

- Systemic Teaching about Christian Life -



Watchful in Prayer

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. The Central Meaning or Purpose of Prayer

The theme of this material is a complementary subject to the topics addressed 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 the series on The Life of the Christian in the World.

From the moment the Gospel of Christ is presented to a person, one can believe in the message of God and have an individual encounter, through faith, with the Lord Jesus Christ and experience the salvation of God in one's life.

Salvation, however, and as seen in other preceding themes, is not an experience in a single or isolated moment so that an individual later returns to a condition of life equal to the one lived before one's encounter with Christ. On the contrary, 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.

*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.***

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

For the Christian who is still in the world, even though one is no longer 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 continual practice of the "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.

After receiving the salvation granted by God, fellowship with the Lord becomes the fundamental aspect of the Christian's life because, as seen in the theme on Work Out Your Own Salvation, it is also through fellowship that the Lord grants words or instructions that lead Christians to the paths in which they achieve growth in this very salvation found in Christ Jesus.

A very meaningful part of the growth of a Christian in the salvation of God is based on the words that are given by the Lord, through fellowship with Him, as seeds to be welcomed and cultivated with meekness in the heart of this same Christian.

In all the themes mentioned above, we tried to highlight how essential it is for Christians to know that God speaks or communicates in a living way with His children for their growth in salvation and for each one of them to understand what God has in store for their lives, just as it is vital for them to learn how to relate with the means or ways in which God communicates with them.

Nevertheless, **when we come to look more closely at the issue of relationship with the Lord also in the aspect of prayer, we can see even more clearly that a more comprehensive process of communion or relationship is always bilateral and encompasses the participation of both parties.**

Thus, in this theme, we do not aim to address again, or in a more accentuated way, the fact that God communicates with people, nor the means by which the Lord communicates with them, but how the Christian communicates with the Lord and by which attitude this Christian can give answers to the words addressed to him or her by God.

It was never the Lord's intent that His relationship with human beings should be unilateral or one-sided. On the contrary, from the beginning of the creation, the Lord was ready also to be attentive to listening to what people want to express to Him when they recognize Him as the Creator of their lives, as well as of Heaven and Earth and all that is in them.

From the beginning of the creation, the Lord established a specific attitude to be practiced for people to express themselves to Him, which was called *prayer*.

Prayer, mentioned in Scripture, is a way for a person to approach God for the purpose of communicating and expressing oneself specifically to God!

Prayer is the most basic, central, or essential way for a human being to present to God what one wants to communicate to the Lord.

Prayer is the most direct way to be used by a person to express oneself before the Lord since, through prayer, one can even ask God, the Only Creator of humankind and Lord Almighty, to incline His ears to him or her to also act in response concerning what one presents before one's Creator, as exemplified in the following text:

Romans 10: 12 **For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.**

13 **For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."**

Therefore, the subject of prayer is essential and central to the life of every authentic Christian who wants to live a relationship with God and who yearns to be victorious in one's journey in line with the Heavenly Father's will.

And as for its form, prayer can be something extremely simple. It can be similar to the simplicity of communicating with another person. However, as to the One to whom it is addressed, prayer is singular or unique, for it is the primary means for a person to express oneself to the One who is also Unique and in whom is the power that sustains everything and everyone, and who can move far beyond what the human being thinks or believes is necessary for one's life, as we also see exemplified below:

Daniel 9: 21 Yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering.
22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand.
23 At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision."

Through the example of the book of Daniel, we can see that **speaking to God or speaking to the Lord represents perfectly an expression that is equivalent to praying or practicing prayer.**

Let us notice, however, that saying that talking to God represents prayer is different from stating that prayer is only expressed through speech, for in other examples of the Scriptures on the practice of prayer, we can see that **praying to the Lord God also involves other deliberate attitudes and practices of a person to express oneself to God, not limited to speech alone.**

The Psalms of David recorded in the Bible, which were songs, hymns, and poems through which he expressed himself to the Lord, are also all considered in the Scriptures as prayers, as can be seen below:

*Psalms 72: 18 **Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, Who only does wondrous things!***
*19 **And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.***
*20 **The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.***

Although in the Bible the vast majority of references made to prayers are associated with an idea of speech directed to God, the Scriptures also offer us the example of a woman who prayed in her heart to the Lord, showing us that a person can express oneself "in prayer" to the Eternal Lord also from the speech of the heart or from what one presents before the Lord from one's soul.

*1 Samuel 1: 10 **And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish.***

...

12 And it happened, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli watched her mouth.

13 Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk.

14 So Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!"

15 And Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD."

The Lord first sees people's hearts and what they present to Him in their hearts. And God is not impressed by the seemingly beautiful speeches and outward oratories that people try to expose to Him, as likewise exemplified below:

Mark 7: 6 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

Luke 18: 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

In the Scriptures, there is yet another text that shows us that, in many cases, Christians themselves do not even know how to ask or pray to the Lord, and that to do so, they actually need to rely on the help of the Holy Spirit who even intercedes with groanings which cannot be uttered on behalf of those who love the Lord and long for His will.

Romans 8: 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

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.

Finally, in this chapter, after we have seen that prayer is an instrument by which a person can express oneself to God, whether in speech, a song, or by pouring out one's heart and soul before God, even if one cannot verbalize exactly everything in words, a matter that may still puzzle many people is about the very need for prayer.

Since God knows all things and God is Almighty, some people may ask themselves questions like the following:

- ⇒ Why does the Lord instruct people to pray to Him?
- ⇒ If God knows everything and everyone and has the power to do what is needed for people, why would there be a need for people to pray to the Lord?

If we look at the life of human beings in general, it can be seen that there are a series of benefits that God grants to people even when they ignore the Lord, as said by the Lord Jesus in the following text:

*Matthew 5: 45 ... **that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.***

On the other hand, **there are many aspects of life for which God waits for people to express their will before Him and which He only grants through prayer**, as also exemplified by the texts below:

*James 4: 2 **You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.***

*James 1: 4 **But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.***
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.

Therefore, **prayer is essential for people's lives in the world because part of what God gives people is granted by Him regardless of what they ask for or don't ask for, but another part is only granted if they ask God, because when someone asks something to the Lord, one also declares to God that one would like to receive what the Lord can give.**

*John 3: 27 **John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven."***

*Matthew 7: 7 **Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.***

Many aspects from God's part for people are reserved for those who ask God for them because the Lord also works by offering gifts to people that are granted not by way of imposition or regardless of their will.

The fact that God, for instance, presents salvation through His Gospel, which is the expression of an offer of life according to God's will, allows people to choose life according to this will voluntarily, a situation in which prayer is the means by which they can declare to God that they want to receive what the Lord offers them.

As another example, if a human being wants to walk according to God's understanding and wisdom, and not according to one's own understanding or of the world, one needs a way to communicate one's intent to the Lord, and prayer is the way God established to do it.

And why does God not give His wisdom in abundance to the individual who chooses to live and walk according to one's own understanding or according to the wisdom of the world?

God does not share some aspects of His wisdom beforehand, which are very necessary for a person to live and walk according to God's will, simply because many people do not want what God has to give them or because they do not express to God their desire for the intervention of the Lord on their behalf.

In the last text of James mentioned above, we saw that people often prefer to covet, envy, and even kill instead of asking God for what they aspire to achieve. People often prefer to use their own ways to achieve what they want because, many times, it is their own goals that they pursue, rather than wanting to live and walk in God's will.

Thus, prayer exists because God did not create people to only automatically receive everything that comes from Him but also to choose whether they want what comes from God according to His will or if they do not wish what comes from God, or yet, whether or not they want it according to the Lord's will and righteousness.

Prayer is an instrument for people to express themselves to God to ask Him to supply their needs, but, before that, it is a way established by the Lord for people to express to God if they want the Lord's purpose and what accompanies this purpose.

*Matthew 6: 7 **And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.***

8 Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

In this way, asking God for something, for example, "in the name of Jesus," is asking for something that is in fact in line with the Lord Jesus' very will and that the Lord longs for it to be fulfilled on Earth. And this is also praying to the Lord.

*John 16: 24 **Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.***

Prayer is a practical attitude through which a person can express oneself to God to present to the Lord a request for wisdom or provision of help in general, to express gratitude, to declare a feeling about the Lord, to express praise about the Lord and His attributes, to ask that the will of God might be fulfilled in one's life, as well as it can also be a way to express a request in favor of other people, peoples, and nations, and for the name of the Heavenly Father to be sanctified with the goal that the kingdom, righteousness, and will of God may be extended to people throughout the Earth.

C2. Prayer: A Privilege Extended to All People

One of the sublime aspects of prayer is that it is not a practice authorized only for a special or particular group of people.

Prayer is a practice that God allows all human beings to perform. Prayer may even be practiced by people inclusive when they have incurred iniquities and transgressions, aiming, however, at their deliverance through the Lord's help, as exemplified by some texts below:

Psalms 65: 2 **O You who hear prayer, To You all flesh will come (or all people).**

3 Iniquities prevail against me; As for our transgressions, You will provide atonement for them.

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

Psalms 32: 5 **I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

Even the person involved in sin can pray to God to call on the Lord for salvation, forgiveness, and restoration, because God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, took the initiative to offer a way of reconciliation of people to Him and established that the acceptance of this path should also be expressed, by those who want it, through the attitude of prayer or crying out to Christ Jesus as Lord or by calling on the Lord's name.

2 Corinthians 5: 18 **Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,**

19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Romans 10: 13 **For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."**

Through the Lord Jesus Christ, a person can pray to the Heavenly Father and be heard by Him even though one has been involved in many and dense sins, for if no sinner or an individual who ran into sin could pray to God, also no person would fit to come individually to God to call on Him to obtain the deliverance and salvation of one's soul.

In the world, many people want to present themselves or even present themselves as mediators of others in the relationship between God and human beings as if they had unique attributes to pray to God. However, if the Lord did not heed the prayers of people with sin in their lives, also those who offer themselves as mediators of others towards God could not expect their prayers to be heard, for they also have been involved with sin and got subjected to iniquities, demonstrating, also in this way, the fragility and inconsistency of their propositions by which they claim that they can mediate others before the Lord.

