

- Systemic Teaching about Christian Life -



Work Out Your Own Salvation

Series:
The Life of the
Christian in the World

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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!

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*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.

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*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.

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C1. Work Out or Develop the Received Salvation

The theme of this material is a complementary subject to the topics covered in other series of the Systemic Teaching about Christian Life, such as Suggestions for Reading and Studying the Bible, The Gospel, The Good News of God, and this very series on The Life of the Christian in the World.

Thus, we would like to remind here that from the moment a person is informed about the Gospel of Christ, one may begin to believe in what God offers him or her and have an encounter, through faith, with the Lord Jesus Christ and experience the salvation from God in one's life.

Nevertheless, as a sequence of the themes mentioned, we also recall that salvation, in turn, is not an isolated experience and that is limited to a moment of difficulty or affliction so that an individual later returns to a condition of life equal to the one lived before the encounter with Christ. God's salvation provides a new condition of inner life to the person who receives it. And concerning which, God's will is that this newness of life may be a growing experience for the recipient and that it may culminate in an ever-increasing and eternal fellowship with the Lord.

For the Christian who is still in the world, even though no longer being a part of it, it is crucial to reach an understanding that God's salvation goes beyond an act or a single experience. Salvation is given to a person so that one may live in fellowship with Christ and reach an understanding of the necessary condition that exists for him or her in the practice of the continual "work of abiding in Christ," through which the Christian is instructed so that the other areas of one's life may also become aligned with the will of God.

*1 Corinthians 1: 9 **God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.***

*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.***

*6 **If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.***

Through the "work of remaining in Christ," a Christian exposes oneself to the Lord so that in him or her, the growth in life that becomes available to him or her as a justified individual through Christ before God may be produced. And this, so that one may understand more about one's new condition in the Lord and about what is proposed to him or her in this novelty of life.

*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 a result of one's fellowship with the Lord, the Christian who "abides in Christ" can grow to the point of knowing more aspects of life through faith in God and may become a channel of abundant fruit according to this faith and the love of God. And yet, through these fruits, cooperate so that the name of God may be glorified, as also exemplified in the following texts:

***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.***

***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.***

And yet another way in which the Scriptures instruct us about the Christian's growth in one's life in God, and which is the goal of this subject, are the references they make to the "development or working out the received salvation," as shown below:

***Philippians 2: 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;
13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.***

The idea associated with the word *develop* or the expression *work out*, quoted in the text above, is related to *carrying out development, performing growth, or even achieving growth in everything that is possible to be reached in the condition that was granted to a person through heavenly salvation*, as also mentioned by Paul in the following text (text most widely approached in the theme on Reaching Forward to Those Things which Are Ahead):

***Philippians 3: 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.
13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,
14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.***

Thus, the salvation granted by God to a person is the greatest gift a person can ever receive in one's entire personal existence. There is nothing more precious and essential to an individual, to a human being, than the salvation of one's soul. This is why this is also the most vital aspect in which a person should persevere and grow.

Matthew 16: 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Mark 8: 37 Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

*1 Peter 1: 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,
7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,
8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,
9 receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

Luke 21: 19 By your patience possess your souls.

As mentioned in the subject on The Gospel of Salvation, when a person receives God's salvation for one's life, one enters the beginning of many other gifts that are available to him or her in the Lord and that can be accessed in God by persevering in this salvation.

Therefore, considering that salvation is part of the set of God's greatest gift to a person, the Scriptures instruct every individual who has received it to also invest due time and due attention in the development or growth in this salvation.

Just as a child needs to be nurtured in natural life from the very first moments of conception, so the individual who receives the salvation given by God is called to grow in what has been granted to him or her. One is called to learn to love, value, nurture, persevere, and consolidate the condition one received through salvation, for salvation, essentially, also encompasses the granting of a new condition of life and the state of being able to grow in it continuously.

The salvation given by God to a person saves that person from the state of eternal perdition to which one was subject. However, it also associates the individual with the purpose of being saved, which, in turn, and as already mentioned, is the bestowal of eternal life that begins for a person at the time of receiving the salvation offered by God.

In this way, **the unveiling of the newness of life given by God through salvation in Christ Jesus and growing in it is what is called “*development, working out, or growth in the received salvation.*”**

To develop or work out salvation is to grow in what was given to a person when one received Christ as the Lord in one's heart, an aspect also described in the following texts:

John 17: 1 **Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,**
2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.
3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

John 1: 12 **But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:**
13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

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.

C2. The Multiple Fronts of Growth in Salvation for the Christian Who Lives in the World

As we saw in the introductory chapter of this material, *working out one's own salvation* can also be called *growth in the Christian life* or *growth in the newness of life in God* that a person has access to when one becomes a Christian by receiving Christ as Lord in the heart.

Nevertheless, to see the issue of growth more broadly, it is also relevant to note in the Scriptures that this growth can be associated with a variety of other terms, such as: *Increase, edification, strengthening, abounding, multiplication, bearing fruit, and yet several others.*

Hence, we can see in the Scriptures that **the development of salvation or growth in the Christian life can take place in a variety of aspects and the most diverse areas of a Christian's life**, such as those listed below together with some texts associated with them:

1) Growth in faith:

2 Thessalonians 1: 3 ***We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, ...***

2 Corinthians 10: 15 ... ***not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, ...***

Acts 16: 5 ***So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.***

2) Growth in Knowledge of God and His Will:

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.***

2 Peter 3: 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.

3) **Increase in love for fellow believers in Christ:**

2 Thessalonians 1: 3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, ...

4) **Growth in the dedication of life to the Lord for a more extensive presence and manifestation of God in those and through those who remain in fellowship with Christ:**

1 Corinthians 3: 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.

Ephesians 2: 21 ... in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ...

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.

5) **Growth in thanksgiving to God:**

*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.*

6) **Growth in the Lord's very grace and in the gift of righteousness through which God's salvation is given to people and through which a person is enabled to live and walk in the world according to the newness of life received:**

*2 Peter 3: 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.*

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.

- 7) **Growth in the breadth of the sowing area of God's righteousness and the multiplication of the fruits of this righteousness:**

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.**

- 8) **Growth in becoming strengthened in God and His power:**

Ephesians 6: 10 **Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**

Ephesians 3: 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.**

- 9) **Establishment of the entire heart:**

James 5: 8 **You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**

- 10) **Growth in the Lord's mercy, grace, peace, and love through growth in knowing more God Himself and Jesus Christ, which, in turn, multiplies access to God's promises, and through which, nature divine, the virtues of the kingdom of God, and the very entrance to the kingdom of God are multiplied in the life of the one who comes to God and abides more and more in Christ:**

Jude 1: 1 **Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:**

2 Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

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:**

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

- 3 *as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,*
- 4 *by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*
- 5 *But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,*
- 6 *to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,*
- 7 *to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*
- 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.*
- 10 *Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;*
- 11 *for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*
- 12 *For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.*
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Through various ways and signaling gifts for the most diverse aspects of life, the Lord invites all those who have received His salvation also to start expanding the experiences with this salvation in their lives. And this, so that in everything they may be built on what is already available to them, which, again, is a way of inviting them to “grow in the salvation” that is provided to them from heaven through the perfect and incomparable love of God.

- 1 Corinthians 1: 4 *I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus,*
- 5 *that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge,*
- 6 *even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you,*
- 7 *so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
- 8 *who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

C3. Understanding the Lord's Work and the Christian's Participation in Growing in One's Salvation

By seen, in the previous chapter, the list of a part of the aspects in which a Christian is called to grow in the salvation granted to him or her by the Lord, it becomes evident or becomes undeniable, also in this way, that this salvation begins in the life of an individual at the moment in which one receives it and that it is a salvation that aims to reflect aspects of change already in the present life, and not only in the future time when this person is no longer living in the current world.

On the other hand, for some people, at first, the call for working out one's own salvation or growing in it may sound like an exhortation to carry out a series of works and tasks through which the Christian oneself would be fully responsible for producing one's growth.

Nevertheless, **when approaching the theme of Christian growth, it is vitally important to point out that no Christian can produce growth in itself or can carry out one's own edification by oneself.**

The growth or development of a Christian's life in God, or in the life given through heavenly salvation, is a work performed by the Lord, as we can see below:

*1 Corinthians 3: 6 **I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.***

*Colossians 2: 19(b) ... **the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.***

In yet another way, the Lord Jesus Christ taught us that the increase of one's life toward God, in God, or in God's salvation is, in large part, a mystery, exemplifying it also by a parable, according to the text that follows:

*Mark 4: 26 **And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how."***

The effective growth of a Christian in the salvation given to him or her by God is produced by the Lord, and there is no way for it to be understood in all respects. It is not possible to see exactly how all the facts of this increase take place.

A person's real growth in the various areas we saw in the previous chapter does not depend only on people but is dependent on God's action on their behalf.

That is, **if God does not grant actual spiritual growth of an individual, nothing that people will do can cause it to happen.**

If a person does not have the consent and the grace of God for one's growth in the newness of life in the Lord, it will be useless for an individual to make efforts and diligence in this direction, as this will be a fruitless effort.

As we intend to see further on, the Scriptures show us that every Christian is also equated with a building, a house, or sanctuary of the indwelling Spirit of the Lord, which is why the subject of growth or edification also prompts us to remember the text of the following Psalm:

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.

As one of the central aspects of His action in the universe, the Lord always wants to be involved in building the lives of people who believe in Him. Unfortunately, however, some people build their lives in vain, which happens because they do not accept the Lord as the primary builder.

At this point, therefore, there is a matter of order in the building, growth, or development of one's salvation, namely: God is not the co-worker and we who give the instructions for the Lord to build what we want. It is the opposite, the Lord is the builder, and we are the co-workers.

