul's doctrine of justification is his characteristic way of formulating the central gospel truth, that God forgives believing sinners. Theologically, it is the most highly developed expression of this truth in the New Testament.

...

'The righteousness of God' is thus a predominantly forensic concept, denoting God's gracious work of bestowing upon guilty sinners a justified justification, acquitting them in the court of heaven without prejudice to His justice as their Judge.

...

The Epistle to the Romans is evidently to be read as a full-dress statement of Paul's gospel, and the doctrine of justification is its backbone.

In three places Paul writes in personal terms of the convictions that had made him the man and the missionary that he was, and all three are couched in terms of justification (Galatians 2: 15 till 21; 2Corinthians 5: 16 till 21; Philippians 3: 4 till 14). In Romans 7: 7 and following verses Paul describes his personal need of Christ in terms of the law's condemnation, – a need which only God's justifying sentence in Christ could relieve (Cf. Romans 8: 1 and following, and Galatians 3: 19 till 4: 7). ...

Justification is to Paul God's fundamental act of blessing, for it both saves from the past and secures for the future. On the other hand, it means pardon, and the end of hostility between God and ourselves (Acts 13: 39; Romans 4: 6 and following; Romans 5: 9 and following). On the other hand, it means acceptance and a title to all blessings promised to the just, a thought which Paul develops by linking justification with adoption and heirship (Galatians 4: 4 and following; and Romans 8: 14 and following). Both aspects appear in Romans 5: 1 and 2, where Paul says that justification brings both peace with God (because sins are remitted) and hope of God's glory (because the sinner is accepted as righteous). This hope is a certainty: for justification has an eschatological significance. It is the judgment of the last day brought into the present, a final, irreversible verdict. The justified man can accordingly be sure that nothing will ever separate him from the love of his God (Romans 8: 30 till 39, and cf. Romans 5: 9). His glorification is certain (Romans 8: 30). The coming inquisition before Christ's judgment-seat (Romans 14: 10 and following; and 1Corinthians 5: 10) may deprive him particular rewards (1Corinthians 3: 15), but not of his justified status.

...

3) The Ground of Justification:

...

Paul maintains that God justifies sinners on a just ground: namely, that Jesus Christ, acting on their behalf, has satisfied the claims of God's law upon them. He was 'made under the law' (Galatians 4: 4) in order to fulfil the precept and bear the penalty of the law in their stead. By His "blood" (that is His death) He put away their sins (Romans 3: 25, and 5: 9). ... He became 'obedient unto death' (Philippians 2: 8); His life of righteousness culminated in His dying the death of the unrighteous, bearing the law's penal curse (Galatians 3: 13 and cf. Isaiah 53: 4 till 12). In His person on the cross, the sins of His people were judged and expiated. Through this 'one act of righteousness', – His sinless life and death, – 'the free gift came unto all men to justification of life' (Romans 5: 18). Thus believers become 'the righteous of God' in and through Him who 'knew no sin' personally, but was representatively 'made sin' (treated as a sinner, and punished) in their place (2Corinthians 5: 21). Thus 'Christ ... is made unto us ... righteousness' (1Corinthians 1: 30). This was the thought expressed in older Protestant theology by the phrase 'the imputation of Christ's righteousness'. The phrase is not in Paul's writings, but its meaning is.

The point that it makes is that believers are made righteous before God (Romans 5: 19) through His admitting them to share Christ's status of acceptance. In other words, God treats them according to Christ's desert. There is nothing arbitrary or artificial in this, for God recognizes the existence of a real union of covenantal solidarity between them and Christ. For Paul, union with Christ is not fiction, but fact, – the basic fact, indeed, of Christianity; and his doctrine of justification is simply his first step in analyzing its meaning.

So it is 'in Christ' (Galatians 2: 17 and 2Corinthians 5: 21) that sinners are justified.

...

... when God justifies sinners on the ground of Christ's obedience and death, He acts justly. So far from compromising His judicial righteousness, this method of justification actually exhibits it.

...

The Gospel which proclaims God's apparent violation of His justice really reveals His justice. By His method of justifying sinners, God (in another sense) justified Himself; for by setting forth Christ as a propitiation for sins, in whom human sin was actually judged and punished as it deserved, He revealed the just ground on which He was able to pardon and accept believing sinners in Old Testament times (as in fact He did: cf. Psalms 130: 3 and following), no less than in the Christian era.

4) The Means of Justification:

Faith in Christ, says Paul, is the means whereby righteousness is received and justification bestowed. Sinners are justified 'by' or 'through' faith. Paul does not regard faith as the ground of justification. If it were, it would be a meritorious work, and Paul would not be able to term the believer, as such, 'him that works not' (Romans 4: 5); nor could he go on to say that salvation by faith is 'according to grace' (verse 16), for grace absolutely excludes works (Romans 11: 6).

...

Paul quotes the case of Abraham, who 'believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness', to prove that a man is justified through faith without works (Romans 4: 3 and following; Galatians 3: 6; quoting Genesis 15: 6).

C21. The Reconciling Purpose of the Justification of Sinners

When a person, for instance, puts oneself or is placed in a situation where he or she needs the help of others to be rescued, it can be observed that the actions for redemption to take place are often much broader and more complex than the actions that made the person enter the position of needing a rescue.

And what is mentioned in the previous paragraph is also something that occurred regarding the association that human beings made to the body of sin when they surrendered to subjection to sin.

The circumstances to which human beings subjected themselves by choosing the subjection to sin became so drastic that they could only be freed by external intervention and that would come to be broader and more powerful than the whole complex of circumstances to which they submitted themselves.

Moreover, the liberation of human beings would still have to respect a series of principles in their actions so that this deliverance could be considered entirely and eternally unquestionable as to its legitimacy and righteousness.

In other words, any proposal for the liberation of human beings from slavery to sin would first have to offer a justification of the people of their sins so that they could later come to be set free, as explained, in part, in the previous chapter.

This justification even needed to be so broad and extensive that a more complete and accurate explanation of it also required the joint use of a series of other terms or descriptions that detail the diversity of aspects that are included in this justification. So that the various areas covered by the referred justification could come to be satisfactorily exposed, the Lord also included in the Scriptures many specific references and terms about the multiple points that this so sublime and singular justification encompasses.

For example, announcing that God justifies the sinner also includes saying that it is God who provides the release of the debt of punishment that was attributed to the sinner and that God forgives the offenses that the sinner has performed against the Lord, as can be recalled in the following text:

*Colossians 2: 13 **And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,***

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

The justification provided by God also includes the complete condition of what the Scriptures, for instance, call the sinner's remission or redemption from slavery to the body of sin and the debt to sin and to God because of the offense against the Lord.

The justification provided by God, also expressed by the words remission or redemption that paid the price of the ransom of sinners from all the yoke of sin, encompassed all that needed to be provided, resolved, or finished.

As has also been commented in the previous chapter, the justification, remission, or redemption accomplished by the sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross of Calvary, as an integral and essential part of the gift of righteousness, is the means by which God has made all the provision for people to become set free from slavery to sin, the body of sin, and the propositions which ineffectively propose to deliver people, aspects which once again we remember in the following texts:

Revelation 1: 4 **John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ...**

Colossians 1: 13 **He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.**

Acts 13: 38 **Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man (Christ) is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.**

Romans 3: 24 **Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25(a) whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness.**

John 8: 36 **Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.**

Psalms 103: 1 **Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!**
2 **Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:**
3 **Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,**
4 **Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,**
5 **Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.**

6 The LORD executes righteousness And justice for all who are oppressed.

Because of the magnitude of the justification provided by God, which includes remission, ransom, redemption, or deliverance, that the Eternal Lord is also called the justifier, savior, redeemer, and deliverer of sinners, as can be seen in yet another series of texts below:

Romans 3: 26 ... to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

*Psalms 65: 5 **By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us, O God of our salvation, You who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth, And of the far-off seas;***

*Isaiah 43: 11 **I, even I, am the LORD, And besides Me there is no savior.***

*Luke 2: 10 **Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.***
*11 **For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."***

*Psalms 78: 35 **Then they remembered that God was their rock, And the Most High God their Redeemer.***

*Isaiah 44: 6 **Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God."***

*Psalms 68: 20 **Our God is the God of salvation; And to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death.***

*Psalms 18: 2 **The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.***

The clear statement that the work of God's righteousness accomplished through Christ aimed and still aims at justifying and reaching precisely the sinner, who has

departed from the path of the will of the Lord, is undeniable and reiterated over and over throughout the Bible Scriptures.

*1 Timothy 1: 15(a) **This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.***

*Luke 19: 10 **For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.***

To see clearly that justification is an integral part of God's gift of righteousness encompasses to perceive the only way a person has to be freed from the perdition and bondage produced by association with sin, for the heavenly justification is the only justification that can provide each one of the necessary items for the liberation of an individual from the most varied consequences that sin aims to attribute to the life of sinners.

Advancing, however, in the objective of understanding more broadly the singular justification offered by God, designated as a gift from the throne of the heavenly righteousness, we can see that the greatness of this justification becomes even more evident as we focus more closely also on the purpose that God has in store for those who receive this justification through faith in Christ Jesus.

Among so many aspects that subjection to sin produces and among so many points that are involved in rescuing a person from the oppression of sin and the consequences derived from submitting to it, it is extremely important that the central purpose of justification, offered by God through the gift of righteousness, also becomes widely perceived and practiced.

That is, the justification that redeems the sinner from the condemnation of death or that frees the sinner from the yoke of slavery to sin and the body of sin has not only these aspects as its ultimate purpose.

The justification that God offers to the sinner has as one of its goals that he or she receives the remission of the subjection to sin, but this, also to restore the most important thing that was damaged by sin, which is the fellowship of an individual with his or her Unique and Eternal Creator.

A more advanced goal of justification, reserved for those who accept the redemption or salvation offered by the Lord, is their freedom and restoration to a condition in which the availability of reconciliation with God is evident and in which the reconciliation in reference can be indeed or practically experienced, as explained in the following texts:

*Romans 5: 10 **For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.***

*11 **And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.***

2 Corinthians 5: 18 **Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,**
19 **that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.**

Colossians 1: 21 **And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled**
22 **in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.**

Through the justification provided by God in Christ Jesus, sinners receive the forgiveness of sins so that they can stand justified, forgiven, and free before the Lord to be at peace with God and to enjoy the fellowship with the Lord.

Romans 5: 1 **Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,**
2 **through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**

1 Corinthians 1: 9 **God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Hebrews 10: 16 **"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"**
17 **then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."**
18 **Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.**
19 **Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,**
20 **by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,**
21 **and having a High Priest over the house of God,**
22 **let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**

Justification through the blood of Christ, or by Christ's sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, restored the way to the most crucial aspect that subjection to sin has corrupted in the lives of human beings.

One benefit of the justification that God offers to sinners that should by no means go unnoticed is that this justification removes everything that prevents a person from coming individually to God for eternal fellowship with the Lord, as well as it, at the same time, also makes the way of grace broadly opened so that each individual may come freely to the Lord to be instructed by Him for a life according to the will of God, and not according to what sin proposes.

A more advanced goal of the justification which provides the sinner's deliverance from the yoke of sin, therefore, is the bestowal of the newness of true life that is available only in the Unique True God, as shown in the texts repeated below:

*Romans 5: 18 **Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.***

*Romans 6: 23 **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

The justification freely offered by God to all people, and which can be received through faith in the Lord, is undoubtedly a living and evident expression of the depths of God's love, goodness, and mercy offered through His Son Jesus Christ to all human beings so that they can be freed from what enslaved them.

Nevertheless, **the distinction of the Lord's love, goodness, and mercy receives an even more sublime prominence when the Scriptures state that the justification offered to sinners is also provided by God so that, above all, they may benefit from the path of return to an appropriate relationship of beloved children or heirs with the Heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Eternal Holy Spirit of God.**

*Titus 3: 4 **But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,***

5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

C22. The Availability and the Acceptance of the Gift of Righteousness

Throughout this material, it has been pointed out that knowledge of the consequences with which one may come to need to deal with because of the subjection to sin can become a very useful tool for a person to evaluate and discern the alternatives presented to him or her to deal with sin and to make the right choice of that option that actually solves the most lasting consequences triggered by association with sin.

We also emphasize here once again, that the exposure of sin as a potential evil to be practiced, as a set of evil consequences triggered by subjection to it, and also as a flow that may act in various directions and for all the time in which this flow is not interrupted, is not intended to bring readers of this information into a position of fear, but rather to expose how much every human being needs God's provision to deal with this whole set so-called sin and how broad and mighty needs to be this help so that it may become well known that a provision of this magnitude could never be created and sustained by those who came to be under the bondage of sin.

The convincing work about sin and its consequences denounces the wickedness of sin, but it also highlights the need for a very ample and perfect righteousness to counteract or overcome all that was and is caused by subjection to sin.

Considering that subjection to sin imputed slavery to the sinner through the body of sin, consisting, among others, of the punishment of sin and the debt record, the provision of God must also predict and encompass the release of the sinner from slavery to sin and the body of sin.

Since the association with sin attributed a change in the human beings' condition of existence, causing them to become a "sinners," God's provision also needs to predict or encompass the restoration of the sinner to a condition of "being justified from sin."

If subjection to sin, viewed from the standpoint of the offense, has caused guilt upon the human being before the Eternal Righteous Judge, God's provision also needs to provide for the forgiveness and extinction of this guilt.

Once the association with sin, viewed from the perspective of the offense, has introduced a barrier of separation and enmity in the human relationship with God, the provision of God, so that this consequence can be removed, also needs to encompass the possibility of reconciliation between the human beings and God.

Therefore, without a solution to be set free from the slavery to which human beings submitted themselves by the subjection to sin, also no other restoration could be of use to them after all, for they would not have the freedom to enjoy this restoration while still being a slave to sin.

Only a provision that contemplates a fully satisfying liberation from slavery that is placed upon the sinner by subjection to sin can grant indeed, simultaneously or subsequently, the restoration of the life of the one who has been delivered from the bondage to sin.

For a human being not to suffer the eternal damages of one's sin and to be able to receive the newness of heavenly and eternal life, which is given in freedom by the Lord, a provision or deliverance that solves all the more lasting aspects that could keep a person subject to sin is needed.

Without a righteous solution that could at the same time save from slavery to sin, the burden of guilt, the loss of the condition of being righteous, and the barrier of enmity toward God, the matter of the dominion of sin over people would not be possible to be removed satisfactorily and eternally, and thus, it would continue to hinder the granting of the newness of life that the Lord has in store for those who would receive the salvation that is offered from heaven.

Expressing the previous paragraph still in other words, we can say that only a provision that is, at the same time, justifying, redemptive, forgiving, and reconciling is able to solve the most profound vile consequences that subjection to sin seeks to attribute to people so that they do not become able to reach the freedom to have free access to true eternal life.

The justification of the sinner, the redemption of people from the yoke of sin and the ineffective means of trying to find freedom, the forgiveness of sin, and the reconciliation of the sinner with God are distinct facets of the salvation offered by the Lord, but, at the same time, they are inseparable aspects of the same and the singular provision for the liberation of people from the dominion and action of sin against their lives.

Bearing in mind that the central point pursued by sin is the breaking of the creature's proper relationship with its Creator, a provision that, for example, would only redeem people from the slavery of sin and would not offer the condition for people to return to an adequate relationship with God, would not, in fact, be a life solution, and, therefore, it would not be a real solution against the harm that the subjection of sin seeks to cause.

Only the remission of the sinner from the yoke of sin and the forgiveness of the sinner would still not produce the newness of true life that one needs, for this novelty of life is in God and is granted by the reconciliation of a person with the Lord.

A complete provision against the consequences of subjection to sin needs to contain an entirely satisfactory solution against the penalty of eternal death, but it also needs to provide the reconciliation with the provision of eternal life.

Just as the practice of sin does not only attribute the direct harm of a mere offense, but imputes a whole set of consequences to the sinner, so also God's provision for that the yoke of sin can be removed from over the sinner could not be limited in providing only partial aspects against the yoke of sin. To be complete, the provision of God also needs to afford a real path for the restoring of the connection with the everlasting life.

Nevertheless, achieving a clear perception of sin and, above all, the perception of the need for a provision that addresses the most enduring aspects generated by association with sin and the reconciliation with the Lord should not remain solely in the informative or contemplative level.

The knowledge of so many aspects about the yoke that the association with sin attempts to ascribe to the sinner and about the necessity of a heavenly provision to find deliverance from this yoke, however enlightening it might show itself, does not necessarily imply that this redeeming provision automatically applies to each individual who becomes informed about these aspects in reference.

Obtaining knowledge about the need for a specific resource and the resource itself to address a particular issue does not mean that the resource will always or automatically be available to those who need it, nor that the person in need of the resource will be willing to receive this feature in the way it is offered.

Therefore, when we come to consider the availability of the heavenly provision for the deliverance of sinners and the granting of the eternal newness of life to them, it is also so relevant to know the righteousness of God through the Gospel of God, for, through His Gospel, the Lord evidences how this provision is made available, as well as He highlights the need for this provision to be voluntarily accepted by those who need it.

The fact that God's righteousness is an integral part of God's Gospel, and the fact that we live in a time when this Gospel has already been made widely available to all people living on Earth, show us that the provision to reach deliverance from the yoke of sin is also already broadly available.

For us who live after Christ's coming in the flesh into the world, His death on the cross of Calvary, and His resurrection, the whole necessary provision for a sinner to reach liberation from slavery to the yoke of sin, the body of sin, and, still, for an individual to return to the fellowship with God is already fully and perfectly available, and nothing more needs to be added to it, an aspect that is repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures as also exemplified below:

*1 Peter 3: 18 **For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, ...***

*Hebrews 10: 12 **But this Man (Jesus), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,**
 13 **from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.**
 14 **For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.***

*Romans 6: 5 **For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,**
 6 **knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.***

*7 **For he who has died has been freed from sin.***
 8 ***Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,***
 9 ***knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.***
 10 ***For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.***

*John 19: 30 **So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.***

When the Scriptures describe that human beings need a provision of the kingdom of heaven to be set free from slavery to sin and the body of sin, they no longer refer to the aspect that this provision needs to be created, constituted, or made available, since it was already perfectly manifested in the crucifixion of Christ Jesus and His resurrection from the dead.

Thus, given that the provision for the sinner's deliverance has already been perfectly established and offered, the central issue in our day no longer concerns what God needs to provide for the sinner, but the attitude that each sinner individually needs to embrace to become associated with the provision that God has already made available to be accessed by all sinners.

So as the Gospel of God is an offer, and a true or legitimate offer does not impose itself upon the recipients of the offer, so the gift of righteousness, as part of the Gospel of the Lord, is an offer that does not impose itself upon those who need it.

The sinner's redemption from the yoke of slavery, the forgiveness of a person's sin, and the justification of an individual before God have a very objective, specific, and central purpose, which is the reconciliation and fellowship of people with God, for only in the Lord is the true newness of eternal life. However, if a person does not want this specific purpose of God's righteousness, then the gift of righteousness, even though it is already available, also does not become a personal experience in his or her life.

So that the gift of righteousness does not remain restricted to the position of being perfect in all that it has accomplished or to the condition of being fully available to all human beings, but, instead, becomes an individual or personal experience of sinners, the Lord, through His Scriptures, even comes to plead for us to receive His gift of righteousness and to advance to the deeper purpose that is associated with it, as the following text explicitly shows us:

*2 Corinthians 5: 18 **Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,***
*19 **that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.***
*20 **Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.***

The justification, the remission, and the forgiveness of sinners are indescribably wonderful aspects, and they demanded the highest price that could be paid in the whole universe, namely the sacrifice of Christ on the cross of Calvary. However, if a person is unwilling to accept or receive the Lord's provision of help, one still abstains oneself from the position in which he or she can enjoy what God freely offers him or her.

*John 5: 39 **You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.***
*40 **But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.***

*John 11:25 **Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.***
*26 **And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"***

The provision of God's righteousness to the sinner, already manifested in Christ Jesus, is the only way that enables a person to dissociate oneself from slavery to sin, the powers of darkness, and the prince of this world, just as it is the only way for a person to reconcile with God. However, if an individual does not receive the unique gift of God's righteousness offered to him or her, one also will not be able to access its benefits either, not because they are not available to him or her, but because he or she is unwilling to accept the gift of the heavenly righteousness in one's personal life.

While the people who lived in the so-called Old Testament times still needed to wait for the fullness of time for the work of Christ becoming a testimony retroactively in their behalf, the people who live after Christ's crucifixion and resurrection do not need to wait for other works from the part of God so that their justification and reconciliation with the Lord may be established, for this matter, in the present day, essentially revolves around people receiving or not receiving what has already been made fully available to them by the Lord.

Since all the provision for the sinner's justification and all the provision for one's reconciliation with God is already made available by the Lord in Christ Jesus, the understanding of how the gift of righteousness can be personally received and the act of actually receiving it, in various aspects, have become the most crucial points in the life of a person who still is on Earth.

The vital condition of accepting or receiving the gift of righteousness should never fail to be widely announced and taught, for it is by the individual receiving of the gift of righteousness offered by God to all humankind that it also becomes the personal righteousness of a person.

Since the gift of the righteousness of God has already manifested itself fully and perfectly concerning the provision for justification, redemption, forgiveness, and reconciliation of sinners, its acceptance and receiving have become the most crucial matter for the salvation of humanity.

Here, however, we would also add the consideration that the provision of the gift of the heavenly righteousness has also become the point against which the highest or strongest oppositions have been raised toward what the Lord freely offers from heaven to all.

Since the gift of righteousness has unquestionably triumphed over all that involves sin, one of the main targets of darkness has also become broadly focused on the point that people do not come to know this gift of righteousness or, if they come to know it, so that they do not accept it in their personal lives.

Considering that God already has irreversibly revealed the gift of righteousness as the way for human beings to obtain deliverance from slavery to sin and to receive the newness of eternal life in the Lord, the opposition of the powers of darkness and sin has also become directed more intensely to the attempts of avoiding that people come to find this way or that they come to choose to receive and follow it.

Thus, the opposition to the theme of accepting and receiving the gift of righteousness should never be underestimated or regarded as a slight resistance, for since the powers of darkness have already been exposed to shame on the cross by the gift of righteousness and also because they could do nothing to prevent this gift from manifesting itself in fullness and perfection, what remains for the powers of darkness is to try to make that people do not come to know what has triumphed over darkness or that people do not come to accept the gift that turns the provision for their deliverance in a personal experience.

After Christ's coming in the flesh into the world or after Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the distortion of the theme of how a person can be justified from sin and how one can be reconciled with God has become one of the main aspects aimed by the powers of darkness, even to the point of advancing to the attempts of presenting false ministers of righteousness in order to distort people's understanding of the unique and perfect righteousness that comes from God through Christ Jesus.

In the present days, it is regarding the work of attempting to oppose that people receive the gift of God's righteousness that the devil and the powers of darkness expose some of the vilest weapons of their wicked actions.

*2 Corinthians 11: 3 **But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.***

*2 Corinthians 11: 13 **For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.***

*14 **And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.***

*15 **Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.***

In order to oppose the eternally established righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, the devil can even seek to disguise himself as an angel of light and present pretended apostles of Christ and false ministers of righteousness, thus demonstrating that the spiritual powers of darkness know just how crucial it is for a person the proper acceptance or receiving of the gift of righteousness.