*1 John 1: 10 **If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.***

*1 Timothy 2: 5 **For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,**
6 **who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.***

So, in general, any individual can pray to God anytime, anywhere, and in any situation, for, saying it again, if people could not pray directly to God, how could they ask for God's forgiveness and the salvation offered to them from the heavenly kingdom?

God not only allows every individual to approach Him through the Lord Jesus Christ, but He also longs for it to the point of having offered His Beloved Son for the salvation of a world subject to sin and darkness. (A subject widely approached in the themes on The Gospel of God and The Gospel of the Glory of God and Glory of Christ).

*Romans 5: 8 **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

Nevertheless, the fact that God allows all people to cry out to Him does not mean that God will listen to or accept all claims, nor does it mean that God is obligated to respond to all prayers.

God is Holy and Righteous, and He will not answer a prayer in which He would be condescending or a partaker of evil.

A person widely subject to sin may pray to God that the Lord may help, free, forgive, and grant him or her salvation, but God will not answer a prayer of that person in which He would be implicated in complicity with an individual's desire to practice sin or subjecting oneself to an iniquity.

At this point, we would only like to recall that sin, in one aspect of its definition, is a direct transgression of God's will, it is the practice of an evil act that transgresses what is good and God's righteousness. (A broader explanation about sin is described in the theme on The Gospel of God's Righteousness).

As for iniquity, however, the issue is often more challenging to be perceived, also leading many people not to realize why the Lord does not answer many of their prayers that even do not seem to aim at an objective or direct practice of sin.

At certain times, iniquity may not be effectively acting in an explicit act of sin because it can be still in the stage of harboring a thought with a potential for sin, but which already stands in the way of the possibility of God acting in response to the prayers so that He does not corroborate with the iniquity that is in the heart of the one who prays to the heavenly kingdom.

A person, for instance, may not be engaged in the act of stealing, but one may have the wicked thought that stealing is not necessarily such a bad thing. One might have the idea in mind that stealing in certain activities of life is necessary for a person to be successful.

In this way, if circumstances occur in which one thinks that theft is not a sin, the person exemplified has a high potential to commit theft in practice and carry out the crime because one already had the heart inclined to it before the crime.

Thus, if the person in reference prays to God, asking the Lord to favor him or her in ways that strengthen the iniquity that stealing is not a sin, God will not respond to one's request, because if He did, He would be supporting the growth of iniquity that this person holds in one's heart.

God will not answer the request for prosperity in theft, corruption, or deceitful action of the one who thinks or is under the iniquity that stealing, bribing, deceiving, or misleading others is a way to succeed in life, even if one think this only in some specific situations.

The example cited in the previous paragraphs might seem obvious about God not answering this kind of prayer, but we will put it yet from another perspective in the following few paragraphs.

So, if a person, for example, has a business that involves commerce of products and one thinks that taking advantage of others in all sorts of ways is part of the commerce business, even if it is not by honest sales, this person may be under the effect of an iniquity that causes one to think and act as one does. And if one prays to the Lord that God may make him or her prosper according to the thought or the iniquity to which one is subject, one will be praying to the Lord for Him to be a partaker of something in which God will not be a collaborator, because:

Proverbs 11: 1 Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD, But a just weight is His delight.

Hosea 12:7 A cunning Canaanite! Deceitful scales are in his hand; He loves to oppress.

8 And (or but) Ephraim said, 'Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; In all my labors They shall find in me no iniquity that is sin.'

In the book of the prophet Hosea, regarding the last text above, we may see that the people of the tribe of Ephraim, under the thought that financial or commercial prosperity is synonymous with being on the right path, were under the effect of the iniquity that made them transgress the good and commit the sin continuously and in an

increasingly accentuated way, showing us even that one of the results that come from the iniquity is the advance even to the denial of the sin as such.

Therefore, if an individual prays to the Lord asking that God favors him or her in business through illicit ways, this prayer is corrupted and compromised by the iniquity of thinking that God is corrupt and greedy as many people are and who still propagate that this is essential in their professions, incurring not in the will of God, but the line of thought of the so-called wicked individual, as follows:

*Psalms 50: 16 But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to declare My statutes, Or take My covenant in your mouth,
 17 Seeing you hate instruction And cast My words behind you?
 18 When you saw a thief, you consented with him, And have been a partaker with adulterers.
 19 You give your mouth to evil, And your tongue frames deceit.
 20 You sit and speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son.
 21 These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; But I will rebuke you, And set them in order before your eyes.
 22 Now consider this, you who forget God, Lest I tear you in pieces, And there be none to deliver:
 23 Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God."*

*Hosea 7: 1 When I would have healed Israel, Then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, And the wickedness of Samaria. For they have committed fraud; A thief comes in; A band of robbers takes spoil outside.
 2 They do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness; Now their own deeds have surrounded them; They are before My face.*

All individuals can pray to God, although not all prayers and not all people present themselves appropriately before God to the point that the Lord grants them His attention. And this occurs simply because they approach God not to cry out for a way and a life according to the righteous will of God, but according to the iniquities that they harbor in their hearts.

*Isaiah 59: 1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear.
 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.
 3 For your hands are defiled with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue has muttered perversity.
 4 No one calls for justice, Nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity.*

The fact that a person seeks the Lord's help to be delivered and restored according to the righteousness of God, despite having been born under iniquity, as the psalmist David declares, or having given oneself over to iniquity, is incomparably different from the attitude of a person seeking God with the objective that the Lord may prosper him or her in the iniquities to which one is subject or to which one even wants to remain subject.

God is inclined to listen and willing to save all human beings, but God is not open to hearing people's requests to become prosper in what drives them away from God Himself and makes them increasingly associated with evil.

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

A person who has stumbled into sin, or given oneself over to sin and even into deep iniquities, does not need and should not refrain from praying to God if one longs to reach the Lord's forgiveness and salvation to get out of the yoke of sin and iniquity. However, this is much different from praying to God for the Lord to make him or her prosperous in the evil ways one finds oneself or intends to pursue.

In the world, unfortunately, many prayers made to God are requests for the Lord to sustain and support iniquities or evil, and these the Lord does not answer.

*James 4: 2 **You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.***

*3 **You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.***

*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."***

Although prayer to God is one of the central privileges given by the Lord to human beings, and the Lord makes it available to all, it is a communication that needs to be done with humility and respect to the Almighty God so that it is also beneficial or profitable. An aspect also expressed by the following Psalm:

*Psalms 51: 1 **Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.***

*2 **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.***

- 3 *For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me.*
- 4 *Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight, that You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.*
- 5 *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.*
- 6 *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.*
- 7 *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*
- 8 *Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice.*
- 9 *Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.*
- 10 *Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.*
- 11 *Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.*
- 12 *Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.*
- 13 *Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.*
- 14 *Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.*
- 15 *O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.*
- 16 *For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.*
- 17 *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart, these, o God, You will not despise.*
-

God is willing to listen to all who come with a contrite heart before Him and who recognize Him as Lord. However, He does not answer those whose hearts are full of arrogance and who advocate their defenses in favor of their iniquities and sins, for, in the end, what is in a person's heart is what expresses what one thinks about God and what one longs to achieve from Him, not just the words one utters.

*Proverbs 26: 23 **Fervent lips with a wicked heart Are like earthenware covered with silver dross.***

All people may speak, sing, cry out, scream, claim, and express themselves to God on any subject and in any area of life. And regarding their prayers, there is no partiality in God towards people concerning external matters of nation, people, tribe, race, or language through which a person expresses oneself to the Lord. However, the attitude of an individual's heart toward God may determine whether one's prayers are answered or neglected.

In the theme on Work Out Your Own Salvation, we address the crucial condition of each person “*seeing how one hears*” when God speaks to him or her. However, in this theme, we are also trying to highlight the necessary condition of each person “*taking*

heed of how oneself prays to God” to understand that one also has a part concerning the aspect that determines whether God will hear and answer him or her or whether God will reject one’s prayer, a point also mentioned in another Psalm, as follows:

- Psalms 66: 16 Come and hear, all you who fear God, And I will declare what He has done for my soul.*
- 17 I cried to Him with my mouth, And He was extolled with my tongue.*
- 18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.*
- 19 But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.*
- 20 Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer, Nor His mercy from me!*
-

Furthermore, or regarding the non-acceptance that prayer is a privilege extended by God to everyone, a person may still claim that one does not know how to pray to God and try to put this aspect as an obstacle to praying personally to the Lord.

Nevertheless, also concerning this point, the Lord is ready for people to come to Him, for if a person does not know how to pray, one can ask the Holy Spirit of God to help him or her.

- 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.*

- Psalms 19: 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;*
- 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;*
- 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.*
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.*
- 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.*
- 12 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.*
- 13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression.*
- 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.*
-

If a person does not know how to pray, it may be necessary for him or her to learn first to listen to what the Lord has to say to him or her about the gift of prayer instead of turning away from it on the grounds that one does not know how to practice it.

- 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.*
-

If a person does not understand something, one needs to adopt a humble attitude, ask the Lord, and be patient to listen to what God has to say and teach because if, on the one hand, prayer is a way of communication with the Lord, on the other hand, the other way is the Lord's part in responding to it in the manner and time that the Lord sees fit and beneficial.

- Job 42: 1 Then Job answered the LORD and said:*
- 2 "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.*
- 3 You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.*
- 4 Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.'*
- 5 I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You.*
- 6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."*
-

And as we have already seen in the Psalms mentioned above and we can also see below, **even if a person does not even know what is in one's own heart, one can begin to practice prayer asking God to give him or her this understanding and guide him or her to turn away from what is not beneficial, as well as lead him or her to a condition or path that one may grow in God.**

- 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.*
- 4 For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.*
- ...
- 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.

Jeremiah 17: 7 Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD.

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

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

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

God does not expect people to come to Him perfect in human works to be able to pray, as was required and was never achieved in life according to the Law of Moses. God does not expect people to be perfect to start praying to Him, for prayer is also the instrument for people to confess their sins and their iniquities to God and ask the Lord to be delivered from them.

Therefore, there is no reason for a person to try to hide one's sins before God, as the Lord already knows all of them much more than the person oneself.

What the Lord expects of all who want to practice prayer, then, is that they approach Him sincerely and with the aim of knowing the truth and coming to be freed from what is in opposition to the Lord in their lives.

What is part of God's will, concerning prayer, is that people come to Him with humility, recognizing Him as God and Lord so that, from His instruction and help, they too may be cleansed and come to have a heart more and more aligned with the heavenly kingdom.