When Paul exhorts Christians to “**let each one take heed how one builds on it,**” according to the text that we will see later on, he is not saying for each individual to come up with a good building project for one's life and for each one to perform a good administration of this project. First, each person should see who the primary designer and builder of the house is. Every Christian should understand who is the one who edifies and who is the one who cooperates, being aware that the effective increase in the newness of life received from the heavenly kingdom belongs to the Lord. And only if the Lord is the main builder will the project be good, lasting, and profitable.

Only through Christ can a person understand and build one's life according to the salvation granted to him or her.

*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.*

So, repeating once more, what has been said above: If the Lord does not grant His grace for the building or increase of a person's life in the heavenly salvation, a Christian is unable to build anything according to God's will, no matter how hard the effort is or even if one claims to be building one's life in the name of the Lord.

Moreover, the Lord may even resist those who think they can develop their lives through their own efforts because they consider themselves more than is appropriate.

*James 4: 6 **But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."***

It is also worth highlighting here what has already been addressed on the theme regarding The Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

In this theme, the matter was addressed that the Kingdom of God does not come to a Christian outwardly, but it comes and acts in the heart of the person who receives it.

Thus, when the Scriptures refer to the building of one's life or its increase in the Lord's salvation, they, of course, are not referring primarily to material building and growth of outward goods, but to what is being built inwardly or in the inner part of each life, whose process is initiated by the Spirit of the Lord in the one who believes in God.

*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."***

*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.***

Thereby, **for an increase to be true and lasting in an individual's life, it must be carried out by God Himself.**

For a building to be steadfast and eternally profitable, it depends on having been built by the Lord Himself.

On the other hand, although God reserves for Himself the exact moment of growth and the way it occurs, God allows a Christian to see and understand parts of one's growth, as well as participating in part of what enables one's development in salvation to come to occur, as we can see in the text that we repeat below, plus a few more verses:

*1 Corinthians 3: 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.

So, in the last text above, we can observe that **although the effective increase of an individual is carried out only by God, there are several roles and works defined around one's growth concerning which a Christian can and should have participation.**

When using the figure of growth in his example above, Paul writes that some may plant, others may water, and that everyone should see how one builds, but always letting the fulfillment of growth to God.

Therefore, **when the Scriptures inform us that every Christian is called to work out one's own salvation, they are teaching us also in the sense that the Christian may consent to the action of God in one's life and may cooperate so that the Lord Himself may carry it out properly in this Christian's life.**

Philippians 2: 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

When the Scriptures call us to “*work out our salvation with fear and trembling,*” they are also calling Christians to be considerate and respectful of God and to always stand in a position that they allow God to work in their lives. And this, so that the increase is done by the Lord and not by the Christian oneself, because, after all, only God is able to effect His purpose in us and to accomplish it according to His good will.

If a Christian seeks to work out one's own salvation without due fear or respect for God, one may develop aspects that do not belong to true salvation and, consequently, build in vain.

Proverbs 28: 14 Happy is the man who is always reverent, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

Given this, a **central focus for a Christian regarding working out one's own salvation refers to him or her being aware of who is actually building one's life. It is for the Christian to be aware if it is the Lord who is edifying one's life indeed so that one does not stray from the one who gives the truly profitable and lasting increase.**

So, **planting and watering a life for the growth in the salvation granted by God is, above all, to cultivate fellowship and the fear of the Lord in the heart so that the soil, that is, the Christian, is exposed to the One who can grant the increase truly beneficial for the present, but above all also for the life that extends to eternity.**

Furthermore, in the development of salvation, or in terms of growing in it, it is necessary to be continually attentive not to incur in the inversion of life through God's grace, which leads to the performance of good works, to a life of works that wants to reach God's grace through these works.

The Lord Jesus Christ declared that the central work required of a person throughout one's life is *"to believe and keep believing in the Heavenly Father and in Him whom the Heavenly Father has revealed to the world as the provision of justification, Savior, and Eternal Lord."*

And once a Christian believes that one's primary work to be cultivated is *"the work of continually abiding in Christ so that Christ also abides abundantly in him or her,"* the Lord Jesus Himself promises that He will manifest more of heavenly salvation in this Christian, expressing this salvation in the life of this Christian also through fruits that through this individual are generated according to the will of the Lord.

*John 6: 29 **Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."***

*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.***

When a Christian abides in Christ (remains rooted in Him) and receives from Christ what the Lord offers or gives him or her (allows oneself to be watered by Christ and His instructions), what the Christian receives from the Lord also produces in him or her growth according to God's will.

Nevertheless, if a Christian does not perform the work of nourishing from the source of life that one has gained access to through heavenly salvation, no matter how many other works one performs in the world, one is no longer supplying oneself with what one needs for his or her increase to advance.

*John 15: 6 **If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.***

Therefore, when a Christian confuses one's role in building one's life and starts to think that all of one's growth is one's responsibility, one may begin to believe that one must do more and more works, thinking that through them, one will achieve the working out of one's own salvation, as if from oneself and one's works an individual could produce the newness of life.

When, for example, a person follows the instruction to drink water to quench one's thirst, one has cooperated so that the supply needed by one's body is extended to him or her. However, what indeed quenched one's thirst was not the person oneself, but the water he or she ingested.

Similarly, despite one's action having served as an instrument to receive what is given to him or her by the Lord, what a person receives from God is what indeed makes him or her grow and not, properly speaking, what one has done.

Thus, when a Christian wants to "take responsibility for one's growth" that only comes from God and begins to think that one's own works can nourish him or her, real and inward growth can become stagnant, as it no longer works by grace, but through human or fleshly effort.

Working out one's own salvation with trembling and fear of God is also to do it so that one is continually careful not to assume the edification, as well as not wanting to produce growth by human effort, an aspect which since the beginning of the Christian era has tried to fascinate, time after time, those who are already Christians, as exemplified below:

- 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."*
-

When a person moves away from the fear of God that brings one closer to fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, one can indeed come to think that it is possible to reach perfection through works, through the arm of the flesh, through their own strengths and disciplines. And this is a kind of fascination that many Christians have been involved with over the centuries repeatedly.

We reiterate here, then, that no person can truly build one's own life. No human being can produce genuine spiritual growth! No one but the Lord God can, by oneself or the help of others, actually work out heavenly salvation in one's own life or of others.

All real growth in life in God comes from God. And it is, therefore, up to Christians to keep themselves in the Lord in cooperation with God so that growth in their lives indeed takes place and becomes consolidated.

Thus, **the increase comes from God, but each person can cooperate so that the conditions for growth are favorable to him or her. And this is what a Christian needs to cultivate in the Lord.**

How God actually effects the increase is a mystery, and there is no way to know for sure everything how He does it, for He does it even when we are physically sleeping.

Nevertheless, **by abiding in the Lord or by the work called *abiding in Christ*, a Christian certainly will reap *one's development in the heavenly salvation* in the measure and time appropriately determined by God.**

Psalms 16: 7 ***I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel; My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.***

Philippians 1: 6 ***... being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.***

C4. The Foundation in the Heart that Sustains People in Their Growth in the Salvation Granted by the Lord

If we continue to consider the growth or development of salvation from the perspective of a building, as exemplified by Paul in the letter of 1 Corinthians, we may see that every building, to be steadily developed, needs a foundation that is even more robust and unshakable than the construction itself.

So, in parallel with the example of an edification, Paul teaches us that the primary seed to be used for the beginning of a plantation or building in the hearts of those who listen to the preaching of the Gospel is the very foundation that will sustain the whole growing or increase to be accomplished in these lives, as follows:

*1 Corinthians 3: 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 primary seed to be sown in a heart to sustain the increase that can come from the newness of life received through the salvation given by the Lord is the foundation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in this heart, for only what is built on this foundation will be counted as a growth accepted by the Lord for eternity.

Having the Lordship of Christ as the only foundation on which a person can grow must become the primary truth for the Christian concerning working out one's own salvation received from God. And this truth should continually be sanctified or in the first place in the heart of the one who longs to grow in the salvation provided for him or her by God, as the apostle Peter also instructs us in the following text:

*1 Peter 3: 14 **But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."***

*15 **But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.***

Therefore, **being able to live and walk under the condition of having Christ Jesus as Lord in life, and through a living relationship with Him, is the main deposit that God has placed in our lives for a good and profitable building in the salvation that the Gospel of the Lord gives us.**

Life under the Lordship of Christ in us is the fundamental ground for all growth in the Lord and whose deposit in us is so essential that the Lord still has given us His Spirit to help us keep it forever.

2 Timothy 1: 14 ***That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.***

Given this or because of the precious deposit of God in his heart, where Christ offered Himself to be the Lord of His life, Paul also said:

Philippians 3: 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.

How, then, could a Christian not give preeminence in everything in one's life, including concerning one's time, to the One who gave His own life to grant him or her deliverance, salvation, and the remission of sins to also give newness of eternal life in which this Christian is called to grow?

Hence, **Christ rescued us so that we no longer live dissociated from the direction and instruction of our Creator, but, or instead, so that we can live according to what He wants to instruct us so that in everything we may be built up in Him.**

2 Corinthians 5: 14 ***For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;***

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.

Colossians 1: 18 ***And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.***

19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

After a Christian learns that growth in salvation comes from the Lord and through fellowship with Him, it is invaluable for one to realize that it is in the very relationship with the Lord that one needs to grow first so that the other works in one's condition as a saved individual also work out according to the will of God and have a firm foundation to support them.

Growing in Christ and the knowledge of His glory will always be the main area for a Christian to grow in the salvation that God has granted, for the place that Christ occupies in a Christian's life and that the Christian occupies *in Christ* defines the entire process and flow of other aspects of one's growth, as seen in the previous chapter.

The working out of a Christian's salvation occurs according to the love of God, and the "first love" of a Christian should always be one's Lord, who gave Himself in love to redeem all people and who grants life according to the love of the heavenly kingdom.