And having as a parameter the aspects mentioned so far in this chapter, we understand that it is also very opportune to present here a particular emphasis on the fact that **the acceptance and receiving of the gift of God's righteousness has been established by the Lord to be according to the “*simplicity that is in Christ.*”**

Despite the breadth and complexity of all the consequences that may come from the subjection of people to sin, the even greater extent and complexity required to provide a way and manifest the righteousness that can redeem people after their association with sin, and yet, which may grant them the newness of eternal life, we understand that it should be highlighted here that **the way God provides for the gift of righteousness to be accepted and received is extremely simple, allowing all people to have access to it**, even regardless whether they lack or do not lack resources in the material world, as explained, for example, below:

- Romans 10: 9* ***That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.***
- 10* ***For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***
- 11* ***For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."***
- 12* ***For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.***
- 13* ***For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."***

If people stumble over the acceptance and personal receiving of the gift of righteousness, this can, in no way, be attributed to some complexity related to how the Lord offers this gift. Stumbling upon the acceptance of this gift of God, when it happens, often occurs because of the stumbling of people precisely on the simplicity that there is in the way by which the gift of righteousness can be received, as also recalled in the texts below:

- 1 Corinthians 1: 17* ***For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.***
- 18* ***For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.***
- 19* ***For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."***
- 20* ***Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?***
- 21* ***For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.***
- 22* ***For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;***
- 23* ***but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,***
- 24* ***but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.***
- 25* ***Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.***

Romans 10: 1 ***Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.***

- 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.**
- 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.**
- 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**
-

One of the most expressive difficulties for some people to understand and receive the gift of righteousness is the point of accepting that all provision for justification has been made basically by God and that a person can do nothing to cooperate for this gift becoming available to him or her.

Not surrendering to the fact that all provision to resist and overcome sin and the body of sin comes exclusively from God is one of the central factors present in all resistance to the acceptance of the gift of righteousness, for this fact also causes people to be faced with a basic aspect of the root of sin that attracts them, which, in turn, is the non-recognition of the Lord's exclusive condition as God, Creator, and Singular Source of all that is essential to life.

One of the difficulties that most oppose people's acceptance of the gift of righteousness is that they resist the humble attitude of recognizing that only the Eternal Lord is God and that only the Eternal Lord is sovereign over everything and everyone, and even above sin and its consequences.

The thought that the production of the provision of justification, redemption, forgiveness, and reconciliation is dependent on people works for them to try to redeem themselves is one of the most vile and wicked thoughts in all times of life on Earth, for this thought proposes that God would not be powerful and free to provide, from Himself, an alternative or a way to set human beings free.

The thought that the provision for justification, redemption, forgiveness, and reconciliation needs human works, in the sense of people trying to build up by themselves their salvation, objectifies, in one way or another, to reduce God to a dependence on the actions of the creature so that He could take the initiative to manifest His righteousness in all areas or, still, to cause people to repeatedly fall back on the aspects that try to elevate the creature to the position of God and God to the creature's position, as exposed more extensively in the subject on the Gospel of the Creator.

As the following texts show us, God is sovereign in everything, and this also applies to the matter of making the gift of righteousness available for all people.

- Acts 17: 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.**
- 25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.**

Isaiah 45: 21 Tell and bring forth your case; Yes, let them take counsel together. Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, A just God and a Savior; There is none besides Me.
22 Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.
23 I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, And shall not return, That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath.
24 He shall say, "Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength. To Him men shall come, And all shall be ashamed Who are incensed against Him."

Therefore, one of the most severe illusions to which a human being may become subject occurs when one comes to think that he or she can produce true righteousness for his or her justification or that a human being can produce the provision for salvation even being under slavery to sin and unrighteousness or after having become associated with sin, forgetting that flesh and blood corrupted by sin cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 15: 50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

Some false assumptions about the potential of human beings to achieve merit for their salvation constitute some of the most resistant, obscure, and vile imprisonments or chains that people may come to subject themselves, for despite that the full and singular provision to be freed from the oppression of sin is already widely available to them in the Lord, many individuals still choose to remain subject to deception because of an inappropriate reliance on a supposed human ability to achieve salvation.

Before the Lord, the attempts of human beings to seek remission, deliverance, and salvation through their own efforts are not only seen as ineffective, but are still compared to the insistence on acts of unrighteousness, iniquity, or filthy rags for resisting the singular salvation option that the Lord offers them through His gift of righteousness.

Isaiah 64: 6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

If the human being could undo everything that is unleashed when one associates oneself with sin, humans could come to be equated with a “god,” for, in this way, they would be able to commit transgressions and undo all the consequences of them by their own abilities. If human beings could undo committed evil with self-provided sacrifices, they would not need

heavenly righteousness, and Christ's sacrifice on the cross of Calvary would have been unnecessary or vain work.

We understand, then, that it should also be noted at this point that the mere knowledge of good and evil is very different from an individual having the ability to do good, resist evil, or yet to undo the eternal consequences of one's practice of wickedness, as exemplified in the text below written by the apostle Paul:

Romans 7: 18 **For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.**

19 **For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.**

The true provision for absolving a person from slavery to the set of aspects derived from sin after one has become subject to it comes only from God, just as any true good that a human being intends to do can only be done if the grace of the Lord is granted to him or her to do it.

Lamentations 3: 22 **Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.**

Psalms 94: 17 **Unless the LORD had been my help, My soul would soon have settled in silence.**

James 1: 17 **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.**

It is also in the acceptance of being a creature of God and that all provision for a true newness of life proceeds from God, including the justification and reconciliation of one who has deviated from the righteousness of the Lord, that an individual finds the place of acceptance of the free gift that justifies and reconciles him or her with the Lord so that one can live and walk according to God's will.

The simplicity of accepting the gift of righteousness lies in believing and trusting in God as the Eternal Creator and as the Unique One Who is the provider of the justification of sinners and their eternal reconciliation with the Lord.

Psalms 37: 1 **Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.**

2 **For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb.**

- 3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.**
- 4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.**
- 5 Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.**
- 6 He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.**

When a person receives Christ as the gift of the Lord's righteousness to his or her life, Christ becomes that person's righteousness, and it is this righteousness, which is Christ in each individual's life, that God will bring forth as the light or as the noonday.

Christ was made the gift of righteousness for us so that we can receive God's eternal righteousness also as "Our Eternal Righteousness."

Malachi 4: 2 But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing (or salvation) in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.

Jeremiah 23: 5 "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

6 In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Jeremiah 51: 10 The LORD has revealed our righteousness. Come and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

1 Corinthians 1: 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

Once again, then, we point out in the text below that all the provision of justification and reconciliation is found only in Christ, for exclusively through Christ was provided a sacrifice of non-corrupted blood for deliverance and forgiveness of those who became corrupted by subjection to sin.

Romans 5: 6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

- 8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- 9 *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*
- 10 *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*
- 11 *And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

In Christ, God has, in a way, presented His righteousness as in a “gift form,” and a “gift” is constituted to be “offered” and “given.” Thus, if one trusts God as his or her justifier, one receives the “gift of righteousness” as a present, and as a received present, the “gift” also comes to belong to this person.

Therefore, the simplicity of accepting the justification provided by God lies in the fact that it is “*a gift of righteousness*” that “*simply*” should be received through faith by the one who needs it, remembering, however, that this very simple or straightforward way through which justification is offered is also an aspect why so many people despise or reject this heavenly gift.

As strange as it might seem, the fact that it is the very righteousness of God that freely, by the grace of the Lord, justifies the sinner, and as well enables the sinner to be reconciled with God, also ends up becoming, for many, the focus of such high rejection of this way, an aspect addressed more broadly in the material under the title of the Gospel of the Grace of God.

Thus, in a very summarized, condensed, or objective way, we can come to the conclusion that any options that do not accept the exclusivity of God's provision of righteousness in Christ Jesus are propositions that opposes God's gift that has been offered in behalf of all human beings, and which are often presented precisely by the fact that some people see the provision of God's grace and goodness in Christ Jesus as a scandal or madness.

Many, indeed, think that the righteousness that justifies the human beings and can redeem them from sin and the consequences of sin may come from sinners themselves, but this thought contradicts the truth that is described throughout the Scriptures of the Lord.

Proverbs 29: 26 ***Many seek the ruler's favor, But justice for man comes from the LORD.***

The gift of God's righteousness, which is in Christ, which is also offered to us as Christ in us and we in Christ, can only be received through the gracious offer, it can only be accepted by faith that God has made a full and perfect provision for sinners, but is also this simplicity that brings so much discomfort to so many people.

It is interesting to note in the Scriptures that after God's righteousness was revealed as the saving righteousness in Christ Jesus, and as a gift to be freely received, the

emphasis that this righteousness refers to a salvation granted by grace and to be accepted by faith had to be widely announced, for people continually wanted to associate God's salvation and justification with a set of human works or rules to be followed, but which invariably have shown themselves entirely ineffective for the purpose they propose to achieve.

After the heavenly righteousness has dealt properly with sin and has already been revealed as the perfect provision for the justification of sinners, one central challenge for humanity has become the perception and recognition of the distinction that needs to be made between the gift of righteousness, and what it provides, and the propositions of works that seek to achieve what the gift of righteousness has done forever and what never could and never will be possible to be attained by any other means.

As we have mentioned above, to seek to establish a way distinct from the gift of the heavenly righteousness for the justification of sinners or for them to reach a just or righteous condition before God is to try to establish that which is already available and what can never be established by any other way than the way of the gift of righteousness that is in Christ Jesus.

Accepting or receiving the gift of righteousness simply by faith in the Lord and that the necessary provision has already been made available by God in Christ Jesus, also in opposition to the attempts of achieving righteousness through human works or by subjection to a set of writings of commandments or rules beforehand established, is a way that is abundantly presented in the Scriptures to teach us and to ensure that what God has done for us is fully sufficient to be believed and accepted, according to a few more examples below:

*Titus 3: 4 **But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,***
5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,
6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,
7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

*Romans 3: 21 **But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,***
22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;
23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,
26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3: 28 **Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.**
 29 **Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,**
 30 **since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.**

Romans 4: 1 **What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?**
 2 **For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.**
 3 **For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."**
 4 **Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.**
 5 **But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,**
 6 **just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:**
 7 **"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered;**
 8 **Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."**

The unique way for a person to become untangled from the imputation of the most severe or eternal consequences of subjection to sin is to receive the imputation of the righteousness that has paid the debt of all sin and which can justify the sinner. And this righteousness, highlighting it once again, exclusively comes from God and is made available to be received voluntarily by all those who need it so much.

The importance of the distinction between the righteousness of God and the other propositions of righteousness is so vital that, from the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the righteousness proceeding from the Heavenly Father has come to be named in the Scripture also as "***the righteousness of the faith***" or "***the righteousness which is from God by faith***." And all this, so that it is not mistaken, in any way, with any attempt at righteousness proceeding from the law, the works of the law, or any other work conceived and performed by human beings.

The "***righteousness of the faith***" is a source of true hope, and it has been manifested as a gift worthy of being desired above all the most precious and important things that may exist on Earth, for what so many things regarded so highly by human beings could never do and never will be able to do, the gift of God's righteousness in Christ Jesus has already made widely available.

Galatians 5: 5 **For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.**

- Philippians 3: 2 **Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!***
- 3 **For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,***
- 4 **though I also might have confidence in the flesh.** If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:*
- 5 **circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;***
- 6 **concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.***
- 7 **But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.***
- 8 **Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ***
- 9 **and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.***
-

Finally, in this chapter, to further broaden the list of texts that expose how decisive is the salvation through God's righteousness and by receiving it through the grace of the Lord and faith in Him, and not by any human work other than believing in Christ and His sacrifice as the provision for our justification and reconciliation with God, we present below some more texts of the Scriptures that show how much the Lord wants this principle of life to be firmly established in each person's heart.

*Galatians 2: 16 **Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.***

*2 Timothy 1: 8 **Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,***

*9 **who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,***

*10 **but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.***

*Ephesians 2: 8 **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,***

*9 **not of works, lest anyone should boast.***

Romans 5: 20 **Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound.
But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,
21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through
righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Romans 11: 6 **And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise
grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace;
otherwise work is no longer work.**

Galatians 3: 10, Romans 3: 19 till 20 and Romans 6: 12 till 14
**For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it
is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things
which are written in the book of the law, to do them."**

...
**Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are
under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world
may become guilty before God.**

**Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His
sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

...
**Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should
obey it in its lusts.
And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness
to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead,
and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.
For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law
but under grace.**

John 6: 29 **Jesus answered and said to them:
"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."**

C23. Facts or Changes Concerning an Individual's Conditions that Follow the Receiving of the Gift of Righteousness

In the previous chapters, it has been seen that although the justification of human beings through Christ Jesus has made the full provision for all to be justified, it is necessary for an individual to believe and accept the offer directed to him or her to effectively receive and enjoy the justification of God for one's life, an aspect that here, due to its great relevance, we will seek to highlight once again through the following texts:

*Romans 3: 28 **Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.***

*Romans 5: 1 **Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

*Romans 3: 22 ... **even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ...***

*Galatians 2: 16 ... **knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.***

If a person, for instance, resists the gift of righteousness or simply rejects it, one also rejects the benefits of the gift of righteousness, which, in this way, do not come to be one's personal experience not because the gift is not sufficient for his or her justification or because God does not want to grant it to him or her, but because the gift is not accepted in the manner in which it is offered.

From the historical or general point of view, Christ's act of righteousness, accomplished on the cross of Calvary, was the most significant event and work of all time that could have been done for sinners, for without it, justification could not come to be reached by any person.

From the individual point of view, however, the personal acceptance or receiving of the gift of righteousness is the beginning of the most relevant work in the life of each sinner, and it is, therefore, not strange to see that the Lord Jesus Christ instructs people to seek God's righteousness in the first place, together with the heavenly kingdom.

And as a consequence or the more a person comes to truly understand the greatness of the deliverance granted to him or her by the gift of righteousness, that is, through what Christ did for him on the cross of Calvary, also a growing sense of humility and

gratitude toward God begins to fill the heart of the one who comes to know more intimately the righteousness of the Lord, as was also announced in the words of the psalmist that follow:

Psalms 103: 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!
2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:
3 Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,
4 Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
6 The LORD executes righteousness And justice for all who are oppressed.

Among the many benefits that the Eternal Lord extends to human beings, the first that is listed by the above mentioned psalmist, and which is also paramount to all who have been subjected to sin, is the justification that brings forgiveness of iniquities, which set free from the root of sickness, especially those of the heart, and that redeems the life of sinners from destruction or the grave, especially in the sense that one does not need to stay away from the eternal fellowship with God.

The primary aspect a sinner needs to find is the Lord's provision to be set free from slavery to sin and the condition of being regarded as a sinner, and this provision and the light to find the way of this provision comes only from the Father of Lights.

Psalms 25: 8 Good and upright is the LORD; Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.

Acknowledgment of God's goodness and gratitude for Him granting the free gift of righteousness, however, does not mean that deliverance is the last stage of the benefits of the gift of righteousness or that a person is saved by God only to not have on him or her the imputation of sin and the body of sin, as also mentioned in earlier chapters.

Simultaneously with the deliverance from slavery to sin, receiving the gift of God's righteousness also changes a person's position and condition before God and the whole spiritual world.

A person's justification before sin, the powers of darkness, and the Lord Himself not only acquits a person of one's eternal debt, but it also changes the situation and attributes of what or who an individual comes to be before God after the moment of accepting the heavenly justification offered to him or her by the Lord.

Therefore, from the moment a sinner receives the gift of righteousness that is in Christ Jesus, one also receives the condition of being seen as "righteous or justified" before the eyes of God, which in turn causes that the promises of the Scriptures addressed to the "just or justified" also become directed to the one who has just received the gift of eternal righteousness offered by the Lord.

A person justified “in Christ” comes to be called before God as just, holy, righteous, free, and, along with all these attributes, one also comes to the condition of a “son of God,” and as a son, “heir of God and joint-heir with Christ and of His eternal righteousness.”

Galatians 4: 3 **Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.**
4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,
5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.
6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

Colossians 1: 12 ... **giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.**
13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,
14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Titus 3: 4 **But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,**
5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,
6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,
7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

1 John 3: 1 **Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.**

When the gift of God's righteousness comes to be seen under the matter of the change that it produces in the condition of the sinner, once again this gift is surprisingly or exceedingly excellent, for in addition to being a provision for justification, redemption, and salvation, the gift of righteousness is also the provision to place those who receive it in the position that God desires all to be, that is, in the position of righteous and as His children.

As mentioned in the chapter on the reconciling purpose of the sinner's justification through the gift of righteousness, the Lord's gift was not only manifested to the world to grant people deliverance from slavery to sin, but also, or even mainly, to allow them to

become reconciled with God and to receive the condition of the newness of eternal life which can be found only in the Lord.

*2 Corinthians 5: 21 **For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.***

*Ephesians 2: 4 **But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,***
*5 **even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),***
*6 **and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,***
*7 **that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.***

*1 Corinthians 1: 9 **God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.***

Still in other words, when one receives Christ, the heavenly gift of righteousness, one also receives from God a new birth that is according to God's righteousness, one receives the condition of what the Scriptures of the Lord call the "New Creature" or the "New Man," created according to God in true righteousness and holiness, as exposed in two more texts below:

*Ephesians 4: 20 **But you have not so learned Christ,***
*21 **if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:***
*22 **that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,***
*23 **and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,***
*24 **and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.***

*2 Corinthians 5: 15 **And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.***
*16 **Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.***
*17 **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.***

Thus, to come to know that the gift of righteousness has delivered us from sin to be a new creature in Christ, a new man created according to God in true righteousness and holiness, extols grace to the point of showing us how precious are the words of John the

Baptist in saying that through Jesus Christ we have received from the “fullness of God” and “grace upon grace.”

John 1: 15 John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'"

16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

By reporting that the righteousness of God puts us in a condition of “New Creature” or “New Man,” the Scriptures unravel and present us a whole new way of life that is made available to an individual from the very moment of the acceptance of the gift of righteousness.

Life under the condition of a “New Man” is a unique relationship with the newness of eternal life that is in the Lord and which has become widely available through the manifestation to the world of the gift of the everlasting righteousness. Life as a “New Creature” is a new beginning, under new conditions, for the relationship of an individual with God.

Therefore, even though an individual has incurred the subjection to sin and the bondage that results from this subjection, when an individual receives the gift of righteousness, one also receives from the Lord a new personal condition of life to live and walk in newness of life before his or her Eternal Creator.

Although receiving the gift of the heavenly righteousness may not imply a person's remission of the convictions or condemnations in the natural level attributed to him or her by human trials or their courts, as was the case of the sinner crucified with Christ on Calvary and who came to repentance, the person who receives the gift of the heavenly righteousness, and keeps one's faith in this provision of justification, is no longer seen before God as a sinner, but as a justified or righteous person through the acceptance of the work that Christ Jesus did for him or her.

Even if in the eyes of men a person has been considered worthy of condemnation, or yet, if a person does not attain forgiveness before one's fellows for the sins one has committed, if an individual receives in one's heart, through faith, the gift of righteousness which is in Christ Jesus, before God this person receives the condition of justified for eternity or the position of being considered righteous to receive the eternal newness of life that is in the Lord.

1 Peter 4: 6 For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

*Romans 8: 1 **There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.***

*2 **For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.***

Finally, to conclude this chapter, we would like to point out that a more detailed description of the general aspects of the referred “New Creature” will not be presented at this time, so that in the present material we may focus primarily on the theme of the Gospel or the gift of the righteousness of God, and also because in the following subjects of the Systemic Teaching about Christian Life there are two series explicitly addressed to this theme, called respectively New Creation in Christ and Walking in Newness of Life.

C24. Life After Receiving the Gift of Righteousness and the Justification of Sins Committed After Receiving this Gift

Something very interesting to note when the life of human beings is observed more closely is that the various aspects of each person's life are divided into higher or extraordinary events and, at the same time, into some continuity of routines or even regular and ordinary facts.

The greatness of all that is involved in the extraordinary event of the conception of life, for instance, encompasses a sublimity that can never be fully described by a human being on Earth. From the moment that the conception of a new human life occurs, there also comes to life an individual who could never come into existence if that conception did not happen.

Moreover, when the conception of a new life advances to the stage of coming to light, which we call birth, a whole new reality surrounds that unique being who has emerged from the mother's womb and entered such a different environment than he or she was exposed until then.

And of course, these extraordinary events in one's life need to be considered among the noblest facts of all existence, and should always be specially highlighted, for without them one cannot attain a natural life on Earth. However, various ordinary aspects of life should not be considered less relevant, for it is by many ordinary aspects that life derived from an extraordinary event comes to be developed and established.

Understanding and valuing the ordinary aspects of life end up demonstrating or highlighting, even more, the value of the extraordinary events. If the extraordinary event of conception brings a new unique being into existence, to take care of this new being is no less vital for the new life to grow and develop indeed. Life conceived by an extraordinary act also reaches continuity by a series of regular actions.

And even though the aspect referred to in the previous paragraph cannot be perceived so visibly regarding a person's spiritual life, for both conception and growth of it cannot be seen merely by the natural senses of perception, when we look at life also from a spiritual point of view according to the Bible Scriptures, we can observe that something similar in terms of the extraordinary and ordinary events of the natural life also occurs in the spiritual life.

These initial points about the existence of extraordinary and ordinary events concerning the spiritual life, therefore, are being highlighted at this point of this subject because they are also of high relevance regarding accepting or receiving the gift of God's righteousness and the effects this gift may cause in a person's life after he or she receives this gift.

Similarly as the receiving of natural life is a gift that generally extends far beyond conception and birth, so the gift of the heavenly righteousness is also granted to extend into one's life for a period that goes far beyond the initial time of receiving this gift.

The fact that the gift of righteousness is previously existent in God, has manifested itself publicly by the event of Christ's crucifixion as the provision of justification and salvation of sinners, and is called in this respect "*one Man's righteous act*," and still, the fact that this same gift of righteousness has been offered to be received forever in a person's life, should never be confused with the inappropriate thought that after

accepting or receiving this gift a person does not need to care or to nurture the new condition received from the Lord.

It is important to note that in the previous paragraph, it is not being said that the gift of righteousness, in itself, needs care and nourishment. The gift of righteousness, as seen in the previous chapter, has already been manifested in a perfect and fully satisfying way for the deliverance of all people from the yoke of slavery to sin. Christ's work on the cross of Calvary and His resurrection were accomplished for all people of all times, nations, and regions of Earth.

Just as sin is not regional and is not a specific characteristic of some peoples and not of others, of some profiles of people and not of others, of some social classes and not of others, but it is worldwide, for all have sinned and all lack the glory of God, so also the gift of righteousness is not regional and is not directed to a specific nation or a distinct group of people. Christ died for the sake of all so that everyone might be saved, an aspect recalled once again in the texts below:

*Romans 5: 18 **Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.***

*Romans 3: 23 **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**
24 **being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.***

*1 John 2: 2 **And He Himself (Jesus) is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.***

After the gift of righteousness was manifested to the world by God in Christ Jesus, the provision of justification for sinners became fully available to all, and nothing more needs to be added to it.

Therefore, when in the preceding paragraphs were mentioned about cultivating and nurturing the gift of righteousness, we are not referring to an effort to try to perfect the gift of the heavenly righteousness that is already perfect and eternal, but we are specifically referring to God's call to people grow in the relationship with the aspects available to them in the gift of righteousness after it has been received in the heart through faith in Christ Jesus.

Although the event that made the provision for the justification of all sinful human beings is characterized as a unique event manifested in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, receiving this gift generates a different condition of life for each person who receives it, which also inaugurates a new way of living the new condition granted along with the acceptance of the gift of righteousness.

As noted earlier, the acceptance of the gift of righteousness interrupts the continuity of slavery to sin and the body of sin regarding the life of the one who receives it and marks an end to the obligation to sin and the law associated with the mentality that by

human works it is possible to obtain salvation and the favor of God. However, what we want to highlight here is that receiving the gift of righteousness is also the beginning of a new life to be lived according to the very gift of righteousness and the new spiritual conditions in which a person comes to be.