God delights in people's prayers when their longing to come to Him also aims at being transformed by the fellowship with His presence and by what He bestows on them through the responses to their prayers presented through faith in the Lord.

James 4: 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

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

Therefore, mentioning this point again, the Lord longs to hear people's prayers and likewise longs to help people in their most diverse needs, but what the Lord does not acknowledge, and could not respond, because He is Holy God, are the requests that are dissociated from heavenly righteousness and that aim to uphold and propagate evil and unrighteousness.

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

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

*Psalms 65: 5 **By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us, O God of our salvation, You who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth, And of the far-off seas;***

*6 **Who established the mountains by His strength, Being clothed with power;***

*7 **You who still the noise of the seas, The noise of their waves, And the tumult of the peoples.***

We recall here yet that the righteousness of God is not primarily focused on the condemnation of sinners but is the offer of salvation by God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, to all human beings. (A subject approached extensively in the theme on The Gospel of God's Righteousness).

*Jeremiah 23: 6 **In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.***

*1 Corinthians 1: 30 **But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,***

*31 **that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."***

*Proverbs 21: 21 **He who follows righteousness and mercy Finds life, righteousness and honor.***

*Romans 5: 18 **Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.***

Regarding yet the righteousness of God, why, then, are there times when the manifestation of the righteousness of God on Earth shows itself less intense in some places?

In addition to people's choice for a more expressive subjection to sin and iniquities, the intensity of the manifestation of God's righteousness on Earth sometimes seems to be less intense also because people pray less for the Lord's righteousness or because they often depart from praying in the way it should be done. They pray with arrogance and pride as if God had an obligation to serve them in their most weird and corrupted longings.

*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.***

Thus, a person's central prayer to God should always be that God may grant him or her heavenly salvation, fellowship with Him, and establishment in the novelty of life in Christ Jesus and His righteousness, and, yet, that the offer of salvation, fellowship, and newness of life in the Lord Jesus Christ may be made known by God to all the people of the world.

From the moment a person humbly cries out for the righteousness of the Lord in one's life, to put on, *in Christ*, the righteousness of God, one's prayer may also move to an even more lively and dynamic stage, as exemplified below:

*1 Timothy 2: 1 **Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,**
2 **for kings and all who are in authority (or in eminence), that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.**
3 **For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,**
4 **who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**
5 **For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,**
6 **who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.***

When a person puts the desire for one's own salvation in God first and, along with this, joins God's desire for all to be saved, that person begins to prioritize, through prayer, one of the main works aimed by the Kingdom of God and the Righteousness of the Lord.

Therefore, praying to God is also expressing our heart's desire to God so that the Lord may help us to be aligned with the truth and eternal righteousness, which brings us to the point that when our heart's desire is in line with the truth and the will of God, He hears us.

1 John 5: 14 **Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.**

In response to the fulfillment of His will in us, in response to prayer or our expression to God, we may go on manifesting our joy and agreement with God's righteousness so that the Lord continues to carry out His will in us more and more to the point of also being fellow workers of this same righteousness.

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

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

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

In this way, prayer to God is a living communication from our side toward the Lord and dynamic as the very life is.

Prayer to God is a living communication about life and the course of its details in all its moments, which is why the Lord made it available to everyone and at all times, recalling here that it is not the volume of words and the repetition of them in prayers that characterizes their acceptance in the first place, as the following text also shows:

Isaiah 29: 13 **Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,**
14 **Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work Among this people, A marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden."**

So, praying to God is not following the precepts that men have said about prayers or supplications. And the fact that God does not answer these mechanically learned prayers should not make people conclude that prayer is only for a select group of people. Prayer is for everyone, but this does not mean that the Lord will answer the prayers of everyone who wants to do them according to what they themselves consider the practice of praying and without subjecting themselves to what the Lord taught to carry out prayers directed to Him.

Matthew 6: 5 **And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.**

- 6 ***But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.***
- 7 ***And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.***

Matthew 23: 14 ***Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.***

The Lord God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, is ready to hear the prayers of those who want to do them according to the heavenly will or to seek the divine will when they do not know it. However, the prayers that are preceded by the denial of who God is and the power that is in Him become empty cries before the Lord, as God teaches us through the words of Elihu to Job:

- Job 35: 1* ***Moreover Elihu answered and said (to Job):***
- 2 ***"Do you think this is right? Do you say, 'My righteousness is more than God's'?***
- 3 ***For you say, 'What advantage will it be to You? What profit shall I have, more than if I had sinned?'***
- 4 ***I will answer you, And your companions with you.***
- 5 ***Look to the heavens and see; And behold the clouds, They are higher than you.***
- 6 ***If you sin, what do you accomplish against Him? Or, if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him?***
- 7 ***If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?***
- 8 ***Your wickedness affects a man such as you, And your righteousness a son of man.***
- 9 ***Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; They cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty.***
- 10 ***But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, Who gives songs in the night,***
- 11 ***Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, And makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?'***
- 12 ***There they cry out, but He does not answer, Because of the pride of evil men.***
- 13 ***Surely God will not listen to empty talk, Nor will the Almighty regard it.***
- 14 ***Although you say you do not see Him, Yet justice is before Him, and you must wait for Him.***
- 15 ***And now, because He has not punished in His anger, Nor taken much notice of folly,***
- 16 ***Therefore Job opens his mouth in vain; He multiplies words without knowledge."***
- 36: 1* ***Elihu also proceeded and said:***
- 2 ***"Bear with me a little, and I will show you That there are yet words to speak on God's behalf.***
- 3 ***I will fetch my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.***

- 4 ***For truly my words are not false; One who is perfect in knowledge is with you.***
- 5 ***Behold, God is mighty, but despises no one; He is mighty in strength of understanding.***
-

Praying to God is to express oneself to the Only and Eternal Creator of Heaven and Earth. It is to express oneself lively before the Living God. And before Whom, it is due that all people present themselves in humility and holy reverence.

Acts 14: 15 ... and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them."

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

29 *For our God is a consuming fire.*

Prayer is an immeasurable privilege given by God to human beings, to whom He inclines His ears with understanding and mercy. However, or even so, He is God, and people are creatures who need to approach God with a respectful posture concerning His righteousness and sovereignty, because life and grace for the time in the present world, as well as the newness of life for all eternity, come only from the Lord.

- Psalms 54: 1 Save me, O God, by Your name, And vindicate me by Your strength.*
- 2 ***Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth.***
- 3 ***For strangers have risen up against me, And oppressors have sought after my life; They have not set God before them.***
- 4 ***Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is with those who uphold my life.***

- Psalms 69: 13 But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, Hear me in the truth of Your salvation.*
- 14 ***Deliver me out of the mire, And let me not sink; Let me be delivered from those who hate me, And out of the deep waters.***
- 15 ***Let not the floodwater overflow me, Nor let the deep swallow me up; And let not the pit shut its mouth on me.***
- 16 ***Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; Turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.***

C3. Prayer in Fellowship with the Lord: A Privilege of Great Honor Bestowed on the Children of God

Knowing that prayer is a practical attitude by which people can express themselves before God and that all human beings can practice it is not the end of understanding the theme of prayer. On the contrary, it is only the beginning.

Although many people may not practice praying to God because they have not heard of the Lord the Creator who hears the prayers of human beings, there are many people who have heard about prayers to the Lord but do not practice them or do not perform them properly because they do not have appropriately known the Lord and what the Lord Himself teaches us about how He sees the prayers that are performed before Him.

There are people, for instance, who do not pray because they do not remember God in their daily lives, because they do not believe that God exists, or because they do not believe that the Lord can be continually present with them and that He wants what is best for them indeed as someone genuinely interested in the details of their lives.

We saw in the previous chapter that in the world, there might also be those who simply do not pray because they think they do not know how to do it or because they have been wrongly taught about prayer, thinking of it as a repetitive religious rule devoid of sobriety and meaning, practiced by many only in a ritual way and even because some of them fear being punished by God if they do not do it.

And finally, among others, there are still those who do not pray to God under the allegation that the Lord has a lot to do and does not have time to listen to people's prayers concerning the most diverse areas of their lives. Some people declare that they have not prayed to God not to be a burden to the Lord and bother Him with the details of their lives in the face of so many other things that they claim that God has to take care of.

Nevertheless, none of these claims presented above qualify or express the position and teaching of God Himself concerning the practice of prayer for human beings.

God did not establish prayer as an arduous obligation to be practiced by people, nor does He see their prayers as a burden to Himself, because considering that God is Almighty, there are no impossibilities in Him to meet all who come to Him and nor can the Lord be overburdened with the necessities of the creation.

Luke 1: 37 For with God nothing will be impossible.

Luke 18: 27 But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

If human beings' prayer or search for God were a burden to Him, God would not have instructed the prophet Isaiah to declare people to seek Him, just as the Lord Jesus Christ would not have announced words for people to come to Him to be freed from unsuitable weights or burdens of their lives.

Isaiah 55: 6 Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.

9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."

Matthew 11: 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

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

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

Thus, prayer is an opportune practical possibility established by the Lord for people to express themselves before their Creator, for He loves His creation and rejoices when people seek Him and come to Him to find in Him salvation, help, instruction in His will, provision of life, and fellowship with Him.

Considering that God Himself gave His Beloved Son to the world so that human beings may find reconciliation with Him, and that prayer is an essential part of the two-way relationship by which people can express themselves to God, the prayer of those who receive the gift of reconciliation with the Lord is not disgusting to God, but an integral part of practical life according to this reconciliation.

The prayer of those who long for God and accept the justification offered to them through the gift of righteousness in Christ Jesus is not only acceptable to the Lord, but it is also a joy to God Himself.

God rejoices greatly in the prayers directed to Him by those who seek Him through Jesus Christ and who do so with reverence and the fear of the Lord.

Proverbs 15: 8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

...

29 The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

The one who prays to the Lord and seeks Him in humility pleases the Lord and does not burden Him as many in the world try to claim.

The longing to turn to God in prayer does not bother Him because, considering that crying out to God is also a form of prayer, the Lord Himself placed in the hearts of His children an intense yearning to cry out to Him.

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."

