

- Systemic Teaching about Christian Life -



The Christian and the Authority

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.*

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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 Challenging Theme of Authority

When someone begins to consider some of the central aspects of life in the present world, one can soon realize that one of these primary aspects is strongly related to the capacity and power of action or performance that a person needs to have in the different areas of one's life.

For instance, if we look at food production, we can observe that it is not enough for a person to have a piece of soil and have the seed to sow in it if one does not also have the capacity to prepare the ground, sow the seed, and reap the fruits of the sowing.

In everything one does, the human being is dependent on receiving capabilities and power to live. And indeed, the removal of these items implies the end of one's life. The natural life of the human being without the essential support and power of survival, which are given to an individual by the Spirit of the Lord, simply ceases to exist and becomes earth or dust again.

*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.***

Nevertheless, if someone goes further and starts to consider, in a more profound way, one's own capacity and power to accomplish something, one will also be able to realize that these aspects will not always be enough for a person to achieve what one wants. Often, it is also necessary to have freedom or authorization so that capacity and power can be used appropriately.

In many situations in the world, a person may even be capable and have the power to accomplish something, but one may not be or not be considered authorized to conduct what one intends or needs to fulfill.

In the general context of life, then, there is the basic strength for people to accomplish something, but there is also the force that is recognized as authorized, appropriate, legitimate, or by right for people to use in their most diverse actions.

There is a big or significant distinction between the basic capacity granted to a human being to perform a series of actions in life and the condition of acting according to what is legitimate or, at the same time, pertinent before God and one's fellow men.

A Christian, for example, may have the capacity to sin, but one should not do so because, concerning one's own good and the good of others, it is not reasonable, pertinent, or appropriate to practice sin.

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

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

When someone receives the salvation offered by God through the Lord Christ Jesus and becomes part of it, one is also given what one needs to be able to adopt a life in victory over sin and the lusts of the passions of the flesh.

Galatians 5: 16 ***I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.***

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

...
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.

Titus 2: 11 ***For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,***

12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ...

If the human being could already naturally count on a measure of capacity and power to carry out many actions and works, *in Christ*, a Christian is called to distinct freedom and an even much broader capacity. *In Christ*, the Christian is called not only to have the ability and power to cooperate in one's natural survival, but also to be able to live and walk according to the will of the Heavenly Father for one's life. A subject more widely addressed in the themes of The Gospel of Salvation, The Gospel of the Power of God, The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, and The Gospel of the Righteousness of God.

In Christ, a Christian is empowered, authorized, and strengthened with the power and strength of the Lord to overcome the temptations that are in the world against one's life, as well as to aim and carry out the Lord's will for him or her.

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

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

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.

In Christ, or in life through faith in the Son of God, a Christian finds the strength and capacity for life that would be impossible to achieve in the condition of being estranged from a living relationship with the Lord. However, also *in Christ*, one is granted rights before God and the world that start to give him or her support to live and walk according to the new condition attributed to him or her by the Lord's salvation. Every Christian who is willing to carry out the work of "*fellowship and abiding in Christ*" has at one's disposal the qualification, capability, or power to live and walk according to the will of God for one's life.

Thus, if anyone persists in continuing to advance a little further on the question of acting in duly authorized freedom, capacity, and power, one may observe that in the Scriptures, there is still the exposition of one more specific point and with particular purposes of enablement, power, and freedom to act in an authorized manner.

Concerning life in general exposed in the Scriptures, there are qualifications and possibilities to act in the world that are specifically associated with some functions and actions to which people are called, or by which they are willing to act, and which are directly related to the theme of authority.

In its everyday use, the theme of authority has been used by many people as an expression of a right to something or a right over something, almost as if authority and a right over something were synonymous. However, understanding the specific theme of authority from the perspective of the Scriptures can be very challenging, for this theme is not used in them in such a generalized way as many people use it in their daily lives.

In the Scriptures, the word *authority* is not so generically applied to any or all rights a person may have. Instead, it is used in a more restricted way, in which the right to have or accomplish something is combined with the responsibilities for what the right was granted.

For example, to receive the salvation offered by the Lord, an individual does not need to hold authority, as salvation is offered and granted by the grace of the Lord. A person only needs to be able to opt for it and receive it through faith in Christ Jesus.

So, the use of the expression "*having authority*" needs to be carried out with caution, for this expression is not necessary for all aspects with which the Christian relates. *In Christ*, a Christian, for instance, is already established above the slavery that sin wants to impose on people, but this does not mean that the Christian "*has authority*" over sin in general in the whole world to command how sin should act or withdraw from acting in all circumstances of all people. A Christian, *in Christ*, is victorious over sin, but this is different from "*having authority*" over every manifestation of sin in the entire world to try to reign and command the workings of sin itself in all circumstances of all people.

In the Scriptures, the word *authority*, in general, is applied more specifically to the condition that is given to someone to perform specific functions and to administer the functions entrusted to him or her by legitimate right before God.

The authority described in the Scriptures may even grant some rights to act over something or lives without necessarily giving the right of ownership over what was given the right to act.

For example, God can grant a measure of authority to an individual in the exercise of one of the functions of regency or government of a municipality, region, state, or country, but without this being associated with granting this individual any right of ownership over the persons, regions, or territories over which one exercises the function of rulership according to the authority given by God.

On the other hand, an individual or a group of individuals may have taken possession of some items according to the criteria used in the world without actually having any authority to act on them.

Thus, if any “right” among people is not recognized by God or if the means by which people seek to exercise their rights are not in accordance with what the Lord establishes, a person, despite the “rights one claims to have,” can be completely dissociated from the principles of what the Scriptures present as being “*authority*.”

Authority is not an instrument, attribute, or capacity that a person receives to be able to impose oneself on others or their goods and possessions to obtain what one wants.

On the contrary, as we will see later, **authority is a condition through which God Himself acts and which the Lord also wants to grant to human beings for them to do or accomplish what is good and just. For this reason, this is one of the main points of view from which the approach to the subject of authority should be carried out.**

The authority granted by God to a person, essentially, is a condition of capability, rights, and responsibilities that the Lord bestows so that this person serves one's fellow men according to the will and heavenly righteousness, making this topic so challenging not to be misunderstood.

Just as it is not the world, the cultures, and the traditions that define what the Kingdom of God, His Righteousness, His Grace, and His Church are, but it is the Lord who does it, as seen in specific subjects of the series on the Gospel of God, so also the concept of the term *authority*, in the way it is used in the Scriptures, is defined by the Lord and not according to what people would like it to be or what they try to attribute to it.

As we have already commented above, **the matter of authority is one of the fundamental points in the present world. However, it is also a challenging topic to be understood since the term *authority* refers, at the same time, to the granting of capacity, power, rights, and the assignment of functions, but not of any capacity, power, right, and position.**

If viewed superfluously or lightly, the theme of authority, like the theme of God's righteousness, is a subject that may create more confusion and harm than good. By the way, understanding the theme of authority is very dependent on understanding the theme of God's righteousness and the current position of Christ in His glory because of this righteousness, whose aspects are addressed more widely and respectively in the subjects of The Gospel of God's Righteousness, The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, and on The Law of Understanding.

Due to the idea of power, strength, or domination that people associate with the term *authority*, the themes surrounding this term have had ample space in all generations and have been the subject of extensive considerations and studies

throughout the most diverse centuries of human life. However, much of what, over the centuries, has been said “to be authority” does not actually refer to what in the Scriptures of God is called “*authority*,” for many people have tried to adapt its meaning to their own interests also to try to take advantage of a force that they think they may obtain from the term in reference.

On the other hand, from time to time, many people also fall into the convenience of accepting some subjects merely as they are culturally passed on to them, strengthening the position of those who try to make undue speculations to obtain inappropriate advantages over others based on a distorted conceptualization of what the term *authority* itself comes to mean.

When people fail in their very generations to validate the essential aspects of life more accurately by the Lord's word, they may quickly become inclined to think about a subject more in line with what they have received by tradition than according to what is recorded in the Scriptures which the Lord has granted them as a standard of measurement and verification. In this way, they are also more exposed to be conducted into corrupted paths that arose from initiatives that try to distort or dilute the word of the Lord.

Authority refers to a term from which high-impact actions may result in the life of a person, a group, a people, a nation, or all humanity. These actions are present in the most diverse daily aspects of life. Therefore, it refers to a term that deserves a more profound and detailed examination. The subject of *authority* should never be approached only by what is exposed about it by culture, customs, or tradition in the world or in the present century.

Romans 12: 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

***Ephesians 5: 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.***

Just as the theme of God's righteousness is not easily understood by those who are not willing to grow in this theme, so the subject of authority also may be characterized as difficult to comprehend for a person who repeatedly insists on remaining as an immature infant concerning the matters of the Christian life.

Because people have so often and repeatedly approached the matter of authority with such superficiality or frivolity, a lot of pain, suffering, abuse, and oppression have been generated around this theme and from the undue ways in which they understand or want to understand it.

The subject of authority is a theme for which maturity in the Christian life is needed. For a Christian to begin to discern between good and evil

appropriately, one needs to grow up and stop being a child in one's understanding.

1 Corinthians 14: 20 **Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.**

Hebrews 5: 12 **For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.**

13 **For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.**

14 **But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**

The subject of authority is highly challenging because, in the world, there is both the action of what authority truly is and what is similar to authority but is not the expression of what authority indeed is according to the Lord's Scriptures.

Essentially, authority comes from God, needs to be recognized before God according to His righteousness, and needs to be associated with a purpose established by God. Therefore, it needs to be better known and understood according to the characterization that God reveals about it to human beings.

C2. The Challenge of Understanding the Relationship with Multiple Authorities and Free Access to the One Who Has Authority Over All Authorities

Among the descriptions that we find in the Scriptures about authority, we see one in particular that teaches us that this subject can involve the simultaneous relationship of a person with multiple scopes of authority concerning one's life, as we may observe below:

*Matthew 8: 5 Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him,
6 saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented."
7 And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."
8 The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.
9 For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."
10 When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"*

Although many people look at the text above primarily from the perspective of faith, we can see that it contains precious teachings on the matter of authority that should be considered.

When the centurion, an officer in the Roman army, appears before Christ, we can see, in the first place, that he does not say that he has authority. Instead, the centurion declares that he is under an authority that gives him a right to give orders to soldiers and servants under his supervision. In this way, he shows that the authority under which he was subject had been conferred on him by someone in a higher position than he was in this respect.

Nevertheless, a very interesting aspect to be noticed in this account is that the Roman centurion, despite being under an authority conferred on the centurions, was not prevented from presenting himself and approaching Christ to refer to Him as Lord and beg Him for a request.

As much as the centurion mentioned above was “under an authority” that allowed him to give orders to soldiers and servants, he was not prevented from approaching the Son of the God Most High to cry out to Him for help.

The centurion showed an understanding that the authority to which he was subject as an army officer and the authority of Christ were two different scopes of authority with specific purposes corresponding to each. The centurion explicitly showed respect for the subject of authority, but, at the same time, he also behaved wisely in knowing how to separate the scope of each of the authorities to which he was referring.

Thus, **the teaching that God allows us to have access through the narrative related to this centurion is very precious and profitable, as it shows us that a person may need to relate, at the same time or simultaneously in one's life, with more than one specific authority.**

The teaching mentioned in these last paragraphs is especially relevant for the present day as well, for many who claim to be teaching about authority have also sought to spread the misconception that a person must necessarily follow, in all aspects of one's life, the chain of authority or command to which one is subject only in some particular respect. They teach the topic as if a person were subject to only one sphere of authority in all aspects of one's life.

Therefore, **to say that a person is subject to a single specific range of authority or a single chain of authority, as some call it, is more associated with the attempt to place a person subject, in fact, to “a chain or prison of authority” than to teach people about the freedom that is before God so that each or every person can come to Him freely and directly through Christ Jesus.**

The authority given by God to human beings is always given in measure or with a partial scope. After the work of Christ Jesus on the cross of Calvary and His resurrection from the dead, the authority granted by the Lord to human beings is never given for them to interpose themselves in people's direct access to the Lord Jesus Christ and, through Him, to the Heavenly Father.

Christ, the Eternal Son of God, was given in love to the world so that people could be reconciled with God through Him and so that they could return to fellowship with the Creator, but also so that all those reconciled with God could always have free access to those aspects of authority that are exclusive of the Lord and that will never conflict with the other authorities that God grants to human beings.

A Christian, as we intend to address later, might be called to follow the instructions of several ranges of authority that God appoints in the world to follow, but always, or primarily, the Christian is called to stand firm in the direct and suitable relationship with the Lord and with those aspects of authority that the Lord does not delegate to anyone else.

A Christian might be called to be subject to various authorities established by God in the world, but one is also called always to be simultaneously and primarily aware of and subject to the Lord's direct authority over him or her.

This theme was also addressed from another perspective in the subject of the Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, in which it was amply demonstrated, by the Scriptures, that **only Christ is the Head of each member of His Body or His Church.** Therefore, **to Christ alone belongs primacy over every life and authority over every Christian.**

Colossians 3: 23 ***And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,***
24 ***knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.***

When a Christian submits to some authority exercised through one's fellow men, one only does so because one understands that the Lord can also instruct him or her through this authority. However, each or every Christian, whether male or female, is always free to seek the Lord when one doubts whether something that others propose to follow comes indeed or does not come from the Lord.

The Spirit of Christ and the peace of Christ in the heart of a Christian are, first of all, the authority to instruct him or her in all aspects of life and are above any other authority or range of authority.

Colossians 3: 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

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

To Christ alone has the Heavenly Father given a full measure of authority. Therefore, it is *in Christ*, and through Him, that we also always have free and direct access to God.

Matthew 28: 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

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

C3. Distinction between Submission to Authority and Any Type of Submission

Continuing to refer to the example of the Roman centurion cited in the previous chapter, we can observe that the theme of authority is also related to submission or subjection to authority, which we also intend to see further ahead.

Thus, at this point, we emphasize that **an essential aspect to be clarified when dealing with the subject of authority and submission is that not every submission or subjection is related to authority and that not every submission confers authority on the one or that to which a person has submitted oneself.**

In life in general, there are many aspects and individuals that people submit to or that try to demand subjection to them that are not what the Scriptures call authority and that do not even have authority over those who submit to them.

For instance, the vanity that leads a person to corruption is something that people might be subject to if they do not know or do not choose the freedom offered to them according to the glory of Christ. However, vanity should not be recognized as an authority over the one subject to it, for it does not produce the good. Vanity produces a bondage from which a person needs to be released to live according to God's will and what is indeed in line with what the Scriptures call authority.

Romans 8: 20 **For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;**
21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.
22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Similarly, sin, which has the strength to reign over people who submit to it, is not equated with something or someone with the attributes of authority.

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.

Thus, **it is not the mere act of submission or subjugation that transforms something or someone into a holder of authority or who acts according to the authority over what was subjected, not even if the submission occurs by the free choice of an individual.**

Many people unduly submit to their fellow men, institutions, and a host of other aspects, rendering power and strength to them to exercise dominion over them. However, if something or someone to which they get submitted does not indeed have the authority to do so, that or those that do not have the authority to do so remain not acting according to what is called by God as an authority.

If only the act of submission defined and established something or someone as an authority, the authority itself would not need to be granted and delegated by God, for by the very imposition or choice of submission or subjection, human beings could create their own ranges of authority.

We emphasize, then, that **authority, essentially, is associated with a power recognized as legitimate before God and not the mere power to submit or subject people or the most diverse aspects that exist in the world**, as also is exemplified in the Bible dictionary commentary exposed below.