In the previous chapter, we mentioned that once a person understands the need for the gift of righteousness and receives it, he or she also comes to a new position or status of life concerning sin and regarding God. However, what we want to add in this chapter is that the new position of life, granted along with the receiving of the gift of righteousness, is not given as a theoretical or figurative title, but rather so that the person now may live indeed in the new condition that has been granted to him or her by the power of God.

After a person passes from the status of a sinner to the condition of a justified person, considered righteous, or accepted through faith in Christ Jesus and the justification provided by the Lord, one is also called to live as a person that has been made righteous or justified by God.

Romans 1: 16 ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.***

17 ***For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."***

Galatians 3: 10 ***For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."***

11 ***But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."***

Hebrews 10: 35 ***Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.***

36 ***For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:***

37 ***"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.***

38 ***Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."***

39 ***But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.***

Ephesians 5: 6 ***Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.***

7 ***Therefore do not be partakers with them.***

8 ***For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light***

9 ***(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),***

10 ***finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.***

To comprehend the attitude that a person who has received the gift of righteousness is called to adopt regarding how one should continue to relate to the gift of righteousness itself is one of the most challenging aspects to understand in the life of the one who has accepted the gift freely given to him or her by the Lord.

After receiving the gift of righteousness, the perseverance or permanence of a person in the gift of righteousness is essential or crucial for him or her to remain, through faith in Christ Jesus, associated with the benefits that accompany the gift of righteousness.

The continuity of the relationship with the justification offered to a person is central to the life of the one who receives it, to the point that we can find this subject being addressed very intensely in most of the Bible books that succeeded the coming of the Lord in the flesh into the world so that the truth about it always remains in evidence. From the coming of Christ into the world, the gift of righteousness needed to be reaffirmed and explained several times, for concerning it, we can also find many narratives where it is described how strongly this principle was opposed by those who do not know it or do not accept the simplicity with which it is offered in Christ, as has also been mentioned in earlier chapters.

Although the act of righteousness for the justification, remission, and salvation of all sinners has been performed once, perfectly or forever, this does not imply that those who have received salvation do not need to continue to relate in a renewed way with the gift of the righteousness of the Lord, which is why we are trying to point out here that abiding in faith or continuing trusting in the gift of righteousness remains equally vital to an individual also after personally receiving salvation.

For many Christians, the fact that the gift of righteousness is a provision to justify them from their sinful past is well accepted and quite understandable. The perception of the justification and forgiveness of sins committed before a person becomes a Christian seems to be well accepted by many, for they realize that before an individual received Christ, one also was devoid of a provision that could free him or her from the yoke of sin to which one had become submitted.

Nevertheless, after the encounter with Christ, a question about the justification of the sins that Christians still commit even after this encounter seems to rise before many of them. Realizing that Christ, because of the Heavenly Father's love, came to call and save sinners is not surprising to many who have received Christ, but many of those who accept well the first part of the heavenly justification do not know for sure how to deal with the forgiveness of the new practices of sin when they incur them after they already have received the justification of God once in their lives.

In a sense, many Christians even know how to appropriately preach the Gospel of Christ to sinners who have not yet received Christ so that they may repent and receive the Lord's salvation, but, at the same time, many of them do not know how they, themselves, should deal with the sins they still commit after they have already received Christ in their lives, which can be very frustrating and sad.

Thus, if there is no understanding of the relationship with the gift of righteousness after receiving this gift, or if a Christian does not advance to be grounded or established

on it, several spaces for an improper positioning concerning the gift of righteousness may seek to settle in this Christian's life.

And among the points on which many people who have accepted the gift of righteousness have some difficulty to understand how their relationship with this gift should be, repeating once again, is the fact that they do not comprehend or accept that the gift of righteousness was manifested in Christ Jesus once and for all and for all people, even for the sins that Christians themselves still commit or will commit.

Unfortunately, for many people, the idea that the heavenly grace can justify a sinner's sins seems more acceptable than to accept that the grace of the Lord can equally justify the sins of a person who has already been justified.

Paul repeated several times the fact that if a sinner can be saved because of God's love and mercy, much more can God save those who have already accepted the heavenly salvation or the gift of righteousness, as exemplified below:

*Romans 5: 10 **For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.***

*11 **And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.***

Therefore, **one of the most relevant points to be understood in the Christian life is that the means or the provision of justification of the Christian always remains the same gift that justified him or her when he or she, through God's mercy and grace, reached the condition of becoming a Christian.**

The fact that a justified sinner comes to be called righteous before the Lord to live a righteous life before God and human beings should never lead the justified person to think that, after receiving Christ in his or her life, the responsibility for the continuity of his or her justification now depends on his or her own "good works."

To think that a Christian should live a righteous life after being justified for the purpose of trying to maintain the justification of one's own life through human works, may become one of the most foolish and disastrous aspects of the life of the one who has been justified through the justification that is granted by faith in Christ Jesus.

We lack words to emphasize how important are the points that we are addressing in these last paragraphs, for if a person, after being justified by faith in the gift of righteousness, comes to think that one's justification becomes his or her very responsibility, this individual enters the way of drawing back from the faith in the unique aspect that can justify him or her, as we have seen in the text of Hebrews mentioned above, and which we would like to quote again below:

*Hebrews 10: 37 **"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.***

*38 **Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."***

39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

About what faith is the author of Hebrews talking? Is it not the same faith by which the sinner was justified and saved by the Lord?

The faith by which the just is called to live and walk after receiving salvation is the same faith that justified him or her to live in Christ. It is the faith that the just was, is, and will continue to be blessed by God not because one is righteous by his or her own works, but because one has been and will continue to be justified forever and ever by the same and unique gift of righteousness manifested by God in Christ on the cross of Calvary.

The righteous life that the righteous lives by faith, one lives it not to achieve the continuation of one's justification on his or her merits, but lives it because one has received and continues to receive the justification by the same and unique gift of righteousness provided by God for his or her life.

Justification in Christ, not only precedes and inaugurates the new life of the one who is justified by it, but it also sustains the whole life of the one who has received a made alive spirit because of the gift of righteousness.

Eternal life or spiritual life in God is the result of the gift of righteousness, and the grace that bestows this heavenly life only operates if the righteousness of God is the foundation of its work. And in turn, the made alive spirit that is granted to the one who receives the gift of righteousness is also called to live by the very heavenly righteousness that is in the Lord.

Romans 5: 18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

Romans 8: 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Romans 6: 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5: 20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As we saw in the previous chapter, **God's righteousness is the foundation of the creation of the "new man," but it is also the foundation that underlies or sustains the newness of life that an individual comes to live spiritually after receiving the gift of righteousness.**

It is through the gift of righteousness that a person can receive the status of righteous, Christian, or a new creature in the Lord, but this gift of righteousness also remains the basis for a Christian to continue to be justified by the grace of God when one still stumbles on some sin.

To aim at a holy life and ever more distant from the subjection to sin is something that every Christian should aspire still in his or her life on Earth for being justified by Christ who paid a very high price to do so. However, the pursuit of a life without absolute sin while still inserted in the present age, and with the aim of obtaining through this conduct justification before God, is not only impossible to accomplish but also a firm resistance against the justification granted exclusively and freely by God.

To think that a Christian can justify oneself through a life perfected by his or her works is one of the greatest and most terrible deceits that afflicts thousands and thousands of people, and which characterizes a lying position in opposition to the exclusive work of the gift of righteousness that God manifested in Christ Jesus.

- 1 John 1: 8* ***If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.***
- 10* ***If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.***
- 9* ***If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

Trying to be justified by human works, after being justified by Christ, is a way of departing from the freedom and grace that God grants in Christ. It is to try to overcome sin in the strength of the creature or to elevate the creature to the condition of being "god." It is to try to deny the eternal need for the creature to be justified by its Creator, thereby, again, incurring the old and bankrupt forms that the followers of the law of Moses or other religious laws have tried unsuccessfully to follow for many centuries, as explained by Paul in the following texts:

- Galatians 2: 21* ***I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.***
- 3:1* ***O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?***
- 2* ***This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?***
- 3* ***Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?***
- 4* ***Have you suffered so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain?***
- 5* ***Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? —***
- 6* ***just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."***

- 7 *Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.*
- 8 *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."*
- 9 *So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.*
- 10 *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."*
- 11 *But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."*

Galatians 5: 1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

- 2 *Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.*
- 3 *And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.*
- 4 *You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*
- 5 *For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*

The Christian needed to be justified by God's gift of righteousness before being a Christian, continues to need justification each day by the same gift of God's righteousness, and will continue to need this justification throughout his or her life, for only by the gift of righteousness is that one can live by faith in Him who justifies him or her to the end.

The justification provided by the Lord, of course, is also given to us so that we may turn away from sin and live righteously or uprightly before God and men, but justification is not granted for a Christian or group of Christians to try to establish or build a new attempt at justification based on an alleged ability that a person receives after being justified when he or she first received the gift of righteousness.

It is not by attaining a life where one no longer commits any sin that a person is saved or remains saved. It is Christ's act of righteousness that saves an individual if one receives the gift through faith, and if one keeps having faith in the gift of righteousness provided once and forever by the Lord!

The sinner is justified by God also to no longer incur the temptations of sin, but even if he or she sins or stumbles after having received the gift of righteousness, it is the Lord Jesus Christ who continues to justify him or her by His grace and mercy, even presenting Himself as an Advocate with the Heavenly Father on behalf of the Christian so that the gift of righteousness may continue to be the justifying agent of the one who sinned or stumbled.

- 1 John 2: 1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*
- 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

When John writes his first letter and says that Christ is “*the propitiation for our sins*,” he is not addressing first those who have not yet received Christ, but he is referring to little children, those who have already received the Lord in their lives, demonstrating that justification at all times of an individual's life is found only in Christ Jesus.

Aside from accepting God's help and God's provision as a heavenly gift, nothing can be done not only for a sinner to be absolved from subjection to sin but also for a Christian to continue to be absolved of any sin one may yet commit before being forever in the eternal glory with the Lord.

The provision that is in the gift of righteousness which was manifested by God in Christ Jesus on the cross of Calvary never grows old, never weakens, never expires, and can never be replaced by human works for the accomplishment of our justification, not even by the works of those who were already saved in Christ.

Thus, the simplicity of believing in Christ Jesus in His status as Eternal Redeemer and Savior includes believing in the fact that the debt of our past, present, and future sins has already been paid by the blood of Christ shed once and forever by the Lord on the cross of Calvary or to believe in the fact that the gift of righteousness is God's unique provision for justification to achieve salvation, but also to continue to be justified forever.

The justification of all sinners and also of those who have already received salvation in the heart belongs exclusively to the Lord Jesus Christ, because only He, entirely innocent and without sin, took upon Himself, on the cross of Calvary, the debt of the sins of all and which were committed in the most diverse circumstances of their lives.

1 Peter 3: 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.

Isaiah 53: 1 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

9 And they made His grave with the wicked, But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

11 He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.

Romans 8: 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

C25. Perseverance in Rejecting the Subjection to Sin, and the Desire for a Life According to the Heavenly Righteousness After Receiving the Gift of Righteousness

In addressing the previous chapter or referring to the first part about life after receiving the gift of righteousness, we mentioned that the justification provided by God in Christ Jesus is unique, valid for all times of human life, and regarding which nothing needs or can be added, except to accept or receive it through the manner in which it is offered by the Lord.

In Christ, the justification of the past, the present, and of the future is available to anyone who believes that Christ is the only-begotten Son of the living God who came in the flesh into the world and who died for all sinners so that all may be justified together with Him in His resurrection, an aspect that remains equally applicable even to a person's justification after one has already received Christ as the Lord in his or her heart.

However, in the face of the fact that Christ has already passed through death in behalf of all people or has already manifested the provision for the justification of all human beings, and yet, that the individual who believes in the salvation of the Lord can add nothing to his or her justification other than continuing to persevere in his or her faith in God and the gift of righteousness, yet a series of other questions have been raised about the need for a person to live and walk indeed in accordance with the heavenly righteousness and the real need for one to abstain from a life of association with sin.

The fact that the justification provided by Christ encompasses aspects of the past, the present, and the future of a person who still lives on Earth, and the fact that this justification does not require or accept human works for an individual to attain it, but only that a person believes in it and receives it in the heart, has also been a reason for generating some doubts or even very distorted propositions about how a person justified by God is called to live and walk in the world after accepting the justification granted by the Lord.

In their various attempts at action, the world and the powers of darkness first seek to act so that people do not even come to know the fact that Christ died in their place to provide them with eternal justification. However, when this fact can no longer be concealed, the powers of darkness and the world that lies under the sway of the wicked one seek to distort people's understanding about the justification granted by God in Christ Jesus.

In their misleading propositions, when they cannot hide all truth about one aspect, the world and the powers of darkness seek to make partial use of the truth in order to conceal or omit other parts of it.

Thus, the world and the powers of darkness seek first to conceal that the justification provided by God in Christ is for all people, and that it even continues to extend to those who already received the gift of righteousness in their hearts, and who, therefore, do not need to return to the vain attempts of remaining justified by human works.

On the other hand, however, the world and the powers of darkness seek to lead people to a line of thoughts at another extreme, where they try to lead them to the corrupted concepts that deceitfully propose that since people already have a provision

of eternal justification in Christ, they could also continue to sin freely without incurring the risk of becoming subject to reap the consequences of their subjection to sin.

And this line of thoughts that propagates the idea that the justification provided in Christ also serves as a justification for people to continue to indulge in sin, and yet, proposing that this attitude will not lead them to become subject to the consequences of this surrender, follows the same line of propositions that seek to distort the understanding of God's grace by falsely claiming that if salvation is granted by God's grace, there is no need for a person to depart from a life subject to sin. (Aspect discussed more broadly on the subject on The Gospel of God's Grace.)

We also emphasize here that the proposition of the kind of thinking mentioned above is not new. This sort of ideas sought to entangle people from the beginning of the time of the introduction of the Christian life and continues to try to do so repeatedly throughout the history that follows the coming of Christ in the flesh into the world.

Already in the early years of the Christian life in the world, Paul noted the questioning of several Christians about the point above in reference, and, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he answered this question to those who had this doubt about it, as follows:

- Romans 5: 20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound.
 21 But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,
 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through
 righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may
 abound?
 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?
 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ
 Jesus were baptized into His death?
 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death,
 that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the
 Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death,
 certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,
 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the
 body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be
 slaves of sin.
 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.
 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with
 Him,
 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no
 more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.
 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life
 that He lives, He lives to God.
 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but
 alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should
 obey it in its lusts.
 13 And do not present your members as instruments of
 unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive
 from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to
 God.*

- 14 *For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*
- 15 *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!*
- 16 *Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?*
- 17 *But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.*
- 18 *And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*
- 19 *I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.*
- 20 *For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.*
- 21 *What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.*
- 22 *But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*
- 23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Therefore, or even though God has already made a fully satisfying provision in Christ Jesus so that people may be delivered from slavery to sin, if an individual continues to insist on remaining under the yoke of sin, thus rejecting the provision of deliverance offered by the Lord, this person also chooses to stay under the consequences that may come from his or her insistence or deliberate choice of being subject to sin.

In their corrupted propositions about what the gift of God's righteousness offers, the world and the powers of darkness seek to distort or hide the fact described by the apostle Paul that the deliberate choice to submit to sin puts a person back in the path of the consequences of this subjection, not because there is no provision for one's deliverance and forgiveness, but because one chooses the option of life under the yoke of sin despite the provision that can deliver him or her from this slavery, an aspect also mentioned by John as follows:

John 3: 19 ***And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.***

If a person insists on staying on the path of destruction and perdition after one has been appropriately informed about Christ's work on the cross of Calvary, about the free availability to him or her of the gift of righteousness, and on what awaits him or her if one remains on the path of perdition, one also chooses to be subject to reap the consequences that are pertinent to the way that leads to perdition.

*Galatians 6: 7 **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.***

8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Christ's work on the cross of Calvary exposed the cruelty of sin and the way of perdition, and also manifested a fully satisfying provision for people to receive deliverance from slavery to the path of destruction, but Christ's work on the cross of Calvary has not eliminated the way of perdition and the possibility of people continuing to choose it even after the deception of this path has already been widely exposed.

In the crucifixion of Christ, it has been shown that sin is not intimidated in taking as a victim any person who allows it to do so, for this is part of the character of sin's actions. And although the provision for the deliverance of all sinners has already been manifested in a fully satisfactory way in Christ Jesus, the power of deception that remains associated with sin should never be seen lightly.

Still in other words, also under the claim that the justification God has provided in Christ has already paid the debt of the sins of humankind and that, therefore, people could supposedly surrender more and more to subjection to sin without suffering the consequences of this attitude, the world and the powers of darkness seek to keep hidden or distorted the fact that the justification already provided by God is also presented by the Lord through the Gospel or as an offer, which, in turn, implies that the receiving of its benefits also has to go through a person's choice of accepting it and remaining in faith regarding this justification.

Since faith in the gift of the heavenly righteousness is the essential work of an individual to become associated and remain associated with the provision of justification offered to him or her freely by the Lord to be saved from slavery to sin, the attempt of the world and the powers of darkness, through the proposition that a person supposedly can surrender to sin without being subjected to the more significant consequences of this attitude, seeks to undermine precisely the faith that a person needs to remain free from slavery to sin and its most lasting effects.

When some people lightly pass on the corrupted idea that subjection to sin can no longer impute damaging results to those who practice it, and this, because they claim that Christ justified all on the cross of Calvary, they forget that one of the aspects that subjection to sin may impute to the people who submit to it is the condition of spiritual blindness or deceit. And in turn, under the condition of spiritual blindness, sin may go so far as to make people forget that they depend on the willingly choice for the gift of righteousness to receive and abide in the salvation that the Lord offers through it.

Though a Christian may stumble over some sin, he or she is still justified by the unique work of Christ if he or she repents and does not depart from the faith in the justification by the gift of the heavenly righteousness. However, if this Christian continues to grant space in his or her life for sin, the deception that is associated with subjection to sin may lead him or her to harden the heart to the point of forgetting that one needs to continue to believe in Christ to be eternally justified or to the point of making him or her turning back to the thought that one must perform works of justification to reach salvation. And so, one begins to enter an extremely dangerous path.

After Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the fight of sin against people's lives is more focused on trying to keep them blind to what Christ has done for them and trying to keep them from the simplicity of the justification in Christ, trying to deceive them, among other things, also through propositions that aim to lead people to the hardening and the blindness of the heart so that they forget that the choice for the gift of righteousness is personal and so that they do not pay attention to the fact that the benefits of the gift of justice do not automatically remain over those who forget it or depart from it.

The lack of attention to what is due to the gift of righteousness or the forgetfulness of what remaining in it provides to people is also one of the targets behind the propositions that falsely claim that people can continue to sin and yet be exempt from the consequences of this attitude, which is why we also remember below the following texts:

*Hebrews 3: 12 **Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;**
13 **but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.***

*Proverbs 15: 9 **The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But He loves him who follows righteousness.***

*2 Peter 1: 8 **For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

*9 **For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.***

*2 Corinthians 4: 3 **But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,***

*4 **whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.***

After Christ's work on the cross of Calvary, even though sin no longer has the same conditions of dominion over sinners as it operated before, the powers of darkness know that ultimately what drives a person to condemnation is not only the yoke of sin, but the abstinence or withdrawal of a person from the source of life and the gift of righteousness by which the newness of life is granted.

No Christian, therefore, should regard sin lightly, for as commented above, a return to subjection to sin may lead a person who associates with it to deceit or to forget how central is the acceptance of the gift of righteousness and to remain in it for the present and the eternal spiritual justification.

Even after being exposed and condemned on the cross of Calvary, sin still has the power to oppress and enslave a person who allows it to do so. Although the working of sin has been widely unraveled and condemned by the coming of Christ in the flesh into the world, it can still lead a person who insists on being subject to it to meet severe damage to his or her life.

Although sin has been exposed to shame and has been condemned by the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary, the devil still goes on trying to deceive people and corrupt their minds so that they do not receive the gift of righteousness or that they do not remain in faith in the heavenly justification after they have received it.

*2 Corinthians 11: 3 **But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.***

Repeating, then, we highlight that the proposition that the Christian can indiscriminately sin after one has accepted Christ, on the assumption that his or her justification is made forever, is an extremely dangerous and harmful proposition, since it omits the aspect that sin still is powerful to harden and deceive a person who renders oneself to it, and this, to the point where one may draw back from the faith in the justification by which one is saved.

Once a person enters the way that works against his or her faith in the justification granted by Christ, one also enters the path of the danger of no longer remain united to the One in whom one can find eternal salvation and even the Lord's goodness so that one may find the place of repentance when he or she incurs subjection to sin.

*Romans 2: 4 **Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?***

Therefore, bearing in mind that the justification manifested by Christ has been provided for all and for all times, but also that salvation is granted to those who choose to associate with this justification and remain associated with it, it is evident that God wants people to choose to walk in the way that strengthens their faith in the gift of righteousness rather than on the path of the propositions that seek to destroy the precious faith they have received in the heart, as the Lord also urges us in the next verses below:

*Jude 1: 3 **Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.***

*4 **For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.***

For those who fear God, with the fear granted by the Lord, the thought of wanting to continue serving sin and freely associating with sin should be kept as far away as the thought of considering that one can overcome sin by one's own works or strength.

The so-called “good works,” when done with the intention of obtaining the justification of the one who does them, may become one of the most wicked deeds that a human being can do, and despite that they may have the appearance of godliness, they may turn into sins of great obscurity and darkness because they seek to reintroduce the thought that humans can provide their very justification, thus trying to make Christ's sacrifice a vain and unnecessary sacrifice. However, it is also not the contempt for good works or the contempt for a life of holiness that is expected of the one who has been justified in Christ.

Attempts to achieve justification before God through human works or by human efforts of sanctification may come to express some of the vilest and most profound propositions of sin, and which, often, enslave people even stronger and more intense than other carnal sins performed in the world. However, it is also not because a person has been justified by faith in the unique work of Christ that one now has God's endorsement to surrender again to a life of subjection to sin.

Thus, the convergence to the point that the justification of the Christian and the maintenance of this justification is not through his or her works, but through perseverance in the faith in the work of Christ, together with the point that the Christian should not surrender to sin even though one's sins have already been justified, is a challenging aspect to understand about the Christian life, but which, at the same time, is also one of the most beautiful points in life after receiving the gift of righteousness.

God knows that we are made of dust, that we have inherited from Adam a corrupted carnal nature, that we are living in a world that lies under the sway of the wicked one, and that in the flesh we are still imperfect or under risks of stumbling. And in order not to be paralyzed by the fear of committing an offense or being destroyed at every stumbling, the Lord has already justified us before so that we may walk or proceed with confidence in the instructions He gives us, but this, God has done to help us so that we may increasingly advance in the newness of life that is available to us in the Lord, and not for a return to a life of subjection to sin.

Romans 1: 16 ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.***

17 ***For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."***

1 John 5: 3 ***For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.***

4 ***For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.***

- Psalms 103: 8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.*
- 9 He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever.*
- 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.*
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;*
- 12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*
- 13 As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him.*
- 14 For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.*
- 15 As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.*
- 16 For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more.*
- 17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children,*
- 18 To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them.*
- 19 The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.*
- 20 Bless the LORD, you His angels, Who excel in strength, who do His word, Heeding the voice of His word.*
- 21 Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You ministers of His, who do His pleasure.*
- 22 Bless the LORD, all His works, In all places of His dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!*
-

When an individual receives the gift of righteousness in his or her heart, the Lord continues to see this person according to His mercy and long-suffering or likewise a compassionate father who is ready to help his children. However, this is very different from proposing that God saves people regardless if they will or will not persevere in the path of the heavenly righteousness, for along with the justification of one's sin, a redeemed person also has at his or her disposal in the Lord a whole new condition to be able to live and to walk according to the heavenly gift which was freely given to him or her.