Galatians 4: 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

And, on the other hand, as already mentioned, **prayer has also not been established by God to be practiced by human beings as a heavy burden to be imposed on them.**

Prayer enables the practical action that allows people to positively wave to the reconciliation offered to them by God, just as it is also essential to benefit them in their condition of having already been reconciled to the Lord.

Therefore, whoever thinks of prayer as a weight or a burden to be practiced is because one still does not see the possibility of prayer as a fruit of God's love for him or her.

The one who thinks of prayer as a hard work still does not see in prayer the great possibility and honor that is granted to the simple mortal human being to approach the Eternal Creator to express oneself personally and individually to the Almighty God, even to the point of being able to enjoy a two-way fellowship with the Lord.

One of the commandments of the Lord to those who become His children through faith in Christ Jesus is "to watch in prayer" or "to pray without ceasing," but just as the other commandments of God are not burdensome to His children, so also is not the prayer made in love, as many mistakenly want to propagate.

1 John 5: 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

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

When a person seeks the Lord for answers and God's instruction to live and walk according to what comes from God, one also declares how much one longs for the Lord to be with him or her throughout one's life and in all that one intends to do, showing us this, that prayer does not aim at the imposition of burdens, but the attainment of strength, victory, and peace granted by God for a greater manifestation of the Lord in the life of the one who follows His instructions.

John 14: 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

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."

The prayer to God, made by a heart that wants to present itself in humility before the Creator, is the Lord's contentment because it also expresses that the individual who prays to Him is pleased with Him and who, because of being pleased with the Lord, will also be pleased with the truth and His will.

3 John 1: 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Whoever prays to the Lord, because one is pleased with the Lord or loves the Lord, presents oneself before God to communicate that one is also pleased with the Lord's plans and purposes for one's life. And as a result of the expression of being pleased with the Lord, the Lord also grants appropriate desires in the heart of those who come to Him for the purpose that the Lord works in them both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Psalms 37: 4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

5 Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

6 He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret; it only causes harm.

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 practice of prayer is highly beneficial to the person who prays appropriately before God, for through it, this person is also renewing one's appreciation for the Lord and responding to the Lord's proposition to be with him or her and for him or her to be with the Lord.

Through prayer to the Lord, a person can keep declaring to God the yearning to remain faithful to Him and His will as one grows and advances in this will.

The prayer of those who seek the Lord to attain the righteousness and love of God is the Lord's contentment, for it is a practical attitude by which people can deliberately declare that they want to live and walk according to what comes from the kingdom of God and that the kingdom of God may also be working in their hearts.

Consulting God to obtain the Lord's wisdom, asking for help or guidance from the Lord for life, drawing close to God to learn from Him, keeping meditating on the Lord's word to be taught by the Spirit of the Lord, and several other practical attitudes, are contentment to God because, through these practices, the children of God can express how much the Lord is essential and valuable for them.

Many people do not pray to God, as we have seen before, because, in reality, they do not want the will of God in their lives, showing that they are not actually pleased with God Himself and how He works. Due to this factor, some people refrain from praying, for some fear that they will come to know the truth of God and have their own opinion contradicted.

- James 3: 13* **Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.**
- 14* **But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.**
- 15* **This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.**
- 16* **For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.**
- 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.**

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

Everyone who has received the love of God and loves the Lord wants to draw closer to Him and wants to know Him more and more so that in all the works that one may perform, one may also do them in the light of the Lord. For him or her, the possibility of praying to God is also the way to express to the Lord this willingness to follow in the Lord's paths.

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

The Scriptures teach us that those who come to God, in response to the Lord's invitation of grace to them, have in return that God draws near to them as well, conferring on them a uniquely honorable position, and in which the Lord lets Himself to be known and also allows those who draw near to sit before Him in Christ Jesus.

*John 15: 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.
15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

*Ephesians 2: 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

In the book written by Luke, we see that the Lord Jesus Christ declares that it is not typical for a “lord” in the world to invite the servants who serve him to sit with him at the table and let them enjoy his fellowship. However, even though the Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord and the Teacher of Christians, the Heavenly Father, in His grace, invites them to sit at the table of fellowship with Christ to share with them the aspects of His will, concerning which prayer is the practical way for Christians to declare acceptance of this invitation made by the Lord, as well as the way to express themselves in this same fellowship.

Although the Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord and Teacher of every Christian, He also recognizes that every Christian has come to be a child of the Heavenly Father through Him. And, consequently, He not only allows but also calls all of them, as children of God, to come through Him to the Heavenly Father.

*John 16: 24 Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.
25 These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father.
26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you;
27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.*

The Lord Jesus teaches us that the prayer of Christians is extremely precious to them, for He knows that it is also through prayer that they can come to their Heavenly Father so that their joy may be complete, even

though they are still in a world subject to many injustices and oppositions to God and those who are His children through Christ Jesus.

The prayer of those who have been justified by Christ is a reason of contentment for the Lord because it is their answer to what the Lord has offered them and because, in response to their prayers, the Lord also provides contentment for His children.

It is evident that every child of God should always present oneself to the Lord willing to serve Him. The Lord Jesus said that those who are His friends are those who obey Him, as they also know that they are creatures and can only stand before God because of the Lord's love and mercy towards them. However, the Heavenly Father also grants them to sit *in Christ* as children of the God Most High to know more about the glory of Christ and the glory of the Heavenly Father, as well as the will of God, which, essentially, is that His children live and walk in the newness of eternal life which they have received from the Lord or that they live and walk *in Christ*.

- 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.
- ...
- 14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."*
15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,
16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Those who receive Christ as Lord are also invited to advance in the practice of prayer, through which they can present themselves to fellowship and intimacy with the Lord and with His light to abide in Him and know more about the Lord Himself and His will.

Through prayer, a child of God has a very simple instrument to be practiced, but which, on the other hand, is also practical and objective for a person to stand up and present oneself available before the Lord to hear Him, to see what the Lord wants to show, and to manifest one's willingness concerning what the Lord wants to present.

By accepting the invitation to fellowship with Christ, the Christian is called to know the will of Christ, knowledge through which one may even pray to the Heavenly Father so that He will make Christ's purposes fruitful in this Christian or cause them to be manifested in the world.

- John 15: 15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*
16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

Once a Christian comes to Christ to serve Him, but is not limited to that and advances to God's call to participatory fellowship with the Lord, Christ makes known to Him what the Heavenly Father wants to reveal to His children. Thus, the Christian prays that the Heavenly Father will accomplish His will through Christ in one's life and the world, and this, so that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified.

When a Christian awakens from the sleep that takes him or her away from prayer, from not drawing close to God, from not asking for wisdom, from not seeking the will of God, and begins to use the great privilege of praying and the position of honor that God has given this Christian before Him, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself enlightens this Christian to know the heavenly will also to see it fulfilled in the practical aspects of one's life.

Turning to God at all times in life, through prayer, is one of the most practical ways for a Christian to demonstrate one's dependence on the Lord, but also one's trust in God to be instructed, supplied, and protected by Him in everything.

After the position *in Christ* in which a person can behold the Lord, hear Him, and allow to be instructed by Him, the possibility of being able to express oneself with the confidence of being heard by the Heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit certainly is one of the incomparable central privileges of life that only God could bestow upon us, and of which every individual should benefit from since it is available to all by grace and through faith in Christ Jesus as the Unique Lord and Eternal Savior.

Ephesians 2: 13 ***But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.***

Psalms 32: 6 ***For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You In a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters They shall not come near him.***

7 You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.

8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

9 Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you.

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him.

11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

C4. Where and When to Pray

Once a Christian reaches a greater understanding of the vital condition of praying to God for one's life, one, of course, will also become more willing to practice it frequently, which, in turn, may lead this Christian to some practical questions about the places and times to carry out one's prayers.

At this point, however, it is necessary to distinguish the condition of people today so that it is clear that they live after the coming of Christ in the flesh in the world, which is why places and times of prayer have also had a very large redefinition regarding many practices related to it before this coming of the Lord.

Although we may also learn a lot from the various prayer practices described in the Scriptures before the coming of Christ, for instance, in the books of Psalms, Proverbs, and the prophets, it is also essential to take into account that, regarding the places and periods of prayer, some of these descriptions were expressed according to the times in which those who wrote them lived.

Therefore, **after Christ's death on the cross of Calvary and after His resurrection from the dead, the principal mentions of the places and times of the practice of prayer always referred to a much simpler condition than in previous times, but which, at the same time, also made it clear that the possibility of the practice of prayer can be carried out in a much freer way and in a much wider extension of places and time.**

Although in the so-called Old Testament there were also several citations to the practice of prayer devoid of pre-defined places and times, it is from the coming of Christ in the flesh into the world, His death on the cross of Calvary, and His resurrection from the dead that the emphasis and teaching of prayer free of time and places were more explicitly highlighted.

So, let us see below some examples of texts of the Scriptures from the so-called New Testament that mention the practice of prayer:

*Ephesians 6: 18 ... **praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.***

*1 Thessalonians 5: 17 **Pray without ceasing.***

*Luke 18: 1 **Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, ...***

*John 4: 19 **The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.***

*20 **Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."***

- 21 **Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.**
- 22 **You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.**
- 23 **But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.**
- 24 **God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."**
- 25 **The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."**
- 26 **Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."**

Luke 17: 20 **Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation;**

21 **nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."**

1 Timothy 2: 8 **I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.**

Matthew 6: 5 **And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.**

6 **But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**

7 **And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.**

8 **Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.**

Revelation 3: 19 **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.**

20 **Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.**

21 **To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.**

22 **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

In the beautiful texts exposed above, there is a lot of material to be explored and assimilated. However, if we focus specifically on the place and times of prayer mentioned in them, we can see that they are very explicit or objective in saying that **the prayer presented from the New Testament is an action or a practice that can and should be carried out everywhere, at all times, and by all people.**

God is Spirit, and as such, He is everywhere and close to people at all times, and therefore, in the sense of place and time, there is no restriction for human beings to turn to Him in prayer at all moments of their lives.

In the texts mentioned above, it is possible to observe that there are people who elect public places, mountains, or temples to demonstrate their prayers and that there are others who understand that prayer is an insistence on a list of words repeated over and over to God, but concerning these, the Lord Jesus teaches us saying: ***“Therefore do not be like them.”***

The Lord mentioned an example of where some people prayed and how they prayed, but also saying to those who asked Him how they should pray to practice prayer differently from those He presented as an example, both concerning the manner and the place of the practice of prayer.