Thus, growing in love in the knowledge of God is the firm, most effective, and quickest way for a Christian to build or work out one's own salvation. And from this foundation, one should never depart.

*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.*

1 John 4: 16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Ephesians 4: 15 But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ.

Finally, in this chapter, we reiterate once again that the primary seed that God deposits in a Christian's heart for him or her to grow in the salvation given by the heavenly kingdom is the Lordship of Christ in this Christian's life so that one too can be in Christ and grow in the love of the Lord.

*Colossians 1: 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*

C5. The Role of the Word or Instruction of the Lord in a Christian's Growth in the Received Salvation

Although the Scriptures explicitly state that it is the Lord who gives growth to a Christian and that one does not have access to all aspects of how God accomplishes this growth, the same Scriptures present some of the elements that are present in a significant portion of increasing in the salvation.

The Lord Jesus Christ told us that the *“kingdom of God is as if a man sowed the seed to the earth and after sleeping saw it germinated and grown,”* the man not knowing well how the whole process took place, knowing, however, that in the kingdom a part of the growth derives from the seed sown in the proper soil.

If the human being were fully responsible for the development of one's salvation, one could not even come to rest and sleep, for there are so many aspects that the Lord does while people sleep and rest. However, this does not prevent the Lord from showing us that part of what happens in the lives of Christians is due to the seeds that they receive in their lives.

Thus, there are attitudes of human beings that enable them to receive seeds from God, as well as allow these seeds to germinate and grow even if a person does not know everything that God moves so that the growth process may come to become accomplished.

In the previous chapters, as well as in the preceding themes of this same series, we addressed the point that shows us that the primary condition on the part of a Christian to grow in the life received through salvation is also associated with one's fellowship with the Lord. However, we emphasize here, again, that once this principle has been established, it also begins to become very significant to know part of the means through which the growth and development of a Christian start to occur from this fellowship with the Lord.

In this way, the growth in the fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the driving conditions for the development of salvation, but it is also through what occurs or is accomplished through this fellowship that an expressive part of the growth in the life of a Christian is granted.

Growing in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ is the primary aspect of Christian increase, but not the final aspect of the Christian growth process. Fellowship with the Lord is a central means for the improvement in other areas and other purposes of salvation that, in the first place, enables a person to draw near to the Lord with confidence.

Through fellowship with the Lord, a Christian can present one's supplications and prayers on behalf of one's growth and development in the salvation given to him or her. However, it is also through fellowship that the Lord Himself wants to deposit or sow His will in the life of the one who comes to Him for a closer relationship.

Through the apostle Paul, God instructs us that He can do infinitely more than we ask or think, according to His power that works in the life of a Christian, but also that there are several aspects that the Lord only accomplishes in the life of a Christian if one declares oneself willing that the Lord first awakens the seed of His heavenly will in one's heart.

There are several aspects of growth in one's salvation that result from the growth of specific seeds that the Lord offers Christians for them to receive and cultivate in a suitable soil to germinate and increase.

Therefore, through the growth in the fellowship with the Lord, the Lord also offers His instruction or word as a seed directed to those who long to receive it so that, through it, they receive even more of the increase given by the Lord.

So, although a Christian may not see everything that God does for one's growth, one can know that part of it occurs through receiving the word of God in one's heart, which is the main ground for which the Lord offers the word addressed to this Christian.

God makes the sun and the rain come on the good and the evil, those who fear Him and those who reject Him, because God gives many manifestations of His goodness to people in general. However, when the subject comes to refer to the development of the received salvation, there are words or seeds that God reserves to release only on the soils that come close to Him or, even if thrown on all soils, they only reach fruiting if the person perseveres in fellowship with the Lord.

Since it is God who gives seed and growth, He can also withhold the increase in soils that are not suitable for the fruiting of the seeds according to the purpose for which they were given.

God is not pleased with the way many people seek to draw close to Him or how they cultivate the words received from Him. And, therefore, He resists some, not granting them the precious seed or not granting the growth associated with some seeds, for many individuals do not approach the Lord with humility and the fear of the Lord.

*James 4: 6 **But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."***

*Psalms 51: 17 **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart, these, O God, You will not despise.***

Thus, for a person to know more deeply the will of God for one's life and to see this will fruitful and established, one also needs to be in a position of disposition to receive, understand, and carry out what one is called to welcome and carry out according to the will of the Lord.

*John 7: 17 **If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.***

In this way, **all the profitable increase of the Christian is bestowed by the Lord, but part of this growth is only achieved by a heart that also positions itself correctly towards the words or instructions of God.**

Working out one's own salvation with fear and trembling is also to have respect in the heart for the power of the word and instruction of the Lord, as well as fearing not to come to despise this word, for the acceptance or rejection of the word or teaching that the Lord gives to a person also defines whether the Lord will remain intensely manifesting Himself in that individual's life.

*Isaiah 66: 1 Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?
2 For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the LORD. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word."*

John 14: 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

Many Christians can be zealous in seeking to keep their hearts righteous before the Lord, in the sense that they are not opposed to believing that God is the provider of the salvation of their lives, and they may even be zealous regarding the position of no longer subjecting themselves to a life of sin as they did before knowing the Lord. However, this is not necessarily enough for growth in salvation.

Only the zeal of having a heart that does not want to submit to sin and darkness, however praiseworthy and noble this posture is, does not necessarily lead to the overall growth that the Lord wants to produce in the lives of those who have received His salvation.

What leads to growth in many aspects in the life of a Christian is the seed, it is the word or instruction of God sown by the Lord in the heart of the one who has received heavenly salvation and who remains in fellowship with the Lord so that it will sprout and bear fruit according to the will of God.

A soil may be plowed and cleared for planting, but if the good seeds are not sown on it, there will also be no production of good fruit in it, and there will be no growth in the areas that are designated to grow from the sown seeds.

Both good soil and good seed are mutually necessary for growth in many aspects of life in the Lord's salvation.

Thus, a Christian is not called to choose to care for the soil or to receive the seed but is called to have both aspects taken care of in one's life.

Therefore, **association with Christ, without opting to adhere to the instructions that He gives through His words, is not the covenant to which the Lord calls people through His Gospel.**

Mark 8: 38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

John 14: 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me."

Consequently, **properly receiving the word of God in the heart as a seed, or the attitude that one adopts concerning it, is also a factor that can be decisive in the Christian's growth in one's salvation, as well as in one's support in this salvation.**

James 1: 21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Although God is the One who grants growth in salvation, it is also by accepting the word of the Lord directed to a Christian that he or she signals to the Lord one's agreement so that the Lord Himself produces growth in one's life.

From the first narratives of the first four books of the Bible on the Gospel, as well as in the texts that came years later, we can see that the Living Word of God has always acted and acts in all creation and was sent to the world to be received to work in the life of every human being.

John 1: 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Hebrews 1: 1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He

had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The very coming of the Lord Jesus in the flesh unto the world was preceded by a declaration of the word of God, which was received like a seed in a humble heart to bear, in due time and by the presence of the Holy Spirit on this heart, the fruit that by it was announced, as shown below:

- Luke 1: 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.*
- 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.*
- 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.*
- 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."*
- 34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"*
- 35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*
- 36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.*
- 37 For with God nothing will be impossible."*
- 38 Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her."*
- 45 "Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."*
-

When encapsulated in the Lord's declarations and instructions, the word of God encompasses in it the complete commitment of God to provide what is needed to bring forth the fulfillment and growth of everything for which the Lord gave His word.

When Mary, who became the mother of Jesus on Earth, accepted the word of God and welcomed it into her heart, she had received the word associated with the Lord's commitment to accomplish all that the angel Gabriel had declared to her.

So, if a Christian does not expose oneself to fellowship with the Lord so that His word is manifested to one's heart or does not accept the seeds of God for one's life, one may be rejecting or despising elements that may be essential for one's growth and development in one's salvation in various areas of one's life, since the words of Christ are also spirit and life.

John 6: 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

Christians are not called to salvation just to be freed from the dominion of sin, death, and darkness, but so that there can be space in their lives for

another great part of salvation, which is to welcome, know, and experience God's will to the point where it is carried out in them and through their lives.

Because she voluntarily surrendered her heart to the Lord, Mary heard God's will, God's word, or the Lord's instruction for her life. And when she heard it, she said, "***Let it be to me according to your word.***"

Furthermore, as a seed that produces what is said when it is appropriately received and cultivated, the word of God also needs to be received with patience and meekness in the heart, for, in many situations, the appropriate time for its manifestation may encompass a more extended period.

So, in addition to having seen Christ come into the world through her, Mary continued to keep other words of the Lord with humbleness in her heart, serving her these words for growth and support in many other future moments of her life.

Luke 2: 16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.

18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Therefore, **when offered as seeds to a willing heart, God's words are precious and powerful to change lives and to produce God-given growth in these lives.**

Peter, for instance, could never make himself a fisher of men for their eternal salvation. However, he received the word by which the Lord Jesus Christ invited him to follow the Lord, resulting in the fact that the Lord Himself, later and at the appropriate time, granted growth to Peter so that he could advance from fisher of fishes to fisher of men, as Christ had promised if Peter followed the Lord.

Hence, one of the primary cooperations that a Christian can perform for God to operate in a broader way the growth in one's life is the type of soil one offers to God and the way one deals with the seeds that God sows in this soil, knowing that it is the Lord who provides the growth of the sown word if it is only watered with fellowship with Christ and following the Lord's instruction at each stage.

How many essential or vital aspects of life, then, are not wasted by those who despise or do not meekly welcome seeds that God so often offers them to be received into their lives?

Indeed, it is only God who can cause a seed of life to sprout and develop, but every Christian may welcome the seed with meekness and water the seed, with prayer before God, so that it may sprout and increase as beforehand announced by the Lord.