The term *authority*, according to The New Bible Dictionary, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., receives, among others, the following considerations:

*“The New Testament word is ‘**exousia**,’ meaning rightful, actual, and unimpeded power to act, or to possess, control, use, or dispose of, something or somebody.*

...
*Whereas the term ‘**dynamis**’ means physical power simply, ‘**exousia**’ properly signifies power that is in some sense lawful. ‘**Exousia**’ may be used with the stress on either the rightfulness of power really held, or the reality of power rightfully possessed. In the latter case, our version (EUV) often translates it as ‘power.’*

...
*‘**Exousia**’ sometimes bears a general secular sense (for instance in 1Corinthians 7: 37, on self-control; and in Acts 5: 4, on disposing of one’s income), but its significance is more commonly theological.”*

Therefore, **if a person considers authority only as a title, power, capacity, or permission to do something, without considering the legitimacy to do so, one is no longer referring to the essential concept of *authority*, referring to a mere force that might be exerted even in a very intense way, but without validity in terms of authority in itself.**

The word or term *authority*, first of all, is a kind of right, power, or license to act regarding something or someone, but this is only valid if this right, power, or license has been legitimately and truly received, and only if it is legitimately and truly used before God.

Knowing, then, the fundamental aspects of what authority is from the perspective of the Scriptures or of God is also of great value to serve as security and protection so that people may discern regarding what is appropriate or due to submit, as well as what is up to them to avoid or even resist becoming submitted.

*Romans 7: 6 **But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.***

Romans 8: 7 **Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.**

James 4: 7 **Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**

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

1 Corinthians 7: 23 **You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.**

C4. Distinction between Authority and Title, Office, or Power

When we return to the Scriptures to take a closer look at the term *authority*, we can see that in the days when the Lord Jesus was in the flesh in the world and revealed the teachings on the Kingdom of God, people were amazed about what Christ spoke and did, but they were also admired by the way He spoke and acted. And this happened because He acted as “one who had authority” in contrast to those who did not, as exemplified below:

Matthew 7: 28 **And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.**

Mark 1: 22 **And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.**

Luke 4: 32 **And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority.**

Mark 1: 27 **Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."**

Matthew 9: 1 **So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.**
2 Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."
3 And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!"
4 But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?
5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?
6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (then He said to the paralytic), "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."
7 And he arose and departed to his house.
8 Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power (or authority) to men.

Therefore, in these few examples cited above, we can already see that the authority of Christ not only caused admiration among people about the content He presented to them, but it also granted the Lord a distinct position from those who preceded Him. It conferred on Him a status to declare orders even over agents from the spiritual world in a way that people had not seen before.

When the Lord Jesus exercised His ministry as the Son of God also as the Son of Man in the world, He was often questioned not only about what He said, but also about the authority He had to say what He said and do what He did. And this occurred because, until the coming of Christ in the flesh into the world, people still did not know so closely how the authority by which the Lord acted among them actually was.

*Matthew 21: 23 **Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"***

On the other hand, giving a little more attention to the last text above, and although people did not know precisely with what authority the Lord acted among them, we can note that people, since antiquity, attributed great importance to an individual being supported by authority to be regarded as worthy of credit, attention, and trust.

The authority by which an individual spoke or acted, in turn, was observed on two main fronts, as exposed in the questions asked in the last text mentioned above, namely:

- ⇒ 1st) By what authority did a person speak and act?
- ⇒ 2nd) Who had conferred authority for a particular person to speak or act according to the authority that had been conferred on him or her?

The questions the priests and the elders mentioned in the texts above asked the Lord Jesus aimed to obtain answers about the kind of authority with which Christ acted and who had conferred that authority on Him. So, the second part of the questions aimed to discover the origin of the authority that had been conferred on Christ, considering that Christ did not occupy any prominent human social or governmental position among the people where He dwelt and manifested Himself.

The descriptions of the few texts exposed in this present chapter already bring to light that what Christ came to manifest about authority was very different from what people understood to be an authority until then. And this fact is evidenced because, in the texts in reference, we can even observe that there were people who held titles and positions in society without even having authority in these positions, as was the case with the scribes mentioned in the texts of Matthew 7 and Mark 1.

Thus, in the few texts of the Scriptures referenced above, we may note that **authority is something that goes far beyond a mere association of a person with a human social, institutional, civil, military, or governmental position.**

When Christ sent out His twelve disciples to announce to Israel that the Kingdom of God was at hand, He conferred on them a specific but very expressive measure of authority, even though most of them were simple and ordinary men of society who were

also dissociated from special positions in the same society because they were fully dedicated to following Christ.

Matthew 10: 1 And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power (or authority) over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

In addition, when looking to review some more fundamental aspects of a particular term, it might be helpful or even necessary, in some cases, to also observe the use of this term in different translations and different languages, and not just in a single language most used by the reader.

The translations of some words into some particular languages can be, in some cases, more precise and meticulous, or they can be less accurate and more generic depending on the different linguistic cultures. In some cultures, it may be common to use the same word for several applications that, in another language, are expressed through different words for each situation.

For instance, the single word *love* used in some languages finds in ancient Greek, in which most of the New Testament was written, several distinct words, presenting a specific term for the *love of God*, another for *brotherly love*, another for *general love for people and things (the idea of liking)*, and yet another for the *love and attraction between a man and a woman*.

Consequently, translating four ancient Greek terms into the single word *love* does not mean that there is a translation error if the word is unique in the targeted language. On the other hand, this will mean that references to *love* will always need to be investigated in more detail in the translated language than in the first language from which it was translated.

In this way, something similar to the word *love* also happens with the word or term *authority* in some languages, as is the case, for example, of its use in Portuguese.

In the case of the word *authority* in Portuguese, we see that it is used in several translations of the Bible both for the situation of the person having a measure or specific authority to accomplish something and to define people who occupy positions of government or leadership. Therefore, this fact may convey a mistaken idea of what *authority* is if an individual does not get a broader view of *authority* itself.

In the following verses, we see exemplified the difference in translation between two languages. For the same biblical verse, we can see that in Portuguese, the expression “*authorities*” was used, while in English, the word “*rulers*” was used, which conveys more the specific idea of those who “*exercise the law*” as the “*rulers or regents*.”

*Acts 4: 5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that the **authorities**, elders, and scribes,
6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.
(Translated from the Portuguese-RA version)*

or

*Acts 4: 5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that **their rulers**, elders, and scribes,
6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.*

Looking at this last verse quoted above also in its expression in Greek, we can observe that its use is indeed more consistent with the expression “*rulers*” than with the term “*authorities*.”

The word used in Greek is the word used to refer to a *regent, prince, chief, magistrate, or chief of regents*, so much so that other translations into Portuguese also present the same verse translated with the use of more appropriate terms.

The perception that the word *authority* in Portuguese, and some other languages, does not always derive from the word effectively used for *authority* in more ancient versions, such as Latin and Greek itself, is of particular relevance, for the non-distinction of this difference also may easily lead a person not to perceive the distinction that there is, in fact, between what is authority itself and what is the condition of people who occupy positions in the most diverse spheres of society in general.

Authority, in itself, is something distinct from those who exercise it, just as it is something distinct from the governing titles, positions, or offices that people hold!

A person in a regent or ruler position may have very broad or very narrow authority, or even have no authority at all in many areas.

For this reason, **when the concept of a person in a government position is confused or unified with the position itself and the aspect of authority, as if all three were the same thing, a large set of possibilities for confusion and abuse of power may come forth from this mixture or unification.**

For example, a traffic cop has a police position to act in some specific areas and may have the authority to fine drivers who break traffic laws in a specific region. However, this does not give this cop the status of the primary ruler of the city or the status of wanting to impose oneself on other people when one is outside the sphere of one's position as a police officer. The function of being a police officer will be supported by authority for some specific situations, but despite being a police officer, the cop in reference is not automatically supported as a representative of government authority outside these situations.

Similarly, a general ruler of a city may have some functions for which one is given a respective authority to exercise them, but, even though one is a general ruler of the city, one does not have “that authority” that the policeman has to apply a fine for a driver infringing a traffic law.

In the last examples, we can see that the person who occupies a position, the position, the functions of the position, and the authority of the position express, individually, aspects that need to be understood both in a grouped way and distinctively according to each of these items.

If an individual who assumes a position does not act according to this position and the authority assigned to it, one does not “exercise or act with authority.” On the contrary, one acts according to one's own postures or intentions.

If we look again at the example of the centurion, cited in the previous chapters, we can see that he did not say that he could command soldiers and servants from himself or that he did so according to his intentions. On the contrary, he declared that the authority under which he was subject conferred the respective right to give orders to a particular group of people. He could only act as a centurion because there was a superior authority over this function that accredited him to act.

If we look in one more Bible dictionary or lexicon, we can see that the word *authority* is more related to what is granted to a person to accomplish in some specific position than the particular position itself.

The term *authority*, according to the commentaries associated with Strong's lexicon in the Online Bible, presents us with, among others, the following descriptions:

Exousia:

Power, authority, right, liberty, jurisdiction, strength;

- 1) Power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases, in the sense of having a leave or permission;*
- 2) Physical and mental power, in the sense of the ability or strength with which one is endowed, which he either possesses or exercises;*
- 3) The power of authority (influence) and of right (privilege);*
- 4) The power of rule or government (the power of him whose will and commands must be submitted to by others and obeyed), which might be:

 - a) Universally or the authority over mankind;*
 - b) Specifically, from the power of judicial decisions or authority to manage domestic affairs;*
 - c) Metonymically, in the sense of a thing subject to authority or rule, jurisdiction, one who possesses authority, - a ruler, a human magistrate, the leading and more powerful among created beings superior to man, spiritual potentates, ...;*
 - d) The sign of regal authority, a crown.**

Looking at the distinction of the words used originally for *authority* and *rulers*, we can see that it is more appropriate, then, to say that “a ruler or someone called a leader may have a share of authority to govern” rather than saying that a “ruler or a leader is an authority.”

Even a ruler or a leader, even if one is acting in one's specific position, depends on receiving authority to practice one's actions, as we saw in the example of the centurion and demonstrated by the Lord Jesus also in the situation described below:

- John 19: 8 Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid,*
9 and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.
- 10 Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power (or authority) to crucify You, and power to release You?"***
- 11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power (or authority) at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."***

12 From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."

While, in God's purpose, the perfectly suitable time for the Lord Jesus Christ to be arrested had not yet come, no one had the authority to arrest Him, even though they held public government positions and continually conspired to arrest Him.

John 7: 30 Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.

Therefore, **a person in a position of regency, governance, or administration needs adequate conditions and the proper authority to be able to perform "in authority" the functions assigned to him or her, which is also called "exercising authority."**

Nevertheless, **when authority itself and the position for receiving and exercising authority are confused or seen as one and the same, there is also soon a tendency to see the position, the office, and the holder of the office as the authority itself, even when one does not act in authority. An aspect that leads to a trend of actions that go beyond what authority actually is.**

Let us see below another text that is translated in some versions as *authority*, but where the term does not refer primarily to *authority*, but to those who are in a *governmental, ruling, or elevated position*:

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**, 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.
 (NKJV)

or

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 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.
 (Translated from RC Portuguese Version)

The expression "**all who are in authority**" mentioned in the text above is not necessarily incorrect, but, again, it is different from the word *authority* (or in Greek *exousia*) used in most of the texts that refer to it in the New Testament. Now, the expression "**all who are in eminence**" is more consistent with the meaning of the

text, distinguishing it more adequately from the term *authority* used in other texts of the Scriptures.

Referring once more to the commentaries associated with Strong's lexicon for the Greek word used in the text of 1 Timothy above, we can also see the following definition for the expression “***all who are in eminence***,” namely:

Huperoche:

- 1) *Elevation, pre-eminence, superiority;*
- 2) *Metaphorically excellence.*

Thus, Paul's direction on one aspect of prayers that please the Lord is for Christians to pray for all those who are in a position of kings (rulers) or in other positions of eminence who have also been assigned the role of governance.

When Paul instructs Christians to pray for all those who are in a position of rulership or eminence, he is presenting a broader prayer instruction than the instruction to pray only for those who are "endowed with authority." In the prayer instruction that Paul teaches Christians, they are called to pray to God for all those who are in a position of eminence or superiority, including those who are opposing authority.

And what should we pray for those who are in a position of rulership or eminence for the exercise of government?

Christians are called to pray for those in positions of rulership or eminence so that they may act in line with the authority given them in the offices they hold and the purpose for which the authority was given them. And yet, so that they do not act according to their personal or corrupt intentions to which they may be exposed or to which they want to incline.

The prayer for the rulers is that they may exercise well the office of rulership or eminence assigned to them so that the people over whom they have rulership or government position may live a “***quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence (or honesty)***.”

In other words, we can pray for rulers or eminences that they become able to exercise good administration and that they may receive authority and exercise it for the good of the people. We can pray for rulers so that they may not use the offices bestowed to them to do evil, but to perform works according to authority for the good of their fellow men. We can pray for rulers so that they come to respect their positions' limits and aim to exercise power only in the sphere that is due to them.

All rulers or eminences can be exposed to the risk of wanting to exercise their functions beyond what is due to them. Because they have a position and “a measure of authority,” some rulers or eminences may fall into the distorted thinking that “they have authority in everything they wish to have authority,” which, in turn, is not “authority.” On the contrary, this last posture is an abuse of their positions, a misuse of the power conferred upon them.

Thus, prayer to God for those occupying positions of government or eminence, according to 1 Timothy 2, should also aim for the Lord to act regarding them so that they may act according to what is appropriate

before God and so that they may keep working in what they indeed have the authority to perform.

Of course, prayer for those in positions of eminence can also include asking God so that they may come to know the truth and salvation that the Lord offers them. However, this request is also found in verse 1 of 1 Timothy 2, where Paul calls all Christians to pray for all people in the world without distinction.

As for salvation, no person has a special privilege because of being in a distinct office or for having authority, for, in terms of salvation, all are equal before God and likewise in need of the righteousness and grace of the Lord, no matter if they are or are not rulers or eminences in the present world.

In the Scriptures, there are still several other examples by which we can observe the distinction of *authority* and the *formal positions of rulership or government*, in which the word *exousia*, in some cases, is also translated as *having a right or power over*, as follows:

*Romans 9: 21 Does not **the potter have power (or right)** over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?*

A potter, a person who makes vessels, has authority over what one does with the clay or lump one has. If the lump belongs to the potter, one can refute it, set it aside for future use, or create a vessel with the purpose one wishes to attribute to it.

Nevertheless, the same potter who can make a vessel that belongs to him or her, and then break it, has no authority over the vessel that belongs to another potter. The fact that someone is a potter or has a position as a potter does not automatically give him or her the right or authority over every vessel that does not belong to him or her.

A potter may even have the physical power to break another potter's vessel, but one does not automatically have the authority to do so.

Pilate had an office that gave him a certain freedom or position to condemn the Lord Jesus. However, if the authority to indeed carry out this action were not granted to him from above, Pilate would never be able to do it, for he would not have authority over a vessel superior to him, as was the case with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pilate received authority from God to condemn Christ, but this is only because this condemnation was in line with the Heavenly Father's purpose in offering us, through His Beloved Son, a perfect sacrifice for our remission of subjection to sin. Christ also gave permission for His life to be taken or for Pilate to receive authority to condemn Him. Pilate did not condemn the Lord Jesus merely because he was in a governmental position.

John 10: 17 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power (or authority) to lay it down, and I have power (or authority) to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

In this way, when the eminences of the people tried to arrest and kill Christ before the appropriate time established by the Heavenly Father, as we saw earlier, they were trying to act contrary to authority or without the authority to do so. They were trying to use their office to establish their own will and were going beyond what was within their remit at the time.

In the book of Acts, we find yet another account of a king who markedly exercised extreme power in his office, but not according to the concept of authority. By using power, but without legitimacy, this king opposed God's will and suffered, also personally, terrible consequences. Let us take a closer look at the following report:

- Acts 12: 1 Now about that time **Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church.***
- 2 Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.*
- 3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread.*
- 4 So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.*
- 5 Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.*
- 6 And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.*
- 7 Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands.*
- 8 Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me."*
- 9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.*
- 10 When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.*
- 11 And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."*
- ...*
- 18 Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.*
- 19 But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there.*
- 20 Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country.*
- 21 So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them.*
- 22 And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"*
- 23 Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.*
- 24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.*

Despite being a king, Herod had never received legitimate authorization to mistreat people who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ or to mistreat people who, through faith, became part of the Church of Christ. Despite being in a kingly position or office, Herod did not have the authority to mistreat and kill people because of their faith in the Lord Jesus and to make it a display of power and entertainment for the people in general.