In the text of Matthew 6, seen above, **the Lord uses a figure of the private room to teach that prayer first is particular and that each one should do it, in the first place, individually before God.**

Nevertheless, in the other texts listed above, the Scriptures also clearly show us that the room is not restricted to a physical space in an individual's home.

God is the Spirit, the kingdom of God comes to be in the hearts of those who receive it, and the Lord comes to have fellowship with whoever opens the door to which He knocks to enter, pointing to us these texts to the fact that Christ, in the present, does not physically knock on the doors of people's material houses, but on the door of the house in which the Lord is willing to dwell besides His heavenly abode.

*Acts 7: 48 **However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says:***
*49 **Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, Or what is the place of My rest?***
*50 **Has My hand not made all these things?'***

*Isaiah 57: 15 **For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him also who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.***

Many people on Earth do not have the facility to have access to a private physical room. Are these, then, excluded from the possibility of praying to God?

Of course not!

In the previous chapters, we saw that **the person who presents oneself to God and is accepted by the Lord to express oneself freely in His presence is the**

one whose heart is in line with what one's lips utter and whose heart is contrite and humble before the Lord.

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

Therefore, when a Christian understands that the Lord is with him or her “every day until the end of the world” and that God is present everywhere, regardless of the mountain, hill, valley, city, house, or another natural place to which one needs to move, this Christian can begin to live in a condition of continuous fellowship with Christ, knowing that in every place and at all times one can also be expressing oneself or praying to the Lord.

In the words of the book of Revelation, chapter 3, when Christ was no longer in the flesh in the world, the Lord said that He would enter “the house” of those who opened the door to Him and that He would dine with them. However, likewise, the Lord declared that those who would receive Him would also dine with Him, thus showing us that fellowship with Christ in the heart is predicted to occur both in the sense that the Lord manifests Himself to the person who opens one's heart to Him as in the sense of the person manifesting oneself to the Lord in prayer.

*Revelation 3: 20 ... **If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.***

There are still several other texts in the Scriptures that show that the house that the Lord enters to dine with someone is not the material dwelling that the person inhabits, exemplified by two more texts below:

*Hebrews 3: 6 **But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.***

*1 Corinthians 3: 16 **Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?***

Thus, considering that the reference to a person's house for fellowship with Christ is not the material house, also the room into which one should enter and close the door to pray is not restricted to a physical space.

Where and when, then, can a person pray to God?

Because the mystery kept for centuries and revealed to us through the Gospel of God is “Christ in us, the hope of glory,” so that we too may be continually in Christ, we can understand that the Christian's prayer to the Lord may be done anywhere and anytime a Christian turns one's heart to Christ, and through Christ to the Heavenly Father.

As already presented in previous chapters, prayer is a part of the relationship of fellowship with God. It is the part of the fellowship in which the Christian expresses oneself to the Lord.

In this way, a Christian might be in one's most ordinary affairs and have one's ears open to hear the Lord, as well as one can, amid these affairs, "close oneself" in one's heart and consult the Lord in prayer about everything that one is thinking and doing, asking the Lord to sustain him or her, strengthen him or her, and grant him or her wisdom and insight for every step of one's day.

A Christian, for example, might be in a meeting concerning one's work in the world and still be consulting the Lord through fellowship with the Holy Spirit about what one should be most aware of, what one should say, about the right way to intervene, if that is the case, and so on.

The thought that being truly before the Lord only occurs or is expressive when a person is at home and enters one's physical room to pray, or that it only happens when they go to a temple or a meeting with other people, is a concept according to the Old Covenant and entirely ineffective in the face of the different challenges that a person faces every new day.

Because of its weakness and unprofitableness, the Old Covenant that concentrated prayers around the tabernacles made by human hands was revoked and made obsolete by the Lord to make way for a New Covenant with superior or better promises and possibilities of fellowship with God. (A subject dealt with extensively in the theme on The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ).

*Hebrews 7: 15 **And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest***
*16 **who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.***
*17 **For He testifies: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."***
*18 **For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,***
*19 **for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.***

And if prayer could not be done everywhere and at all times, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, when He was crucified, could not have prayed to the Heavenly Father asking Him to forgive those who somehow cooperated so that His crucifixion became accomplished.

The examples in the Scriptures that show the practice of praying of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to the Heavenly Father predominantly point to this practice being carried out outside the physical temple that existed at that time.

Thus, considering that the Lord is continually with a Christian even if he or she is among other people or facing tasks to perform, this Christian is also always before the Lord. And for this reason, one is called to behave in all circumstances as it is worthy of behaving before God, which also includes the possibility to continually consult the Lord about the attitudes

to be adopted or avoided and ask the Lord for help in these varied circumstances.

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

...
14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

A Christian can always be in the presence of the Lord, thus being able, through prayer, to express oneself to the Lord in the most diverse places, moments, and situations.

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.*
- 4 For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.*
- 5 You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me.*
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.*
- 7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?*
- 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.*
- 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*
- 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.*
- 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me;*
- 12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.*
- ...
- 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.*

A Christian continually needs the guidance and help of the Lord, which is why the Lord is ready to be with this Christian constantly to listen, instruct, and protect him or her.

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

...
9 A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

Proverbs 20: 24 A man's steps are of the LORD; How then can a man understand his own way?

The only truly private room available in the world for an individual is one's heart. And dissociated from this condition, "prayer without ceasing" would not be possible to be performed.

The Lord Jesus severely warned His disciples to be wary of those who would come and falsely say that Christ would dwell in human houses and buildings, as if people depended on these houses or places to meet the Lord and to pray their prayers to Him, as follows:

*Matthew 24: 23 **Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it.***
24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.
*25 **See, I have told you beforehand.***
26 Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it.

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that prayer, first and foremost, is something personal or to be performed from within or the heart.

Thus, prayer, first of all, is a personal communication of a person addressed to God and initiated in one's heart before the Lord. Prayer is also the personal expression to God of someone who has made the Lord one's hiding place.

*Psalms 91: 1 **He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.***
2 I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."

...

9 Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place.

...

14 Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.
15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.

In the text of the last Psalm quoted above, we can see several times the Lord's answer to the prayer that an individual presents to Him. However, we likewise can see

the different parts of what an individual may say and do in the fellowship with the Lord, which are also called practices of prayer, such as:

- ⇒ 1) “*I will say of the Lord*” or “*for you have said,*” which represents an expression of prayer spoken to God;
- ⇒ 2) “*Because he has set his love upon Me,*” a point that can represent an expression of prayer in response to the fellowship offered by God;
- ⇒ 3) “*He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him,*” which represents an expression of prayer concerning a request in which God undertakes to answer it in all circumstances of the one who thus prays to Him.

Being able to put oneself apart from other people to have a more intense time of fellowship with the Lord is, of course, very good and profitable for an individual. Taking time apart to pray for more specific matters, as well as to read and study the Lord's word longer and more comprehensively, is something that every Christian, who has this possibility, should do regularly and should strive to do it regularly.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself often withdrew from the crowds and even His closest disciples to pray to the Heavenly Father.

Nevertheless, prayer is not limited to being practiced when someone physically departs from the presence of others, as we saw in the texts at the beginning of this chapter. The fact that a person schedules a time and place to pray can be very beneficial. However, if this leads an individual to abandon fellowship with God at other times in one's life, this pre-defined time and place may even become a path or a practice of deviating from the continuous relationship with the Lord.

Therefore, **in one of its central aspects, prayer encompasses the attitude of being continually attentive to remaining under the conscious dependence on the Lord in all that one thinks or does.**

Philippians 4: 8 **Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things.**

9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Praying without ceasing involves an individual being attentive, in every moment and circumstance, to keep oneself intimate with the Lord in the heart and to declare to God the desire or need for Him to help, guide, protect, and give him or her wisdom or even to simply lift the heart to the Lord in gratitude and for the praise of His Name and His Glory.

Furthermore, the practice of prayer is not something that an individual needs to keep announcing to others, for, as seen above, prayer is also a practice that can be performed before the “**Father who sees in secret**” and who, from what He sees in secret, rewards those who pray to Him.

A Christian can pray to God without anyone knowing one is praying, without announcing and boasting that one is praying, for, once again, when a Christian prays, one should be aware that one is addressing the “*Eternal Father who sees in secret.*”

Matthew 6: 5 And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

If someone prays and wants to demonstrate to others one's “great devotion to the practice of prayer,” one does not receive God's reward, for one's reward is to receive admiration from people because of one's “seeming piety and devotion to prayer” and what comes out of it.

Thus, entering the “room” is not someone announcing to the people around that one is withdrawing for a “holy prayer” time. An individual “going into his or her room” may also be done in silence, and often even in secret, to tune one's ears to hear God and to, from a contrite heart before God, ask for the Lord's help, protection, strength, wisdom, and guidance.

Praying to God is to express the dependence that an individual has on the Lord even concerning the thoughts that are proposed in the world to the heart of the one who prays or about the thoughts that this person has in one's own heart, with the expectation of receiving from the Lord an answer to the prayer or the consultation made to Him.

*2 Corinthians 10: 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,
5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*

*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.*

“*Going into your room and shutting the door to pray to the Lord*” encompasses, then, praying in such a way that this prayer is expressed personally, directly, or indeed individually before God as an intimate expression to the Lord on the part of the one who prays, and not just saying that one prays or that one practices prayers to be seen or heard by others.

So, the act of praying and the motivations with which a person prays also represent a way in which an individual manifests oneself before God and how the Lord sees the heart of the one who prays and what one indeed aims to achieve.

The Lord Jesus teaches us that those who like to trumpet their practices of prayers are the religious hypocrites. And recalling yet that the word *hypocrisy* comes from the idea of *acting as an actor who dissimulates on stage to exhibit oneself*, we can see that in the world, many pray to be seen by others, which is why they should never be seen as a suitable model for prayer.

Luke 12: 1 In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

A Christian does not need to show other people a “good performance of prayer,” but what one needs, in one’s heart, is to actually and effectively continually practice prayer before God, who is truly the Only One who can help him or her always and in everything one needs in one’s life.

Psalms 146: 3 Do not put your trust in princes, Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help.
4 His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish.
5 Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in the LORD his God,
6 Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever.