"Let it be to me according to your word" is an example of how every Christian should be standing before what the Creator God of Heaven and Earth utters as a rich and precious seed towards one's life!

Concluding this chapter, we highlight that we may see in the world that some people may even want God's words and try to cultivate them, but they often also want God's words to be fulfilled according to their desires. However, the word of God in the life of a Christian is fulfilled when He finds a heart that wants the seed to sprout and produce what is associated with the seed and for the purpose for which the seed was given.

God wants us to keep a close eye on what has actually been announced.

*2 Timothy 1: 13 Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.
14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.*

When a Christian keeps the good deposit received from the Lord, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in one's heart, and maintains the pattern of sound words as spoken by God, the seeds that have been designed to cooperate in the unfolding of one's salvation will sprout at the proper time for the good and the edification as a whole of this Christian.

The growth in the fellowship with Christ will teach the Christian that abiding in the Lord is a two-way road and not a one-way path in which only the Christian speaks with the Lord.

The fellowship with Christ is a way through which also, and perhaps above all, the Lord offers words or instructions to a Christian for one's growth, and whose effects could never be foreseen and much less achieved by the Christian's own efforts.

Thus, learning to remain silent before the Lord or wait on God to receive from Him life's instructions that lead and produce growth is also a way to work out one's own salvation.

*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.
18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.
19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;
20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*

C6. Take Heed How You Hear or Watch How You Hear

In the previous chapter, we addressed the matter that a significant portion of a person's growth in one's salvation occurs through the word of God implanted in the heart, for when the word or divine instruction is sown in a soil that receives and cultivates it properly, it also produces increase according to what it has been shared.

The word of God in a life aligned with the Lord's will is food and supply for growth and development, just as natural food is for the physical body.

Amos 8: 11 **"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD, "That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, But of hearing the words of the LORD."**

Matthew 4: 4 **But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"**

1 Timothy 4: 6 **If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.**

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.

Therefore, when a Christian offers one's heart as soil for the growth of the word of God in him or her, one offers oneself as a ground where God's will may come to sprout, grow, become established, and bear fruit in one's life, as well as for the benefit of others if this is the Lord's intent.

1 Corinthians 3: 9 **For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.**

A Christian is a fellow worker of God when one allows the Lord Himself to build and cultivate the soil of one's heart to, from this, see growth spring up in various aspects that lead this Christian to grow and be established in the Lord as a whole.

We remember and emphasize here that in addition to a person being able to receive the implantation of the word of God in one's life, one can also receive from the Lord the Heavenly Anointing to properly guard this word, that is, to receive the Holy Spirit who teaches him or her to properly relate also to the word of the Lord.

The Spirit of the Lord, bestowed to the heart by God to help those who receive Christ as the Lord, works in Christians, among other things, also concerning the word of God to:

- ⇒ 1) Guiding them to the truths of the eternal word available to them;
- ⇒ 2) Making them remember all that Christ said and says to them;
- ⇒ 3) Convincing them of sin, but also the word of God's righteousness and the word of victory concerning eternal judgment;
- ⇒ 4) Teaching them and announcing to them the things that are yet to come;
- ⇒ 5) Witnessing to them about the riches of the Glory of Christ;
- ⇒ 6) Teaching them to abide in Christ and that abiding in the Lord also encompasses abiding in His words.

And once God has already deposited His word in the heart of the Christian, the big question starts to be the Christian relationship with the received word, for a person, as already seen, may welcome with meekness the word implanted in one's heart or may resist and stifle it so that it does not produce the effects for which it was granted.

One of the central points of a Christian's cooperation with God is how one relates to God's word deposited in one's heart as a seed, what, in turn, leads us to the question about how, then, does this process of welcoming or rejecting the words of God that serve for the growth of an individual in one's salvation occur?

Considering that the word of the Lord is a central instrument in the process of an individual's growth in one's salvation, the relationship to it needs to be learned through the way God wants us to relate to it.

And a guideline mentioned several times in the Scriptures regarding receiving the word of God is related to the aspect of *“how a person hears or pays attention to the word of the Lord.”*

How *“the word of God is listened to”* is one of the most used topics in the Scriptures and one of the essential expressions to determine a good reception of the word of the Lord or rejection of the same word, as exemplified respectively below:

- Proverbs 2: 1 My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you,*
- 2 So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding;*
- 3 Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding,*
- 4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures;*
- 5 Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.*
- 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

Jeremiah 7: 26 **Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.**

The Scriptures expressly declare to us that God is willing to freely impart wisdom to those who ask Him. But how, then, will people receive and understand the heavenly wisdom if they do not incline their ears to God when the Lord wants to manifest it to them?

In another passage of the Scriptures, already seen above and which we repeat below, we see the Lord Jesus affirming that a person's own life also depends on the word spoken by the mouth of God that one receives, showing us how much the due attention to the word of the Lord is vital.

Matthew 4: 4 **But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"**

As we saw earlier, **God expresses His word or instructions by communicating it to people, also comparing it to a seed. Therefore, the way a person offers God a soil for the word to manifest itself as a seed in one's life is also related to the posture with which one "hears" the voice of God when the Lord speaks to him or her.**

In the Scriptures, repeatedly, we see the Lord urging people *to heed His voice*, announcing that He is constantly speaking to them, as exemplified below:

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."**

Hebrews 12: 25 **See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,
26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."**

Job 33: 13 **Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words.
14 For God may speak in one way, or in another, Yet man does not perceive it.
15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, When deep sleep falls upon men, While slumbering on their beds,
16 Then He opens the ears of men, And seals their instruction.
17 In order to turn man from his deed, And conceal pride from man,**

18 He keeps back his soul from the Pit, And his life from perishing by the sword.

As yet another example, in an account in the book of Acts, we find God speaking in various ways to a man who longed to know Him and who sought the Lord so that He might manifest Himself to him and all his house, as follows:

*Acts 10: 1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment,
2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.
3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"
4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.
5 Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter."*

*...
30 (more ahead) So Cornelius said to Peter, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,
31 and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God.
32 'Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.'
33 So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."*

Cornelius was a man attentive to the voice of God. So, first, Cornelius heard the Lord when He, through an angel, instructed him to call Peter. And afterward, he continued to listen attentively to God through what Peter announced to him from the Lord.

And the result of "hearing the Lord with due attention" was that Cornelius, and all who were in his house, received God's salvation and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon their lives.

We highlight here, then, that God does not have favorite people. However, in the world, there are people who receive with meekness and love the seeds of God and see them grow as they hear, keep, and follow God's instructions for their lives, and who, as a result of trusting in God's words and the growth granted to them, also enjoy the life that God has associated with the bestowed seeds.

When people welcome the words of God addressed to them by the Lord with meekness, they are led to grow on the path that God presents to them, which, in turn, leads to new stages of growth also by understanding and practicing new parts of the instructions of God, as we may see in the sequence of Cornelius' example presented above:

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.

36 The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ, He is Lord of all.

After Cornelius heard and accepted the Lord's instructions to call Peter, he came to hear about the word of God expressed through the Gospel and even received the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life to, subsequently, be continually instructed by the Lord in his life and throughout this whole Gospel.

Thus, **one of the ways the Lord uses to carry out the development of a Christian in one's salvation is teaching him or her through His Gospel and through what He speaks to this Christian directly through the Holy Spirit, showing us that increase is also granted by the understanding that the Lord gives to a person about the fundamental aspects of His will.**

Besides, the words that God speaks to those who believe in Him are like seeds that produce the will of the Lord in the hearts of the hearers who receive them because the words of the Lord spoken to the heart may also generate a profound transformation of understanding, and which, in turn, may cause a remarkable transformation in the lives of the individuals who receive them.

Romans 12: 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.***

Therefore, as already seen, there are many expressions and ways through which the word of God can work in the lives of those who receive it with meekness and love.

Nevertheless, in the next steps in this chapter, and to return to its central theme, we would like to focus a little more on an aspect that the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to His first disciples when He also taught us that not every word, when cast as seed, comes to bear fruit.

In this way, **when the Lord Jesus compared the process of God talking to people with the practice of a sower when he sows seeds in the ground, He also showed that just as some seeds do not come to fruition because of the soil in which they are sown, so also the word of God does not grow in the adequate measure in soils that do not welcome it or do not cultivate it properly.**

The texts that narrate the comparison mentioned in the previous paragraph, in turn, can be found in three books of the so-called four Gospels. The Scriptures describe them in Matthew 13: 1 to 23; Mark 4: 1 to 25 (including the text about the lamp), and Luke 8: 1 to 18 (also including the part of the text about the lamp), and of which we will only present one of them below, even though we consider it to be very significant if the reader would also read the other two at this point in one's Bible if one is willing and able to do so at this moment.

Below, then, follows the text according to Luke's narrative:

- Luke 8: 4 And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable:*
- 5 "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it.*
- 6 Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture.*
- 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.*
- 8 But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*
- 9 Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?"*
- 10 And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.'*
- 11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.*
- 12 "Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*
- 13 But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.*
- 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.*
- 16 No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light.*
- 17 For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.*
- 18 Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."*
-

In the narratives cited in the paragraphs above, we understand that it is significant to note that the Lord speaks (1) about the sowing process, (2) about the types of soil, and (3) about the seed to be sown or the seed that the sower sowed.

Nevertheless, since many printed Bibles present the division of titles of the parables, placed by those responsible for their printing and which are not indeed an integral part of the Scriptures, it might be that an essential part of the Lord's instruction on the parable of the sower goes unnoticed, for in some cases it is found after the reference the Lord makes to the use of the lamp that He mentioned.