When the Christian people realized the evil that this king was causing, they turned to God and asked the Lord to deliver Peter from the evil intent that Herod was putting into practice. And the Lord heard them and delivered Peter.

Later, King Herod abuses his office and position even more and accepts the honors of the people as if he himself were a god. The office or status of king, however, did not give him the legitimate right or authority to rise to the position of a god, and for this, he died eaten by worms.

Thus, when the Lord delivered Peter from Herod's prison, the Lord Himself attested that Herod's action was carried out "without authority or the concession of authority from heaven."

In arresting Peter, King Herod did not "exercise authority or *exousia*." If he had acted in line with what is authority, the Christian people's request, contrary to Herod's intent, could have been opposed to what is authority and have run into difficulties for God to send the angel to deliver Peter.

In the case of James, King Herod exercised homicide in opposition to any authority he may have had. And in Peter's case, he exercised an attempt of premeditated murder, which, of course, also was not part of any authority he perhaps still had.

When Herod left the "limits of authority or *exousia* pertinent to his position as king," and gave himself up to his own plots or passions, he abused the office and power that were in his hands, gave himself up to the practice of wicked designs, and acted in dissonance to any authority.

Therefore, answering the prayers of His people, the Lord sent His angel to free Peter, for Herod tried to subject Peter to himself, to his evil intentions, and in disagreement with the principles of authority or *exousia*. However, if Herod were an authority or *exousia* just because he was a king, just because of his office or position, Peter would have to be subject to him, and the Lord would not send the angel to oppose something that indeed was authority. Despite being a king, Herod was not acting in authority in the matter of Peter's imprisonment, one of the reasons the Lord intervened on Peter's behalf.

When the people prayed and cried out for God's liberating intervention, the angel came and acted according to what was indeed authority or *exousia*, telling Peter to stand up, clothe himself, put his sandals on, and then follow him. The instructions given by the angel were effectively the authority or *exousia* to which Peter should obey and submit. And Peter's acceptance of the proper authority or *exousia* served as a guide or direction for him to experience the liberation the Lord provided for him.

Since Peter heeded the Lord's instruction, the authority or *exousia* that God had sent him through the angel, submitted to it, and did not fear the king and his sentinels, Peter experienced God's favor to deliver him and grant him more time to live in the present world.

In the previous accounts, we can observe, then, that **authority or exousia encompasses the power or permission of something that is legitimate before God and that came from God**. And God frustrated Herod's intentions because his plans were not according to the Lord and, therefore, were not according to the authority or *exousia* coming from God.

God can act to “exercise the authority or *exousia*” through human rulers, eminences, or magistrates, but also directly through the Holy Spirit directing and guiding an individual, through angels, ordinary people of society, or even through an action through creation in general, as was the case with the earthquake that opened the prison doors where Paul and Silas were chained. (Acts 16).

Furthermore, **when the Lord Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, He referred to yet another authority that was not tied to human offices. To respond to the devil regarding the temptation that he proposed to Him, the Lord Jesus used the authority that was contained in what had been written and recorded in the Scriptures for several centuries.** For example:

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

We understand here, then, that **making an adequate discernment in the matter of whether a regent or an eminence is acting or not according to authority or *exousia* also has as a fundamental point the understanding that a position of a ruler and the ruler oneself are not synonymous with authority or *exousia*.**

On the other hand, **when authority or *exousia* is confused with position, office, or person, through the abdication of wise discernment, evil begins to have more space among human beings to hide and advance in its perverse intentions.**

In this way, **to understand that a ruler's position is automatically synonymous with authority is not to pay attention to one of the central characteristics of the “spiritual man,” which is to discern, in Christ, good or evil in all things.** (An aspect also discussed more widely in the material on The Law of Understanding and on Christ being the Light of the Christian addressed in the theme on The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ).

*1 Corinthians 2: 15 **But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.***

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

or

*1 Corinthians 2: 15 **But he who is spiritual discerns all things, yet he himself is rightly discerned by no one.** (Translated from RC Portuguese Version)*

After James was killed by Herod and had Peter imprisoned, Christians began to pray to the Lord to send them the authority that could deliver Peter, and the Lord did so.

Let us consider, then, what has been exposed so far in a few more examples below:

- Exodus 1: 13* **So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor.**
- 14 And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor.**
- 15 Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah;**
- 16 and he said, "When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live."**
- 17 But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive.**
- 18 So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?"**
- 19 And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them."**
- 20 Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty.**
- 21 And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them.**
-

If, in the above account, Pharaoh's position or office would be automatically considered as an authority, regardless of his attitudes, how then to explain the fact that the midwives were blessed by God even though they acted contrary to Pharaoh's instruction?

The midwives were blessed by God precisely because they did not follow the instruction given them by Pharaoh, despite the strength and power of his position, and because they feared God. The midwives were blessed because they submitted to the authority or *exousia* which is according to the divine righteousness, and because they did not carry out Pharaoh's intent, for what the ruler of Egypt wanted to do in this particular situation was not legitimate authority.

Similarly, God commends the attitude that Moses' parents adopted at the same time as these midwives lived, as described below:

- Hebrews 11: 23* **By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.**
-

If the attitude of Moses' parents had been one of disrespect for authority or *exousia*, God would not have delivered Moses, much less Moses' parents. However, as they acted

according to the instruction of God and the fear of the Lord, and not according to the intentions of a man who was abusing the power of the office in which he found himself, the Lord favored Moses and Moses' parents in the path that these adopted.

Furthermore, if submission to rulers or magistrates applied even to the acts they demand in opposition to authority or *exousia*, God could not have, centuries later, instructed Joseph to flee with Mary and the baby Jesus to Egypt. If an office, position, or title and authority (or *exousia*) were the same thing, Joseph would have had to stay in Bethlehem and submit to the killing of children that was executed. And so, Joseph would have run a massive risk of exposing the Lord Jesus while still a small boy to the slaughter of children ordered by King Herod.

Matthew 2: 13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

If submission to all rulers or eminences applied even to the orders contrary to authority or *exousia* they demand, the Lord Jesus Himself would also have been under the obligation to answer Herod when he asked Christ to do miraculous signs before him.

Luke 23: 6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean.
7 And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.
8 Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him.
9 Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing.
10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.
11 Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.

If submission to rulers or eminences applied even to ordinances contrary to the authority or *exousia* they demand, first-century Jews who became Christians would have to abandon Christ and return to the practice of the Law of Moses, for Saul persecuted them with a written order of the princes or eminences whom he represented.

Thus, neither Saul's position nor the letter that authorized him to persecute Christians can be equated with what authority or *exousia* is in the eyes of God. They were not instruments for good. That is why, also because of this, the Lord was with those who were dispersed through the most diverse cities and nations.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme authority together with the Heavenly Father over His People, His Body, or His Church, intervened in Saul's attempt to continue persecuting Christians and made the distorted order, along with its emissary, come to fall to the ground.

- Acts 9: 1 **Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest**
2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.
4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"
5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."
6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

When Saul fell to the ground, he soon realized that there was a conflict between what he was submissive to and the One who showed Himself with power and position far superior to what he had seen until then, promptly turning to address Christ as Lord. Christ stopped Saul's intentions because he was working against authority, against what was due to be done.

We see, then, in the examples above, that in the world, there are orders and commandments that rulers and eminences issue in an attempt to impose on other people what are not always the expression of authority or *exousia*, for authority is granted by God to be used according to the Lord's instruction and not of mere men. An aspect that can also be seen in the experience described below of the other apostles of Christ:

- Acts 5: 27 **And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,**
28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"
29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.
30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.
31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

There are some rulers and so-called leaders who surrender or lend themselves to the practice of evil, placing themselves, many times, in the condition of the first ones to disrespect the authority or *exousia* to which they should also be subject.

Therefore, **government, regency, or leadership positions are not synonymous with authority or *exousia*. They are positions of eminence**

that may or may not come to have and exercise authority or *exousia* depending on what and how they propose to act in the roles of government, regency, or leadership that they occupy.

C5. Authority One Receives, Has, or Exercises and Is Not Something One Is

Another way of perceiving what we are seeking to approach in the previous chapters is to observe in the Scriptures that the references made to the authority itself, and not to what has been translated as an authority in some languages, are presented in the respective texts relating the authority with something that a person receives, submits to, has, or exercises, and not necessarily with what one is or with a title or status one has received.

According to the examples of the Scriptures or the Bible, authority is not something a person is or becomes. Or still, it is not a title that can be attributed to an individual. Instead, authority is something that is granted so that the one who receives it can be equipped with it to exercise it when necessary or suitable for the purpose for which the authority is bestowed.

When we look at the Scriptures through the prism of the last paragraph, even beyond the example mentioned earlier about the Roman centurion, we can see that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself did not present Himself to the world and His disciples as “being an authority,” but as the One to whom it “was granted” and as the One who “has the authority” given to Him, as exemplified below:

Matthew 28: 18 **And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."**

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

John 10: 17 **Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.**
18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power (or authority) to lay it down, and I have power (or authority) to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.

At yet another time, the Lord Jesus Christ said that He was granting authority to His disciples for a specific mission so they also would be adequately equipped to carry out this mission. However, the Lord did not say that they would “be or become authorities” because of what was granted to them, as can also be seen in the text below:

Luke 10: 19 **Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.**

Therefore, **also due to how authority is conferred on someone, we can see that authority, offices, titles, or functions are essentially distinct aspects from each other, even though these different aspects are expected to work together for good.**

A person may rise or be raised to a position or office. However, if God does not recognize authority in something, it will be of no use to this person, concerning authority itself, receiving the possession or title of a position.

In this way, when speaking of submission to those who govern or to those who are also called eminences or simply leaders, it is crucial to see this theme also intertwined with the aspect of the authority that a particular ruler or leader received to exercise, as may be seen in the text below:

*Titus 3: 1 **Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,***
*2 **to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.***
*3 **For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.***

At first glance, the above text from Paul's letter to Titus may seem like a reference to anyone or everyone who rules. However, when he also refers to "submission to authorities," we can see that the text applies to those who rule, but who, at the same time, are also invested with or have received authority from God to govern.

Submission to those who govern is related to doing so in what they act under authority. That is, submission is due to what the rulers ask, instruct, or order legitimately in the eyes of God, and that collaborates for every good work. Therefore, what the rulers deliberate according to authority should be followed by Christians, for carrying out what is ordered according to authority also collaborates with carrying out the good works to which the Lord calls those who believe in Him and serve Him.

A Christian is not called to be contentious with rulers, nor should one oppose what they propose in conformity with authority. On the contrary, Christians are called to be collaborators in that which expresses the authority or *exousia* coming from the Lord through the magistrates and which cooperates for good.

There are many laws in human societies that are good and are inspired by God or appointed by the Lord for the appropriate functioning of life in general. Concerning these laws, every Christian should submit oneself to them, facilitating and cooperating with the work of those who are in the position of rulership or eminence. And the fact that a ruler or an eminence does not act in all acts according to authority does not imply that a Christian should no longer submit oneself to those laws or acts that are indeed according to authority.

For example, if for an area with a large circulation of schoolchildren there is a law and signs that instruct to drive in this traffic carefully and at reduced speed, it is beneficial to all and pleasing before God that this is obeyed, as it means respect for children and their precious lives.

Thus, in addition to the Scriptures of the Bible, there are many other laws in the various governments of the world that are according to the authority appointed by God and for the good of the people who live in the places that these governments oversee. And for this reason, everyone, especially Christians, should also seek to adopt a posture of submission to them.

If a law is good and cooperates with people in general, even though it may establish disciplines or punishments for them if it is not followed, this law has the character of authority or *exousia*, which, because of this, is worthy of being obeyed. And if it is authority or *exousia*, this law was also instructed by God and should be respected by Christians whenever necessary. Thus, in these cases, submission to this law should be seen by Christians as if they were obeying and following the instructions of the very Lord and Savior of their lives.

On the other hand, the Christian who lives one's life “*in Christ*,” and with respect for one's fellow men, should already have an attitude of respect for others, even if the society in which one lives does not have specific laws in some area in which respect to the like is due.

If all the people of a specific region would submit in their hearts and their actions individually to Christ in His position as King of Righteousness and King of Peace, in which He is established in His ministry in the present day and as the Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ teaches us, there would be no need for supplementary laws to be enacted. If all people let themselves be guided by the Spirit of the Lord, the need for laws in the world could be significantly reduced.

Nevertheless, when people no longer live in reverence for God, who is the source that grants or withdraws authority, they begin to incur more sharply in sins or acts of transgression, making themselves in need of laws in their societies so that their transgressions come across legal limits.

The laws of societies, instituted in line with the authority of God, aim to restrict and instruct, mainly, transgressors, since the righteous who “live in God and by faith in Him” should already know the main principles of life through their personal fellowship with the Lord and should already practice them according to the Lord's instruction for their lives, even if the rulers or eminences do not come to establish laws for them, as several texts teach us:

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

Colossians 1: 9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

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. 3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

Galatians 5: 16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

At this point, we highlight yet another noteworthy aspect to be observed.

We emphasize here, then, that the more people move away from the Gospel of the Glory of the Blessed God, the more laws will be necessary to be enacted. And the more laws are issued, the more magistrates will be needed to judge them and order their

execution, which, in turn, also implies higher costs and burdens on the people to support these magistrates.

The over-promulgation of civil laws, even those that have the seal of authority granted by the Lord, is proof of the distancing of people from their Unique Creator and Lord. It is the result of people moving away from reverence and respect for the One God who created them, as well as from the respect for their fellow men and all creation.

The need to establish some civil laws will always exist, for not everyone will accept the Gospel of the Glory of the Eternal God, and not even Christians will always keep walking according to the will of God. However, the solution for a people, a city, or a nation is not a continuous and sharp increase in the promulgation of laws, and because the fulfillment of these rules will also require the need for more law enforcers, generating a cycle that is very difficult to be sustained.

Thus, **the mere action of establishing offices, and occupants of these offices, does not guarantee that those who will occupy them will adopt conduct consistent with what authority is and the purpose of doing good to their fellow man. And this, in practice, shows us again that the occupation of offices and positions to carry out what is good also depends on the willingness of those who occupy them to act according to authority and not according to their merely human positions.** For this reason, Christians are also called to pray for the Lord to act in relation to all who are in eminence for them to work in favor of what is good, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

If the holder of an office “were authority” only by holding the office, even the corrupt attitudes of those office holders who utterly despise God and their fellow men would have to be considered as instruments for good and could not be presented before God for the Lord to intervene concerning them. However, returning to the example of King Herod, who killed James, we see that God intervened with His supreme authority because the people prayed that the intentions of that evil man would not prevail, reaching the point of God removing Herod entirely from his position of rulership.

The fact that a person receives a position in which one is called to act with authority regarding other people does not give this individual a so-called “safe conduct” for the practice of evil or to work outside what is according to the authority granted by the Lord. On the contrary, before God, each individual responds for one's life similarly to one's fellow men, but also regarding the exercise of the authority entrusted to him or her and before the fact that each of one's fellow men has ample freedom to pray to God and ask the Lord to free him or her from the evil deeds of those who oppress others.

Ephesians 6: 9 **And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.**

James 5: 4 **Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.**

So, because many Christians do not look at the matter of authority with due attention and depth, and because they do not even see the distinction between office and authority, they themselves have reached the point of endorsing or seeing without acute sense many evil attitudes that rulers in the world have practiced in their days and generations, as if the mere fact of occupying a position validated as authority everything that is performed from it.

Because many Christians have not given due attention to some points regarding the broader understanding of the meaning of “*there is no authority except from God*” or that authority is something that is given by God and not something that a person is, they have failed to pray to God asking that the Lord may restrain the actions of those who act in disagreement with the principle of authority and that the Lord may manifest authority more abundantly to those who let themselves to be guided to use it for good actions.