Along with justification, a person who receives it in one's heart also obtains the condition of becoming a son of the Heavenly Father. And it is according to this new condition that a person is called to live and walk in the world, and not on the pretense proposition that one does not need to resist sin, as if the justification of the gift of righteousness would protect this individual indiscriminately from the consequences of a voluntary choice for a return to subjection to sin.

There are many texts of the Scriptures that oppose the whole line of corrupted thoughts that propagate the idea that the one who has once received justification can return to the subjection of sin and yet be free from the consequences of this attitude, as

well as there are many texts showing that to choose to return to subjection to sin is no longer necessary in the face of the incomparably better gifts that the Lord makes available to those who choose to walk the path that is according to the heavenly righteousness.

*1 John 2: 1 **My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.***

*Romans 8: 15 **For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."***

*Ephesians 5: 1 **Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.***
*2 **And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.***
 ...
*8 **For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light***
*9 **(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),***
*10 **finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.***
 ...
*14 **Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."***
*15 **See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,***
*16 **redeeming the time, because the days are evil.***
*17 **Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.***

The conclusion we express here, therefore, is that the Lord who gave His own life to rescue us from sin, surely also wants us to depart from all subjection to sin, and He wants us to do so through Him and His righteousness so that it may also be known that only the heavenly righteousness grants the necessary strength and means that enable that a justified person may truly overcome the temptations of sin.

After a person receives justification in Christ Jesus, God does not want a person to be able to live a life of complete absence from sin through one's own efforts, which we have already seen as not being possible to achieve while an individual still lives in the present world. However, this also does not mean that a person should simply surrender oneself to a life of submission to sin, for along with the gift of righteousness, one has also been granted the love of God and the fear of the Lord that enables him or her to live according to God's will and, as a result, also abstain more and more from sin.

*Jeremiah 32: 40 **And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.***

A person truly born again from the grace of God does not conform to surrender to the practice of sin, for the seed which God has deposited in him or her, when he or she received the gift of righteousness, draws this individual increasingly to a life ever more in conformity with the righteousness of the Lord and more distant of subjection to the working of sin.

The position in which a person is accepted before God is the position of faith in the justification through Christ Jesus, but because one understands the benefit of the fellowship with God that this justification has bestowed upon him or her and because one realizes that sin is contrary to everything that comes from God, a Christian, or the one who has truly received the gift of righteousness, is also called by the Lord to take pleasure in turning away from the practice of sin.

*Proverbs 28: 13 **He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.***

*14 **Happy is the man who is always reverent, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.***

*1 John 1: 5 **This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.***

*6 **If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.***

*7 **But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.***

*8 **If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.***

*9 **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

*10 **If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.***

*2:1 **My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.***

*2 **And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.***

Finally, in this chapter, we understand that to say that the just shall live by faith as well encompasses the fact that the individual who through faith has been justified from sin also receives a genuine yearning of not being associated with sin and, at the same time, begins to have a real longing to do works according to the heavenly righteousness without fear of living and walking in them, for he or she realizes that the Lord is with him or her to give the necessary support and even the continuity of forgiveness if one only remains steadfast in the faith in Christ Jesus.

Psalms 37: 28 For the LORD loves justice, And does not forsake His saints; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.

2 Timothy 2: 22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Psalms 37: 23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.

1 John 2: 29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

Hebrews 12: 1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

C26. The Receiving of the Gift of Righteousness and the Abstention of the Association with Unrighteousness or Unequal Yoke

In the previous chapters concerning the life after receiving the gift of righteousness, we mentioned the fact that a Christian does not need to advance to do human works or denominated works of the law to maintain his or her justification as if it now becomes dependent on them after the gift was received in one's life, but also that one should not take sin lightly and indulge in a sinful life just because the work of the Lord on the Calvary's cross has already made provision for the forgiveness of his or her sins.

*Galatians 5: 1 **Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.***

...
*13(a) **For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh.***

A person who truly came to become Christian by the new birth by faith in Christ Jesus is given a new position and a new condition of life to do good works, but here again, we stress that these works are the fruit of the justification and not to obtain or maintain this justification, since the heavenly justification, essentially, always has the gift of God's righteousness as its foundation.

*Galatians 2: 16 **Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.***

*Romans 3: 24 ... **being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ...***

*1 Corinthians 3: 11 **For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.***

However, as we go deeper into the comprehension of the position and condition of life that are bestowed upon a justified person, we can note that it is not only the direct relationship of this person with God and the sin that is altered. When one receives the gift of righteousness in one's life, one's position regarding the world and the people around him or her may also change significantly.

Receiving the gift of God's righteousness inaugurates a new time of fellowship of a person with the Lord and a new condition of freedom so that one no longer needs to be subject to the bondage of sin, but it also

inaugurates a distinct time of discernment and relationship in general of the person justified by God with the world around him or her.

By faith in Christ Jesus and His redemptive work, a person does not only receive the justification of sin but also obtains a position and a condition of deliverance from slavery to sin to which one was subjected, and this, so that one may indeed have in general an understanding, posture, and attitudes according to this new position and condition granted to him or her in the Lord.

Although Christ died for all people and the gift of righteousness is available to all who want it and believe in it, it is worth remembering and highlighting that the deliverance that grants a new position and a new condition of life also includes a personal salvation, thus introducing the justified person to a differentiated situation of life regarding several aspects of the world and those who have not yet received the gift of righteousness or who do not remain trusting in this unique heavenly provision.

From the personal encounter with Christ, a person is called by the Lord also to see his or her various horizontal relationships from a distinct perspective and to adopt a differentiated personal attitude toward the most diverse aspects that are around of his or her life.

*Romans 12: 1 **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.***

*2 **And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.***

The life of an individual in the world has the characteristic of being surrounded by the most diverse “wills.” A person in the world is the target of many “wills” that are presented to him or her, and the fact that one has received the gift of righteousness to live and walk according to the newness of life in God also implies a new positioning or attitude concerning to this “sea of wills” that surrounds him or her.

When a person accepts Christ as his or her Lord, the most significant changes occur first within the heart, but as the presence of the gift of righteousness advances in an individual's life, also his or her relationship with what happens around him or her will come to be exposed to significant changes.

Although at first or in some cases the changes that occur in a person when he or she accepts Christ may even seem imperceptible externally or in the natural world, because they are primarily spiritual aspects, afterward the significant changes that occur in the heart as well will affect his or her perceptions of the world around him or her, as shown at the end of each of the following texts:

*1 Corinthians 2: 9 **But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."***

*10 **But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.***

11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

Romans 5: 17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

When a person comes to have an encounter with the free gift of God's righteousness and receives this gift in one's life, the new position received from God enables him or her to attain knowledge of various characteristics of one's salvation, the restoration of the understanding of the essential aspects of truth, and allows him or her to reach the possibility of adopting a new posture of life according to the truth taught by the Lord.

Nevertheless, receiving the knowledge of the truth, and a new position and condition of life, also implies the call to discern more widely the difference of this newness of life from the life of those who are subject to sin or the call for that the one who was justified also comes to adopt a different attitude towards the flowing stream to which people who do not live a life according to faith in the gift of the heavenly righteousness are submitted, as described below:

1 Peter 4: 1 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,
2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.
3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

Ephesians 4: 17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Although the most significant changes for the one who receives the gift of righteousness in his or her life usually occur primarily in the heart, following this new inner position of a person will begin to reflect on how one relates to God, to sin, but also to the world and the people in it, as already mentioned above.

And considering the breadth of these changes and how relevant they are to be understood in the most diverse areas of the Christian life, we have sought to describe several of these points in more detail in the series of subjects called respectively *The Life of the Christian in the World*, *New Creation in Christ*, and *Walking in Newness of Life*, keeping, however, the goal of discussing in this chapter what is related to how inappropriate or dangerous it is to attempt to reconcile an association between heavenly righteousness and unrighteousness, and how sin seeks to use some associations made by people to try to destabilize even Christians from the new position given to them by the Lord through His gift of righteousness.

Thus, when we begin to look at life also from the aspect of some associative expedients that people make among themselves, we can see how vile sin can become as well in its attempts to work indirectly and not only in a direct confrontation of those who it wants to involve in its tricks or deceits.

Although the return to subjection to sin also involves a personal choice of each individual, sin often attempts to present itself to people through the indirect propositions of improper association of an individual with others, including seeking to use the intimidating force of a collective pressure or behavior against an individual, or the strength of the false idea that if there is a certain expressive contingent of people doing a particular evil, it may, perhaps, not be so bad indeed, as exemplified in the following text:

- Proverbs 1: 10 My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent.*
- 11 If they say, "Come with us, Let us lie in wait to shed blood; Let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause;**
- 12 Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, And whole, like those who go down to the Pit;**
- 13 We shall find all kinds of precious possessions, We shall fill our houses with spoil;**
- 14 Cast in your lot among us, Let us all have one purse".—**
- 15 My son, do not walk in the way with them, Keep your foot from their path;**
- 16 For their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed blood.**
- 17 Surely, in vain the net is spread In the sight of any bird;**
- 18 But they lie in wait for their own blood, They lurk secretly for their own lives.**
- 19 So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; It takes away the life of its owners.**
-

Unrighteousness seeks to introduce itself through direct temptations of sin, as we have seen before, but it also tries to infiltrate itself through propositions or proposals that seek to seduce people into believing that they can extract the best from the “world of righteousness” and the supposed best from the “world of injustice” without suffering the harm of unrighteousness. And so, the propositions of associating people with the

unrighteousness aim to lead them to mistakenly think that in injustice there can be something good and healthy to be extracted or obtained.

Therefore, the propositions of sin that aim for a justified person to associate oneself with unrighteousness or inadequate life standards just because a significant contingent of people follow them is also one of the points through which sin seeks to dilute a truth through mixing some lies or where it tries to hide a lie by inserting to it some parts of the truth.

In other words, if a person wants to live a life associated with the righteousness of God and simultaneously or alternately associated with unrighteousness, the result will incline to the harvest of injustice, for the supposed association of righteousness with unrighteousness is a misleading proposition and, therefore, it is also essentially a practice of injustice.

The Scriptures show us various figures to illustrate that there is a vast distinction between life under the gift of righteousness and life not subject to the gift of righteousness, as cited in the texts above and in the example of the narrow way and the broad path also already exposed earlier.

In this chapter, however, we would like to focus more specifically on the example of what the Bible refers to as “*unequally yoked*,” as mentioned in the following text:

*2 Corinthians 6: 14 **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (or unfaithful).***

For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness (or unrighteousness)? And what communion has light with darkness?

15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The last text presented above is worthy of special attention, because a very superficial analysis of its content can produce several dissonant considerations of what is more objectively presented in it, for when the above text is seen in the broader context in which it is inserted, we may note that the approach to the “*unequal yoke*” is not primarily related to the situations of business societies, marriage, or other types of civil life associations as claimed by some people. The recently presented text focuses mainly on the matter of attempting to associate God's righteousness with unrighteousness, injustice, or iniquity.

Even though the principle of not becoming “*unequal yoked*” can be very beneficial in choosing a spouse or a partner, the action of becoming “*unequally yoked*” quoted in the

Scriptures referenced above is presented as primarily correlated with the attitude or positioning of faith for justification.

We understand that it is significant to highlight the above consideration, for in the world, there are people who, for instance, accept the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord of their lives after they have marriage and whose spouses do not receive the Lord at the same time, and even because of this reason they are not under that which is regarded as an “*unequal yoke*” before God. On the other hand, there may also be a situation where a Christian married an equally Christian spouse, but still later comes to associate with yokes of beliefs that more express unrighteousness rather than the righteousness of God.

There are situations in which a marriage may indeed become an obstacle for one spouse to continue believing in Christ, and in this case, the Lord instructs how the spouse who stands firm in his or her faith can properly position oneself regarding the Lord and the unbelieving spouse (according to 1Corinthians 7). However, this is still not the overall or the primary scope of what the text of 2Corinthians 6 describes as “*unequally yoked.*”

Still as another example, when a person receives the gift of righteousness from the Lord and one's parents have not yet received the same gift, the Lord has not instructed those who came to believe in Him to stop caring for those close to them and that have not yet embraced the same faith. On the contrary, the Lord instructs true Christians, whenever this is possible, to seek to care of their own.

1 Timothy 5: 4 **But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.**

...

8 **But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.**

In other parts of the Scriptures, the same Paul who wrote the words about the “*unequal yoke*” explains that the warning to Christians not to associate themselves with unrighteousness also does not mean seeking a total lack of relationship with people in general, stating that a certain degree of relationship with them is inevitable, as follows:

1 Corinthians 5: 9 **I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people (or fornicators).**

10 **Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people (or fornicators) of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.**

11 **But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, — not even to eat with such a person.**

The Lord Jesus did not instruct those who receive the gift of righteousness to cease to relate to people of the world in general, for He calls His disciples to be the salt of the Earth and the light of the world. The Lord Jesus Himself prayed to the Heavenly Father

that His disciples would come to be placed in the world to testify of Him in the most diverse regions so that many others might come to believe in the Father and Christ as their Eternal Lord.

Many people who receive Christ in their lives are not called by the Lord to leave their places of work or to move from the city in which they live precisely to serve God in everything there and to be witnesses of the Lord and the changes that have taken place in their lives.

On the other hand, in the world, there are a series of associations that are offered to Christians who are associations that have as a parameter what people believe or claim to believe. They are associations that revolve around some sort of belief about how people think they can live in relation to sin, the justification of their lives, and eternal life. And it is especially these associations that need to be investigated with particular caution by those who have received the gift of God's righteousness in their lives.

The propositions of associations with others that seek to affect the exclusivity of faith in Christ's justification or the unique gift of righteousness are those which primarily may characterize the subjection of a Christian to an "*unequal yoke*" and with which one should not become associated, whether these propositions are those that suggest that following rules, precepts, or idols can justify a person or whether they are those that despise the power of sin or the need for God's salvation to be received voluntarily by every human being.

In other words, if a person wants to associate oneself with God's gift of righteousness and simultaneously or alternately wants to associate oneself with the conditions of life that oppose the gift of the heavenly righteousness, one is trying to establish upon his or her life an "*unequal yoke*," that is, an inappropriate association, partnership, or bond with those who do not believe in the unique provision of the heavenly justification for their lives or who do not receive this justification as it is offered by the Lord through His Gospel.

If a person wants to associate oneself with the gift of righteousness but also wants to associate oneself with what opposes the gift of the heavenly righteousness, one is trying to establish a society of righteousness with unrighteousness, light with darkness, or Christ with the sinful nature of the man who resists the salvation offered by the Lord to all human beings, which is highly contrary to the life of a Christian or which will never be possible to be established for a person's benefit.

Since God's righteousness cannot and will never have any association with iniquity or unrighteousness, insisting on an "*unequal yoke*" is extremely dangerous, for the Lord's righteousness, as merciful as it is, will not become an accomplice of the person who insists on continuing on the path of association with unrighteousness.

When a person takes his or her position of associating with a yoke of unrighteousness lightly, one might be acting under the presumption that one can dissociate oneself from the yoke at any time when it, in one's eyes, becomes inconvenient, forgetting, however, that this position also represents a high degree of haughtiness and pride in assuming that a person can have control over all his or her actions when one intends to take control of them in one's hands.

After a person becomes associated or subject to a yoke of unrighteousness, his or her sober understanding of righteousness or unrighteousness can also become severely restricted. When a person submits oneself to unrighteousness, one also becomes subject to no longer facing the light that enlightens one's understanding of the Gospel

of the righteousness of God and that enlightens the heart to understand the truth and the will of the Lord.

Similar to the situation in which a person who associates with sin may also come to develop a hardened and blinded heart by sin, so a person who associates with a yoke of unrighteousness may also expose his or her heart to the effects of the deception of this injustice, recalling as well that:

1 John 5: 17(a) All unrighteousness is sin.

Faced with so many challenges that a person faces in life, the task of not becoming or remaining associated with an “unequal yoke” requires the continual presence of the light and the discernment granted by the Lord, and this discernment cannot, in any way, be performed without the Lord's instruction.

John 8: 12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

Psalms 37: 5 Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

6 He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.

Just as light and darkness have no fellowship, just as Christ and Belial (the “man” who resists God) do not associate and have no agreement between them, and as well as the temple of God, which also is the heart of every person who believes in Christ, cannot have consensus with idols or with the vain acts of worship that are done in the temples built by human hands, so also the yoke of righteousness, which is light, easy, and of newness of life, never can have partnership with the yoke of unrighteousness whose target is deception, stealing, death, and destruction.

Isaiah 59: 8 The way of peace they have not known, And there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace.

9 Therefore justice is far from us, Nor does righteousness overtake us; We look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness!

Acts 17: 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

Matthew 24: 23 **Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it.**

24 **For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.**

25 **See, I have told you beforehand.**

26 **Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it.**

Just as a proposition of subjection to sin certainly is contrary to the option that can provide a person's liberation from slavery to sin, so also the propositions that aim to associate people with the ways of the unrighteousness of men or darkness are contrary to what God offers through His gift of righteousness.

Galatians 5: 1 **Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.**

...

4 **You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.**

5 **For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.**

1 Corinthians 7: 23 **You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.**

The “unequal yoke,” mentioned above, becomes strongly characterized when a person becomes an accomplice with the works of unrighteousness, that is, when a person becomes a participant in the works of unrighteousness or supports them to be performed, which the Scriptures firmly teach not to be done by a Christian.

Ephesians 5: 11 **And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.**

And here, if we delve more specifically into the Scriptures on the subject referred to in this chapter, we may note that similar to what was addressed in the chapter on the ineffective and false means that offer to deliver from slavery to sin, also the propositions of the association of righteousness with unrighteousness or an “unequal yoke” are divided into two main sets.

Thus, on the one hand, the Scriptures show us that one of the groups of actions that a Christian should not associate with in order not to incur the “unequal yoke” or the attempt to unite heavenly righteousness with the path of unrighteousness is exposed in the text that follows below:

1 Corinthians 15: 32 **If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"**

33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

34 Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

In his letter to Christians in Corinth, Paul teaches us that there is a group of people who oppose God's gift of righteousness in a very peculiar way by proposing that the life of a human being is essentially limited to aspects of natural life. That is, they are propositions that oppose the need for human beings to be justified and saved from slavery to sin by trying to spread the line of thought that there will be no life after natural death or that there will be no judgment concerning how a person lived his or her days in the present world.

Thus, it is from the line of thought that people will not need to be accountable for their lives in the world that arise the propositions of paths of unrighteousness such as the phrase "**let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,**" seeking to carry people to associate with a life where the lusts of the eyes and the flesh reign.

The kind of way of unrighteousness that is subject to a life surrendered to the lusts referred to above is also mentioned in the letters of Peter, which even describes that the individuals who indulge in this kind of yoke even find it strange that Christians do not equally surrender to this type of flood of dissolution or dissipation, as follows:

1 Peter 4: 3 **For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.**

4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

Therefore, because of the context of such a broad surrender of multitudes of people to the desires of their lusts, and also because they do not wish to abandon the passions of the flesh, several individuals seek to introduce one of the groups of an "*unequal yoke*" propositions with which a Christian may come across in the world and through which some deceitfully alleged that it is possible, then, to reconcile a part of what is pertinent to the Christian life with a part of what regards to a life that is ruled by carnal concupiscence.

This first set of propositions of association between righteousness and unrighteousness may even try not to go so far as to deny that there will be life after natural death in order not to position themselves with explicit disregard for the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary. However, so that those who propose them do not need to refrain from their carnal desires, they seek, then, to introduce the misleading concept that the saving grace that Christ came to manifest is a grace that saves the one who receives it even if the recipient of the heavenly grace continues voluntarily to choose subjection to sin, as already mentioned in previous chapters and of which we recall the following texts:

Jude 1: 3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3: 18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their mind on earthly things.

As much as some people want to show that they recognize the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary, when they try to reconcile or propose the possibility of a life in accordance with God's gift of righteousness associated with a life yielded to the lusts of the flesh and the world, their actions and words show that in practice they are enemies of the cross of Christ, the grace of the Lord, and God Himself, no matter how much they try to hide this enmity toward the Lord and the gift of righteousness that is in Him.

As was also mentioned earlier, a Christian is not called to abstain from the relationships with people in the world in general, nor to seek to live under a condition of isolation from others. However, this does not mean that a Christian should not discern the people with whom one relates and the attitudes that are inappropriate for his or her life, for as much as many people claim that God will not judge them or see the acts they do, the Scriptures state that everything is exposed in the sight of God, that the Lord will in due time bring everything to light, and that He will make the appropriate distinction between those who have remained under the gift of righteousness or those who have chosen to be subject to unrighteousness.

Galatians 5: 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Hebrews 4: 12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

*13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.
14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

And here, continuing the considerations on the two main sets of propositions of an “unequal yoke” or the attempts to associate righteousness with unrighteousness, we would like, then, to give continuity on some aspects of the second group pertinent to these propositions.

Under an apparent or supposed opposition to the propositions of subjection to the lusts proclaimed by those who want to turn God's grace into lewdness, the Scriptures show us that in the world, there also are many who present their propositions of associating righteousness with unrighteousness, or that are characterized as an “unequal yoke,” in proposing that if the Christian life is not the surrendering to carnal lusts, then it should be a life subject to a set of disciplines or rules by which people supposedly should be able to overcome the desires of the flesh.

This second group of propositions, however, is also constituted from carnal yearnings and which, in one way or another, are equivalent to the proposal of living similar to what was objectified in the condition of life under the law of Moses, the Old Covenant, or the Levitical priesthood.

This second set of propositions does not propose the surrendering to lewdness or that people can freely indulge in their carnal yearnings, but it is characterized as unrighteousness by announcing that people may reach the condition of being justified or accepted by God through their carnal or natural efforts to try to do good or follow the law to which they subject themselves.

That is, although this second set of propositions does not proclaim submission to the flesh in the sense of surrendering to fleshly lusts or concupiscence, they proclaim subjection to the flesh in the sense of trying to achieve through the efforts of the flesh the condition of justified or accepted in what regards their everlasting life, thus not taking into account the following words:

Romans 7: 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

A life surrendered to the most basic lusts or concupiscence of the flesh, denying that the association with the vile deeds of the flesh at the end will have undesirable consequences, as well as the option for a life surrendered to the most elaborate religious practices to trying to reach justification before God are, both, fruitless works and contrary to the provision of salvation offered by the Lord in His unique gift of righteousness.

From the tower of Babel to the thousands and thousands of sacrifices made throughout human history under the law of Moses, or any proposition with similar precepts, none of these religious works could provide what was provided only in Christ

Jesus and what can only be attained by faith in the gift of righteousness from heaven, for these propositions always insist that humans should have a part in the creation, elaboration, or constitution of the provision of their justification. That is why a Christian should never associate with and support any message, preaching, or ministry that proposes anything in opposition to the singular or exclusive sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, at the risk of working in opposition to the faith in the justification offered to the world by God.

The Scriptures repeatedly declare that only in God's righteousness is the real foundation for the justification, redemption, and salvation of people on Earth. And for this reason, it should also be received exclusively, for the attempt to attain or establish righteousness by human works or efforts is also an attempt to nullify the meaning or value of God's work manifested in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 2: 21 ***I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.***

No natural resource or human work is sufficient to provide the eternal justification of a single person, and, therefore, no proposition of salvation that seeks to be grounded in any of these aspects is worthy of acceptance in the place of the gift of righteousness in Christ Jesus, but also not in conjunction with the gift of the heavenly righteousness.