Thus, although some editors divide the text of the parable and the candle with different titles between them, this parable of the sower is entirely linked to a highly relevant posture of those to whom the seed is addressed and which is mentioned at the very end of the report of the parable, namely: ***The way they hear the word that has been announced to them or shared with them.***

If we do not separate the reference to the lamp from the parable of the sower, at the end of the narratives of Mark and Luke respectively, we can find the descriptions that show that they are entirely associated with the parable of the sower and its explanation given by the Lord, as follows:

Mark 4: 24 ***Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given."***

Luke 8: 18 ***"Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."***

Both in the parable of the sower and the narrative of the lamp, the Lord Jesus Christ warns His disciples to ***"SEE OR WATCH ATTENTIVELY TO HOW THEY HEAR!"***

And it is very remarkable to pay attention to this combination of human functions, namely: ***"To watch how oneself is hearing!"***

Therefore, **looking at the parable of the sower in general, we can see that the whole effect of sowing approached in this same parable is about the observations that the Lord Jesus Christ makes about "how people hear or take heed of His word."**

In the narrative of the lamp, when the Lord speaks of the light that a lamp provides and concludes about ***"an individual watching how oneself is hearing,"*** He did not stop talking about the parable of the sower, but continued talking about the essence of people's attitude towards the sown word.

Mark 4: 21 ***Also He said to them, "Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand?"***

22 ***For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.***

23 ***If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."***

When the Lord says that people need the light of the lamp, He may also be referring to the fact that they need light to ***"see how they themselves are hearing."***

And yet, **in the account of the parable of the sower, the Lord Jesus shows us the central or the crucial position of this specific parable regarding all other parables**, as follows:

*Mark 4: 13 **And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"***

The impression we get from repeatedly observing the parable of the sower is that its understanding is indeed a precondition for understanding all the other parables, making it even more essential and showing why the Lord also emphasized so much the warning “**take heed of how you hear!**”

In the narrative of the parable in reference mentioned in the Gospel of Mark, the Lord emphasizes that people should “**take heed of what they hear or of that what they hear.**”

Therefore, **it is certain that the Lord wants all Christians to know God's will for their lives. However, if a person “does not see how he or she oneself hears,” no matter how often the Lord declares His word to one's heart, one might not attain the purpose associated with the seed because one does not allow the seed to reach sprout in such a way that it bears fruit in one's own life.**

So, “**to see themselves concerning how they are hearing**” or “**to take heed of how they themselves are hearing**” encompasses people learning to see honestly and frankly what the posture they adopt is like when the Lord addresses His word to them.

And, in turn, **properly hearing the word of the Lord is always associated with the willingness to want to live and walk according to the will of God manifested through His instruction.**

*Matthew 13: 15 **For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.***
 16 **But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.**

*John 7: 17 **If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine (or teaching), whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.***

The willingness of heart and love for the Lord's truth to live, walk, and persevere in His will is like having eyes that allow a person to receive and see the cultivation of the word of God in one's life until the time appointed by the Heavenly Father for it to bear fruit according to the purpose for which it was assigned.

God's salvation is offered to people always and only by the Lord's grace. However, each person needs to want to receive it because its rejection also implies the rejection of what is contained in it, as occurred to the young man who heard the Lord's instruction addressed to him but did not receive it and thus ended up depriving himself to continue in the closer presence of Christ.

Matthew 19: 22 **But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.**

And similar to the offer of eternal salvation, the development of this salvation is also offered by grace. And each person, likewise, needs to want to receive the words provided by the Lord to walk and grow according to the purpose of this same salvation.

James 1: 25 **But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**

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.**

No work that a person does, even if one calls it “Christian,” can compensate for the resistance to wanting to hear and follow the guidance of the will spoken by the Lord. No human effort or sacrifice can compensate the opposition to the will of God revealed by the Lord through His instructions and words to a person’s life.

The Lord sharply warned many of those who said that, in “His Name,” they did many works, but who, at the same time, turned away from actually listening to and fulfilling God’s will for their lives. (According to Matthew 7)

If a person rejects God’s word, one also resists the fulfillment of God’s will in one’s life, for one opposes the seed in which the process for fulfilling this will is embedded.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, the fulfillment of God's will in a person's life, in different situations, is also associated with adequately receiving and persevering in the word of God for that person.

If a person accepts the word of God, one implicitly also welcomes the Lord's commitment to bring His will or promises to complete fulfillment.

Jeremiah 1: 12 **Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word."**

Thus, expanding the concept of “*hearing the word of God*,” the Lord Jesus Christ, in the parable of the sower, still exposes the existence of four types of soils, but which actually express four positions of hearts, four personal postures before the will of God, four attitudes on how to hear the word of God. And it is concerning them that Christ exhorts every individual about the “***take heed of how you hear.***”

Let us see, then, once again, the four soils mentioned by the Lord and what He associated with the symbology and the name referred to each one of them, as follows:

The 1st soil is the one referred to as The Wayside, described as follows:

Matthew 13: 19 ***When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.***

Mark 4: 15 ***And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.***

Luke 8: 11 ***Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.***
12 ***Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.***

The 2nd Soil is the one referred to as Stony Places or Rocky Grounds, described as follows:

Matthew 13: 20 ***But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;***
21 ***yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.***

Mark 4: 16 ***These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness;***
17 ***and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.***

Luke 8: 13 ***But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.***

The 3rd Soil is referred to as the one Among the Thorns, in turn, described as follows:

Matthew 13: 22 **Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.**

Mark 4: 18 **Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word,
19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.**

Luke 8: 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.**

And, finally, the 4th Soil is the one that is called a Good Ground, described as follows:

Matthew 13: 23 **But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.**

Mark 4: 20 **But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.**

Luke 8: 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.**

Looking, then, at the texts exposed above once more, we may observe that “**SEEING how one hears the will of God**” is directly associated with the positioning that is in the heart of the one to whom the word, as a seed, is addressed, showing that the word of God does not sprout in all hearts or all lives, or even if it does, it does not bear permanent fruit in every heart or every person.

So, **“seeing oneself how one hears”** is to have a personal awareness of how one's own heart is positioned to hear the word of the Lord and how it relates to His instruction after it is sown in the heart.

The texts of the Bible declare that the word of God is alive and effective, and that it is powerful to separate even soul and spirit. However, if anyone listens to God's instruction with contempt, this word finds no ground ready for the operation of its power in this individual.

In this way, “taking heed of how one oneself hears” regarding the first soil of the parable of the sower, for example, is determined by the situation in which an individual hears in such a way that one “does not even get to the point of understanding” what was said.

Matthew 13: 19 **When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.**

And, in turn, *the lack of personal understanding* of whether one oneself is or not in the condition of the first kind of soil may be associated with some factors that are also exposed in other texts, as follows:

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.
5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.
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.

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.

One of the first and most striking factors that compromise the understanding of the word of God is unbelief, which even allows the devil to act so that a person does not even come to know the light of Christ to **“SEE HOW HE OR SHE ONESELF HEARS,”** because Christ is the light that shines out of darkness and illuminates for the knowledge of the glory of God, which, in turn, allows an individual to know also the glory of what the truth and the will of the Lord are like. (A subject addressed extensively under the theme entitled The Gospel of The Glory of God and The Glory of Christ).

The Lord Jesus told us that He Himself is the WAY!

Thus, it is interesting to note that those who are at the wayside, on the verge of the way, are those who may be very close to knowing Christ, but in whom the word has no penetration, not even the slightest, because they are hardened towards God and Christ in their hearts.

An individual can read the Bible and hear the Scriptures preached, but if one is not willing to see the person of Christ as the Lord of one's life, one keeps away from the light that can make him or her understand the Scriptures to know what the will of the Lord indeed is and that He, through His word, wants to manifest to one's heart.

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."

A person by the wayside is very close to the way, but not precisely on the way and does not understand or reject the idea that the WAY is the person of Jesus Christ as the Eternal Lord of one's life, and with whom one could have a living, personal, and direct relationship.

As an apostle of Christ, Paul declares that his focus was "PREACHING CHRIST AS THE LORD" for the enlightenment of hearts. And this, so that people could reach the understanding coming from God for their lives and so that they would not be subject only to the knowledge according to the creation or the natural man, therefore saying:

Ephesians 5: 14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

Yet another factor that blocks the understanding of the word of God is the lack of willingness to fulfill God's will, as is implied in the text below and which we have already mentioned several times above:

John 7: 17 If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.

As already approached before, **hearing God's word not willingly is a factor that inhibits understanding, which, in turn, hardens or inhibits the possibility of believing His word.**

A person can be so close to the word of God, hear it, but "see" absolutely nothing of its development in one's life by not giving the slightest space for this word to establish itself and take root in one's heart.

Even those who are already Christians need to be careful not to become unduly accommodated concerning the salvation received because they think it refers to a unique act of the past in their lives and not a condition in which they are called to persevere and grow.

The Christian who is not attentive to the call to growth in salvation may be led to think that once one has experienced salvation in the past, one no longer needs new instructions from God in one's life and, thus, stopping to pay attention to wanting to understand the word of God concerning the different areas of one's life each new day.

The ground by the wayside may also be the repetitive hearer of the word, but who does not have a heart willing to understand and indeed practice the word one hears. It can be the passive listener who merely hears what one is told, but because one ignores what one receives, one does not see the fruits, for one does not understand or does not strive to understand what the Lord is saying.

There are listeners of the word of God who begin to live from the past, rules, routines, and rituals that they have become accustomed to practicing, but with a heart distant from the Lord and a renewed meditation on His word, thus leaving aside the search for a continuous and growing understanding of God's will for their lives.

Because of all this, the Lord says: ***“Take heed of how you hear!”***

- Hebrews 6: 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.*
-

Next, after seeing some points on the first ground and moving a little further to observe in more detail the second soil, the stony one, we can see that this is the one that refers, among others, to the individual who is very concerned about what people will say and do if one positions oneself according to God's will, despite welcoming it at the beginning.

The second ground is a heart more willing than the ground by the wayside, and that is willing to hear and receive the will of God. However, the stones in one's path, the rocks in one's heart, and one's relationships with other people prevent this individual from following the will of the Lord, and one soon gives up on persevering in His word.