Using a parable, the Lord Jesus Christ exemplifies the performance of evil rulers, as well as exemplifies what Christians should do when individuals disrespectful of authority abuse the positions and power that were conferred on them in their offices, as follows:

- Luke 18: 1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,*
2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man.
3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.'
4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man,
5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"
6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said.
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?"
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In the last text presented above, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself acknowledged the judge in reference as someone unjust, wicked, or evil. And if that judge were the perfect expression of authority only because of his office, regardless of his actions, the Lord could not have attributed to him the adjectives that he attributed to him, since authority, essentially, comes from God and is granted to collaborate with the good.

The judge exemplified by the Lord Jesus did not exercise his role as a judge with justice and according to what comes to be authority indeed. On the contrary, the judge behaved with disrespect for God, his fellow men, and, therefore, the authority that had been entrusted to him. This judge only judged the widow's cause to get rid of the trouble that this woman caused him, and not out of respect for the authority entrusted to him.

The judge mentioned by the Lord was highly self-centered. He judged the widow's cause because of himself to get rid of the widow who bothered him. And the other widows who did not trouble him, when would he judge their causes?

In this last example, we can even observe that **a person can be in a position and refrain from acting according to the authority entrusted to him or her. That is, a person can be in a position and, because of one's negligence, not even trigger the authority that one could or should use in that position.**

There are people in positions of eminence who abuse these positions by going beyond what suits them. However, there are also people who fall short of what is due, demonstrating yet in another way that office and authority are aspects that can and should complement each other, but are also essentially distinct from each other.

On the other hand, in the parable in reference narrated by the Lord Jesus, we see that God is not like the judge mentioned and is not complacent with the posture of that judge. **As the Lord is the One who appoints authority, He is also the One who watches over it and answers those who cry out to Him for the authority to be restored or for it to work in line with the purpose for which it was designated.**

Faced with examples such as that of the unjust judge in reference and who did not regard the authority he had to correctly judge the cases presented to him or who omitted himself to judge them, the Lord Jesus did not attribute to this magistrate the title of a good ruler just because he was occupying a position of eminence in society. Instead, He explicitly expressed the corrupted profile of this judge due to his attitudes.

In the parable of the unjust judge, the Lord Jesus taught us that people who stop fearing God and stop regarding their fellow men also distance themselves from the authority that God could grant them to act appropriately in the positions in which they find themselves.

Therefore, one of the Lord's central teachings in the referred parable is that even in the face of injustice and contempt for authority that the holders of an office themselves begin to adopt when they move away from the fear of God, there is an alternative that all Christians should always use, and that can be used even if rulers oppose the authority of the Lord.

Let us look once more at the words which the Lord spoke at the end of the exposition of the parable in reference:

*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?"***

Faced with the injustice of the world and the contempt of authority, Christ instructs people first to address God in prayer and cry out to Him for justice or righteousness. Therefore, this is a practice that also cooperates with a more present action of the Lord's authority on Earth for the good of those who cry out to God.

God is righteous and listens to those who pray to Him asking for righteousness according to the heavenly kingdom or for the authority that is granted from heaven to work more presently among people in general and in favor of those who pray for it.

When people believe that it is from God that their central provision of righteousness and authority for the good of their lives comes, they cry out to the Lord because they believe He can deal appropriately with rulers or magistrates who misbehave regarding authority and that He may even remove them from their positions if necessary.

Regarding any eminent person or even any authority that God has granted to be exercised in the world, the Lord Jesus calls our attention to the fact that all children of God have personal or direct access to the One who has the authority over all authority. The Lord Jesus shows us that praying to the Heavenly Father and Christ Himself, asking for the intervention of heavenly righteousness, is also obeying the “superior authorities” who are above all other authorities.

Faced with the unrighteousness that operates in the world in disregard of the authority that God bestows on people in the world, Christ instructs the children of God to seek first the help and instruction that the “even higher authorities in heaven” have to offer those who answer the call “to pray without ceasing.”

Furthermore, also through the Scriptures, we can be taught that God is powerful to remove kings and establish kings. However, a central point that Christ questioned in the parable mentioned above is whether there will be people on Earth who desire true heavenly righteousness and that have faith in God to cry out to Him for it. The Lord showed us the relevance that there is in the action of people on Earth to pray to God so that the work of His righteousness may rise even more in the world to favor those who seek the good of the Lord and to restrict the work of those who do not respect this righteousness.

Although the Lord has all the power and authority to place and remove kings or rulers from His own initiative, the Lord shows us that, in several situations, He calls His children to pray with faith for Him to grant that the rulers in the world may work for a quiet and peaceable life so that people may live in all godliness and reverence.

*Proverbs 16: 12 **It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness,
For a throne is established by righteousness.***

*Daniel 2: 20 **Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God
forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His.***

***21 And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and
raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those
who have understanding.***

***22 He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the
darkness, And light dwells with Him."***

The Lord is not a God who moves by importunity, as the unjust judge mentioned by Christ did. On the contrary, **God listens to His children on Earth when they**

turn to the Lord through faith so that He may move on their behalf according to true righteousness. However, in all generations or the current one, will there be people on Earth who indeed want a life according to God's righteousness? This is a matter of significant cooperation regarding the manifestation of righteousness and authority among human beings.

When Peter was imprisoned unjustly and under Herod's abuse of power, not in line with an instruction according to authority, the people cried out to God for Peter's release, and the Lord answered their prayers.

Nevertheless, once again, will God find faith on Earth to manifest more intensely the presence of His Son Jesus Christ as King of Righteousness and King of Peace to the world? Will God find people who believe that authority, offices, and office occupants are distinct aspects and that the Lord can work on all these points so that righteousness is manifested more widely in the world?

When will Christians in the world sincerely ask God for rulers who act in line with righteousness and authority according to the heavenly kingdom, to the point where they also want to submit themselves to these rulers to indeed live in godliness, reverence, honesty, and uprightness, and not only to have supposed peace to run after fleeting delights and pleasures?

- James 4: 1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?*
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."
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When Christians do not distinguish the authority or *exousia* from the offices and the people who occupy them, they are in danger of being complacent in their prayers with the evil ones who are in positions of government. Moreover, because they do not heed the distinctions that may exist between office and authority, many do not even present requests to God to stop the acts that are evil and dissociated from authority that many eminent individuals practice.

When Christians do not distinguish the authority or *exousia* from the positions and the people who occupy them, they run the risk of no longer realizing that they, the children of God, are also called to be observers and cooperators of righteousness before God regarding the conduct of rulers and magistrates in their various positions. The presence of a Christian in the world is for him or her to be light in the world and salt on Earth, but also to present oneself in prayer to the Lord to ask Him to intensify the manifestation of the heavenly kingdom's righteousness in the world and the most

diverse positions of government and eminence, as we have already seen in the text of 1 Timothy 2.

When rulers or regents, intentionally or by ignorance, begin to commit evil in their positions and depart from the authority bestowed on them to do good, Christians should turn to God and ask the Lord in prayer that He may act towards those rulers or regents, crying out to the Lord so that they do not prosper in the practice of evil and, on the contrary, that they may be directed to do what is appropriate.

A persistent condition for the practice of evil work, of the work dissociated from authority, contributes to people inclined to wicked works to lean even more toward evil, needing to be obstructed by sentences of interruptions of this cycle.

Ecclesiastes 8: 11 **Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.**

Isaiah 9: 18 **For wickedness burns as the fire; It shall devour the briars and thorns, And kindle in the thickets of the forest; They shall mount up like rising smoke.**

Let us also note here that when it is commented above on the need for God's intervention in actions distanced from authority, this does not necessarily mean condemnation or damage to those who act in evil ways, but mainly and primarily so that they may know the truth and salvation and that they may repent of their wicked ways.

Psalms 25: 8 **Good and upright is the LORD; Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.**

2 Peter 3: 9 **The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**

Furthermore, another aspect to be observed in the positioning of those who occupy the position of eminence is that the most prominent rulers are not always the central problem. Often, their assistants or advisors are the way for evil to infiltrate and for their authority not to be used rightly. However, also in this case, Christians can pray to the Lord, asking Him to intervene on behalf of righteousness, for He is mighty to intervene in any of the hierarchies of a given government that opposes the righteousness that is according to the authority appointed by God.

Proverbs 25: 4 **Take away the dross from silver, And it will go to the silversmith for jewelry.**

5 Take away the wicked from before the king, And his throne will be established in righteousness.

Finally, in this chapter, yet another detail to be observed concerning some points discussed in this topic is that God will not always act through the immediate removal of evil rulers, as He may first warn them to repent, or it may still be the case that the alternative of other individuals who fear God and regard authority is not available at a particular time and place.

Nevertheless, if the people of God, the Christians directly linked to Christ, and who are His Body and His Church on Earth, begin to pray to God so that He may intensify the manifestation of His righteousness on Earth, the Lord promises to move what can be moved according to His righteousness and will not delay answering these prayers, even if the answer involves an extensive process.

But will the Lord find faith on Earth to the point where people believe in His position as King of Righteousness, King of Peace, and holder and giver of all authority which is according to God's instruction? Will the Lord find faith in people to the point where they come to Him asking that the intervention of righteousness according to the heavenly kingdom comes to be appointed from the heavenly throne and not according to the justice of men?

The first action expected of Christians in the face of the injustice that is being practiced in the world, or when they see the contempt for the exercise of the true authorities appointed to act in it, is for them to turn to the One who is seated above all rulers or those who are in a position of eminence, that is, to the Lord of Lords and King of Kings because His throne is a throne founded entirely on true righteousness.

*Psalms 89: 14 **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face.***

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

If Christians paid more attention to the understanding that authority or *exousia* is assigned by the Lord to whom He wants to bestow it and that it is not assigned by people who struggle so much to occupy positions in the world, it is very likely that Christians themselves would turn more toward the Lord to present themselves before Him in prayer continually.

If Christians opened their hearts more to the understanding that there are many ways for a person to contribute to authority even without being in public office of government, they would also not need to be so focused and busy aiming first at their own positions of eminence and could come to make greater use of the highest position a person can have while one still lives and walks in the world, which is the position before the One who appoints the authorities over the world.

*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.

Who has a higher position, a king who does not know the Lord or a Christian who can pray to the “Head of all principality and power” in the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ, asking the Lord to turn the hearts of kings to the benefit of the people over whom a ruler is established?

Proverbs 21: 1 **The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.**

Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, who prayed to the Lord and obtained her son according to the grace and mercy of the Lord towards her, teaches us which God she served when the subject is also related to the positions and offices of a government, as well as to authority, as follows:

- 1 Samuel 2: 1 And Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation.**
- 2 No one is holy like the LORD, For there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.**
- 3 Talk no more so very proudly; Let no arrogance come from your mouth, For the LORD is the God of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed.**
- 4 The bows of the mighty men are broken, And those who stumbled are girded with strength.**
- 5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, And the hungry have ceased to hunger. Even the barren has borne seven, And she who has many children has become feeble.**
- 6 The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up.**
- 7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.**
- 8 He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set them among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, And He has set the world upon them.**
- 9 He will guard the feet of His saints, But the wicked shall be silent in darkness. For by strength no man shall prevail.**
- 10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces; From heaven He will thunder against them. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king, And exalt the horn of His anointed."**

Christ grants grace so that people can, through Him, have appropriate and continuous access to the presence of the Heavenly Father to find even more grace and mercy. However, by the example of Anna's prayer, we can see that part of this access is related to people approaching God with faith in the Lord's sovereignty over the kingdoms and the occupants of the offices of these kingdoms.

Therefore, when Christians equate human offices and positions with authority, they may be more likely to miss and not respond to the invitation to turn in prayer to the One who has all authority over Heaven and Earth.

When Christians do not distinguish human offices and positions from the authority they may or may not have received, they may also fall into the expectation that everything has to come from these human positions, forgetting that, in the first place, it is the Lord who cares for them and that He is the source of all provision and protection, including the aspect of assigning authority.

*Matthew 28: 18 and 20(b) **And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ... And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.***

*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.***

A Christian living on Earth can see and perceive part of what happens in the world, but one can also sit in the heavenly places *in Christ* to see circumstances from God's perspective and to express one's prayers to the Lord there.

A Christian is called to pray to God for the offices of rulership or government in the world and their occupants because God is righteous, sovereign, and mighty to cause them to be led in line with the authority and righteousness that are according to the kingdom that is above all other kingdoms.

*Psalms 103: 19 **The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.***

The Lord is mighty to strengthen rulers or individuals in eminence in their positions. He is powerful to increase or decrease their authority. He is mighty to raise other magistrates to punish or remove them when they resist the authority with which they should act in their offices. And the Lord is also powerful to remove them directly if necessary. Thus, because of His sovereign position and for the good of those who fear Him, the Lord invites and even urges His children to pray to Him.

Let us see below some more examples of prayers and declarations regarding the Lord's sovereignty presented in the book of Psalms:

Psalms 72: 11 Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; All nations shall serve Him.
12 For He will deliver the needy when he cries, The poor also, and him who has no helper.

Psalms 82: 8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; For You shall inherit all nations.

Psalms 94: 1 O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs; O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth!
2 Rise up, O Judge of the earth; Render punishment to the proud.
3 LORD, how long will the wicked, How long will the wicked triumph?
4 They utter speech, and speak insolent things; All the workers of iniquity boast in themselves.
5 They break in pieces Your people, O LORD, And afflict Your heritage.
6 They slay the widow and the stranger, And murder the fatherless.
7 Yet they say, "The LORD does not see, Nor does the God of Jacob understand."
8 Understand, you senseless among the people; And you fools, when will you be wise?
9 He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see?
10 He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct, He who teaches man knowledge?
11 The LORD knows the thoughts of man, That they are futile.
12 Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O LORD, And teach out of Your law,
13 That You may give him rest from the days of adversity, Until the pit is dug for the wicked.
14 For the LORD will not cast off His people, Nor will He forsake His inheritance.
15 But judgment will return to righteousness, And all the upright in heart will follow it.
16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?
17 Unless the LORD had been my help, My soul would soon have settled in silence.
18 If I say, "My foot slips," Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up.
19 In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.
20 Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, Have fellowship with You?
21 They gather together against the life of the righteous, And condemn innocent blood.
22 But the LORD has been my defense, And my God the rock of my refuge.
23 He has brought on them their own iniquity, And shall cut them off in their own wickedness; The LORD our God shall cut them off.

- 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.*
-

If necessary, according to His sovereign wisdom and righteousness, the Lord is mighty to extinguish offices, positions, or even entire structures of nations without ever losing His sovereign position of authority over the peoples and individuals in them.

- Psalms 10: 13 Why do the wicked renounce God? He has said in his heart, "You will not require an account."*
- 14 But You have seen, for You observe trouble and grief, To repay it by Your hand. The helpless commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless.*
- 15 Break the arm of the wicked and the evil man; Seek out his wickedness until You find none.*
- 16 The LORD is King forever and ever; The nations have perished out of His land.*
- 17 LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear,*
- 18 To do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, That the man of the earth may oppress no more.*

Psalms 33: 10 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.

Psalms 22: 28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S, And He rules over the nations.

Psalms 47: 8 God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.

Psalms 113: 4 The LORD is high above all nations, His glory above the heavens.

As mentioned earlier, authority is granted by God to human beings to serve God and their fellow men for good works. However, when people begin to regard positions and titles as being authorities in themselves, they also tend to trust that their deliverances or supports also come from these offices, thus attaching excessive value to them and moving away from the truth that it is from the Lord that authority, salvation, and provision to live and walk in the world according to the heavenly will firstly come.

Psalms 118: 8 ***It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in man.***

9 It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in princes.

Psalms 146: 1 ***Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!***

2 While I live I will praise the LORD; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

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,

7 Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners.

8 The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; The LORD raises those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous.