As much as many people try to create or present alternative ways with the intention of not needing God's gift of righteousness in Christ Jesus, or as much as they want to overshadow the exclusivity of the provision in this heavenly gift, the Scriptures repeatedly and in many ways show how vain is people's confidence in their resources, disciplines, rituals, or alleged works of law that they claim to follow with the purpose of achieving the condition of justified, exemplified by two more texts below:

Proverbs 11: 4 ***Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, But righteousness delivers from death.***

Luke 16: 13 ***No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (or the riches).***
14 ***Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.***
15 ***And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God."***

When the Scriptures declare that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes*, it also implies to say that the time to accept yokes that seek to establish the idea that a person can be justified by works has also come to an end and that this kind of yoke should no

longer be accepted by anyone, much less by a Christian who has already been redeemed by the Lord through the grace and the gift of the heavenly righteousness.

Romans 10: 1 **Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.**

2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

When he had his eyes opened to the reality of God's righteousness, Paul, who later became an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, promptly abandoned years of his association with a religion in which he had been one of the most faithful participants and in which he had attained very high degrees of honor and human standing. Faced with the sublimity and uniqueness of what God came to offer him through the gift of righteousness, Paul realized that the yoke that was once upon his life would never lead him to reach what was indeed essential to achieve in his life on Earth, and mainly for his eternal life.

Even though before knowing the gift of the heavenly righteousness Paul did not follow a life of surrender to the desires of the lust of the flesh as many Gentiles did, when he saw the kind of justice to which he was associated before knowing Christ and saw the gift of righteousness that was given him from heaven through the heavenly grace, he exchanged all his devotion for a law that could never save him for the righteousness granted from heaven and accessible through faith in the Lord.

When Paul came to know Christ and what provision of righteousness the Lord was offering him, he recognized the sublimity of this gift also through his dissociation from all which was opposed to the righteousness that was graciously offered to him from the heavenly kingdom, and not by men. And this, also to come to the newness of life and the benefits which can only be received through the heavenly righteousness.

Unlike many of his countrymen, and based on the righteousness of God, Paul chose to give up his association with what appeared to be just or good to gain what was indeed good, eternal, and according to the heavenly righteousness.

Philippians 3: 4 **Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:**

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

- 9 *and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*
 10 *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,*
 11 *if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

Yet at another place, we find Paul describing that the Lord has kept for him the “***crown of righteousness.***” And also from this aspect, we can understand that the Lord does not accept the attempts of associating righteousness with unrighteousness, for God does not call people to share the glory that is in the gift of righteousness granted by the heavenly grace with the injustice that is in the propositions that try to justify people through their alleged subjection to some disciplines or laws of beforehand ordained external acts.

2 Timothy 4: 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

When an individual considers associating with the beliefs or practices of other people, groups, or institutions that seek justification based on human works, cults, services, rituals, disciplines, gifts, tithes, or other sacrifices to put themselves in a blessed position before God, thinking that one can participate in these associations without losing one's faith in the exclusive justification in Christ, this individual should never despise the power of deceit and blindness that association with a yoke of unrighteousness may come to put upon his or her life.

- 2 Corinthians 3: 14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.*
 15 *But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.*

- Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?*
 2 *This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*
 3 *Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*
 4 *Have you suffered so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain?*
 5 *Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*
 6 *just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

Galatians 5: 2 **Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.**

3 And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

Considering that circumcision in the flesh, from the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, has become a figure or typology for the most diverse kinds of associations of people with the options of trying to live under a set of religious commandments and practices through which they aim to please God, no person, in thinking of associating oneself with this kind of conduct, should yield to the thought that he or she is stronger than to what one submits oneself and that one can simply detach oneself from this sort of yoke whenever he or she wants.

The Christian should never forget that if one chooses to become subject to the deceitfulness of unrighteousness or an “unequal yoke,” one can only return to the freedom that there is in the Lord if the goodness of God also grants him or her to find the place of repentance to return to the point of recognizing that the provision of justification is provided by God exclusively in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, once again, we remember here the following texts:

Romans 2: 4 **Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**

Galatians 6: 12 **As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.**

13 For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

Colossians 2: 20 **Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations,**

21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"

22 which all concern things which perish with the using, according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

And continuing still on some considerations about the second group of propositions of attempts of associating righteousness with unrighteousness or to be “*unequally yoked*,” we understand that it is also worth mentioning that the engagement in defense of the thought of justification by human works or disciplines gains particular strength in those who attribute their earthly successes to their own efforts and their intense dedication to the causes to which they were or are devoted.

Because they have achieved some success before their fellow men, some individuals or groups of people give way in their hearts to the belief that they are and will be blessed because of the amount of work or number of achievements they accomplish, or because of the high devotion of themselves to the causes they elected as their visions or life purposes.

In this way, the propositions for association with “*unequal yokes*” are particularly dangerous also where people are inclined to emphasize that the merit of their successes lies in their disciplined lives, their devotion to work, or the intensity with which they give themselves to these works. And because they have some temporary success, they often tend to incline to the idea that if they succeeded before their fellow men, why wouldn't they also succeed before God or, even, why wouldn't they be able to make up for their sins through their own efforts or successes?

For them, however, the same what has been commented above equally applies, namely, that no material or human success has the power to redeem and save a life for eternity, to the point that the Lord Jesus declares the nullity of eternal value that there is in a person achieving great successes in the world but lacking in obtaining the eternal salvation of the soul.

Mark 8: 34 **When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.**
35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.
36 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"

Romans 4: 4 **Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.**
5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,
6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works.

Ephesians 2: 8 **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,**
9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Finally, in this chapter, we would like to mention once again that God does not call those who come to receive the gift of the heavenly righteousness to abstain from the various actions and works in the present world and which are not opposed to living under the heavenly righteousness. But as for those propositions of association with others which oppose what one can receive exclusively in the gift of the heavenly righteousness, the Lord very explicitly calls Christians to depart from them, whether they are in line with those who want to turn grace into lewdness or whether they are in line with those who want to reestablish the subjection of people to beliefs, precepts, and religious services similar to those found under the law of Moses.

*1 Thessalonians 5: 21 **Test all things; hold fast what is good.***

*22 **Abstain from every form of evil.***

*23 **Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

God has granted the gift of righteousness that we may abstain from bondage to sin, the body of sin, but also from the associations with the propositions and works that seek to act against the sublime and exclusive position of God's righteousness. And this, that we may be free to be eternally associated with a body or a family that loves righteousness, yearns to abide in it forever, and is also called to be forever the people of the Lord of all eternal righteousness.

*2 Corinthians 6: 14 **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness (or iniquity)? And what communion has light with darkness?***

*15 **And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?***

*16 **And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."***

*17 **Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."***

*18 **"I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."***

From the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ Jesus, the only distinction between people before God, in a sense, is the distinction that people themselves make in relation to God's righteousness, choosing to accept and abide in the righteousness of God or choosing to reject God's righteousness and putting themselves under a heavy yoke of unrighteousness.

*2 Timothy 2: 19 **Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity (or unrighteousness)."***

1 Corinthians 12: 13 **For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.**

Although the distinction between the “easy and light” yoke of righteousness and the heavy yoke of unrighteousness is not always explicitly perceptible to the natural eye, the attitude of remaining in the faith in God's righteousness has an invaluable implication for the spiritual life and the eternal life of the one who believes in the everlasting gift of the Lord.

Galatians 3: 22 **But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.**
23 **But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.**
24 **Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.**
25 **But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.**
26 **For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.**
27 **For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**
28 **There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

At the conclusion of this chapter, we also remind once again that several other considerations about the groups of propositions of association with unrighteousness and how a Christian should position themselves regarding them are described in the next materials of this series, as well as in the series on The Life of the Christian in the World, New Creation in Christ, and Walking in Newness of Life, but for now we would like to close this point by highlighting the following text again:

Romans 3: 21 **But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,**
22 **even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;**
23 **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**
24 **being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,**
25 **whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,**
26 **to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**
27 **Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.**
28 **Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.**

- 29 ***Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the
Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,***
- 30 ***since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith
and the uncircumcised through faith.***

C27. The Heavenly Light and the Virtue of Discernment of Good and Evil Associated with the Word of Righteousness

When the Lord Jesus Christ instructed His disciples to seek God's righteousness first, He did so because in God's righteousness lies the gift or the foundation of justification for sinners to be able to receive, by grace and through faith, the salvation which is offered them freely from heaven.

However, as has also been described in previous chapters, in addition to God's righteousness being the unique provision for the redemption of people from the condition of slavery to sin, the body of sin, and the ineffective means that in vain try to free people from this slavery, the heavenly righteousness is also the firm foundation indispensable for any other aspect or any other practice of a Christian life consonant with the will of God.

God does not offer His righteousness only to set people free from slavery to sin, but He offers and grants it so that those who receive the gift of righteousness may also live a life according to the heavenly righteousness. The Lord does not set people free so that they return to be servants of sin or to remain subject to a life of unrighteousness. God frees people for the purpose that they also may serve the righteousness of the Lord and reap the fruits that result from a life according to this righteousness, an aspect exposed once again in the text below:

*Romans 6: 17 **But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.***

*18 **And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.***

*19 **I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.***

*20 **For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.***

*21 **What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.***

*22 **But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.***

*23 **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

The gift of God's righteousness is offered by the Lord to all so that all who receive it may experience a change of position and condition regarding the slavery of sin, but also so that they may live and walk according to the new position and condition they receive from the Lord when they receive the gift of righteousness through faith.

God's gift of righteousness is offered to all for salvation, but also for the saved to come to know the gift of righteousness as a means for them to experience a significant change in their conduct or attitudes in their living and walking in the world.

Just as all God's decisions and works are grounded in His righteousness, the Lord also longs for Christians to live and walk according to the righteousness they have received in their hearts or to perform the most diverse acts of their lives according to the heavenly gift they received.

*1 John 2: 29 **If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.***

The righteousness of God is so sublime that even the faith that a righteous or justified person needs to live by faith in God comes from this same righteousness.

*2 Peter 1: 1 **Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.***

*Romans 1: 16 **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.***

*17 **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."***

In other words, **the call for a person to live according to God's will is not only related to one's freedom from slavery to sin, but also to the aspects that the gift of righteousness adds to his or her life or which are made available to be used by this individual.**

And among the aspects that the gift of righteousness makes available to the person who receives it, so that this individual may indeed live and walk according to the will of God, is precisely the possibility that the person redeemed from sin may come to know the will of God, the truth, and the aspects of how is life in line with the heavenly righteousness.

Thus, through the gift of righteousness that is in Christ Jesus, God:

- ⇒ 1) Announces the possibility of salvation for sinners;
- ⇒ 2) Points the way of salvation for sinners;
- ⇒ 3) Offers liberation to sinners from the spiritual yoke of slavery from which they need to be saved;
- ⇒ 4) Puts those who receive the gift of righteousness in a new spiritual position and condition of life;
- ⇒ 5) Offers to teach and empower those who have come to be on the path of righteousness so that they can also live and walk in the new way they have chosen by receiving the gift of righteousness.

The gift of the righteousness of God, in addition of showing itself as the way of justification, redemption, salvation, and as the path of the newness of life to be followed by the one who receives it, is still a means by which God teaches those who receive this gift that is offered them through the heavenly grace.

*Psalms 25: 8 **Good and upright is the LORD; Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.***

*Proverbs 12: 28 **In the way of righteousness is life, And in its pathway there is no death.***

*Isaiah 48: 17 **Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go."***

When the Lord Jesus Christ taught that searching God's righteousness should always be placed first in the lives of His disciples, He did so because this aspect has an importance equivalent to the order in which it was instructed to be sought, for, through His righteousness, the Lord teaches us and guides us in the paths that are useful for the present, for eternal life, and even for the purpose that the very name of God may come to be glorified so that more people may come to know the overflowing excellency of the glory of His kindness, mercy, and grace.

*Psalms 23: 3 **He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.***

The justification or salvation that is extended to the person who receives the gift of righteousness in Christ Jesus does not only free him or her from the yoke of slavery to sin, the body of sin, and the means that vainly try to free people from this slavery, but, by taking the person out of this bondage, it also makes available the "*light of life*" to the one who receives the redemptive gift, for the light of the Lord in all things always works in conjunction with the heavenly righteousness.

So, yet in other words, we would like to point out that another heavenly virtue that can only be attained in conjunction with the gift of righteousness in Christ Jesus is the availability of continual access to the eternal light of the Lord for the most diverse aspects of life.

*Ephesians 5: 8 **For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light***
*9 **(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),***
*10 **finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.***

John 8: 12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

And, in turn, regarding the role of the gift of righteousness as a means for a Christian also become supported by the "**light of life**," we would also like to emphasize that the heavenly light that a Christian becomes able to access through the gift of righteousness is offered to him or her to know the way of newness of life in the Lord, but also for him or her to be supported in the Lord to discern the evil that still works in the present world.

If we recall once more the previous chapter on the propositions that are in the world to try to lead those who have received the gift of righteousness to return to slavery to sin or to associate themselves again with unrighteousness, we may quickly notice that the need that the Christian who is still in the world has to walk in the way of the Lord's righteousness also requires that he or she has available the appropriate discernment of what might try to oppose one's new path under the gift of the heavenly righteousness.

That is, after a person has received the gift of righteousness in his or her life and has been delivered from slavery to sin and what is associated with it, one needs the discernment of the good that is offered him or her in the way of righteousness, but also the evil that may come to oppose him or her, so that one does not fall in the path of returning to be deceived or entangled by that from which the Lord already has set him or her free.

The righteousness of God is worth seeking and keeping even if it leads to the discernment of the need for some restrictions of association with aspects of the world, the flesh, or unrighteousness, as seen in the previous chapter, as well as if there may occur some persecutions and oppositions against the one who receives this righteousness, for the result or reward of remaining in the righteousness of the Lord is to be able to be forever in the kingdom of heaven, in the fullness of righteousness, or in the fullness of Him who is the eternal source of the heavenly righteousness.

***1 Timothy 6: 9* But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.**

***10* For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

***11* But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.**

***12* Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**

***2 Timothy 2: 22* Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**

*Matthew 5: 10 **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

The gift of the righteousness of God demonstrated in Christ Jesus is more precious than any human or natural wealth, and it is also granted by God to be used so that the hearts of those who abide in the Lord may be kept from the most terrible fascination, deceit, or ruins, as well as to help them to remain in the lasting or eternal condition of newness of life in God.

*Psalms 5: 8 **Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; Make Your way straight before my face.***

*9 **For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; Their inward part is destruction; Their throat is an open tomb; They flatter with their tongue.***

Therefore, knowing that accepting and receiving the gift of righteousness are not the last stages of a closer relationship with God's righteousness can be crucial for a person also to be grounded in this righteousness and so that a Christian may take a safer position against the possible oppositions that sin still attempts to raise against one's life even after one has already reached the salvation of the Lord.

*Hebrews 5: 13 **For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.***

*14 **But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.***

*Ephesians 6: 13 **Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.***

*14 **Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness.***

C28. The High-Risk Position a Christian May Undergo by Neglecting Growth in the Word of Righteousness or the Christian Life

A. The Necessary Personal Participation of the Christian Concerning the Permanence and Growth in God's Righteousness

In the previous chapter, we accentuated once more how indispensable the gift of righteousness is for the redemption of a person from slavery to sin and what is associated with it, but also that the gift of righteousness is vital or essential for a Christian to live and walk in the world under the light or discernment of good and evil that can only be obtained by a person in the Lord.

The degree of importance of the gift of the righteousness of God for an individual who has already received it in the heart and the possibility that is associated with this gift of discerning the good and evil are, undoubtedly, some of the most crucial or essential themes to which a person can devote time during his or her whole life.

We also recall here that the fact that a person receives the gift of righteousness in one's heart, or receives salvation through faith in Christ and what through the Lord was provided on the cross of Calvary, does not mean that this person is now exempt from being exposed to temptation, nor that one has passed into a condition in which one no longer needs to use a sober and wise discernment. On the contrary, as commented above, one of the great benefits of receiving the gift of righteousness is that through fellowship with this gift, which is essentially expressed in Christ, one can finally discern what he or she could not discern while subject to bondage to sin.

Therefore, a person's knowledge about God's righteousness and about sin should go beyond superficiality and even beyond the understanding that it is by the gift of God's righteousness that a person initially receives salvation, for some of the most cunning temptations encountered in the world are precisely those who even hide behind subtle and false words about how a person should live under the heavenly righteousness.

And, in turn, after addressing the aspect that a more accurate discernment of good and evil also can only be attained by a person through the Lord's gift of righteousness, we would like to focus, from this point on, in the aspect that after an individual receives this gift, one is also called by the Lord to grow in the fellowship with the word of righteousness or the Lord's teaching about His righteousness to as well not jeopardize the salvation granted to him or her by heavenly grace.

The aspect of the need for a Christian to grow in the fellowship with the word of the Lord or of His righteousness can be observed in the general call that Christ made in the text of John 8 so that His disciples may remain in the teaching to know the truth, but also more specifically in the text of Hebrews presented below, and from which we will seek to address the point here in reference more objectively.

Bearing in mind, therefore, the relevance that the following texts represent to the relationship of a Christian with the truth and the righteousness of God, inclusive after one has already received them in one's life, we would like to suggest that the reading of

them may be done with special attention both to the benefits of the relationship with God's righteousness and to the risks of neglecting it, as follows:

John 8: 31 **Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.**
32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
 ...
36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

Hebrews 5: 11 **Of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.**
12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.
13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.
14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.
6:1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,
2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.
3 And this we will do if God permits.
4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,
5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,
6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.
7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God;
8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.
9 But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.
10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.
11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,
12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

After presenting the last texts above, we would like to highlight once again how crucial can be the participation of the person who has chosen to follow the Lord Jesus to grow in the knowledge of the truth and the word of the heavenly righteousness, and this, also for that one does not become so highly exposed to the possibility of turning away from the salvation granted to him or her through the gift of the heavenly righteousness.

The fact that an individual receives heavenly salvation through grace does not mean that one should not participate in persevering in what is granted by the Lord or that one can be negligent in persevering in the condition given by the grace of God without becoming exposed to the risk of this negligence.

As mentioned in previous chapters, a person's justification and salvation do not occur because of one's merits. And even after being justified, a person cannot do works in order to achieve merits so that this justification and salvation continue to be extended to him or her. However, an individual may neglect the growth and firmness in the salvation granted to him or her, might depart from this salvation, or might be led away from the grace of God if one lets oneself be involved again in subjection to sin or association with ways of unrighteousness. Which is why the Lord gives us the words of exhortation that we repeat below:

Galatians 5: 1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

...

4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

5 For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

7 You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.

9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

...

13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

The fundamental aspects that make possible a person's justification and salvation are found exclusively in God and are granted solely through the gift of righteousness and the heavenly grace. However, the choice to stand steadfast on this unique foundation and to watch to avoid becoming entangled by propositions of withdrawal from what is freely given by God also encompasses the participation of the one who has received salvation and the newness of life in the Lord, as can also be noted in the following texts:

Colossians 2: 6 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

**9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;
10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.**

Matthew 26: 41 **Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.**

1 Peter 5: 8 **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**

9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

We understand that the subject that was described in the previous chapter and which is being mentioned above needs to be addressed insistently and even repeatedly also on the preventive side, for although the word of God's righteousness addresses some of the most challenging and essential aspects that exist in the universe and which sustain the functioning of every human being's life, it is intriguing to note how much this theme is often or repeatedly not considered as a priority or even thrown into oblivion by so many people, including many who call themselves Christians.

Although God's righteousness is so fundamental and beneficial to human beings, and although the Lord Jesus instructs people to seek God's righteousness first, the low rate of people who put some efforts to indeed seek it in God, including those who claim to follow the Christian faith, is highly impressive negatively speaking.

Since ancient times, the practice of seeking God's righteousness has gone through moments of extreme negligence or scarcity. Many times the Lord wanted to offer a broader abundance of His righteousness to the peoples and their cities, but He did not do so because the situation often reached the point where not even one person longed for the Lord's righteousness in these places, as we can see by an example below:

Jeremiah 5: 1 **Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; See now and know; And seek in her open places If you can find a man, If there is anyone who executes judgment (or justice), Who seeks the truth, And I will pardon her.**

In the days of the prophet Jeremiah, the city of Jerusalem was submerged into its own sins, and the sufferings that were coming upon it were the result of the evil ways of its people. But all this had as its primary cause the contempt for the searching for the truth and the righteousness instructed and granted by the Lord.

In the text of the prophet mentioned above, the Lord announces or exemplifies that at certain times there would be the possibility that a city would not be so exposed to the destruction that was to come upon it if there were at least one person who walked

under the righteousness of God, but even so, there were several times when this individual was not found.

And what is so important in people's lives to the point that the whole population of a city or region may refrain from seeking more intensely the righteousness of the Lord that over the centuries has been so favorable to help those who seek it first in their lives?

If we launched some research on why seeking the righteousness of God first receives so little attention despite its fundamental condition for life, what would be the probable answers that people, including many who call themselves Christians, would give to this question?

And if we still performed a survey only among those who call themselves Christians these days and asked them how many spent or invested at least an entire hour in the last year of their lives seeking "specifically the righteousness of God" first, as the Lord Jesus instructs them to do, surely we would be amazed at the small portion that would have done it.

In several crowds who claim to serve the Lord of righteousness, there will be a high probability of not finding even one who seeks first and intensely the word or the specific teaching about the righteousness of God.

The low degree of seeking the specific and objective word or teaching about God's righteousness and the gift of righteousness manifests itself even, or even chiefly, among those who accept to be called or appoint themselves as leaders of some multitudes who claim to follow the Lord, for their own position to receive the varied titles of leaders or guides already contradicts the explicit instruction that the Lord Jesus Christ gave to His disciples so that they would not call any of their brothers their teachers, guides, leaders, or fathers in what refers to their new condition in Christ.

*Matthew 23: 8 **But you, do not be called 'Rabbi' (or masters); for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.***
*9 **Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.***
*10 **And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.***

And among their many arguments, many might argue that the reason for not putting the attitude of seeking the righteousness of God in the first place in their lives is due to the fact that the theme of God's righteousness is so broad and so challenging to understand, or yet, that it could only be assimilated by those who have a more privileged natural mind.

However, the argument that God does not want all Christians to know His righteousness does not hold or does not support what the Scriptures teach about God's call to those who believe in Him, for in the previous chapters, it has already been mentioned that the Lord Jesus Christ has called all His disciples to seek first the righteousness of the heavenly kingdom and also that He has already appointed the Holy Spirit to accomplish the task of convincing people in the world about the heavenly righteousness.

The Lord has already pointed out in many ways that knowledge of the gift of righteousness is not related to a matter of privileged natural intelligence, but is related to a willingness to believe in what is offered in Christ Jesus and to be instructed by the Holy Spirit appointed by the Lord.

*1 Timothy 2: 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,
4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,
6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*

John 14: 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

Luke 10: 21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."

*James 1: 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*

*Proverbs 2: 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding;
7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly;
8 He guards the paths of justice, And preserves the way of His saints.
9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice, Equity and every good path.
10 When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul.*

Psalms 32: 8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

Still continuing on the issue of many people not paying attention to the instruction of the Lord Jesus to seek the heavenly righteousness first, there is another group of individuals in the world who even conform to the thought that if they have no knowledge of God's righteousness, they will not be accountable for what they did not

know. People in this condition even think or claim that the “*deliberate choice for ignorance*” may protect them from the cunning actions of the devil, sin, unrighteousness, or the world.