The second soil is a heart that wants God's will, but as long as it does not cause the hearer any trouble with other people or with the circumstances of life.

- 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.*

2 Timothy 3: 12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

The stony ground represents the listeners who want the benefits of the word of the Kingdom of God but do not want the new positioning of what the word will produce in their hearts, for this will reflect in their external actions that may lead them to have oppositions because of positioning themselves on behalf of the will of God.

The stony-hearted listener does not want the outward and public exposition of the changes the word of God may cause in him or her, and one begins to turn away from the growth of the word of God in one's life, but this is not for one's own good.

So, also concerning this point: *“Take heed of how you hear!”*

The third soil represents the listeners whose hearts receive the word of God and who remain in it until they begin to see it sprout and grow even vigorously, but who, at the same time, allow their hearts to be overloaded with the things of life in the world and from which they do not want to get rid of or turn away.

The world and what is in it have a higher value and space than they should have in the listener's heart of the third ground. And for this reason, this type of listener also allows the sprouting and increase of aspects in one's heart that oppose the growth of God's will for one's life.

The listener aligned with the third ground is the one who hears the word of God, rejoices with it, appreciates the Lord's instruction, wants to see it grow in one's life, but does not place it as the most significant aspect in one's life, nor does one attach a value to it to such an extent that some of the things that are opposed to this word are even removed or taken out of one's life.

Among other things, if the listeners of the third soil *“saw how they themselves hear,”* they would see that they are the ones who even accept a certain degree of opposition and resistance for following the will of God, but that they are also those who want to reconcile or mix the will of God with aspects of the world that cannot be harmonized with the purposes of heaven.

The listener of the third ground, for a time, even gives space in one's heart to the word of God, is sympathetic to it, and even follows a part of it or follows it for a considerable period. However, when this word puts this listener in front of choices where one needs to choose between the will of God and some will of one's flesh, in situations where one needs to give up things to walk in faithfulness to God, the concerns about worldly things or the attraction to them prevail and surpasses the will of God for one's life.

The hearer compared to the third soil wants to cultivate, at the same time, the word of God that leads him or her to the Lord's will and that which stifles the will of God in one's life and separates an individual from the divine purpose.

Therefore, it is crucial to know how to relate to God, but also the things of the world:

2 Corinthians 1: 12 For our boasting (or glorying) is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.

*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.
5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?
6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*

*Matthew 6: 19 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;
20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.
21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

The heart that yearns for God primarily or only for its material prosperity, and to the detriment of the inner and healthy prosperity of its soul and spirit, opens itself up to a wide possibility of the sowing of thorns in one's life.

Proverbs 22: 5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; He who guards his soul will be far from them.

And the Lord Jesus Christ defines very explicitly which are the thorns that multiply in the way of those who do not have Him, the heavenly salvation, and His word as the greater good of their lives.

The thorns mentioned by the Lord Jesus Christ are not some kind of obscure and unidentifiable things that grow in the heart, but they are well defined and recognizable before the Lord.

As Christ Himself describes them, the thorns and their action are expressed at least as follows:

- ⇒ 1) *The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches which choke the word, and one becomes unfruitful;*

- ⇒ 2) **The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things, which entering choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful;**
- ⇒ 3) **Cares, riches, and pleasures of life; and bring no fruit to maturity.**

The thorns, also symbolized in the crown of thorns that people placed on the head of the Lord Jesus Christ in the process of His crucifixion, may represent thoughts that aim to reach the mind or the heart, that may increase in their action, and that may take space to the point that the words that were sown by God lose their value or their place of action in an individual.

The thorns work so that the seeds of God's will in a person's heart are choked or stifled so that they become unable to reach their fruitful maturity. They seek to impose a lack of space, freedom, and light to impede the advancement of the word granted by the Lord to an individual.

Anyone who has ever tried to take care of some planting in a physical area knows that thorns just get into the soil, take over the ground, and choke the good seeds if they are not directly and continually resisted and removed.

God does not call people to try to mix what He gives them with what fights against the Lord's will for an individual.

*James 1: 7 **For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;**
8 **he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.***

So, also for this reason: ***“Take heed, therefore, how you hear!”***

Continuing further, **when the Lord Jesus is announcing the parable of the sower, we can see that He is not rebuking the disciples for going through the temptations mentioned in the parable, but He is guiding them to “look” at these situations with sobriety, discernment, and understanding so that they may continue “seeing how they hear” to continue in the will of the Lord and abide in God eternally, because:**

*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.**
17 **And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.***

When the Lord Jesus warns us about the essential factors for life in the heavenly salvation, it is to give us the understanding of why He does it, as it is also through the knowledge of what He instructs us that we begin to have amplified the possibility of inclining our hearts towards His will. (A subject addressed more extensively in the theme on The Law of Understanding).

So, once again: “**Watch, therefore, how you hear!**”

Matthew 6: 22 **The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.**
23 **But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!**

When a person who loves the Lord sees a thorn trying to sprout and grow in one's life, one can ask the Lord to help him or her pluck it out, and one can do this by repenting and confessing the act of harboring something not beneficial or appropriate.

1 John 1: 9 **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Proverbs 28: 13 **He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.**

In this way, it is not because a person has hardened one's heart or has given way to stones and thorns within it that one cannot return to offer good soil to the Lord. However, one needs to recognize one's condition and ask for the Lord's help so that a transformation in one's life may happen, a change that only the Lord's work can produce in one's heart through faith in Christ Jesus.

The word of God is mighty to produce what is contained in it, even if it is bestowed as a seed. However, presenting good soil is the means of cooperation with God by the person who (1) wants this will, who (2) wants to understand the heavenly will, who (3) perseveres in this will despite contrary opinions and actions, and who (4), with the help of the Lord, abstains oneself from the thorny propositions.

Exposing the last paragraph in other words, let us look at the following Scripture text one more time:

James 1: 21 **Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**

Part of the thorns described in the parable of the sower may even have the appearance of something pleasant. However, thorns are always vile because when they gain space in the heart, they aim to choke the good seed of God that produces salvation and the increase in this salvation.

And unfortunately, if a Christian does not keep attentive to the Lord, it is possible for one to give in to the thorns to the point of exchanging the growth and fruitfulness of the good seed of God for the growth and establishment of thorns in one's life, as exemplified also in the texts below:

*2 Timothy 4: 10 **For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica; Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.***

*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.***

Therefore, the Lord says:

⇒ ***“Take heed how you hear!”***

⇒ ***“See or watch how you hear!”***

And, finally, in the words of the Lord Jesus regarding the parable of the sower, we find the description of the fourth ground, the GOOD SOIL, which, in turn, expresses the listener or the heart that:

- 1) **Hears and understands the word;**
- 2) **Hears the word and welcomes it;**
- 3) **Hears the word and keeps it, with perseverance, in a good and noble heart.**

Let us see below, then, two texts already mentioned above:

*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.***

*Proverbs 2: 1 **My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you,***

*2 **So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding;***

- 3 Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding,**
4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures;
5 Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.
-

Although the growth of a Christian is something belonging to God, when we see the parable of the sower, we can see that the Lord Jesus teaches us that, concerning the word of God in a person's heart, the conditions for its fruitfulness to occur or not is also associated with the posture of the listener of His word.

The seed of God is always sufficient and powerful to sprout, grow, and produce its fruit. However, it may not prosper when, on the part of the one who receives it, it is received with resistance to what it came to grant.

In the sense explained in these last paragraphs, **the growth in salvation can also be directly linked to the type of ground offered to God when the Lord pronounces His will. And the quality of this soil, in turn, is directly associated with the posture in the heart that a person adopts when hearing the word of God addressed to him or her.**

For someone who has not yet had access to the word that instructs him about Christ, ignorance about God's salvation is not a condition for attributing guilt to this person. However, wanting to remain in ignorance when one already has the opportunity to understand the will of God regarding the Lordship of Christ Jesus is to expose the heart to the risk of hardening or to render it over so that it more and more will turn to be a ground that gives space to thorns, stones, and, finally, comes to incur in the characteristics of the soil by the wayside.

The Lord Jesus Christ renews the heart of those who ask Him for this, and the Lord purifies the heart of those who want to be clean. Christ is the Eternal High Priest according to the Order of Melchizedek, powerful to save and purify all who believe in Him. However, for Christ to do it, it also is necessary that people come to God through Him and receive the instructions He gives them to work widely in their lives.

- Hebrews 7: 25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**
- 26 For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;**
- 27 who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.**
- 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.**
-

It is necessary for us to hear knowing that the way God's will is produced in us also involves having a good ground, not hardened by unbelief and contempt for the word of the Lord, free from stones, and free from thorns. On the other hand, we must also be aware that the good soil is produced in us by the Lord Jesus Christ when we abide in Him and follow what He instructs us to follow and do.

In some moments, the Lord purifies us; in others, the Lord makes seeds sprout in us so that they bear fruit in all kinds of good works; for this, *He is the one who is all and in all.*

When the Lord Jesus promises something to a Christian, that person often might want to see it fulfilled immediately. However, when the Christian receives the word with meekness, according to the text mentioned earlier, the Lord Himself may work in the person to first prepare the ground so that, in due time, the seed may sprout and bear its fruit.

Thus, ***“taking heed how one oneself is hearing”*** also encompasses a person learning to see with what disposition of heart one presents oneself to the Lord to receive His word, as well as being attentive to how the Lord helps him or her to prepare one's heart to have the proper disposition to receive the sowing bestowed from the heavenly kingdom.