9 The LORD watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; But the way of the wicked He turns upside down.

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

On a specific circumstance and mission in which the Lord Jesus granted authority to His disciples, they also returned marveling at the power that that authority had conferred on them, including over demons. And then, the Lord Jesus extended the concession of that authority for it to continue to accompany the disciples throughout their lives. However, along with the granting of authority, the Lord Jesus also warned them that authority was not the main objective of their lives nor that the authority bestowed on them was the means to be saved, as follows:

Luke 10: 17 ***Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."***

18 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things

*from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so,
 Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.
 22 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one
 knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except
 the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."
 23 Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are
 the eyes which see the things you see;
 24 for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see
 what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and
 have not heard it."*

In this way, the fact that a person receives authority does not make this individual "to be saved" or confers the right and power for salvation, for salvation is not achieved by someone's titles, positions, or offices in the world or by the powers and authorities that one may have, but by the grace and by faith in the gift of God's righteousness.

Just as no person is saved by works, so no person is saved by office, title, position, or authority that one has received, but only by the grace of the Lord and the gift of righteousness received through faith in God. Therefore, it is also so important to understand that "authority is not something that someone becomes," but "something that a person receives to serve God in something specific and whom God wants someone to serve."

*Job 32: 21 Let me not, I pray, show partiality to anyone; Nor let me
 flatter any man.*

*Ephesians 2: 5, 8 and 9 ... even when we were dead in trespasses, made us
 alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*

...

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of
 yourselves; it is the gift of God,
 not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

*Galatians 2: 16 ... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the
 law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ
 Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the
 works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be
 justified.*

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

C6. The Challenge of Understanding the Text that Mentions that “*There Is No Authority Except from God*”

Once noted that there can be submissions in the world to aspects that are not authorities and that authority and the positions, offices, or titles of the functions of government or leadership are distinct aspects, also the observation in the Scriptures that “***there is no authority except from God***” becomes better supported to be seen more comprehensively.

So let us look again at the text that contains the sentence mentioned above:

Romans 13: 1 ***Let every soul be subject to the governing (or higher) authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.***

2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

4 For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake.

When a ruler or an individual acts according to the authority conferred upon him or her, which is granted for the practice of what is good, every person should submit to the established ordinances because, in this situation, these ordinances are intended to act as instruments of cooperation with God to guide or lead people to walk in that which is good for them and their fellow men.

Considering that many people in the world do not live a life of faith in God and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, it becomes necessary, in human societies in general, to establish some sets of ordinances that apply to the people who live in them. Since many people do not act according to the fruit of the Spirit of the Lord, against which there is no law, and also considering that the Gospel of God is presented to the world as an offer and not an imposition, thus allowing people to choose between living or not living according to the gift offered by the Lord from Heaven, it is necessary to establish some means of government in society regardless of the position of belief regarding God that people adopt. And the subject of authority is one of the central points for approaching this significant challenge.

Nevertheless, the text of Romans 13, mentioned above, needs to be examined with particular attention so that we do not again incur the aspect of considering that every ruler, magistrate, chief, commander, or leader, which is the meaning of the term magistrate, is automatically considered an authority or that all leadership positions are synonymous with authority. As we will see in further chapters, there are people who set themselves up as leaders precisely against and in opposition to legitimate authority.

The word *authority*, as we saw earlier, is distinct from offices, as it refers to a power, a capacity, or a right granted to someone to be used for good, just as it does not refer, in itself, to what the person is or the position one occupies.

The magistrates, who can also be the rulers, commanders, chiefs, or so-called leaders, are means by which authority can be exercised or manifested and who are called to cooperate with the authority when it is conferred on these types of positions.

In this last sense, magistrates should be obeyed, and Christians, as free in the Lord, are also called to voluntarily submit to them, as is similarly exposed in the Scriptures by the apostle Peter, namely:

*1 Peter 2: 13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,
14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.
15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:
16 As free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.
17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*

In the above text written by Peter, we again find in some versions the use of the term *authorities* instead of *governors*, remembering, however, that the most appropriate is the use of *governors* since the word in the original text again is not *authority* or *exousia*.

For life in societies in general, whether the majority of people are Christians or not, God bestows authority to a range of people in positions of government or eminence to restrain or punish wrongdoers and to extend recognition, credit, and praise to those who do good. And regarding these rulers and their ordinances, or also so-called institutions, Christians are called to submit themselves so that the ignorance of foolish individuals may be restrained.

The call to live and walk in the freedom that is *in Christ* is not a call to rebellion against the rulers or anarchy and lack of social or moral order. On the contrary, it is a call to live and walk in wisdom and according to a good conscience also towards fellow men and life in societies in general.

Nevertheless, when rulers or regents do not act according to the authority conferred on them but act according to one's intentions or the corrupt purposes of others, these rulers become the first or main ones to oppose the bestowed authority. In this way, they can also start to reproduce ordinances that do not indeed come from the authority conferred on them.

So, **the mere fact that something is established by law does not automatically mean that it expresses authority, as there are laws that are created by the wicked for a specific pretext to practice their evil intentions, as shown in the Psalm below:**

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

- 21 They gather together against the life of the righteous, And condemn innocent blood.**
- 22 But the LORD has been my defense, And my God the rock of my refuge.**
- 23 He has brought on them their own iniquity, And shall cut them off in their own wickedness; The LORD our God shall cut them off.**
-

For instance, if a “general constitution” of a country declares with authority that all its inhabitants are to have free access to life, any inferior law which opposes a person's action to seek Christ as the Lord of one's life is an unconstitutional law and, therefore, devoid of authority, for Christ is the true life on which a Christian is dependent.

John 11: 25 **Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.**

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

If somewhere someone creates a law as a pretext to prevent people from freely coming to Christ in His condition as the Eternal Lord, and to receive and have the life of God in their hearts, this law may even be recognized by the local rulers, but it is not a law with attributes of authority. And concerning its condition of law only of merely human points or commandments, it is worth emphasizing what the disciples of Christ said when the priests and elders urged them not to announce the Lord Jesus Christ anymore or to testify about Him, according to the text that we repeat below:

- Acts 5: 27* **And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,**
- 28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"**
- 29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.**
- 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.**
- 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.**
- 32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."**

In this last narrative, those who were in opposition to the authority of the Prince and Savior Jesus Christ, whom God had set at His right hand on the highest throne in the universe, were not the disciples of Christ but those who were issuing express ordinances against the Lord's disciples.

In the specific case mentioned in the text above, the priests and elders were trying to intervene in something that they did not have the authority to do, since **regarding the matter of a person's faith in God, the "superior authorities" are the Heavenly Father Himself, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. And the Lord has not assigned any man or woman the task of mediating between Him and human beings in this sense.**

*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.*

Although the Lord may grant authority to Christian or non-Christian individuals who are in offices or positions of government or eminence, the Lord does not give any of them attributions and authority to define who can come to Him and nor to determine the path and the manner through which people can obtain the salvation of their souls and individual fellowship with their Eternal Creator.

*Acts 4: 5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes,
6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.
7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"
8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:
9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,
10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.
11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'
12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

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

When trying to use their positions in society to intimidate the disciples of Christ, the chiefs, the priests, and the elders of Israel tried to enter into spheres for which they were not called by God to act. For this reason, it was up to the disciples, in that circumstance, to express once again or testify in due time about the position of the sovereignty of God and Christ over them, pointing out that what the rulers of that

society tried to impose on them, despite their threats and severe warnings, was not the true expression of authority.

If we grouped, then, only the experience of the disciples with the statement of Romans 13 that we are trying to verify more comprehensively, we could advance to the conclusion of a first hypothesis about the text of Romans 13, affirming that **the word or term *authority*, as expounded in the Scriptures, would be a word to which only that which is right or just can be associated. That is, there cannot be a “false authority” or a “false exousia,” because if that were the case, there would be the possibility of the existence of authorities that would not have come from God, contrary to the text of Romans 13.**

If we joined only the experience of the disciples with the statement of Romans 13, we could assuredly say that **authority, according to the Scriptures, is similar to the truth, considering that in the truth, there can be nothing false, in the truth there can be nothing of the lie, even though the truth teaches, explains, or unveils lies, false things, and how they work.**

If we combined only the experience of the disciples with the statement of Romans 13, we could assuredly say that **if something is authority or *exousia*, it is automatically good, legitimate, comes from God, and is instituted by God for good, righteousness, or judgment according to the righteousness and truth of the Lord.**

In the same line of reasoning, it would be unreasonable to say that someone “abused the authority that one has,” for since the authority or *exousia* is always good and comes from God, it cannot have been used with abuse.

What many people do is use abusively the positions and power they hold. And they use their office and power abusively precisely when they do not act in line with the authority or *exousia* they may have received from God, preferring their desires, concepts, or illegitimate pretexts.

We have already seen before that the fact that there is an effective capacity and power to execute or accomplish something does not mean that there is automatically authority or *exousia* for that to be done. That is, the power or capacity to act without due authority may end up expressing itself in acts against the will of the Lord.

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

Therefore, **a human being does not receive authority from the Lord to practice evil, sin, or iniquity. A motive why no one should want to remain attached to what does not come from the heavenly kingdom.**

If we still grouped only the experience of the disciples described above with the statement of Romans 13, we could assuredly say, then, that **no abusive ordinance comes from God and, therefore, also no abusive ordinance is an authority indeed.**

There are wisdom, power, and ruling instructions that come from the flesh, the world, and the empire of darkness, and there are wisdom, power, and governing instructions that come from God and His heavenly kingdom. And still, considering that only the later aspects would be characterized as

authority or *exousia*, it is then up to a Christian to turn to the Lord to learn to discern between them.

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.

James 1: 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

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.

All that is truly just, whether for the good of those who long for the righteousness of God or to rightly rebuke or punish evil, comes from God. And authority is also one of those essential gifts that people in the world need so much.

Nevertheless, if we look even more sharply at all the uses of the term *exousia* in the New Testament Scriptures to refer to authority, we can see that this same term appears related in them, at least in three circumstances, also with connotations in which its use seems to be contrary to Christians or the beneficial use for people in general.

When we see that the term *exousia* sometimes is also used to express only power or positions of power, we can see that it is used in opposition to Christians or people in general in the circumstances exemplified below:

1st circumstance:

Mark 10: 42 But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.

44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all."

OR

Luke 22: 25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'

26 But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves."

2nd circumstance:

Ephesians 6: 11 **Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

12 **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

3rd circumstance:

Revelation 13: 1 **Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.**

2 **Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.**

3 **And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.**

4 **So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"**

Faced with these last mentioned texts and to support the reasoning exposed throughout this chapter that the word *authority* could only be used for the practice of good things, it would be necessary, as a possibility to understand the text of Romans 13, to consider that what is said in the referred chapter that “***there is no authority except from God***” and that “***whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God***” would be referring only to all authority that God assigned to some person or magistrate. An aspect that is indeed an interesting possibility to be considered.

If the dragon, which in the book of Revelation is explicitly presented as the devil, has authority, the text of Romans 13 obviously is not declaring for people to submit to the authority of Satan, for in the book of James 4, verse 7, Christians are told to submit to God and to resist the devil so that he will depart from them.

Similarly, it would not make sense for Christians to be instructed to subject themselves to someone in a position of power (or powers or authorities) who strives against them, as is exposed in the book of Ephesians in the text which refers to the use of the spiritual armor that God offers to all Christians.

And yet in the other example about the posture of some rulers of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself instructs His disciples not to exercise authority with the aim of domination and to lord over their fellow men, much less among Christians themselves.

Thus, returning to the text of Romans 13, it might be necessary, first, to better understand the beginning of this text and what is the meaning of “***let every soul be subject to the governing (or superior) authorities***” for later, and together with

the first part, to advance to the other part that says that ***“there is no authority except from God.”***

According to the comments associated with Strong's lexicon, the expression governing or superior in the text in reference can also be considered as *higher, better, more excellent, or supreme.*

Therefore, when we look at the text of Romans 13 primarily from the aspect of “superior authorities,” we can see more clearly that every excellent, supreme, best, or higher authority is also good, always assigned for what is appropriate, and that whatever comes from it is equally coming from God and worthy of acceptance and not resistance.

In this latter sense, to affirm that God's authority is like the truth, in the aspect that it contains nothing false, remains widely appropriate.

Observing yet the aspects of the expression “superior authorities” from another angle or the perspective that authority always works from the higher or highest to the lowest or the ones that are subordinated to the highest, we could also say that the inferior authorities are only authorities to be recognized and to be followed by a Christian if they are indeed in line with the highest.

If an authority that a king exercises comes from men and is not in line with the “superior authorities,” and is used by the king to oppress people, it is not indeed an authority appointed by God, and nor is it authority in the sense of being an authority recognized by God as such and as a minister of God for the good of those who practice good works and for the correction of those who do evil.

In this way, if we consider that an authority is only valid if it is in line with the “superior authorities,” we could then say that there is indeed no “superior authority” over a Christian that has not been appointed or established by God. And if the latter aspect is applicable, all “superior authority” is also for the benefit of a Christian and worthy of receiving honor or tribute.

Romans 13: 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.

7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

If there are circumstances in which the word *authority* is also used to mention some authorities that act against the lives of Christians and people in general, these authorities are not part of the so-called “superior authorities” and, therefore, should not be considered among the “superior authorities” worthy of someone submitting to them.

When the devil told the Lord Jesus Christ that he would grant Him his authority over the kingdoms of the world, the Lord replied to the devil that He, Jesus, was subject

only to the “superior authorities” and not the inferior ones that the devil was proposing to Him.

Luke 4: 1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,
2 being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.
3 And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."
4 But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'"
5 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.
6 And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.
7 Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."
8 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Christ did not submit to the authority the devil claimed he had, for the devil's authority was not in line with “the superior or excellent authorities.” Therefore, it was not a God-appointed authority for human beings to submit to, obey, or follow. In the broader sense of Romans 13, it was not indeed an authority to be accepted by a Christian.

An authority granted by God and characterized as part of the “superior ones” comes from the Lord Himself for the creation, not from the creation for God. It comes from the highest place to people, not from people to the highest places.

Acts 5: 29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men."

When the Lord instructs us to seek the things which are above or from above, this also applies to authority from heaven, for there are many ordinances among human beings which are but mere ordinances of their own, and which are not in fact “authorities” or “superior authorities” for a Christian to accept and submit to them.

Colossians 2: 20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations (or ordinances),
21 (Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,
22 which all concern things which perish with the using) according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

3: 1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Basic principles of the world, coming from its traditions and cultures, are not “superior authorities,” for they were not appointed by God. On the contrary, they were introduced into the world by people who resist the Lord. This shows us once more that the authority to be recognized as appointed by God is only that which is indeed appointed and established by God from His heavenly kingdom over humankind.

Galatians 4: 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

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

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

8 But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.

9 But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

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

18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you

21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Colossians 2: 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

C7. The So-Called “Spiritual Authorities” that Are Not Really God-Appointed Authorities

In the final part of the previous chapter, we could observe, in several texts, that **there are in the world a series of ordinances that are considered by God as ordinances of men, of the creation, or their cultures and traditions, but which before God are not recognized as the expression of the “superior authorities” and appointed by the Lord for people to submit to them.**

The fact that people attribute the term *authority* to themselves, their offices, their institutions, their ordinances, or their teachings does not make them authorities appointed by God or invested with authority by the Lord, for, as we repeatedly have seen, for an authority to be considered or recognized as such before the Lord, it must also have been deliberated or appointed by the Lord Himself.

So, not even calling something “*spiritual authority*” makes what is not indeed authority before the Lord pass to the level of becoming an actual authority.

Many people use the expression *spiritual authority* aiming to attribute a special weight of value to the positions they aspire to occupy in the world or among human beings. However, we emphasize here that the combination of the words of the expression *spiritual authority* itself is not mentioned in this way in the Bible.

In the Scriptures, we can observe that Christ, at one point, actually granted His disciples a portion of authority which gave them the power to cast out demons, heal the sick, and, at another time, trample on serpents, scorpions, and all the power of the enemy, so that the enemy's strength would not harm them. At another time, the Lord still emphasized that this power or authority would accompany those who believed in Him or His Name, but He only called it authority, as shown below:

Matthew 10: 1 **And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power (or authority) over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.**

Luke 10: 19 **"Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.**

20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Mark 16: 14 **Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.**

15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;

18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

19 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

20 And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

The actions described in these latter texts can obviously only be accomplished through spiritual power and what some would call *spiritual authority*; however, the combined expression *spiritual authority* is not found as such in the Scriptures.