Nevertheless, the fact that a person chooses to ignore God's righteousness does not exempt him or her from being able to be reached by the consequences of subjection to sin or the ineffective means to deal with slavery to sin. On the contrary, this option may prolong bondage to deceit for the time that sin, the body of sin, and the vain and ineffective means against slavery to sin are not properly dealt with in the light of God's righteousness, for ignorance of the righteousness of God is one of the greatest causes of the spread of deceit and slavery to sin.

Sin seeks to widely exploit the ignorance that people have about it and how it works, but even more broadly, sin tries to make use of people's ignorance of the righteousness of God that is provided by the Lord to make them free from sin or its yokes, deceit, deception, or false propositions of freedom.

Just as ignorance about the law of gravity does not keep a child from a possible disastrous fall if this child unwisely jumps or falls from a high place, similarly the choice of ignorance about righteousness and the aspects related to sin also does not keep people from the consequences of their subjection to sin or their remaining submitted to sin because they do not know the righteousness of the Lord.

The lack of interest in a theme as essential to life as God's righteousness and the gift of righteousness does not make it less relevant, crucial, or vital just because it is ignored or despised.

And how can an individual expect to see through God's light if one chooses to ignore the light and remain in darkness?

Ignoring the basic principle of justification before God and sin can be eternally disastrous, and invoking the protection of the voluntary choice for ignorance to the detriment of the knowledge of the truth of God is certainly not choosing a safe or appropriate path.

The position contrary to the attachment to ignorance is the active attachment to the love of truth. And once God manifests His saving righteousness to a person according to the heavenly truth, it is also to be expected that this person wants to grow in the salvation extended to him or her.

Contempt for the love of truth makes a person a fertile ground for deceit and unrighteousness, makes a person a weakened target for the power of darkness' pernicious actions against one's life, for when a person despises the abiding and growth in the righteousness granted to him or her at the price of Christ's blood on the cross of Calvary, one also despises what growing in the heavenly righteousness could continue to do for him or her.

*2 Thessalonians 2: 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,
10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,*

12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Sin is an instrument of evil, and evil acts by cunning and deceit, not in truth. Thus, although sin has already lost significant space after the revelation of the gift of the heavenly righteousness to the world, it insists on trying to recover some lost areas, not refraining from using the most different lies and seductions in its propositions.

The gift of righteousness, being an aspect of the Gospel of God that is given as an offer to those who want to receive it, acts and continues to work in those who continue to want its action, but despite being granted as a free gift, it has part of its working restricted in those who despise or reject it, or who do not remain in the relationship with it.

The fact that God's goodness is so benevolent towards people's lives does not imply that it indefinitely will continue to work so concerning those who repeatedly despise it. God grants His gifts to meet people's needs, but the Lord also gives them so that the source of these gifts is known, respected, and loved. Not all aspects of God's goodness are automatically delivered to every human being or granted independently of their will, and there is no guarantee from the Lord that they will continue to be given to those who continually do not recognize the source of the eternal goodness.

Although God manifests and grants various aspects of His goodness upon all, there are certain benefits that the Lord reserves only for those who willingly accept to receive the gift of the heavenly righteousness and the word or teaching about this righteousness. God loves His righteousness, and to those who receive it and walk according to it, the Lord proceeds to reveal Himself even more intensely than to those who despise it.

*Psalms 33: 5 **He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.***

*Psalms 11: 7 **For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright.***

*Psalms 25: 14 **The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, And He will show them His covenant.***

Returning here again to the aspect that some people claim not to seek God's righteousness by alleging the fact that they do not understand it, we would like to highlight that it is precisely through seeking the heavenly righteousness in the Lord and His kingdom that a person comes to understand it, and not by abstaining from this search or by pursuing to understand God's righteousness only in their natural knowledge, as also exemplified below:

1 Corinthians 2: 12 **Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.**

Colossians 3: 1 **If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.
2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.
3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

When the Lord instructs people to seek His righteousness, He does not expect anyone to know it before seeking it. What God expects an individual to do in relation to the heavenly righteousness is for him or her to exercise faith or trust in the Lord and a willingness to seek His righteousness in His Gospel under the guidance of His Holy Spirit to, then, understand it, what is also confirmed in other words by the Psalmist in the following text:

Psalms 37: 5 **Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.**
6 He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.

And finally, yet another aspect why some people take the attitude of not seeking to grow in God's light and righteousness, after already knowing that they are freely available to all who receive them, may lie in the attachment to unrighteousness or in the desire of not departing from injustice, as described below:

John 3: 19 **And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.
20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.
21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.**

2 Timothy 4:3 **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;
4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**

Romans 1: 28 **And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;**

29 *being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality,
 wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder,
 strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,
 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of
 evil things, disobedient to parents,
 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;
 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who
 practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but
 also approve of those who practice them.*

Thus, returning specifically to the situation of many who call themselves Christians but who want to claim that the reason they do not seek God's righteousness more intensely lies in the fact that they do not understand it, the reality is that many of them do not seek God's righteousness because of their own attitudes that they repeatedly adopt towards the Lord's righteousness, their unwillingness to seek it indeed, or because they have "*become dull of hearing.*" as mentioned in the text of Hebrews 5 at the beginning of this chapter, and whose part we repeat below:

*Hebrews 5: 11 ... **of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.***

In the above verse, it may initially seem that the matter at hand is difficult to explain, but although it is a subject on which there are many things to say, it is difficult to understand not by itself or its broad scope, but because the people to whom it is repeatedly addressed are unwilling to really pay attention to what is exposed to them.

Considering further that an individual can find the righteousness of God in the Gospel from faith to faith, if a person is negligent in being willing to know the aspects of God's righteousness that elucidate the next steps of a life under this righteousness, one, as a result, obviously also will have difficulty to understand the aspects that are increasingly presented to him or her.

The fact that the gift of righteousness is offered by heavenly grace, and not because of the merit of works that people perform, does not mean that a person should not be dedicated to understanding what is granted to him or her, or that one does not need to be willing to use what has been freely given by the Lord.

If a person, for example, gets a car that can be very useful to him or her, but one does not make an effort to learn to drive or use it, one may indeed have received the gift, but one will not become experienced in using what has been given to him or her.

It is not only by direct objection to the gift received that a person abstains from its benefits, but also by the unwillingness to know and use it more, by procrastination to learn about it, by the lack of perseverance in the relationship with it, by the unwillingness to advance to what the gift helps to reach, and so on.

Therefore, because of God's love for His children and the benefits that the heavenly righteousness offers them, the Lord readily is willing to teach them in all they need and instruct them to discern what is good and profitable for them. However, also because of the same love and the preciousness of the gift of righteousness, the Lord as well exhorts

His children through warnings about the risks and harm that may come to those who choose the paths of neglecting what the righteousness of God offers them.

When God repeatedly admonishes the individuals who have already received the heavenly salvation in the heart, He does not do so with the purpose of accusation and condemnation, but to exhort them to change their attitude for the benefit of themselves. And this also applies when the Lord exhorts Christians about the importance of seeking His righteousness continuously and increasingly.

Besides the fact that the Lord does not refrain Himself from teaching the benefits that are available to a person who receives the gift of righteousness and also perseveres to grow in it, the Lord equally does not withhold Himself from teaching Christians what may happen to them if they simply neglect what gracefully is made available to them.

Because of the essentiality of the various aspects contained in the heavenly righteousness, the Lord made the demonstration of this righteousness becoming foretold for centuries, the Lord personally presented it as a heavenly gift in Christ on the cross of Calvary, and the Lord has appointed the Holy Spirit to make it known to the world. However, the Lord has also recorded it in the Scriptures so that all may come to know what it is about and how one may choose to position oneself regarding this eternal righteousness, exposing yet the benefits that are associated with receiving it, but also what are the possible consequences for those who neglect it.

*Proverbs 9: 9 **Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.***

*Ephesians 4: 15 **But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ.***

*Colossians 1: 9 **For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;***
*10 **that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;***
*11 **strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;***
*12 **giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.***

B. The Need for Each Christian to Receive the Gifts of the Righteousness of God with Due Attention

Still in addition to the direct mentions in the texts displayed in the previous topic on how necessary is the participation of a Christian in the relationship with the righteousness of the Lord, we may yet see, as exposed in the text of Hebrews 5 and 6, that the Lord also made use of various figures of speech to make it even more widely known how much the continual and more profound relationship of Christians with the word of His righteousness may come to be crucial for them to be established ever more firmly in the newness of life available to them in the Lord.

Although many people in general and even many Christians tend to accuse God for a large part of the misfortunes of their lives and for a large part of their ignorance of the truth, in the text of Hebrews 5 and 6 presented in the previous topic, it can be noted once again, through two figures of speech, that the individual attitude of many Christians can be the main reason or cause why they do not enjoy more fully what is offered to them by the Lord.

In the text of Hebrews 6, when the Lord uses the figure of speech regarding what soils do with the rains they receive over and over again, He is showing that the answer that the earth gives to the rains that fall on it or to the One who sends the rains may become a determining factor for the treatment that the soil may receive more ahead.

The rains of the figure of speech used by the Lord are the same for the various soils mentioned in it. Initially, what is given to each ground is equivalent. Following, however, some of the lands that repeatedly receive the rains that fall on them produce useful fruit, but some others that receive the same rains do not produce good fruit, on the contrary, they produce thorns and briars. And because they deliver what is contrary to what is truly good, these latter soils may incur in a position of not being accepted and in a situation that brings them closer to the possibility of becoming cursed and destroyed even though they have received the same good rains as the soils that produced good fruits.

A similar situation to what is mentioned in Hebrews 6 is also described in the parable about the four soils taught by the Lord Jesus and which also addresses the matter of how a soil receives the word sown by the Lord and the results that comes from how this soil receives this word, as can be seen in a part of it below:

*Luke 8: 11 **Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.***

...

14 Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

15 But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

Returning to the text of Hebrews 6, we may see that the existence of a cycle that pours out favors over and over in people's lives also aims for a higher purpose, a

purpose that is connected with the objective of leading people who receive the favors into a possibility of also bearing fruit according to the favors they received.

On the other hand, the condition for good fruits to become manifested in those who receive the rains is not automatic, for it also depends on the posture or attitude of the soil that receives the rains. If the earth that receives the heavenly favors incurs in the absence of good fruits because it has sheltered aspects that choke the possibility of good fruits to mature and become established, called thorns and briars, and explained by the text of Luke 8, this soil, at the end, may even come to see its condition of a blessed ground become a land about to be rejected.

God is pleased to pour out His favors repeatedly and increasingly on His children, but contempt for the Lord's favors for giving space for thorns and briars may have severe consequences for those who despise the heavenly gifts, and this also applies particularly to the word sown by the heavenly sower or the word of the righteousness of the Lord.

God pours out His rain so that the soil may do good, but if a person does not give due attention, credit, or appreciation to the favors received, to the point of letting the fruitless distractions of the world occupy one's heart and keep him or her from advancing to the good fruits for which the rains have been bestowed upon him or her, the blessing of the Lord may be withdrawn, showing that God does not guarantee the blessing upon a soil indefinitely if it successively despises the heavenly gift.

No person can attain a condition of deserving the rains of heavenly mercy, goodness, righteousness, and grace, and these, in a sense, God pours upon every soil by offering to all the gift of righteousness that is in Christ Jesus and the word of righteousness that He is willing to teach those who receive the gift of His justice. However, by not paying due attention to the gifts God offers through His grace, choosing instead to pay attention to what produces thorns and briars, a person may lead the soil to become increasingly hardened, an aspect that may also occur with Christians since the text of Hebrews 5 and 6, in particular, is addressed to these.

When a person receives the gifts of the heavenly kingdom as a capacity to turn away from evil and to incline toward good, God's goodness manifests itself even more in that person's life. However, if an individual repeatedly receives God's gifts without dedicating oneself to them and without allowing them to cause a change in his or her life or attitudes, that person also repeatedly despises the purpose of the gifts and may reach the stage where the soil, hardened by contempt for the gifts of the Lord, becomes increasingly insensitive to new rains and the purposes of these gifts.

*Romans 2: 4 **Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?***

*Hebrews 3: 14 **For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,**
15 **while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."***

Hebrews 2: 1 **Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.**
2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,
3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,
4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

Continuous exposure to the benefits of the kingdom of God without the person who receives them changing the focus of one's life is something highly dangerous and may lead to irreversible consequences for the one who stays under this condition.

We highlight here again that a person does not become deserving of salvation by applying oneself to good works, but this does not mean that one cannot voluntarily depart from salvation by insisting on not remaining and not growing in the salvation granted through the heavenly grace or by one's insistence on subjecting oneself to the thorns and briars that seek to overshadow and choke their faith in the righteousness and salvation of the Lord.

The rains mentioned in the text of Hebrews 5 and 6, referenced above, may represent the whole word of God and the various gifts from the Father of Lights, but when we also look at the first figure of speech of the same text, it can be observed that these rains are as well closely associated with the "word of righteousness," which is also the "*word that was in the beginning*" and presented in John chapter 1 when he tells us that the "*word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*"

When we look at the writings of the prophets of the so-called Old Testament, it can be seen that they also taught the people that the rain of God in various circumstances was likened to the rain of the heavenly righteousness and the harvest that comes from this rain, as exemplified below:

Isaiah 45: 8 **Rain down, you heavens, from above, And let the skies pour down righteousness; Let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, And let righteousness spring up together. I, the LORD, have created it.**

Hosea 10: 12 **Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.**

Therefore, when we look at the figure of speech of the rains and the soils from the perspective of the rain of God's righteousness, we can realize how precious it is for the Lord to offer His righteousness freely to all people and to grant the gifts of this rain on the individuals who are willing to receive the gift of the heavenly righteousness.

When God gave the gift of righteousness in the person of the crucified Christ, Who is the living expression of the Word of Eternal Righteousness, the Lord did not give the world what He had plenty, but He gave the only aspect that was single or unique to Him, His beloved Son, so that the blood of His Son could come to be shed on the cross of Calvary for the justification of those who became slaves to sin, the body of sin, and the law, and who thereby departed from God. And, therefore, the fact that God has granted His Beloved Son to the world through His grace, and also continues to offer Him by the same grace as the Eternal Savior, should not be confused with the fact that God's gift of righteousness and the growth in the word of this righteousness may merely be rejected by those to whom it has been offered without them also being exposed to the consequences of opting to reject the gift of righteousness offered to them.

Psalms 127: 1 Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.

2 Corinthians 6: 1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

If we recall here the text that teaches us that by abiding in the word of the Lord an individual attains knowledge of the truth which sets him free, we may also know that not remaining in the word or teaching of the Lord may also imply in the condition where a person refrains oneself from reaching the freedom the Lord wants to grant him or her.

Heavenly rain, when granted as the expression of God's righteousness, presents itself day by day to keep Christians justified and righteous before the Heavenly Father. Daily it presents itself to support those who receive it as a gift from God. This rain continually is offered by the Lord to those who were saved from darkness to keep them from returning to slavery to sin and the body of sin. And this same rain is always ready to water the way of the fellowship of the saved ones with their Eternal Creator.

However, repeating this point once again, if a person chooses to stay associated with thorns and briars instead of making use of what the Lord offers, one is also opting for the path that may lead an individual to draw back from the favorable conditions which one had already reached in the Lord through the gift of righteousness.

C. The Need for Every Christian to Feed Personally on the Word of Righteousness or Solid Food

Continuing further on the significant relevance for a Christian to come ever closer to the word of righteousness and to a practical life under the direction of this word, we would like to highlight here the first figure of speech mentioned in the text of Hebrews 5 and 6 as a parameter for the considerations of this chapter, and whose verses we repeat below:

*Hebrews 5: 11 **Of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.***

*12 **For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.***

*13 **For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.***

*14 **But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.***

When, in the text of Hebrews 5, the Lord tells us that being experienced or skilled in the “**word of righteousness**” represents a “**solid food**” necessary for the maturing of Christians and crucial for every Christian to discern good and evil, He passes to draw our attention to one more vital aspect of His righteousness and how much the gift of the heavenly righteousness continues to be indispensable to those who already have received salvation through this gift.

By comparing “**solid food**” with “**being experienced or skilled in the word of righteousness**,” the Lord teaches us that just as the rain of God's righteousness should be received with appropriate attention for the good seeds to sprout and grow in the soil that receives the rain, so also “**the growth in the relationship with the word of righteousness**” represents an essential food for a Christian to reach the condition of maturity in the life that is lived by faith in God.

After God's righteousness is granted to free a person from subjection to sin and the body of sin, this same righteousness is also offered as a provision of God to lead the Christian to experience or live the Christian life appropriately and more broadly, allowing a Christian to pass from an infant condition in his or her life of faith in God to a mature and firmly established position in the Lord.

The Scriptures are very clear about the condition that God expects His children to reach in their journey of faith in Christ. The Lord's aim for His children is that after knowing the first aspects of the Christian life, called the elementary principles of the doctrine of Christ, they also may come to know the aspects of how they can act according to the instruction of the gift of righteousness in order to be enabled to discern good and evil, and so, that they may do good, and that they may no longer be accomplices and slaves to the evil that so closely surrounds them, an aspect recalled below through a few more texts:

1 Corinthians 14: 20 **Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.**

1 Corinthians 2: 14 **But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

15 **But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.**

Ephesians 5: 8 **For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light**

9 **(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),**

10 **finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.**

11 **And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.**

Hebrews 12: 1 **Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,**

2 **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

In one of the previous chapters, it was mentioned that an individual who receives the gift of the heavenly righteousness should no longer be involved in the aspects that place him or her under an “*unequal yoke*” or in association with unrighteousness, but it is through the teaching that a Christian is called to continually and increasingly relate to the word of righteousness that God shows how a Christian can be prepared to perceive or discern the propositions that do not match the Lord's will for his or her life.

On the other hand, when a Christian does not remain in a continual and growing relationship with the word of righteousness after one has received the gift of justice in his or her life, one also puts oneself in a condition of unpreparedness or malnutrition to live and walk in consonance with the newness of life for which the gift of righteousness has saved him or her.

In this way, **the Christian's abstention from abiding and deepening in the word of righteousness is like placing an obstacle for a child not growing up in the growth for which he or she was born.**

The text of Hebrews 5, therefore, warns of the fact that if a Christian lacks a more practical and objective relationship with the word of righteousness when one could have done so because of the time one is already a Christian, one is also subject to becoming like a soil that receives rain but which does not learn to reject thorns and briars, nor learns to bear useful herbs from the good seed which the Lord grants.

Once again we would like to emphasize that the exhortations presented by the Lord in the text of Hebrews 5 and 6 need to be carefully observed, for they do not refer to the absence of God's favor over the lives of those to whom the text is directed. On the contrary, the text draws attention to the position of those who receive the favor of God abundantly, but who insistently neglect a more continuous and deeper relationship with the Lord's instruction.

Still looking at the text of Hebrews 5 regarding Christians who remain infants or as immature children even when they could have already reached a more advanced condition, it can be observed that the central point of the matter was that Christians themselves repeatedly, or by their own choice, refused to move forward in the faith because they “had become dull of hearing the most substantial food and for behaving like children or babies who repeatedly need milk.”

Unlike natural parents, who add solid food at the point that their children need it along with milk and without the children having a real sense of what they are receiving, solid spiritual food for a Christian is not imputed to him or her, but offered, leaving the choice for it to be received or despised by the one to whom it is offered, for as a gift of the Gospel, the solid food that is granted by the Lord also needs to be accepted, received, or voluntarily ingested by the recipients of the offer.

In the Scriptures, it is interesting to note that the comparison of an immature Christian with a natural child is valid in some respects, but this is not quite the same as the natural relationship that occurs between those who grant food and those who receive the food. Even though the comparison of a Christian feeding on spiritual milk equates him or her to an infant, in the choice for solid food, the Christian is not seen as unfit to choose solid food, but he or she is considered as someone responsible and able in the Lord to practice continuously and increasingly an adequate relationship with the word of righteousness.

Thus, to remain repeatedly only in the elementary principles of the doctrine of Christ, but without advancing to a growing and continuous relationship with the word of righteousness, is to make a choice for a very risky kind of life, for besides that the Christian in this way does not grow in the Christian life, one still puts oneself in a situation where one may repeatedly go so far as to forget even the elementary principles of Christian life.

As mentioned in the text of Hebrews 5, when a Christian makes a choice to be dull of hearing the word of righteousness or to behave like an infant, he or she puts oneself under a condition in which even the most elementary principles of Christian life that already have been taught to him or her, and that should have already been established in one's life, become forgotten time after time, and where it is necessary that they also have to be repeated to him or her time after time.

Still in other words, **when a Christian refrains from growing in understanding and living the word of righteousness, one puts even the most basic aspects of his or her salvation at risk if someone else does not remind him or her again and again of the need for faith in God and in the gift of righteousness that the Lord offers by His grace.**

Through living and walking under the instruction of the word of righteousness or by a growing relationship from faith to faith with this word, a Christian grows to discern what are the good and useful herbs and also what are the thorns and briars that oppose

the fulfillment of God's will in one's life. If a Christian, however, repeatedly rejects fellowship with the word of righteousness offered by God and granted through the Holy Spirit, if he or she is unwilling to advance beyond milk, or if one is unwilling to mature in the life of faith in the Lord, this Christian may reach a very severe state of spiritual malnutrition and in which one may come to be subject to forget even the most elementary principles of Christ's teaching.

The person who does not deepen one's relationship with the word of righteousness repeatedly must be taught again not only in the word of righteousness, but in everything or from the beginning, for by abstaining from solid spiritual food, when one already should feed on it, one becomes subject even to forget all things about the life of faith in God that previously have repeatedly been taught to him or her.

And if a Christian forgets the truth and righteousness taught by the Lord, how may he or she discern good and evil, truth and deceit, righteousness and unrighteousness? And in turn, if a Christian does not discern good and evil, how may he or she resist the propositions that seek that one should associate oneself with unrighteousness or become an accomplice in the unfruitful works that work against the heavenly righteousness?

How may a Christian “take aside every weight and sin that tries to ensnare people” if he or she does not discern the actions of sin that try to enslave him or her again?

How may a so-called Christian father teach his children about the heavenly righteousness if he does not seek the word of righteousness as the Lord teaches it? How may a mother speak of the heavenly righteousness to her children if she does not know the word of righteousness that the Lord intends to teach her through His Gospel?

Without instruction and practical life in the word of righteousness or the Lord's teaching on matters that go beyond the elementary principles, a Christian is subject of not becoming able to live and walk in accordance with the heavenly gift also by not becoming able to discern how to deal with the propositions that are contrary to God's will and which may even be clothed with an appearance of piety and righteousness.

It is in the light of understanding the main aspects of God's righteousness and the gift of this righteousness that the unrighteousness and its propositions become more evidenced and may indeed be discerned.

Therefore, abstaining from the knowledge of the word, truth, or true teaching about the Lord's righteousness also implies severe limitations on the discernment of the propositions and actions of unrighteousness.

Yet in other words, it is not because of the strength or cleverness of the propositions of sin or unrighteousness that many Christians have given so much undue space to them, but because they are unwilling to know more broadly and precisely the righteousness of the Lord and the precious things that there is in the gift through which the Lord extends this righteousness to those who receive it in their hearts.

Due to the lack of a living and growing relationship with the living word or the teaching of the gift of righteousness, many Christians have not understood the propositions of unrighteousness that are presented to them in so many ways, because if a Christian is unwilling to grow in the word of righteousness, one also chooses to remain immature or an infant concerning his or her faith.

And, in turn, by extending too much their condition as an infant, several Christians are subject to being **“tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,”** as mentioned in the text of Ephesians 4.