*Psalms 139: 1 O LORD, You have searched me and known me.
 2 You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.
 3 You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways.
 ...
 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.*

The word of God is always good and perfect, which is also true when it is offered as a seed. And when the divine word finds a willing heart to receive it for the purpose for which it is designated, the Lord effectively fulfills both the will for its fulfillment and the realization of its fulfillment, generating growth in every process of sowing and harvesting that takes place in the lives of those who persevere in the Lord.

*Philippians 2: 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;
 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

C7. Growth in Faith Comes by Hearing and Hearing Through the Word of God

Continuing on the principle in which we saw that, to a large extent, the development of a Christian's salvation takes place through the words of God that one receives in one's heart and how one keeps the state of the ground during the growth of this word, and also that one of the central aspects of the relationship with God's instructions is closely associated with how a person "hears the word addressed to him or her," we believe it is relevant to still go deeper into this matter of how a Christian can "hear the word of the Lord" or how one can "take heed how one hears."

When a person receives the understanding of the crucial condition of "hearing the word of God well" and of the power of the Lord that can work for one's growth from a seed sown in one's heart, one should also learn to listen appropriately to "not to open" one's heart to the promises that "are not" in fact of God.

What we intend to consider in this chapter aims, then, to complement the previous chapter on "*take heed how you hear*," but, on the other hand, we yet aim at approaching some different aspects and angles on the theme of receiving the word of God and, through it, also achieve growth in the salvation given by the Lord.

Bearing in mind the parable of the sower, we can realize that the aspect of "*take heed how you hear*" is primarily related to the care a person should have with one's heart to properly receive and cultivate the good and the perfect seed that from God is sown in one's life. However, in this chapter, we would also like to expose some considerations about the investigation of the seeds offered in general to a Christian and the following up closer of those that come from the Lord indeed.

In other words, **for the Christian to remain in the growth that comes from God and not depart from it, it is essential that one also learns to hear the "voice of the Lord" properly and, at the same time, learns to distinguish the "voice that is not of God," since there are several voices that address the Christian while one is still in the world, although a Christian is no longer of the world,** as exemplified below:

- John 10: 1 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*
- 2 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*
- 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*
- 4 And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.*
- 5 Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.*

The expression *to know*, mentioned in the text above, is based on the idea of *perceiving with the eyes*, making us return to the need to be attentive to "*watching what is heard*" also in the sense of ascertaining or checking what is being said or presented.

Thus, **an attentive follower of Christ**, exemplified above as a sheep, **is one who “searches with one's eyes or with a proper light” the words one hears always to discern and separate those that come from the good Shepherd and those that come from strangers.**

God is not opposed to a Christian taking a careful look at what He says to him to her. On the contrary, the Lord sees this attitude as a noble action when it is performed by His children to watch, with sobriety and discernment, what is proposed to them.

*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.***

The action of judging all the things that are proposed to a Christian, in the sense of discerning what does or does not come from God, is an integral part of a healthy Christian life, as we approached in more detail in the theme on The Law of Understanding already mentioned above.

Even this material on the theme Work Out Your Own Salvation, which the reader is reading right now, should be examined by him or her and checked with God and His Scriptures to see if it is in harmony with the Gospel of the Lord. This practice is prudent, healthy, and noble before God.

Those named by the Lord Jesus as “strangers,” when they utter their propositions to others, do not want them to be examined by those to whom they are directed, as they know that they will not endure the “eyes of a good examination” or “the examination of good eyes,” and, consequently, will not be recognized and accepted by those who verify them with God.

Yet another way to verify the trustworthiness of a seed before keeping it and cultivating it in the heart, also already exposed in another subject preceding this one, **is the Christian's growth in knowledge of the word of righteousness, as this serves as solid food to exercise the faculties of discernment not only of good but also of evil.**

*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.***

Without knowing the basic and essential details of the Kingdom of God and without growing in them, especially in one of its first aspects, which is the Righteousness of God or the Word of Righteousness, the Christian is like a babe or infant subject to the risk of being carried around by every wind of doctrine, by the wiles and subtleties of people who try to mislead others in their lives. (A subject extensively addressed in the theme about The Gospel of God's Righteousness, The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, and Another Gospel or A Different Gospel).

As presented in the Scriptures, knowledge of the main aspects of the Gospel of the Lord is security for the Christian to know how to refute the propositions contrary to this Gospel, as well as knowing how to refute the propositions that present themselves as the Gospel of God but which go further and present in a distorted way what the Lord has already revealed to human beings about this Gospel.

Galatians 1: 8 ***But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.***

Through what is presented to us in His Scriptures, the Lord established firm parameters or references so that a Christian can discern by the Spirit of God what is or is not pertinent to His Gospel, as well as what is or is not due to a Christian to adopt in one's daily living and walking in the world.

Just as an emphasis on the need for the Christian to keep in conformity with the Spirit of the Lord and the Scriptures that teach him or her about the Christian life, and before we proceed in this chapter, we repeat below once again some texts that affirm this sublime and irrevocable condition of these Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 15: 1 ***Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.***

2 Timothy 1: 13 ***Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.***

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.***

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?

God has placed a written reference of His Gospel in the world. In particular ways, God called several people to preach and record it so that in the centuries to come, together with the continuous action of the Spirit of the Lord, these records would serve and continue to serve as a standard and reference for the discernment of what proceeds and what does not proceed from God to the life of a Christian.

On the other hand, as we have already mentioned in previous chapters, although a Christian should firmly bear in mind that the Scriptures are incalculably valuable and that Christ will not lead a child of God into what opposes what God Himself, through the Holy Spirit, inspired people to write, the instructions that Christ proposes to give to a Christian are alive and aim to cover wisdom and direction in all areas of this Christian's life, there no being a way that all of them could be recorded in detail in written texts.

Therefore, when mention is made that the Lord speaks or communicates in a lively way with those who through Christ have become children of God, there are people who insist on claiming, under the pretext of protecting themselves against false words, that the Lord, in the present day, only speaks to His children through the Scriptures, denying that the Lord speaks freely to His children in line with the Scriptures.

To say that the Lord only speaks to His children through the Scriptures, and that He does not speak to them individually and personally, is not only not a solution against the words of strangers' voices, but it also runs counter to the whole proposition of God to guide, through the Holy Spirit, those who are His through salvation in Christ.

Christians believing that the formal words of God to humankind are already recorded and sealed is correct, for there is no provision in the Scriptures for other writings and teachings with the same weight and value as the Scriptures. However, even this does not mean that God will not communicate personally or directly with each of His children.

The Lord Jesus Christ, and those whom He called at the beginning as apostles and preachers, recorded the formal words that Christians need and in which they are called to believe with conviction and peace that they are the complete set, until the end of time on Earth, of the so-called Scriptures. However, in none of the texts of the Bible do we find a revocation of God's option to speak freely, directly, or personally to people.

God has placed in us, those who believe in Christ, His Holy Spirit who guides His children in all areas of their lives and testifies directly in the heart of each child of their condition before God, as also mentioned in the following text:

Romans 8: 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

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."

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Already on several times, in the themes cited above, we have mentioned that God guides people through His Holy Spirit in the most diverse situations according to His word, but not only by the written word, for how the psalmist could pray for the Lord to probe his heart and show him specifically if there was any evil way in him concerning which he should repent or from it turn away?

Even if a person might memorize the whole Scriptures, one will still need God's guidance to apply these Scriptures in the different situations and the specific moments of one's life.

Although the Scriptures instruct the fundamental aspects about what is consistent with God's will and what does not match the Lord's will, they do not define whether a person should leave the job "x" to go to the job "y," or if a Christian should move from the city "a" to the town "b," aspects that the Christian absolutely may ask directly to the Lord to instruct and guide him or her.

The Lord Jesus Himself declared that all people are called to present all their anxieties before Him because He cares for all those who are His and who come to Him, just as the Scriptures also teach that people who need wisdom may ask for it to the Lord, who, in turn, is willing to answer them liberally or without reproach in the most varied matters in which they need heavenly wisdom.

In yet another text, we see that the apostle Paul says that a Christian cannot even think for oneself according to the will of God if this is not granted to him or her by God, declaring that all the sufficiency of a Christian comes from the Lord including to think according to the will of God and even more to have the wisdom and heavenly strength to carry it out.

Now, if God can give strength and virtue in a living and personal way to a Christian to carry out the heavenly will, would He be limited to communicating personally with those He loves and has as His children?

If God were restricted to speaking to people in the world only through the Scriptures, instead of communicating freely with them, how would the text of the following statement made by the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah be valid?

Jeremiah 33: 3 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

And if God spoke with the prophets of antiquity, with Abraham, David, Moses, and so many others before the revelation of Christ to the world, how much more will He not speak to the heart of His children after Christ was widely revealed to the people of the Earth?

***Hebrews 1: 1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.***

Thus, to teach or declare that God only speaks to people in the present day through the Scriptures, rather than freely and in line with the Scriptures, is also to propagate a terrible, cruel, and deceitful teaching intended to mislead them concerning hearing what the Lord has to teach and guide each individual.

Many of those who claim that God does not speak directly or personally to His children do so because they are subject to what the Scriptures call the “*spirit of bondage*,” “*life under the law that frightens*,” and the “*letter that kills*,” and who yet, through their fanciful propositions or ostentatious institutions, aim to deceive or entangle many others instead of announcing them the Gospel of Peace and the fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and, through Him, with the Heavenly Father.

Those who claim that God does not personally reach out to His children in the world contradict many, many texts of the Scriptures that they claim to be the only current way in which God speaks to people, as shown in some more examples below:

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.***

32 ***So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.***

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."***

16 ***The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.***

...

14 ***For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.***

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 14: 6 ***Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."***

1 Corinthians 1: 9 ***God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.***

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.**

Because they do not believe in God or think that the Eternal Creator cannot actually communicate personally and clearly with a human being, there are still other individuals who claim that God does not really speak to people or that they cannot indeed know the purpose of the Lord for their lives, not realizing, however, that they are the ones who do not know the Spirit of the Lord and that it is not God who cannot speak to people in the present world.