The fact of distinguishing and highlighting that the expression *spiritual authority* is not mentioned precisely in this way in the Scriptures might be very significant, for a Christian, in reality, only receives authority for the actions described in the verses above when one acts in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the One to whom indeed all authority belongs, whether in heaven or the matters relating to authority on Earth or in the world.

Therefore, **a Christian does not receive a “*spiritual authority*” to act autonomously or independently of the Lord as if upon receiving the “*spiritual authority*,” one would have all the power one wanted to also operate in the way one oneself would like to.**

Acting on the authority that the last texts mentioned above only has recognition before God if people indeed act as legitimate representatives of God, which only occurs if they operate in line with the will of the Heavenly Father, as Christ also teaches us in the text below:

Matthew 7: 15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

21 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

We remember here, as we also saw in the previous chapters, that even if a person is, in fact, the holder of authority granted to him or her by the Lord, one is not saved by the fact of being a holder of this authority, but by maintaining faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, His grace, and His gift of righteousness.

In this way, **in the world, there are many mentions of what many call *spiritual authority* that are not indeed authorities appointed by the Lord. On the contrary, they are propositions of authority that are directly opposed to the authority, law, and work of Christ toward humankind and toward the children of God who have received salvation through faith in the Lord.**

When they try to use the expression *spiritual authority*, many people do not do so in the sense of having authority or power to be protected by the Lord so that the enemy does not harm them, but in the sense that they have the power to subjugate other people to themselves without, however, having the Lord's authorization to do so.

In the world, there are many people who call themselves *spiritual authorities*, or holders of *spiritual authority*, to present themselves as people specially called by God to, supposedly, exercise a spiritual role over others. Many do it with the aim of passing on to others the idea of being also holders of "*higher callings or ministries*" with the task of guiding the lives of others or to be called "*spiritual leaders*" or even "*mediators of others*" toward God.

Nevertheless, all claims similar to those exposed in the last paragraphs are contrary to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as contrary to the New Covenant to which people are called to take part through faith in Christ and His work of redemption through His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary.

As we have already seen in previous chapters, **the Lord Jesus Christ explicitly taught His disciples not to behave among themselves similarly to how the rulers or governors of the world do regarding those over whom they want to dominate**, as exemplified in the texts that we repeat below:

Matthew 20: 25 ***But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.***

26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

***27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave:
28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."***

Mark 10: 42 ***But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.***

43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.

44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.

45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

- Luke 22: 23 Then they began to question among themselves, which of them it was who would do this thing.*
- 24 Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.*
- 25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'*
- 26 But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves."*

Christ explicitly instructs His disciples, in their relationships with each other, not to act like the rulers of the world that He mentions in the texts above, just as they should not be like them, as presented in Luke's text.

Thus, **the comparison of who is the greatest or the least among those who received God's salvation through Christ simply does not suit them as to the relationship between them, for all are similarly called to serve one another and not to dominate others or impose themselves on them.**

At yet another time, **the Lord Jesus Christ also explicitly evidenced the equivalent position that each Christian has regarding others who believe in the Lord, frustrating or declaring incompatible any pretension of some of the brothers or sisters aiming to establish themselves as masters, "spiritual fathers," guides, or leaders of one's other fellow believers in God.**

- Matthew 23: 8 "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.*
- 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.*
- 10 And do not be called teachers (guides or leaders); for One is your Teacher (guide or leader), the Christ.*
- 11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.*
- 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Therefore, **those who claim to be or have a *spiritual authority* to elevate themselves over those they call brothers or sisters in the faith are trying to present to others an alleged authority or a false proposition of authority, as they are proposing something that goes against the authority of the express and direct words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the One who has all authority.**

Christ would not at one time tell people who believe in Him not to call brothers or sisters of faith their teachers, fathers, guides, or leaders and at another time grant authority to some of them to rise above the others.

On the contrary, those who claim to be or have a *spiritual authority* to elevate themselves above their fellow believers are those who fit the words written by Paul to

Timothy, for they oppose themselves to the sound words taught directly by Christ. They are those who aim to obtain undue personal gain with these attitudes, as described in the following text:

*1 Timothy 6: 3 **If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,***
*4 **he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,***
*5 **useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.***

Previously we have also mentioned that **from Christ, that is, from the possibility of the New Covenant with God, no mediator between God and human beings has acceptance before the Lord. Therefore, besides Christ, no one is worthy to receive authority for this office.**

*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.***

*Hebrews 8: 6 **But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.***

...

*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."***

In the New Covenant, a Christian is called to trust in God and not in the flesh or carnal individuals who want to claim to have a *spiritual authority* to rise above others, who often call themselves “workers of Christ” but who are even named in the Scriptures also as dogs that want to impose slavery again on those they try to subject to their false claims of authority.

*Philippians 3: 1 **Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.***
*2 **Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation (or false circumcision)!***
*3 **For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.***

Isaiah 56: 11 Yes, they are greedy dogs Which never have enough. And they are shepherds Who cannot understand; They all look to their own way, Every one for his own gain, From his own territory.

Christ explicitly warns us about the deceitful pretensions of those who want to impose themselves on others, for the Lord knows that these will not love those who are subject to them. Instead, they will trample them underfoot in the sense of destroying them under their domination.

A justified life *in Christ* is the highest good a person can receive for eternal salvation. For this reason, the Lord Jesus Christ warns against surrendering to those who claim to have *spiritual authority* but do not indeed have it and who, in reality, are opponents of Christ and those who believe in Him. A situation with which the prophet Isaiah also agrees, as follows:

Isaiah 3: 12 "As for My people, children are their oppressors, And women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, And destroy the way of your paths."

Therefore:

Matthew 7: 6 "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces."

The Scriptures do not even mention that a Christian needs authority to love another Christian. However, even if one needed *spiritual authority* to do it, this would always be given to an individual to serve other Christians and not to dominate them or try to guide their lives.

Those who claim to have *spiritual authority* received from God to guide others, or to try to draw them after themselves, resemble those who brought Paul to tears repeatedly for some years, as described below:

Acts 20: 29 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.
30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.
31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."

In his preaching, letters, and teaching, Paul declared that he had received the *authority* to act in favor of spreading the Gospel of Christ. However, Paul always explicitly stated to whom Christians belonged and to whom they should look for

foundation and edification. Paul never presented himself as a "ruling or dominating spiritual authority over those who belong exclusively to Christ Jesus."

Acts 20: 32 **"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."**

1 Corinthians 11: 2 **Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.**
3(a) **But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ**

1 Corinthians 4: 1 **Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.**

2 **Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.**

...
6 **Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.**

7 **For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?**

Ephesians 2: 19 **Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,**
20 **having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,**
21 **in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,**
22 **in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**

1 Corinthians 3: 11 **For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**

We still emphasize here that **when Paul writes that Christians are all equally called to be built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, he is not saying for Christians to be built on the apostles and prophets as these being their foundation. Instead, what Paul declares is the call for all to be built on the same and only foundation that the apostles and the prophets were also built on, namely: Christ Jesus, the only Lord and Head of all the members of His Body or also called the Church of Christ.**

Paul did not exercise primacy over the people he preached and taught. On the contrary, he pointed them to Christ and committed them to God's care. Paul knew his

position as a servant of Christ and a brother to others who called upon the Lord. Paul never wanted Christians under him or his rulership, for he knew they were Christ's flock and never his. Paul knew that he himself had not given his life for the redemption of any Christian as Christ did, and, therefore, he had no right or authority to claim rulership and dominion over those who believed in the Lord. Paul did not buy them for himself with the price of his blood, as the Lord Jesus Christ had done.

1 Corinthians 1: 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

12 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."

13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Colossians 1: 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

29 To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Christ's exclusive authority as the Head of His Body and as Lord over those who believe in Him is non-transferable, "cannot be delegated," and is not authorized to be shared with others, for it was the Heavenly Father Himself who eternally established Him in this position. Thus, it is up to Christ Himself and all the members of His Body to pay attention to that in which the Lord Jesus was established eternally by the Everlasting Father.

Ephesians 1: 19 ... and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

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

7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and

establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

In the Scriptures, there are still many other texts that demonstrate the exclusive sovereignty of Christ over each one of those who believe in Him or who are part or members of His Body. However, considering that this aspect is widely exposed in the various subjects on the Gospel of God, we will try to advance here in a more focused way regarding the matter of authority.

Thus, **another aspect that also denounces many of the alleged or pretended *spiritual authorities* that appear in the world is the fact that several people or institutions claim to have authority based on the use of the law of Moses, even if partial in what suits them. However, this supposed authority has already been declared revoked or obsolete since the sacrifice of Christ on the cross of Calvary and the offering of the New Covenant to all human beings**, an aspect that is also widely addressed in the theme about The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ and concerning which we will seek to make only a few brief considerations here.

Because of the establishment of a new priesthood option through Christ Jesus, offered in the New Covenant, the commandments of the old or first type of priesthood became revoked before the Lord.

Therefore, since the law of the First or Old Covenant has been declared outdated by the Lord, no one acting under this old law can properly advocate that one has authority received from God to exercise or enforce this law, for before the Lord, in the present day, the very priesthood because of which the law of Moses was introduced is already devoid of authority coming from God.

- Hebrews 7: 12 **For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.***
- 13 **For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.***
- 14 **For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.***
- 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.***

Even in human judicial or governmental systems, no person has authority when one seeks to rely on what has already been revoked. Thus, much less value will something have if God Himself has already declared it obsolete.

No person who claims to have *spiritual authority* has authority indeed from God to set priests and Levites over the lives of Christians or to require tithes and offerings from them, for those who are *in Christ* are no longer under the law and the priesthood that people practiced according to the Levitical priesthood.

Considering that Christ, for the righteousness of everyone who believes in Him, is the end of the law that was associated with the First or Old Covenant, or others that adopt similar principles or that are derived from it, no one else receives authority from God to act according to the commandments of the outdated law.

Let us recall below, then, some texts that exemplify what we are mentioning at this point:

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.***

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

Galatians 5: 4 ***You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.***

Galatians 5: 18 ***But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.***

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

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

After the “end of the law of Moses” “in Christ” for the righteousness of everyone who believes in the Lord or after the declaration of the obsolescence of the priesthood of this law, those who try to impose the principles of this law again on people, even if only in part, are those who actually resist the authority which God has to abrogate what was passing or outdated and to introduce the new according to higher and everlasting promises.

When a previous priesthood is substituted by another type of priesthood, and as a result also another respective law takes place, what the revoked law proposes no longer has the authority it had previously, even though people may still cling to titles and positions according to the outdated law because, somehow, they still confer them power or they think that they confer them power.

Therefore, **no one has God-appointed *spiritual authority* to reintroduce or sustain what God has already revoked and established as antiquated or obsolete.**

When God, through Christ Jesus, introduced the New Covenant, which is eternal, better, and superior to that according to Moses, He introduced an order of faith in which there is no separation of individuals between those who have or are *spiritual authorities* among them and those who are not or do not have it.

In Christ Jesus, the old concept of separating people into clergy and laity has no authority from Heaven to continue to be practiced or upheld by those who serve it.

In the New Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ did not authorize a Christian to subject another Christian to oneself in matters of faith in God, for they are fellow believers, God's family, and equally children of the same and the only Heavenly Father. Christ called all Christians to serve one another, but this by the free option of each one and not by the command or supposed "*special authority*" of a few over the others.

There is no space, that is, there is no legitimacy in Christ that allows a Christian or a group of brothers or sisters to rise as a government over the lives of other Christians concerning their life of faith in God.

Galatians 3: 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Any action of Christians or groups of Christians that seek to elevate them over the lives of other fellow believers, aiming to rule or exercise dominion over them in matters of the family of faith in God, is not the kind of instruction that comes from Christ. Therefore, in this sense, there is no God-given *authority* or *exousia* for this kind of purpose. And yet, this is even independent of the gifts and ministries that Christians receive from the Lord, for the gifts and ministries (services) are for Christians to serve each other and not for one to exercise dominion over the other.

1 Peter 4: 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it (or serve with it) to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

“Spiritual government” over each Christian, as some like to call it, is an attribute that the Heavenly Father has uniquely attributed to Christ Jesus, the One who is Lord of all and who is all and in all.

Colossians 3: 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,
10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.
12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;
13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.
14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

The Scriptures teach us that the Lord gives gifts to Christians so that they serve each other mutually and that each Christian should submit to God's action through another Christian. The Scriptures teach us that all are to be subject to one another in the Lord and “not many to a few” as want to do those who pride themselves on claiming that they are or have *spiritual authority*.

Ephesians 5: 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,
19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,
20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Galatians 5: 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

1 Thessalonians 5: 11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Propositions of corporate or collective subjection of various Christians to a few or supposedly select Christians who claim to have *spiritual authority* over others, or to the institutions, groups, or collectivities they create under the claim that they are instruments to guide the lives of others

in their lives of faith, always end up being attempts to reestablish, in one way or another, the law or parts of the law of Moses already revoked by the Lord from the death and resurrection of Christ.

We underline here, however, that these last statements do not deal with the working relationship where a Christian hires another Christian to work professionally in one of one's marketing or business ventures. This is a market relationship, and the Scriptures, in various texts, guide how this relationship between Christians should occur, as well as it may happen with the relationship between employers and employees in general (according to the examples of Ephesians 5: 4 to 9; 1Timothy 6: 1 and 2; 1 Corinthians 7: 21 and 22).

Furthermore, **elders, deacons, and bishops, mentioned in the so-called New Testament Scriptures, are not equivalent to the First or Old Covenant offices and titles. Similarly, they do not refer to an institution where some supposedly have authority or *exousia* over the members who join it, for the very action that aims to constitute an institution to serve as a control over Christians is already reprehensible before the Lord.**

When reading the Scriptures that mention gifts and services among those who believe in the Lord Jesus, there are people who see them through the institutional and corporate eyes of the present day or the law of Moses. However, many do not pay attention to the fact that Christians, in the period in which the reports were written, were not under formally constituted institutions as occurs in many situations today or that began to be constituted from the Roman emperor Constantine. God gave us the Scriptures so that, based on what He instructs us in them by the Holy Spirit, we may turn our lives to the Lord's will, and not try to adjust the contemporary molds created by men to what the Scriptures teach us.

We understand that it is suitable to remember here, then, that **the Body or Church of Christ is the set of “persons” or “individuals” who believe in Christ and remain united or directly linked to Him as the Unique Head of each of the members of this Body. The Body or Church of Christ is not the very meetings, associations, assemblies, or institutions that people have created or are still creating.** (A subject also covered extensively in the materials on The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, Another Gospel or A Different Gospel, and The Fellowship of Christians in the World).

In ancient times, an elder was recognized as such because of one's character and conduct, to serve as an example of a life of faith in God and faithfulness to the Lord, and to teach about the general principles of the Scriptures. However, never as a dominator and guide concerning what each person should do in their own life.

An elder (or also called a presbyter by some) was a person experienced in the faith of Christ or the Christian life and who had already demonstrated this by one's conduct in all areas of one's life. Because of this good course of faith and walking according to the word of the Lord, an elder served as a model and inspiration of faith in God to others and as a reference for teaching about the word of God.

Nevertheless, the moment an elder failed to keep one's faith in God or one's character in the condition in which one was recognized, or the moment one stopped practicing the postures expected of an elder, one also ceased to be recognized as a

reference or model of how others should seek to live a life of faith directly in Christ and the Heavenly Father.

What a person is in the practice of the life of faith in God, and towards life in general, is what qualifies an individual to be listened to or not with special attention. However, even though one has a good testimony before God and one's fellow men, one is not called to determine what one's fellow believers should choose in the most varied details of their personal lives or to mediate them in their relationships with God.

The fact that a person is seen and respected as an “elder worthy of trust and respect” does not give an individual authority over what other people will decide to do or not do in their lives. Similarly, it does not confer the authority to assume positions and offices in which one seeks to establish oneself for the rest of one's life regardless of whether one remains an example of faith in the Lord and conduct before God, other Christians, and the world.