Through abiding in Christ and by a growing practical relationship with the word of righteousness applied in the most diverse circumstances of one's life, a Christian can come to the point of **having by reason of use the senses exercised to discern both good and evil**, to the point of also being assisted by the heavenly wisdom to discern those agents who oppose his or her life not only directly, but which as well present themselves as false prophets or as sheep-clothed wolves, as mentioned in the text below:

- Matthew 7: 15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*
- 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?*
- 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.*
- 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.*
- 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*
- 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*
- 21 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*
- 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'*
- 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*
- 24 Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:*
- 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.*
- 26 But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:*
- 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."*
- 28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching,*
- 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

The Lord continually calls us to advance to a good and steadfast edification of our lives, for when a Christian repeatedly is dull to hear the word of God appropriately, and so also does not advance in the practice of life according to the word which has been granted or instructed to him or her, or which has been sown in his or her heart, one begins to resemble with a man who builds his life on the sand, becoming subject to fall when oppositions rise against him. And the Lord does not want to see any of His children have their faith and salvation shaken by the enemy's attacks or oppositions.

Also from the example of the tree that bears good fruit and the tree that bears bad fruit, mentioned above in the text of Matthew 7, we can see how crucial it is for a person to eat the so-called solid food, for it is also by eating from the tree of the righteousness of the Lord that a Christian becomes able to discern unrighteousness even if it seeks to show itself clothed with garments that may have an appearance of being of righteousness.

We have seen earlier in the present material that many false prophets are precisely those who claim to serve God and do their works in the name of Christ, but who before the Lord and the word of His righteousness cannot remain hidden, for though they claim to do works in the name of the Lord, they do them under the “***unrighteousness of wanting to justify themselves by their works***,” thus opposing the only true provision of justification which was provided to us in Christ Jesus through His work on the cross of Calvary.

Romans 10: 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

Because they resist to accept or receive the gift of God's righteousness, the false prophets incur in the lack of knowledge about the true heavenly righteousness. And under the zeal of their deceitfulness or ignorance concerning the true righteousness, many false prophets still seek to attract many others that equally do not know or accept the word of the only truly justifying, saving, and righteous justice through which the true eternal newness of life in the Lord can be received.

By not subjecting themselves to the unique gift of the righteousness of God, many individuals or even groups of people present themselves as godly, devoted to God, and with the appearance of humbleness, but both they and those who follow them are building the castles of their lives upon the sand that will not be able to serve them as a steadfast or secure foundation when they will come to need it most.

Due to ignorance of God's gift of righteousness, how the Lord offers it to all people or by contempt for it, many devote years and years of their lives to ensure for themselves a safe future condition, but, at the same time, they are entrusting their future to propositions of salvation through their works which ultimately have not the characteristics that could be useful for them.

Because of their resistance or negligence concerning the willingness to know more precisely the gift of God's righteousness, many have applied themselves to plans and strategies for their future security or salvation built on false and misleading propositions, for they rely on what is not able to remain steadfast in the coming future and for their eternal life, or because they rely on that which will not be able to ground what it proposes to sustain.

At this point, we would still like to highlight how serious and oppressing the conduct of false prophets or false teachers may become, as mentioned in the first epistle of Peter. For in addition to not being subject to the righteousness of God, the gift of righteousness, and that what the Lord teaches about this gift, those who falsely claim to be workers of God may even advance to point of exploiting the vulnerability of others who do not know the word of righteousness or who are unwilling to grow in this word.

Not being satisfied with presenting propositions of ways contrary to the righteousness of God, or also called by the Lord as works of iniquity, the false prophets or teachers still appreciate introducing themselves, in one way or another, as mediators between people and God, thus claiming that they are chosen by the Lord also to receive the offerings and sacrifices that their followers are taught to make in order to try to attain or sustain the future justification of their souls.

Therefore, the perverse and oppressing exploitation that some people make of their fellow men because of their lack of knowledge of the word of God's righteousness or even because of the superficial understanding of the Lord's righteousness is very impressive, negatively speaking.

Due to people's lack of knowledge about how the gift of righteousness is granted and how a person can remain in it, some even follow and reproduce some absurd beliefs and practices to the point of proposing what Paul calls as “*a different gospel*” or “*the other gospel*” that seems to be according to the truth but which is not indeed (aspect addressed more broadly in a particular material with this title).

And since greed is one of the aspects that accompany an extensive part of the actions of unrighteousness, also this point is unduly exploited on a large scale by the fact that people are unaware of the word of righteousness and, thus, are willing to follow the propositions that even use parts of the Scriptures, but which use them in such a way as to meet the greedy yearnings of those who propose them, as exemplified once again below:

2 Peter 2: 1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

1 Timothy 6: 3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,

4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,

5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

From such withdraw yourself.

*Acts 7: 48 However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says:
 49 'Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, Or what is the place of My rest?
 50 Has My hand not made all these things?'
 51 You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.*

*2 Corinthians 11: 13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.
 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.
 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

When Christians do not grow in the word of the righteousness of God, they are more exposed to accepting some types of leadership over their lives that Christ has never authorized to lead them, as seen in the text of Matthew 23 already mentioned above.

When Christians are unwilling to grow in the word of God's righteousness, they put themselves at risk of being like children who subject themselves to other children or other unfit people who work to destroy their ways.

Isaiah 3: 12 As for My people, children are their oppressors, And women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, And destroy the way of your paths.

*Acts 20: 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.
 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.
 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*

When Christians are unwilling to grow in the word of God's righteousness, they put themselves at risk of being like spiritual children who prefer fame or glory before men over the glory to which they are called by the Lord, despising, however, the fact that the glory of men is temporal and without any condition to substantiate a person for eternal justification and life.

John 12: 42 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;

- 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*
44 Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me.
45 And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.
46 I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness."

1 Peter 1: 24 Because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, 25 But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

When, however, a Christian grows in the understanding of the gift and the word of the righteousness of God, one also becomes more skilled to discern those agents to whom the Lord no longer wants him or her to submit, as well as one advances to be more strengthened to live according to the condition of life that the righteousness of God already made available from the work of Christ Jesus on the cross of Calvary.

1 Corinthians 7: 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

1 Timothy 2: 5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

The teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ on the righteousness of God is not always easy for the soul to digest, for as a solid food, it often needs to be chewed or ruminated to be assimilated, but the Lord's words are the only true words of eternal life that truly cast light in the hearts of people so that they may know and receive the eternal life.

When the Lord manifests His light through the word of righteousness, there is no darkness, no blockages, no veils, no covers or roofs that can prevent the righteousness or unrighteousness of a heart from being revealed.

The word of righteousness, the solid food granted by the Lord, or the living word of God is a powerful word that is fully able to separate what no surgical instrument or psychological technique can accomplish.

Hebrews 4: 12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

The gift of righteousness and the fellowship with the word of righteousness are granted in simplicity and can be known through grace and faith in God, but, at the same time, the word of righteousness is challenging because it unveils the opposing propositions or paths which resist the righteousness of the Lord, no matter how vile or subtle these oppositions may come to be.

*2 Peter 3: 17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;
18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.*

Although the Lord grants the gift of His righteousness in much simplicity, the word of the heavenly righteousness is unique, powerful, and consistent, and that is why the word of God's righteousness in Christ is the only word that actually teaches to live and walk in the only way of the universe that is entirely grounded in truth and eternal righteousness.

Psalms 4: 1 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.

D. The Need of Each Christian to Be Willing to Be Guided by the Holy Spirit

In this new topic, as a final part of this chapter, we would like to return once again to the participation of the Holy Spirit in helping Christians to know appropriately and at the due time what they need to know about the gift and the word of the righteousness of God.

The living and powerful word and sharper than any two-edged sword mentioned in Hebrews 4 is also the word of God in the hand of Him who convinces the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. God's sharp sword is the word of the Heavenly Father and Christ being revealed and operated by the Holy Spirit of God.

*Ephesians 6: 17 **And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.***

Thus, not to pay attention to the word of God's righteousness, after the Lord Jesus Christ has appointed the Holy Spirit the task of convincing the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, is also not to pay attention to a very significant part of the present ministry of the Holy Spirit on Earth, for the actions of the Holy Spirit, hope, faith in God, and righteousness work together or complement each other.

*Galatians 5: 5 **For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.***

The accurate discernment of good as well as evil is not a virtue that God desires for some Christians who think they are specially elected and anointed, but it is a gift that God wants to grant to every Christian who receives the Holy Spirit and which should be used by each of them without distinction.

*Romans 8: 14 **For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.***

*1 John 2: 27 **But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.***

*1 John 4: 13 **By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.***

When God gives spiritual food to His spiritual children, to those who have experienced the new birth through faith in Christ and who, consequently, have become

partakers of the Holy Spirit, the Lord also expects them to gladly receive the food for growth and maturity so that they may become ever more convinced in their faith in the Lord and increasingly applied to using the new condition of life and the gifts they have received.

Up to this point in this chapter, it has been addressed the fact that many Christians do not grow in the Christian life because they do not feed on the word of righteousness, making themselves like infants that still need milk. However, when we advance to observe the Scriptures regarding a person's acceptance of the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life, we may also see from this angle why many Christians are unwilling to grow in the knowledge and the practice concerning the word of righteousness.

Believing in God and accepting the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord is crucial for growth in the knowledge of God's gift of righteousness and the word of righteousness, for fellowship with the Spirit of the Lord is essential for the characteristics of the Lord's righteousness to shine forth in the eyes of an individual's heart. Therefore, it is also about how a person positions oneself by faith regarding the relationship and direction of the Spirit of the Lord that progress in the knowledge of the word of righteousness occurs or does not occur.

Growth in the word of God's righteousness, and consequently in the Christian life and discernment not only of good, but also of evil, is directly associated with the position that a person adopts in relation to whom one wants to guide his or her life and to how deep one wants to be guided by the Lord through the Holy Spirit concerning the knowledge of the heavenly righteousness and the gift of righteousness granted by it.

What we are trying to say from this point on is that the growth in the theme of God's righteousness is also directly related to whom or what a person is inclined and predisposed to follow.

The fact that the theme of God's righteousness is broad, very comprehensive, and poorly understood in the merely natural or intellectual world may become a discouraging point and a motive why many people do not actually put it in the first place in their lives. However, the reason for the difficulty in understanding this subject is not really people's intellectual difficulty, but it can be in their unwillingness to live and walk according to God's direction through the Holy Spirit and according to the life that God's righteousness produces, for the righteousness of God becomes indeed known by a person when one also is willing to be guided by the Holy Spirit to experience this righteousness in one's personal life.

The word of the righteousness of God is unknown to many Christians because they do not seek it with the help of the Holy Spirit and do not look at it to experience it in their personal lives under the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord.

*1 Corinthians 2: 14 **But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.***

*15 **But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.***

*13 **These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.***

The righteousness of God generates the newness of spiritual life, but those who are willing to accept the instruction or direction given by the Spirit of the Lord are also empowered to experience growth in this newness of life. When a person inclines his or her will to be guided by the Spirit of the Lord, one also predisposes oneself to be quickened by the righteousness of God in one's spirit, which makes a Christian qualified for the Lord to instruct him or her in truth, in righteousness, and to operate the novelty of life in one's whole being, as can be seen in the following text:

- Romans 8: 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*
- 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*
- 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*
- 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*
- 9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*
- 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*
- 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*
- 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.*
- 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*
- 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

The spiritual life generated in an individual through the gift of righteousness and the Holy Spirit can make alive even one's mortal body to cooperate with God's will. However, the inclination to be guided by the merely natural or carnal man cannot produce the life of God's righteousness, for the lack of fellowship with the spiritual life that proceeds from the heavenly kingdom also inhibits the understanding of the heavenly righteousness itself and which is more broadly assimilated by living or by practicing the fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

We understand it to be significant to note that the willingness to live the kind of life that God's righteousness offers cooperates with the understanding of the wonderful aspects it offers. Righteousness is revealed to those who want to live by faith in God and according to the newness of life that God wants to give to those who believe in Him. However, if one is unwilling to live and walk guided by the Spirit of the Lord or wants God's righteousness to live according to the flesh, according to the direction of the natural man, this person also puts oneself in opposition and resistance to the heavenly righteousness offered to him.

God's righteousness always seeks to work for the reconciliation of people with God, through faith in God, and through the novelty of life in the Spirit of the Lord, but if an

individual does not want the spiritual life that the righteousness of the Lord offers, one puts oneself in a position of enmity towards God for preferring to walk according to the righteousness of men, aspect already seen in the previous topic.

One of the aspects most considered as a hindrance for a Christian to be willing in favor of his or her growth in God's righteousness is that the life guided according to the Spirit of the Lord and the life guided according to the natural man cannot be conciliated or harmonized in the sense that their interests eventually could be met jointly.

Just as life guided by the Spirit of the Lord is equivalent to living and walking under the righteousness of God that produces life, so the life guided by the flesh is equivalent to a position of opposition to the heavenly righteousness that leads to death, and there cannot be consonance between them.

Galatians 5: 17 **For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.**

Romans 8: 6 **For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.**

Galatians 6: 8 **For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.**

And if we take a closer look at the matter of Hebrews 5 about some Christians “making themselves like children in such a way that they always need to return to spiritual milk” together with the text of 1Corinthians chapter 3, we can see that the resistance of several Christians to solid food or their negligence towards the purpose of the rains of God's righteousness to produce good fruit is, actually, the result of a conflict between the desire to live a life partly after the Spirit of the Lord and, at the same time, partially in the flesh or according to the mentality of the natural man, as follows:

- 1 Corinthians 3: 1* **And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.**
- 2* **I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;**
- 3* **for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?**
- 4* **For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?**
- 5* **Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?**
- 6* **I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.**
- 7* **So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.**

- 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.*
- 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.*
- 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.*
- 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*
-

The position where an individual puts oneself under the control of the flesh, even though one is already a Christian, is a dangerous and vulnerable position, for the piety based on the flesh or that only seems to be godliness cannot bring real usefulness to one's life nor can it nullify the destructive effects of the inclination toward the carnal mind.

Moreover, in the text of 1Corinthians 3, Paul still teaches that a Christian's inclination in the sense of saying that he or she is of other Christian or follows other Christians is as an attempt to lay a foundation other than the unique already established, which is Christ Jesus, the only one who died without sin for the justification of all human beings.

As much as the soul delights in setting other people as its life reference, it represents an inclination towards the flesh or a propensity to try to walk by sight rather than by faith. As much as many people are pleased to say that they are of the "church of the leader, priest, or pastor x, y, or z," or that they are followers of certain world-renowned leaders, institutions, or groups, the choice of this kind of path is an inclination towards the flesh and an attempt to establish as a foundation or part of the foundation of life that which in the sight of the Lord was never called to be a foundation of righteousness, salvation, and newness of life.

When Paul, in the text below, states that every Christian is called to be built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, he is not saying that a Christian is called to be built upon the apostles and prophets themselves, as some in a deceitful or distorted way seek to present to raise followers of them.

When Paul announces that every Christian is called to be grounded on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, he is teaching that every Christian is called to be built on directly on the same and unique eternal foundation that the apostles and prophets also were built on, for the Lord Jesus Christ has always been the unique or exclusive foundation of justification and eternal life announced by the apostles and prophets.

- Ephesians 2: 19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,*
- 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,*
- 21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,*
- 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

And also as God's family, every Christian is equally called to be built directly upon the Heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit of the Lord, and never upon or under those who present themselves as having been chosen by God to be a foundation, spiritual covering, or mediators between their fellow men and the Lord.

Ephesians 3: 14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

*15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,
16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,
17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height,
19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,
21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

The attempts of a Christian to “outsource” to others his or her edification in the gift of God's righteousness and the word of righteousness invariably are copies, in one form or another, of the Old Covenant model or the priestly system in which some sought to represent the others before God and God before the people, but whose system has repeatedly shown itself as a failed model and useless for a true edification of people in the precious and unique heavenly righteousness.

Hebrews 7: 11 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?

...

*18 For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,
19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

Returning, then, to the considerations on the texts of Hebrews 5 and 1Corinthians 3, we can note that the similarity between the two narratives is very high, because the carnal position of the Christians in both texts prevented the authors of the texts from announcing to them deeper subjects of the Christian life. And in both texts, Christians

were jeopardizing the basic aspects of their relationship with the heavenly righteousness given to them in Christ Jesus.

While in the text of Hebrews 5 and 6 the resistance to growth in the word of righteousness or solid food is presented as an obstacle for Christians not to reach discernment regarding both good and evil, coming so to be under the possibility of not producing the useful herbs expected from the soil, in the text of 1Corinthians 3 we see to what kind of thistles, thorns, briars, or lures of the flesh that Christians may undergo by insisting on improper carnal positions, coming so to enter the path that leads to forgetting even the only foundation by which they can indeed achieve salvation and eternal life.

That is, when a Christian does not advance to a life led by the Holy Spirit and a life with discernment of good and evil obtained by the solid food of the word of righteousness, one puts oneself in line with the risk of exchanging precisely what the righteousness of God provided or granted him or her.

When a Christian does not advance to a life led by the Holy Spirit and a life with discernment of good and evil obtained by the solid food of the word of righteousness, one becomes subject to letting oneself become influenced by the direction of other people to the detriment of the guidance of God.

And still, as a result, one begins to move away from the understanding and the confidence that only “in Christ” there is an unshakable and reliable foundation for both one's salvation and one's life after having received justification and salvation by heavenly grace.

When a Christian keeps oneself from growing in the understanding of God's righteousness in Christ Jesus, makes oneself dull to hear the word of righteousness, or repeatedly adopts positions of those who do not want to leave their condition of babes in the Christian life, he or she puts oneself at risk of again incurring subjection to the teachings from which the Lord has already set him or her free through the heavenly righteousness and to attitudes of life that oppose the principles of the faith that God's righteousness has provided for this Christian. And by doing so, one again becomes vulnerable to following the creature's propositions rather than the guidance of the Creator and Father of Lights.

When Christians stop paying attention to the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, they again become vulnerable to the idolatry of human beings and all sorts of distorted propositions of the creature, without seeing how carnal and temporal humans and their idols are, and how carnal their works and projects are when they depart from the fellowship with the Lord.

A Christian who does not grow in the word of God's righteousness in due time also does not make use of the benefits of what was freely offered to him or her to discern the world around him or her, and so, one becomes vulnerable of being ensnared again by misleading proposals precisely by refraining oneself from the discernment offered to him or her by the heavenly righteousness.

A Christian who resists the growth in God's righteousness may become subject to forget soon that one's source of discernment and wisdom is in Christ Jesus and that the spiritual man only can discern spiritual things appropriately by having access to Christ and the wisdom that is in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 2: 15 ***But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.***
16 ***For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.***

John 15: 5 ***I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.***

2 Corinthians 3: 4 ***And we have such trust through Christ toward God.***
5 ***Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,***
6 ***who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.***

While a Christian is unwilling to grow in the word of God's righteousness through a personal fellowship with the Lord who provides the gift of righteousness, this individual may take courses and more courses, seminars, and also go to colleges that are intended to teach about the Christian life but, even so, not becoming able to advance from the position of an inconstant child concerning living and walking by faith in God. If a Christian does not personally feed on solid food, even if one dedicates oneself to various studies of other Bible themes, one keeps remaining in a condition that may not be enough to discern more profound matters about the good as well as about evil.

John 5: 39 ***You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.***
40 ***But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.***

A simple person or even with little formal instruction who asks God to be guided to the word of truth and who asks the Holy Spirit to teach and convince him or her of the righteousness of God may come to be able to achieve this objective broadly, for understanding of the word of righteousness, as already mentioned a few times before, does not depend on the intellectual capacity of the human being, it is something that the Holy Spirit shows to whoever wants to receive it and to whom the Spirit of the Lord wants to reveal it.

Matthew 5: 6 ***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.***

Proverbs 9: 10 ***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.***

Proverbs 2: 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding;
7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly;
8 He guards the paths of justice, And preserves the way of His saints.
9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice, Equity and every good path.
10 When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul,
11 Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you,
12 To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things,
13 From those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness.

Acts 4: 13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Feeding on the word of God's righteousness is crucial for a person to break from the condition of being a babe in the faith to advance to the position of becoming a son of God who accepts being led by the Holy Spirit. And a person who does not seek God's righteousness in the Lord and does not allow oneself to be instructed by the Holy Spirit about the riches of this righteousness is subject to not being able to leave the infantile condition regarding one's faith in God.

Galatians 4: 1 Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all.

...

3:24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.
25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.
26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

A person can attend services or masses regularly throughout one's life and yet be profoundly devoid of the knowledge of the word of God's righteousness, for the kinds of services where some rise as leaders over others are not fit to perfect those who render or perform their worship acts. On the contrary, religious services that seek justification by the works that their leaders or teachers require of the people, in addition to not producing sufficient provision for people to attain the righteousness of God, still produce more acts of unrighteousness that resist the justifying gift that there is exclusively in Christ Jesus.

Religious education, worships, services, or rituals that are devoid of the righteousness of God or that are supported by the pretended righteousness of men or women, however intense and frequent they may be, no matter how high are the

offerings and tithes they raise, do not prepare people for them to see that their own religious works should be buried to give way for the true righteousness that frees them even from these services, masses, or veneration, and the works practiced in them.

And if these religious meetings or services really wanted people to reach freedom to live by the faith in the righteousness of God, they would also make it clear that these kinds of worships cannot really perfect those who practice them and that there is, in fact, no need for these kinds of services to be performed, as taught below:

*Hebrews 9: 9 **It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience,**
10 **concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.***

*Hebrews 10: 1 **For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.***

Because of the lack of willingness to hear the word of righteousness, many Christians or those who call themselves Christians end up not discerning good and evil in a series of practices to which they subject themselves week after week and year after year without the Lord asking them to do so, and thus, they end up giving the strength of their lives to various works that seem to be godly, but which do not have the power to keep their hearts in the true righteousness and will of God. Because of their unwillingness to hear the word of righteousness, many Christians devote themselves to perform “dead works” or works of wood, hay, or straw whose harvest is more “dead works” and subjection to leaders, groups, assemblies, congregations, or institutions to which God never instructs them to submit, therefore:

*Colossians 2: 18 **Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,**
19 **and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.**
20 **Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations,**
21 **"Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"**
22 **which all concern things which perish with the using, according to the commandments and doctrines of men?**
23 **These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.**
3:1 **If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.**
2 **Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.***

3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Galatians 4: 8 But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.

9 But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

Some leaders of some groups who call themselves Christians even get to the point or the absurdity of demanding works, offerings, and tithes from their followers even knowing that these practices can never justify people from sin and before the Lord. They continue to demand these people's sacrifices under the pretext of guiding them on a path of godliness, but they do so out of greed because they see their religious services or meetings as a profitable business to maintain their social status or to maintain their position of primacy over their fellows.

As mentioned in the previous topic, the false prophets, false teachers, or the wolves dressed as sheep aim to make their followers the objects of their ruthless and corrupt trades. However, more harmful than taking people's material resources through vile manipulation is that they do not mind making people return to the practices of the Old Covenant that oppose righteousness through the grace of Christ Jesus and oppose the heavenly righteousness in which only the Lord Jesus Christ is accepted as the mediator between human beings and God.

Although the general principle of the acceptance of the gift of righteousness and life under the righteousness of God is not complicated or is according to the simplicity that there is in Christ Jesus, the set of ways through which darkness, the lusts of the world, and the works of the flesh seek to oppose the righteousness of the Lord is really vast. That is why a Christian is called to keep oneself in fellowship with God so that the Lord may instruct and sustain this Christian in the most diverse moments and circumstances of his or her life.

We once again emphasize here, therefore, how vital it is for a Christian to remain under the direction or instruction of the Holy Spirit, for if one intends to live the Christian life only from the acquired knowledge or the guidance of other people, one is continuing to try to live and walk apart from the reconciliation and fellowship that the gift of righteousness has come to provide. He continues to try to live and walk under the instruction and direction of the creature rather than the Creator, becoming, in this way, also subject to reaping the results that come from being guided by the creature's limited condition.