And as for this last point, we present or repeat, then, below the following texts of the Scriptures:

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.**

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.**

Job 33: 14 **For God may speak in one way, or in another, Yet man does not perceive it.**

15 **In a dream, in a vision of the night, When deep sleep falls upon men, While slumbering on their beds,**

16 **Then He opens the ears of men, And seals their instruction.**

17 **In order to turn man from his deed, And conceal pride from man,
18 He keeps back his soul from the Pit, And his life from perishing by the sword.**

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.**

7 **For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;**

8 **he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**

By not turning to God to have the eyes of understanding enlightened by Christ, many remain subject to ignorance about the possible personal relationship with the Lord and still elaborate the most diverse scenarios and arguments that seek to prevent that also others do not hear the Gospel and do not come to know their Creator personally.

In the book of Hebrews, when He recalled His own prophecies about the New Covenant available in Christ Jesus, God still said that He would even write His words or instructions to His children in the hearts of those who would become part of this New Covenant. (Subject covered in the theme Knowing about God or Knowing God).

Hebrews 8: 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

11 None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

Given this, the question for Christians should no longer be whether God can or cannot instruct them directly or personally, for the Scriptures themselves say that God speaks to them indeed and that the anointing of the Lord is in their hearts and teaches them in all truth and according to the righteous heavenly will.

And here, still as another consideration regarding “taking heed soberly to what one hears,” we would like to emphasize one more point in addition to the different aspects of discernment concerning hearing the word of God that we have already mentioned in the previous chapters and paragraphs.

When we delve into the Scriptures specifically on the aspect of hearing, we may see that attention in listening may initially be directed (1) to discerning what is and what is not of God and (2) to listening with a willing heart to do God’s will and not open itself to thorns and stones.

Nevertheless, **there is also yet another need for special attention when hearing the word of the Lord, which is (3) to hear what was actually said by God and not what someone wanted the listener to hear or what the listener wanted to hear.**

In the theme on The Gospel of the Promise and in the chapter of the subject on The Gospel of the Glory of the Lord that addresses the Glory of Christ also as the Author and Finisher of our faith, we approached the aspect that faith in God is presented to us by the Scriptures as the “*certainty of what is expected*” or the “*assurance of hope*,” showing us that “*the foundation of faith is the Lord Himself and the hope in the promises given by the Lord.*” A point that, in turn, leads us again to see that growth in faith is also the result of the proper reception of the truth that God exposes to us in His words addressed to us.

Thus, the promise that God undertakes to fulfill, and in which a person can put faith, is the one that the Lord has effectively declared and with the content that He has communicated it to the person or individuals to whom the word was addressed.

If a person believes in something that is not according to what God has said, one is not indeed exercising faith in God, the faith of God, or the faith in the word of God, because what the person believes in was not actually said by the Lord.

A person might even believe that God told him or her something. However, if God has not declared it as the individual says the Lord promised him or her, it is not through God's faith that one is acting.

Faith in God or the faith of God, which in us is created and consummated by the Author and Finisher of Faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, does not lead us to believe in false or wrong things. On the contrary, the words in which the Lord Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, helps us to believe through faith granted by God are true, righteous, and in line with the good, perfect, and pleasing will of God.

And to help us understand how we can believe what indeed the Lord has told us and still says, the Scriptures also teach us another highly significant way to know how we can adequately hear the Lord, as the text below shows us:

*Romans 10: 14 **How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?***

...
*16 **But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"***

*17 **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.***

Faith in the word of the Lord, as it should be, also goes through a process of hearing and seeing "*by the word of God.*"

Regarding the last text cited above, some translations use the expression "by preaching" instead of "hearing by the word." However, the more precise words are, in fact, "**hearing**" and "**hearing by the word of God.**"

In verse 14, we see that some do not believe in Christ merely because they have not heard the word of God concerning His Beloved Son. And this, because no one has preached the Gospel of Christ to them. In verse 16, however, we can see that there are people who hear the preaching but do not believe. They do not believe because they do not listen properly. They do not hear with a willing heart to receive what the Gospel offers them and to remain in what the Gospel calls them to believe.

Nevertheless, if we take heed particularly to verse 17, which is our target in this chapter, we may see that there is an appropriate way to hear the word of God even by one who wants to believe in it, which, again, is "*hearing the word by the very word of God.*"

Let us point out that the text referred above does not say that faith, or a firm trust in God and His word, comes only through "hearing the word of God," but it also comes through "**hearing *by the* word of God.**"

"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God!"

Why, then, often, do people who expose themselves to the word of God do not attain faith or do not grow in faith?

Many people do not reach the faith of God because they do not correctly hear what God says to them or do not hear what God actually speaks to them. And this, because they do not “look” with due attention and precision at what God indeed has said or says to them.

Often, when God announces His word to people, people see what they want to see in the word, and they do not see what God is showing them through His word. God speaks to them, but they hear what they want to see in what God has said instead of seeing what God calls them to see.

And so, many people do not come to faith in what God has said because they do not see indeed what the Lord is showing them and because they are seeing what they want to see under the pretense of believing what God has declared to them.

The word of God is sown to produce what it was planted for and not what a person thinks it ought to bring forth or simply desires or envisions that it ought to produce.

And when people do not listen to what was said to them in line or according to what indeed was announced to them, as we have already mentioned, they also do not receive the faith of God to believe what they want to believe, depriving themselves of growing in the life of faith as they could by channeling their attention to what is misleading or not true.

Let us see another text below as an example to consider regarding what has been mentioned in the last paragraphs:

*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.***

If we look at the above text “*by the word of Christ,*” that is, according to all the content He declared in it, we can see that the peace that the Lord mentions is the peace that is in Him and not just a generic peace. The Lord’s peace is for those who abide in Him, and not a peace that He grants to the disciples to be with them even if they dissociate themselves from remaining in Christ.

If, however, a person looks at this last text in a blurry or partial way, one may soon come out believing, by oneself, and not by God's faith, that Christ said that all Christians always have peace in the world even when they are in opposition to the will of God or even that Christians have peace in the world to the point that God protects them from any exposure of afflictions that may exist in the world.

In the last text presented above, the Lord Jesus was not saying for Christians to be optimistic despite the afflictions, to be constantly proactive people even in the face of setbacks, nor was He saying that they would not face tribulations. Instead, as the central point, what the Lord Jesus was telling them is that they would have peace as long as they remained in Him, and because they could be in Him, they were called to be of good cheer even though they were also in the world in which they would experience afflictions.

Christ was telling His disciples that the world is not an easy place to live. The Lord did not omit that the life of a Christian in the world is challenging and that there are tribulations in it even for those who are His. And for this very reason, The Lord taught that Christians should abide in Him and in the fellowship with Him to have a safe haven of peace in Him, and yet, that this was a substantial reason for them to be able to live with good cheer despite the challenges of life in the world.

The Lord Jesus taught us that even though there are tribulations in the world, we should not weaken in our faith and the work of remaining in Him because when we trust and are in Him, we also overcome the 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 the development of salvation, it is beneficial for the Christian to learn *to hear by seeing what the Lord indeed says to him or her through the words or content granted by the Lord.* And when a part is not understandable, this Christian can ask the Lord to clarify what one did not understand, just as Mary did when asking the Lord how it would be possible to conceive a child considering that she was still a virgin.

In the practice of personal fellowship with Christ and abiding in Him, one of the central aspects of the “*development of salvation,*” or “*growth in faith in God,*” is learning to have the boldness to hear what the Lord actually tells us, even if not everything is understandable or pleasing to us initially.

When a person opens one's heart to gladly hear what the Lord indeed said in the Scriptures or speaks to him or her personally and directly, the Lord is willing to produce in that individual the faith to believe what has been said, even if what has been said is of great challenge to this person's condition of weakness according to the flesh or the natural eyes.

When a person is willing to hear what the Spirit of the Lord indeed has to say to him or her, not only in the natural aspect but according to the kingdom of God, the Spirit of the Lord begins to teach him or her the details of what the Lord has been saying, whose understanding becomes accompanied by due and increasing faith of God towards what was exposed.

*Isaiah 50: 4 **The Lord GOD has given Me The tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak A word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned.***

*5 **The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not rebellious, Nor did I turn away.***

*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."***

*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.***

*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.***

For the Christian to be successful in the process of hearing God's instruction "**by the word of God**," to also receive growth in salvation through the word, one needs to become ever closer to the fellowship with the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord designated to dwell in the Christians' heart to guide them in all moments of life and according to what God indeed spoke or speaks to them, also protecting each of them from any distortions that may want to get in the way of a Christian.

*John 16: 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.***

*Ephesians 1: 13 **In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,***
*14 **who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.***

And here again, by other texts and information, we come across the essential principle of the growth in the Christian life or working out one's own salvation that has been mentioned from the beginning in the present theme, which is the maintenance of close, personal, and continuous fellowship with the Lord.

*2 Peter 3: 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.

When we remain in the Lord and the dependence of His Spirit, even in times of great weakness, we are protected to continue to be safely exposed to the Lord's words and actions according to His heavenly will.

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.

27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

When we abide in Christ, He abides in us and helps us so that His word appropriately is in us and so that, from teaching to teaching and from faith to faith in His instructions, we are also strengthened to be more and more steadfast in the Lord, who is fully able to sustain us, enrich us in Him, and perfect us in all that we need to conform to the salvation granted to us by our Eternal Heavenly Father.

1 Corinthians 1: 4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus,
5 that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge.

Psalms 84: 5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.
6 As they pass through the Valley of Baca, They make it a spring; The rain also covers it with pools.
7 They go from strength to strength; Each one appears before God in Zion.

Luke 6: 47 Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like:
48 He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.

Ephesians 4: 15 But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ.

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.

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