Although God instructs Christians to also learn from others about the example of faith and faithfulness to the Lord, Christians are not called to depend on the faith of the “elders,” as each one is called to live and walk through one's personal faith in God. Therefore, the “elders” may serve as a reference, encouragement, and example of life through faith in God for everyone to realize how important it is that, personally or individually, each Christian lives according to one's faith and remains directly connected or united with the Lord.

*Romans 14: 22 **Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.***

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

Continuing with the principles mentioned in the last paragraphs, we underline that they also apply to the people called “bishops” and “deacons.” These can be recognized by others as references to serve fellow believers and teach them to remain in the truth and faith in Christ, but never entitled or placed in positions to rise above others. The words *minister* and *deacon*, originally, are the expression of the same word, which points to people who are willing *to serve* those who believe in the Lord, and not to exercise dominion or command over them.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not and still does not grant authority or *exousia* for a Christian to call oneself a leader over other Christians, to make disciples of oneself, or to call one's followers “my sheep.” Likewise, the Lord Jesus Christ did not grant any authority or *exousia* for a Christian to call oneself a leader and open “one's own Church.”

Anyone who insists on being called by titles of leadership over other people of faith in the Lord resists the authority or *exousia* that the Heavenly Father granted to Christ for Him to be the Only Teacher, the Only Shepherd, the Only Head of His Body or His Church, the Author and Finisher of the faith of each of the saints, and so on.

The fact that some people create institutions, and in them define positions and titles, does not transform and accredit the offices they establish and the leaders who assume these positions automatically into *authorities, exousias, or spiritual authorities*. On the contrary, when people create positions that go against the Lord's guidance, they enter the path in which some want to rise above their fellow men, trying to obtain primacy over them, which, however, in the Church of Christ, is exclusively assigned to Christ.

- Colossians 1: 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,*
14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.
15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.
16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.
17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.
18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.
19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,
20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.
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The mere fact that some people call themselves *spiritual authority* or *authority* does not mean that they indeed have authority or *exousia* recognized before God or that they are authorized to exercise the authority or *exousia* they claim to have.

Several people create the most diverse orders, institutions, groups, and positions to announce to the world that they have authority or *exousia*. However, once again, if the authority that some individuals claim to have does not have been granted to them from above or is not attested by God, what they create are orders, institutions, groups, and positions that are “hollow or empty of authority” and that only serve to try to deceive and subjugate people to their manipulative domains and that are illegitimate before the Lord.

Authority or *exousia* is received from God. It is not created and not instituted merely by human action, no matter how many names or high titles are attributed to people and their creations or how many records of these propositions are made in notary offices or according to the civil laws of the peoples in which they live.

Even though the Lord can and does use civil laws to manifest before human beings many aspects of the legitimacy of His authority, who ultimately legitimizes whether an authority is indeed an authority before God is the Lord Himself. By itself alone, the mere legal registration in the present world cannot legitimize before God what the Lord has already

considered as revoked and obsolete, as is the case of the law of Moses and the propositions of structures similar to it.

Once Christ declared that Christians are all brethren and that He is the Only Teacher and Guide assigned to their lives by the Heavenly Father, no institution, position, group, or person will legitimately receive from the Lord a heavenly authority or *exousia* for the functions that are exclusive of the Lord.

We highlight here yet, that when exposed to the direct and objective instructions given by Christ, as exposed in several texts above, some people seek to claim a condition contrary to what Christ teaches, pointing, for example, to the texts of Hebrews that instruct Christians to look at some *guides* (or *rulers*), more specifically the following verses:

Hebrews 13: 5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

6 So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

7 Remember those who rule over you (or who go or went ahead of you), who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Hebrews 13: 16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

17 Obey those who rule over you (or who go ahead of you or that govern), and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Nevertheless, in the first of these last two texts, we should take into account that the *rulers* to which verse 7 refers may also be those who no longer live in the present world, since the text says to remember those who “preached” and to imitate or follow the faith that “they had,” thus possibly pointing to examples of the past and not necessarily to people of the present time.

Secondly, the text does not say for a Christian to follow the people through whom the word of God was preached to them or who served as an example to them, but to “follow or imitate their faith” that they had and in whom they had it, namely, in God, for it is God who said: *I will never leave you nor forsake you* and *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*, also reminding Christians to confidently affirm that: *The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*

The so-called *rulers* (or *guides* or *who went ahead*) in the first of the two texts above of Hebrews, because they possibly could be no longer in the present world, can also be those who wrote us the words of the Lord inspired by the Holy Spirit and who

serve as an example of faith and perseverance so that, just as they did, we also follow Christ and remain faithful in following the Lord personally.

In the second text above, however, it seems more evident that the instruction refers to people in some prominent situation who still live on Earth or in the so-called present age.

Thus, if the word *rulers* or *guides* used in the second text refers to rulers acting in the same generation that people live, the principles exposed in it follow what we have previously commented about obeying rulers in general in what they actually act with authority.

Nevertheless, for the situation of the second text, it should still be noted that the word *ruler* or *guide*, the same used in verse 7 seen above, is also appointed in the first to the “instructors of the word of God,” who are called, for example, as “*teachers*” in Martin Luther's translation into German.

In Portuguese and Spanish, some versions even use the word “*pastors*” instead of *teachers* or *guides*. However, the word “*pastor*,” according to the oldest writings and used in most other texts of the so-called New Testament, is entirely different from the word used here for *rulers*, *guides*, or *teachers*, not representing the expression of the pastoral position indeed.

Now, a teacher or instructor, in general, is a person who instructs people to understand the principles of what one teaches, but this does not mean establishing the teacher over the life of the learner as the one who determines the choices that the learner makes in one's own life.

For instance, if a teacher at a driving school instructs an apprentice in some commands so that the learner can drive the car, it is evident that the apprentice should follow these instructions so that one may grow in the attempt to learn to drive the vehicle properly. However, this instructor does not become the life guide of the instructed person and does not even define the choices of paths that the apprentice will adopt after the classes given. The apprentice may listen to one's instructor's instructions, but, in the end, it is the apprentice who really chooses one path or another.

Therefore, if, for example, an “elder,” a person respectful and experienced in the word of God and life with the Lord, suggests that someone deepens in personal fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, the educated person should follow this advice and do it for one's own growth. And this, because in addition to benefiting everyone who follows the word of the Lord, it still facilitates the task of the “elder” regarding the care and desire that this one has that all one teaches are well and strengthened in God.

Nevertheless, the fact that a person has a gift given by God to teach some aspects of the Scriptures and about the Christian life to others does not, automatically, mean that one has the authority or *exousia* to say what another person must do in one's life or what personal choices one must take.

Christ Himself, the holder of perfect heavenly authority over everything and everyone, extends to people the choice of following Him or not, or to receiving or not His offer of the Gospel and newness of life, as exemplified below:

Luke 9: 23 **Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.**

24 *For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.*

Moreover, without specifying the sphere of one's scope and leadership, to say that an individual is a guide or a teacher is very vague. And if a person extrapolates what is pertinent about the specific function of a guide or teacher, one may run the risk of electing "a blind person to guide another blind person" because, in this case, neither the instructor nor the follower knows the limits of one towards the other.

A person instructed in the word of God and experienced in the relationship with the Lord can be called by the Lord to suggest others also seek to deepen themselves in the word of the Lord and personal fellowship with God. In this case, through one's words, one can suggest a direction for people to look to the One who can guide them in all aspects of their lives. And if the instructed person indeed starts to seek the Lord to be taught and guided by Him, the instructed person will also be effectively obeying what the guide or teacher told to do or will be "submitting" to the given instruction. However, one can do this without the need to establish the so-called guide or teacher as the leader of one's personal life decisions.

On the other hand, if the learner does not follow the teachings that the instructor tries to pass on about the importance of each person seeking God, one may generate a burden in the heart of the one who teaches him or her, for the one who instructs others according to the truth is also attentive to the well-being of the souls to whom one shares the teachings of God's word and the Lord's call to each individual for personal fellowship with Him.

If we first look at verse 16 above, we can see that verse 17 is placed in the context of ***"But do not forget to do good and to share (or to jointly participate or cooperate), for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."***

Let us see, then, how the text in reference proves to be interesting when also viewed from the perspective of verse 16 or the "mutual cooperation." God is pleased when each one does one's part. God sees this as a sacrifice that pleases Him.

Let us further note that the one who instructs others in truth teaches them as if one were going to give an account of the lives of the instructed. One teaches with zeal "as if" one will give an account for each life, but the text "does not say that one will actually give an account for the lives of others," for those who will give an account for their own lives are the ones that have been instructed themselves.

Even though the Lord instructs people to seek Him to know His will and direction for their lives, it is surprising to observe that many prefer "guides" or supposed "spiritual authorities" who tell them what they should do in their lives and who are audacious or even abusive in proposing to guide them in their most diverse decisions.

In the latter case, however, neither the people who seek these types of leaders nor these types of leaders are in line with the Lord's instruction. On the contrary, both oppose what the so-called "guides" or "teachers" of old taught about seeking fellowship and instruction from God, including also what the Lord Himself directly stated:

Matthew 11: 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."

*James 1: 5 **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.***

Several people think that when they follow their fellow men, to know the specific directions of their own lives, then they can satisfy their soul's longing to be properly guided. However, when a teacher or a guide instructs them with instructions for themselves to seek in God the answers for the direction of their lives, these same people, several times, do not feel comfortable obeying these last guides that in fact instruct in truth and for them to seek the Unique One in whom all truth is.

Teachers willing to serve the Lord to teach others can teach how essential it is for each person to seek the Lord's will for one's life, they can speak about how the Lord promises to care for and relate to those who believe in Him, and so on. However, instructors should not want to assume a position of authority or “spiritual authority” to guide the lives of others or to mediate them in their relationship with God, as is also explained in more detail in the subject on Knowing About God or Knowing God.

Both the situation of teaching people to seek directly in God the direction and will of the Lord for their lives, as well as the position of wanting to instruct others to the point of directly leading their lives, refer to instructing other people, but only the first is according to God's instruction and truth.

And why, then, do so many people have such a hard time following the instructions of those who teach them to seek God directly, but find it easy to follow those who have no absolute authority over their lives? Have we already entered the times about which Paul writes to Timothy that would come in the future, according to the text below?

*2 Timothy 4: 3 **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;***
*4 **and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.***

When people want to claim that they should follow leaders who guide them and who please them with what they want to hear, they do not realize or do not want to recognize that the other texts that talk about guides who were faithful to God, and whose instructions to seek God directly are worthy of being accepted and obeyed, are preceded by the following text:

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

- 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.***
- 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.***

This last text is particularly enlightening about a Christian's posture regarding one's fellow believers in God and the Lord Jesus Christ. In Hebrews chapter 11, the author has just reported a "so a great cloud of witnesses" who lived a life of faith in God. However, despite citing the "so great a cloud of witnesses," it does not say to look and stick to the witnesses themselves, but it teaches us to do as they did, that is: **To look unto God or directly and firmly to the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Thus, **the true witnesses of Christ are those who inspire and support others to look and stand directly in Christ.**

Not even the sum of many witnesses, composing a great cloud, serves to determine what a Christian must do personally, except for reaffirming that each Christian should always have Christ personally in one's heart and as the fundamental reference for one's life.

Psalms 123: 2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the LORD our God, Until He has mercy on us.

Psalms 25: 15 My eyes are ever toward the LORD, For He shall pluck my feet out of the net.

Psalms 19: 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Psalms 146: 8 The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; The LORD raises those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous.

Psalms 141: 8 But my eyes are upon You, O GOD the Lord; In You I take refuge; Do not leave my soul destitute.

Despite being able to let good examples of life to others, witnesses have a temporary presence in the world, but Christ remains forever. He Himself and He alone said, "**lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**"

Therefore, a Christian's confidence should always be centered squarely in God because ***the Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.***

In fact, the entire book of Hebrews, as well as all the books of the New Testament, the Psalms, Proverbs, and the Prophets, point to the greatness of the Lord Jesus as the Christ given by God to guide all those who trust in Him, confirming it even by granting Christ to be directly in the heart of everyone who believes in Him.

Colossians 1: 27 **To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

28 **Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.**

In the book of Hebrews, we can find the instruction to imitate the faith of people who trusted in the Lord and even to follow the instructions of those who point us to seek life in Christ. But this is to be always done subject to, and never contrary to, Christ's instruction to keep our eyes first and foremost on Him. Following Christ personally and directly is the way out of darkness to live and walk in the paths of life.

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."**

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

No Christian is called to be a disciple of another Christian. Christ called us to be His disciples. And the Scriptures instruct us that to follow other people is to be carnal and not spiritual. And where the flesh reigns, there is, in fact, no "spiritual authority" from the Lord in action.

1 Corinthians 3: 4 **For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?**

5 **Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?**

In another example, we can see that when Peter wanted to know how the Lord Jesus would guide John's life, the Lord told him that this did not concern him, but that he, Peter, should be attentive to keep his eyes fixed upon the One who he should always follow.

John 21: 21 **Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?"**

22 **Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."**

Thus, the fact that a guide or leader has people who follow this individual, or even audiences and crowds, does not mean that one is endowed with authority or the so-called “spiritual authority.” On the contrary, in the world, there are many who deceive and will deceive many others by saying that they are anointed (christs) of the Lord, that they are prophets who speak in the name of God, or that they act according to the authority of God, however, without ever having received true authority to do so.

Concerning yet the individuals mentioned in the previous paragraph, Christ emphatically warned us to beware of them and in no way subject ourselves to their invitations and propositions, as exemplified below:

Matthew 24: 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

...
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."

No faithful minister of Christ has been or is given the authority or *exousia* to be the leader of another Christian's life. And if anyone tries to do so, one is unduly inclined to use a power or a position not conferred by the Lord Jesus.

Many who advocate being leaders or claim to be or have “spiritual authority” use threats and seek to frighten those subject to them, saying that if they do not obey them, they will also be in rebellion. However, the most expressive rebellion is not, firstly, in those who claim to follow them and question them, but in those who claim to have authority in what is directly and offensively contrary to what Christ warned them to refrain from doing.

Following Christ's instruction, also Paul, an apostle duly appointed by Christ to preach and teach about the Gospel of God and the foundation that is only in the Lord, tells us that those who wanted to exercise dominion over his life, contrary to the New Covenant and the Liberty which Christ had bestowed upon him, were not worthy to receive his submission even for one hour. That is, these were not worthy of attention at any time because their positioning was not indeed according to authority, but was, instead, intended to deprive him of the freedom he had in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 2: 4 And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),

5 to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

6 But from those who seemed to be something (whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man) for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.

On another occasion, Paul goes so far as to say that in the world, there are even those who call themselves apostles of Christ, but who are false and deceitful workers, workers of unrighteousness, although they present themselves with an outward appearance of ministers of God's righteousness. And this is the sort of workers that there are also in the present day, where some of them are those who most seek to promulgate the idea that they are or have "*spiritual authority*" to rise above those who they call, for convenience and corrupt interests, brothers and sisters of faith.

1 Corinthians 5: 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

10 Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; not even to eat with such a person.

The Lord grants authority or *exousia* to people, magistrates, and Christians in general. However, it is specific and limited to what the Lord has determined, and not for some to dominate their fellow men or, in the name of the supposed "*spiritual authority*," to become those who determine what others should or should not do in their lives of relationship with God or as Christians.

Looking at the aspect exposed in this chapter also from the side of those who want to opt for paths where they could have others as "*spiritual authorities*" over their lives, and who are not indeed authorities before God, it is worth remembering that God does not call a person to transfer the responsibility of one's actions to leaders one chooses or not even leaders who try to impose themselves on one's life. Instead, each person is called to give a personal account before God.

Romans 14: 11 For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God."

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

When called to give an account to the Lord, people will not be able to hide behind the commandments of magistrates, regents, rulers, or those who claimed to be or hold "*spiritual authority*," arguing with this that they did not practice what is right because their "superiors" gave them orders to do evil or did not teach them to do what is good.