The Christian who learns the value of prayer is one who prays mainly when no one sees and even when many do not even know that one prays to the Lord, for one does not pray to men, but to God, and neither is the reward according to men that one seeks to achieve.

Galatians 1: 10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

What matters in prayer is that God hears it, not that people know how much a person has prayed.

The prayer life of a believer in Christ is not something to be shown off, for, without a personal fellowship with Christ, one’s public prayer can achieve nothing from God.

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.

Finally, or on the other hand, when the Scriptures teach that prayer is primarily a Christian's personal attitude toward God, they do not say that there can be no joint prayer and no collective thanksgiving to God, but that these never should aim to replace the individual prayer of each Christian to the Lord.

There is no way for every Christian to be always together with others to pray with them and by this keeping the instruction to pray without ceasing. For this reason, the primordial condition of prayer is that each one practices it first and foremost in one's own personal life for later, if it is opportune, also do it together with others, not the other way around.

*Psalms 62: 8 **Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.***

The fact that the last psalm presented above exhorts people to always trust in God and pour out their hearts before Him does not mean that the text is telling everyone to pray all the time collectively, nor to set up prayer shifts or prayer groups that carry out these shifts. Looking at the broader context of the Scriptures regarding prayer, we can understand that what is said in the last verse above can only be fulfilled, in fact, if each person of the people does this continuously in one's own life, as only each individual can pour out one's own heart before the Lord in every moment of one's life.

In the New Covenant that the Lord Jesus Christ came to reveal and offer to all people in the world, the personal relationship of each Christian with God is for everyone and cannot be carried out by others, much less a collective of fellow believers can come to mediate others in what each one is called to do personally before God and with God, as well as what God wants to do in and for each of His children.

Among other aspects, the New Covenant was granted by the Lord also to establish the conditions for each Christian to be able to pray without ceasing to God in any place and at any time, for it is, first, personal between each Christian and one's Lord, Redeemer, and Author and Finisher of one's faith. (A subject approached more extensively in the theme on Knowing About God or Knowing God and on The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ).

*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.***

C5. The Multiform Ways of Expressing Prayer

As mentioned in previous chapters, prayer contemplates the aspect of a person's communication with God through which one can express oneself before the Lord.

It has also been mentioned several times that the expressions of prayers can be very varied, just as it may occur in many good communications between two or more parties.

Nevertheless, **when we are faced with the matter of multiple expressions in prayers, we understand that it is worth noting that they may encompass, at the same time, different ways for a person to express oneself to the Lord as well as different contents with distinct purposes.**

Thus, **in the Scriptures, prayer is also equated with what is called supplications, intercessions, thanksgivings, praises, worship, and others, demonstrating that the practice of prayer is not a repetitive ritual or of non-alternating contents.**

As for prayer, there are times when the urgency of the need will imply a very brief request for help from God, without the possibility of long introductions or exaltation to God. There are times when the emphasis of some supplication will be more emergent, but which, afterward or when the supplication is answered, may become a reason for expressing praise and gratitude to God.

We have also seen that the Lord is not impressed by long oratory and flattery, but He is pleased with a contrite heart and that turns to Him with faith in the expectation that He is able to answer prayers with words and to perform deeds in response to these prayers.

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

Therefore, when the Scriptures teach about the diversity of expressions to be presented to God through prayer, rather than a pre-defined ritual proposal to be followed, they show an instruction of the varied subjects and emphases that can be addressed in prayer.

If the Scriptures did not teach about the diversity of topics and actions that can be presented in prayer, people could think and teach that only some specific forms or aspects could be presented to God.

And in the variety of forms and the content of prayers, one may even find the practice of prayers in a tongue also for the benefit of those who perform it, as shown in the text below:

*1 Corinthians 14: 2 **For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.***

*3 **But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.***

4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.

...

13 Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

15 What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

Prayers to God may cover all areas of a person's life, from confessing sin, pouring out the heart before the Lord, as we saw a little above, asking for wisdom, giving thanks, supplications under afflictions, praying in tongues, and so on.

On the other hand, **the Scriptures expose the subdivisions of themes in the practice of prayer also so that Christians are attentive to behave soberly before God.**

Often when a person becomes involved in an affliction, one may shift to focus only on the tribulation and may find oneself succumbing to the concerns of that particular situation. However, when one looks at other aspects of prayer, one can see that there are many benefits of God all around him or her that should also be remembered and brought up before the Lord.

Seeking a broader view when praying to the Lord allows a person's relationship with God to be more comprehensive and not only regarding what one is so focused on at a particular moment in life.

Thus, **there may be times when the best way for an individual to carry out prayer is, precisely, to mix the cry out and thanksgiving so that a specific or momentary need or anxiety does not overshadow, before the eyes of the one who prays, the greatness and care of God as a whole, as also exemplified below:**

Philippians 4: 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Through prayer, a Christian can present all one's anxieties before God. And this does not mean that God does not already know them, but when a person presents one's needs or worries to God, one is saying that it is one's desire that the Lord may intervene on one's behalf in these matters according to His will and eternal righteousness.

Not all Christians want God to act in all areas of their lives. And for this, they often stop to pray to the Lord. However, when a Christian presents

oneself to God, asking the Lord to act and help him or her in every area of one's life, this Christian declares that one wants the Lord's intervention in all aspects of one's living and walking in the world.

On the other hand, as already said, prayer also needs to contain sobriety. That is, the fact that a Christian is facing difficulty and anxiety does not entitle him or her to declare whatever one wants to say about life and God before the Lord Himself, at the risk of only presenting “empty talk” before the Lord.

When a person turns to God through the practice of prayer, one also needs to ponder various general aspects of one's life and be grateful for the many benefits of the Lord to him or her and to the whole creation.

In this way, **when someone presents one's subjects in a balanced and respectful way to the Lord, God provides His peace to him or her so that one's understanding and one's heart may always remain in Christ Jesus.**

Even though the moment is arduous and requires an emerging cry for deliverance from a great affliction, it is always good to remember that prayer is a relationship of fellowship and respect toward God.

God will always be God, and we will be His creation, something that can never be reversed. Therefore, we, as the creation or creature, must be aware that we should always present ourselves with respect before God.

*1 Peter 5: 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,
7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*

*Isaiah 45: 21 Tell and bring forth your case; Yes, let them take counsel together. Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, A just God and a Savior; There is none besides Me.
22 Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.
23 I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, And shall not return, That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath.
24 He shall say, 'Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength. To Him men shall come, And all shall be ashamed Who are incensed against Him.'*

Among the diversity of topics to be addressed in a moment of prayer or as an act of expressing oneself before the Lord, there are situations in which the best prayer practice is even for the person to simply expose oneself to God with sadness and repentance because of what one harbored in one's heart and because of the works contrary to God that one allowed oneself to be involved.

*James 4: 8 **Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.***

*9 **Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.***

*10 **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.***

God does not offer the possibility of practicing the prayer to the Lord as a burden, nor is it a painful command that God wants to impose on people, as already mentioned. However, this does not mean that some moments of prayer are not accompanied by crying and do not have a significant impact on the life or soul of those who come to the Lord.

Highlighting this point once again, **prayer is part of a living relationship with the Lord. And as such, it encompasses various circumstances, subjects, and aspects that may occur in the life of a person who voluntarily presents oneself to God.**

In prayer, there can be happiness or joyful expressions before the glorious presence of the Lord, but also sadness and afflictions before the light of the Lord, which can penetrate the deepest parts of the heart of those who are willing to expose themselves to the Lord also to be healed and purified through heavenly love.

Moreover, given such profound facts that can occur through the practice of prayer, that is, through the practical attitude of a person voluntarily presenting oneself to God, we would like to quote here once again the text with which we concluded the previous chapter, and in which the Lord declares to us that exactly how each person's relationship practice with Him will be is something that effectively belongs to Him alone to teach those who also attend His invitation to fellowship with Him.

*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.***

Therefore, **when the Scriptures show us that prayer can come to be expressed through supplication, worship, outcry, thanksgiving, and the like, they are in no way authorizing people to adopt or attempt to impose to others a ritual, a set of steps, or formula of how one should pray to God, trying to return to some manner of leading the prayer of others similar to what was practiced in the First or Old Covenant according to the Law of Moses or similar to it.**

What was written for those who were subject to the Law of Moses, and the rituals associated with it, was for those who were under this law. However, this entirely changed for those who are *in Christ Jesus*, as it is also widely exposed in the themes on

The Gospel of God's Righteousness, The Gospel of God's Grace, and The Gospel of God's Glory and Christ's Glory, a point exemplified one more time through the texts below:

Romans 3: 19 **Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.**

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

Romans 6: 14 **For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.**

Hebrews 7: 12 **For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.**

Romans 10: 4 **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**

When the Lord taught that people should not use mere repetitions of words when praying to God, as, for instance, is done by the so-called predefined prayers, He taught that they are “vain or empty” prayers or words.

The prayers of mere repetitions do not express, and cannot express, a living and bilateral relationship of people with God, because in a bilateral relationship, the person prays about aspects of one's life to God and the Lord answers him or her, or God speaks to the person and one responds to the Lord according to what God has communicated.

Thus, what the Lord calls prayer does not consist of the same repetitive words or litanies that traditionally have been taught to so many people.

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that God does not pay attention to people's prayers because of the number of prayers or sacrifices they perform or the number of words they utter. God attends people when they turn away from the ready-made or automatic rules or formulas taught by traditions and when, through Christ, they seek God personally and individually from hearts that are contrite in a living and real way before the Eternal Lord.

In vain repetitions, there is no space for a lively exchange of communication between the parts and according to the dynamics that life needs. Therefore, they are discarded by God, similar to how the law of Moses was made obsolete with its rites, symbolisms of worship, and ineffective prayers that so many people still insist on copying or being inspired by even today.

Emphasizing, then, once again, what has been mentioned so many times in the various themes addressed in the Systemic Teaching about Christian Life, the Lord,

when He calls us to receive His salvation, also calls us to a living fellowship with Him, a point presented in the Scriptures as an integral or essential aspect of eternal life.