If a Christian does not incline the heart to be guided by the Holy Spirit in the word of righteousness or solid food, one continues to allow the government of the natural man's condition over one's life and becomes equated with those who walk by sight or subject to the flesh, which are also subject to the works of the flesh such as contentions, ambitions for fame, fights for positions, and envy as described in 1Corinthians 3 in reference in this topic.

Even if a Christian has been taught in the elementary principles of the doctrine of Christ, if one is unwilling to advance to the knowledge of the word of righteousness or

solid food, one still stands in the condition that limits his or her understanding that dissociated from the fellowship with the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, one also cannot discern the more deceitful aspects of unrighteousness, nor is one able to produce the useful and eternal fruits resulting from life in accordance with the heavenly righteousness.

Because they do not advance in a practical way to a condition of life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and according to the gift of the heavenly righteousness, many Christians end up getting into a repetitive cycle of searching for religious courses and training by instructors who also are not experienced in the word of the righteousness of God. And so, they undergo at the risk of having the precious time of their lives being consumed by the vanity, competition, and greed of people, and by what cannot make them ready to perform what can only be accomplished under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the gift of the heavenly righteousness.

Because they do not really heed the Lord's instruction about the gift and the word of God's righteousness, many are drawn to propositions that appear to be of godliness and which even can be very attractive to the flesh, but which in fact are religious attractions equated with actions of the adulterous woman described in Proverbs 5 and which seek to divert people from the life which is in conformity with the will that the Lord wants for them.

- Proverbs 5: 3 For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, And her mouth is smoother than oil;*
4 But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword.
5 Her feet go down to death, Her steps lay hold of hell.
6 Lest you ponder her path of life, Her ways are unstable; You do not know them.
7 Therefore hear me now, my children, And do not depart from the words of my mouth.
8 Remove your way far from her, And do not go near the door of her house,
9 Lest you give your honor to others, And your years to the cruel one;
10 Lest aliens be filled with your wealth, And your labors go to the house of a foreigner.
-

Therefore, for their sake and of the people around them, Christians should never afford to avoid the continual and intense searching of God's righteousness in Christ Jesus and should never mistakenly think that they are immune to the harsh implications that can come from adopting an attitude of neglecting a deeper and more continuous relationship with the gift and word of the heavenly righteousness.

Considering that Christians have been redeemed by the gift of the heavenly righteousness, are called to live by faith through this gift, are called as the righteousness of God, and are called to be ministers or instruments of the heavenly righteousness, it is also reasonable to expect that they seek in the Lord the teaching to understand with what they are

called to have fellowship and what they are called to serve and to be representatives or ambassadors in the world.

Isaiah 26: 8 ***Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD, we have waited for You; The desire of our soul is for Your name And for the remembrance of You.***

9 With my soul I have desired You in the night, Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; For when Your judgments are in the earth, The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5: 21 ***For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.***

Hebrews 5: 13 ***For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.***

14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Finally, in this chapter, we would also like to mention that the discernment that the Lord offers to give to His children through fellowship with Christ is also described in the subjects on Knowing about God or Knowing God, The Letter or Life, The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, The Core Principle of Life for a Christian, The Law of Understanding, and the series Walking in Newness of Life. We emphasize, however, that more important than knowing these other materials is that each person already may turn directly to the Lord Jesus Christ so that through the Spirit of the Lord one may come to be taught in this so useful theme for the Christian life.

1 Peter 3: 18 ***For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.***

1 Corinthians 1: 9 ***God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.***

Ephesians 5: 14 ***Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."***

15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,
16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Colossians 3: 15 ***And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.***

C29. The Fruit of Righteousness

One very significant thing to note concerning accepting or receiving the gift of God's righteousness, as commented in previous chapters, is that this gift is not granted for a person to add it to the way of life that is distant from God's guidance and in which one lived before receiving this heavenly gift. The gift of righteousness has manifested itself to the world to be given to the recipients to enable them to make a choice to move away from the type of life under the slavery of sin and the consequences that accompany it, but also to enable a person for a life that one was previously unable to live because of subjection to sin.

Receiving the gift of righteousness is granted for a person to be placed in a position where a series of old principles and living conditions no longer match the new chosen position, but it also introduces an individual to new principles and living conditions so that one may be able to live in consonance with the new life offered in Christ Jesus, as is also recalled in the following text:

- 1 Peter 1: 17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;*
- 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,*
- 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*
- 20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*
- 21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

The granting of the gift of God's righteousness, as well as the whole Gospel of God, is not a concession of information or mere knowledge, but the real granting of the novelty of life from heaven and given through the grace of the Lord to enable real and substantial change in all who receive it.

And yet another way in which the Scriptures make reference to the changes that can occur in the life of those who receive the gift of righteousness is contained in the expressions that mention the “*fruit of righteousness*” or the work and the result that God's righteousness causes in the life of those who receive it as a gift from the Lord through His grace, as exemplified in several texts below:

- Philippians 1: 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,*
- 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,*
- 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

Hebrews 12: 7 **If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?**

...

11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

James 3: 17 **But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.**

18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Isaiah 32: 14 **Because the palaces will be forsaken, The bustling city will be deserted. The forts and towers will become lairs forever, A joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks,**

15 Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, And the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, And the fruitful field is counted as a forest.

16 Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, And righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

17 The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.

18 My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, In secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places,

19 Though hail comes down on the forest, And the city is brought low in humiliation.

Ephesians 5: 8 **For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light**

9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),

10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

When God's righteousness is also viewed from the perspective of a gift that bears fruit, it is interesting to note that the fruit of righteousness can be seen both in the aspects of what the righteousness of God produces in the life of the one who receives it and in the aspects of what the heavenly righteousness accomplishes through those who welcome the gift of the Lord's righteousness into their lives.

Firstly, the fruit of God's righteousness is manifested by the immeasurable and incalculable benefits it offers to all human beings and which it produces for those who receive the heavenly righteousness, but after that, it also extends to the point that those who receive the gift of the Lord's righteousness also may become agents that work in favor of the very heavenly righteousness they have received.

Romans 6: 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves (servants) of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Romans 7: 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

Although the sinner's justification through the grace of God and the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary is one of the central aspects why the Lord grants the gift of righteousness, the gift of righteousness also bears the fruit that the justified person in Christ may become an instrument of this same righteousness.

As has also been seen earlier, receiving the gift of righteousness results in the deliverance of a person from the bonds of slavery to sin and the condemning law, the fruit of an inner change in the heart of the recipient, but it also begins to be reflected in the inner and the outer works that this person comes to practice if he or she abides in faith in the Lord and the fellowship with the heavenly gift that one has received in the heart.

The righteousness of the Lord has as its fruit the liberation of a person from the tribulation of living in disagreement with the will of God, but at the same time, it also bears the fruit of granting a new or vivified condition where one can perform the works that the Lord intends for each person.

Although the works of human beings cannot justify them before God and sin, for a person is justified by faith in the gift of God's righteousness, the fruit of the gift of righteousness in the life of the justified person also begins to result in a life of good works for the benefit of this individual and for the testimony of the Lord's deeds through his or her life.

The righteousness of God has not manifested itself powerful only through outwardly demonstrated acts on the cross of Calvary, but it continues to reveal itself powerful to work in the depths of the hearts that receive it to deliver them from the tribulations of the soul, as well as to lead them to the sublime and upright ways of life that will benefit them as well as other people.

Psalms 143: 11 Revive me, O LORD, for Your name's sake! For Your righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

Romans 5:17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2: 8 **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,**
9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.
10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

As already mentioned above, the fruit of the righteousness of God extends to countless benefits over and in those who receive the gift of the heavenly righteousness, but it also multiplies into numerous manifestations of the Lord's righteousness through them, for once a person is accepted as righteous before God, one is also approved to advance and act supported by the Lord and His righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5: 21 **For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

2 Corinthians 9: 10 **Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,**
11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

1 Peter 2: 24 **... who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness, by whose stripes you were healed.**

When a person receives the gift of God's righteousness as a gift of the heavenly grace to be justified and abides in it, the Lord grants this individual the privilege and joy of being able to continue to live according to this righteousness for his or her benefit and also for the benefit of other people.

Proverbs 21: 15 **It is a joy for the just to do justice, But destruction will come to the workers of iniquity.**

The righteousness of God is life to those who receive it, and it multiplies itself as a testimony of life through those who receive it, as also shown in the precious Psalm presented below:

Psalms 71: 1 **In You, O LORD, I put my trust; Let me never be put to shame.**
2 Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; Incline Your ear to me, and save me.
3 Be my strong refuge, To which I may resort continually; You have given the commandment to save me, For You are my rock and my fortress.
4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.
5 For You are my hope, O Lord GOD; You are my trust from my youth.

- 6 *By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You.*
- 7 *I have become as a wonder to many, But You are my strong refuge.*
- 8 *Let my mouth be filled with Your praise And with Your glory all the day.*
- 9 *Do not cast me off in the time of old age; Do not forsake me when my strength fails.*
- 10 *For my enemies speak against me; And those who lie in wait for my life take counsel together,*
- 11 *Saying, "God has forsaken him; Pursue and take him, for there is none to deliver him."*
- 12 *O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me!*
- 13 *Let them be confounded and consumed Who are adversaries of my life; Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor Who seek my hurt.*
- 14 *But I will hope continually, And will praise You yet more and more.*
- 15 *My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness And Your salvation all the day, For I do not know their limits.*
- 16 *I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.*
- 17 *O God, You have taught me from my youth; And to this day I declare Your wondrous works.*
- 18 *Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.*
- 19 *Also Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You?*
- 20 *You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, Shall revive me again, And bring me up again from the depths of the earth.*
- 21 *You shall increase my greatness, And comfort me on every side.*
- 22 *Also with the lute I will praise you, And Your faithfulness, O my God! To You I will sing with the harp, O Holy One of Israel.*
- 23 *My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, And my soul, which You have redeemed.*
- 24 *My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long; For they are confounded, For they are brought to shame Who seek my hurt.*
-

Thank God that a person, through the fruit of righteousness, receives salvation from sin. However, one also receives the possibility of the purification of the mentality or the conscience that sin and the false propositions of justification have attempted to establish in one's life, thus placing the justified person in a position of capability to serve the Lord in righteousness not on the merits of this individual, but through the mercy and love shown in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 9: 14 ... how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

*Romans 5: 1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

...
5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Because of the Lord's righteousness, the path of human reconciliation with God has been established so that they may practice direct fellowship with the Lord, that they may have their hearts instructed according to true righteousness and not according to the false or seeming godliness, and that they may live and walk in the way of a life that results in beneficial everlasting fruits.

For the one who receives the gift of righteousness through faith and perseveres in it, the fruit of God's righteousness results in the eternal defeat of the highest purpose of sin and which aims at turning a person away from his or her Eternal Creator. However, the fruit of the Lord's righteousness is also the victory that leads to life under God's light, care, and guidance.

Proverbs 10: 2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, But righteousness delivers from death.

Proverbs 11: 19 ... righteousness leads to life ...

Proverbs 12: 28 In the way of righteousness is life, And in its pathway there is no death.

Proverbs 21: 21 He who follows righteousness and mercy Finds life, righteousness and honor.

Psalms 11: 7 For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright.

Even when the heavens and the Earth we see today will cease to exist, the fruit of God's righteousness can never be extinguished to those who believe in the Lord, for God's righteousness is sovereign and eternal as the God of this unique righteousness is sovereign and eternal.

- 2 Peter 3: 7* **But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.**
- 8* **But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.**
- 9* **The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**
- 10* **But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.**
- 11* **Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,**
- 12* **looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?**
- 13* **Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.**

2 Timothy 4: 8 **Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.**

And finally, in this chapter, we would still like to emphasize the fact that **the fruit of God's righteousness is the result of abiding in it.**

That is, **a person is not called to the responsibility of producing the fruits of righteousness by one's own efforts, but is called to remain faithfully in the gift of righteousness until it bears and manifests righteousness through the one who abides in the Lord.**

Galatians 5: 1 **Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.**

Jeremiah 51: 10 **The LORD has revealed our righteousness. Come and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.**

Psalms 37: 4 **Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.**

5 **Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.**

6 **He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.**

C30. Christ: The Branch of Righteousness, The Sun of Righteousness, The Root of the Righteous, and the King of Righteousness according to the Order of Melchizedek

After presenting several considerations on God's righteousness and how it is offered to us as a gift through the grace of the Lord, we would like to highlight here again, as the final part of this material, that **the most significant revelation or evidence of the gift of God's righteousness offered to us is surely found in Christ Jesus.**

The sun of righteousness, the branch of righteousness, the root of the righteous, our righteousness, the reigning righteous, and many other expressions foretold and promised over the centuries converge all to God's gift to the world in Christ Jesus, as the following texts exemplify explicitly:

*John 3: 16 **For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.***

*John 1: 29 **The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"***

*Matthew 1: 21 **"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."***

*1 Corinthians 1: 30 **But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,**
31 **that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."***

Only because of the granting of Christ Jesus, that God has done for us, that we can have access to the heavenly righteousness and yet be justified and saved through it, as has also been seen several times in the chapters presented throughout this material.

Nevertheless, returning to the aspect of the fruit of righteousness or what it provides to those who receive the justification done once and for all by God through Christ Jesus, we would also like to emphasize here that **Christ Jesus became for us righteousness from God to justify us, but also to be the gift of righteousness that sustains us or that is our righteousness to live and walk in righteousness after we have already been redeemed in the Lord.**

We want to emphasize here once again that the central fruit of God's righteousness has always been, is, and always will be the granting of the Lord Jesus Christ to the hearts of those who receive the justification provided to them in Christ Jesus by the Heavenly Father.

The Son of the Heavenly Father's Love has been given to us as the “*gift of the heavenly righteousness*” to justify us, but as well as to become “*Our Righteousness*” eternally and that we, by the same righteousness, may also be His forever.

Just as Christ is the central gift of God's Gospel that precedes all other gifts, and just as Christ is the central mystery of the kingdom of God that precedes the understanding and receiving of all the other mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, so Christ also was made the exact and tangible expression of God's righteousness. Christ was also manifested as the expression of the fruit of the heavenly righteousness so that through Him, the fruit of righteousness could and can be manifested in those who receive Him and abide in Him.

When a person receives the Lord Jesus Christ and remains in Him as his or her personal righteousness, the fruits of God's righteousness in Christ also become the fruits of this righteousness in those who are supplied and nourished by Him.

John 15: 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

As challenging as it may seem to live in the righteousness of God in a world that still presents so much perversity of sin, this challenge can be broadly met, not because of our ability, but because God has allowed His righteousness to dwell in us through the most sublime expression of the Heavenly Father's righteousness, namely the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 2: 19 For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.

20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

God knows that people in the world suffer resistances to living and walking according to the condition of being justified by God through faith and not by works, and the Lord knows the opposition that there is in the world to try that those who were justified in Him do not manifest the fruits of the heavenly righteousness. However, the Lord does not call people to live and walk in righteousness without also giving them what they need to walk in His eternal path, even still being in the present world.

John 16: 33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

1 John 4: 4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Hebrews 4: 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

1 John 5: 11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

And yet in addition to all the promises of protection the Lord promises us in Christ Jesus in texts such as those presented above, **God still made public that the Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Perfect Lamb, the provision for our justification, Our Righteousness that dwells in us, but also that He is the Eternal King of Righteousness, and King according to the Order of Melchizedek.**

Isaiah 9: 6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Psalms 45: 1 My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

2 You are fairer than the sons of men; Grace is poured upon Your lips; Therefore God has blessed You forever.

3 Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, With Your glory and Your majesty.

4 And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; And Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.

To support us in our choice for the gift of God's righteousness, in the growth in the word of righteousness and the experience with the heavenly righteousness, and to help and sustain us also to live and walk in this eternal righteousness, God has given us the sovereign King of Righteousness who reigns over everything and everyone, but who is as well the Eternal High Priest who knows how to help and sustain us in all our weaknesses.

We have a King established by the Heavenly Father at the right hand of His unique and sublime throne who is above every principality and every power to reign and establish this righteousness in us and on our behalf wherever we are on Earth. A King who was established as the King of Righteousness to save us in righteousness so that we too can live and walk eternally in the everlasting righteousness of the Heavenly Father.

Moreover, when we come to see the condition of the Lord Jesus Christ also as King of Righteousness and King of Peace in conjunction with His position as the Eternal High Priest, we are undoubtedly faced with an even much broader and inexhaustible set of aspects about the righteousness of God and the call to live and walk in this righteousness.

As we come to know more precisely the call to walk instructed and supported by the King of Righteousness who sits at the right hand of the high and the sublime throne of God, but who also dwells in us, we can grow, for instance, in understanding how important is the role of the Christian's prayer and its cooperation with the Lord so that a broader presence of the righteousness of the kingdom of God may become manifest in the world.

Getting to know the condition of Christ as the King of Righteousness and knowing the central aspects associated with it enables us to see or understand even more broadly the eternal sovereignty of the righteousness of the heavenly kingdom.

As a Christian becomes more conscious of how majestic and powerful the condition of Christ as the Eternal King of Righteousness is, also the Christian's state of faith in the Lord may become greatly strengthened or enriched.

Thus, the sublimity of Christ's position as King of Righteousness is undoubtedly worthy of being widely known and appreciated, toward which, however, we will not move forward in the present material so that we do not extend here too much into it and so that the approach to the condition of Christ as the High Priest and the Eternal King might be done timely in a more extensive manner or with an attention that is due to it.

Considering that a broader description of the Lord Jesus Christ as our King of Righteousness also applies to the Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, we will not extend this material in greater detail of this wonderful facet of the glory of Christ. We emphasize, then, that the present content on God's righteousness expresses only a first part about life associated with this righteousness, for the gift of righteousness in Christ has been given to us to be experienced and lived under the Lord's guidance in a practical and growing way every day of our lives.

Therefore, to the Heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit be all glory and honor for having, in the fullness of time, opened the way for us to become part of the Eternal Righteousness that God revealed and offered from heaven even when we were still sinners.

Romans 1: 16 ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.***

17 ***For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."***

Hebrews 13: 20 ***Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,***
21 ***make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.***
Amen.

C31. Summary View on the Righteousness of God

Because of the relevance and breadth of God's righteousness, a Christian is called to continually seek the righteousness of God first, as well as to discover this righteousness in the Gospel from faith to faith and as one progresses in walking with the Lord in the most diverse areas of his or her life. That is why it would be impossible to summarize all groups of subjects of the breadth of God's righteousness, and it would be even more impossible to try to summarize this righteousness just in one definition.

However, to at least enable a more grouped or summarized insight into several of the main points that are encompassed in the theme of the Lord's righteousness, we present below an attempt at a brief summary as an appendix to the material described in the previous chapters and to encourage people to always return to the perception that the heavenly righteousness is fundamental and necessary to them for salvation, but also for continuity in the newness of life received in the Lord.

Below, then, is a figure and a list of some central points that we understand to be very significant of being continually reminded about what is exposed to us through the Gospel of the heavenly righteousness.



⇒ 1) **The Righteousness of God: An Attribute of God that:**

- a) Grounds the throne of God;
- b) Grounds all the judgments of God;
- c) Grounds all the actions of God;
- d) Grounds the Grace, the Mercy and the Love of God;
- e) Grounds the Gospel of God and the Gift of Righteousness.

⇒ 2) **The Righteousness of God: A Heavenly Gift that:**

- a) Brought abundant light upon the evil of darkness, sin, and the body of sin;
- b) Exposed the weakness of the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses, or the unprofitableness of this law as to the justification and salvation of human beings, as well as to lead them to be perfected;

- c) Brought abundant light upon the ineffective, false, or vain means of justification and salvation, either from the so-called Jewish or circumcision model or from the so-called Greek or uncircumcision model;**
- d) Revealed to the world the unique, full, and perfect provision of justification of human beings who became subject to the bondage of sin and the consequences associated with it;**
- e) Revealed to the world the way of eternal salvation;**
- f) Revealed to the world the means for the reconciliation of human beings with their Eternal Creator;**
- g) Justifies everyone who receives this gift;**
- h) Forgives before God the one who receives this gift;**
- i) Grants salvation to the one who receives this gift;**
- j) Grants the new birth to the one who receives this gift;**
- k) Is the foundation for a Christian to be recognized as righteous before God;**
- l) Reconciles with God the one who receives this gift;**
- m) Grants that the righteousness of God, in Christ, dwells in the heart of the recipient of this gift, to the point that Christ is called “Our Righteousness;”**
- n) Is the provision by which the Holy Spirit and the love of God are poured into the heart of the one who receives the justifying and saving gift;**
- o) Has made and makes available the continuous fellowship of the Christian with the Lord;**
- p) Has made and still makes forgiveness available to the Christian also if he or she stumbles upon a sin, offering him or her Christ inclusive as one’s Advocate with the Heavenly Father;**
- q) Grants the word or the teaching of righteousness as a solid food for the saved so that they obtain their faculties exercised by practice to discern not only good but also evil;**
- r) Is the basis for the Christian not to remain in the infantile spiritual condition and subject to tutors or false mediators;**
- s) Is the provision for a Christian to no longer need to return to associations with works of unrighteousness that resist to recognize and accept exclusively the unique justifying and saving gift that is in Christ Jesus;**
- t) Is the provision by which a Christian can be assured that one no longer needs to go back to the submission to human priests and the rules, offerings, and sacrifices of their institutions or religions;**
- u) Is the basis for a “righteous to live by faith;”**
- v) Enables those who have been saved by the gift of righteousness to live and walk according to God’s righteousness;**

w) Enables those who have been saved to be instruments of the Lord's righteousness and to cooperate with God in manifesting the heavenly righteousness in the world;

x) Grants the possibility of those who have been saved to experience yet another series of fruits, results, or benefits that come from receiving and abiding in this gift;

y) Enables those who have been saved to be kept in the Lord until they have received the crown of righteousness eternally and come to dwell in the new heavens and new Earth in which the heavenly righteousness dwells and reigns forever;

z) Reveals Christ as the Eternal High Priest and Sovereign and Eternal King of Righteousness and Peace already established eternally according to the Order of Melchizedek and Who acts for the benefit of those who place their trust in Him.

⇒ 3) **The Righteousness of God: A condition by which the Lord Jesus Christ acts as:**

a) The unique Redeemer or Savior of human beings;

b) The only mediator between God and human beings, and vice versa;

c) The sole mediator of the New Covenant;

d) The Singular Eternal High Priest according to the Order of Melchizedek;

e) The Lord of Lords and The King of Eternal Righteousness and Peace also according to the Order of Melchizedek.

2 Corinthians 5: 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Psalms 71: 19 Also Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You?

Bibliography

Note on Biblical Texts referenced:

- 1) The biblical texts without explicit indications of reference were drawn from NKJV Bible, as indicated below.
- 2) Highlights in the biblical texts, such as underline, bold, or similar were added by the author of this study.

Bible EC – Portuguese - João Ferreira de Almeida Edição

Comtemporânea (1990). Editora Vida.

Bible LUT - German - Translation of Martin Luther (1912) - CD Online Bible.

Bible NKJV - New King James Version (2000) - CD Online Bible.

Bible RA – Portuguese - Almeida Revista e Atualizada (1999) - CD OnLine Bible.

Bible RC –Portuguese - Almeida Revista e Corrigida (1995) - CD OnLine Bible.

Bible RVR95 – Spanish - Reina – Valera Revisión (1995) – Cd Online Bible.

James Strong, LL.D, S.T.D. - Strong's Hebrew and Greek Lexicon - CD Online Bible.

J.D. Douglas, Organizing Editor - The New Bible Dictionary (First Edition May 1962). WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. - Grands Rapids, Michigan.