The fact that a Christian does not practice what is good, under the banner of obeying the “authorities” that give him or her orders contrary to what is appropriate, will not exempt this person from individual accountability before God, for the Lord promises to supply each one of those who believe Him also in the face of the temptations with which they may come across in the world.

1 Corinthians 10: 13 **No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.**

At the moment of personal accountability before God, an individual will not be able to hide under the banners of men or women whom one has followed contrary to what Christ instructed to follow.

Many people choose to stay under the so-called “*authorities or spiritual coverings*” even out of convenience, thinking they will not be exposed to evil in this way. However, many times, precisely because of the choice of accommodation, they do not realize that they are submitting themselves to the evil they want to avoid by taking a position contrary to the will of God and because these supposed “*spiritual coverings*” will not be by their side at one of the most crucial moments of their lives, which is the hour of accountability before the Almighty and Eternal God.

Both those who offer supposed “*spiritual coverings*” as if they had received authority from Christ to do so, but without actually having the Lord's support to do so, as well as those who submit to them and support them, even though only by mere attendance at their activities, dishonor the authority of Christ who gave Himself to the world to be the Unique Lord and Shepherd in the hearts of each of those for whom He was crucified.

1 Corinthians 11: 4 **Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.**

The announcement of a supposed Gospel that includes an alleged “*spiritual authority or coverage of some over others,*” and in which Christ is not the exclusive, personal, and direct Head of each member of His Body or Church, is a proposition that tries to introduce a distortion in people's hearts in relation to the true Gospel and proposes what Paul calls a **proposition of another Gospel, but which does not want to be seen as another.** (Theme exposed in the subject on Another Gospel or A Different Gospel).

When some individuals want to introduce complexity in the authority that is in Christ over each person who believes in Him to relate personally to them, it is no longer Christ that they are serving, for the simplicity that there is in Christ is found in invitations such as those that follow below:

Revelation 3: 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."**

John 6: 30 **Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?"**
31 **Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"**
32 **Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.**
33 **For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."**
34 **Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always."**
35 **And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.**
36 **But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe.**
37 **All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."**

John 7: 37 **On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.**
38 **He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."**
39 **But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.**

It is in the words of Christ and His provision for us to live and walk firstly *in Christ* that a Christian should hold fast in the matter of authority as well. No Christian should accept anything that goes against one's position in the Lord, which was granted with so much love and by the price of the blood of Christ shed on the cross of Calvary.

2 Corinthians 11: 3 **But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.**

1 Corinthians 7: 23 **You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.**

Colossians 1: 21 **And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled**
22 **in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight:**

23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

The Heavenly Father made the Lord Jesus Christ King on His Mount Zion, the place of His eternal throne. Thus, even though many earthly rulers and their princes try to stand up against the authority of Christ, the Heavenly Father, in due time, will always make the authority that He assigned to His Only Begotten Son prevail.

Many people in the world often rebel against the Lord, and even kings and rulers may unite against God's authority or *exousia*, going beyond what is pertinent to them. But when they do so, they do it in vain or for the damage of themselves, for He who bestows authority or *exousia* also watches over it. Therefore, before the authority of God that is in Christ, the best option is always to receive it with reverence, respect, and love, knowing that whoever takes refuge *in Christ* is blessed in the Lord.

*Psalms 2: 1 Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing?
 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
 3 "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us."
 4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision.
 5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure:
 6 "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion."
 7 "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.
 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.
 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel."
 10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
 11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling.
 12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.*

We conclude, then, this point by asking the Lord to once again pour out an abundance of His goodness and mercy upon us, upon all His people on Earth in this generation also, so that we may also be taught in this area of authority according to the rich, wonderful, and righteous principles of the Heavenly Kingdom, and not only according to the basic principles of the world and the traditions of the peoples.

1 Peter 4: 11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus

*Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.
Amen.*

C8. Prudence and Caution Even with That which Is Not Authority in Conformity with God's Designation

Before moving on to the last chapter of the current theme, we believe it is significant to register a mention of the attention or caution that every Christian should have even with that which is not authority appointed by God and which, despite this, is in a position of power and strength in the world.

According to the text of Ephesians 6 mentioned in previous chapters, we can see that the fact that there are forces contrary to the will of God or that do not have recognized authority before the Lord does not mean that they act without significant power. That is why the Scriptures urge Christians to put on the armor of God to resist the actions and forces opposed to their lives.

The fact that someone is not invested with authority does not always mean that one is not empowered to act, being able to operate, on several occasions, even in a corporate manner or with the cooperation and the sum of the forces of a plurality of individuals and resources.

Several conflicts that are carried out in the world express struggles between groups or even kingdoms. And in these cases, there are individuals with different command positions, domains, and lordships on each side of those involved in these conflicts. And concerning these, it is reasonable to take the position of caution that is due.

Majesties, princes, or other people with positions of government or leadership, even those who incline themselves more to evil than to good, are also in offices that, many times, may give them a broader operational power in the world for several situations than an ordinary individual or a Christian has. For this reason, it is necessary to be cautious in the approaches and considerations about them.

Even though the devil is evil in all his intentions and does not aim at the good of any person, he, for instance, is mentioned in the Scriptures as a prince of an empire, the empire of darkness, and who holds, as long as the Lord allows him, a significant power.

*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.***

*2 Corinthians 4: 3 **But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.***

The fact that the devil or some rulers, regents, or leaders serve evil does not mean that they do not have “power” in their hands to act nor that anyone, including Christians, should make light or frivolous references about them or to them.

It is up to Christians to be careful with evil, but also with those who serve evil, for they operate with snares and cunning tricks.

- 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.***

The Christian who abides *in Christ* is kept in the Lord so that evil deeds do not prevail against one's life. However, as seen in the themes of The Gospel of the Righteousness of God, The Gospel of Peace, The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, The Christian in the World in General, and Watchful in Prayer, every Christian is called to walk in the faith in the Lord, but, at the same time, also in continual sobriety and care not to be ensnared by evil intentions and works.

Just as a soldier is not called to go out alone into combat or without due instruction, so a Christian is not called by God to go out alone into the world to confront all and any position that is contrary to the authority appointed by the Lord.

In the sense of being cautious with what one should say, including what concerns those who are in opposition to God and, at the same time, in prominent positions in the world, we find a text in the book of Jude that exposes that the disregard of caution is not a prudent attitude, as follows:

*Jude 1: 3 **Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.***

*4 **For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.***

....

*8 **Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority (or government), and speak evil of dignitaries.***

*9 **Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"***

*10 **But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.***

The word presented above as *authority* would be better translated as *government* or *dominion* (AV), which, therefore, is not directly associated with the term *exousia* and, in turn, presented in the following way:

Kuriotes:

*Dominion, government;
 Dominion, power, lordship;
 In the New Testament: One who possesses dominion.*

On the other hand, the word presented in some versions as *dignitaries* or *dignities* is expounded in the comments associated with Strong as those *having superior glory*, as follows:

Doxa:
*Glory, glorious, honor, praise, dignity, worship;
 Opinion, judgment, view;
 Splendor, brightness;
 A most glorious condition, most exalted state.*

So, if we look at the word *government* as those *who have some dominion, lordship, or government*, and *dignities* as those *who have superior glory*, we will have verses 8 and 9 of the letter of Jude as follows:

*Jude 1: 8 **Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject “government or dominion” and speak evil of “dignitaries or those having superior glory.”***
*9 **Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”***

Furthermore, if in the above considerations, we also add the aspect that the word translated as *authorities*, specifically in this last text above, may also mean *individuals in a prominent position or dominion*, even if they are not God's cooperators, we may understand even more broadly the high prudence of the Archangel Michael even towards the one who is the most expressive opponent of the Lord or the prince of the powers of darkness.

Archangel Michael himself was very cautious in what he said about the devil, despite resisting and contending with him. The Archangel Michael did not despise the fact that, despite being opposed to God, there are individuals who hold positions through which they act in power and should be treated, for this reason, with prudence and according to the specific instruction of the Lord of all lords and King of all kings.

Therefore, **every Christian should continually be on guard not to be reckless in speaking about matters concerning the authorities indeed appointed by the Lord, but, likewise, also regarding the forces that oppose one's life and that are contrary to the authority bestowed by the Lord. A Christian should be prudent in everything, as one may be exposed to conflicts that are not small and about which one should not utter words without consulting the Lord and being guided by the Holy Spirit on how to act, remembering also that doing something in the name of the Lord is to do it according to the instruction received from the Lord Himself.**

Colossians 3: 17 **And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**

A Christian is not called to be a “sniper” against everyone and everything that one, in one's understanding, thinks that is not in conformity with the will of God.

Psalms 37: 1 **Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.**
2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb.
3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.
5 Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.
6 He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.
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.
9 For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth.

Proverbs 3: 5 **Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;**
6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.
7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil.
8 It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.

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,
6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience (to the Lord) is fulfilled.

A Christian is called to present one's causes, first of all, to Christ and the Heavenly Father, so that one may be instructed by the Lord when and how to act in the world wisely and according to heavenly righteousness so as not to attract opposition and harm that can be avoided.

First, a Christian is called to live in direct fellowship with Christ and to know the glory of the Lord according to the Gospel of His glory. And then,

from “hiding in Christ,” to be instructed by Christ on how to live and walk in the present world in a dignified, prudent, and sober way.

Colossians 3: 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.
4 When Christ who is our life appears (or will manifest Himself), then you also will appear (or be manifested) with Him in glory.**

Titus 2: 11 **For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,
12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,
13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,
14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.**

Prudence is an attitude of great value or relevance that the Lord admonishes Christians to practice continuously, as the Scriptures show us in another series of texts that we list at the end of this chapter and for consideration also concerning the theme of authority and that which resists the authority of the Lord:

Psalms 111: 10 **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.**

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

Proverbs 12: 16 **A fool's wrath is known at once, But a prudent man covers shame.**

Proverbs 14: 15 **The simple believes every word, But the prudent considers well his steps.**

Proverbs 22: 3 **A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, But the simple pass on and are punished.**

Matthew 10: 16 **"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves."**

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.

1 Corinthians 14: 20 **Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.**

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

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

C9. The Provision and Wisdom for the Christian regarding the Subject Authority are also in Christ Jesus

To conclude the present theme, we would like to reiterate once again that in living and walking *in Christ*, the Christian finds provision, wisdom, and instructions for directing one's life in the world in general, which, of course, also includes the points related to the aspects about authority.

Even before a Christian occupies oneself with obtaining authority to act in the world or appropriately relating to the most diverse expressions of authority that exist in it, the Christian is called to relate in profound fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who has, on the part of the Heavenly Father, all authority in Heaven and on Earth, according to the texts we have already mentioned in previous chapters.

In Christ, the Christian also has the example of how a person should behave both concerning the posture before an eminence in the world and regarding one's attitude when one is entrusted with some authority to be exercised.

Matthew 11: 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."**

Even though granting authority to some also grants them some positions of eminence, the person given authority is called to remain humble in the heart, just as Christ exemplified it for us.

God does not grant authority for people to exalt themselves in pride before Him and their fellow men. Instead, He bestows it on people to do good to their fellow men in humility and respect before God and before other people.

Philippians 2: 3 **Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.**
4 **Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.**
5 **Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,**
6 **who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,**
7 **but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.**
8 **And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.**

When a person receives a measure of legitimate power according to the "superior authorities," one receives it in weakness despite what is entrusted to an individual. And this, so that the Lord of Glory may be exalted, and that praise and honor may be given to Him who created the Heavens and the Earth and all that is in them.

*2 Corinthians 4: 7 **But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.***

*Psalms 77: 14 **You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples.***

*Daniel 2: 20 **Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His.***
*21 **And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding.***
*22 **He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him."***

When a person receives a portion of authority or power according to the righteousness of the Lord to do good, one does not in oneself or of oneself become more powerful, but one has just received the privilege of being an instrument of the Lord to deliberate or do good to one's fellow men. Therefore, a person should receive it in awe and reverence to the One in whom all supreme power and authority are.

When a person receives a portion of authority or power according to the Lord's will for good works, one is called for the purpose of the Lord working and exercising authority through him or her, for, in reality, only the Lord is sovereign in everything and over everyone to manifest some benefit to human beings, as so many men and women have described in the Scriptures. Below are some more examples:

*Nehemiah 9: 6 **You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.***

*1 Chronicles 29: 11 **Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all.***

*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.***

Therefore, a Christian is not called to govern one's own life, and that which God entrusts a person to administer, apart from the life of God in one's heart and the position *in Christ* that one receives by grace and the gift of righteousness through faith in the Lord, as the following text explicitly teaches us:

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

A Christian does not get a life according to God's will from oneself. One receives it only because of the eternal justification that gives newness of life and because of the fellowship with Christ that grants newness of life in abundance to everyone who believes in the Lord.

When the Scriptures teach us that Christ saves us also to reign in life through Him, they do not instruct us to aim to reign as the kingdoms of the world govern, to covet what they covet, or to rule over our lives merely according to the concepts of human leadership. The Scriptures teach us to reign through Christ so that we can act in the world according to the grace, mercy, and righteousness of the Lord.

Disassociated from Christ, a Christian is deprived of bearing appropriate fruit according to the kingdom of God also when it comes to the matter of understanding and behaving oneself before authorities or acting in authority on behalf of one's life and of others.

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."

First, then, the Christian is called to learn to hide or take shelter in the hiding place of God Most High, which is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, to learn from Him humility, the love of the Lord, and fellowship with the Holy Spirit to also experience, live, and walk in everything according to the fruit that results from this fellowship.

Christ can elevate those who serve Him to the highest positions in the world, but, at the same time, He is not dependent on these offices to manifest His sovereignty and wisdom to the world. The Lord often chooses to do it by means considered simple, and that confuse the knowledge and wisdom of the wise and powerful according to the world.

Thus, the Christian should be careful not to become too focused on reaching high places to then think about exercising one's calling as the light of the world, salt of the Earth, the fragrance of Christ, a letter from God to people written by the Holy Spirit, or instrument of the Lord's righteousness. And this is because God often calls His children in positions and conditions that are not the strongest or most elevated in the eyes of the

world, nor the most recognized by the people who are part of it, as the following text exposes us:

- 1 Corinthians 1: 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.*
- 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;*
- 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,*
- 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.*
- 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."*
- 2: 1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.*
- 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*
- 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.*
- 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,*
- 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*
- 6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.*
- 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,*
- 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*
- 9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*
- 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*
- 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.*
- 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*
- 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*
- 14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*
- 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.*
- 16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*

In Christ, or under the instruction of the mind and guardianship of Christ, a Christian, in humility, finds the right wisdom to discern the authorities which come from God and those propositions which do not come from the Lord. Similarly, it is also *in Christ* that a Christian finds the wisdom and strength to act according to God's will in what the Lord grants him or her authority to act.

Therefore, **the safe place either to discern, submit, or exercise authority in conformity with the will of God is also the place where the Christian is called to begin any of the daily activities of one's life, namely, forever and ever, in Christ Jesus the Lord.** (A theme widely exposed in the subjects on each of the fundamental aspects of the Gospel of God and The Core Principle of Life for a Christian).

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."

Romans 11: 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

12: 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

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.

4 When Christ who is our life appears (or will manifest Himself), then you also will appear (be manifested) with Him in glory.

So, despite the particularly special mentions that the Scriptures make for a Christian always to be attentive to every “superior authority” that one may be exposed to in one's life in the world, the “main authority” to which a person should always pay respect, honor, and submission is, and always will be, that which is in Him who can grant life, and especially eternal life, to all who believe in Him and remain in Him.

Mark 8: 34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

- 35 *For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.*
- 36 *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*
- 37 *Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

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

Finally, then, we emphasize that **since the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom necessary for living and walking in all respects according to the will of God are found in Christ, also that which is needed for a Christian's proper relationship with the aspects encompassed by the theme of authority is found, first, in one's Eternal Lord and continual fellowship with Him.**

Mark 1: 22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

- Colossians 1: 9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;*
- 10 *that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*
- 11 *strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;*
- 12 *giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.*

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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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