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

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

Therefore, even concerning the diversity of ways of praying to God, we would only like to highlight once again a basic point of prayer that never changes, no matter how much people try other paths and try to justify them with their most diverse arguments, namely:

1 Timothy 2: 5 **For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,**
6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Every time a person practices prayer, it is opportune for one to confess before God through Whom one is drawing close to the Lord. And this, so that one may remember to Whom praise and reverence is due to be able to draw near to one's Eternal Creator freely and to express oneself to Him.

Hebrews 10: 19 **Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,**
20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,
21 and having a High Priest over the house of God,
22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

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.**

John 15: 16 **You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.**

John 16: 24 **Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.**

Furthermore, we emphasize that **“asking something in the name of Jesus” goes far beyond merely mentioning the name of Christ at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the prayer.**

“To ask the Heavenly Father for something in Jesus’ name” is to ask what Christ wants a person to ask God, which shows us that for this, it is necessary that the person who wants to pray something in Jesus’ name has first been taught by Christ about what to ask, also demonstrating once more that prayer is not a one-sided practice and words merely uttered by lips whose hearts are far from the fellowship with the Lord.

Finally, in this chapter, when the subject of the variety of aspects of prayer is also addressed in terms of specific content and purpose, we understand that it is crucial always to remember that the Lord Himself also asks us to pray for some particular matters on which He calls us to be cooperators of His work in the world so that, for instance:

- ⇒ 1) His Name is sanctified;
- ⇒ 2) His kingdom may be even more present on Earth;
- ⇒ 3) His will may be done on Earth as in Heaven;
- ⇒ 4) The manifestation of His righteousness becomes extended widely to the children of God and also to the world;
- ⇒ 5) His mercy may be extended to all human beings in the world, for it is God's will that all know the truth about His Son Jesus Christ as the only Mediator between God and human beings;
- ⇒ 6) All the saints, those who are of the Body of Christ in the world or who everywhere call upon Christ Jesus as Lord, remain united to the One Head of the Body, who is Christ Himself;
- ⇒ 7) All those who are incarcerated may be the targets of the Lord's attention and mercy;
- ⇒ 8) The Lord of the harvest may send workers to the harvest that is white for the harvest;
- ⇒ 9) The rulers and those who are in eminence may act in cooperation so that all may have a meek and quiet life so that they may freely devote themselves to a life of godliness and reverence towards God;
- ⇒ 10) The propagation of the word of the Eternal Gospel of God, of Christ, and the Heavenly Kingdom is extended to all peoples and families as a witness of the grace of God to all nations.

The prayers of Christians on behalf of peace, of others, of rulers, and the saints are actions of cooperation with the work that the Lord is carrying out on Earth in different generations.

When a person comes to see the Gospel of God also as the Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, seeing through the Gospel that Christ is also the Head of all principality and power, just as Christ is also the King of Righteousness and King of Peace, according to the Order of Melchizedek, one too can learn why the Lord invites him or her to pray to ask that the kingdom of God and His righteousness may come to be manifested more fully on Earth.

Part of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as King is performed regardless of what people ask of Him, but other parts are performed when people yearn and practically ask for His kingdom and eternal righteousness to be manifested more widely in their lives and the world. And in this sense, the Lord asks Christians to be His fellow workers for their own good, but also for mercy and on behalf of the salvation of those who have not yet received His Gospel.

The faithful prayer of Christians is an instrument of love through which they too can declare to the Lord their desire for the intervention of the heavenly kingdom in the world, just as they can express to the Lord their longing for the glorification of the name of the Heavenly Father and Christ, for His kingdom, and the fulfillment of the Lord's will on Earth in their and future generations.

- 1 Timothy 2: 1* **Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,**
2 **for kings and all who are in authority (or in eminence), that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.**
3 **For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,**
4 **who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**
5 **For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,**
6 **who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.**

Ephesians 6: 18 ... **praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.**

Hebrews 13: 3 **Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body. (AV)**

- 2 Thessalonians 3: 1* **Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,**
2 **and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.**
3 **But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.**

Luke 10: 2 Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

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

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

1 John 5: 11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

When God calls Christians to pray for all people throughout the present world, the Lord also does so that Christians will strengthen their hearts in the fact that the One in whom they choose to believe is fully empowered to understand all people in their most diverse peoples and nations, just as He is mighty to save all who cry out for Him to be the Lord of their lives.

Romans 10: 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

To human eyes, a city, a people, or a nation may seem gigantic and with endless problems to be solved, but before the Lord and the strength of His power, nothing can surpass His sovereign position and His power to intervene in favor of all who turn to Him. A reason why the Lord calls those who believe in Him to sit in the heavenly places *in Christ* and to pray not having as reference the limited capacity of the human being, but the endless mercy, grace, and sovereignty of the Eternal Lord.

Isaiah 51: 5 My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth, And My arms will judge the peoples; The coastlands will wait upon Me, And on My arm they will trust.

6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, And look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, The earth will grow old like a garment, And those who dwell in it will die in like manner; But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not be abolished.

7 Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, You people in whose heart is My law: Do not fear the reproach of men, Nor be afraid of their insults.

8 For the moth will eat them up like a garment, And the worm will eat them like wool; But My righteousness will be forever, And My salvation from generation to generation.

Isaiah 12: 1 **And in that day you will say: "O LORD, I will praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.**

2 Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.'"

3 Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation.

4 And in that day you will say: "Praise the LORD, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted.

5 Sing to the LORD, For He has done excellent things; This is known in all the earth.

6 Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!"

Psalms 117: 1 **Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!**

2 For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 67: 1 **God be merciful to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us.**

2 That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.

3 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

4 Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously, And govern the nations on earth.

5 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

6 Then the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us.

7 God shall bless us, And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

Psalms 148: 1 **Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights!**

...
13 Let them praise the name of the LORD, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven.

Psalms 146: 10 **The LORD shall reign forever, Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!**

C6. Watch, therefore, Praying

Finally, as the last chapter of this theme, we would like to address more specifically the title of this material, namely: “Watchful in Prayer or Watch in Prayer.”

God speaks to human beings in various ways, even if they are unwilling to listen to Him. And the initiative of proposing the relationship of God with human beings has always started by the Lord and continues to come from God's side.

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.*

God is much more interested in talking to people and hearing people talk to Him than the people themselves are.

We saw earlier that the Lord's ear is not heavy so that it cannot hear, just as His hand is not shortened so that He cannot save.

Nevertheless, **part of the Lord's very speech to people also awaits their return to Him, an aspect in which prayer to God represents the manifestation through which a person demonstrates that one wants to interact with the Lord and that one wants God's action in one's life.**

When someone talks to a person over and over again and this individual never replies the first, the tendency is that the person who always takes the lead in the conversation will also withdraw from looking for the person who never responds, for a person who never responds to the individual who seeks him or her many times also demonstrates, with one's posture, the disinterest or little real interest in communicating with the other party.

A person may yet claim that one does not know how to pray. However, before the Lord, this too does not represent an impediment, for prayer is learned by practicing and exposing oneself to the teaching of the Lord, as we have seen repeatedly in previous chapters.

Prayer is the human being's reciprocal to the voice of the Lord. However, in many situations when it is not practiced, the Lord also withholds Himself in the sense of not acting in a specific way in favor of the individual's life who does not pray to Him.

Considering that a person's prayer to God is a way to express to the Lord, with the heart and by words, that one wants to be exposed to Him and what comes from Him, when a person refrains from praying, also what is associated with being released by the Lord after that same person's response to Him may come to be suspended from being granted to an individual.

The primary benefit of a Christian's willingness to want to communicate with God is the growing fellowship that is established between the Lord and the one who believes in Him, and yet, that from this fellowship, many of the aspects of the Christian's

development in the salvation offered to him or her by the Lord are released and which are not learned or manifested if a person abstains from the practice of prayer.

The Lord Jesus Christ declared that the one who does not abide in Him can do nothing. That is, what an individual produces without remaining in Christ will not be something actually generated according to God's will for one's life. The written word of the Lord reinforces the centrality of abiding in Him from various angles, expressions, and teachings, showing, therefore, that prayer is a crucial attitude for this permanence to be cultivated and maintained.

Thus, **given the importance that prayer has in the aspect of Christians to remain united with Christ and to value what has been given them by the grace of the heavenly kingdom, the Lord also instructs them, in a very objective way, not to neglect or not distracted from remaining in the primordial aspects of the Christian life, using for this the reference to the verb “to watch” or similar, as exemplified below:**

*1 Corinthians 16: 13 **Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.***

*Mark 13: 37 **"And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"***

*Revelation 3: 11 **Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.***

The Christian in the world does not find oneself in a calm environment and that naturally leans towards the ways of the Lord. On the contrary, the Christian in the world is in a context that insistently works so that people turn away from the path of the Lord and come to oppose the Eternal Creator.

Although a Christian can have abundant inner peace because of the presence of Christ in one's heart, one's surroundings are troubled and vile. Hence, one needs to learn to be continually on the alert or watchful in the Lord.

*1 Peter 5: 8 **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.***
*9 **Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.***

Nevertheless, what does to be vigilant or watchful more specifically mean?

What should be watched, and how should something be guarded?

In one of the Psalms recorded in the Scriptures, we find a very significant or vital answer to the questions mentioned in the above paragraphs, namely:

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.

Looking at the last text mentioned above, we can see that the work of being vigilant is futile or inappropriate if the central aspect of being watchful is not present.

If a person reads the texts on being watchful carelessly and does not associate them with the essential condition of fellowship with the Lord, one may make enormous vigilance efforts and still not reap its benefits by not sticking to the central aspect of any work of being watchful concerning one's life.

Considering the last Psalm quoted above once more, we can observe that **“the main watching work of a Christian is that he or she is always watching whether the Lord is watching for him or her!”**

No human being, in oneself, is skilled enough to manage to set up a watching system that will protect him or her from the devil's tricks, the darkness, the world, and its cunning snares.

Nevertheless, **if a person adopts the Lord as the One who watches over one's life, one will not be taken by surprise or deceived, for the Lord can never be taken by surprise or deceived by anyone or any other creature. The Lord is always attentive, and the Lord never sleeps or will sleep.**

Psalms 121: 1 I will lift up my eyes to the hills, From whence comes my help?

2 My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

3 He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber.

4 Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade at your right hand.

6 The sun shall not strike you by day, Nor the moon by night.

7 The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.

8 The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore.

Neither mountains, that is, nor the elevated or high places, nor fortresses or isolated places, can guard and help people if the Lord is not the One who protects and watches over them, for people, in their own refuges, still remain vulnerable to those around them or themselves.

When a person stumbles or becomes involved in some deceit or cunning craftiness, it is not because the Lord has been deceived, but the person oneself may have let one's guard down in the matter of remaining in fellowship with the Lord.

Here, however, it is worth emphasizing that being under the Lord's watch does not mean that a person will never be exposed to hardships and persecutions on Earth. There are several persecutions that come upon Christians without them having been negligent in fellowship with the Lord. In the world, there are actions that oppose the

children of God precisely because they watch to keep themselves under the care of the Lord and to live and walk according to His will.

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

*Matthew 5: 10 **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

*1 Peter 4: 3 **For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.***

*4 **In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.***

...
*14 **If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.***

When a Christian remains in fellowship with God, the Lord Himself will comfort and instruct this individual to act when there is opposition because of one's perseverance in the work of abiding in Christ and His ways.

Therefore, **the Christian needs to be watchful, as a matter of priority, if one is in continuous communication with God so that the Lord always guides one's life, warns the Christian also about dangers that are possible to be avoided, and leads him or her through deliverances in those aspects that arise as opposition in the Christian's journey according to the will of God.**

*2 Thessalonians 3: 1 **Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,***
*2 **and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.***

A Christian needs to take shelter in the hiding place of God Most High to be continually under God's watch, remembering that the hiding place granted by God Most High to His children is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that a Christian must be hidden or sheltered under the Lord's watch.

*Psalms 31: 19 **Oh, how great is Your goodness, Which You have laid up for those who fear You, Which You have prepared for those who trust in You In the presence of the sons of men!***

*20 **You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence From the plots of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion From the strife of tongues.***

Colossians 3: 1 ***If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.***
2 ***Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.***
3 ***For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.***

And when we return to reviewing that the place for a person to be under the Lord's watch on one's behalf is *in Christ*, we also return once more to what has been commented on as the essence of perseverance in prayer, which is perseverance in living and voluntary fellowship with the Lord on the part of the one who was called by God to it.

Briefly, then, since this topic has been approached extensively in other themes and the previous chapters of the present material, **a Christian hides oneself in Christ, through faith, while maintaining bilateral communion with the Lord, while elevating one's thoughts to hear the things that are from above where Christ sits, as well as while one keeps expressing oneself to the Lord in what it is one's duty to do.**

A Christian ceases to hide in God when the things of Earth begin to overwhelm one's fellowship with the Lord, which, in other words, is to say that a Christian ceases to hide in God also when one "stops practicing prayer."

When a Christian fails to be attentive to listening to God, as well as responding to God's voice addressed to him or her, one begins to come out of the hiding place of God Most High, the position of the Lord's watch. One begins to lean on one's own thoughts or the thoughts surrounding him or her and that do not come from God.

If a Christian stops to care about listening to God and refrains from expressing oneself in return to the Lord, one is vulnerable in one's vigilance and security, for one lacks the God-given discernment to keep oneself on the path or will of the Lord, which brings us back to the following text:

Ephesians 5: 14 ***Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."***
15 ***See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,***
16 ***redeeming the time, because the days are evil.***
17 ***Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.***

Through the text of Ephesians 5, quoted above, God does not call a person, first, to wake up and rise to perform works for Christ, but to present oneself to the Lord Jesus to be enlightened by Him in the will of God, a situation in which awakening to the point of standing ready before Christ can also be a way of describing what the practice of prayer is.

The Psalmist of Psalm 25, when he prays to be guided in the paths that lead to true life, does not ask the Lord to bless the ways that the psalmist himself chose. Instead, He asks to be led in the paths that the Lord establishes for his life because only the ways of the Lord are according to truth and mercy, as well as, or for this very reason, they are

also the only ways in which there is protection and lasting security indeed for the soul, as described below:

- Psalms 25: 1 To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.*
- 2 *O my God, I trust in You; Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies triumph over me.*
- 3 *Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause.*
- 4 *Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths.*
- 5 *Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.*
- 6 *Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses, For they are from of old.*
- 7 *Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; According to Your mercy remember me, For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.*
- 8 *Good and upright is the LORD; Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.*
- 9 *The humble He guides in justice, And the humble He teaches His way.*
- 10 *All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.*
- 11 *For Your name's sake, O LORD, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.*
- 12 *Who is the man that fears the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses.*
- 13 *He himself shall dwell in prosperity, And his descendants shall inherit the earth.*
- 14 *The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, And He will show them His covenant.*
- 15 *My eyes are ever toward the LORD, For He shall pluck my feet out of the net.*
- 16 *Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me, For I am desolate and afflicted.*
- 17 *The troubles of my heart have enlarged; Bring me out of my distresses!*
- 18 *Look on my affliction and my pain, And forgive all my sins.*
- 19 *Consider my enemies, for they are many; And they hate me with cruel hatred.*
- 20 *Keep my soul, and deliver me; Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You.*
- 21 *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, For I wait for You.*
-

So, when we begin to understand that watching is related to watching if we are abiding in the Lord and if we remain responding appropriately to the Lord's instructions and directions, we can also understand more fully what the Lord Jesus Christ warned us to be attentive to, which also encompasses watching in prayer, as explained in the following texts:

Luke 21: 36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Colossians 4: 2 **Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.**

Ephesians 6: 18 ... **praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.**

In several texts of the so-called New Testament, we find the expression watch and pray, showing us that when watching is associated with praying, this also implies the following points:

- ⇒ 1st) Watch to see if you are praying;
- ⇒ 2nd) Since you are praying, watch to be attentive to what the Lord has said and to the words that He continues to instruct;
- ⇒ 3rd) Once you are listening, also watch to answer the Lord concerning the position and the readiness to follow in the will and paths appointed by the Lord.

Watch, therefore, and pray always is another way of saying “pray without ceasing,” alerting us the Lord, in other words, to the importance of a person not straying from bilateral fellowship with Him.

The Lord calls us to pray or gives us the privilege to pray to Him because He wants us to be well. Thus, prayer is a practice for the good of the one who prays.

In this way, **Christ's appeal to a person to watch if one is praying is for this person to watch not to turn away from what is beneficial to him or her, or, mainly, from the One who is beneficial to him or her and wants one's eternal good.**

Perseverance in prayer helps a person to escape from many tribulations that will come upon the portion of humanity that abstains from God, as well as protects them always to be standing or ready before the presence of the Lord Jesus to be enlightened and instructed by Him.

Therefore, **the one who remains vigilant in prayer is not taken by surprise as if he or she were walking in darkness, unless one does not watch and voluntarily or by personal distraction abstains oneself from the light.**

1 Thessalonians 5: 1 **But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.**

2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

- 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.**
- 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.**
- 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.**
- 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.**
- 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,**
- 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.**
-

The individual who watches through praying, or watches if one is keeping oneself in prayer before the Lord, is not taken by surprise by the darkness, for this person remains in the refuge of the light, in the hiding place of God Most High, or before the eyes of whom all and all things are disclosed, patent, or open.

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

- 14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.**
-

A person dissociated from fellowship with Christ is a person who places oneself in an area vulnerable to fascination or deception because one does not cling to Christ as the truth for one's life, and one's vigilance becomes vain by distancing oneself from the love of the truth. A subject covered more broadly in the themes 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, also exemplified in the texts below:

1 Corinthians 2: 14 **But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

- 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.**

16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2: 9 **The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,**

10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Therefore, **to be spiritual is to love the truth, to love Christ who is the truth, and is to discern what needs to be discerned according to the instruction or according to the mind of Christ, to whom a Christian also has access through prayer. It is to keep accessing Christ continually that a Christian is called to watch in prayer.**

We also have already mentioned that the call of the Lord Jesus Christ for every Christian to be in prayer at all times is not to put on them a hard weight, rule, or a difficult task to be carried out. On the contrary, continual prayer or the specific and direct search for God is an indescribable benefit bestowed upon every person who believes in Christ Jesus as one's Lord and Savior.

In addition to being a person's way of consulting the Lord, asking for wisdom, and agreeing with God's will in one's life, continual prayer or continually seeking the Lord is a way through which one can be instructed in the paths of the Lord and also receive the warnings of what does not come from the kingdom of light.

Keeping always watching in prayer, or remaining in continual fellowship with God, corresponds to the continued acceptance of the offer of the newness of life that the Lord offers to all human beings, but which also protects the Christian even from oneself or the weaknesses of one's flesh towards the practice of good and that strongly oppose the purpose of the Spirit of the Lord in one's life.

*Matthew 26: 41 **Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.***

Prayer is a widely satisfactory way for a person to present oneself to the Lord in all that one needs. Therefore, it is also so vital that each person remains vigilant in practicing it in the most varied moments and circumstances of one's life.

Thus:

- ⇒ *Watch if you are continuously praying;*
- ⇒ *Always watch if you are remaining in the living fellowship with God.*

Praise God for speaking to His children, as well as for the fact that He, in His love for each of His children, provides them with the opportunity to draw close to Him, adding yet the granting of His Holy Spirit to help them in everything, even when they do not know how to pray.

In many ways and through many gifts, the Lord speaks to human beings and still gives them all the help to be able to return His voice, but also informing them that watching to remain in the practice of such a great gift involves each individual who has been called to fellowship with the Lord, for this call is an opportunity or an offer of the Lord, and not an imposition.

Galatians 4: 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"
7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

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,

17 and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

...

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.

...

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The main work of watching that God calls people to perform is to remain in Christ, for, in Christ, the vigilance over the most varied aspects of the life of the one who is in Him belongs to the Lord who can always guard and instruct those who believe in Him.

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."

Revelation 3: 10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

John 10: 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

When the Lord calls us to watch, at all times, praying, the Lord does it because He is also ready to hear us at all times and in all that we need to live and walk in His will.

So, since the Lord, our God, abundantly overflows His mercy and long-suffering towards all human beings to call them to salvation, how much more, then, shall He not do it towards those who respond to His call to draw near to Him?

Romans 5: 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Psalms 4: 1 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.

Psalms 66: 16 Come and hear, all you who fear God, And I will declare what He has done for my soul.

17 I cried to Him with my mouth, And He was extolled with my tongue.

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.

19 But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.

20 Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer, Nor His mercy from me!

Therefore:

Luke 21: 36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

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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